

## **Bridging Faith and Science**

### ***Rethinking Our Human Purpose in a Scientifically Progressive, Postmodern Culture***

As the twenty-first century progresses, Western societies are steeped in a scientifically progressive, postmodern culture. A shift sparked by Enlightenment values has matured into an emphasis on personal experience and identity, evident in movements such as the rise of transgender rights where an individual's self-perception is held in highest esteem. In this emerging cultural landscape, personal feelings are seen as the primary determinant of happiness and fulfillment.

In tandem, our societies have gradually shed the previously shared bonds of a transcendent moral compass, propelled by rapid advancements in science and technology that have raised questions about our collective conception of human identity. The common trust in empirical science is encapsulated by the phrase, "follow the science."

***Navigating a Scientifically Progressive, Postmodern Culture:*** The Church, deeply embedded in this cultural atmosphere, has often been significantly influenced by societal norms. Without divine intervention, returning to a time when a shared consensus regarding life and God prevailed is highly unlikely, if not impossible. The question then arises: how can the Church prosper and uphold its sacred identity and influence as presented in the New Testament?

Science is advancing the cultural changes that are reshaping our lives at an unprecedented pace. Scientific discoveries have led to transformative medical procedures and revolutionary technologies that enhance communication, work, and even, due to AI, the way we think and engage in every sector of society and life. While these advancements promise a future of well-being, their potential for disastrous unintended consequences also must be soberly considered.

Consequently, profound questions arise regarding our human purpose and identity as unique beings created in God's image. What does the "abundant life" Jesus promised look like in our world? How should we serve in God's kingdom? How can individual Christians thrive in a culture that often rejects or redefines orthodox Christian values? How do we love the sinner but despise the sin in a society that views acceptance of individual choice as the highest expression of love? In other words, how can the Church intentionally strive to be an essential part of the world but not be defined by it – be "in the world but not of it?"

Undoubtedly, we, as individual Christians and the Church, have faltered both historically and in contemporary times in upholding clear biblical values in society. How should we address and amend these failures? Should our focus be on purposefully engaging with secular culture to provide faith-filled "leaven" or creating an alternate community within the culture – a separate assembly that focuses on preserving distinctly Christian beliefs and values among its members?

***Rethinking Human Purpose for followers of Christ:*** Our ordained purpose remains unaltered: to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. What is evolving are the tools and methods to achieve this goal. The Church's values, however, must not be dictated by cultural whims. Political powers have often usurped and even ridiculed the divine imperatives for determining technological morality and human ethics. Yet, a Christ follower's capacity to love should lead to an ability to listen and engage in open, healthy discussions about the potential benefits and perils of technological and cultural changes, as a way to discern which advances align with orthodox Church values and those that don't.

Christian academics and Church thought leaders are uniquely called to address these questions and communicate informed perspectives in accessible language to followers of Christ. Their insights are integral to improving the Church's understanding of the theological and practical implications of scientific and technological advancements. Including these voices is essential to ensure that the Church and its Christ followers can benefit from the wisdom of our most gifted members.

***Creating a Bridge Between Faith and Science:*** Living on the Edge (LOTE), a global Church broadcast ministry, reaches over a million listeners weekly. In the last two years, we have trained over 170,000 Christian leaders worldwide. We accept that our ever-changing technological and cultural landscape is here to stay, as is our Christian mission. We believe that building a bridge between faith and science is imperative for the Church to thrive in this environment.

We believe that harmonizing scientific knowledge with faith is of vital importance for the Church; too often we have lagged behind in addressing questions that deeply impact followers of Christ. Historically, the Church called councils to discuss and reconcile essential questions concerning its future. In this rich tradition, we envision an ecumenical collaboration between Christian academics, scientists, and thought leaders, united for a modern-day council; a community of gifted believers that looks forward as they grapple with issues of scientific, technological, and societal transition. A council that seeks to develop a praxis for the Church within the emerging cultural landscape.

In *Bridging Faith and Science*, we aim to establish settings that enable the examination of the intersections of science, technology, culture, faith, and our perception of reality. Through engaging discussions with Christian experts across various disciplines, we will explore the theological implications of living in a scientifically progressive, postmodern world.

We have identified five technological areas of focus to explore and discuss: traditional computing and communications, artificial intelligence, DNA/RNA editing, robotics, and data mining. Additionally, we have identified a number of cultural values that have been contested due to technological advancements and moral scientific reasoning; these include gender dysphoria, social media, creation care, microeconomics (workforce restructuring), and theology (including consciousness). Opinions and decisions in these areas are already influencing our lives and promise even more significant changes in the future. Informed and thoughtful conversations are needed in each of these areas and potentially others.

To commence our bridge-building efforts, we have planned two initial projects:

1. **Podcast** - Through a global podcast, *Bridging Faith and Science*, will engage in discussions with scientists, technologists, academics, and Church thought leaders. We will explore advancements in science, technology, and their impacts on culture and the Church, along with their potential benefits and risks.
2. **Gathering** - We plan to host an in-person event by the end of 2024, inviting Christian academics, scientists, and thought leaders to dialogue around science, technology, and cultural change. We anticipate this approach to encourage research, publications, and ongoing communication that will enable the Church to thrive in a world dominated by science and technology.

The goal of these ministries is to highlight the Church's crucial role in defining a moral and ethical framework in a society increasingly shaped by science and technology, and to equip Christian leaders and their followers with the knowledge and insights needed to navigate this new reality.

**Invitation for Collaboration:** Given the rapid advancements in science and technology, the task of reconciling scientific knowledge with faith is more pressing than ever. We invite the ASA community and others to contribute insights, participate in our podcasts, and engage with our collaborative model. Together, we can navigate the complex task of communicating science to the Church through the lens of faith, fostering a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of our rapidly advancing world.

**Join us in Our Work to Build a Bridge Between Faith and Science**

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