to fill it" (p. 504). Twenge cannot help but express a concern for the future of American society here and elsewhere. Christian scholars should join her. After all, our faith is transmitted through the generations. As Psalm 145:4 says, "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts." Are we failing to transmit the story to younger generations? This book compiles extensive evidence that we might be—and that American society might be worse off as a result.

Generations is best understood less as an attempt to advance psychological science and more as a concerned American psychologist's data-studded jeremiad. Twenge compares thousands of data points in order to persuade us to care about the future of American society, which has promoted individualism to the detriment of collective well-being. Those called to love their neighbor would do well to study the trends here and ponder how they can care better for all generations of those neighbors. For those of who us are part of a kingdom that "endures through all generations" (Ps. 145:13), we can learn from Twenge how to reach members of each of the generations alive today while promoting a less individualistic society.

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TECHNOLOGY

THE DIGITAL PUBLIC SQUARE: Christian Ethics in a Technological Society edited by Jason Thacker. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023. 384 pages. Paperback; $34.99. ISBN: 9781087759821.

Questions about the role of digital technologies are becoming increasingly important. In 2014, Luciano Floridi published *The Onlife Manifesto*, arguing that the digital and physical worlds were in the process of merging and that any meaningful distinction between offline and online was shrinking. The advance in digital technology provides fertile ground for academic discussion of digital technologies and their role in human society. Following the popularity of *The Age of AI*, Jason Thacker has quickly become one of the prominent voices in evangelical thought in this area. His most recent contribution is an edited volume, *The*

Digital Public Square, which focuses on issues of public theology such as censorship, sexual ethics, hate speech, or religious freedom as they present themselves in the digital milieu. Following Jacques Ellul, Thacker dubs this milieu "the technological society."

The book contains thirteen articles that are divided into three major sections which attempt to articulate a public theology for the technological society. Public theology is a relatively young field. Hak Joon Lee suggests that public theology seeks to engender religious discourse within the context of a pluralistic society by acknowledging the importance of human rights, tolerance, equality, and other democratic values without suppressing the variety of possible expressions of religion.[1] Public theology is a theology done towards, with, and for the general public for the sake of the common good of the society.

The first section attempts to provide the foundation for public theology in a technological society. Chapter 1 sets out a Christian philosophy of technology, chapter 2 advocates for the virtue of patience in online interactions, and chapter 3 charts a middle path between technological optimism and pessimism in US attitudes toward technology. A particular standout is chapter 4, Patricia Shaw's extensive survey of international technology policy in "The Global Digital Marketplace." While, like most policy articles, it is a little dry, Shaw's article is thorough, well sourced, and well organized. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the challenges of free speech in a digital milieu and the limits of policy-based approaches.

The second section of the book includes six articles that address specific issues in public theology with an eye toward specifically digital iterations of these issues. This section covers implications of freedom of speech on digital media (chap. 6), specifically hate speech (chap. 7), content moderation (chap. 8), and pornography (chap. 9). It also addresses the explosion of conspiracy theories and the problem of digital misinformation (chap. 10) and the rise of digital authoritarianism (chap. 11). Finally, the third section offers two articles that articulate the church's role in the technological society in terms of discipleship (chap. 12) and public witness (chap. 13).

One immediate point worth noting is that this book has more to do with public theology, and specifically concerns around the freedom of expression, than it

does with digital technology. Many of the articles frame the topics they discuss in the context of a digital milieu—for instance, how companies such as Twitter, Meta, or YouTube should approach the filtering or suppression of hateful, pornographic, or otherwise offensive expressions (chaps. 5, 7, 8, 9)—but the central issues of the book do not arise from philosophy of technology or engineering. They are perennial questions in public theology and policy that are explored in the context of the digital world. While I cannot critically interact with every article, a couple of examples will give the reader a sample of what to expect.

In the first introductory chapter, Jason Thacker attempts to set out a uniquely Christian philosophy of technology. He grounds his approach in the work of Jacques Ellul, Neil Postman, and Albert Borgmann, and argues that a Christian philosophy of technology should reject technological instrumentalism or the idea that "technology," broadly understood, is merely a neutral tool (pp. 7–14). Instead, he argues that a Christian philosophy of technology understands that we interact with technology in complex ways (p. 14), and it seeks to provide "a framework of agency and accountability, alongside expanding our view of technology to see the larger social effects of these tools" (p. 20). However, it is not entirely clear how it does so. Thacker attempts to carve a path between technological instrumentarianism and technological determinism, but he doesn't defend a rigorous account of agency in a digital milieu or clarify when or how digital actors are accountable. This seems particularly significant considering that some scholars argue that machines count as agents in a significant sense—for instance, John Sullins or Christian List. Thacker argues that Christians must adopt a principled pluralism, which is a popular model of social and political interaction among public theologians, and develop a deeper understanding of difficulties faced by the technology industry, government actors, and the populace as they engage in a digital public square (pp. 22–23). Given this, it is odd that the book contains no articles written by engineers, developers, or technologists.

Olivia Enos (chap. 11) provides a well-developed account of the ill effects of explicit digital authoritarianism, defined as "the use of digital technology by authoritarian regimes to surveil, repress, and manipulate domestic and foreign populations" (p. 266). She focuses on Russian and South East Asian examples including, but not limited to, China. However, as do many, Enos assumes a strong digital libertarianism as the norm, a position with its own challenges. Digital libertarianism has enabled the rise of what Shoshana Zuboff calls surveillance capitalism. It seems plausible to argue that surveillance capitalism and digital authoritarianism have much in common. If this is accurate, then Enos's digital libertarianism is likely to lead to an alternative version of authoritarianism. While Enos's account of the challenges raised by explicit digital authoritarianism is very good, it does not effectively take account of the rise of similar trends in digitally libertarian nations; this is a significant weakness of her argument.

The Digital Public Square is more about public theology in a world that has embraced the digital than about what it means to live in a digital world, or about a deep consideration of what constitutes a digital public square or a digital community (interesting questions in their own right). It would help for the authors writing on the philosophical and theological side of the discussion to engage in greater depth with a wider array of contemporary sources in the philosophy of technology. The influence of Jacques Ellul is evident. However, Peter-Paul Verbeek is mentioned only once, as is Luciano Floridi. And other prominent philosophers in the discussion such as Don Ihde, Charles Ess, Shannon Vallor, Mark Coeckelbergh or John Danaher are entirely absent.

This book will appeal to those who are interested in public theology. It draws many of its political assumptions from classical liberalism and its theological assumptions from the Reformed tradition. Those sympathetic to these traditions will appreciate this book. Finally, several of the chapters will serve as excellent introductory resources for anyone exploring practical issues of legislation and policy in a digital milieu.

Note

[1] Hak Joon Lee, "Public Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology*, ed. Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 44.

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