Arie Leegwater

Loving the Kingdom and Responsible Technology

Teaching a section of an introductory chemistry course to fifty students this fall semester, of which more than one-half were prospective engineering majors, I was at a loss in imagining a thematic structure for the course. Should I provide an apologetic for theism? Would an appeal to natural (physical) law or an acceptance of a form of critical realism suffice to engage my students? Should I reflect on the wondrous awe-inspiring conjunction of physical constants and the specific character of fermions which make chemical reactions possible and provide an explanatory framework? Perhaps I should employ reverse engineering arguments giving evidence for the wise design of physical entities and their interrelationships. These apologetic moves could be interesting, could even lead to fruitful discussions, but I considered them to be too defensive, too restrictive and reactionary, and ill-suited for whetting my students' interest. What if I followed another path: provide a thetical approach and allow the students to become part of the narrative, that is, to enter into the story of redemption and renewal that is afoot in the world? Would it capture the imagination of my students and appeal to their deep-seated interests to be God's agents in his world? And so I began the course with this narrative: loving the kingdom and responsible technology.

At first glance, loving the kingdom of God and technology have little, if anything, to do with each other. We live in the period of the biblical story that anticipates the return of the King, Jesus Christ. Christ's resurrection and our bodily resurrection is the Gospel's good news and it provides us with a political, social, and technological mandate. The mission of the church, the body of Christ, is nothing more or less than the outworking, in the power of the Spirit, of Jesus' bodily resurrection. We are promised a new type of bodily existence, the fulfillment and redemption of our present bodily life. This new life includes activities we presently do as humans: our academic studies, our vocations, and our collective cultural pursuits—even those involving technological matters. Technique and technological practices need no justification. They are ingrained in the very makeup of our humanness. The vision of Isaiah 60 describes ships bringing in instruments of culture into the New Jerusalem. These instruments have been thoroughly transformed into proper instruments of service. A similar theme is echoed in 2 Peter 3:10 in which, at the last day, "the earth and everything in it will be laid bare [or will be found]." Our present earthly life and its cultural productions, though perhaps transformed beyond our recognition, will be carried into the new heavens and the new earth. The cultural achievements of history will be purified and re-appear on the new earth (Rev. 21:24–26). There is continuity between this life and the life to come: our bodily resurrection is the guarantee.

What could follow from this inspiring vision? God's call to live as kingdom citizens exercising our responsibilities in using our creational opportunities. For an academic institution, it also carries curricular implications. Students need to be adequately equipped to find their place in the biblical story. Paul exhorts us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), responding to all of God's revelation. We should begin to view our technological work as a calling infused by a faith that invites allegiance and is open to the wonders of God's world. That sense of wonder and joy in exploring and unfolding creation's potentialities, expressed in service to our neighbors, is what we need to impress upon our students. As professors and leaders, we need to help them identify the problems that should be addressed with Christian insight. These are often complex issues in which we need to balance a diverse array of normative principles such as cultural appropriateness, openness and communication, stewardship and sustainability, and justice. These not only concern the ethical application of various technologies, but they are also found at the very heart of theorizing, experimentation, and technologi-

Editorial

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cal design. A past research team, which I coordinated, attempted to work out the implications for technological design, which is the central focus of technological activity, and reported their work in the now outdated book *Responsible Technology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

In summary, several themes and concerns in our collective efforts at creating a responsible technology require attention.

1. A recurring question: Are our technological practices, and the manner, in which they are taught and applied, in need of change and reform? Do they genuinely promote human flourishing and foster sustainable development?

2. We need to continually acknowledge an important check on our overly optimistic views of technology, namely, to remember the two-edged character of technology: good and evil run through each other in our practices. The famous quote by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn captures this truth: "But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

3. The authors of *Responsible Technology* concluded with this statement on page 244:

> [R]esponsible technology must rest upon a servant-like commitment to love God above all and our neighbor as oneself. It is as all of us—designers, research scientists, consumers, public policy makers, citizens, fabricators, corporate executives, journalists, scholars, and others—seek to love as Christ loved us that we will be able to live in the line of creation and redemption. We will then broaden the standards by which our technologically relevant decisions are made to simultaneously include all the biblically based normative principles, and at the same time narrow the application of the economic, the technical, the scientific, and the political.

I look forward to suggestions and submissions for a *PSCF* theme issue devoted to appropriate technology. As an ASA community, we need to tussle with a normative approach in our technological practices, one that desires to be of service to our neighbors and enhances their flourishing as God's image bearers.

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In This Issue

After two successive theme issues of *PSCF*, we return to a more traditional fare. Three major articles and an essay book review highlight this issue. The first article by Wayne D. Norman (Simpson University) and Malcolm A. Jeeves (University of St. Andrews) walks us through a historical survey of phrenological methodology and considers what we can learn, of benefit, for neurotheological considerations today. Second, an article by Michael L. Peterson (Asbury University) offers a comprehensive study of the views of the ever popular Christian apologist C. S. Lewis on the theory of evolution and the argument from intelligent design. The third article by Joseph L. Spradley (Wheaton College), detailing the importance of the moon for the unique character of life on Earth, provides support for the belief that God can work through natural processes to achieve his creational purposes. The last article is an essay book review by Dennis R. Venema (Trinity Western University) of *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* written by Stephen C. Meyer, a leading spokesperson in the intelligent design community. Besides the usual array of book reviews, several letters, and a three-year index complete the issue.

In a Future Issue

In my editorial, I welcomed submissions on responsible technology. If a sufficient number of quality articles are submitted, I would like to generate a theme issue on appropriate technology. As editor, I would favor an issue having both theoretical-reflective articles, articles that develop normative principals essential for sustainable technological development, and those that describe a number of case studies in which responsible technology has been practiced.

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