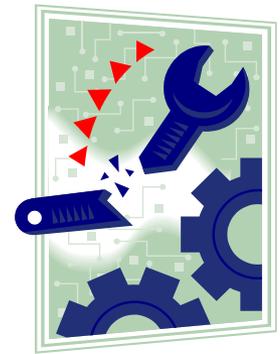


Technology In Mission

Theology And Practice



The Problem



- Two of the main forces that are changing the world today are technological change and religious conflict. (Others include economic globalization, environmental challenges and corrupt and self-serving leadership)
- These challenges interact and intersect with each other
- Technological change threatens some religions more than others and intersects with globalization and the environmental issues.
- Technological change is set to increase very rapidly
- Artificial intelligence is already operating in some highly specialized areas (such as playing chess, translating languages and driving autonomous vehicles)
- Biotechnology is at the point where the definition of what it even means to be human is constantly being challenged
- A great gap is opening up between the technological have's and have-nots

The Christian Response

- Very few Christian pastors or theologians are addressing these issues or the challenges that we will face as we fully enter the Information Age
- Some Christians are beginning to use technology to share the gospel and these efforts are gradually gathering momentum

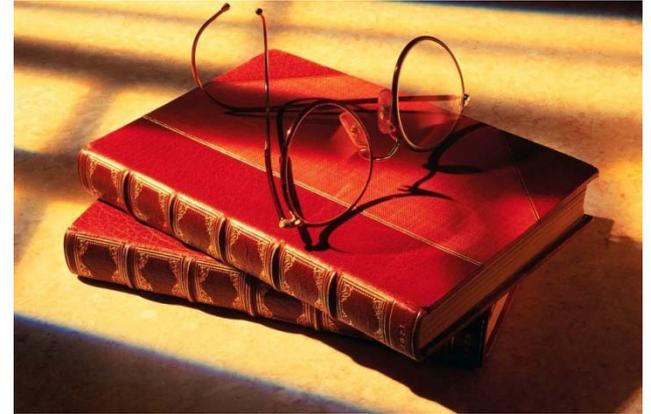


Some Of The Theological Issues

- Robots & Humans
- Robot Ethics
- Databases & Privacy
- Artificial Intelligence
- Neural Implants & Human Personality
- Artificial Transplants (how much of the human body can we replace and still be human)
- Definitions of Mind/Body/Spirit
- Intelligent avatars ?
- Trans-Humanism
- Post-Humanism
- Genetic alteration of human personality
- Abortion of people with “criminal genes”

Recent Books

- Ray Kurzweil: *The Age of Spiritual Machines; The Singularity Is Near*
- Richard Clarke – *Breakpoint*
- Francis Fukuyama – *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of The Biotechnology Revolution*
- James Gardner – *The Intelligent Universe*



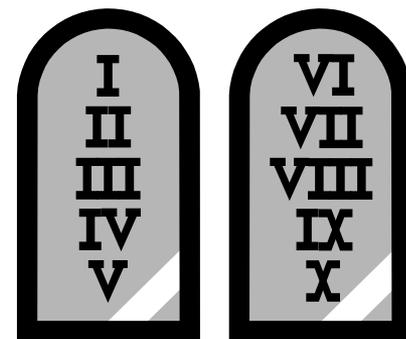
Technology: Good Or Evil?

- The two extreme views are that:
 - a) technology is always good
 - b) technology is always evil.
- Another view is that technology is about material objects and is therefore unspiritual and this is not the concern of the Church.
- This is Greek Platonism (matter is evil and confining). However Christianity is about an incarnate Christ and a resurrected body and takes the transformation of the material world very seriously indeed.



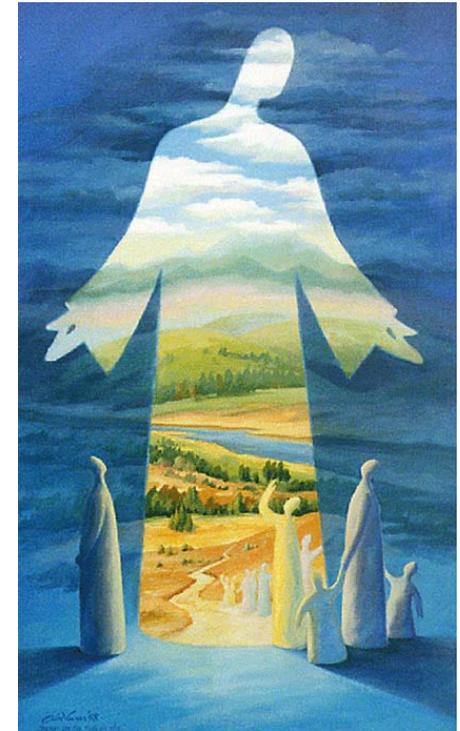
The Holy Spirit & Technology

- Bezalel was the first Spirit-filled person in the Bible
- Bezalel was filled with the Spirit so that he could accomplish a technological task – building the Tabernacle
- *And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Behold, I, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship, to devise designs; to work in gold, and in silver, and in bronze, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all workmanship.*
(Exodus 31:1-5 MKJV)



Jesus & Technology

- Jesus did not incarnate as a monk, or a philosopher but as a carpenter – a creative, tool-using, technical person
- Jewish rabbis had to learn a trade e.g. Paul was a tentmaker
- The disciples were “hands-on” people (fishermen etc)
- This means we need to redefine spirituality to include some measure of technical ability!
- Contrast between Jesus’ followers / methods & that of Greek philosophers



God & The Ark Of The Covenant

- And you shall put the mercy-seat above, upon the ark. And in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. And I will meet with you there, and I will talk with you from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubs on the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the sons of Israel.
(Exodus 25:21-22 MKJV)
- God put His Presence and Voice in a human creation made by a craftsman – God-indwelt technology?



Spirit-Indwelt Machines

- And as I looked at the living creatures, behold, one wheel was on the earth by the living creatures, with its four faces. And their appearance and their workmanship was like a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went on their four sides; and they did not turn when they went. And their rims: they were even high; they were even awesome. And their rims were full of eyes all around the four of them. And in the going of the living creatures, the wheels went beside them; and in the lifting up of the living creatures from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. **Wherever the spirit was to go, there they went; there the spirit was to go, and the wheels were lifted up along with them. For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.** In their going, these went; and in their standing still, these stood still. And in their lifting up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up along with them. For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. (Ezekiel 1:15-21 MKJV)



Demons In The Machine....

- Rev 13:15 And there was given to it to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might both speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.
- And a third angel followed them, saying with a great voice, If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark in his forehead or in his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the anger of God, having been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented by fire and brimstone before the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.
(Revelation 14:9-10 MKJV)



Idols and Artifacts

- Idols and religious artifacts can carry a demonic presence
- *What then do I say? That the idol is anything, or that an idolatrous sacrifice is anything? But I say that the things which the nations sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. And I do not desire that you should have fellowship with demons. (1 Corinthians 10:19-20 MKJV)*
- *And He shall deliver their kings into your hand, and you shall destroy their name from under the heavens. No man shall be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them. You shall burn the graven images of their gods with fire. You shall not desire the silver or gold on them, nor take it for yourself, so that you may not be snared in it. For it is an abomination to Jehovah your God. And you shall not bring an abomination into your house, lest you be a cursed thing like it. You shall utterly hate it, and you shall utterly despise it. For it is a cursed thing. (Deuteronomy 7:24-26 MKJV)*



Good Technology Is...

- Like the Ark or Ezekiel's Wheels..
- Worshipful / Glorifies God
- Beautiful, Holy and Glorious
- Lasting / Permanent
- High Quality In Materials and Construction
- Raises People Up To God
- Blesses Them In Some Way
- Gentle / Life-Giving
- Revelatory
- An Exercise In Grace And Mercy



Evil Technology Is...

- Like torture, crucifixion or the Image Of The Beast
- Crude
- Cruel / Degrading of Humanity
- Inhuman / Beastly
- Idolatrous
- Murderous
- Demonic
- An Exertion Of Power & Dominance
- Scornful Of God



So Then....

- Christians should seek to develop ‘good technology’ and refuse to be involved in ‘evil technology’ no matter how cool it may first appear to be.
- Christians should use technology to exalt God and to worship Him
- Christians should use technology to help the poor and to achieve justice
- Christians should use technology to share the gospel and to make disciples
- Christians should use technology to create beauty, wisdom, knowledge and peace in the world around them
- Christians should use technology to include people in loving Christian community



Using Means....

- William Carey, often called “the father of the modern missionary movement” wrote a famous pamphlet calling of people to “use means” to fulfill the Great Commission.
- The Internet is a low-cost communications medium that can be used by mission agencies to communicate Christ to multiple cultures.
- It is a means of *front-line evangelistic ministry* to the nations.



Emerging Opportunities

- Cyberchurches
- Internet evangelism
- Chat room evangelism
- Email evangelism
- MySpace, Facebook, YouTube
- Second Life, MUDs, MOOs
- Mobile evangelism – cellphones, PDAs, Blackberrys, 3G devices
- Christian online and video gaming
- Podcasting and video-casting
- Internet cafes – bridging the digital divide
- Ebooks, online training, downloadable materials



A Service, A Community Or An Opportunity

- Of the top 500 websites in the Alexa ranking most provide either a service, a community or an opportunity
- <http://www.rapidshare.com/> (No. 19) provides a way of sharing files for free with one click
- <http://www.yahoo.com/> (No 1.) provides email and search services
- MySpace, Orkut, Hi5 and Facebook (Nos 6,8,15, 18) etc provide community
- YouTube (No. 4) provides an opportunity (to be seen) – *broadcast yourself!*



Private Thinking

- People do their private thinking online
- thinking that they cannot do publicly
without facing some disapproval
- Medical information
- Online Dating
- Political debates
- Conspiracy research
- Changing religion
- Sexual exploration
- People thinking about Jesus will do
research on Christianity online first
before making a decision offline and
we must provide them with good
information.



Bridge Websites

- Have a specialized secular interest that will draw in unbelievers
- Then lead into the gospel – say with a testimony as the bridge
- Decision page as the other end of the bridge
- Christian athletes
- HollywoodJesus.com – a Christian view of the movies
- XXXChurch.com – a Christian take on pornography



The Edges Of Cyberspace

- The growth of the conventional Internet is slowing as the number of users = the number of landlines
- Now new users are being added at Internet cafes and on mobile devices such as PDA's and cellphones
- There is a rush to make better screens, more flexible screens and docking devices for mobile devices
- With 3G cellphones becoming widespread some say that 3 billion users may be connected to the Internet by 2010
- We need to be ready to share the gospel with those currently 'on the edges of cyberspace'.



Online – Offline Synergies

- Crusade Follow-Up
- Keeping in contact after short-term missions
- Fan club for radio or TV broadcast
- Correspondence courses by web / email
- Build relationships offline put complex content online
- If you cannot give an overt appeal give a website URL where they can make a decision for Christ

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