

Present Manifestations of the Western World's Most Influential Religion: Technocracy

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People linking their brains together to form a global collective intelligence. Humans living well beyond 100 years. Computers uploading aspects of our personalities to a network.

These scenarios and many more could all become reality in this new century with the proper investments in technology, according to a report issued by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Commerce of the United States government.

Titled „Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance: Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology, and Cognitive Science,“ the 405-page report could one day be remembered as a seminal road map to the future. It calls for more research into the intersection of these fields. The payoff, the authors claim, isn't just better bodies and more effective minds. Progress in these areas of technology also could play a key role in preventing a societal „catastrophe“. The answer to human brutality and new forms of lethal weapons, it suggests, is a kind of technology-triggered unity: „Technological convergence could become the framework for human convergence.“

The „Converging Technologies“ report stems from a workshop which was convened in Washington, D.C. at the end of year 2001 involving scientists and technology leaders in government, academia, and private industry. Major themes at the seminar ranged from expanding human cognition and communication to improving human health to strengthening national security.

The final report, edited by Mihail Roco, senior adviser for nanotechnology at the National Science Foundation, and William Sims Bainbridge, acting director of the Foundation's Division of Information and Intelligent Systems, includes papers submitted by various participants as well as an overview by Roco and Bainbridge. In the overview, the editors argue that a host of advances can be achieved in the next 20 years alone. Among these are wearable sensors that send health alerts, much more useful robots, invulnerable data networks, and direct broadband interfaces between our minds and machines.

The report thinks big when it comes to peering beyond the next two decades to the rest of the 21st century. Taking visionaries such as Ray Kurzweil seriously, it imagines robots so advanced they may deserve political rights, building surfaces that automatically change shape and color to adjust to the weather, and the prospect of personality uploads that make death itself ambiguous.

Merging human consciousness with machines is tied to another nearly incredible concept: brain-to-brain connections. The report discusses the possibility of „local groups of linked enhanced individuals“ as well as „a global collective intelligence.“

In his article „US Report foretells of Brave New World,“¹ Nathan Cochrane explains how this plan of converging technologies would be instrumental in the unification of mass consciousness:

People may download their consciousnesses into computers or other bodies even on the other side of the solar system, or participate in a giant „hive mind“, a network of intelligences connected through ultra-fast communications networks. „With knowledge no longer encapsulated in individuals, the distinction between individuals and the entirety of humanity would blur,“ the report says. „Think Vulcan mind-meld. We would perhaps become more of a hive mind – an enormous, single, intelligent entity.”²

Of course, preparations must be made for humanity’s comfortable acclimation to this new „hive mind,“ as Cochrane reminds us:

The report says the abilities are within our grasp but will require an intense public-relations effort to „prepare key organisations and societal activities for the changes made possible by converging technologies“, and to counter concern over „ethical, legal, and moral“ issues. Education should be overhauled down to the primary-school level to bridge curriculum gaps between disparate subject areas.³

Roco and Bainbridge suggest further that creating such a networked society could play a vital role in overcoming today’s social and political crises. „The 21st century could end in world peace, universal prosperity, and evolution to a higher level of compassion and accomplishment,“ they write at the end of the report’s first chapter concluding it with an imaginary vista into what they like to see happening a hundred years from now: „It is hard to find the right metaphor to see a century into the future, but it may be that humanity would

¹ Nathan Cochrane, „US report foretells of brave new world,“ July 23, 2002; <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/20/1026898931815.html>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

become like a single, transcendent nervous system, an interconnected 'brain' based in new core pathways of society.“

Religions for a Galactic Civilization

In his article „Religions for a Galactic Civilization“, sociologist William Sims Bainbridge encourages the creation of new faith communities in America, embracing some kind of UFO mythology. He envisions that these new cults will be instrumental in establishing a theocracy, premised upon the technocratic faith in „progress.“ The appealing aspect of Ufology, once it will have been turned into the new civic religion of America, is, according to Bainbridge, its political and social expediency of emphasizing unfettered technological development.

Commenting on the supposed centrality of this scientific faith to progress, the author states:

Religion will continue to influence the course of progress, and creation of a galactic civilization may depend upon the emergence of a galactic religion capable of motivating society for the centuries required to accomplish that great project.⁴

Scientific cults are the purveyors of this new religious consciousness. They are contributing an essential religious element to the creation of a new Technate. Bainbridge actually suggested in the following that the social sciences should augment the efforts of scientific cults in the formation of this new theocratic order:

J. Gordon Melton's monumental *Encyclopedia of American Religions* reports the histories and doctrines of thirteen flying saucer cults: Mark-Age, Brotherhood of the Seven Rays, Star Light Fellowship, Universarium Foundation, Ministry of Universal Wisdom, White Star, Understanding Incorporated, The Aetherius Society, Solar Light Center, Unarius, Cosmic Star Temple, Cosmic Circle of Friendship, and Last Day Messengers. These groups mix together various supernatural notions from many other traditions, but a common thread is the idea that the Earth is but a small part of a vast inhabited galaxy. Some, like The Aetherius Society, contend that our planet is the pawn in an unseen interstellar war, and if such a cult became influential our society might invest in cosmic defenses which incidentally would develop the planets as bastions. Others feel we must perfect ourselves in order to qualify for membership in the Galactic Federation of enlightened species, and if such a cult became influential our society might invest much in the attempt to contact the galactic government. These flying saucer cults are all quite insignificant, but one like them could well rise to prominence in a future decade. We need several really aggressive, attractive space

⁴ William Sims Bainbridge, „Religions for a Galactic Civilization,“ in Eugene M. Emme, ed., *Science fiction and Space Futures* (San Diego: American Astronautical Society, 1982) 187-201. Paper given at the Nineteenth Goddard Memorial Symposium of the American Astronautical Society, Pentagon City, Virginia, March 26-27, 1981.

religions, meeting the emotional needs of different segments of our population, driving traditional religions and retrograde cults from the field.⁵

Bainbridge conducted a five-year ethnographic study of The Process Church. His scientific study was later published under the title of *Satan's Power. A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult*.⁶ The Process Church originated as a therapy service business called "Compulsions Analysis", after it had split off from Scientology. It aimed at expanding self-awareness for what Bainbridge stresses were normal, intelligent individuals desirous of moving beyond what their polite middle-class society offered them or would tolerate. The author believes that their particular therapeutic system fostered especially intense relations among individuals, leading to a "social implosion" turning the group in on itself and away from the larger society. Such profound intimacy stimulated mystical feelings⁷, thus setting the stage for the gradual transformation of the fledgling psychotherapy group into a full-blown satanic cult. As the cult grew, it became hierarchically structured, and the middle and lower ranks were not allowed "to invent their own social customs, experimenting with alternate schemes in search of the highest personal gratification. Only the leaders of the cult were permitted such freedom. The cult existed for the sake of its founders, and therefore the social system functioned to channel wealth, power, and pleasure in their direction."⁸

During his examination of the Processeans, Bainbridge developed a strong affinity for the cultists' penchant of re-conceptualizing the roles of God and Satan. As for Satan, *she* is only one in a pantheon of four deities which includes Lucifer (male god of the air), Jehovah (female god of earth), Christ (male god of water) and Satan (female god of fire). This case of Biblical revisionism inspired Bainbridge, who revelled in being a principal instructor of satanic lore and proud possessor of a huge collection of satanic paraphernalia. Since then, he has encouraged sociologists to take an active part in the re-conceptualizing of traditional religious concepts. It is his hope that such religious experimentation will eventually result in the creation of a „Church of God Galactic“. In „New Religions, Science, and Secularization,“ Bainbridge presents the following mandate:

It is time to move beyond mere observation of scientific cults and use the knowledge we have gained of recruitment strategies, cultural innovation, and

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ William Sims Bainbridge, „Social Construction from Within: Satan's Process,“ in James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley, eds., *The Satanism Scare* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991) 297-310; William Sims Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁸ Ibid., 169.

social needs to create better religions than the world currently possesses. At the very least, unobtrusive observation must be supplemented by active experimentation. Religions are human creations. Our society quite consciously tries to improve every other kind of social institution, why not religion? Members of The Process [Church], founded mainly by students from an architecture school, referred to the creation of their cult as religious engineering, the conscious, systematic, skilled creation of a new religion. I propose that we become religious engineers.⁹

Evidently, Bainbridge feels that the sociologists should play a role in the creation of a new religious consciousness. Ethnographic analyses of scientistic cults, such as The Process Church and Scientology, will no longer suffice. What will be required is „active experimentation“. Working in such a capacity, social scientists would cease to be observers. Instead, they would become active promulgators of the different scientistic cults comprising Technocracy. The latter would become the only acceptable civil religion of America, probably called, in deference to Henri Saint-Simon, the “New Christianity”. Bainbridge elaborates:

Sociologists of religion are among the most ethical and high-minded of scholars, and there is no reason why they should not apply their knowledge to the creation of new religions. The world needs them. We have roles to play as consultants to existing new religions, helping them solve problems that our research has permitted us to understand. But we must also be prepared to launch new cults of our own invention, a task I admit that is both hazardous to one’s own welfare and outrageous in the eyes of people who refuse to admit that all religions are human creations. But it is far better for honest religious engineers to undertake the creation of new religions for sake of human betterment than to leave the task to madmen and wealth-hungry frauds.¹⁰

In essence, Bainbridge’s proposal for social scientists to become religious engineers merely reiterates the technocratic concept of Saint-Simon’s „New Christianity” and Auguste Comte’s sociocracy.

Apparently, the notion of a „New Christianity“ did not die with Saint-Simon in 1825. Modern scientistic cults, whose religious engineering efforts are being increasingly augmented by the technocratic social sciences, proffer a „New Christianity“ of their own. Many scientistic cults derive their „New Christianity“ from science fiction.

⁹ William Sims Bainbridge, „New Religions, Science, and Secularization.“ in *Religion and the Social Order*, Volume 3A, 1993, pp. 277-292.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Science Fiction

William Sims Bainbridge feels the literary genre of science fiction is the most promising source for the “edifying” theology of a new galactic religion:

New cults tend not to be very creative, but draw their practices and doctrines from other groups and traditions. If they are to get galactic visions, the best source is probably science fiction. Not only does science fiction offer grand images of galactic civilizations and specific notions of how to achieve them, but it is drenched in occult and pseudoscientific ideas which might well serve people’s religious needs if packaged in new churches.¹¹

While science fiction venerates science and presents worldviews that are ostensibly secular, the genre still promotes religious concepts. Bainbridge observes the sci-fi genre’s continuing preoccupation with religion:

Religion is a common topic in science fiction, and sci-fi writers have considered it from several perspectives. In *The Gods of Mars* and in *The Master Mind of Mars*, Edgar Rice Burroughs sharply criticized religion for enslaving believers – for murdering the scientific spirit as well as offering human sacrifices. Sometimes religion has been seen more sympathetically, even though in conflict with science, as a humane corrective for the excesses of technology gone mad. Examples include „*A Canticle for Leibowitz*” by Walter M. Miller and „*The Quest for Saint Aquin*“ by Anthony Boucher. Still other stories have been essays in theology and theodicy for a scientific society, for example „*The Star*“ by Arthur C. Clarke and „*A Case of Conscience*“ by James Blish.¹²

From Bainbridge’s vantage point, science fiction provides a rich repository for the provision of socially and culturally expedient myths: “More relevant for those who might want to engineer a Church of God Galactic are stories which sketch newly invented religions, cults which might actually come into existence and if successful shape public policy toward science and technology.”¹³ Bainbridge views sci-fi myths as a potential self-fulfilling prophecy. He contends that when such stories have embedded themselves within human consciousness, they shall actuate themselves. Supposedly, the tangible enactment of this myth will result in the creation of a Church of God Galactic. This new theocratic order will preside over the emergent galactic civilization that has been the dream of futurists for years.

These “socially and culturally expedient myths”, however, are purely scientific in character. That is, they exalt the epistemological imperialism of scientism. Yet, because they present metaphysical claims (e.g., transcendence, *unio mystica*, physicalism, etc.), the

¹¹ William Sims Bainbridge, „Religions for a Galactic Civilization“.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

scientific myths of science fiction still qualify as religions. These religions are developed according to the sociological demands of those seeking to re-sculpt the dominant religious-cultural milieu. Bainbridge's religious engineers would seek to condition effectively the public mind to accept a technocratic form of governance. The same goal is being pursued by a group of progenitors of a technology-driven post-human future: the Transhumanists.

William Sims Bainbridge is one of the most influential proponents of Transhumanism, described by Katherine Hayles as an ideology which „promotes the breeding of ‘genetically enriched’ forms of ‘post-human’ beings.”¹⁴ According to Hayles, „... in this post-human [being], there are no essential differences, or absolute demarcations, between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals.”¹⁵

As Hayles makes abundantly clear, the „post-human” condition is man's transformation into a machine. This could be the intended outcome of self-directed evolution, a goal which Transhumanists share with Freemasons. As a matter of fact, the similarities between Transhumanism and Freemasonry are too numerous to be ignored. In his book *The Meaning of Masonry*, W. L. Wilmshurst provides a summation of his Craft-brothers' highest aspirations:

This – the evolution of man into superman – was always the purpose of the ancient Mysteries, and the real purpose of modern Masonry is, not the social and charitable purposes to which so much attention is paid, but the expediting of the spiritual evolution of those who aspire to perfect their own nature and transform it into a more god-like quality. And this is a definite science, a royal art, which it is possible for each of us to put into practice; whilst to join the Craft for any other purpose than to study and pursue this science is to misunderstand its meaning.¹⁶

Just like the Freemasons, Transhumanists openly express their derision for the human condition. For instance, British scientist of robotics Kevin Warwick candidly renounced his humanity: „I was born human. But this was an accident of fate – a condition merely of time and place.”¹⁷ This prompts a disturbing question. If the human condition was some sort of biological accident, then what is mankind's ultimate evolutionary destiny? Bart Kosko, a professor of electrical engineering, reveals the final destination on the evolutionary map:

¹⁴ Quoted in C. Christopher Hook, „The Techno Sapiens Are Coming.” *Christianity Today* 19 December 2003.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ W.L. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry* (New York: Gramercy, 1980) 47.

¹⁷ Quoted in C. Christopher Hook, „The Techno Sapiens Are Coming.” *Christianity Today* 19 December 2003.

„Biology is not destiny. It was never more than tendency. It was just nature’s first quick and dirty way to compute with meat. Chips are destiny.“¹⁸

Transhumanism advocates the enthronement of an elite. This new post-human elite is called the „GenRich” class. According to the Transhumanist, Lee Silver, the end of this century will witness the ascendancy of the “GenRich” elite: „All aspects of the economy, the media, the entertainment industry, and the knowledge industry [will be] controlled by members of the GenRich class ... Naturals [will] work as low-paid service providers or as laborers ...”¹⁹ In their promotional literature Transhumanists freely claim their “ability and right” to “plan and choose their own lives.”²⁰ This is their ploy to deceive the unwary. Transhumanism is totalitarian to the core. Only to a small group of “posthuman scientists” (cultural and economic elitists) is “total freedom” granted. Their goal is clear: in order to dominate humankind they want to remake creation, including man, to suit their own purpose. C. S. Lewis’s question bears asking. He wrote that “human nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man. The battle will then be won. ... But who, precisely, will have won it?”²¹ Considering all the odds, it is rather doubtful, if transhumanism will finally succeed in its stated objectives to overcome human frailty and achieve paradise on earth. As a matter of fact, viewed from a premillennial perspective, Christians know that the very opposite will happen. The Bible calls the seven year period preceding Christ’s Second Coming “the Great Tribulation”. In the Gospel of Matthew we read, for example:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. (Matth. 24:21-25)

Utopians of all shades have, in the past, embraced pursuits similar to those found in Technocracy and Transhumanism. As Jean B. Quant observes, “This secularization of the postmillennial tradition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries cut across the lines which divided theology and social science, clergymen and intellectuals.”²² Already a hundred years ago technology played a rather large role in helping to develop man’s pursuit of utopian goals.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Nick Bostrom, “The Transhumanism FAQ,” #1.1.

²¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, [1944] 2001) 76-78.

²² Jean B. Quant, “Religion and Social Thought: The Secularization of Postmillennialism” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Oct., 1973) 390-409.

Referring to the clergymen and intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Quant states that, “Technological developments were particularly significant for hastening the arrival of the new era. Man’s progress toward the kingdom [of God] had heretofore been slow because individual development and social solidarity always worked at cross-purposes.”²³ Quant suggests that the “believers in a this-worldly utopia did belong to the mainstream. And these modern postmillennialists lent to reform thought much of its optimism, its perfectionism, and its faith in the ability of brotherhood, united to the modern scientific spirit, to conquer all the evils of the world.”²⁴

A large contingent of contemporary evangelicals has embraced some aspects of the technocratic ideals of Transhumanism and is drawn by its motivations. They embrace the belief that Christians are Christ’s “on-going incarnation in the world”. Their new focus is on an earthly inheritance for the church. In concrete terms this means that Christians are called upon to usher humanity into a new stage of its existence. Through individual Christians’ labor, all the evils in society will slowly be conquered until they are no more. Only after the Kingdom of God will have been established on earth by human effort, they believe, will the Second Coming of Christ occur. The evangelicals who pursue these and similar goals are called Dominionists. They belong to a diverse conglomerate of movements, covering the entire theological spectrum of evangelicalism from the charismatic Manifested Sons of God to the neo-Puritan Reconstructionists.

Emerging from these peculiar enclaves of the religious communities is a myth that could be the „New Christianity“ of Bainbridge’s sociocratic “Church of God Galactic”. The new scientific paradigm proffers what can be called an „exotheology.“ Seraphim Rose explains:

Contemporary Protestant and Roman Catholic „theologians“ – who have become accustomed to follow wherever „science“ seems to be leading – speculate in turn in the new realm of „exotheology“ (the „theology of outer space“) concerning what nature the „extraterrestrial“ races might have (see *Time* magazine, April 24, 1978). It can hardly be denied that the myth behind science fiction has a powerful fascination even among many learned men of our day.²⁵

In his final assessment of science fiction, Rose concludes that this ostensibly „scientific and non-religious“ genre is, in truth, the „leading propagator (in a secular form) of the ‘new

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, [1975] 1996) 74.

religious consciousness”“ that is gradually supplanting biblical Christianity.²⁶ Laced with occultism and intimations of an emergent pagan spirituality, science fiction’s propagation of Technocracy could be facilitating a paradigm shift in religious thinking. Of course, an exotheology requires an exotheological Christ. Science fiction is already paving the way for a new scientific messiah.

Technocracy has infiltrated nearly every segment of western society. Instead of vigorously opposing the mythical, elitist, and totalitarian machinations of this rival religion, evangelicals, by and large, are eager to abate the encroachment of technocrats on their churchly terrain. They pride themselves on being the vanguard of a utopian future, euphemistically called the “Kingdom of God on earth”. What is missing in their thinking is the critical realization that while transhumanism aims at posthuman perfection through technology, it misses the true nature of moral “perfection” (progressive sanctification) in its rebellion against God. The transformation Christians should be seeking is not the physical or psychological enhancement found in science, reason, or technology, but rather the transforming work found only in God’s supernatural work through His Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” This is the ultimate kind of transformation; and the only kind that can be truly attained with God’s help in this world. The goal is the post-judgment attainment of perfect humanity in heaven, not the attainment of full technological perfection on earth, as a quasi-divine being (Phil. 3:20-21).

²⁶ Ibid., 77.