



Redeeming the Future: Exploring the Theological Implications of Transhumanism in Missions

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Abstract

Advanced technological innovations changed every aspect of human life, including humanity's hope for the future. Current enhancements through technology predicted what would happen as humans found ways to increase lifespans, heal diseases, and lead humanity to breach somebiological limitations. Transhumanism was the hope that humans had not ended their evolution and that technology could help with more enhancements. Such enhancements included uploading the human mind into computer systems and enabling people to live virtually. The Church responded to transhumanist people and contexts and the possibility of reaching a posthumanism phase in humanity. The challenges for the church were establishing a theology to help people deal with technological innovations and examining the morality of transhumanists. The church also challenged the notion of a transhumanism religion and how transhumanists relied on technology for transformation while Christians rely on Christ for redemption and renewal of their minds and the salvation of their souls. This article suggests that the church has to be at the forefront to guide people in the coming days on the dangers of worshipping technology and viewing it as a creator instead of a as a useful tool at humanity's disposal. It also explores theological discussions along posthumanism lines that could help people understand the human-technology relationship and how to use it for maximum benefits. A literature review was used in this study involving researching, reading, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly literature typically from journals and articles about this specific topic on the issue of transhumanism in Church missions.

Keywords: Church, cyborg, digital mission, technology, transhumanism, posthumanism.

Introduction

Traditionally, Christians spread the Gospel orally on mass crusades or in the Church during services. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it was challenging for most churches to continue



their services without implementing digital technology to assist. The analog era allowed most churches to operate without a proper understanding of technology (Ugboh, 2023). Post-COVID-19 and moving forward, it will be challenging for churches to remain in existence while using old and obsolete methods to engage a new society. The diffusion process of the Church accounts for its upward movement as new technology emerges and thrives (Ugboh, 2023). However, although the Church might use technological innovations to spread the Gospel, there are questions about its acceptance of transhumanism. Contemporary philosophers argue that technological measures will augment and improve human biological and cognitive capabilities (Lamola, 2021: 3). Technological advancements have also resulted in artificial intelligence (AI), inanimate artifacts such as robots, and technological devices to re-engineer human consciousness (Lamola, 2021: 2). While the Church has accepted the use of technology in spreading the Gospel, there are questions about its perspectives on transhumanism.

Recently, most churches have been conducting services and broadcasting them on online channels. Today, most churches must have digital facilities such as websites, Zoom, Whatsapp broadcast channels, Facebook pages, Instagram accounts, YouTube, Twitter, and Telegram to remain relevant (Ugboh, 2023). Although churches accept the use of digital technology to spread the Gospel, questions remain about its responses to other technological developments now in existence. For example, while the Church can use advanced technology such as AI to sustain its theology mission, there are widespread concerns about the rate at which AI affects human participation in the job market and its role in increasing unemployment (Ugboh, 2023). In the New Testament, Timothy shows himself approved of God and is not ashamed to boldly and rightly preach the word of God. There are questions about whether the Church will fail to boldly spread the Gospel if it fails to creatively embrace technological advancements and use available measures to spread the Gospel (Naidoo, 2023). "The internet and WEB 2.0 applications made it possible for smartphones to emerge. As internet speeds increased, the experience of accessing information became more seamless. Making the gospel message visual and sharing it over social media through the use of smartphones allows the gospel message to reach a wider audience in a shorter period of time." (Naidoo, 2023:1). Concerns about digital technology and the Church's mission become more complex when discussing transhumanism.

Transhumanism reflects the future of technology due to its power to enhance human beings and create powerful AI (Gaitán, 2019: 415). Proponents of the transhumanist agenda are actively striving towards achieving posthuman status, which represents the ultimate objective of their movement. They are dedicated to preparing themselves to transcend the limitations of humanity through technological enhancement and evolution (Kurzweil, 2010: 125). Its role in the future of human enhancements leads to questions for the Church on how it will engage in digital theology and its argument on whether to accept or reduce the role of transhumanism since humans are created as God's image.

The Christian faith upholds human dignity as God's distinctive creation, thus viewing endeavors to surpass natural human boundaries as potentially conflicting with divine intention. While transhumanism sparks imaginative exploration, Christianity underscores embracing human limitations within the Divine scheme, asserting that genuine fulfillment lies in profound communion with God rather than solely in technological advancements (Salurante, 2023: 233). The research thesis emphasis, the importance of integrating traditional Christian beliefs with the materialistic worldview of transhumanism, the Church's adaptation must all navigate the complexity of technology while upholding its fundamental principles and mission.



Understanding Transhumanism/Posthumanism

While the Church might want to deny the existence of transhumanism, the technological transformation of humanity in the 21st century has already begun. Recent technological advancements promise limitless possibilities for humans, including transhumanism and its potential success. Transhumanism represents a way of thinking about the future where its proponents believe that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of human development (Bostrom, 2014). The principles of transhumanism include using current scientific understanding, technological advancements, and creative and critical thinking to enrich human capabilities and liberate humanity (More & Vita-More, 2013: 5). Transhumanists commit to seeking more intelligence, open-mindedness, and wisdom for humanity. Their goals also include the removal of psychological, biological, political, and cultural limitations among humans to facilitate evolution to the next phase (More & Vita-More, 2013: 5). Transhumanists' commitment leads to questions about the group and its interest in technologically mediated transformation for humans.

Transhumanists are an intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility of improving the human condition through applied reason (Bostrom, 2014). For example, transhumanism occurs when humans use available technology to eliminate aging, improve physical appearance, or enhance physical and cognitive capabilities. Transhumanism is also the study of technology's promises and potential dangers as humans work to eliminate fundamental human limitations. (Bostrom, 2014) Transhumanists are a small group of nearly a thousand followers of techies and technological philosophers (Cole-Turner, 2018). Despite transhumanists representing a small proportion of the human race, recent technological advancements demand that Christians pay attention to technology's transforming and disruptive powers.

The study of transhumanism leads to questions about other new terms, such as posthumanism. Although the two terms are related, posthumanism argues that human reasoning and technology will make the next stage in human evolution possible (Imbert, 2017: 211). At the posthumanism stage, humans will change due to their interaction and connection with technology. That means humans will exceed the limitations that define the less desirable aspects of human aging, such as suffering from diseases, aging, and the inevitability of death (More & Vita-More, 2013: 6). Transhumanists argue that the posthuman person will have enhanced human capability and freedom of form. Such individuals will also have greater cognitive abilities and refined emotions, including more joy and less anger (More & Vita-More, 2013: 4). However, most researchers claim that posthumanism might not affect all humans. Since posthumanism is mostly speculation, it does not guarantee uniformity among all people. However, transhumanists believe that posthumanism is an emerging and imminent future reality in which all humans are responsible for improving their appearance, cognition, and capabilities (Thweatt-Bates, 2016). While Christians might view transhumanism as impossible for humanity, recent developments display its existence in society.

Scientists today are using technology to enhance human lives and modify human traits and capacities than ever before. For example of transhumanism includes cosmetic surgery to improve physical appearance (Cole-Turner, 2018: 2). While today's human enhancement technologies are limited to drugs and surgery, transhumanists predict a limitless future. In this case, enhancement considers the biological improvement of a person that focuses on improving their performance, appearance, and cognitive abilities (Cole-Turner, 2018, p. 2). Enhancement technologies motivate transhumanists to discuss the trend line where humans increasingly rely on technology to improve their lives.



The current uses of technology to enhance human capabilities have caught the attention of religious leaders. Since today's enhancements point to a coming future, the Church must engage in the conversation and consider how transhumanism affects theology mission.

The Church's Perspectives on Transhumanism

The Church's core mission includes dynamic human transformation and redemption. Christian theology is founded on the notion that humans transform when they allow the Holy Spirit to renew their minds. However, when it comes to transhumanism, humans appear to rely on technology and human reasoning for transformation instead of depending on God. Christians argue between the distinctions of transformation made by God and the one facilitated by technological advancements. However, there is also the consideration that technological transformations might be a large cosmic intervention of redemption to restore humans to an original state and glorify God (Cole-Turner, 2018, p. 76). While Christians express concerns about transhumanism's reliance on technology for human transformation, some argue that technological advancements could be seen as a cosmic intervention aligning with the divine plan to restore humanity to its original state and bring glory to God.

Most Christian and societal traditions criticize transhumanism and the possibility of reaching a posthuman state. The Church must ask the first question regarding transhumanism and whether attaining posthumanism will contradict the essential features of a Christian worldview. Most secular leaders believe transhumanism will lead to morally unacceptable consequences or problems with enhanced individuals' moral and psychological status (Göcke, 2017, p. 353). There are also concerns about unaware Christians worshipping transhumanism and viewing it as a possible Messiah. Arguments indicate that the transhumanist movement seeks to fill Western civilization's widening religious and cultural void (IMBERT, 2017, p. 214).

The answers to the two questions will help Christians determine whether to endorse transhumanism and use it as an object in the Church's theology mission. Christian leaders must also consider whether the development of posthumans through technology enhancements follows the fundamentals of Christian morality (Göcke, 2017, p. 355). Most political leaders today view transhumanism as morally impermissible and subject to suppression. However, the Church must consider the role of transhumanism in its theology mission. Most people view transhumanism as faith in the progress of human beings (Imbert, 2017: 208). The perspective peaks the debate between historians and Christians on creationism and evolutionism. Most Christians might be worried that faith in transhumanism and human evolution diminishes the power of the creation theology.

Transhumanism is a recent trend that calls for discernment and wisdom among Christians to help in theology missions. The bible highlights that Christians are called to discern the signs of the time and to watch and pray (Glennon, 2018). The Church must remain watchful and pray for discernment from God as members try to understand the signs of the current times. For example, the Church realizes that technology, through transhumanism, is changing the very notion of what it means to be human. Through technology, a person can overcome the limitations of biological life, use robotic body parts to improve their lifestyle, and even create new bodies to carry people to the future (Pugh, 2017; 2).

When discussing changes in the human body, biblical writers understood the idea of having a new body after the resurrection. However, the resurrection possible through transhumanism frees the body from the constraints of biology. It offers immortality by uploading the human mind into a computer system, where if one dies in cyberspace, one



can choose a new avatar (Pugh, 2017: 2). The Church raises concerns about people becoming cyborgs or hybrids instead of relying on God for transformation and redemption. Nevertheless, through transhumanism, the enhanced body does not mean a person has to die or diminish their existence to wait for resurrection. As contradictions arise through the notions of transhumanism, the Church must take a step back and reflect on how Christian and theological principles apply as humans enhance and during posthumanism.

Theology Mission in the Digital Era

Information technology has opened a new way of doing things. Digital culture affects every aspect of human life, influencing how the Church spreads its theological mission. Now more than ever, millions of people spend more time in cyberspace, virtual reality or the computer simulation of a participatory environment than in face-to-face interactions (Meadows, 2012: 166). During the Covid-19 pandemic, technological innovation accelerated, including the application of AI for commercial interests (Lamola, 2021: 2). The increased interest in digital culture and technology affects how the Church spreads the Gospel and how it can change from traditional ways of the Gospel to merge with the current digital culture.

When people first began talking about the digital revolution in late 20th century, there was the assumption that digital technology would inevitably replace old media. However, what is happening now is a combination/convergence of old media and digital technology (Meadows, 2012: 178). However, the convergence also means that Augmenting the experiences of the Church with online activities keeps the Church more informed about ongoing trends, such as transhumanism and the possibility of posthumanism. Staying connected to the internet also allows the Church to actively involve itself in shaping the lives of everyday youths and participate in ongoing global conversations.

Although most churches are comfortable remaining offline and ignoring recent developments in digital technology, the approach has numerous shortcomings. On Contrary church in digital reality might have some temporal and spatial features to support the community to be present together independent of time and place and, thus, feel the sense of belonging (Cooper et al., 2021:2). However, the Church must effectively respond to changing patterns of human behavior and new ways of doing things orchestrated by new technologies to remain sustainable. The Church risks losing its influence in society if it fails to adapt to the digital culture in its theology mission. Previously, an aspiring pastor bought land, built a house, and went to Church, where he participated in communal activities. However, most people today spend time in cyberspace, gathering and associating with other virtual communities around shared interests and purposes (Meadows, 2012: 166).

Christians recognize God as the greatest creator and most creative (Ugboh, 2023). Christian theology has its foundations in believing that God will deliver Christians from the hand that might bring them wickedness and disaster. Since God provides the Church and gives them the wisdom to discern the signs of the times, believers must ask for wisdom about the role of technology in their lives. Previously, some church leaders preached that God did not support televisions in the homes of believers (Ugboh, 2023). Some even criticized the use of private cars and jets by Pastors. However, more preachers now reach believers through television. The same applies to digital culture in the Church's theology mission. The Church should not view the acceleration of digital technology as sinful but instead use it as an opportunity to reach the entire world with the Gospel.

As the church debates its theology mission in the digital era, it is crucial to look back and learn from the past. The use of technology in the past and now changes how humans view the world around them (Cole-Turner, 2018: 4). The Church today must view technology as a



tool to improve human beings' operations and spread its theology to the rest of the world. While the technology used during the time was complex, it allowed the Israelites to have God's presence in their midst. Church leaders today should reflect on such biblical technology and consider its influence on theological missions in the digital era and perhaps host global inter-denominational conferences and workshops to thrash out an appropriate Christian Bible based response and way forward

While the Church embraces technology in the digital era, it must establish theologies to guide believers in navigating digital culture. For instance, most futurists envision a technosocial future where humans evolve in their technological powers and embed them into social practices, values, and institutions (Shatzer, 2019: 16). However, it is challenging for believers to see the effects of technology on their daily lives. Christian leaders such as Alan Jabos highlight the importance of training people on contemplative practices and effectively using and reflecting on technology (Shatzer, 2019: 36). Other leaders, such as Vallor, emphasize the human blindness to how technology influences people. For instance, reaching a technosocial capacity makes it challenging for the Church to identify, seek, and secure ethics and life's purpose (Shatzer, 2019: 32). It is not the Church's responsibility to help believers see how technology affects the achievement of a shared future. The negative effects of technology are a call for the Church to create a new theology to guide believers as they navigate the use of information technology as part of their daily lives.

The Church and Transhumanists: Navigating the Digital Frontier

Christianity and transhumanism share the notion that the old self transforms into a new self. Paul's theology talks about God's transforming grace, where a person's old self is put to death, and a new self emerges as a unique identity in Christ (Cole-Turner, 2018: 9). However, for Christianity, Paul mentions that the new self is more authentic. The new self is also profoundly different from the original self since it did not live in Christ and has not experienced a renewal of its mind. The central difference between transformation through Christ and technology lies in a person's wishes. For instance, when a person seeks enhancement through technology, they seek to achieve the desires of the old self. However, among Christians, the new self is the gradual creation of the persona of Christ within them. Christianity and transhumanism are similar yet profoundly different in critical ways. Transhumanists call for technological enhancements to bring the old self to a higher life. The paradox of personal transformation through Christ and technology calls for attention among Christians today, leading to discussions about how the Church responds to transhumanism. The following sections will analyze how the Church in the digital era responds to transhumanist people and contexts.

As the Church engages in transhumanism conversations, it must consider technology's role in societal well-being and the limitations of such roles. One of the primary challenges of transhumanism is that most transhumanists proclaim the Gospel of human enhancements and the coming blessings of AI. As the Church responds to such beliefs, it must incorporate biblical materials in such conversations to make the most influence. For instance, emerging technologies and AI's coming blessings speak directly to technology's role in human enhancement. However, the bible goes beyond physical enhancement and talks about building a personal relationship with God to become a more genuine and authentic person (Cole-Turner, 2018). The Church must also talk about the effects of misplaced confidence and ego that come with enhancement through technology. Theology mission in the digital era talks about achieving communal wholeness as people seek transformation through their relationship with God. Christians focus on the power and willingness of God to restore life and maintain relationships against all forces. However, it is vanity when transhumanists rely on technology to create artificial enhancements.



Transhumanists advocate using advanced technology to enhance human capabilities and extend life, and their ideas have found unique intersections with some religious institutions, including a range of churches. Their ideas might be integrated into church contexts by enhancing worship and religious experiences of adherents. There are of course also virtual services (Naidoo, 2023) some churches have used VR to create immersive worship experiences, allowing congregants to attend services from anywhere in the world. AR can also bring religious texts to life with interactive elements, enhancing understanding and engagement. AI has been used in some countries to tailor sermons to address the very specific spiritual needs of individual congregants. Going further, Chatbots and AI systems could certainly soon if not already provide 24 hour a day pastoral care and support to church congregants. Of course congregants would need to be educated on the ethical aspects of such usage and be discerning as well.

The Church responds to numerous transhumanist contexts and ideas in the digital era. For example, the transhumanist narrative calls attention to the challenges and limitations of a non-enhanced existence (Campbell, 2016: 307) Transhumanists discuss the challenges of aging, dealing with diseases, losing memory with old age, and enhancing one's appearance and capacities. While wishing for a longer and healthier life is not a problem, transhumanists focus on reframing the traditional understanding of being human. Transhumanists explain how technology can expand life spans, bodily functions, and intellectual capacities (Campbell, 2016: 312). While such improvements benefit humans, the Church must respond to whether such motives eliminate unnecessary boundaries and create more reliance on technology than on God. The Church talks about the possibility of worshiping technology instead of viewing it as a human helpmate. The church insists that technology should only enable humanity to be more developed and not replace humans or their worship of a higher being. But tradition still has value and a real place in the future, precisely because we live with such diversity around us. In many cities around the globe, the more traditional churches are making a strong comeback (Dreyer, 2019:6).

While transhumanists represent a group of thousands of people, including techies and technologists, the Church should not ignore its ideas. The Church realizes that biological functions, human activities, emotions, moral predispositions, and cognitive capabilities are susceptible to sophisticated technologies (Cole-Turner, 2018: 7). Most religious leaders supporting transhumanism discuss the powerful opportunities that online technologies and digital culture offer (Campbell, 2016; 322). Most religious professionals seek to use their skills carefully on behalf of religious groups and justify their online work to offline religious organizations in the hope of acquiring support. However, the problem is that online technologies result in the emergence of numerous religious actors and leaders seeking to undermine the importance of traditional religious communities. Church leaders in future must gain a thorough understanding these problems that they wanted to attract, either on their doorstep or in cyberspace (Ungerer: 2019). The Vatican's 2002 document 'The Church and Internet' acknowledges the Internet as a divine gift that can enhance communication, unity, and evangelism, urging Catholics to utilize it effectively. However, it also views the Internet as a potential threat, capable of attacking Catholicism, spreading heterodox teachings, and promoting a consumerist attitude towards Church doctrines (Hutchings, 2007, p. 245).

Transhumanism in the digital era leads to a divide between traditional church leaders and religious digital creatives. Digital creatives include individuals with specialized skills in software design, digital content creation, computer coding, and social media innovation and management (Campbell, 2016: 314). Religious digital creatives leverage their skills for a cause, often motivated by a personal passion or agenda. The problem with most religious



professionals using online technologies is that they preach the transhumanism gospel to offline believers, discussing its potential benefits for the Church. As they justify their role within religious communities, they might face disagreement from traditional religious leaders. The controversies highlight an essay by Anderson (1999) about how the Internet would lead to the emergence of new classes of religious interpreters utilizing the Internet for religiously motivated agendas. The discord between internet and offline preachers demands that the Church creates a new theology to guide its mission in the digital culture and how to respond to transhumanism people and contexts.

In the past, Christian leaders have attempted to reconcile theology with scientific developments. For instance, Roman Catholic authorities interspersed Christianity with Neoplatonism, the popular science of the day (Cannon, 2019). Neoplatonism discusses extending or transforming in many respects, such as identifying Christ as God. Thirteen centuries ago, Scholastic theologians also continued to synthesize Christianity with popular science, such as the rediscovered ideas of Aristotle. Such past incidences lead to questions on whether modern-day Christians will synthesize Christianity with transhumanism. Religious transhumanism is more concerned about the explicit use of technology and its role in the Church's theology mission. The view of transhumanism as a new form of religion indicates that technology will usher humanity into a new destiny in its evolution (Damour, 2019). While the transhumanist vision is more secular than religious, there are concerns about how the Church will respond and questions about the possibility of synthesizing Christianity with such contexts.

Transhumanism as a New Religion and the Church's Response

Numerous scholars today claim that transhumanism represents a new form of religion. For instance, William Sims Bainbridge, a sociologist of religion, talks about transhumanism as a new form of religion. Bainbridge has had close links with the transhumanist movement since the 1980s and contributed to disseminating transhumanism ideas as an NBIC reporter. Bainbridge promotes the idea that transhumanism is a religion that supports the progress of civilization and serves to channel new energy and create meaning for posthumans. Other sociologists with similar views are Max More and Gregory Jordan. Conversely, envisions transhumanism as religion 2.0 because it gives people a purpose and a new hope for a better future (Damour, 2019). The Church has varying opinions on such views and transhumanist contexts. Emerging Technologies and transhumanism present opportunities for the Catholic Church to promote human dignity and adapt to the changing nature of humanity. Unlike posthumanism, transhumanism aligns more closely with the Church's mission to defend human dignity and effectively deliver sacraments. By embracing transhumanism, the Church can thrive alongside a flourishing, technologically-enhanced humanity (Malapi-Nelson, 2019).

The Church recognizes that transhumanism is not new. Throughout centuries, human beings have dreamed and attempted to address the many problems of life. For example, humans have worked towards solutions such as developing fire, clothes, the wheel, and the use of fuel (Winyard, 2020). However, despite such developments, the Church does not support the view of transhumanism as a religion and its role in changing human nature (Wendy & Alinuridin, 2021: 23). Christians believe God created human nature perfectly and morally forbids humans to change it (Göcke, 2017). Only God has the authority and ability to change human form and that altering or enhancing human capabilities is taking on a role that human beings do not support. Human beings are meant to enjoy and work with the God-given design of the world as they have received it. When considering God's role in creating, Christian leaders speak against transhumanism as a religion, both human dignity and the worship of God are compromised.



Transhumanists believe that in the future, it will be possible to transfer or upload human minds into computer systems. Uploading human minds into the computer system will potentially eliminate a person's problematic biological existence, including challenges with diseases, aging, and limited physical capabilities (Winyard, 2020: 70). Transhumanists believe that such technological developments make transhumanism a new religion for posthumans, devoid of God. While one might assume such results will be impossible, transhumanists express great confidence in their visions. They recognize that their faith in science is comparable to religious belief since it will open the door to human enhancements that exist only in science fiction, implying that transhumanism will possibly be a new religion. Max More (2013) supports such notions by arguing that transhumanism functions as a religion despite lacking an appeal to a higher power supernatural entity and without the other core features of religion. Religious people view More's remarks as promoting a cult religion and failing to understand humanity. While transhumanists promote the idea of having their religion, Christians realize that spirituality and society are hugely inter-connected, and current religion cannot simply fade away to give room for a transhuman religion.

Leading promoters of transhumanism collide with Christian leaders through various arguments. They argue that transhumanism is similar to Christianity in specific ways. For example, the return of Christ promises humans a new world free from pain and death. Transhumanism also promises that technological breakthroughs will free humans from the pain of diseases, and uploading their minds into computer systems will free them from death. They add that religion is wired into human brains due to human evolution and cannot be abandoned without a major transformation of human nature. Transhumanism will not make religion obsolete but will lead to its development. In the future, religion will become transcendent and radical, taking humans to the stars and eliminating the ugly reality of death (Winyard, 2020). Christian leaders criticize such ideas and dismiss them as being vain.

However, instead of dismissing the views of transhumanism promoters, Christians should consider how to respond to it while maintaining their theological mission. Some theologians welcome the opening chapter that transhumanism will bring and explore how theology can inform and support such emerging technologies. For example, Calvin Mercer as cited by Pugh, a Christian theologian, explores how the Christian belief of a resurrected body can live with the ability of personhood existing in a hybrid posthuman body (Pugh, 2017: 5). Many people today also recognize the value AI programs and transhumanism will have on humans. Mercer urges the acceptance of agendas like transhumanism, the fluidity of the sort of bodies humans will have, and the elimination of suffering and death. Other Christians also consider the promise of salvation as transhumanism seeks to relieve people from biological suffering (Winyard, 2020: 72). However, challenges remain despite the possible perceived convergence between Christianity and Transhumanism.

Christian Arguments against Transhumanism in the Digital Era

The rise of transhumanism provides the opportunity to take a setback and reflect on how theological and religious principles might apply to people in a posthuman world. While the current article has reflected on such a possibility, there are many reasons why the Church is against transhumanism in the digital era. The first reason is that transhumanism holds a materialistic worldview and promotes the worship and human faith in technology rather than in the Triune Godhead. Christianity focuses on a past where God created the world and everything in it and a future where Christ will come again and free the world of suffering and the pain of death (Winyard, 2020: 73). However, transhumanism holds its faith in the future and has little to offer in origins debates. The conflict between transhumanists and Christians is that transhumanists look at the possibility of a created universe where humans control the



creation process (Winyard, 2020: 75). It is challenging for the Church to view a future where humans are responsible for altering the human form and taking the role of God in creation, thus highlighting one of the arguments against transhumanism.

Most proponents of transhumanism meet religious objections to enhancement technologies with ridicule. However, the Church maintains the right to voice its opinions and objects against hubris. Theologians argue that God is humanity's author, engineer, and creator and that humans are His creation (Thweatt-Bates, 2016). It is against God for transhumanists to play his role in creation. The problem is that transhumanists do not believe that a divine and supernatural God exists, indicating why they might meet such claims with ridicule. Transhumanists believe that scientists and technology will profoundly affect humanity in the future, including broadening human potential by overcoming involuntary suffering, aging, cognitive shortcomings, and confinement on planet Earth (More, 2013: 17). However, they fail to believe that God is still in control of what happens to society, and He desires to have His name glorified by all humans worldwide. While transhumanists believe that humanity's potential is unrealized, the Church argues that humans are wonderfully created in God's image and should seek transformation only through Christ. Arguments against transhumanism lay on the basis that physical enhancement is vain and that humans should seek to renew their minds and souls by forming a true and solid relationship with Jesus Christ.

Nicolaides (2017), a theologian and ethicist, has explored the ethical implications of AI usage, emphasizing the need for ethical practices in technological advancements. His research underscores the importance of integrating ethical considerations into AI development to ensure sustainability and social responsibility in any sphere including faith. Nicolaides (2017) advocates for a transformational approach that combines ethical leadership with innovative strategies to address a plethora of environmental and social challenges using inter alia, AI. He argues that businesses and institutions such as places of worship. must adopt eco-centric and value-driven practices to ensure their actions do not compromise future generations' sustainability or the teachings of the gospel. Nicolaides thus highlights the role of ethical guidelines in guiding AI usage in order to be safeguarding it benefits humanity without causing any harm. He also emphasizes the necessity of entrenching ethical principles in AI development and its usage, promoting a sense of equilibrium between technological innovation and moral responsibility, and this applies to churches and their important spiritual work as well.

Biblical texts on technology show that it is inherently ambiguous and can be used to cause harm and violence (Genesis 4:22; 11:4; Isaiah 44:22). Romans 12:2 informs us that Christians should not be "...conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

The early Christians used technology to build a sanctuary for the Lord and the Lord's Church, it was still nonetheless used to cause harm and violence. Early Christians used technology to make and worship idols against God's wishes. What happens in the digital era is not new to most Christian leaders and theologians. Christians today accept that since technology is part of the human condition and that it is often used to solve human problems, but it cannot be used to solve the human condition itself (Glennon, 2018). The worship of technology, as promoted by those who view transhumanism as a form of religion, appears futile since technological innovations are man's doing and not vice versa. Although technology can alleviate some of the effects of the human condition, it is not its engineer or creator. While technology is part of the human condition, it cannot define humans or act as a



source of life. Romans 1:22 advises us that “Claiming to be wise, they became fools”, so let us be prudent and prayerful in our endeavours,

Conclusion

The Church grapples with the impact of digital technology, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as it turns to online platforms for global outreach. However, the rise of transhumanism, a secular movement advocating human evolution through technology, poses challenges to traditional Christian beliefs. Transhumanism's materialistic worldview clashes with Christian ideals of redemption through Jesus Christ, raising concerns about misplaced faith in technology. The Church faces the task of reconciling these differences and navigating moral implications, such as the integration of human minds into computers. Religious leaders must develop a new theological framework that addresses these complexities, affirming core beliefs through both online and offline ministry efforts to engage with the digital era effectively. Thus, the integration of transhumanist ideas in any shape or form into churches involves a very careful balance between embracing technological advancements and maintaining essential spiritual and ethical principles based on the Holy Word of God. Churches have the important role to lead thoughtful discussions on how technology can enhance human life while upholding the values central to the Christian faith and its many traditions.

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