



# CHRISTIAN NEGATIVITY: WHERE POSITIVE WITNESS?

By Wilfred Hahn



Christians, who are looking up—“for [their] redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28)—sometimes fall into a negativity trap. To them, every trend is black, terrible and condemned. Since the Bible foretells a day of God’s wrath and an ungodly mankind, they tend to focus only on the media headlines of disaster, strife, and disease. News reports of misfortune, economic or financial market downturns ... etc. are repackaged, re-tweeted and blogged about by Christian news aggregators and conspiracy theorists.

Is there not anything positive to celebrate or condone? Arno Froese makes the point that there have been many achievements of mankind, and that, contrary to the doomster’s incessant bleatings, humanity in many ways is actually experiencing the best of times.

If so, would this change the truth and prophecies of the Bible?

No. Without a doubt, we know in advance the choices that mankind will make, which will play a willful part of the events leading to the Apocalypse and Judgment Day. Why? Because the Bible has foreknowledge of these free and ungodly choices of mankind.

But that is not the complete story. The perspectives of the above-described “negativist” are not entirely Biblically balanced.

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God did bless humans with skills and creativity. After all, the LORD said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground [...] in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26-27). Moreover, God engaged mankind to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (verse 28).

Mankind here is clearly implored to “subdue” the earth. To do so, therefore, is not necessarily an ungodly endeavor.

Mankind is even capable of achieving things far beyond what the LORD had intended to be ideal. Consider the “advanced-technology” story of the building of the Tower of Babel. The people of that era (living not long after the flood) “[...] said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:3-5).

We see here how the people of that day quickly translated their achievements into arrogance and the celebration of self-determination without God.

“But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The LORD said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing



they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:5-6).

We repeat part of the quote from above for emphasis: “[...] then nothing they plan will be impossible for them”!

We must conclude that mankind indeed has the capability to take dominion over the earth, in so doing establishing many achievements.

Consider some examples of how mankind has subdued the world since Creation:

**Human Productivity:** For a great part of human history (even as late as between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages), productivity growth was absent. People would spend their short lives fetching water and wood. Today, conditions are comfortably different. Only in parts of the developing world will one not find piped water. The contributors to advanced productivity have been the discovery of electricity, refrig-



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eration, telecommunications, the internal combustion engine ... etc.

**Technology:** Thanks to modern telecommunications, we can today have discussions or exchange information with anyone, virtually anywhere in the world almost instantly. Mankind has also mastered flight and stepped onto the surface of the moon.

**Increasing Lifespan:** The Bible documents that mankind enjoyed very long lifespans until shortly after the Flood. More recently, great increases in lifespans have occurred. For example, from the 1500s onward, until around the year 1800, life expectancy throughout Europe hovered between 30 and 40 years of age. Today, by contrast, life expectancy at birth in developing countries has lengthened by nearly one-third, from 50 years of age in 1960 to 65 years of age today. Seen over a longer time frame, the average life ex-

pectancy of all humans has more than doubled over the course of the last century.

**Human Travel Speed:** A normal walking speed for humans is around 5 km (a little over 3 mi.) per hour. Today, the average travel velocity of humans is much more rapid. We may drive our automobiles at speeds 20 times faster than we can walk. Jet travel is also commonplace, at speeds of 100 times that of walking.

**General Health:** Improved health care, sanitation, immunizations, antibiotics such as penicillin, access to clean running water, and better nutrition have all contributed to the massive increase in health. In 1960, 22 percent of children in developing countries died before their fifth birthday; but by 2013, only 5% did. The rate of child death has declined in every single country in the world. Diarrhea killed five million children a year in 1990, but claimed fewer than one million in 2014. Half as many people now die from malaria as did in 2000.

**Poverty:** The share of people living in extreme poverty has fallen by half over the last two decades, according to the World Bank. While poverty will never be eradicated (Christ said, "The poor you will always have with you," Mark 14:7), in fact, global poverty is falling faster today than at any other time in human history. In 1993, about two billion people were trapped in extreme

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poverty. By 2012, that number had dropped to less than one billion.

The above cited accomplishments range from the incredible to the amazing. Man, who was made in the “image” of God, accomplished these (though surely not without God’s allowance and His Creation). Is any one of these to be interpreted negatively? Not in and of themselves. Yes, these achievements can be used for evil by someone with demonic intent. But, that does not nullify the beneficial aspects of inventions and improvements mankind has enjoyed over recent centuries.

Then, for what reason does God bring His wrath? Not for mankind’s achievements, but for a very different

cause. To begin, God is no “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34). Mankind becomes smug, proud and independent as a result of his achievements. Subsequently, humanism becomes the world’s most prevalent attitude and religion.

Mankind seeks independence from God and the freedom to do what he considers to be right and good. It is at this point that “ungodliness” emerges. Consider that God charged Israel to “Do what is right and good in the LORD’s sight, so that it may go well with you [...]” (Deuteronomy 6:18).

The Bible provides a number of examples of the admonishments that God brought against nations



and peoples that became proud and independent.

Here we cite just one: Ezekiel tells of a high and mighty tree (symbolizing Assyria). God Himself says that “I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God” (Ezekiel 31:9). We see that God blessed this people, and then something happened that kindled God’s wrath. What was it?

The people took credit for their greatness, not attributing any glory to God.

“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because the great cedar towered over the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, I gave it into the hands of the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside” (Ezekiel 31:10-11).

### Thoughts to Ponder

Are there achievements of mankind to celebrate? Can we not accept the many conveniences and health improvements that the world increasingly enjoys as a blessing? Yes, definitely. It is not honest to only publish negative news ... as if to imply that Christians are somehow gleeful about bad news, taking delight in the failures and sufferings of mankind. Such an unwarranted bias brings discredit.

Christians have no reason not to provide fair attribution for the many achievements of mankind in “subduing” the earth. The main difference is that these acknowledgements do not lead to conceit and arrogance. In doing so, we praise and give thanks to God. It is only through Him and His Son that all things are created.

Says the Revelator: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Revelation 4:11). That truth doesn’t change, no matter how much God may have enabled mankind to subdue the earth and achieve beneficial accomplishments.

However, today mankind has become quite proud. Humanity has again come to the point of converging languages and materialistic beliefs. Globalism, globalization, monetarism and the interconnectedness of all peoples on this planet have caused mankind to come a long way. Indeed, as God said “[...] nothing they plan will be impossible for them.”

In fact, organized humanity no longer thinks it needs God. Worse, the notion of even believing in a God who is Creator is regarded as primitive.

Mankind’s situation will eventually come to the point described here by Jude: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 1:14-15).

We can already discern the specter shown in Psalm 2 taking place in our day. In this chapter, we note the Psalmist’s prophecy: “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles’” (Psalm 2:1-3).

God therefore responds in wrath: “The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled) [...] The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear” (Isaiah 2:12-18).

Christians, who have been given the Great Hope and are therefore saved from wrath, can be thankful for the advances and quality of life afforded today. However, technology (and humanism) is not our strong tower. “The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverb 18:10). “For You have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe” (Psalm 61:3). <sup>MC</sup>