Technology and Faith: Creative and Redemptive Responses

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Abraham, Abraham Lincoln, 21st Century
The 21\textsuperscript{st} Century World
The Role of IT

[Diagram showing historical progression of computing technology, from electromechanical to integrated circuits, with various milestones marked along the timeline.]
THANK YOU FOR BEING LATE

We are here

Rate of Change

Human Adaptability

Technology

Time

THANK YOU FOR BEING LATE

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

AN OPTIMIST'S GUIDE TO THRIVING IN THE AGE OF ACCELERATIONS

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

AUTHOR OF THE WORLD IS FLAT
As Christians...

• How do we make sense of this world?
• How do we faithfully contribute to it?
Four Perspectives

• A Technology Developer
• A Personal User
• An Organizational Worker
• A Member of Society
Technology Builder → Organization User

Technology Builder → Society

Organization User → Personal User

Society → Personal User
A Technology Builder
Rosie Perera

“As a software engineer, I have had the experience of creating something out of virtually nothing, which is pretty amazing. I love well crafted, elegant computer code. And I love to see people’s faces light up when they learn how to do something on the computer that previously mystified them.”
Genesis 2:5-7

“.... for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground....Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”
Proverbs 25:2

“It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.”
Sin Messed Up Everything
...Including our Work

“Cursed is the ground because of you;
• Through painful toil
• It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
• By the sweat of your brow ...”

Genesis 3:17-19
Building Technology: Mixed Story

• Build great and helpful new things
• Thorns and thistles “show up” **in** our work
  • Bugs
  • Systems with flaws
  • Our own weaknesses
  • Bad intent
• Thorns and thistles “show up” **from** our work
  • Good work rejected
  • Unanticipated consequences from our work
What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his work. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God.
The Role of Reconciliation

“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation”

2 Corinthians 5:19
Personal User
Organizational Use
Organizational Use
Organizational Use

• A huge collection of issues for businesses, and business schools, to navigate business in an age of technology
• Most institutions (medicine, law, art, government) are being disrupted
• A growing collection of questions as education is disrupted by technology
Society

• Numbers
• Search
• News
• People
• AI Systems
• Cyber warfare
• The Nature of Work and the Gig Economy
Numbers

28573 / 8947 = 3.193584441712346
Numbers

28573 / 8947 = 3.193584441712346

Are we sure?

a. 3.193584441712346

b. 2.901695948004468
Numbers

What is the meaning of 3.193584441712346?
Search

• How do I assemble this crib?

• Am I having a heart attack?

• Who played centerfield for the Chicago Cubs in 1969?
But....

- Validate sources?
- Understand context?
Understanding Our World
A Post-Truth Society

Oxford Dictionaries has selected “post-truth” as 2016's international word of the year.

The dictionary defines “post-truth” as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”
The Flat Earth Movement Is Growing, Survey Reveals

12 April 2018, Athena Yenko Tech Times
And Yet....

• New cures for diseases
• Tools for the blind, hearing impaired, and autistic
• Clean water, safe food
• Transportation safety
We need to deliberately broaden our view and understanding

• To even understand each other
• To rightly understand our world
First Impressions: The Science of Meeting People

“Research shows that **two** trait **dimensions** account for 80 to 90 percent of overall first impressions, and that holds across cultures.”

Amy Cuddy  
Harvard Business School
Self-Driving Cars—What Could Go Right, and Wrong?

• Reduce traffic deaths (from 40,000 annually)
• Probably not speed limits, traffic lights, etc.
• What about insurance?
• What are new issues that require governance?
Cyber Warfare
The Nature of Work
Mathematical Help

• Understanding something (or someone) complex by reducing it to two dimensions

• The danger of reducing three dimensional objects to two
Understanding Three Dimensions in Two
Understanding Three Dimensions in Two
Challenges for Society

• Wider gap between tech savvy and Luddites
• Fundamental misunderstandings – different data and different sources
• Wonderful life-saving devices and support
• Growing political divides and polarization
• New kinds of threats
• Self-reliance for work
Challenges for Christians

• What does it mean to be “salt and light” in this 21st century world?

• Paul said, “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.... Let us behave decently, as in the daytime.” Romans 13:12-13

How do we live in the 21st century in light of eternity?
Things to Do

• Experiment and explore
• Get to know people deeply—beyond technology mediated relationships
• Take a technology Sabbath—coordinated
• Read books as well as tweets
• Look at more than one side of an issue—recognize confirmation bias
Conclusions

• Everyone is impacted—not just techies
• God placed us in the 21st Century for a reason—don’t look to retreat
• New kinds of learning are required
• Faith communities are an important place for focused discussion on these issues