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Editorial: Grand Designs of the Past, Present and Future

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The future will be unimaginably different from even our best predictions, but we can help to shape that future by what we choose to do today.

What **are** we choosing today? What **are** the Grand Designs or Visions of mankind?

Space colonization, interplanetary and interstellar travel and the search for intelligent life beyond the earth qualify as Grand Designs for the future. Interest and enthusiasm for such ideas may be high but without sufficient sustained financial support nothing significant may materialize and man will become a recluse in a little corner of our galaxy.

What were some of the Grand Designs of the past? The Dark Ages of Western Europe, spanning a thousand years, ended because of the Grand Designs of explorers and pioneers like Columbus and Gutenberg. The darkness of the Dark Ages was in the minds of men until Columbus and Gutenberg illumined their intellects with new vistas and ideas.

Today, a half millennium later, we like to consider ourselves "enlightened" and "advanced", yet, ironically, today's world still bears many of the marks of a feudal society of the Dark Ages with military might the dominant factor except that we now count our strength in intercontinental ballistic missiles instead of knights in saddle. Also many of our business, industrial and labor organizations act with singular self-interest in the manner of the feudal barons of old.

What are the Grand Designs of today which will challenge us to look beyond our crises of the moment? They are the Grand Visions of the Gerard O'Neills, the Buckminster Fullers, the Jacques Cousteaus, the Carl Sagans, the John Wheelers and the Arthur Clarkes. We need the bold visions of persons like these to provide mankind with a true cosmic awareness of its place in the universe and to help chart its course into the future.

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