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The Will of God and an Emerging Dilemma

by Revd Jack Dunion

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulders.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

Recently I watched a documentary on the Netflix channel which highlighted what is one of the biggest challenges confronting the human race today. Entitled “The Social Dilemma”, it featured many of the early architects of the various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, along with some key people associated with the industry. Collectively, they were expressing grave concerns about the path which social media and related technology is currently taking us along.

The Algorithm

Basically, there are three different strands involved in the development of social media platforms:

- a) the gathering of information about individual users;
- b) predictions of what individuals might do next;
- c) targeting the user with advertising products which they are most likely to buy.

All the data collected about each person are collated within massive computing systems which are then processed by computer algorithms to maximise the operator's desired outcomes. These algorithms are designed to "self-learn", and so become increasingly more efficient at doing what they do; they will stop at nothing to achieve the goals they are programmed to pursue. One example of the problems this could cause is that social media algorithms have now learned that false information (e.g. conspiracy theories) gets shared online six times faster than true factual information. What is true, therefore, is becoming more elusive! Further, each individual is shown the "truth" which will most appeal to them, and persuade them to spend more time on the screen.

The Desired Outcomes

What worries those who understand the implications of all these developments is the way in which the technology is designed to prioritise sales with little or no regulation or monitoring of what the system is capable of, nor what it is prepared to do in order to meet the end result which it is programmed to meet. Equally worrying is that the real target of all this marketing are the individual users themselves. The reason for this is that all social media platforms compete for the users' screen time in order to sell more advertising opportunities to large corporations. So, the longer the algorithm can keep users on the screen, the more money will be paid by advertisers. This is why social media platforms are free and designed to keep people engaged. Effectively then, the individual user's screen time is the product which the advertisers are paying for. In short, the provider is selling our time to the advertisers! The result is that young people spend increasing amounts of time looking at their phones or on social media platforms.

Highlighting an Existing Problem

There are two ways in which we can look at this situation. On the one hand, we can say that, as a world, we are becoming more selfish and greedier. On the other hand, we could say that this situation is simply magnifying and highlighting a problem that has always existed within the collective human will. That is, we humans are essentially self-centred. One thing that all those featured in the documentary agreed on is that in order to stop the human race being consumed by these algorithms, which, remember, are designed to self-learn and become increasingly more efficient at doing what they do, there needs to be a collective will to put a stop to this activity. Unfortunately, none of those featured in the documentary believed that the collective will required to halt the growth of this problem currently exists. So, rather alarmingly, despite knowing the dangers, none of them could see a way in which this could be stopped. It is notable that a similar dilemma has emerged through climate change.

So, is there a Solution?

In the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus is recorded as facing an agonising choice. In that moment He made a choice which for you or me would be unimaginable! He had to choose whether to go on living in this world, or, suffer the torture of crucifixion, while fighting off a combined and sustained attack from the hells, an attack which came from within Himself as well as from all those around Him. On top of this He was facing certain death. Having a full awareness of this in Gethsemane, the Lord sweated blood! He knew what was at stake: it was the future of the entire human race. He knew that if He didn't go through with this battle, the human race would never be able to obtain a will strong enough to resist the hells, and would therefore perish! Faced with this unthinkable dilemma, the Lord then prayed to the Father: *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet, not my will, but yours be done."* (Luke 22:42)

The Dilemma

When the Lord was born on earth He inherited a human will through His Mother Mary. The Father, which was the divine soul within Him, the divine love itself, had impregnated Mary through the Holy Spirit. *"She was found to be with child? through the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 1:18). The will inherited through the Mother acted as a kind of portal through which the hells could present a hellish alternative to the will of the Father, which was the divine love within Him. Since the understanding of a person is produced by their will, the will inherited through Mary offered a false understanding (the appearance of self-life) which as a consequence is incapable of seeing the corrupted will for what it really is. So it is that the Lord while on earth was in a constant state of equilibrium between these two elements of choice, the divine will or the corrupted and hellish human will.

The Victory

While the Lord was on earth He never once chose to act from the corrupted will inherited through His Mother but always did the will of the Father. This is why the Lord prayed to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane: *"not my will, but Yours be done"*. Since it is only what we freely choose that actually becomes a part of who we truly are, the Lord, not having chosen anything of the corrupted will, put off entirely the will inherited through His Mother Mary and put on in its place a will of pure love from the Father. As He acted only from pure love, falsity was also expelled from His understanding, and so He became pure wisdom, hence becoming the Divine Human. During the most severe temptations on the cross, which were the culmination of this process, there was a last desperate attempt by the hells to defeat Him, during which He permitted them to throw everything they had at Him. In this way the Lord finally overcame all the evil which had completely corrupted the human will down the ages. He put off the human will altogether, replacing it completely with the Divine will. Jesus made His human divine and so *"in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."* (Colossians 2:9 RAV)

The Saviour

Since the Lord has already performed this greatest of works on earth – the redemption of the human race - He also has a full and comprehensive understanding of the dilemma which the human race is facing today on many fronts. Only now are we reaching the stage in human history where we as a world are ready to accept that, left to ourselves, we will consume and destroy all life on earth. Further, there is simply not a strong enough collective human will to prevent this from happening. The Lord, though, has given us the power to elevate our understanding above our corrupted will, enabling us to look down and recognise both the need for change and our own inability to make those changes on our own. The social, economic, climatic and demographic dilemmas of our time are telling us that we need to change or we will destroy ourselves. It is also being recognised that we do not possess the collective will to do so.

The Lord alone has a will and the power to overcome human selfishness, and provide the human race with the truths we need to follow so that we can be saved from our own self-defeating behaviours. How long, now, before we finally grasp this ultimate reality, turn to our only hope of help, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and prayerfully say “*not my will, but Yours, be done*”.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulders.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)