

The Science of 21st Century Serfdom

That technology giants pull the strings in the 21st century is a fact that is becoming increasingly clear. It's hard to imagine a world without social media and online shopping, and the billionaires made rich by these enterprises likely don't want us to do so, either.

Yet the consequences of this arrangement are becoming more visible. Increased [censorship](#) by our new technological overlords and overladies ensures that only accepted opinions reach wide audiences. Your politics must be "woke" and your devotion to the new religion of science must be in accord with the orthodoxy. Merely questioning the lockdowns and other strategies to contain COVID-19, or to address climate change perhaps, and you may be uttering heresy.

In the [November issue of *Chronicles*](#), John M. DeJak explains how this technological elite interacts with average Americans in his review of Joel Kotkin's book, [The Coming of Neo-Feudalism](#):

Unlike past eras, this new elite does not seek to improve life or create opportunity for its neighbors. Rather, in the words of The Serpent in George Bernard Shaw's play *Back to Methuselah* (1922), it seeks to 'imagine things that never were and ask: why not?' The dogmas of their new religion include environmentalism, urbanism, and social justice activism.

Those who work for Facebook, Google, and other tech companies may enjoy some benefits of their position, but DeJak argues that they are really tied into a new serf-lord relationship with the Zuckerbergs of the world. Unable to afford the exorbitant housing of the Silicon Valley neighborhoods by themselves, they are forced to find roommates and prolong

“their collegiate experience, which includes being permanently stuck in an economic underclass.”

Meanwhile, the average Americans outside of the tech industry are also expected to toe the line of the new “woke” religion. DeJak says this devotion is enforced upon Americans “mainly because our newly developed technology has become the fabric of modern life.”

But this new religion is not as new as most Americans might like to believe.

In 1990, just after the first commercial internet service providers had come into existence, science fiction author Michael Crichton published [*Jurassic Park*](#), a novel in which chaos theory mathematician Ian Malcolm is extremely critical of the potential of Jurassic Park to succeed. After being injured by a Tyrannosaurus rex, and with velociraptors attempting to break into the building through a steel reinforced skylight, Malcolm lambasts the park’s creator for his arrogant belief that science and technology can control the world.

All this attempt to control... We are talking about Western attitudes that are five hundred years old. They began at the time when Florence, Italy, was the most important city in the world. The basic idea of science—that there was a new way to look at reality, that it was objective, that it did not depend on your beliefs or your nationality, that it was *rational*—that idea was fresh and exciting back then. It offered promise and hope for the future, and it swept away the old medieval system, which was hundreds of years old. The medieval world of feudal politics and religious dogma and hateful superstitions fell before science. But, in truth, this was because the medieval world didn’t really work any more. It didn’t work economically, it didn’t work intellectually, and it didn’t fit the new world that was emerging.

Crichton, by way of his character Malcolm, seems to have been prescient. Thirty years later we have progressed to where science is deified and organized religion is scorned by much of America as “the opium of the people,” to quote Karl Marx.

“But now,” Malcolm continued, “science is the belief system that is hundreds of years old. And, like the medieval system before it, science is starting not to fit the world any more.”

We are starting to see Americans push back against both politicized science and the tech giants who seek to lord their wealth, power, and technology over us. [Section 230 protections](#) are under threat, meaning social media giants may soon be treated as the publisher of all of their users’ content. This would be the end of their long-enjoyed immunity from liability for criminal or offensive content carried out by their users on their platforms. The burden of moderating everything posted by [2.7 billion Facebook users](#) or [330 million Twitter users](#) may be cost-prohibitive even for these tech giants, and many Americans are already exploring alternative sites or abandoning social media completely.

At the same time, the novel coronavirus has revealed that American scientific know-how cannot solve every problem that humanity faces. While a vaccine may arrive soon, it took enormous effort over months of lockdowns and face mask mandates, both of which are of questionable efficacy.

If we turn away from our devotion to screens and gadgets and stop seeking the short-term, immediate gratification of video game achievements or strangers’ approval on the internet, we will be a happier people.

It is time to reject the modern, secularized religion that revolves around politicized science and technology. We should aspire, instead, to a higher, spiritual calling residing deep in the heart of every human person.

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