

Virtual Reality Virtual Reality, Part 1

Studio Session 76 Sam Soleyn

In the 2004 presidential elections, young people went to the polls in record numbers and they voted primarily for Democrats. Now when the results came back, and a Republican won—and in general Republicans won in major races across the country—young people were heard to say that people who voted for Republicans were “stupid.” Now there have been many who have been trying to understand the implications of these elections and this little observed result holds the key to profound understandings as to exactly what happened, and the nature of change that has come about since this time. “Stupid” is a comparative term. “Stupid” as compared to what? The answer is that there was a different anticipated result generally held as the common view among young people.

The view among young people was that Democrats should win, Republicans should lose and that that was, in a sense, a foreordained result. Therefore, the response took on that highly emotional character by suggesting that whoever voted for Republicans was “stupid.” But that little statement, by itself, holds the key to a vast understanding and is itself the key to an understanding of monumental changes that have come about in the world in which we live. At the present time, the changes that are happening in the world are far greater than any other time and any other change, and yet it would seem that the understanding of this is not tracking that same perspective. I mean by that, if you ask people, “Are there real changes in the world today?” The changes that they would likely point to are changes resulting from natural disasters or from man-made catastrophes, such as terrorism.

But in general terms, people are not understanding how society is shifting and changing and would generally not agree with the statement that “The most monumental changes in the history of mankind are happening now and the results are so fundamentally reordering our perspective of society and of our way of life on the planet that, in the future, things will be so different than the way they have been in the past as to be hardly recognizable.” That is, that the society as it *has been* compared to what it *will be* will be hardly recognizable. The transformation will be so complete, the changes so sweeping. The implications for the body of Christ will also be really eschatological—meaning that they will implicate things of the most basic nature that the Scriptures speak about concerning the end of the age.

I would like to present a couple of messages—perhaps a few more than a couple—entitled, “Virtual Reality” as a way of leading into an entire series of messages in the venue or in the vain of understanding prophetic things. In the 1800’s, Charles Darwin came up with the Theory of Evolution and one marvels that such a theory, although it was just a theory and remains that—an unproven theory from which, by the way, Darwin himself repented on his death bed—such a theory so swept human society that after the theory ran its course, human society was permanently altered. Let me explain. Previous to Darwin’s theory of evolution, the way that society was ordered was on the basis of a nexus, a connection between the church and the state.

From the days of the Roman Empire, Constantine invited the Christian church to be the church of the empire and pursued a joint fellowship, as it were, between the church and the state. From that point on, up through the Holy Roman Empire, the reconfiguration of the empire after it fell—after its political muscle became flaccid and it lost its potency politically—it was reconfigured as a religious empire and lasted approximately 1000 years. During all of that time, the kings of Europe of the various European states that constituted the old Roman Empire found their legitimacy in the approval of the papacy. And even after the Holy Roman Empire disintegrated into its member states, the same basic format of church and state together continued to be the foundation for the ordering of human society.

In England, the Statutes of Primunery enshrined in law the rule of the kings by establishing something called, “the Divine Right of Kings.” Niccolo Machiavelli, the Italian writer, who wrote about the power of princes, established in his writings the divine authority of kings to rule at the behest of the church. And even when France, following the revolt from the king, the house of Louis and the palace of Versailles—even when they revolted, the nobles, after a short while regained political control. So Europe had largely been ruled over by this connection between church and state. But in the mean time, while the state was approved of by the church and approved the church in turn, and that connection between the monarchy and the papacy—or the monarchy and the church structure after the papacy was no longer that monolith—even when that was going on the Industrial Age was marching on as well. And the societies of Europe were changing from an agrarian-based society—agriculture and land—to an Industrial Age.

With that going on, more and more the common man, the French term, “the bourgeoisie”, began to have access to wealth but were largely shut out of power. And you had attempts to break loose of the structure and to have, more or less, representational governments but such successes were very limited. Well into the time of the Holy Roman Empire, some attempt at reform was made with the establishment of the Magna Carta, the “large chart” or the “large writing,”—what would be in American terms, “the pre-cursor to the American Bill of Rights.” The English charter gave certain rights to the nobility but those rights did not trickle down in general terms to the common population. And then you had the French Revolution—first you had the American Revolution and then the

French Revolution—[an] attempt to break from this form of governments. But by and large it held sway even though the ambitions and the desires of people in these societies—with growing wealth, growing influence, and growing education—wanted to participate in government that ruled over them.

When Darwin came up with the Theory of Evolution, it struck at the heart of this nexus by challenging the church's legitimacy. Because, as the rubric would certainly indicate, if the Theory of Evolution were true then there would be no God, the origin of the species would be by evolution from some common cataclysm and not by the divine hand of God. That would then place in question the entire structure of church. And with that would come the question of the role of something so basically illegitimate as church, working to confirm the kings and the structure of governments—and in exchange would become the very arbiter of social order and common public behavior.

There was you see, prior to this time a general movement in society away from this control of the nobility over everything relating to the lives of people. So when Darwin spoke his Theory of Evolution it began to cause those who hoped to participate in their own governments to believe that a different order was possible. But whether or not Darwin intended this, this was clearly the bellwether of change because on the heels of that, a British Jew named Karl Marx wrote an economic theory in which he basically postulated the point of view that the means of production should be in the hands of those producing and not being governed by those who had control of those means, thereby maintaining—creating and maintaining—a society in which a few benefited from the labors of many.

Well this theory was picked up and given political force, political reality by two Russians: Ivan Lenin and Leon Trotsky. They were the architects of the Bolshevik Revolution and perhaps the reason that this took place in Russia was that Russia was somewhat a Western society because of the influences of both the English and the Germans on the structure of the nobility and the ruling class of Russia. In those days, as you well know, these nations were ruled, and peace was generally secured, through dynastic marriages—marriages between dynasties that ruled various countries. And so Czarist Russia was fully related to European royalty and in turn they held the Russian people in probably the most restrictive forms of serfdom that existed throughout Europe and Asia during the time of the Industrial Age.

The Russian peasants were barely more than slaves, horribly treated by their overlords. And so Lenin and Trotsky, armed with Marxist theory of economics, found a ready hearing in the desperate hearts of the vast populations of Russia. And a Communist state was created to serve, actually as a laboratory, in which, for the hopes and ambitions of a rising class—middle class, lower class—rising up to take its own destiny and to control its own fortunes. So by the time that this Theory of Evolution fully got underway it was given various settings—political, economic, and social—in which to flourish. And you

will note that Europe in that time underwent enormous changes. For example, since the “survival of the fittest” was the order of the day then eugenics was a useful practice.

Hitler practiced both eugenics and genocide—kill off the least desired, promote the more desired—and you have essentially what today would be called “ethnic cleansing” at the same time that the Aryan race was being touted as a master race. But to understand these concepts apart from their historical times is to understand less than what was going on. It isn’t that understanding the historical times justifies any of this, but it makes it more understandable without justifying it. By the time Darwin’s Theory of Evolution ran its course—and I would consider that it ran its course with the fall of the Berlin Wall—more than half of the world’s population was, in one way or another, under Communist rule if you include China and Southeast Asia. And the changes that spun out of this theory that legitimized change at a philosophical level engulfed the whole world.

While that world was collapsing and winding down, another world was rising up... another reality was rising to take its place. That concept, that reality is called “virtual reality.” Now we are familiar with virtual reality somewhat as a product of being familiar with cyber-reality. In the early days, when virtual reality was being talked about we were familiar with it in the movies—the Star Wars saga showed a three dimensional holographic image being projected out. Or we would go to malls and have these interactive games presented to our eyes and to our minds by these funny goggles and so on. So we’ve thought of virtual reality as this: fabricated cyber imagery.

Since that time, more than twenty years ago, let me assure you that cyberspace and virtual reality have gone through incredible metamorphoses. So virtual reality is no longer this cyber reality. Today when you speak of virtual reality, you are not talking about images in cyber space. When you talk about virtual reality, you are talking about creating and constructing reality out of component parts. Once again, science is leading the way in giving legitimacy to the development of this idea. When—two years ago—scientists announced that they had successfully sequenced the human genome, science became abuzz with the prospects of this. For example, science now believes that there is no basic scientific reason why a human being should die because the thought is: first you can either create a human being from the genetic level according to a predetermined design or plan. For example, you could create a baby to certain height requirements, color of eyes, color of hair, perhaps even color of skin and, above all, free of those pesky genetic structures that are predisposed towards diseases.

Quite literally, you could create a superhuman being who really ought not to die. But then you could remediate existing human beings by crafting certain cocktails of drugs to target specific tendencies toward disease, such as Alzheimer’s disease. And the debate is raging over just such things presently, such as stem cell research to create new medicines and therapies to remediate the human form, to remediate the human genetic structure. And then of course, the thing most hotly debated of all is cloning: the ability to create,

through a clone, your access to “spare parts”. So if you have a heart that wears out, eventually, your clone’s heart could be harvested and replaced... it would be perfectly “you”. Whatever the need was, you could create your own bag of spare parts.

Science is leading the way and redefining reality to be “virtual”, that is, reality does not have to be any particular thing. You are not stuck with genes that your parents gave you. You may create, at the genetic level, the kind of genetic structure that you want. This brave new world should not be scoffed at because it reflects the hope and the belief of the world that is coming. Why were the young people who were polled and who voted for Democrats apt to say that people who voted for Republicans were “stupid”? Well they were operating on a premise of virtual reality. That premise was that a reality had been created in the press and that reality was real, so that it took the place of precedence and anything that denied precedence was the radical thing. And deftly it shifted the young people into the center of predisposition of what had already had occurred in their minds so that they were not the radicals anymore, they were the conservatives. And people who voted for Republicans, in their minds, were the radicals because they deviated from the norm.

You see, we are no longer in a world in which the reality is typically considered to be fixed. For example consider that you could go shopping in any flea market in the whole world at any time of the day or night; you may buy or sell goods on EBay. Now what exactly is EBay? Where does it exist? At once it exists nowhere and everywhere. It is a set of computers that allow people to be linked but the goods are held by the people who have them for sale until the person who wants to purchase them makes the appropriate connections. So EBay, in a way, is a facilitator that allows people worldwide to go to the flea market to sell their goods and to buy from others. We’ve just begun to scratch the surface. The world is excited about virtual reality because virtual reality does not require you to give up so much in order to get so much. For example you don’t have to fight the traffic to go to the flea market but yet you could shop in the convenience of your own home or sell in the convenience of your own house. Virtual reality is here and the whole world is caught up in it. You need to know more about this reality. The implications for the church are astonishing. I hope that you will join me as we flesh this concept of the new reality—virtual reality—we flesh it out. I’m Sam Soleyn. I hope you will join me for this most important continuing discussion of the new reality—virtual reality—make it up out of its component parts. I’ll see you then.