

Reading that Russian at 5 A.M.

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Providence.

This is Chris Oswald, Senior Pastor at Providence Community Church. You're listening to the Providence Podcast. This morning, I am going to record a couple of podcasts, one that is possibly of very little interest to many of you.

I take off the mask and reveal my deepest political slash theological nerd status.

Again, as a warning, you may not find this interesting. And so with that warning, you may, you may not, but give it a try.

How about that? Well, I woke up this morning to find a fascinating article produced by the notorious Russian intellectual Alexander Dugan, an article he titled, An Even Deeper State and the Dark Enlightenment.

[1 : 0 9] And the context of this article has to do with Dugan attempting to explain Trump's ascendancy to the 47th presidency in particular.

In the article, he differentiates between what he calls Trump 1.0 and Trump 2.0, and then proceeds with a series of explanations on what makes 2.0 Trump different from 1.0 Trump.

And one of the things he says is that among various influences, Trump has a new coalition in 2.0 of so-called accelerationists, which would be just a group of tech bros.

Dugan calls them, probably appropriately so, oligarchs. And what he's saying, amongst other things, is that the Trump 2.0 phenomenon is in part due to the new coalition formed with this group of tech bros that are all somewhat transhumanist and also accelerationists.

Here's how he describes it. This is the one paragraph from the article I'll read. In the 2024 election, Trump received support from key Silicon Valley figures, oligarchs and technocrats traditionally associated exclusively with the Democratic Party.

[2 : 3 3] This group is entirely devoted to accelerating the pace of time, a process that gave rise to a particular term and corresponding philosophy, accelerationism. Accelerationists believe existence is concentrated solely within time.

And by accelerating time, rapidly advancing technological progress, especially in social media and artificial intelligence, humanity can reach a qualitatively new level.

In essence, this represents a leap towards post-humanity or superhumanity. And what I would like to do today is to offer a bit of a spin on some of those comments and suggest maybe something else afoot.

One key to thinking about history and politics biblically is to understand that God moves people like chess pieces while allowing those same people to exercise agency according to their own motivations.

And we see this exemplified perhaps most clearly in the kind of thing at work in the plot to kill Jesus. In that case, key political leaders conspired together to accomplish their individual goals, all the while being utilized by God to accomplish his will.

[3 : 57] So that's a key for the Christian to understand sort of what is actually happening in politics. For us, we have to ask two questions.

What do our leaders think they are doing? And then more importantly, what is God actually doing through them? And so I wouldn't disagree with anything that Dugan stipulated about the motivations of the accelerationists.

And here we would be talking about people like Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, David Sachs, and so on and so forth. I wouldn't disagree with his assignment of motivations.

They seem to have at least somewhat, I'm going to qualify this a little bit, transhumanist aspirations for humanity to go post-humanity in a sense, or to reach superhumanity.

That certainly would have been a very accurate description of this movement five years ago. I think things have changed a little bit, and I think I would trace that to the hand of the Lord.

[5 : 00] And so I'd like to talk about this phenomenon, this new coalition, and what God might actually be doing through this. I don't want to dismiss the dangers of the transhumanist philosophy.

I just happen to believe that the project itself, living forever, uploading human consciousness to the cloud, etc., I just happen to believe that all of that is both a dead end and ultimately a distraction from something deeper that is taking place.

If I had to put a name to what I'm talking about, I think I would talk about a return to pre-Darwinian Victorianism.

A return to a pre-Darwinian Victorianism. That's what I think is happening. And I need to do more work to develop the Victorian aspects of this hypothesis.

But for now, I will just speak about the notion that I have that whatever the motivations of the leaders are themselves, it seems to me that God is actively at work through them and others to dismantle key features of Darwinianism that have held humanity back and, in fact, I would say disorient and demoralize people in fundamental ways.

[6 : 26] That's what I think might be happening. In spite of whatever the leaders themselves are attempting to accomplish, this is what I suspect or at least hope God is up to. The reason why, in order to advance human flourishing, we have to see Darwinian thought dismantled is because it does disorient us in fundamental ways.

Human beings are fundamentally oriented by both place and time. And I think you could add, you know, the third would be the Word, the Word of God. And, of course, you know, you're very familiar with the way that Darwinian thinking would dismantle the Word, right?

I won't speak to that in this conversation. What is less familiar to most folks is the importance of place and time for human orientation, for a human to understand himself and to understand who he is and what he must be about.

Place and time are very important. Now, by place, I don't mean location exclusively, although that concept is important.

Mankind's most important sense of place is actually a little bit more metaphysical in the sense that it involves, properly understood through the Scriptures, man's place involves a sense of superiority over the rest of creation, you know, a kind of differentiation between man and the rest of creation.

[7 : 58] So there's a sense of superiority that the Bible extends to man over creation, while accompanying that with a sense of inferiority beneath the Creator.

For us to know who we are and to know what we're supposed to be about, we have to be located and placed properly in that position of being above creation, but also beneath the Creator.

And Darwinian thinking just dislodges mankind from both of those positions. He is neither special or differentiated in any meaningful way for the rest of creation, certainly not by the fiat that the Bible describes, nor is he located in any kind of subordinate position beneath a superior Creator.

So this is what I mean when I say that Darwinian thought is disorienting to the human mind. It removes him from a sense of his locative position, his proper place in the created order.

Now, more common notions of place, like, you know, I am from Missouri, I live in Kansas, I am an American.

[9 : 14] These are sort of the headlines associated with the Trumpian populism. They always have to do with nationalism, right?

And nationalism is pertaining toward reorienting a human being in space, in place. Nationalism does that in terms of location, in terms of nation.

And that is an important development. And it's a development that will help humanity far more than it will hurt humanity to get people to stop thinking about themselves as replaceable units of economic activity, swappable with any other human being in the world, to see the relevance of people and place and our identity.

These are all extremely positive developments. But nationalism itself, properly understood, is always downstream from these larger senses of space, a place that I'm talking about.

Let me read a passage of scripture that makes that pretty clear. In Acts 17, Paul is essentially engaging with the men of Athens, the philosophers of Athens.

[10 : 33] He's essentially engaging in a locational work. He's hoping to place them properly in the sense that I had talked about, you know, the metaphysical sense that I had talked about a moment ago.

And so he stands at the Areopagus and says, Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious, for I passed along and observed the objects of your worship. I found also an altar with the inscription to an unknown God.

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives all mankind life and breath and everything.

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and boundaries of their dwelling place.

Now, what is inherent in that, amongst other things, is a kind of Genesis literalism. And I'll return to that subject in a moment. But what you'll see maybe, you know, that leaps out to you first is that it is fitting for people to think of themselves in terms of their geographic location.

[11 : 53] It is fitting to think of nations as distinct entities and that all of that is orchestrated by God, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

That's a really healthy way to think. And I'm glad to see a return to that. And I'm glad to see that, you know, resurging. But I will say that that actually, that way of thinking is best accounted for in that other thing I was just talking about, namely that we are underneath a God who is orchestrating everything.

And yet we are also above the rest of creation. That's this truth of nationalism depends on those two broader placements.

And Darwinian thinking removes all of that from us and we become disoriented. We don't have clarity about our place in the cosmos, for instance.

We don't realize that we're the kings and queens of creation while also being subordinate to the creator. Darwinianism blows all of that up. And then everything downstream from that, which would include this sense of providential nationhood, comes out of that larger sense of placement.

[13 : 08] So, again, what seems to be happening in the Trumpian universe is that a broad coalition has formed, that at the very least has started to believe that human beings are special again.

And in this way, I see Darwinian thinking being deconstructed. Now, even among those tech bros, many of whom still remain nominally committed to an evolutionary explanation, even among those guys, the notion of human uniqueness is rising in prominence.

So, even among the ones who would still formally ascribe to evolution, they're really being inconsistent in a good way, I'm glad for it, in really starting to celebrate the uniqueness of humanity.

Take, for instance, Elon's desire to make the human race interplanetary and ensure the continued survival of what he calls human consciousness. That's a tacit acknowledgement, more than a tacit acknowledgement, that there is something unique about human beings worth celebrating, worth differentiating from the rest of the cosmos, and worth preserving.

So, remember, I'm suggesting that human flourishing is dependent on, right now, like kind of the issue that is the most important as far as I can see, is the dismantling of the Darwinian disorientation, right?

[14 : 46] And relocating us in our proper position above creation and beneath the creator. And the question that remains is whether or not these transhumanists will help us arrive at the sweet spot, or whether God will use them, I should say, to help us arrive at that sweet spot.

Now, at first blush, all of the transhumanist aspects of these guys' philosophy would lead us to believe that we're going to not only decide that we're special, but that we're God.

And I do believe that that's the natural momentum of the human heart as well. But remember, I'm assuming that a good God is in charge, and that he might be doing something much better than what his agents, his leaders, are aware of.

So, I'm cautiously optimistic that this is taking place, and that actually all of the haughty, prideful, transhumanist elements that would rob us of our proper subordinate role beneath God, I actually believe that that's all fading away, and that what is emerging is something like this sweet spot between humans are special, but we're not God.

Let me explain why I'm cautiously optimistic on this front. One of the things we've seen is a mass return to natural law.

[16 : 24] And this appears, as best as I can trace it, to have emerged primarily in reaction to the transgender insanity. There, you seem to have a moment in which a very large coalition of reality respecters, that's what we call them, reality respecters, kind of emerged together and became co-belligerents against all the transgender insanity, the pronoun terrorism, the drag queen story hours, biological men invading women's sports.

So, what happened, I think, as a reaction to transgenderism was a coalition of reality respecters emerging. And there could be other explanations.

That's just the one that seems obvious to me. So, as a result of this, many people have rediscovered the importance of natural law. Because of this, you know, absurdity that was shoved in our faces, a whole group of people, many of whom are not Christian, have accidentally stumbled back into the sort of bedrock reality of natural law.

And here's what I think I'm seeing. And that is, is that reality is addictive. Truth is somewhat addictive. Meaning, roughly, and here's why I see that playing out in another area, roughly the same coalition who has remained intact, who stood up against transgenderism, has remained intact to resist other rejections of natural law that have been taking place in society.

And one of those additional areas of natural law rejection would be what we call modern monetary theory, which is actually just the economic equivalent of transgenderism.

[18 : 17] In both cases, the elites stand up and assert their naming, you know, formative power over fundamental reality. In terms of gender, they stand up and think that they can simply speak a man into a woman.

And in the same way, they think they can simply speak value into currency. That's essentially what's going on with modern monetary theory.

And what we're finding is, is that that group of reality-respecting co-belligerents who stood against transgenderism found that to be refreshing to their souls, I believe.

And they start looking around for other examples where the emperor is wearing their clothes and where a departure from natural law has taken place.

And among other places, they have landed on this sort of newfound enthusiasm toward fiscal responsibility.

[19 : 18] And that's because the basic claim, the basic problem is the same. The elites think that they can simply speak money into existence in the same way that they can simply decide to make a man into a woman.

And so these reality-respecting people seem just as willing to resist the economic insanity as they once resisted the gender benders.

So all that to say that the cultural momentum, in my mind, does not seem to be leading toward transhumanism. Because a return to natural law is most fundamentally an acknowledgement that while we are very powerful and special, we are subordinate to a set of realities that human beings cannot simply change at whim.

That is where I see things at right now, in spite of whatever transhumanist goals to ascend above God might exist in influential people's minds.

Return to natural law. And a return to natural law is definitionally, sort of ultimately subject, making yourself subject to someone, to a lawmaker who set laws that you can't fiddle with.

[20 : 36] So I don't see the transhumanism thing moving all that quickly. I think that this renewed love for natural law is, of course, from the Lord.

And, you know, all of this is quite messy, I will say. So you'd be well within your rights to disagree with me. But I tend to believe that in God's gracious mercy, he's dismantling the demoralizing effects of Darwinism.

In part, by restoring man's sense of awareness of his place in this world, both as special, but also subordinate.

And that man does not actually have enough power to exert his will over basic reality. That seems to be, you know, I think an undeniable development in the last several years.

To be sure, that work, if it were to happen, and we were to wind up getting rid of the Darwinian disorientation and finding ourselves relocated back to our proper place, both in the cosmos and also within the nations, that would all just be because of God.

[21 : 53] The truth is, is that human beings in their fallen nature are quite proud and certainly have, as a result of the fall, you know, an insatiable craving to be as gods.

But God is kind and he can correct all of this in real time as the car is driving down the road. I would say this too.

Certainly some components of the tech oligarchy had once made kind of blasphemous assertions that man's place is at the very top of the cosmic hierarchy.

But now I see some of the same most powerful members dialing back from transhumanism. Take Mark Zuckerberg for an example. You know, he was just a hubris machine to begin with, a robotic hubris machine to begin with.

But that seems to be giving way to a guy who likes to hunt and eat barbecue and train jujitsu and serenade his wife. Just recently in 2024, he did an interview with Bloomberg and was asked about transhumanism.

[23 : 01] And he expressly pushed back against some of its most controversial aspirations, saying he doesn't believe that human consciousness can be digitized. Well, that's quite a statement.

That's quite a statement because now he's taken a step into the metaphysical. If human consciousness is not merely mechanic and therefore cannot be simply digitized, then that's an interesting development in his mind to see that.

Again, I think these are all kind of reality-respecting developments. And then he went on to say that even if such a thing were possible, he would not actually want to be a part of it.

He wouldn't want to live in that sense. All that to say there's a way that Darwinian thinking has really affected us and disoriented us by removing us from our proper sense of place in various ways, most importantly, in that metaphysical cosmic hierarchy.

And I think the momentum in our culture right now is definitely, I can say this kind of more assuredly, I think the momentum is definitely moving away from the notion, the Darwinian notion that human beings are nothing special and merely accidental.

[24 : 21] It seems like the culture is really moving quite obviously toward a sense of the opposite conclusion, the opposite thesis, that we are actually special, that we are actually worthy of a special place in the created order.

And the real question remains, will we hit that sweet spot, you know, and be in our perfect little groove in the cosmic hierarchy, or will we do what people do naturally, which is to aspire to be God?

And I just would say that right now, this renewal of affection for natural law and a renewed respect for reality, by its definitional nature, keeps man in a subordinate position beneath God.

Am I being Pollyanna on that? Am I being overly optimistic? You know, time is there. Now, I mentioned that in addition to dislodging us from our place, Darwinianism has dislocated man from a proper understanding of time.

And this is one of those areas that I think really gets neglected as we think about the fallout from Darwinian thought.

[25 : 41] Remember I said there's three ways that it's disoriented us. Number one, it's taken the word from us, the word of God from us in very real ways. Number two, it removes our sense of place, both in the cosmic hierarchy, but also as an extension of that makes us think of ourselves as indistinguishable, swappable economic units that place doesn't matter at all.

It really is a pre- Darwinianism is actually, in some sense, a precursor both toward a kind of Hitlerian hyper-fascism, but also kind of a globo-homo, everything's-the-same-ism.

So I think that we can see that, you know, God's always going to protect his word, and God is maybe helping us as a culture right now get a better sense of our space, our place.

But what about time? Why is time so important? Well, first of all, let's just be clear. Time is what orients you most consistently in reality.

When someone asks what time it is, they're asking, where am I in the day? When someone asks what date it is, they're asking, where am I in the week? Where am I in the month?

[26 : 59] Where am I in the year? Time is really the common orienter for all of humanity, and we need time to give us a sense of location in reality, I guess you could say.

And I think that people don't understand the way that Darwinian thinking has distorted our sense of time. I think it's relatively simple.

I just don't think it gets talked about a lot. So by adding billions and even trillions of years to the story of the earth, Darwinism has created what I would call time inflation.

Time inflation. So let me talk about inflation for a minute, because there seems to be some confusion about what inflation even is. If we talk about inflation, we do not mean that the prices of one or two items has increased even by a lot.

That kind of thing just happens merely as a result of supply and demand. And certain commodities have interdependent relationships with one another.

[28 : 04] So obviously, if fuel costs go really high, then the price of everything that fuel delivers would also increase. But we're not talking about simple supply and demand issues.

Even artificially restricted supply and artificially developed demand, that's not actually really in the inflation conversation properly conceived.

Inflation is much broader than that, and it just has to do with the purchasing power of the dollar. And the inflation we're experiencing now, which isn't making just one or two things more expensive, but rather everything, is actually not due to a supply and demand issue.

It's due to the massive injection of artificial currency into the economy. So to put it simply, inflation happens when you dump trillions of virtual dollars into a system designed for real ones, into a system designed for a finite number of real dollars.

This action distorts the distinction between real money and fake money and basically dilutes the value of the dollar. That's how I would describe inflation.

[29 : 19] It's the dumping of trillions of virtual dollars into a system that is set up for real ones, and this action then dilutes the value of the dollar.

So when I'm talking about Darwinian time inflation, I mean that what has happened to our sense of time, once the theory of evolution became popular and sort of received knowledge in our world, what has happened is that you don't just add a trillion years to the front end of our story and walk away and expect nothing to change.

The truth is that in the same way that dumping trillions of dollars into the economy dilutes the value of the dollar, dumping trillions of years into the story dilutes our proper understanding of the value of time.

And so we wind up having, maybe in less consequential ways than in other aspects, but I mean, we wind up just having an inevitable kind of disorientation due to the injection of that much time into a story that wasn't designed for that much time.

So now you can maybe begin to see like that, you know, if we need time to orient us and to understand our place and our role in the world and, you know, where we are, if we need time as an orienting principle, then you mess with time and you start, you know, moving it around.

[30 : 57] And especially when you just dump a trillion random years into the front end of the story, well, there's some things going to give. And what I would say is, is that that has the effect of really devaluing time or certainly making the measurement of time less meaningful and useful for our orientation in the world.

So my thoughts on this are obviously still a little bit fuzzy, but I will say that in terms of human beings being properly oriented in the reality of time, going back to this, you know, this group of oligarchs in Silicon Valley, their aim seems to be different than mine for sure.

I would just say, though, that all of the fruit of accelerationism seems to be deflationary in the sense of time. What seems to be happening, whether they intended or not, is actually that time is more understandable and useful than it was even a couple of years ago.

Let me put it this way. In economic terms, deflation makes your dollar go further. Well, we're seeing something develop with time itself.

I can certainly get more done with a minute today than I could 30 years ago. I'm 32 minutes into this podcast. I will be done in, you know, probably five, 10 minutes at the most.

[32 : 39] And I will hit a couple of buttons and do some editing, take about 30 more minutes and upload, you know, what is going to wind up being something like a 5,000 word essay.

There is a sense in which time itself has begun to stretch further. You can get more done with the same minute.

And what seems to be happening to do good, good, to do more good. And I agree. Gosh, I see something happening both to place and time.

And then, of course, I also see something happening in relationship to the word. I think people are returning to it. And I just look at, well, when did all that go wrong? And I think, well, all of that got super distorted through Darwinism.

And I won't get into the reasons why scientifically it is being dismantled. But I would say even culturally, we may be actually experiencing the lifting of the Darwinian spell.

[33 : 49] If you want to hear my super optimistic take, I see a lot of evidence that people are starting to behave like Genesis 1 through 3 is literally true.

That God made the world. That men are men and women are women. That work is fundamental. That time is measurable and comprehensible to some degree.

To such a degree as necessary for a man to properly orient himself in the world. And that all of this is true because we are special, but we are also subordinate to the one who brought all of this into existence and into order.

So that's my super optimistic take. I just see like this reemergence of all of the consequential beliefs in Genesis 1 through 3.

I see a reemergence there. I'm not crediting Elon or Trump. Again, the real trick to doing Christian politics and Christian history is to say, well, people do what they're going to do, but God uses what people do in a way to accomplish his greater will.

[35 : 02] Now, that's the optimistic take. The pessimistic take would point to another section of Genesis, namely the Tower of Babel. This essay began with Dugan's observations about the rising power of the tech-right accelerationist.

And to be sure, that movement does have plenty of Babel builders. And so the pessimistic take was is that if they wind up defining the moment, man will actually wind up being further dislocated from the most important senses of space and time, which is really the goal of that story.

The antagonists in the Tower of Babel story are actually trying to displace themselves from both space and time. they want to live forever in one sense or another.

It's a transhumanist goal there. And there are many other people who have talked about that much better than I can. But as I've already stated, I find reasons for cautious optimism, not because the oligarchs are good, but because God is good and his steadfast love endures forever.

Never forget that the renewal of Second Temple Judaism, the relocation of God's people back into their place came about through the humbling of the ancient transhumanist king called Nebuchadnezzar.

[36 : 28] And we see that after God disciplined him severely, in Daniel 4, he exclaims, At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven and my reason returned to me and I blessed the Most High God and praised and honored him who lives forever.

For his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing and he does according to his will among the host of heavens and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can stay his hand or say to him, What have you done? At the same time, my reason returned to me. Hmm. And for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me.

My counselors and my Lord sought me and I was established in my kingdom and still more greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven for all his works are right and his ways are just and those who walk in pride, he is able to humble.

Maybe we're seeing some reason restored to the key movers and shakers of our age. But then again, maybe not. But either way, it's important for you to get properly oriented in place and time.

[37 : 50] On the one big deal, you're a cynical of supply. You should get to be like grasses to grow in an important role. You have a role of honor in creation, but you are still part of creation and under God's rule.

And with, and so far as time is concerned, what you do with your time matters. Clear any Darwinian induced chronological cobwebs from your mind.

Today is, is a day full of opportunities. So, redeem the time and do all of this with a sense of quorum Deo, that the God of the universe is not only watching, but he is working to accomplish his great and glorious will.

All right, well, if you made it through that, I congratulate you. Every once in a while, you have to bear with me as I dive into some weird, weird aspect of theology or politics or so forth.

So, anyway, thanks so much for listening. God bless you. God-bye. Okay.