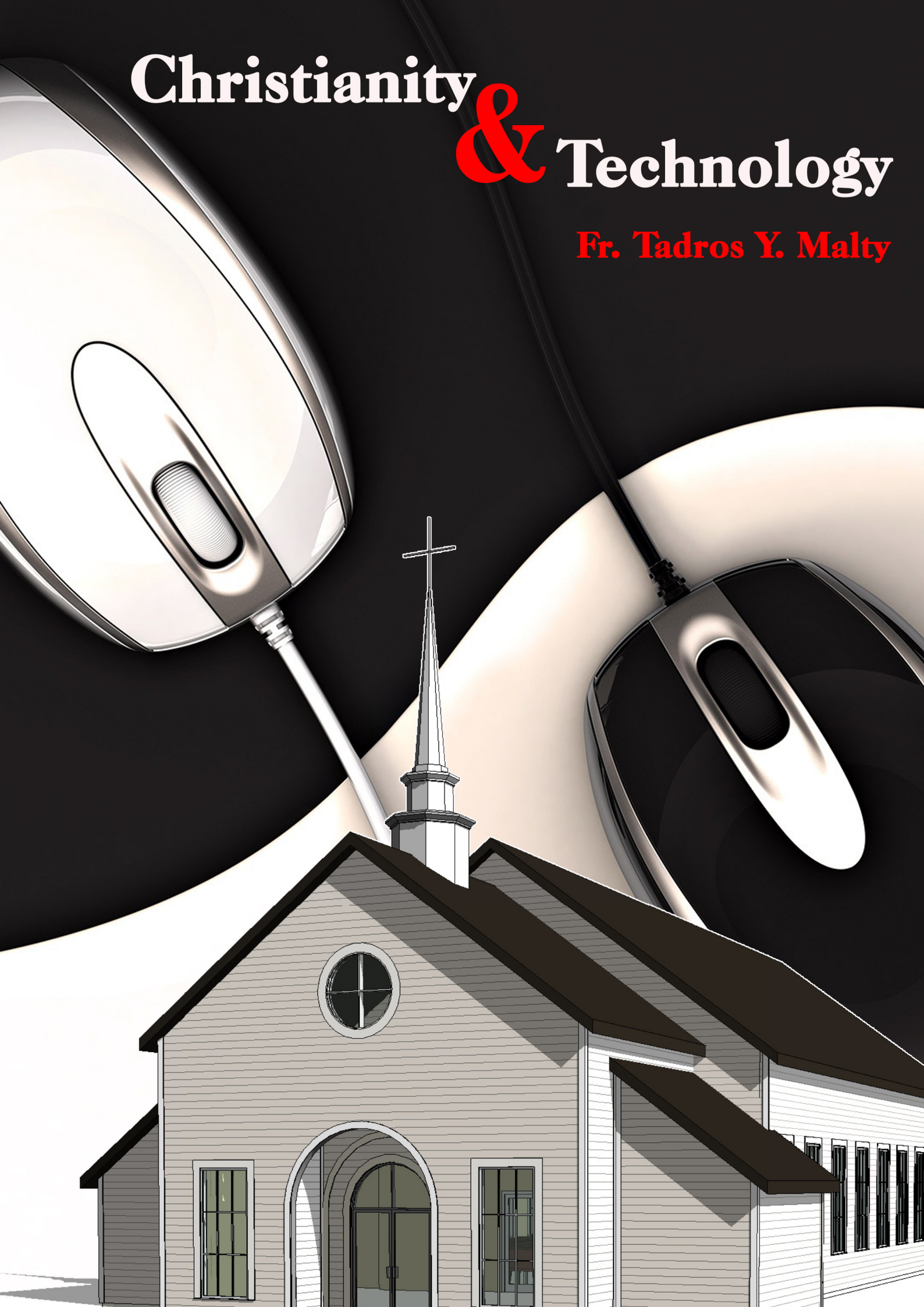


Christianity & Technology

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Christian Youth and Technological Advances

PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

Christianity is not just a matter of beliefs (theology and resulting doctrine), but also of living (practice). Christianity is about right belief and right action. Theology is the study of God, which attempts to find the right belief, resulting in doctrine, whereas practice is the application of beliefs (doctrines and other truths) in the life of an individual or a group of believers. One finds that some people specialize in one or the other of these two areas. When discussing Christian practice, we will refer not only to how Christians are to live, but to how Christians believe all people are to live.

Things in the natural realm can be divided into two similar categories: the beliefs about the nature of things (science and scientific findings) and the implementation of scientific and other findings to life (technology). With this distinction, it becomes readily apparent that a more fruitful comparison or examination could be made when theology and practice in Christianity are compared to science and technology in the natural realm.

1. **Philosophy.** A philosophy fed by the springs of Christian faith, which is a liberating, saving faith ... will be serviceable in indicating a meaningful, liberating, normative perspective for technological development.

2. **Science:** The purpose of science is to better understand the natural realm, generally with an eye to finding useful things to improve technology. Similarly, the purpose of theology is to better understand the spiritual realm (in particular, God), generally with an eye to finding useful things to help practice.

3. **Technology.** As technology is the testing ground and point of implementation of science, so practice is the testing ground and point of implementation of doctrine.

THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA AND SECULAR KNOWLEDGE

1. Facing the Philosophical School by embracing its leaders and students. (St. Paul in Athens).

2. Its curriculum was encyclopedic.

3. Because of the existing worldwide Greek culture, the Alexandrian School used **Greek philosophical terms** to explain Christian doctrines to gain philosophers and heretics. While the Alexandrians used the philosophical terms, they did not deem them. This is what **St. Athanasius** means when he states that *disputes merely over words should not separate those who think alike*¹.

4. Alexandria, the cosmopolitan city, was chosen as a home for learning². Egyptian, Greek and Jewish cultures together with eastern mystic thoughts flourished. The deans of the Christian School didn't allow another culture or philosophy to this area. They didn't want to enter into competition with these philosophies, nor did they want to challenge them. They dealt with philosophers by their broad-mindedness, the openness of their hearts and sincere love. In the second century **Tertullian**, the first theologian of the Western Fathers was attacking the ideology of philosophy as an enemy to faith and philosophers as being enemies of believers. At the same century in Alexandria, **St. Pantenius** insisted to practice his work as the dean of the school putting on the garment of the philosophers. **Origen** states that **Pantenius** attracted many pagan philosophers to the Christian faith. **St. Clement of Alexandria** was the first Christian writer who declared that philosophy is God's method to lead the well-educated people to Christianity. His disciple, **Origen**, was not in accord with philosophy but he insisted on using philosophy to attract the philosophers.

The early Alexandrian Fathers knew how to preach among the philosophers by using their own method. Thus, we have to walk in their steps, by preaching others through their own culture. We have to acknowledge their mentality in order to reveal to them faith.

¹ *Quod non sint tres de (That They are not three Gods).*

² *H. M. Gwatkin: Early Church History, London 1909, vol. 2, p.155.*

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN THE WORLD

In this age **technological advances have overwhelmed the world**. Not only has the world become mystified by it, but also the notion is that **without it there is no hope or possible existence**. Since "technology" represents the practical applications of science, it has now become the new magic word in place of the word "science."

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO TECHNOLOGY

While exceedingly rare, there are a few relatively direct statements in the Bible about technological things. We will consider two references, both at the beginning of the Bible.

The first reference concerns God's creation of mankind and His command to them:

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)

While not specifically mentioning anything technological, this passage gives a basis for man's exerting control over nature, which is how technology functions as well as the purpose for which it is used. Thus, it can be argued that mankind has a divine imperative for the development and use of technology.

The second reference concerns God's gifting people by His Spirit to do various crafts for the constructing of the temple. The passage reads as follows:

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts- to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers-all of them master craftsmen and designers.

So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded." (Exodus 35:30-36:1)

It appears from the passage that God had such a desire for artistic beauty (not only in constructing the temple, but also the various things in it, cf. Exodus 28) that He specially gifted the people who would use technology (artistic tools). Not only did God work in them, but He gave them the ability to teach others, to impart to others their "skill, ability and knowledge." From this passage we get a sense of the value of aesthetics, that things which men create are not to be purely functional, but should also be aesthetically pleasing-at least in God's temple.

THE FOUNDATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

The vast majority of scientific inventions have originated in Europe (including Britain) and the USA since the dawn of the 17th century. What led to the fast technological advances in the European countries and North America around that time?

According to Alfred North Whitehead and J. Robert Oppenheimer, both renowned philosophers and scientists of our era (but not Christians themselves), modern science was born out of the Christian world view. Whitehead said that Christianity is the "mother of science" because of the insistence on the rationality of God.

Entomologist Stanley Beck, though not a Christian himself, acknowledged the corner-stone premises of science which the Judeo-Christian world view offers: "The first of the improvable premises on which science has been based is the belief that the world is real and the human mind is

capable of knowing its real nature. The second and best-known postulate underlying the structure of scientific knowledge is that of cause and effect.

The third basic scientific premise is that nature is unified."

In other words, the epistemological foundation of technology has been the Christian world view presented in the Bible.

This may sound incredible to some because of the popular feeling that science and religion don't mix. Didn't Christianity vehemently oppose Galileo and Copernicus when they proposed the modern models for the solar system?

The truth, however, is that the real conflict was not between Christianity, as presented in the Bible, and science. In fact, the true conflict was not between science and religion at all, but between the existing scientific view and a new scientific view. The geocentric world view held at that time was not based on the Bible but on the Ptolemaic system which was rooted in the views of Plato and Aristotle.

Historians have observed that the foundations for modern science were laid as early as the thirteenth century when scholars like Roger Bacon showed that Aristotle made certain mistakes about natural phenomena. Medieval science was based on authority -- primarily of Aristotle -- rather than observation. It developed through logic, rather than experimentation.[3] Both Copernicus and Galileo challenged Aristotle's authority, using experimentation in the spirit of modern science. The Biblical emphasis of the Reformation, just prior to this, had already paved the way for dropping Aristotle's authority; it also encouraged the rational investigation of our world.

Perhaps the most obvious affirmation that Biblical Christianity and science are friends and not foes comes from the fact that most of the early scientists after the Renaissance were also strong believers in the Bible as the authoritative source of knowledge concerning the origin of the universe and man's place in it. The book of Genesis, the opening book of the Bible, presents the distinctly Christian world view of a personal Creator God behind the origin and sustenance of the universe (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:17; etc.).

Among the early scientists of note who held the Biblical creationist world view are Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), and Samuel Morse (1791-1872) - what motivated them was a confidence in the "rationality" behind the universe and the "goodness" of the material world. The creation account in Genesis presents an intelligent, purposeful Creator, who, after completing the creation work, declared it to be very good (Genesis 1:31). That assures us that the physical universe operates under reliable laws which may be discovered by the intelligent mind and used in practical applications. The confidence in the divinely pronounced goodness of the material world removed any reluctance concerning the development of material things for the betterment of life in this world. The spiritual world and the material world can work together in harmony.

Genesis also gives another important motivation for the investigation of the laws of nature and application of it to technology. That is the divine mandate given to man to subdue the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). Obviously, the discovery of the laws of nature is the key to harnessing the powers of nature for man's use and control. Herein is the key to the motivation for developing technology. Genesis 4:21-22 records the earliest technological developments by man (4:21-22).

THE ETHICAL FOUNDATION OF TECHNOLOGY

Jesus, the founder of Christianity, Himself chose the profession of a carpenter prior to His ministry. Along with this work ethic, there was also the right climate for initiating research. The free-enterprise system allowed individuals and private groups to carry on research and to develop technology.

There is no question that technology has given us untold blessings. But technology has also been used for monstrous destruction and human misery. ***This should alert us to the fact that technology, by itself, is not the means of salvation.*** Releasing the technology genie has caused our world to go out of control. The apocalyptic vision of some superdictator controlling humanity, using the incredible power of the computer or the atom, is no longer a laughing matter. The potential for

deception through technology, coupled with the illegal use of technology, has also become a serious concern.

PROBLEMS OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

1. Technological advances depend on scientific explanations, scientific proofs and the overall knowledge of man and their inventions. The one who has allowed all this to happen and who is in charge of all, **the Creator has been forgotten**.

The interesting thing is that the world is lost and knows not the truth but the Christians and the church are not able to live by the truth. The church has been caught up in this lie; it too has forgotten. The Lord said through His apostle Paul, ***Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*** Don't miss this important truth.

Evolution theory itself has now collapsed under scientific scrutiny.

2, The Lord of host said, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me, technology has become one of our other gods.* Our lack of faith and failure to trust God has caused idol worship among believers.

Men have become **self-reliant and self sufficient** where all knowledge, and power are now available through this source.

The question the world is asking is *"If we are able to do it all, why do we need God?"*

THE INCARNATION OF GOD THE LOGOS AND TECHNOLOGY

1. God entered our world and sanctified human work, gifts and progress. He didn't despise man's affairs and progress.

2. As the Divine Model of the religious leaders, He didn't interfere in political and civil jurisdiction. He escaped from setting Him a king.

3. Jesus Christ didn't enter in philosophical argument.

4. Our Lord didn't issue literal laws to make a control on man's mind, but grants us the spirit and discernment by which leaders of every generation issue the laws that help men in their progress through sanctified minds.

HOW DO WE FACE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES?

1. Christians have been called to **show them the way**; they must show them that they have been deceived. They have to bring them back into the truth. Remember our Lord Jesus Christ said: ***we are the light of the world, and we should let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.***

Therefore Christians are capable of explaining to the world not opposing technology but how to use it and not depend on it. Technology, man nor anything else can replace or come close to trusting the heavenly Father.

Where technology fails God will never fail. There is nothing new under the sun. God Himself who is the Creator of all pleases that His children grow in every knowledge, even in technological advances. There is no accidents or coincidences in the kingdom of God.

2. The gospel of Christ cannot only hold in check the destructive use of technology by its emphasis on loving others as ourselves, but also provides the antidote for selfish greed, which is behind our runaway buying habits. Jesus emphasized that the abundance of things does not produce happiness.

Back in 1832, Darwin, during his famous trip on the "Beagle," visited Tierra del Fuego, the southern coastal region of South America inhabited by savage barbarians and observed man at his worst. Their depravity was shocking to him. Darwin swore that the Fuegian savages were untamable. Within a few years, however, the Fuegian savages were converted, through the efforts of a missionary sent by the South American Missionary Society who brought the gospel to these people. They were radically transformed into a rational and civilized people. Darwin was very impressed by the success of the Missionary Society. Keen to spread the blessings of civilization, Darwin sent donations to the mission for several years. Thirty-five years after his visit to Tierra del

Fuego, he proudly accepted the invitation from the South American Missionary Society to become its honorary member.

That power to transform individuals and nations is still available. The "Good News" Jesus brought is that the power to love others as ourselves is available to all, from the Creator. When we have that love, technology will be a blessing to all.

CHRISTIANITY AND TECHNOLOGY

3 aspects of Christianity, that support technological development and geographical expansion

1. Manual work is fine: In Christianity manual work is considered of equal standing with mental work, so it is not entirely left over to slaves and low class people. Clever people from the higher classes also do manual work. That is good for the development of technology.

2. Earth is God's gift to man In Christianity Earth is considered as God's gift to man, and so it is legal for man to utilize natural resources. And technology is to a high extent utilization of natural resources.

3. Christianity is missionary: It is a Christian duty to spread the gospel all over the world. That was considered a good argument for colonialism. Among other things, colonialism inspired and supported technological development in Europe in several fields of technology.

SUMMARY TO CHRISTIAN GUIDANCE OF TECHNOLOGY

As should be clear from the above, the Christian (a) has a motivation-love of one's neighbor in obedience to God's commandment-to guide technology, (b) has a strong foundation-the requirements of Christian doctrine and practice-on which to stand when addressing the issue of technology, (c) has a lot to say about the direction of technology-because it not only affects what and how we do things, but also what we think about and how-, and (d) can act in variety of ways-for example, as a prophetic witness or loving resistance fighter, or in politics-to help in the direction of technology. Let us each fulfill our responsibility as part of the Body of Christ.

The ultimate point to be made is this: responsible technology must rest upon a servant-like commitment to love God above all and one's neighbor as oneself. It is as all of us ...seek to love as Christ loved us that we will be able to live in the line of creation and redemption. ...We will become builders who work with, not against, God's good creation to bring out and develop the riches he has placed there. As we do so we will often feel like exiles in a strange and threatening land. Yet we have God's promise that our efforts will not be in vain. Yet we have God's promise that our efforts will not be in vain. Faithfulness will bear fruit. It will be a harvest of God's choosing and timing, but a valuable harvest nonetheless, one worth the struggle and the wait.

1. T. V. Varughese, Ph.D.: Christianity and Technological Advance - The Astonishing Connection - IMPACT No. 245 November 1993
2. Eric V. Snow: Christianity: A Cause of Modern Science?