

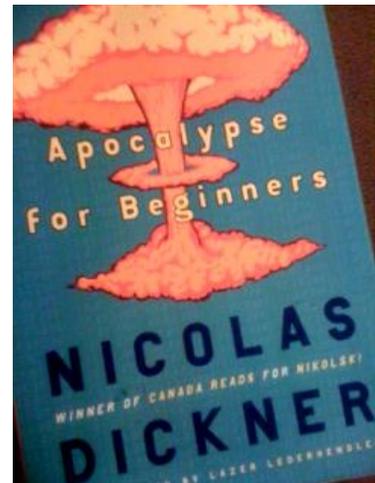
Self-fulfilling

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27 December, 2015

This Sermon is part of a larger service and is primarily intended to be heard in a particular time and space—it is offered here as an effort to bring part of that worship experience to a larger community. This content came alongside musical offerings, as well as other spoken stories, meditations, and readings.

One reading that accompanied this Sermon came from pages 230-232 of *Apocalypse for Beginners*, by Nicolas Dickner.

I remember thinking about the future quite a bit when I was growing up in Mexico in the 1980s. Like Nicolas Dickner, the Author of *Apocalypse for Beginners*, I remember having schoolyard conversations with classmates about the catalogue of available apocalypses. I remember some debate on the technical subtleties between atomic and nuclear bombs, specs on yield, and the nature of nuclear winters. There also seemed to be some confusion on whether the main threat came from the Soviet Union or the United States, but there seemed to be a consensus that anyone's use of the doomsday machines would be... inadvisable.



Along with the imminent threat of Armageddon, our expectations of the future were mellowed out with anticipation for cool car designs, like the aerodynamic smoothness of the 1990 car models, and the inevitability of increasingly slicker designs in years to come, not to mention the apparently mythical advent of mobile phones and affordable desktop computers.

One vision of the future that caught my attention in 1989 was the science fiction blockbuster *Back to the Future II*, in which the protagonists Marty McFly and Doc Brown travel to the unfathomably futuristic date of October 21, 2015.

Its vision of a future, with flying cars, prevalent hover technology and commonplace organ replacements, offered a somewhat optimistic, or at least snazzy time to look forward to.

And as that innocuous date has come and gone, a kind of taking stock of our accomplishments has come along with it.

Now that we live in the future, the prophecies of old, take some different meanings. Where are we now, actually? Is it where we've wanted to be?

And... did we see it coming?

The producers of *Back to the Future II* openly admit that they threw in flying cars into the movie without ever expecting to get the future right—flying cars just look cool.

They are a big more contrite about the vision for hoverboards—floating skateboards without any wheels—knowing that a whole generation of disappointed kids still thinks that there’s a conspiracy to keep hoverboards out of the toy market. Alas, the mythical hoverboards have yet to appear... although I have knowledge of at least [one entrepreneur](#) with a partially-working prototype.

I, for one, have taken notice of what was to become regular fashion this year: shirt collars that allow for *two* neckties! And—not seeing any at the local clothing stores—last New Year’s Eve I, decided to take the future into my own hands, with yarn and hook, and crocheted a collar that would allow for this groundbreaking neckwear trend—which, I expect, still has a few more days in 2015 to catch on. We may not have flying cars or hoverboards, but... my friends—we have the technology for double ties!

The prophecy has been fulfilled!

As I’ve strutted around with what I’ve considered to be contemporary fashion, I’ve often been encountered with the question: “Rod... why are you wearing two ties?”

My answer, as it turns out, has become quite fashionable this year: “Because it’s 2015!”

A notch in the Gregorian calendar, as it turns out, has become a good reason to do—and to be—what many of us have wanted to be for many years: to become the people we want to be, and usher in the world we want to live in.

Why must women have equitable representation in leadership?

Because it’s 2015!

Why do mental health and addiction issues deserve our attention?

Because it’s 2015!

Why must we welcome in people from abroad into this land?

Because this is the day the world has made it our responsibility to mind our neighbour.

Some of the more unexpected predictions in *Back to the Future II* had less to do with technology, and more with the way that people interact. The dilapidated downtown scene of the fictional 1980s town of Hill Valley, gave way to a re-



engineered social space more commonplace in the revised and revitalized cores in the cities of the 21st century, like the new lakeview scene along the Queens Quay in Toronto, in 2015—a place where people can be together among the urban space of a modern metropolis and the natural water site that has spawned a thriving population.

And it is those little details that often escape our attention—the awareness of details that bring our civilization into focus—that can make the difference between a civilization of abilities and a civilization of possibilities.

It strikes me that among the many success stories of days like today, are the stories of our successes in the past—the stories that make our present, extraordinary.

I've recently come across a kind of... survival guide, by an astrobiologist called Lewis Dartnell. His survival manual is called [*The Knowledge: How to Rebuild Civilization in the Aftermath of a Cataclysm*](#) and it purports to offer ways of rebuilding our way of life in the event that a major apocalyptic event, such as global pandemic, natural disaster, or worldwide war, wipes out the world as we know it. This book by Dartnell is a kind of “How To” manual that intends to bring survivors to a level of technological ability similar to our current state, within a few generations, and without the pesky trouble of tens of thousands of years of trial and error.

Within 300 pages, Lewis Dartnell outlines an amazing inventory of civilizational techniques, including methods for growing food, metallurgical methods for harvesting metals, and a crash-course on chemistry, to develop everything from soap, for hygienic purposes, to photography for medical goals, such as taking X-rays.

My favourite section is the one on agriculture, in which Dartnell describes the ways by which different crops, including wheat and corn have been selectively bred over thousands of years so that we may have feeding crops with effective yields to feed billions of people, along with techniques for growing these crops so that only a fraction of us need to work in growing food, while others my focus on other things, like making soap, so that we may stay clean and healthy when we look to ingest the food we grow.

It is a neat take on the apocalyptic approach; a kind of optimistic fatalism that looks to catalogue, not so much how the world might end, but how it may rebirth.

And while I imagine that a guide like this may well help to reboot a post-apocalyptic society into a modern civilization, I am far more fascinated by the rich descriptions of what our current civilization is already able to do.

Things like growing enough food to feed everyone on the planet—it is no longer a technological limitation, but a social one that requires the will to bring it about. My friends, we have the technology.

I am in awe that we can offer sanitation and healing opportunities to those who ask. It is only a matter of saying “yes” when the request comes. We have the technology—do we have *the will* to respond in kind?

I stand in wonder at the possibilities we have, to offer a dignified life to all who live among us, and who ask to live with us. Because it’s 2015.

And because it’s 2015, there has been no shortage of cataclysmic shifts. Between 1989 and 2015, there have been enough worlds ending to see the fragility in our civilization, and the beauty that our spirit of cooperation can bring about.

And we *have* seen worlds end, my friends.

From the fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of the 80s, symbolizing the end of the old order of the Cold War, and the fall of the Twin Towers, ending the world we knew in the 20th century, and the multiple wars in the middle east, where we have come to question where we stand in the world. The world has been ending for us, over and over again.

And amid these hardships, we have the ability to make a difference—if the will is there.

My friends, amid this apparent turmoil, you have been steadfast in standing on the side of love. You have shown your commitment to the future, taking into your hands the task of bringing a better life to others who seek a life after the end of the world they knew. Bringing new opportunity to people who have literally seen the world crumble around them, and who will continue to face the struggles, in a society that might not accept them, because they appear to be different.



My friends, you have taken up the [sacred call of prophecy](#)—of embodying the world that you wish may take place today. A world that will take care of their neighbour, no matter the place of their birth, and a world that will care for others, no matter the cost.

My friends, you have opened your home, your

hearts, and you wallets, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for people you have never met, who you know need your support. You are offering your year-long commitment to find a new home in a foreign land—and beyond.

You have the will.

You have the technology.

You have the heart.

To show the world what the future can be like.

Because it is 2015.

Because it is long overdue.

Because it is time.

It is time to show the world what being a blessing means.

So may you be,

Amen.