

Forcing Change



Transhumanism and Mormonism: *Encounters in Salt Lake City*

By Carl Teichrib (www.forcingchange.org)

"The real challenge remains that we do possess the technical means of doing almost anything we have a mind to, short of making angels of men."

- Herbert J. Muller, *The Children of Frankenstein*.¹

Sometimes doors open that are wholly unexpected.

This was the case last May when Lincoln Cannon, the president of the Mormon Transhumanist Association (MTA), contacted myself by email. Would I be willing to attend the 2013 MTA conference and present a "Christian critique" of "Christian transhumanism"?



Index:

Transhumanism, p.1.

Second Life, p.3.

Postman Quotes, p.5.

Gods and More Gods, p.7.

Christian Critique, p.14.

Purpose MTA, p.18



Carl Teichrib, Editor.

I was surprised by the request, but thankful for the opportunity, and appreciative that the MTA would consider bringing a critic to the table. This was an open door, and I agreed to participate. So how did this happen?

In 2010 I attended the MTA *Transhumanism and Spirituality* conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, and thereafter wrote an essay critical of the movement - both in the general sense and with what transpired at the event (see "The Rise of Techno-Gods," *Forcing Change*, October 2010). This led to emails and blog comments between members of the MTA and myself, and on one occasion when I gave a presentation on transhumanism to a Christian conference that was subsequently posted on YouTube, Lincoln responded with helpful criticism. Obviously there was a connection before receiving the invitation. Nevertheless, it was unexpected.

For those *Forcing Change* readers who are unaware of transhumanism and the Mormon connection, a few words of explanation are in order.

Trans... what?

The modern idea of transhumanism is linked to the forecasted impact of technology and science upon individuals and society, and the capacity for this to transform what it means to be human. To that end, the technical developments that drive transhumanism are many; the expanding potential of genetic sciences, nano-technology, artificial intelligence and robotics, the morphing of machines with humans and the advancement of implantable devices, the creation of virtual worlds and immersive simulated cyber-environments, and brain-computer interfacing.

Indeed, it has been argued that we are *presently* in the "Transhuman Age," as computers have become personal communication devices - powerful mediums for social change - and as mechanical and technical augmentation is forcing us to re-think human limits, as was the case when double amputee Oscar Pistorius competed in the regular 2012 Summer Olympics by using "Flex-Foot" artificial limbs. Genetics too is moving us down new paths, to the point where ethical questions swirl around the issues of creating "designer babies," the legal ownership of a person's genetics, and how far is too far when it comes to human *transgenics*.

Your membership keeps the research going!

Benefits of a Forcing Change Membership

- Access to every issue of *Forcing Change*, our fully documented monthly publication.
- Membership-only admittance to source documents.
- Access to special reports such as *The Power Puzzle: A Compilation of Documents on Global Governance*.
- Access to media files, reading lists, audio features, & more!

Your membership helps fund the research and expenses incurred in producing each issue of *Forcing Change*. *Thank you!*

Or consider brain-computer interfacing (BCI), a working technology that allows you to tether your mind to a computer and operate software or robotic devices “hands free.” Today, BCI is finding a valuable place in medical research, particularly with people who have spinal cord injuries. Electronic gamers are also looking to BCI and its potential to elevate the player’s experience to a new level of realism; watch in the next few years as “neuro-gaming” starts to go mainstream, for the technology is poised to move from bulky headsets and primitive actions to wireless head-pieces and complex movements. And for those who presently enter into virtual worlds like Second Life, a cyber-environment where you interact in a “physical” digital landscape, BCI technology will blur the distinction between “real life” and the “virtual self.”

Does all of the above sound like science fiction? When you consider this is just the tip of the iceberg, and that the technologies listed above are real and burgeoning, it’s not hard to see how the idea of transhumanism is gaining ground.



- Second Life -

The virtual world of Second Life (SL) has been in operation since 2003. Here, you control an alternate of yourself - an avatar - in a 3D “physical” cyber environment, moving and interacting in real-time with other avatars in a myriad of landscapes called “regions.” Each region is a 16 acre parcel where users build homes, shops and stores (SL has its own economy and currency), parks, galleries, churches and “sacred spaces,” school settings (a number of universities have campuses in SL), fantasy locations... the list is endless, including “adult” islands. Over 20,000 regions exist.

Today there are more than 20 million registered Second Life accounts, but only 600,000 who are active, with 50,000 people participating at any given time.

For myself, I’ve been an active user since 2009 - occasionally checking out different churches, partaking in discussion groups, sitting in university seminars and live-streamed lectures, interacting with users in public settings, and attending conferences. In fact, the picture of the man sitting and reclining (below right) is myself as an avatar while attending a transhumanism conference at the Terasem SL theater. All the others you see around me are connected to a user behind a computer in another part of the world, interacting at the same time in the same “virtual” space.

Yes, we are living in very strange times.

But Second Life isn’t the only platform; InWorldz, Kitley, and OS Grid (part of OpenSim) are other examples of open virtual environments. Massive multiplayer online games like World of Warcraft (WoW) also fit the description of a “virtual world,” however, WoW is a dedicated game with game-based objectives. The others are not.

General interest in SL has dropped in the last few years, due in part to the business side of its corporate owner, Linden Labs. Nevertheless, Second Life has proven itself as a working platform, “a seed,” if you will, for the next level of virtual reality.



Although techno-wonders proliferate, transhumanism isn't about "gadgets" *per se*. Rather, it's an intellectual movement recognizing that science and technology are integrating with humanity in unprecedented ways, and that we can now see the potential to reshape Mankind at the social and even biological levels - to "take evolution in hand" and redesign humanity in *our* image. Pitfalls, challenges, risks and opportunities are acknowledged and explored in conferences, research papers, and university settings. Furthermore, it's a broad movement with diverse people and different approaches. Over the years I've talked to "techno-utopians" who are enamored with the possibilities of a "post-human" paradise, and with techno-dystopians who envision a future where smart machines make humans obsolete. From dreamers and visionaries to computer engineers and genetic researchers, the transhumanist movement is an eclectic intellectual breeding ground.

At the same time, "transhumanist" applications are as wide as can be imagined, each purporting to create a *better world*, however this is defined. For example, transhumanism can encompass those who seek positive medical breakthroughs to enhance human life and grant longevity - to cure diseases, and slow or stop the effects of aging. For some connected to the defense industry it's about engineering super-soldiers for "battle space dominance." Others see it as a way to improve the existing human condition; to enable greater connectivity within a global society, or to genetically tailor desirable physical traits - to "live long and prosper." For some it's about ridding the world of "human weeds" and the planetary "human cancer," to replace mankind with "something better for the planet." And for those involved in the social sciences, it can be about the "plasticity" of human development, something Vance Packard warned about decades ago in his book, *The People Shapers*.

"What emerges is a pervading assumption that humans are creatures of almost limitless plasticity. People are raw material that needs perfecting, modifying, or at least improving, either for their own good or to suit the wishes of others. Malleable people are more likely to be controllable people."²

The "transhuman quest" opens a full range of possibilities, from the beneficial to the barbaric. Some ideas will likely remain in the realm of speculative philosophy and theory. Others will find expression in industry, the health-care community, the marketplace, and more ominously the "battle-space." Still other technical advances present dangerous possibilities for "social engineering." The warning of yesterdays critics - Vance Packard and Neil Postman - come to mind, and more recently the concerns expressed by the "father of virtual reality," Jaron Lanier.

"It is impossible to work with information technology without also engaging in social engineering..."

...Online culture is filled to the brim with rhetoric about what the true path to a better world ought to be, and these days it's strongly biased toward an antihuman way of thinking."³

Whichever road transhumanism takes - and to some extent it's taking them all - and however it succeeds or fails, there's no doubt our world is on the cusp of unprecedented changes. For some, the idea of molding humanity into our own image is enticing. As the World Transhumanist Association (now Humanity +) stated in 2003, "Transhumanists reject the idea that human beings should refrain from playing God."⁴ For others it's about more than that: It's about "becoming God."

Playing God - Becoming God

"God talk" is rife within the transhumanist community, and has been for some time.

Two early proponents of transhumanism were Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Julian Huxley. Chardin was a Catholic mystic who wrote in the early 1950's about a coming "trans-human" and "ultra-human" tipping point. This he considered to be the cumulative "natural evolution" of humanity, where Man's upward spiritual, social, and technical development would *psychically* unify humanity and bring convergence with the "Cosmic Christ."⁵

The noted humanist and evolutionist, Julian Huxley (also remembered for his role as director of UNESCO, founding member of the World Wildlife Fund and president of the British Eugenics Society), considered the need for a "new belief" which would recognize Man's role as "managing director... of evolution." Tasked with the job of bringing the universe into a "cosmic self-awareness," and girded with science, technology, and the "techniques of spiritual development," this new transcendent belief system - he wrote in *New Bottles for New Wine* - would be "transhumanism."⁶

Huxley said;

"I believe in transhumanism'; once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence..."⁷

Later Huxley would write of the need for science and religion to merge, creating a "new organ for dealing with destiny, a new system of religious beliefs... to inspire change."⁸ Implied is that a new "god" would also be inspired, for as he explained; "religions, like sciences or philosophies, are creations of man, and gods are products of the human mind..."⁹

Jumping to 1994, Kevin Kelly, founder of *Wired Magazine*, ventured into "god-talk" in his book on "transhumanism," *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization*. In it, he asserted that Mankind was taking on a God-like

Postman on Technology and Social Change



Neil Postman was a social critic, professor, and author. Here is a short selection of quotes from his book, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (Vintage Books, 1992). Page numbers are given at the end of each selection.

"...technology imperiously commandeers out most important terminology. It redefines 'freedom,' 'truth,' 'intelligence,' 'fact,' 'wisdom,' 'memory,' 'history' - all the words we live by. And it does not pause to tell us. And we do not pause to ask." (pp.8-9).

"...to whom will the technology give greater power and freedom? And whose power and freedom will be reduced by it?" (p.11).

"New technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think about. They alter the character of our symbols: the things we think with. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which thoughts develop." (p.20).

"Technopoly is a state of culture. It is also a state of mind. It consists in the deification of technology, which means that the culture seeks its authorization in technology, finds its satisfaction in technology, and takes its orders from technology. This requires the development of a new kind of social order, and of necessity leads to the rapid dissolution of much that is associated with traditional beliefs." (p.71).

"The elevation of one god requires the demotion of another. 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' applies as well to a technological divinity as any other." (p.165).

role by creating machines and computers that would eventually be sentient; to be conscious, creative, and perceptive. He also emphasized the idea of “playing God” in the context of simulated virtual worlds; “Stripped of all secondary motives, all addictions are one: to make a world of our own. I can’t imagine anything more addictive than being a god... Godhood is irresistible.”¹⁰

But Kelly’s “god” is also willing to “let go” of his creation, to allow the creature to rise as a creator in its own rite.

“...as we unleash living forces into our created machines, we lose control of them. They acquire wilderness and some of the surprises that the wild entails. This, then, is the dilemma all gods must accept: that they can no longer be completely sovereign over their first creations.

The world of the made will soon be like the world of the born: autonomous, adaptable, and creative but, consequently, out of our control. I think that’s a great bargain.”¹¹

More recently, Ben Goertzel, a transhuman and Cosmist thinker, wrote about the God question in his 2010 book, *A Cosmist Manifesto*. Note: Cosmism is a philosophy advocated by Nikolai Fyodorov, a Russian philosopher who died in 1903. It combines Eastern and Western forms of philosophy, evolution, strands from Russian Orthodoxy, and transhuman futurism - that Man will be able to achieve immortality through scientific methods. Goertzel tells us,

“Whether or not transhuman minds now exist in the universe, or have ever existed in the universe in the past, current evidence suggests it will be possible to create them - in effect to build ‘gods.’ As well as building gods, it may be possible to become ‘gods.’ But this raises deep questions regarding how much, or how fast, a human mind can evolve...”¹²

The Mormon Transhumanist Association also speaks about “God.” In fact, the issue of God is front-and-center of the organization’s existence, as explained by Lincoln Cannon in his opening speech at the 2013 MTA conference (the text of his speech is on page 18),

“The Mormon Transhumanist Association stands for the proposition that we should learn to become Gods, and not just any kind of God, not the God that would raise itself above others, but rather the God that would raise each other together. We should learn to become Christs, saviors for each other, consolers and healers, as exemplified and invited by Jesus.”

This quest for a collective God fits with Mormon teachings. Joseph Smith, the founder of the religion, held that God was only an exalted man, and that we too could become Gods.

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!... I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and suppose that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see... he was once a man like us... Here, then, is eternal life - to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exalta-

tion to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead... To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a god, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before.”¹³

In the Mormon construct - the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) - God the Father is an advanced human being; “God himself, the Father of us all, is a glorified, exalted, immortal, resurrected Man!”¹⁴

Doctrine and Covenants, another claimed revelation of Joseph Smith, puts this within a biological context, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s...” (D&C 130:22). And in the *Pearl of Great Price*, a further selection of writings from Joseph Smith, we find that Abraham “talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another.”¹⁵

Parley P. Pratt, the “Apostle Paul of Mormonism,”¹⁶ gives us some added detail. Pratt tells us that in “the great family of man, comprising the inhabitants of unnumbered millions of worlds,” there are five progressive stages of development, with the top order in the “family of man” be-

Gods and More Gods

Mormonism is not the only path to “becoming God.” In this text box I’ve included quotable examples from two esoteric fields, each claiming some form of “works” or “special knowledge” as the key to perfection and Godhood.

Contrast this to Biblical Christianity, which explicitly states that Man’s fall was in direct relation to the lie that we could become “as God” (Genesis 3). The Bible also informs us that there is only one True God (Isaiah 44:8), and that Mankind cannot save himself through works (or rituals or obligations). Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Freemasonry:

“From grade to grade the candidate is being led from an old to an entirely new quality of life. He begins his Masonic career as the natural man; he ends it by becoming through its discipline, a regenerated perfected man. To attain this transmutation, this metamorphosis of himself, he is taught first to purify and subdue his sensual nature; then to purify and develop his mental nature; and finally, by utter surrender of his old life and losing his soul to save it, he rises from the dead a Master, a just man made perfect...”

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 purpose 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...” - W.L. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry* (Gramercy Books, 1922/1980), p.47.

“Man is a god in the making, and as in the mystic myths of Egypt, on the potter’s wheel he is being molded. When his light shines out to lift and preserve all things, he receives the triple crown of godhood, and joins that throng of Master Masons...” - Manly P. Hall, *The Lost Key of Freemasonry* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1951), p.92.

Continued on page 8.

Gods and More Gods *continued.***Freemasonry** *continued:*

“It is far more important that men should strive to become Christs than that they should believe that Jesus was Christ. If the Christ- state can be attained by but one human being during the whole evolution of the race, then the evolution of man is a farce and human perfection an impossibility... Jesus is no less Divine because all men may reach the same Divine perfection.” - J.D. Buck, *Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity* (Regan Publishing Company, 1925), p.62.

Theosophy:

“Theosophy teaches that humans are God in person and a ‘god’ in the making.” - Theosophical Society in Atlanta (www.theosophicalatlanta.org).

“Man is not to be compelled; he is to be free. He is not a slave, but a God in the making...” - Annie Besant, *Esoteric Christianity* (Quest/Theosophical Classics, 1966), p.220.

“For man’s supreme aim should be to become God, and God is love... We become one with the Supreme most surely when we lose ourselves in work for Humanity.” - William Q. Judge, *Theosophical Articles* (The Theosophy Company, 1980), pp.385,388.

“They [Perfected Men] tell us with one accord that no long time ago They stood where we stand now. They have risen out of the ranks of ordinary humanity, and They have told us that we in time to come shall be as They are now, and that the whole system is a graded evolution of life extending up and up, further than we can follow it, even unto the Godhead Itself.” - C.W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (The Theosophical Press, 1925), pp.11-12.

ing that of the Gods, “composed of personal spirits, who inhabit tabernacles of immortal flesh and bones in their most refined state...”¹⁷ More than that, there is an administrative order in the heavenly family of God-men; “All these are Gods, or sons of God; they are Kings, Princes, Priests and Nobles of Eternity. But over them all there is a Presidency or Grand Head, who is the Father of all.”¹⁸

The point is this: Father God is just a man in the Mormon cosmology - one who is now the highest head of other Gods - but a man nonetheless. Therefore becoming a God is not only possible, but the implied goal of the LDS believer. But something else needs to be considered, for if God is an exalted human being, then “he” must operate under the same rules of science and the laws of nature as other men. In fact, he must be bound by them. Parley P. Pratt recognized this in his book, *Key to the Science of Theology*,

“Each of these Gods, including Jesus Christ and His Father, being in possession of not merely organized spirit, but a glorious immortal body of flesh and bones, is subject to the laws which govern, out of necessity, even the most refined order of physical existence.”¹⁹

Mormonism thus becomes a type of naturalistic theology where the LDS God acts as a master engineer - what Freemasonry calls “The Great Architect of the Universe” - manipulating al-

ready existing matter to a “perfected order.” In fact, the concept of “spirit” is transformed in this thinking, as *Doctrine and Covenants* 131:7 states, “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes.”

The humanized Mormon God could not, therefore, engage in *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing), as that would require a *different kind of God*, one who could “speak” matter into existence (Genesis 1) - a Creator beyond space and time - a transcendent spirit not bound by physical constraints (the uncaused cause).

An interesting consideration emerges. As the Mormon version of God is an exalted man who operates in and is bound to physical matter, “full salvation” or exaltation requires a naturalistic or humanistic mechanism: good works and obligations. Exaltation, to be raised up a god, is therefore enmeshed in the acts of humanity - first, through the flesh-and-blood “God” sitting in heaven, and second, by the works of those who strive in the LDS.

Indeed, good works, church requirements, and the propagation of the family are the vehicles through which exaltation in the LDS is attained - that is, to pass beyond the resurrection of the dead, enter into the “celestial kingdom,” and then advance to the state of God or “full salvation.” The *Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 25:23 provides one example of the importance of good works; “for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do.*” (italics added)

Those who know the New Testament book of Ephesians will recognize the linguist similarity, “it is by grace that we are saved.” Yet the twist from the New Testament meaning is colossal. Consider the full words of Ephesians 2:8-9, **“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Works in Biblical Christianity does come into play. Ephesians goes on to say that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works.” In other words, “good works” is a result of our salvation, not a joint cause of it - for if salvation required our works, then the “finished work” of Jesus Christ on the cross (John 19:30, Hebrews 10) *is incomplete*. Here, Jesus Christ is either true - the finisher of our faith, with nothing more required - or He is a liar.

Bruce McConkie, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the LDS, presents a brief overview of what’s required to be saved as a Mormon. Here he explains the three levels of “salvation” - the “three heavens or degrees” (D&C 131:1) - and what it takes to “make it.”

“1. Unconditional or general salvation, that which comes by grace alone without obedience to gospel law, consisting in the mere fact of being resurrected. In this sense salvation is synonymous with immortality... This kind of salvation eventually will come to all mankind, excepting only the sons of perdition...”

2. Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by grace coupled with gospel obedience, consists in receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God. This kind of salvation follows faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Spirit, and continued righteousness to the end of one’s mortal probation...

3. Salvation in its true and full meaning is synonymous with exaltation or eternal life and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom... Full salvation is attained by virtue of knowledge, truth, righteousness, and all true principles. Many conditions must exist in order to make such salvation available to men. Without the atonement, the gospel, the priesthood, and the sealing power, there would be no salvation. Without continu-

ous revelation, the ministering of angels, the working of miracles, the prevalence of gifts of the spirit, there would be no salvation. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”²⁰

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, counter to the finished Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament - “a gift of God, not of works” - places an unimaginable and impossible burden on the shoulders of Mormon followers.

Yet Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 11:28-30,

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

In working through the issue of “playing God” and “becoming God” in transhumanism, and “exaltation” and “becoming God” in Mormonism, I can see why an organization like the Mormon Transhumanist Association would exist. Transhumanism fits the LDS faith, as the *movement* and the *religion* are seeking God-like attributes, and both strive to this end through “works.” The transhumanist attempts to achieve an evolved and God-like status through technology; the Mormon through obligations, duties, acts of righteousness, and the extension of the family into the celestial kingdom. And as Mormonism itself is a type of naturalistic theology, these “acts of righteousness” and “good works” can then logically extend into the realm of science. Transhumanism and Mormonism dovetail (I would also suggest, from certain philosophical perspectives, that Freemasonry and Theosophy can mesh with transhumanism).

As Lincoln Cannon said in his opening statement,

“If you're a Mormon, you should be a Transhumanist. To identify as a ‘Mormon Transhumanist’ is not at all redundant, but to identify as a ‘Transhumanist Mormon’ is redundant, because Mormonism mandates Transhumanism. In other words, you can be a Transhumanist without being a Mormon, but you can't be a Mormon without being a Transhumanist, at least implicitly. Of course this is a controversial claim, but we can make an argument from Mormon scripture.”

Closing the MTA 2013 conference was Richard Bushman, Professor of Mormon Studies and one-time editor of the *Joseph Smith Paper*. His words reflected the transhumanist-MTA aspiration, yet left the group with a serious challenge; “This is a saved-by-works group. It really believes that we can do anything - just give us a little time and enough research funds, [and] we can pull it off. My question is; is there any room for grace?”

Conclusion

The conference of the Mormon Transhumanist Association was a one-day event, and I was glad to attend. Each of the people I interacted with, from Lincoln to the other speakers and members of the MTA, treated me with respect. They were gracious hosts in every sense, and I enjoyed spending time with them - and hope to do so again in the future.

Did we agree? Not at all. That was the point of my invitation; to have an outside and critical voice at the table. And I have to give Lincoln and the MTA a lot of credit for bringing me to Salt

Lake City. As an intellectual organization representing both Mormon thought and transhumanism, they demonstrated the value of “free speech” - literally, to give the platform to someone they knew was in opposition to their cause.

So what did I say? The title of my talk was “A Christian Critique of Christian/Religious Transhumanism” - and yes, “Christian transhumanism” is how members of the MTA view Mormonism. The thrust was basic; Jesus Christ alone and not Jesus plus good works, plus obligations, plus social action... plus technology or science. None of the “pluses” will save us. You can read a transcript of my speech on page 14.

In preparing for my talk, I was re-struck by what took place at the cross of Calvary. Jesus, hanging naked and scourged and beat, found Himself between two thieves. Consider the words of Luke,

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’

But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’

And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’” (Luke 23:39-43)

Contrast what Jesus Christ said to the thief next to Him, who could do nothing to “save himself,” with the long and arduous list required for exaltation as given by Mormon theologian Bruce McConkie;

“...grace coupled with gospel obedience... faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Spirit, and continued righteousness to the end of one’s mortal probation... virtue of knowledge, truth, righteousness, and all true principles. Many conditions must exist in order to make such salvation available to men. Without the atonement, the gospel, the priesthood, and the sealing power, there would be no salvation. Without continuous revelation, the ministering of angels, the working of miracles, the prevalence of gifts of the spirit, there would be no salvation. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”²¹



In closing, it must be said that the MTA’s transhuman vision of “human betterment” is couched in good intentions; lifespan longevity, eradication of diseases, enhancing the quality of life, and excelling at doing good works. For this I applaud them.

At the same time, transhumanism is a movement that operates far beyond the intellectual sounding board of the MTA, taking place in the closed rooms of laboratories, testing facilities, and research centers. Much of the “hardware” and “software” of transhumanism is beyond our examination and even technical understanding, a fact that makes it difficult if not impossible for

the rest of humanity to consider its uses and misuses, ramifications, benefits, and unintended consequences - positive and negative.

Furthermore, there exists in certain transhumanist circles a measure of hostility and animosity, where to be “human” is disparaged and where “Christianity” is openly despised. At the same time, this fact shouldn’t cause us as Christians to hide-our-heads in the sand, nor remain on the sidelines of debate and discussion. We are called to be “salt and light,” wherever the door open for us.

Finally, we need to remember that the true God Himself tells us about the “God-condition,” and it doesn’t fit the transhuman or Mormon idea. Consider these words from the Book of Isaiah, taken from the King James Bible (The KJV is the version used by Latter-day Saints).

Isaiah 43:10-11

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour."

Isaiah 44:6

"Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

Isaiah 45:20-22

"Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and by ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

[Carl Teichrib is editor of Forcing Change, www.forcingchange.org]

Endnotes:

¹ Herbert J. Muller, *The Children of Frankenstein: A Primer on Modern Technology and Human Values* (Indiana University Press, 1970), p.370

² Vance Packard, *The People Shapers* (Little, Brown and Company, 1977), p.11.

³ Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not A Gadget: A Manifesto* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), pp.4,22.

⁴ World Transhumanist Association, slide 3 in the *Intro WTA* power point.

⁵ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*. (Harper Colophon Books, 1969). See chapters 19 to 22, all written in 1950 and 1951, with a portion of chapter 22 - "Cosmic Life" - printed in 1968.

⁶ Julian Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine* (Harper & Brothers, 1957), p.17. See also pages 13 to 17 for his discussion of cosmic evolution and the managing role of humanity.

⁷ Ibid., p.17.

⁸ Ibid., p.287.

⁹ Ibid., p.286.

¹⁰ Kevin Kelly, *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization*. (Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1994), p.233.

¹¹ Ibid., p.4.

¹² Ben Goertzel, *A Cosmist Manifesto: Practical Philosophy for the Posthuman Age* (Humanity + Press, 2010), p.29.

¹³ Joseph Smith, as quoted in *Mormon Doctrine* by Bruce R. McConkie (Bookcraft, 1979), p.321.

¹⁴ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.643.

¹⁵ Joseph Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham 3:11 (The Church of Latter-day Saints, 1971 edition).

¹⁶ See Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism*. (Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Dessert News, 1915), p.64.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.40

¹⁹ Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, p.42.

²⁰ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp.669-670.

²¹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp.669-670.

A Christian Critique of Religious Transhumanism

By Carl Teichrib

This is the complete speech as presented to the Mormon Transhumanist Association, April 5, 2013, Salt Lake City, Utah. My time limit was 15 minutes, which was the allotted time for the majority of the speakers who participated.



First of all I want to thank you for inviting me to this event, and I especially want to thank Lincoln for his willingness to bring me on board, because I know that I'm holding to a different perspective and view than the majority in this room. And so, in that sense, it was interesting to be asked [to speak], and thank you.

I also think it's appropriate to be asked, because as many conservative minded Christians today are now starting to come around to the ideas of what transhumanism is looking like – we're beginning to wrestle through this. We're trying to understand it, to grasp it. That said, as awareness grows within the Christian community, as questions surface, and as concerns are expressed, we will find ourselves bumping into each other as we engage in the marketplace of ideas. So a talk like this has relevance. A talk like this has necessity.

When I was asked to give a Christian critique of Christian transhumanism in under fifteen minutes [laughter from audience] – Wow! – It compelled me to explore what the core tension is between Christianity, particularly from an evangelical conservative position, and what could be argued as "Christian transhumanism." And this is important, for there is a division and a tension between these two camps.

And no doubt arguments could be made regarding the ethical questions that sometimes come into play – we look at issues of genetic manipulation, the concepts of social technologies in shaping human behavior – all of these have relevance and importance. But I believe

that if we really want to get down to it, we need to understand what the core difference is. And that's where we need to focus our attention: What is the heart of the matter.

Up front, I want to bring in three qualifiers:

First: Christianity is not opposed to achieving human longevity, expanding human capability, or overcoming medical obstacles through technology. The ethics of how these goals are achieved may come into question, but Christians do not oppose betterment. Indeed, when it comes to the betterment of society, Christianity has a long and unprecedented track record of actions; from the establishment of hospitals, orphanages, schools, to disaster relief and a multitude of other humanitarian work.

Second qualifier: My focus, here, is on the side of transhumanism that links itself with what is typically viewed as religious constructs – couching itself in terms of immortality, perfection, and salvation in particular.

And third and final qualifier: The end goal that Christianity speaks to could be labeled “transhumanism” in the sense that it speaks to redemption, immortality, and perfecting. It recognizes and teaches that Mankind is fundamentally flawed at the spiritual level, and that our sin nature is wrapped up in our spiritual DNA. And that this also has a bearing on the physical. Therefore, Salvation, which lifts people up from sin – the way of death – and brings us back to the way of Life – first in the spiritual and later the physical – is central to the Christian message.

And yet, here is the point where we see the divergence taking place between historical Christianity and Christian transhumanism, and to understand this difference and what it looks like, what we need to do is engage in a brief survey of Christian theology, and then a short survey of Christian transhumanism.

In regards to the evangelical-Biblical perspective, I will give this survey in four points.

First: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” Genesis 1:1. Here, the identity of the one who created is expressed; God did it. More than that, He wants you to know that He did it. In this sense, He is addressing Himself to us, and here we have implied a relational setting – a relational aspect to our Creator. God wants to be known by His creation.

Furthermore, the New Testament expands on this, demonstrating that through Jesus Christ – God manifested in flesh – all things were created by Him, as John 1:3 tells us. God, which is Jesus Christ as Creator, is therefore the author of life and the author of love.

Second point: Mankind is created in God's image. This does not mean that humanity is equal to God, for a limited created being cannot equal an unlimited Creator, but rather this speaks to Mankind's role as representative of God's qualitative attributes; love, righteousness, and as a special creation – having an eternal soul, a spiritual dimension.

Moreover, Genesis chapter 2 places God, and Adam and Eve, in a really relational setting. Here, God provides all of the first human couple's physical needs, and more importantly, He is in direct communion with them. This is an unbroken fellowship between the creation and the Creator.

Third: But as God is the author of love, choice is required if love is to exist. For love without choice is bondage. Thus, in Genesis chapter 2, a choice is placed before Adam and Eve – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the option to partake of it or obey God and abstain. And with this choice comes a warning; if you eat of it, you will perish, you will die – for to partake means a choice has been made to step away from the Author of Life, the Creator of Life – to literally break away from God’s blessing in an act of disobedience. It would be as if to say; “God is not sufficient.”

In Genesis 3 humanity is faced with a tempter – as some call Lucifer – who presents the justification, now, to disobey God. Through this act, Adam and Eve are told that they can become God-like, or as God, through special knowledge – and that they will not die. They eat, and in doing so made the conscious decision to step outside of God’s hand; thus removing themselves from the Giver of Life as they now pursued their own destiny to become “Gods” or God-like. And here we see now a break from the blessings of God’s fellowship, and one that pits us as humanity against our Creator. This was not a benefit, but a self-caused curse. As Proverbs 14:12 reminds us; “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

Since then, humanity has striven to regain that which has been lost, a right relationship with God and immortality – are we continually strive to do this on our own terms – we do this through rituals, technique, religion, endless cycles of good works – to no avail. We still die, physically and spirituality – we’re still in separation.

Fourth point: Two thousand years ago, God entered humanity’s domain through Jesus Christ, literally God in flesh walking among men. Here, Jesus – not becoming God, but was and is God – engaged in the one thing necessary to re-establish a relationship between the creation and the Creator. Death needed to be overcome. So, Christ Jesus allowed Himself to be executed on a cross, experiencing, Himself, the full consequence of sin – our disobedience – then, demonstrating Himself to be God, did something no man could do, He raised Himself from the dead, thus breaking the bondage of this curse. This was a finalizing act. It was finished. It was done. Nothing more could be done. Nothing more could be required.

But even in this, love is presented with a choice, just as in Adam’s day. And the choice here is to believe that Christ Jesus alone provides salvation, immortality, and perfection – which requires that we, in humility, acknowledge our own disobedience, recognizing our own good works do not save us. We already see a foreshadow of what this looks like with King David in Psalm 51, where David, confronted with his own sin, recognizes that God isn’t so interested in his sacrifices, but in a broken heart – a contrite spirit.

As Ephesians 2:8 tells us, “For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” And here, in this sense, we either place our trust in Christ alone, or we choose our own way – however this may appear or however this may look. That [referring to the above] is the Christian survey.

A brief survey of Christian transhumanism – and here again we could actually expand this way out into all kinds of territory including Gnosticism and mystic thought, and all kinds of areas, because it's broad. It's a very, very broad subject.

What I want to do here is quickly point out a few examples for you, and you'll see how the contrast comes into play.

Historically, we could even loosely lump in as a “Christian transhumanist” – again, loosely – [from the] 19th century, the father of sociology, Saint Simon, who while rejecting Christianity orthodoxy, called for a “New Christianity” led by men of science, led by men of industry. And that this New Christianity was to be a rejection of the Christian dogma of salvation, replacing salvation through the works of our hands.

Another Christian transhumanist, so to speak, would be the Orthodox Russian and Cosmist, Nikolai Fyodorov, who, it could be argued, is the one of the fathers of modernist transhumanism. Fyodorov held that science would provide the path for immortality, that science and the works-our-hands through technology would provide the salvation of mankind.

And Catholic mystic, Teilhard de Chardin, who started using the phrase “trans-human” in 1950, envisioned an evolutionary convergence taking place in the social and spiritual sphere, driven in-part through technological development – transforming mankind and bringing about a type of salvation for humanity, in essence, through the works of humanity.

More recently, I remember in the 2010 [MTA] conference you had James Ledford, who incorporates a technological justification into the idea of Christian salvation. So there's already been a lot of thought in this [idea of Christian transhumanism] as well.

And in the last few years, an Evolutionary Christianity platform has emerged, incorporating social evolution into the Christian salvation message. We are saved, in this sense, in part through our social action and evolutionary progress; this is the implied claim.

In conclusion, whereas historical Christianity recognizes that salvation, immortality and perfection comes through Jesus Christ alone, Christian transhumanism says “Jesus Christ plus science, plus technology, plus social action, plus good works and obligations, plus, plus, plus...” And that is the difference.

In a sense we can see how this plays out, actually, when Jesus was being crucified. Jesus, hanging on a cross with a thief beside Him on either side – one thief, calling down on Jesus, the other thief recognizing Jesus – and the thief who recognizes Jesus calls out in fear of God, recognizing that he is undone, asks Jesus to remember him when you [Jesus] enter the Kingdom, which, in essence, is a plea for salvation. How did Jesus respond? Actually, how did He not respond?

He did not say to the thief; “first, get down off your cross and go do good works.” He did not say to the thief; “go down off your cross and find a technological solution for your problem of death.” He didn't say any of that, obviously! He [the thief] didn't have any choice, did he? He's there; it's his end. All he could do was the one thing that was required of him to do: fear God, acknowledge Christ, and have a contrite heart.

How did Jesus respond? “Today you will be with Me in paradise.”

Here is the criticism; Christian transhumanism, in essence, commits the same mistake that Adam and Eve committed – “God... you are insufficient.” And it [this insufficiency] compels us to attempt to save ourselves in our own power.

Whereas the historical Christian position puts faith in Christ alone, recognizing that in due time, He will complete what He promised – bringing us back into a right relationship with Him.

In giving you these contrasts, in setting this up for you, I’m hoping that this presentation will help you to understand the distinction, the difference – the tension point that there is, because that’s there – between Christian transhumanism and the orthodox, historical, conservative position.

Again, Lincoln, thank you for letting me come – this has been good – and I really just appreciate spending time with you folks.

Purpose of the Mormon Transhumanist Association



NOTE: Lincoln granted Forcing Change permission to reprint his entire opening speech. In presenting it here, it is my hope that you’ll have a better grasp of what the MTA stands for, how it fits within the Mormon community, and a larger sense of the transhumanism movement.

By Lincoln Cannon, President of the MTA (<http://transfigurism.org>)

Good morning, and welcome to the 2013 Conference of the Mormon Transhumanist Association. My name is Lincoln Cannon. I currently serve as president of the association by appointment of the board of directors, which is elected by voting members of the association. I’ll lead this morning session of the conference. On behalf of the association, thank you for being here. I’d like to start today by commenting on the purpose of this association.

The Mormon Transhumanist Association stands for the proposition that we should learn to become Gods, and not just any kind of God, not the God that would raise itself above others, but

rather the God that would raise each other together. We should learn to become Christs, saviors for each other, consolers and healers, as exemplified and invited by Jesus.

Mormonism itself is an immersive discipleship of Jesus Christ. It's not so much a religion about Jesus as it is the religion of Jesus. With Jesus, we would trust in, change toward, and fully immerse our bodies and minds in the role of Christ. We would also endure in that role, working to reconcile ourselves, our relations and world, through suffering and even death if needed, anticipating the day of transfiguration and resurrection to immortality in eternal life (a fullness that our afternoon keynote, Richard Bushman, will say more about). So while we may not be Christian by creed, we're plainly Christian by Gospel (and I hope our special guest, Carl Teichrib, will comment on this while sharing his Christian criticism of religious Transhumanism).

Mormonism is also a school for prophets. The name of the religion itself reminds us of a book that would extend the Bible, in part by claiming yet other books would also extend the Bible. In turn, that book reminds us of a man that would speak and act for God, in part by saying everyone should speak and act for God. The Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith are not fortune-tellers, but rather forth-tellers that would express a sublime esthetic, a Holy Spirit, provoking us to speak and act so as to fulfill their prophecies, in part by learning to become prophets ourselves.

For some, prophecy is not a living proposition, let alone religion or God. They wonder if we've not heard that God is dead, and they're right to wonder. Following their Gods, traditional religions are dying, particularly in technologically advanced and prosperous places. Observing this, many have embraced the secularization hypothesis that religion itself is dying. However, that hypothesis is showing its age, and it's now embraced more by anti-religious voices in popular culture than by experts, among whom another hypothesis is coming of age.

If God is merely a supernatural superlative, he very well may be dead, but positing such as God misses the function of God. God always has been and is at least a posthuman projection, an extension and negation of human desire, imagined and expressed within the constraints of human thought, language and action. That's not to say God is only so much. To the contrary, as demonstrated by the New God Argument, we've moral and practical reasons to trust that others have already realized posthuman projections (and I hope our special guest, Peter Wicks, will comment on this while sharing his atheist criticism of religious Transhumanism). However, no matter your attitude toward faith, God is at least this much: a posthuman projection. Understood in terms of that function, God clearly is not dead and never was, except perhaps to the extent recurring death is part of evolution.

Likewise, if religion is merely genuflection to the supernatural, it very well may be dying, but again that overlooks function. Most of us have regarded religion too narrowly, and much that's supposed to be secular actually functions as religion. For example, some claim inspiration from science or ethics. Awe fills us as we contemplate the vastness of space or the voice of the people. Yet the inspiration is not merely in the reductionist implications of science or the procedural adjudications of ethics. Rather esthetics are woven through them, tying them together in meaning,

and that's why we care about science or ethics. Esthetics shape and move us, and at their strongest, they provoke us as a community to a strenuous mood. When they do that, they function as religion, not necessarily in any narrow sense, but esthetics that provoke a communal strenuous mood are always religion from a post-secular vantage point.

Of course, none of this means science or ethics should or even could be displaced by religion. To the contrary, science should continue to reconcile our contending accounts of experience, as ethics should our contending accounts of desire. Each should expand its reach to the uttermost, always better informing our esthetics, affecting each other in a feedback loop. Yet even as science and ethics increasingly empower us, let's not fool ourselves into supposing they'll ever be finished or sufficient in themselves. We care for and use them only in accordance with esthetics, which presents itself as foremost among them in the most vital moments of life, when we must act, according to whatever wisdom and inspiration we might have. Life cannot wait.

How will we act? Will we see beauty in science? Will we feel unity in ethics? Will we care, and how much will we care? Could our degree of concern make a practical difference? These are questions that will matter to all except perhaps the most apathetic, escapist or nihilistic among us. It's not enough that we can describe our world through science or imagine a better world through ethics. We also want to make a better world. We can do that through engineering and governance, but it's also not enough that we can make a better world. We want to feel it, sometimes powerfully, and more: we want to share our powerful feelings with others in ways that move us together. As engineering and governance are action on science and ethics, religion is action on esthetics. As engineering and governance are the power of science and ethics, religion is the power of esthetics.

If we can raise our eyes from the altar of religious and anti-religious dogma, we'll see that the hand raised to finish the dying God is the sign of the oath to the resurrecting God. If we can keep our eyes raised, resisting the carnage below, we'll also see the hand is our own and it holds a blade that's aged and stained. That's when we have a choice, either to repeat the old sacrifices of our ancestors, or finally to make the new sacrifice that they always implied: we can put ourselves on the altar and learn to become Gods. Put differently, the negation of one posthuman projection always implies another until humanity chooses to become posthumanity.

Transhumanism is the ethical use of technology to expand our abilities from the human to the posthuman. For some, this conjures up images of comic book cyborgs with gun arms and laser eyes. Of course Transhumanism is partly about body enhancement, but you'd probably agree that a gun arm doesn't qualify as an enhancement, either practically or esthetically. For better examples, look at the technology that enhances you right now. Some of you are using computing devices that extend your ability to communicate. You might be watching through glasses, contacts or surgically-modified eyes, or listening through hearing aids or cochlear implants. You're probably wearing clothing that enhances your ability to adapt to environmental change. Under those clothes, you might have implants or prosthetics. Through your blood, drugs may be relieving pain, heightening attention, or facilitating growth. That's just now. Think through the rest of

the day leading up to this moment. Think through your life. Consider human history. If technologically-enhanced humans are cyborgs then we've always been cyborgs. At least in context of the past and present, that's not particularly controversial. The controversy arises when we look forward. How will technology change us in a few years or decades? What about a thousand years from now? How many drugs, surgeries, prosthetics and other enhancements are there between humans and posthumans, as different from us as we now are from our prehuman ancestors? Is it possible to change that much? If so, should we?

Sometimes we talk about humans becoming more robotic or robots becoming more human. When we do, our language uses a dichotomy that is increasingly insufficient for describing not only the possibility space, but even the actuality space. Does a human receiving a prosthetic limb or an artificial heart become less human? Can a body originating from artificial DNA, conceived through an artificial process, or gestated in an artificial environment ever be human, even if it's eventually indistinguishable from a natural human? For that matter, how natural are the humans we actually know? Are agriculture and medicine natural? The blurring between natural and artificial is as ancient as the stick our distant ancestor wielded to extend her reach, and the leaves donned to enhance his skin. In an important sense, a synthesis of anatomy and tools made us human, empowering us above and differentiating us from our prehuman ancestors. In that sense, perhaps we've always been robots, for at least as long as we've been humans. Of course, when we think of robots, most of us usually think of cold metal or hollow plastic. If that's what robots are then we aren't and never should (or could) be robots.

Why do we want to enhance ourselves? The answer's not new. We want to enhance ourselves for all the reasons we've made tools since the beginning of history. Tools empower us. So we'll continue to build more and better tools, and their synthesis with our anatomies will become increasingly seamless and intimate, because we want to and because we can, for the power it provides. Like all power, tools and their intimate evolution into body and mind enhancements are not inherently good or evil. Rather, they're both risks to mitigate and opportunities to pursue according to whatever wisdom and inspiration we might have. On the one hand, tools can empower us against each other. Some hoard, and others deplete. Elites form, totalitarians control, and revolutionaries revolt. Artificial catastrophic risks well beyond those of nuclear weapons present themselves. Perhaps we could realize the worst interpretations of the Apocalypse. On the other hand, tools can also empower us for each other. Already we've used them to build, relate, console and heal in ways our distant ancestors imagined only Gods to have the capacity. Perhaps someday (and I can't wait to hear more about this from our morning keynote, Aubrey de Grey) we might transfigure ourselves into ageless bodies. We might even resurrect each other as sublime minds that relate with unfathomable compassion and conceive thoughts that in themselves constitute nothing less than the creation of new worlds. In any case, Transhumanists affirm that we can and should change through continued ethical use of technology to expand our abilities from the human to the posthuman.

If you're a Mormon, you should be a Transhumanist. To identify as a "Mormon Transhumanist" is not at all redundant, but to identify as a "Transhumanist Mormon" is redundant, because

Mormonism mandates Transhumanism. In other words, you can be a Transhumanist without being a Mormon, but you can't be a Mormon without being a Transhumanist, at least implicitly. Of course this is a controversial claim, but we can make an argument from Mormon scripture. Let's begin with the premises.

First, God wants us to use ordained means to participate in God's work. This premise is based on scriptures like First Nephi 3, which says God prepares ways for us to accomplish his commands; Alma 60, which says God won't save us unless we use the means he's provided; and D&C 58, which says we shouldn't wait for God to command us to engage in a good cause.

The second premise is that science and technology are among the means ordained of God. This premise is based on scriptures like First Nephi 17, where God commands Nephi to construct a ship to save his family; Alma 37, which says God gave Nephi a compass to guide his family to the promised land; D&C 88, where God commands us to study and teach everything from astronomy and geology to history and politics; and D&C 121, which says we will learn all the laws of the natural world before attaining heaven.

The third premise is that God's work is to help each other attain Godhood. This premise is based on scriptures like Third Nephi 12, where Jesus commands us to be perfect like God; D&C 76, which says God would make us Gods of equal power with him; and Moses 1, which says God's work is to make us immortal in eternal life.

The fourth and final premise is that an essential attribute of Godhood is a glorified immortal body. This premise is based on scriptures like Ether 3, where the Brother of Jared sees that God is embodied; D&C 76, which says God has a body glorified like the sun; D&C 93, which says full joy requires a body, elements are the body of God, and intelligence is the glory of God; and D&C 130, which says God's body is as tangible as that of a human.

From these four premises, we can reason. Since God wants us to use ordained means to participate in God's work, and since science and technology are among those means, God must want us to use science and technology to participate in God's work. Next, since God wants us to use science and technology to participate in God's work, and since God's work is to help each other attain Godhood, God must want us to use science and technology to help each other attain Godhood. Finally, since God wants us to use science and technology to help each other attain Godhood, and since an essential attribute of Godhood is a glorified immortal body, we can conclude that God wants us to use science and technology to help each other attain a glorified immortal body.

This conclusion is both a religious mandate, in that it purports to express the will of God, and a description of the Transhumanist project, advocating the ethical use of technology to expand human abilities. If we arrived at this conclusion by valid reasoning, which we did, and if we began with premises that accurately reflect Mormonism, as I believe we have, then Mormonism mandates Transhumanism.

Again, the Mormon Transhumanist Association stands for the proposition that we should learn to become Gods, and that science and technology complement religion and spirituality as means for doing so. Here's how it's expressed in the Affirmation that all association members support:

- 1) We seek the spiritual and physical exaltation of individuals and their anatomies, as well as communities and their environments, according to their wills, desires and laws, to the extent they are not oppressive.
- 2) We believe that scientific knowledge and technological power are among the means ordained of God to enable such exaltation, including realization of diverse prophetic visions of transfiguration, immortality, resurrection, renewal of this world, and the discovery and creation of worlds without end.
- 3) We feel a duty to use science and technology according to wisdom and inspiration, to identify and prepare for risks and responsibilities associated with future advances, and to persuade others to do likewise.

That's the purpose of the Mormon Transhumanist Association, and that's what we'll do at this conference. We have an excellent lineup of speakers today, and I'm excited to be here...

Forcing Change is a monthly, online publication dedicated to documenting and analyzing the socio-religious transformations now sweeping our Western world.

Forcing Change is a membership subscription service, with an annual fee of \$54.95 US. Membership in *Forcing Change* allows access to the full range of FC publications, including special reports, FC back issues, expert documents, and more. FC receives neither government funding nor the financial backing of any other institutions; rather, FC operates solely on subscription/membership support. To learn more about *Forcing Change*, including member benefits, go to www.forcingchange.org.

Reprint Permissions: For Publications: Permission to re-publish articles in *Forcing Change* is granted, provided that FC credit is acknowledged (preferably with the *Forcing Change* URL attached), and that *Forcing Change* is notified of the article use.

For Private Individuals: Permission is granted for individuals to make copies of FC articles and distribute to family, friends, colleagues, and community leaders.