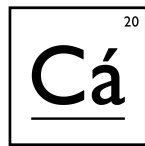




# CHRISTIANS IN BABEL



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# **CHRISTIANS IN BABEL**



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## INTRODUCTION

**T**his book calls attention to our culture's advances in science and technology. I plan to focus on the problems and threats which accompany this development, problems engendered by phenomena such as nuclear energy, nuclear weapons, computer technology, unemployment, bio-technology, genetic manipulation, environmental pollution, the depletion of natural resources and energy sources, the legalization of abortion, and the demand for world government.

Analysis of these developments and their spiritual background reveals that we no longer live in a Christian culture. There is a startling correlation between the development of science and technology on the one hand and the process of de-Christianization on the other.

To understand this correlation, we must evaluate both the development of science and technology and the spiritual forces behind this development in the light of biblical prophecy concerning the end of time. The closer we come to the day of Christ's return, the more we are able, through *faith*, to see the approaching Kingdom of God. The light of biblical prophecy shows how the development of culture will bring enormous scientific and technical accomplishments which will, ironically, bring about the decline and doom of culture.

There was a time when people spoke of our Christian culture. That term is now meaningless.

From a biblical point of view our culture can probably be identified as *Babylonian*. Here man worships various gods as he builds whatever his science and technology enable him to build.

I intend to assess this Babylonian culture and call attention to the position of Christians as *exiles* in it. The exile theme is eminently biblical. As exiles, we can have no grandiose pretensions, and yet we need never lose heart. We shall have to learn more about our *responsibility* within our current culture. Exiles yearn to return to the living God. We must reject the false deities of our society and continue to fight the good fight.

## I: CURRENTS IN FUTUROLOGY

**T**o provide a sound analysis of our current culture we will need to know more about the field of spiritual forces behind the development of science and technology.

We will start by investigating two major currents in humanistic futurology. When we compare both currents to Christian expectations of the future, we will see the problems resulting from science and technology in proper perspective.

### **Evolutionary Futurology**

Within modern futurology science has a religious function. Man entrusts his life to science and its powers. Scientific technology has become a deep source of inspiration for people anxious about the future. Contemporary man assumes an evolution process, and then applies his knowledge to eugenics to try to provide future generations with better "inner equipment." Concomitantly, modern scientific technology is seen as a means to improve man's "external equipment." In the past, evolution was thought to operate automatically, without man's intervention; today, man has begun to believe that he can direct his own and society's development.

**Controlling the future.** The process of rapid and unceasing change Western culture has known since the second world war has been frightening. We find ourselves in a headlong rush

which, if not controlled by man, threatens a dark and dangerous future.

Futurologists believe that this rapidly closing future can be rescued only if we learn to control it through the judicious use of science. Their efforts to control the future depend on technology and its scientific method. Applying the scientific methods of control to non-technological activities such as economy and politics will presumably bring them under control. Thus they see technology as the engine of cultural progress and our increasing scientific knowledge as the fuel that fires the engine. They have pinned their highest hopes on the computer in relation to the fields of systems design and cybernetics. The computer, they say, is the most potent tool to help us research, guide and control the future. Whatever problems and threats now exist—even those spawned by technology itself—could be solved by even more recent discoveries in science and technology.

Scientific method in the hands of the modern engineer has proved to be very successful in controlling matter. If this successful progress is to continue and expand, futurologists argue, the scientific method will also have to be applied to areas that are not specifically technological. This means that man, his society, and the future will have to be manipulated by the scientific method.

Modern planners think in this evolutionistic and technocratic way. Therefore, they advocate a kind of technological imperialism within the supremacy of science.

**Motive.** We know that our culture is on the wrong track when we analyze the dominant motive guiding the technocrats. That motive is

completely secularized. "We will have to be as certain about tomorrow as we were about the past," said one technocrat. The old humanist ideals of "knowledge is power" and "to know is to foresee" are highly operative. Man strives to redeem and maintain himself. Through his knowledge and capabilities, his demands and desires, he makes himself *the measure of all things*. He is determined to regain Paradise lost through his own strength. The futurologist Olaf Helmer promises that if the technological-scientific control method is applied consistently to man and his society, not only will suffering disappear altogether and wars become a thing of the past, but man will be able to luxuriate in unparalleled material prosperity.

The Christian must ask himself whether he should concern himself in a scientific way with the future. The answer is yes. Our society has become so complicated in its dynamics that it is virtually impossible to say anything about the future without resorting to scientific analysis. But the Christian should not allow scientific knowledge to become the norm. Scientific knowledge should serve to enhance, not eradicate, the Christian's responsibility.

When man's responsibility, not science, is made central, we may still expect new, positive opportunities, especially in the sense of unexpected solutions to difficult problems. However, many secularized planners seek to obtain solutions in an arrogant way, using only the tools of technocratic imperialism. They find then, to their dismay, that the solutions cannot be reached. *To succeed in our struggles concerning the future we need to reject every pretension*

*that science and technology can help us save ourselves and secure the future.*

If we fail to recognize the norms for the future, fail to see man as the created image of God, and fail to put away secular motives, evolutionary futurology will give us the opposite of whatever we seek. Man will be imprisoned by ever-expanding forces which will ultimately be united and mobilized in one single global power. That is, the future sketched by the evolutionary futurologists will be a technological society in which everyone and everything will be reduced to component parts of one large, comprehensive, totalitarian system. Within that system, a human being will be a cog, fully interchangeable and replaceable. And a technological world state will be the personification of the future's power.

Such a future will have no future. It will bring oppression and insurmountable problems, some of which have already been signaled by the Club of Rome. However, most people, united in their common materialist concerns, seem content to follow the course outlined by the technocrats. Those who resist this trend with a passion are the revolutionaries.

### **Revolutionary Futurology**

The *revolutionary* futurologists object strenuously to the static, rigid future perceived by the technocratic elite. Their guess is that such a future would serve only the self-interests of that elite; present injustice, suffering, evil and oppression, will be reinforced rather than eliminated. Moreover, they fear that nuclear war, increasing environmental pollution, and the ongoing depletion of minerals and energy resources—all

ethically unacceptable to them—will be logical, viable options for the technocrats. The technocrats take only limited measures against these problems, merely postponing them. At a later date, they will surface again in a much more acute form. According to revolutionary futurologists, this happens because technocrats subordinate history to the progress of science and technology. Their mistake means that current economic cultural forces, together with all their evils, will only be reinforced in quantum leaps.

***Revolutionary versus evolution.*** Revolutionaries agitate for revolution. To them, revolution, with its protest, conflict and action, is the eternal combustion engine of history. The fuel for this engine is utopian fantasy—which oddly enough uses science for its fulfillment. Revolutionary futurologists, most of whom are neo-Marxists, sense that the fulfillment of history and the future will be frustrated by the technical-scientific approach. They fear that man will become a prisoner of production forces; as his labor is reduced to purely productive labor, its cost to the profit system must be offset by escalating consumption. Revolutionaries therefore feel that man will become a beast of burden in the technocratic structure of society. They jump to the defense of people who are not even aware of their predicament, partly because of the mind-numbing forces exerted on them by the production-consumption syndrome and partly because of their own unlimited lust for consumption. Revolutionaries insist that the materialism which is basic to all evolutionary futurology cannot redeem man; instead, it will bring him to his doom.

From this vantage point, it seems that revolutionary futurologists and evolutionary futurologists (planners) are polar opposites. Revolutionaries refuse to rationalize the current situation and stridently oppose the main tendencies of current culture. Instead of presenting history as an evolutionary process, they emphasize the discontinuity of history, insisting that unique, innovative, and individual acts are the keys to escaping man's impending doom, the keys to liberty. Their ideal is not a planned, determined future, using the tools of science and technology; instead, they adopt a wait-and-see attitude concerning the future. The past, they argue, cannot simply be prolonged into the future by extension, and existing political and economic forces, which use science and technology as their tools may not be allowed to continue and consolidate their strength indefinitely. These forces must be dismantled and replaced by more imaginative approaches which again using science and technology can lead mankind into a truly utopian future. Their utopia will give to man a kaleidoscope of options that should ensure a free, enriched future.

Such a utopia, however, cannot remain wishful thinking. Even while the current structure of society is being dismantled, the new utopia should be taking shape. Revolution is the beginning of a developmental process in which man can once again become himself, no longer alienated from himself, as he is in a burgeoning technocracy.

**Method.** The method of the revolutionary futurologist is therefore based on a radical negation of the premises underlying past and present.



Revolutionaries resist existing social forces “the establishment”—and hope to bring them down in open conflict. Only when the establishment has been brought down will there be new potential for the future. Only then will the rule of independence, liberty and freedom have a chance. However, not even they are certain that their goal will ever be achieved. They are not particularly optimistic about the future, partly because conditions in Marxist countries show that revolution offers no guarantee of freedom. There is no guarantee that the revolution will not be channeled into a more comprehensive and technocratic dictatorship, as happened in the Soviet Union. Current revolutionaries are therefore much more radical in their perception of revolution than old-guard Marxists. Orthodox Marxists felt that a single revolution would guarantee redemption. They were wrong. Current revolutionaries think that revolution must be an ongoing, perpetual process. Thus, only when a society is in a state of perpetual revolution can the progress of science and technology be guided into avenues of freedom and peace for mankind.

To prevent suppression, exploitation and disaster, science and technology should not be placed in the hands of the establishment. The power of science should instead be placed in the service of revolutionary creativity and creative revolution in order for man to fulfill himself. The road of perpetual revolution is the road to salvation. Karl Marx’s cardinal error was to propose a single, culminative revolution. However, when that single, terminal revolution came to an end, oppressive forces again emerged in the form of

an elite which proceeded to turn man's new-found freedom into slavery. By contrast, when revolutionary destruction is perpetual, freedom—in the sense of creativity—will feed on the perpetual disorder.

I noted that current revolutionaries are far from optimistic. For one thing, the establishment seizes every opportunity to curb revolutionary forces and thus prevent fulfillment of the revolutionary, utopian ideal. Moreover, the masses see no need for a revolution, let alone a *perpetual* revolution. The masses, revolutionaries generally feel, are quite content to sleep the sleep of the dead. For this reason revolutionaries appoint themselves as the protagonists of the struggle, thereby creating a new revolutionary elite. But it was precisely their aim to do away with all forms of elitism!

### **The Spiritual-Historical Background**

For technocrats, history is absorbed into the continuity of scientific-technical progress. But, revolutionaries counter, such history yields a society of power expansion, suppression, lack of freedom and mammoth cultural catastrophes.

But do the revolutionaries really offer an "open" future? Despite their claims, they are not so sure.

And in fact, they merely *assume* that destruction of the old will produce a better "new." Moreover their faith that revolution will somehow ennoble man's ambitions cannot conceal their fear that revolution could well lead to arbitrary excesses. This makes the future of revolutionaries an unknown factor. Beneath their stridency, despair lurks.

**Conflict between the two.** A cursory reading of the two positions would suggest that they were complete opposites. And, indeed, a constant, almost antithetical battle rages between them. That conflict intensifies as the problems and catastrophes faced by Western culture intensify. To truly understand the conflict, we have to locate its origin and course in history.

Why is it that one part of Western culture has been so arrogant in its use of science and technology to support the dominant economic and political edifice, while another part, the revolutionary segment, has been so hesitant and guarded and, with respect to current technological-scientific culture, downright despairing?

**Reformation and Renaissance.** The development of science and modern technology became possible in Western culture when early modern European man gained new understandings of history, nature, the development of culture, and human freedom. Since the end of the Middle Ages, people have come to see this world as one that must be developed.

Yet there has never been any unanimity concerning how to go about this development. From the beginning, there were two spiritual movements that contrasted sharply. For example, they answered the question of origin differently. The Reformation defined man as called to freedom, yet responsible to God. Thus, his freedom meant service and stewardship. By contrast, the Renaissance saw man as autonomous and self-sufficient, a creature who could discover and support himself. The fundamental disagreement between the Reformation and the

Renaissance was not immediately clear, and so each side borrowed from the other. However, the Renaissance quickly secularized certain Christian ideas. This was especially true in philosophy and knowledge. Because philosophy and knowledge had little impact on practical day to day life, the influence of secularization began slowly. As the influence of philosophy and science on culture intensified, so did the influence of secularization. At that point the idea of human autonomy, always a central thesis in humanism, began to assume leadership throughout Western culture.

***The god of the philosophers.*** Timidly at first, but more aggressively later, philosophy posited human freedom as a right, not a gift. Western philosophers and scientists came to see man as a creature who deserved his own freedom. They attempted to found this freedom in man's autonomy, and later they tried to give scope to this autonomy in the fields of science and technology.

The first renowned philosopher of the new age, René Descartes, placed rational man at the center of the universe. Descartes' anthropocentric philosophy gradually permeated Western culture; eventually, people came to worship man's rational endeavors, especially in the fields of science and technology. This religion of man also surfaces in terms like self-interest, self-determination, self-realization and self-sufficiency.

At first the philosophers continued to talk about God, but this new god was clearly not the living God of Holy Scripture. The god of the philosophers was a god created after man's own

image. For a while this theoretic god still functioned as a necessary cause, but as man became more rationalistic and anthropocentric, the deity gradually disappeared from the scenario, leaving a thoroughly humanistic philosophy and science. Knowledge and science became the tools with which man would clear a path into the future. That path began to open when modern technology began to develop. Gradually the idea took hold that both man and the world could be brought to fulfillment through the use of science and technology. And *Christian eschatology steadily retreated in the face of technological expectations of redemption.*

When the combined efforts of science and technology began to yield material fruit in the nineteenth century, the secularized idea of progress made deep inroads among the masses. Many Christians also embraced the idea of progress, and then found themselves with an ambivalent lifestyle. Thus the Christian element of Western culture was attacked by pretensions of human autonomy and undercut, even from the inside by secularized expectations of the future.

**Apparent antithesis.** But this does not explain why evolutionary and revolutionary futurologists nearly always oppose each other. For that we must once again return to the spiritual history of the West. Both social evolutionists and social revolutionaries, proceed from the premise that man is self-sufficient, free, and autonomous, a creature who can stand on his own two feet without the help of a living God. This "free man" now pretends to be lord and master both of himself and of the world around him and, finally, of the future.

Social evolutionists, planners, and technocrats base their certainty and trust on science. They tie their idea of man's freedom to the idolization of his reason. Therefore they also deify the results of their scientific enterprise. The natural sciences are of ultimate importance to them, because the reality in which they live conforms precisely to the laws of mathematics, physics and mechanics. Everything is absorbed into the chain of cause and effect, even, in the final analysis, autonomous man. This, of course, destroys human freedom, though man also fights the destruction of his freedom.

***The Enlightenment.*** The question of man's freedom and its destruction constitutes the inner tension of the philosophy of the West. The deterministic science postulated by free reason imperils man's freedom. Sometimes the struggle in philosophical-scientific thinking between science and freedom is subdued; at other times it becomes quite fierce. Since the days of the Enlightenment that conflict has grown beyond the merely philosophical and theoretical to the cultural sphere. After all, it is in the spirit of the Enlightenment not only to know reality logically but also to order it logically. The intent may be to create, through scientific reason, a society that serves the self-realization of human freedom. However, then science becomes supreme and autonomous, and the results of science determine society's history and shape its future. Evolutionary futurologists (planners) have fallen into this trap. Under their influence, man is seriously threatened. The threat intensifies as cultural development becomes more dynamic, more complex and more obscure to the common man.

The degree to which modern man becomes ensnared in the net of scientific-technical culture determines the intensity of his struggle to liberate his freedom from the technocrats. His resistance to evolutionary futurology takes shape in his cultural activity. Through perpetual revolution, he seeks to cast off the chains of the forces of science and the yoke of massive technology. Today it is primarily the neo-Marxist revolutionaries who act as spokesmen for resistance against the ever-burgeoning technocracy. Standing squarely on the principle of the autonomy of man, they turn against an establishment that seeks to usurp and control both history and the future. This is why they plead for imagination, creativity and for the subjective historical freedom of man. They intend to redeem man's autonomous freedom through the revolutionary destruction of the existing order.

Thus, the battle between evolutionary and revolutionary futurologists is at heart a battle between two types of humanists who agree on the fundamental claim that self-sufficient man needs no God. Yet that fundamental agreement is what divides Western culture against itself.

The next chapter will show how this struggle between types of humanists will come to dominate the future of the West. Any proposed future in which man and his kingdom are central will then have to be evaluated in the light of Christian eschatology, which is the light of the future of Jesus Christ and the coming of God's Kingdom.

**Views on the Future:****Futurology versus Eschatology**

So far, I have discussed evolutionary and revolutionary futurologies. They give two extreme views of the future which are diametrically opposed to each other. I have tried to describe their forces fundamental to their operation and the tendencies that characterize these two futurologies.

What do these two futurologies mean for the future of Western culture? There are problems and dangers in both positions. We will evaluate them in terms of the Christian expectation of the future, otherwise known as eschatology. As we shall see, humanistic futurology both notices, and fails to understand "the signs" mentioned in Christian eschatology.

Evolutionary futurology defines the future in scientific terms and seeks to control history and development by the power of technology. It seems to believe that its own image of the future takes into account all the diverse possibilities for the future. Evolutionary futurologists lack the modesty to anticipate completely unknown factors. They try to integrate various contingency plans for the future into one comprehensive, universal plan. The execution of such a universal plan, however, means the increasing restriction of personal freedoms, since the execution requires a collectivization and concentration of power.

In the twentieth century, the drive to rule the world through technology has had disastrous consequences. The humanistic ideal of permanent peace, presumably attainable through science and technology, has been blown up more



than once. The ideal of universal material prosperity and progress has been realized only in the Western world, and at the expense of the rest of humanity and a battered environment. We face an alarming shortage of natural resources and energy. The idea of progress, with its belief in limitless production and consumption, has been checkmated by the limitations of creation and the finiteness of its resources. And although modern man strives to make both himself and his world more "human," he only manages to alienate himself from his fellow man and from his world.

Whenever technocrats are confronted with such problems, they go back to science and technology to try to solve them. They develop new strategies in which they retain their power to violate human freedom. Various world congresses and forums held to deal with critical problems only reenact this pattern.

This concentration and escalation of power, and the catastrophes it brings—as, for example, irreversible environmental pollution and the perils of nuclear energy—are opposed by revolutionaries, who always come to the defense of oppressed humanity. They insist on absolute freedom in an historical or cultural sense. But when they strive to give cultural form to this freedom, they, too, must utilize the powers of science, technology and modern organization. Invariably, a revolutionary elite arises.

For this reason, revolutionaries will either cross over into the camp of existing powers or will themselves mobilize a force that seems more totalitarian and dictatorial than the power they are fighting. Thus they betray their own revolu-

tionary ideas, and their revolution devours its young. The cultural tension between technological-scientific control of the future and man's attempt to escape this control keeps escalating and intensifying. To remain consistently revolutionary, the revolutionaries have to become more and more radical, resorting ultimately to violence. In the end, there will be chaos.

Technocrats control the reality of this cultural tension, and therefore enjoy an advantage over revolutionaries. They do not put their faith in man as a purely historical being, but rather, in man as a rational, scientific being, and in the technology itself—in, for example, systems analysis, cybernetics and the computer. Additionally, the masses have no alternative but to put their trust in the technocrats, and they choose to do so because their faith in the blessings of science and technology has not yet been severely shaken.

### **Man without God**

Science and technology are often blamed for the mess we are in, but I assert that this is a devastating misunderstanding. The origin of the problem is man. Man has come to see himself as the Alpha and Omega. Beyond the here and now, modern man reasons, there is nothing. The meaning of history and of life is confined to observable reality. Since access to a living God has been closed, mankind has put hope in what science and technology can make of the future. The spirit of western man has been touched by the vision of perfection and fulfillment. After all, he has learned of Paradise. But when he rejects

God's love and His revelation, Western man no longer uses his God-given freedom in his capacity as God's steward, but instead usurps it as he tries to create a utopia which reflects his own beliefs. When man divorces his power, freedom and calling from obedience to Jesus Christ, he does not relapse into paganism but instead becomes post-Christian man. With no religious trust in God, he bases his new, secular religion on science and technology, two areas whose development, ironically, were made possible because of the Christian faith.

#### **Lawlessness and Meaninglessness**

When man rejects revelation and history and exploits modern technology and its potential to unprecedented proportions, technology assumes sinister and demonic traits. When he is in control of the earth and all its treasures, modern secular man becomes tyrannical, exhausting both himself and his environment.

Moreover, as secularization intensifies and Christian resistance to the process decreases or disappears, modern secular man will become lawless and nihilistic—a figure aptly described as the man of the end of time.

Nowadays, the idea of unlimited progress is obviously in conflict with the limited potential within creation. Thus, material progress and its values have become matters of discussion. Secular man's hope for an earthly paradise seems to be arbitrary. Instead of cherishing an optimistic view of the future, people have become profoundly pessimistic. But the "answers" provided by these pessimists are also far from uniform. The house of secular humanity

is badly divided against itself.

An arbitrary, technocratic dictatorship stands diametrically opposed to a revolutionary idea of freedom which believes that every technocratic success must necessarily be destroyed. There is a nihilism fundamental to the mechanical order of the technocrats, and it stands opposed to the nihilism of revolutionary chaos. Technocrats will mobilize all their forces to create a technically streamlined society, in the hope of preventing catastrophe; meanwhile, in the name of freedom, revolutionaries seem bent on the self-destruction of culture.

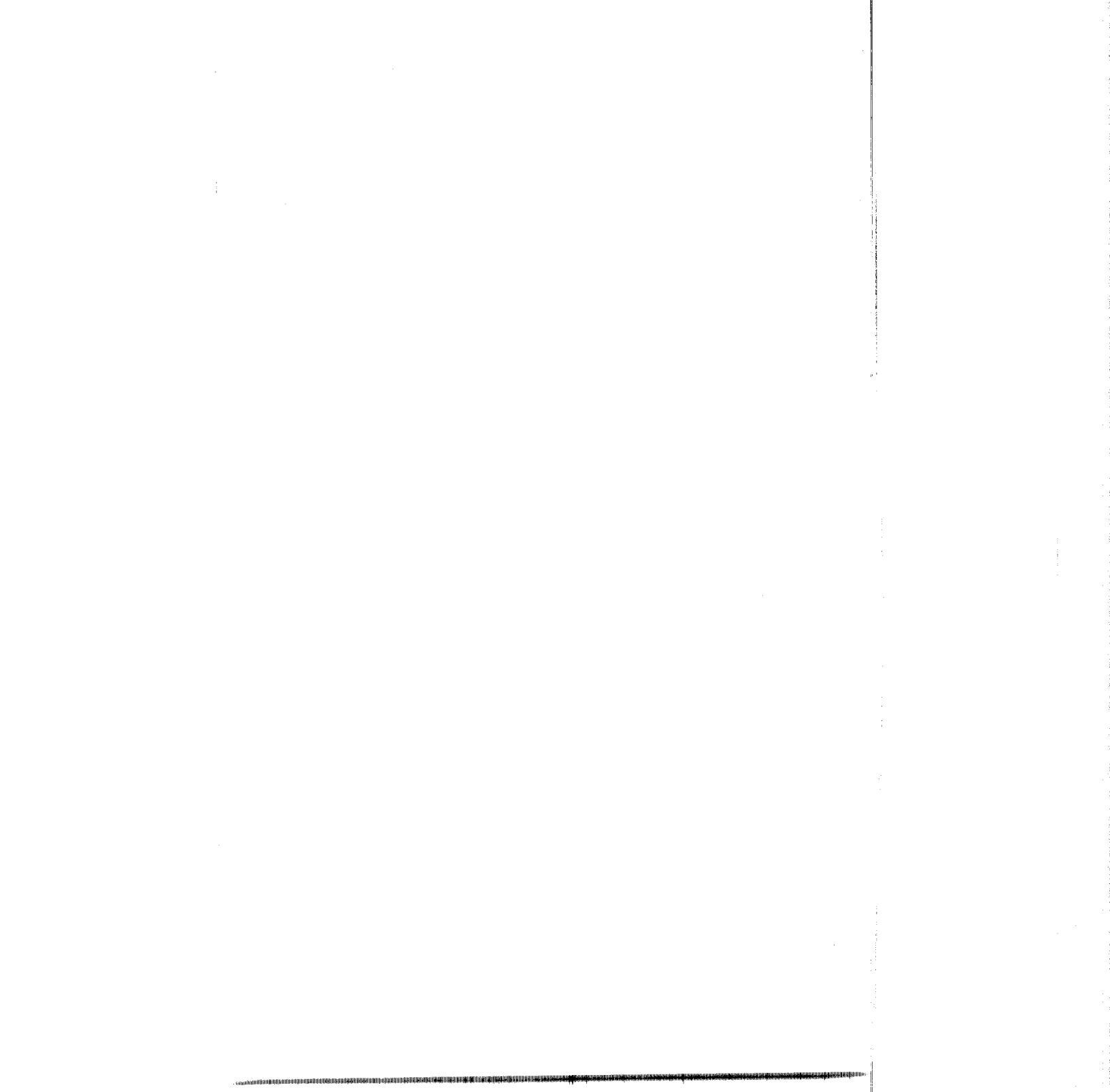
#### **Culture Heading for the End**

Unless man reverses himself radically and turns to God, the conflict and nihilism of Western culture will probably intensify while it travels down the road to cultural decay.

A culture without God always carries the seeds of decay, as so ably demonstrated by K. Schilder in his book *The Revelation of St. John and Social Life*. The forces of decay will ultimately bring its total ruin. Nevertheless, since God will not abandon even such a culture, man will come to experience the meaninglessness of a culture without Him.

The course plotted by humanists whether they be evolutionary or revolutionary, will come to a dead end. The death already evident in our culture is a sign of the expectation confessed in Christian eschatology: the return of Jesus Christ for the purpose of establishing God's Kingdom. Christian eschatology is diametrically opposed to humanist futurology. Eschatology does away with the dilemma of pessimism and optimism

because, taught by God's Word, it confesses, that God Himself, through Jesus Christ, is the Lord who constantly controls history. His decree includes both the believer and the unbeliever, and it unfolds towards the coming of His Kingdom. In his Christian faith, hope and expectation, the Christian is called to serve that Kingdom, a service that includes his scientific work and technical achievements.



## **II: MAN'S CULTURE REDUCED TO A SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL MODEL**

**B**ecause of the dominant influence science has on culture and because of the stamp modern technology puts on our culture, that culture is based, more and more, on a scientific and technological model. Once we have defined the scientific and technological model, we will have a better understanding of the background to our culture. We will do so with six points.

(1) Science keeps becoming more independent, autonomous, and self-sufficient. People are asked to accept science as the only truth, and thus to accept with religious certainty the conclusions science draws.

(2) Science is also being called on to be the main instrument of human control over the world. Man increases his power over reality by exploiting scientific means, particularly in the development of industrial technology. Many believe that modern technology is nothing more than applied science, and so culture according to a scientific model becomes culture according to a technological model. Expressed differently, scientific, rational control over nature and man's society leads to technological control of reality.

(3) This concentration on control comes from man's religious yearning to realize and liberate himself. The universal longing for liberation is directly related to the potential of science and

technology. Science and technology take a messianic role. Through science and technology, man hopes to be liberated from misery and suffering and to find material happiness.

(4) Until the modern industrial revolution, the idea of progress motivated only men of science. But once the material prosperity of the industrial revolution had become available to the masses, the masses accepted progress as an article of faith. Philosophies such as positivism, Marxism and pragmatism all contributed to the belief that modern technology would function as a liberating force.

(5) Economic and political forces have done much toward building the scientific model and the technological model. Only through these forces could large scale development have taken place. For this reason, the hidden economic and political forces should be criticized—which neo-Marxists are happy to do. However, neo-Marxist criticism does not penetrate to the root of the matter; it may lead to a change of players, but the new players will simply continue to build the scientific and technological model.

(6) Because the religious dynamic of the world is apostate, culture will become more and more secular. The deification of science and technology goes hand in hand with resistance to the Christian faith. Transcendent reality has become a myth, a projection. Rational, technological man himself, it is believed, will eventually achieve a utopia which he himself has designed and will control and subject. In this scientific-technological world, man will be lord and master, independent and sovereign. This world is a thoroughly *godless* world. All its



problems are to be solved through democracy, which can channel science and technology into truly redemptive paths.

### **Problems and Perils**

In this way of thinking, reality is robbed of its meaning. Reality is no longer creation, a richly differentiated, deeply alive entity borne up by the Word of God. Instead, man "creates" a world impelled by a technological dynamic, and then tries to accept it as the real world, though it is devoid of meaning. Modern man equates the technological world with total reality. Of course, created reality does not allow for such a reduction. All the aspects of created reality cohere in a meaningful unity. But if man denies this God-centered coherence, man's development of reality bring about his own doom. Doom may come slowly and cumulatively, but it will come.

Establishing an independent technological world is impossible. The growth of technological development is limited to the potential in created reality. Energy sources and mineral deposits are limited. Environmental problems, such as the pollution of seas and oceans and the contamination of soil, water, and air, show how current technology dangerously exploits the environment. Technology also betrays serious internal tensions around such issues as nuclear energy and biotechnology. Increasing reliance on the computer has already caused a great deal of unemployment, social dislocation, loneliness and alienation. The specific and unique functions of every person, the individual and creative responsibility of man functioning within the context of a full-orbed world of experience, are being

systematically eliminated from the technological model of reality. A culture defined as a scientific-technological unity becomes torn apart internally. Externally, it is the reflection of a cold, uniform, impersonal and homogenous abstraction.

Creating an independent scientific-technological world and letting it dominate and destroy the full-orbed world of experience brings about the problems and perils I have mentioned. The problems show that reality is one, created by God and maintained by God. The problems also show that scientific knowledge is always impelled and permeated by a pre-theoretical or supra-theoretical knowledge. The uniqueness of the Christian view is that pre-theoretical or supra-theoretical knowledge is based on faith founded in God's revelation. This enables the Christian to be both critical and appreciative of science and technology. Seen from a Christian point of view, science and technology can be meaningful only if they remain limited areas of the totality of human experience and do not become models for how all of the other aspects of life are to be organized—to their hurt.

**“World of Experience” and  
“Scientific-technological World”**

What do we mean by “our world of experience”? That world is the world in which we live, hope, suffer and struggle; it is the world in which we see things simply, in which we feel and love; it is also the world of faith and trust; in fact, faith and trust are the pivotal point of that world. This world of experience is original and primary; it cannot be fully comprehended; it is complex,

concrete, full, richly varied and profoundly inscrutable. Every human activity and its meaning—science and technology and their meaning, belong to this world. Our knowledge of this original, primary world of experience comes from being inextricably related to it and involved with it. It is an intuitive knowledge which both precedes and transcends all scientific knowledge.

The second “world” is the world of philosophy, science and the application of science. Thus it is also the world of scientific and technological control. To construct a scientific and technological model for the whole of reality, as many people do, is to subordinate the first world, the world of primary, intuitive knowledge, to the second. Then the scientific-technological world begins to dominate the everyday world of experience.

Technocrats have the illusion that science provides the only, true, complete and concrete knowledge of reality—a belief that arose during the time of the Enlightenment. However, when the abstract, sharply reduced world of science becomes the primary world, the genuine primary world of total experience is reduced to a scientific abstraction. That reduction will eventually end in destruction. The tendencies towards scientific and technological models of reality can be seen in modern urban growth, industrial policy, housing, health care, social work, the economy, politics, and defense. Fortunately, because the real world of experience refuses to disappear, technology will never be completely successful. Nevertheless, as power is concentrated within a technocratic society we become aware of the disappearance of love, which cannot possibly

flourish within the cold, uniform structures of such a society. After all, love orients itself primarily to the specific and unique. The degree of social welfare provided in a technological state cannot alter that complaint that "Nobody really cares about me." Within a technocratic culture, essential bonds of human communion are severed and replaced by artificial ones which cripple love, destroy compassion and empathy, and increase alienation and loneliness. People who suffer the agony of such a cold, impersonal world make public a host of protests and claims.

What lies behind man's drive to develop science and technology? The motive, it appears to me, is man's yearning to control reality fully through his thought and actions. Man's ambition is to control the origin, existence and destiny of all things, subjecting all things to himself. Man keeps trying to break reality down into its smallest, basic elements in order to reconstruct it according to his own power structure.

This fundamental motif was already apparent in the Fall, but it was not until after the Renaissance, during a period strongly influenced by modern humanism, that this drive was reinforced by the energy of modern natural sciences and technologies.

Protagonists of the Renaissance bade farewell to Christianity. They continued to use Christian terminology, but in a thoroughly anthropocentric (man-centered) perspective. Creation was no longer considered to be the handiwork of God, but rather man's own handiwork. The Fall, according to humanists, was not a denial of God, but rather a denial of the self. Redemption is not the restoration of communion with God through

Jesus Christ but rather the assertion that man can learn to stand on his own two feet. Belief is not reliance on God in Christ, but rather faith in oneself. And finally, the future is not whatever God places on man's path, but rather the organization of the world according to one's own insights. The spirit of the Renaissance has permeated the thinking of most modern philosophers and scientists—including the Enlightenment, modern philosophy, positivism, Marxism and materialism. The spirit of the Renaissance, featuring self-reliant and self-fulfilling man, has dominated developments in economics, politics, science and technology. Man has become the measure of all things in most sectors of culture, and science is his instrument for controlling reality.

Scientific rationalism has pushed technology to enormous proportions. At the same time, cultural development has been retarded—a sad fact which few people notice. Most people, motivated by materialism, consider non-technological matters unimportant.

Other motifs have sprung from the same root of man's pretended autonomy and self-sufficiency to bolster rationalism. Most importantly, there is the motif "technology for technology's sake." Whatever can be made, must be made, and the bigger the better. And so technical development spins beyond man's control. Man may pretend to be lord and master of technology, but he becomes, in fact, its slave. People become prisoners of their own work when they refuse to think about appropriate norms for technology. Problems of the environment, and the dangers associated with nuclear energy,

computer technology and biotechnology warn us that technology is becoming an absolute power which threatens both nature and culture. And its growth seems to be out of control.

A second principle that plays a large role in technical development holds that technology must serve economic power. Technological development becomes totally subjected to the profit motive. Other norms are paid scant attention. One of the painful results has been with widespread environmental pollution. The aberrations brought on by a society dominated solely by economic motives have brought about serious problems. The potential blessing of technology has turned into a curse. Potentially man's friend, technology has become his enemy.

We cannot blame only the philosophers, scientists, engineers and economists. Many people not directly associated with technology are also dominated by a materialistic spirit, so much so that they ascribe to technology messianic power. Blinded by insatiable yearning for material prosperity, modern man idolizes technological development as a means of obtaining ever more consumer goods and material blessings—his kind of happiness."

Thus, both inside and outside the process of scientific-technological development, we find that the current problems and perils are brought on by people who develop and build without norms. The anormativity of their production is the result of their pretension that they, not God, determine the development of science and technology.

As pointed out earlier, modern man has been tricked and trapped by the power science offers.

Science, with its abstraction and reduction, gives knowledge of only a part of reality, not of its whole. The unlimited application of science amounts to a reduction of reality. Tremendous things may be achieved, but the reduction may well lead to the eventual annihilation of reality.

If, in order to solve existing problems, technocrats turn to yet another field of science, the problems may temporarily be suspended. But they will reappear in a more menacing measure later. If all of this technology finally results in the establishment of a global technocratic dictatorship, then there will be no more room for human freedom and responsibility. Man will then become prisoner in a universal concentration camp.





### III: BABEL CULTURE

**W**e now come to the question of how best to describe the development of the scientific-technological culture. If Christians can thoroughly understand this culture, they will be better enabled to consider their own responsible involvement in it.

We are confronted with many problems and perils, including the possibility of a global nuclear war. It is becoming increasingly clear that, whether through nuclear war or through accident, a global catastrophe is not at all impossible. We will have to subject that possibility to the Word of God. We face the greatest and most pressing problems of life and death in global proportions. This is a "sign of the time."

How do we perceive that sign and what is our reaction? Perhaps Christians will have to realize that they are facing an apocalypse. Perhaps we still underestimate the potential for destruction, especially concerning nuclear warfare. The consequences of such a war would be practically indescribable. And should any future generations survive, they, too, would suffer terribly.

What kind of culture can tolerate such a threat? What should the Christian's attitude be toward it?

Such a culture can well be called a Babel culture. A Christian's responsibility in such a culture cannot be denied. The Christian must appeal to a return for a cultural life *coram Deo*, to a

responsible cultural development. At the same time, the Christian must assess his time prophetically; he must remind the people that indescribable disaster will take place unless there is repentance. Christians will need to proclaim that political solutions cannot alter the current course of our modern culture. They will maintain that beneath our current cultural morass is man's radical religious choice. Christians must assess the spirit of current culture on the basis of God's Word, and on the basis of that Word they must look for properly normed political responses to today's problems. A prophetic assessment and analysis of culture—a task to which the church has been called—will enable Christians, including those active in politics, to exercise influence in the broad developments of culture.

What does the term "Babel culture" mean? The Babel motif, dynamic self-willed ambition, harks back to man's fall into sin, and has often made itself felt since. Currently, however, this motif has reached unprecedented prominence, and for two reasons:

First, we now live in a secularized culture, which no longer concerns itself with God and His commandments.

Second, this secularized culture now has at its disposal tremendous scientific-technological power. Let us look at the combination more closely. We notice that the Babel motif manifests itself in both an integral and global fashion in our current culture; it keeps pulling science, technology, economics and politics into one massive entity. These various sectors of culture reinforce each other's strength as together they

head toward godlessness. Has this culture not been described in Revelation 13, which prophesies that the beast of political power will increase its strength toward the end of time by mobilizing the beast from the earth, the beast of the powers of science and technology? Thus science and technology, now in the service of politics, will display power, signs and deceptive miracles (compare II Thessalonians 2:10). Within such a culture, material prosperity will be interpreted and even worshiped as progress. Mankind will consciously choose for the things of this earth rather than for the things of heaven.

Development will become unprecedented overdevelopment of science, technology and economics, and overdevelopment will become exploitation. What was alleged to be progress will turn out to be regression, a kind of retrogressive development. The appearance of material prosperity and welfare materialism is a real and deceptive threat. Catastrophes in the environment, the depletion of natural resources, the exhaustion of energy sources, the increasing alienation between people, and the growing chasm between rich and poor nations show that this powerful Babel culture is threatened by impotence and decay from within. Again we see the prophetic truth of Revelation 18. Verses 11-14 make clear that the demise of the Babel culture will coincide with the end of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms as well as with the end of the world of men. Man's self-willed ambition has put culture on the road to doom. That road leads to the kingdom of man, but since man is incapable of ruling justly, it also leads to destruction and death.

As I mentioned earlier, the Babel motif comes from man's wish to regain Paradise lost through his own strength. Men try to make their own legacy on earth, to create eternal rest and the conditions for their own utopia. Cain and Nimrod were the prototypes of such men. The Babel motif recurs repeatedly in Scripture; Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Babylonia and Nineveh all showed the signs of this culture. The Bible often prophesied against these forms of self-willed ambition. Revelation 11 shows us that even Jerusalem, the chosen city of God, could become a form of Babel. This should tell us something: it is precisely in Western, post-Christian culture that man's self-willed ambition has run wild, inspired by the powers of science and technology.

Much could be said about the history of this development. But it is even more important to see what the Bible says about the religious direction of the Babel culture. I am reminded of II Thessalonians 2:1-21 and II Timothy 3:1-9. If these passages are read against the background of Romans 1:16-32, the religious direction will become clearer. Romans 1 shows us what happens in a pagan, heathen culture and it reveals to us the religious direction and commitment of non-believers. II Timothy 3 and II Thessalonians 2 describe the religious direction of neo-pagan, secularized, selfish man and the cultural impact this direction has. Romans 1 parallels II Thessalonians 2 and II Timothy 3. Looking at modern, post-Christian and even anti-Christian culture, we can say that its evils and disasters have come about precisely because of the potentials offered by science and technology. The modern forces of science and technology are

enormously threatening, and for that reason demonic. The Bible shows us why they are demonic; it is because our current culture not only rejects the revelation of God as seen in the works of His hands—as took place in the pagan culture described in Romans 1—but also rejects the revelation given in Christ. And just as the rejection of creation as revelation had disastrous consequences for the pagan world, so the current rejection of both creation and the incarnate Word has multiplied the evil. The escalation of evil is made possible by the unnormed forces of science and technology. Why? Because “they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen” (Romans 1:25; compare II Thessalonians 2:10 and 11).

In the light of this prophetic Word, we see why our culture can be called the Babel culture of the end of time. Our culture combines sin, apostasy, idolatry and lawlessness with science and technology. Therefore we contend with the dangers inherent in the lawless forces of science and technology, and with the destructive corruption of life and society. A Babel culture is always a culture of confusion. Those who see only the lawlessness in life and society while ignoring the lawlessness of science and technology will not recognize the deep spiritual force which unites the spiritual disintegration of our times. But those who take note of that deep spiritual unity, seeing also the revelation of God’s wrath on all apostasy and lawlessness, will know that God has surrendered man to decadence and blindness (Romans 1:18 and 28; II Timothy 3:9).

Through his Babel culture man tries to erect a counter creation. His efforts glitter like gold, and science and technology promise an escape from God's judgment. However, appearances are deceiving. As counter creation, Babel carries the seeds of its own destruction, and will effect its own judgment and demise.

Within the force field of science, technology, economics and politics, nuclear weapons appear. Defense policy can be understood only in the context of the forces of science, technology and economic interests. When we see the big picture, we come to see that world events are drawing man toward a vortex of evil and death. Who can escape the thought of nuclear war? Demonic powers would then be revealed in all their power (Ephesians 6:12); humankind would face the consequences of the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

## IV: CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS

**W**ithin this Babel culture which seems hell-bent for destruction, Christians must learn to see that the armor of God equips them to fight against dominions and powers, against world forces of darkness and evil spirits (Ephesians 6:12ff).

Christians may not allow themselves to be lured onto the road of counter-creation. Instead, they must follow the way of renewal. We are on the way to the new Jerusalem, and we must be pulled back to it continually. Removing ourselves from the Babel motif and speaking against it will put the Christian into a position of sojourner and crossbearer. He will be the kind of witness found in Revelation 11. His witness is a prophecy even as it is an admonition to return to God's norms, which teach and allow true freedom and responsibility.

We cannot, in good faith, avoid the world. The Babel culture is a perversion of the Kingdom of God, a perversion which feeds off the forces of God's Kingdom. The Bible calls this culture the culture of darkness, and yet this darkness cannot extinguish the light that has burst upon this world with the coming of Christ (John 1:5). Through the coming of the Kingdom of God the Babel culture will be judged. The perspective of renewal, signified by Christ's glorification, is the perspective of responsible thought and action.

If the man of science, technology, economics

and politics would again choose a responsible, normative course, science and technology would no longer be threatening forces. They would present fascinating possibilities for researching and disclosing the secrets of creation. To such discovery and unfolding there would be no end. By contrast, the way of the kingdom of man always threatens an end, for it threatens humankind with its destructive and demonic developments.

If man were once again to discover the way of normativity in science, technology, economics and politics, or in other words, to seek the Kingdom of God responsibly, his efforts would generate many problems. The right way of following God's commandments would be problematic simply because so many cultural structures are presently locked into the perspective of the kingdom of man. We have to take this obstacle into account when we seek to pursue our Christian perspective on culture. We would first have to recognize the existing situation and find ways of dealing with it. And we would always be tempted toward accommodating ourselves, such being the nature and power of the Babel culture. Christians find it more and more difficult to live in that Babel culture and yet not be a part of it. To choose responsibility *coram Deo* means resisting the powerful forces of human ambition and will. Responsibility also means rejecting revolution. Revolutionary changes cannot provide solutions for existing states of lawlessness, for they themselves own no law. Christians face the enormous task of beginning with the existing, decadent situation and trying to renew it, using the norms given by God.



If Christians had more insight into what was really going on in the world they would be misled less easily by the world's motive. An understanding of the world should be the basis for their apologetics, especially when they attempt principled action in cultural activities. In our present culture which is tending toward nihilism, it seems that Christians are all too willing to choose either for technocracy or revolution. We often see young Christians take one standpoint, and then exchange it for a completely opposite point of view. There are always convincing arguments on both sides. The winning point of view is then modified and accommodated before it is passed off as Christian. Through such vacillation and compromise, Christian political thought and action in Western European countries has all but lost its central dynamic. And why has this happened? Because Christians have failed to recognize the spiritual conflict inherent in the cultural motifs which determine contemporary development.

In the past, the weapons of apologetics have defended the Christian faith against the spiritual force of paganism. A similar defense should now be set up against neo-paganism, the modern spiritual force and hallmark of secular culture. Such an apologetic would eagerly confront philosophies, ideologies and thought systems which, as false revelations, wielded tremendous apostate religious power.

A Christian apologetic should give a united and biblically responsible, biblically normed vision of man, culture and history. Such an apologetic would help Christians test the spirits and would enable the church to remind its

members of the privilege of having the Kingdom way of life open to them despite all the anguish and problems that arise from their culture's way of death.

### **Developing Ethical Awareness**

We have dealt with the problems of scientific life and technological culture, pointing out that these problems are signs of man's self-willed ambition to form culture. Escape from this road to death is possible only if one chooses a different road. And we maintain that it is the church's prophetic task to point out the better road.

However, because of the church's rightful limitations, it cannot solve the technological crisis. To this task, there are called Christians, either as individuals or in groups. The church's task is to *warn* against wrong motives. The right way can be traveled only if we allow ourselves to be led by biblical wisdom which, while ancient, always remains new and relevant.

In the biblical dynamic, man is not the center of reality; he is not a totally self-willed ambitious creature. Scripture shows how man is created according to God's image, and thus emphasizes man's responsibility. As a responsible creature, man is to love God above all else and his neighbor as himself. Practical political results of such love would mean that man gives up his lust for power and seeks to promote justice and righteousness. For the economy, love means that man is no longer driven by an absolutized profit motive but instead exercises responsible stewardship. For science, love means that knowledge is no longer raw power, but that it serves the interest of wisdom. We must come to

see that science and technology can be humanity's helpful servants, rather than our tyrannical masters.

We need not deny the great significance of science or technology; however, we should resist the belief in man's self-willed independence that has become part and parcel of science and technology. Through man's apostate faith the development of science and technology have come to determine the course of our cultures; actually their function should be limited to being the roads which lead towards building culture. Both science and technology need to be subjected to responsible thought and action.

We can better understand the service science and technology should provide for culture when we return to the original motif. The Bible teaches us that man is permitted to build upon creation, but only with the intention of preserving creation. Only to preserve creation without developing culture leaves fallen man in the grip of natural forces. On the other hand, to build without thought of preservation is arrogant. Ignoring judicious and discreet preservation will eventually turn into a situation in which natural perils are replaced by cultural perils; menacing technological forces will threaten to bring about total ruin.

Within the context of this harmonious calling both to build and to preserve, man sees himself as the image of God. In both building and preserving, he confirms his love towards his Creator and Redeemer. He will then treat creation with the concern and respect it deserves. Responsible humanity recognizes the need both to develop creation and to resist every form of distortion and

chaos. If man allows himself to be empowered by scriptural norms, his cultural endeavor can be a blessing even for the realm of nature. Such was the case in the days of King Solomon (I Kings 4:33, 34); such can also now be the case if we allow our economics, politics, science and technology to become a harmonious action of building and preserving or, put differently, if they become part of our search for the Kingdom of God.

Admittedly, achieving harmonious interaction between building and preserving is not easy. Many people will strongly resist biblical direction. Even after rejecting the idols of science and technology, many people turn to other idols, such as the idol of revolutionary freedom or the idol of nature. Others try to design a modified strategy for science and technology but continue to rely on a closed view of the world and life which still excludes God.

But God does not permit Himself to be excluded, and so He permits cultural developments within this closed world to run haywire. We recognize His judgment here, and yet at the same time hear His call to return to Him and follow His norms. This gives us hope. The horizon of our hope is the horizon of the Kingdom of God, which will be the fulfillment, reconciliation and renewal of the entire creation. With this perspective, we do not need to consider ourselves sojourners or spectators in the world, but rather citizens of a Kingdom that has once come with Christ and will come again. We belong in this world, even though we are exiles in a Babel culture!

Exiles, while not builders of the hostile culture, are also not its slaves. Their relationship to that

culture is one of tension. God's love demands that we reject such a culture, but it also demands that we address that culture in love. Thus, a Christian cannot avoid his cultural environment. On the other hand, a Christian cannot expect to see too much fruit come of his Christian mandate within such a hostile culture. For the biblical motif, which features living and working out of God's love and grace, is diametrically opposed to the motif of the Babel culture. The Bible rejects unequivocally man's pretension that, with the use of science and technology, he can build a counter-creation to which he himself can give meaning.

Scripture calls us to live and work with a recognition of creation order, and with the confession that only Christ can give meaning and the expectation of renewal. In Christ the Kingdom of God has already been given to us and will, upon His return, be given to us in its recreated dimensions. This is the true view of history. Nor can this perspective be in any way altered by the pretensions of our Babel culture. The biblical perspective, it seems to me, also gives the resources with which to counter our culture's reduction of the meaning of science and technology, for it addresses our attention to the rich and inexhaustible meaning of science and technology. Our Babel culture has reduced science to a caricature of its true self. As exiles we can witness to its genuine and full meaning by focusing on its original meaning and normativity. This concerns global issues of our time such as nuclear armament, biotechnology, computer technology and energy problems, but also the more personal problems such as abortion,

crime, the dissolution of marriage and the family and the increasing decadence of our society, problems having personal roots but which have come to assume huge proportions. Living in the midst of all these perversions and dislocations, Christians must carry themselves responsibly, which means being of service and at the same time witnessing to the values that society must honor. For this reason, the personal cultural endeavors should not be forgotten, for it is in those areas that cultural reformation must begin. We often think in global dimensions and analyze our culture as part of a global culture, but the smaller cultural endeavors is where we must begin. Science and technology can assist us in our endeavors, but we must always be mindful that they are potentially subversive forces that could, if not used properly, once again imprison us.

In this regard it would be helpful to say a few things about politics, which is where people usually seek solutions. Christians should first pursue a different course, beginning with questions about spiritual and historical background matters. Given the religious background of a problem, they will then have to articulate an ethical position before they can proceed to looking for responsible political solutions. To begin and end with politics is a superficial approach whose efficacy will never be more than superficial. I could mention in this connection the current political discussions concerning nuclear weapons, one of the global issues, and, as an example of the more personal issues, the discussions about legalization of abortion.

I suspect that many Christians will consider

my approach impractical. Nevertheless, I maintain that accepting responsibility and normativity allows a great variety of possibilities and benefits, and also a stable course. The course of our current Babel culture may appear to be a road to freedom, but man will eventually find himself to be a prisoner of his own misdirection, on a course that offers no future, only fear.

Those who keep in touch only with factual developments run the risk of always accommodating themselves to those developments. By contrast, those who orient themselves to the perspective of the Kingdom of God, given to man in grace, do more than keep up with the facts. They will resist the spirit of godless development, and will also accept their own responsibilities to pursue a biblically normed approach. The Bible gives us the examples of Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, and the examples of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are also encouraging and hopeful.

At the end of these chapters, I conclude that we should first of all learn not to see the Kingdom of God as the final goal of history and of our cultural endeavors. We must constantly remind ourselves that the Kingdom of God is a gift that has been given, is also truly given now, and, finally, will be given to us again in the future. The final renewal will show us the real meaning of our cultural endeavors. Then even Babylon will become Jerusalem. This divine mystery, given to us throughout history, cannot be comprehended, yet it is a life-giving dynamic deserving our respect, devotion, gratitude and sense of responsibility.

A normative view of life in culture which rejects both frenzied expectations of culture and outright avoidance of it is most accurately described by the prophet Jeremiah in his letter to the Babylonian exiles, in words that are serene, yet filled with expectations:

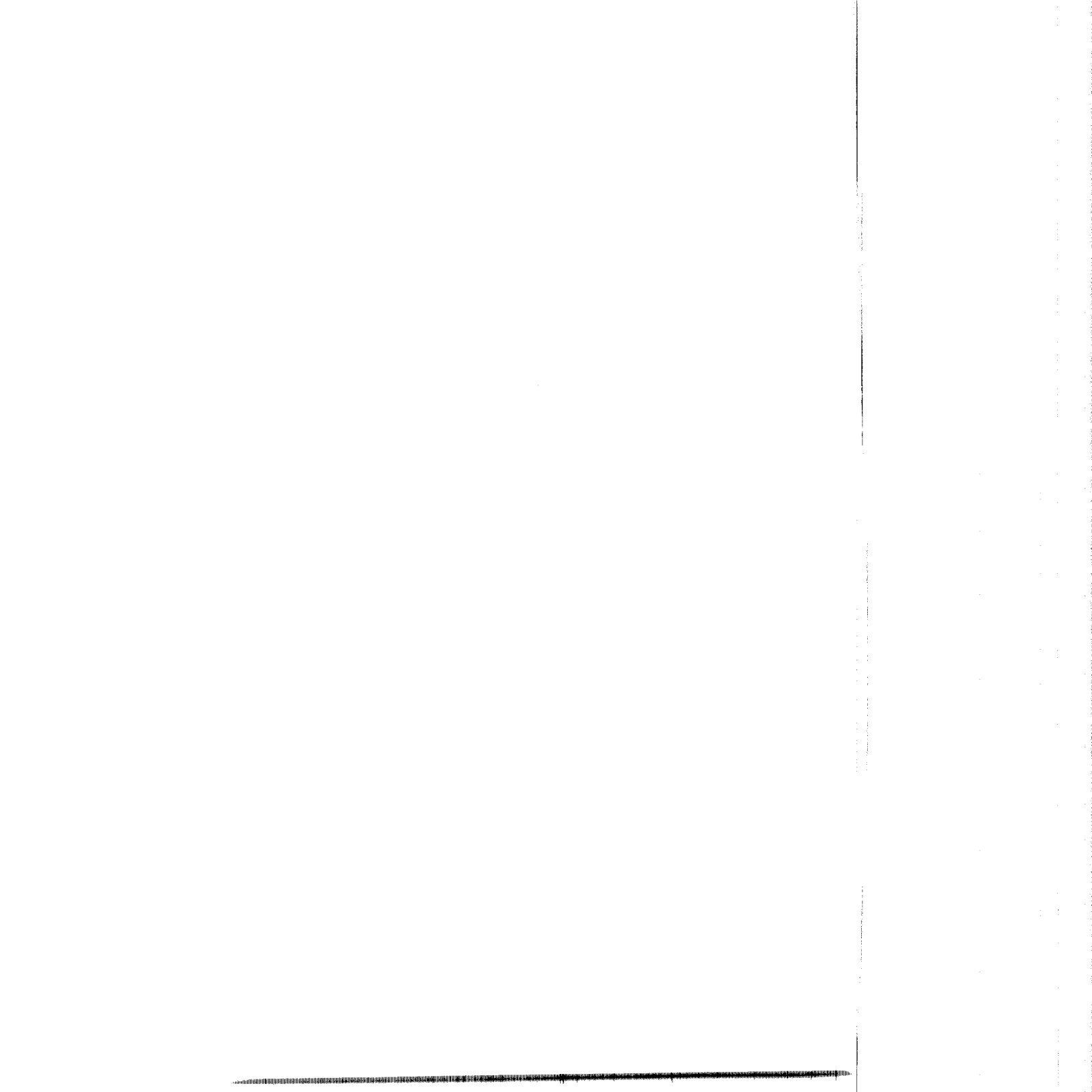
This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (29:4-7);

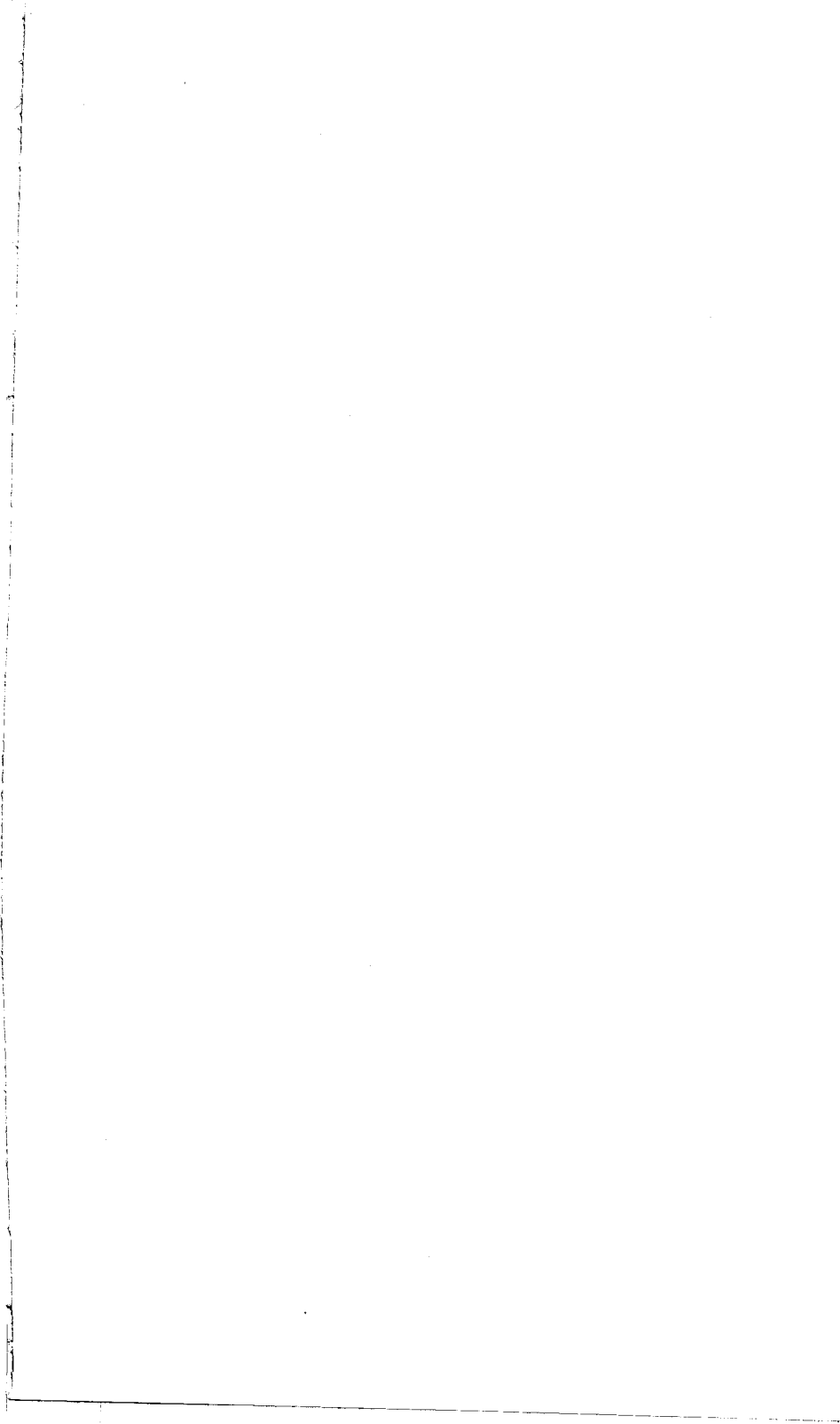
and:

". . . For I know the plans I have made for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future . . ." (29:11).









**CHRISTIANS  
IN BABEL**