

The Next Great Awakening Through the Convergence of Science and Religion

John Redmond
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Students of human history are very aware of patterns and cycles that define our intergenerational experiences. The hope is that by discovering the systemic causes of failures in the past we can prevent or reduce the consequences of failures in the current age.

Karl Marx hypothesized that the important cycles of history were the ones defined by the conflict dialectic and that the arc of history is bending toward worldwide socialism, where material wealth is uniformly distributed.



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In the Divine Principle, history moves by the Principles of Restoration in cycles, but the length of the cycles is dependent on the providential response of the central figure and chosen people of an age. The arc of providential history creates a society spiraling upward in increasing beauty, truth and goodness, in addition to the abundance of material prosperity.

The last 400 years of human history have been a golden age of prosperity by any historical measure. There is widespread anxiety that the scientific forces unleashed by the Enlightenment will cause humanity to end in disaster as previous golden ages have. Elon Musk said he's determined to create another populated planet in case humans render earth uninhabitable. The Dark Ages, which followed the Roman Empire and birth of Jesus, led to 1,000 years of dystopia.

Recent political polarization, exacerbated by Internet information algorithms, have created toxic levels of political discourse in America. This was predicted by Marx, who thought that escalating conflict created conditions for a revolution that would destroy an old structure so that it could be replaced.

The Divine Principle also predicts that conflict can clarify roles of a subject and object, but that in cases where the opponents can be reconciled to a higher truth, a system of higher complexity, unity and effectiveness can be created.

A good example of this success is the creation of the United States. The mounting conflict of the American colonies with England from the 1770s could have resulted in some representation in England, lower taxes, or a humiliating loss. However, the Founding Fathers and Mothers of America were moved to create something new and higher than a simple political win, and indeed, America has been the indispensable nation for the last 100 years.

It seems that human history may be at a turning point from both the materialist and spiritual points of view. What are the forces that affect that turning point and how can we influence the course of history to create an upward spiral rather than a 1,000 year decline?

History has some precedents for how society has been shaped by spiritual and religious movements.

This response from ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot, was to the question: "What were the Great Awakenings and what were the consequences for America?"

“The First Great Awakening took place in the 1730s and 1740s. It was sparked by preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, who emphasized the importance of personal conversion and a direct relationship with God. The movement had a profound impact on colonial society, as it challenged traditional religious authority and hierarchical structures. It led to the growth of new religious denominations, such as the Baptists and Methodists, and promoted ideas of equality and individualism.

“The consequences of the First Great Awakening were significant. It contributed to the rise of religious pluralism in America, as people began to question and explore different faith traditions. The movement also had political implications, as it fostered a sense of unity among colonists and promoted the idea of individual rights and liberties. Some historians argue that the First Great Awakening played a role in shaping the American Revolution, as it encouraged a spirit of resistance against authority.

“The Second Great Awakening occurred in the early 19th century, spanning from the late 1790s to the 1830s. This movement was characterized by large-scale revival meetings, emotional and experiential preaching, and a focus on social reform. It emphasized the idea of individual salvation and personal moral responsibility. Prominent figures associated with the Second Great Awakening include Charles Finney and Lyman Beecher.

“The consequences of the Second Great Awakening were far-reaching. It led to the establishment of numerous voluntary societies and organizations dedicated to various social causes, including temperance, abolitionism, women’s rights, and education reform. The movement played a significant role in shaping American society, contributing to the spread of social activism and the push for social change. It also influenced the rise of new religious movements and denominations, such as the Mormons and the Disciples of Christ.

“Overall, the Great Awakenings had profound consequences for America. They challenged established religious and social norms, fostered a sense of individualism, and promoted social reform. These movements played a crucial role in shaping the religious, political, and cultural landscape of the United States, leaving a lasting impact on American society.”

This concise summary stops short of the conclusion that the first Great Awakening created the mindset in Americans that led to the acceptance of “One Nation Under God,” culminating in the Revolutionary War and the birth of a new nation. The second nationwide awakening led to the rise of abolitionist values that purged the nation of slavery and reinforced the declaration that all men are created equal before God.

It seems that history may be ready for another Great Awakening that can propel the world forward to a new, more complex and successful experience of life and on the way fulfilling the Marxist ideal as well as taking us along the path to the Unificationist ideal.

Convergence

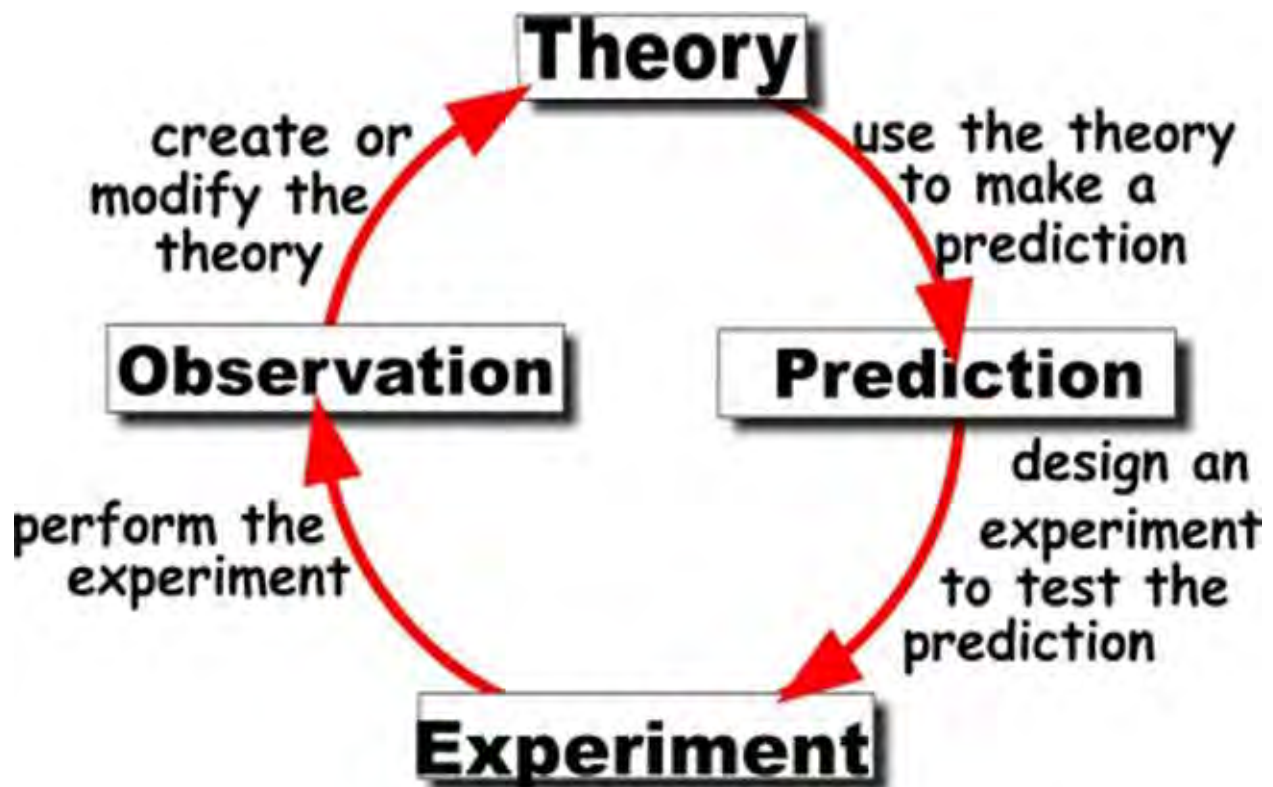
Before written language and the scientific method, people relied on common sense and intergenerational narratives to accumulate and transmit knowledge of the natural world and of the meaning and purpose of life. This subjective and imprecise method of identifying universal truths was often polluted with superstition, ignorance and bias. The operative philosophy of the thousands of years before Christianity was that “might makes right.” Christianity undermined that assumption with the idea that God determines right and the Dark Ages between the 5th and 14th centuries saw the rise of the Catholic Church in Europe and the idea that revealed Truth is superior to the immediate experience of life.

The suppression of Copernicus and Galileo were examples of the excesses of this point of view that created the conditions for the rise of the Enlightenment.

Thanks to the invention of the printing press around 1450, literacy and centers of learning developed in Europe and knowledge was codified and organized, and propagated around Europe sowing the seeds of the Enlightenment.

Two hundred years later, Sir Isaac Newton wrote *Principia Mathematica* and Rene Descartes published *Discourse on the Method* which rationalized the acquisition of Truth. Galileo is credited with originating the scientific method around that time.

This methodology of Truth requires objective and repeatable observations and logic tied to an existing body of knowledge. While scientists use their inductive reasoning to extend a hypothesis, they depend on deductive and reductionist reasoning to eliminate errors and refine an idea to its fundamental truth.



Through the last 400 years, the subjective and personal experience of spirituality and the divine has clashed with the pragmatic and reductionist nature of science.

Scientists have disproved or called into question the likelihood of creationist stories and religious practices that require faith rather than evidence. Many scientists are not just neutral on questions of faith, but hostile to invisible forces or spiritual communication and the possibility of higher consciousness. Social scientists, especially, seem fundamentally opposed to religious revelation and subjective spiritual experiences.

This has created the current “secular vs. sacred” polarity in Western culture. The scientists generally hew to reductionist, materialistic first principles:

- Anything that cannot be scientifically tested is not objectively real.
- The Law of Cause and Effect is fundamental.
- Consciousness is the result of natural laws, not the author of them.

This skepticism has served scientists well, allowing them to explore topics like socio-biology, brain science and Darwinism, where all motivations and impulses are reduced to their simplest and most biological explanation.

While temporarily suspending subjective opinions in the pursuit of evidence is admirable, many scientists have made their hypotheses their new small reality, excluding any thinking that does not fit in their current worldview.

This has an effect on politics and culture when these limited views are treated as universal truths and policies are made to reinforce them. The current “de-platforming” of political and social scientists who are not aligned with these materialistic assumptions is the root of many current conflicts and seems irreconcilable.

Fortunately, there are several fields of science that are revealing complexity and uncertainty in this fixed view of reality. This opens a path for spiritual people to create a dialogue that could result in convergence of these two alternate views of reality.

One of the trends moving scientists toward a more nuanced view of reality is the continuing success of quantum theory. In essence, it states that matter is both a wave and a particle and can exist in several states at the same time. At the subatomic level, fields and waves are more likely to define existence than little bits of spinning matter. In fact, many mathematicians consider our reality to be similar to a hologram, where waves of fields of energy intersect to “paint” reality rather than having a reality that is actually made of something.

“Quantum Consciousness” is a derivative of the “observer effect.” In order to “collapse” a wave into a

particle, it must be observed by a conscious being and therefore humans can be seen to “co-create” reality, supporting the free will assumption of most religions and giving humans agency to create a good or bad existence. Quantum consciousness is necessary for existence and bears a striking resemblance to the idea of a divine universal force that is omnipresent.

This mathematically demonstrated quantum reality is much closer to the traditional spiritual understanding that God is the First Cause and we exist in the “Mind of God” than to the understanding that matter is “real” and spirit is not. This allows a great space for conversations about both the nature of the First Cause and the mathematics of “reality.”

A third development that has jolted scientists into reconsidering the role humans play is the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI). Many scientists assume that consciousness is the result of a large collection of brain neurons. They assume both consciousness and life arise spontaneously from energy and complexity. Religious people believe that consciousness pre-exists matter and that humans can receive and channel and mold consciousness through their physical body rather than create it. The possibility of machines that are much smarter than humans and then by Darwinian selection, reducing their creators to irrelevance is terrifying for some scientists.

Historically, coal miners, weavers and clerical workers experienced a value crisis as machines have been developed to replace their work. They have had to adjust to a new value for themselves and a new reality. Intellectuals and scientists are approaching this transformation now and there will be a large body of people who previously found value and prosperity by being smart, and could soon be replaced by an app on their phone.

The accumulation of these breakthroughs, and similar levels in robotics and biology call into question the meaning and value of human life in a way that has not been relevant before.

This creates the conditions for a Third Great Awakening, where both science and religion can evolve toward a more complete and enlightened understanding of both the subjective awareness and objective observations of life.

Our Responsibility

Great Awakenings don’t happen by themselves; they are fueled by conscientious people. They are not dogmatic, but universal. The previous Great Awakenings did not rely on any one doctrine, but on a generalized sense of individual spiritual responsibility to the Creator.

Speaking the language of science, but retaining the heart of spirituality is critical to a successful convergence. To do this, religious people need to be conversant in the language and assumptions of science. We can hypothesize:

- There is a coherent First Cause to the universe that designed and controls the fields that make up reality.
- It is likely there is a “Field of Consciousness” that humans are a subset of, since they can observe and collapse wave functions.
- It is likely that this consciousness is multi-dimensional, transcending time and space since time in our universe was created at the Big Bang.
- Humans are by far the strongest link to that universal consciousness and are unlikely to be replaced by machines in that role.

This hypothesis can be the basis for a conversion with materialists that doesn’t require biblical quotes. These discussions are the basis for enlarging first principles to allow for the re-discovery of innate spirituality and reflection. The testing of these hypotheses requires a wide knowledge of human and religious history and a willingness to test oneself subjectively, to allow intuition and common sense to inform oneself.

We control our conversations and, in the Internet age, our “brand.” Today, with blogs and vlogs, everyone is a publisher and consumer of ideas. This next Great Awakening will be conducted in the Internet realm, not in revival tents, but is no less critical to our continued rise as a functioning and model society.

John Redmond is married to a clever wife, is the proud father of four interesting children, and is one of the Tri-Pastors of the Mid-Hudson Family Church in New York State. He has high expectations for the American Unification movement.