The 2001 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture
Proclaiming the Gospel in a Wired World

Introduction

Cell phones, e-mail, MTV, the Web, Palm pilots, and pagers fill our lives and the lives of young people. Teens live in a world where "religious chat rooms and web sites act like spiritual supermarkets, offering an assortment of belief systems all within one click" (Newsweek, May 8, 2000). Whether you laud the changes technology has brought or long for yesteryear, there is no denying that today's wired world affects how we share the good news of Jesus Christ. Those who are engaged in ministry with youth are translators—charged with the daunting task of making connections for young people who are more familiar with gigabytes than with grace.

Rather than offering instructions on how to use e-mail, set up chat rooms, and design multimedia presentations, the 2001 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture examine the theological implications of modern technology and globalization. They help us to reflect on our modes of proclamation—not just preaching and worship but also storytelling, relationships, justice-seeking, service, teaching, and the daily practice of Christian life. They provide inspiration that will refuel us for bearing witness to Jesus Christ with youth in the wired world.

Thomas Beaudoin engages us in a provocative discussion of the relationship of the church to consumer media capitalism. He argues that consumer media capitalism functions strategically as an anonymous spiritual discipline, thus creating "theocapitalism." Beaudoin then proposes a tactical plan for Christian theology and pastoral ministry to contest the strategic discipline of theocapitalism. His lectures offer challenging insights on ministry in today's wired world as well as practical directives for discipling young people in this context.

Marva Dawn raises concerns about blind acceptance of contemporary fads and asks how we can teach youth to question their use of technology. The gospel, says Dawn, calls us to be hopeful realists about the wired world and enables us to de-idolize those elements of culture that begin to take primary place in our lives. She gives ten Christian practices that can help us to clear a space for the focal commitments of our faith in today's culture. Dawn then urges readers to take greater care in how they use words, and she provides insights from Luke's account of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24) on how we might proclaim the gospel to young people.

Richard Osmer takes us on a rafting trip through the white water of globalization, exploring this cultural shift's influence on adolescents through the global media, the globalization of risk, and the new pluralism of globalization. Drawing on the research of the Princeton Project on Youth,

Globalization, and the Church, he explains why we experience globalization as catching us up in currents of change that are beyond our control and discusses the practical implications for ministry with young people. Osmer calls the church to provide young people with three indispensable gifts for their white water journey: a creed to believe, a code for the road, and a dream to esteem. These gifts for the journey are developed out of the practices of catechesis, exhortation, and discernment found in Paul's ministry and are illustrated for today through case studies of two very different congregations.

Finally, Katherine Paterson blesses us with the gift of story. We are important, she persuades, not because we can teach our young people about the wired world or because we must warn them away from it, but because we are the church and we have a story to tell. Paterson explores how we might tell our story to the young who think they have nothing to learn from us. She challenges us to see the "invisible youth" by looking at young people as they really are and loving them as such. Perhaps, she notes, youth would welcome from us a vision of who, in God's sight, they really are, in a sharing of stories that illumine and heal.

May these lectures inspire you and equip you to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the young.

Faithfully yours,

Amy Scott Vaughn
Director of Leadership Development
Institute for Youth Ministry

2001 Lectures

Thomas M. Beaudoin
Celebrity Deathmatch: The Church Versus Capitalism?
After Purity: Contesting Theocapitalism

Marva J. Dawn
Technological Devices or Engagement in Practices?
The "Humiliation" of the Word or Its Restoration?

Richard R. Osmer
Riding the Raft: Ministry with Youth in an Age of Permanent White Water
A Checklist for the Journey: Biblical Foundations of Ministry with Youth

Katherine Paterson
I Love to Tell the Story
The Invisible Youth

Technological Devices or Engagement in Practices?

I always begin lectures that have to do with the Church, with the responsive phrases that God's people have used for thousands of years.[1] Perhaps the first biblically recorded usage is in the book of Ruth, when Boaz greeted his reapers in the field, "The LORD be with you," and they responded, "The LORD bless you" (Ruth 2:4). It is important that we remember why we say such phrases to each other—for this correlates with the topic of this essay.

When I say to an assembly, "The LORD be with you," I am praying for everyone's ears, minds, hearts, lives, ministries that what we do together will strengthen God's work through them all. When the people answer, "And also with you," they are committing themselves to me, to the process of our time together. There is no such thing as speaker and audience or writer and readers when we are talking about the Church. There is only a community that listens together to the Holy Spirit.

I also encourage those participating with me physically to extend their hands in blessing as they respond, because I have found that if people move their bodies that action re-engages their minds, and they remember why they are saying this response—that this is a commitment. They are saying, "We are praying for you, for your mouth and mind that they will function for the sake of God's glory and the strengthening of the Church in this place." This is a very serious commitment, and I have found the practice useful, especially with young children and teenagers, who are more ready to become truly engaged than are adults (who are often much more passive). My prayer in using these phrases of the Church is that we might truly be a community for the sake of God's purposes.

Similarly, may our work together here—as I write and you read—be

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also communal. The LORD be with you. [Response: And also with you. Please carry this act of engagement into your reading.]

> Let us pray: Triune God, we are so grateful, in the face of the consumerism of our wired world and in the midst of this technological milieu, that we as your people hold a different stance, live a different way, and serve a different kingdom. Open up our minds to understand our culture more clearly. Open up our hearts to love you more dearly. Open up our lives to invest ourselves more thoroughly for the sake of serving your people. We are grateful for the privilege of being together to learn and worship through this printed page. We pray that now you will enfold us in your grace so that we can hear what your Spirit is saying to the Church. We ask this eagerly, confidently, expecting that you will manifest yourself in our midst, to your honor and glory and praise, and for the sake of the world. Amen.

In correlation with what Tom Beaudoin has explicated concerning consumerism, the impact of media, and the nature of the capitalism that characterizes our society, this essay will consider the fundamental language of our culture. The 2001 Princeton Forums on Youth Ministry invitation booklet says that we will "explore how the church might proclaim the Gospel in the language and thought forms of the electronic culture without losing something in the translation." It is my thesis that we can't translate, that what we do instead is offer a different language. I have become convinced that the language of the electronic culture is extremely dangerous, and I'm not being a pessimist. Let me underscore this for the sake of proper interpretation of the rest of this essay: I am not a pessimist or a doomsayer. I am not opposed to technology; I'm not a Luddite. I simply want us to ask better questions, so that we don't become overwhelmed by what in the fundamental language of the media culture is inimical to the Gospel.

A Sampling of Concerns

Let's first sketch the landscape and survey a sampling of recent reactions to the technological milieu that show us how important it is to ask the right questions. Years ago we heard many advertisements about how computers in the home would change the life of children, how education could be vastly improved with the use of computers, how "left behind" families would be if they didn't buy into such hype. Now major news journals are featuring special cover stories on how computers aren't really good for small children, that "two-dimensional play is not as good as three-dimensional play," that pediatric optometrists are discovering an escalation of younger

and younger children with eye problems. One doctor said, "The increase has been exponential…with the rise of computers in homes.[2]

Similarly, Tom Beaudoin's first presentation mentioned the influence of media on people's expectations of a "better house." Meanwhile, a fraternal insurance magazine observed,

> The trouble with homes today is not so much that they don't have the latest technology. It is that they have no kitchen table.… No one has a place to learn we are all in this together. No one has time to confess—and to forgive.
>
> We may live in better houses than our parents ever dreamed of. We may be technologically sophisticated and have oceans of information at our fingertips. We may be more mobile, more intelligent, freer and wealthier than ever before.
>
> But we are poorer, more broken and less able to be a family because somewhere we lost that wonderfully improbable, scratched and scalded, littered and almost unusable center of our lives—our meeting place; our altar; our laughing, praying and being place. The kitchen table.[3]

My intention is not to romanticize the past or kitchen tables. We simply have to recognize that in our present culture, in the face of a glut of advertising for all the things that we can possess in connection with the "wired world," there is also a deep yearning being expressed and left unanswered. This is demonstrated by the movie *The Family Man.* Its main character, a man who has everything, suddenly wakes up in a different way of life. Though it takes awhile for him to adjust to the radical alterations, he realizes at the end that his fast-paced, super-affluent, nonrelational, self-centered life was not what he really wanted. Similarly, in youth ministry we help those we serve to recognize their deepest longings (expressed and unexpressed), who human beings are and want to be, who we specifically are, who God is, and how all these things connect.

Other examples for our brief survey are provided by a special section in the *Christian Century* on how seminaries can make better use of the possibilities of the Internet and wired education. Those observations are especially useful to us here as we consider what youth ministry should be when the young people with whom we work are so formed by the wired world in which they are immersed.

Raymond B. Williams, for example, noted that distance electronic education changes the character of interpersonal relations, the kinds of interaction

between the students and their professors. He also observed that seminaries frequently can't afford the best technology and the necessary training for using it, so they will always appear stodgy.[4] We should especially stress these points in connection with youth ministry. Is it a good use of church funds to invest heavily in technological devices when we will never be able to keep up with the dazzle of entertainments outside our church—since the wicked are always richer than the holy ones and since we have other priorities, such as feeding the hungry and housing the homeless?

In another article from the *Christian Century* David Stewart from Princeton Seminary discussed the difference between using libraries and using the Internet and Web. He asks if the "high-volume, high-speed" information of the wired world is always what a researcher needs, and he concludes, "the wired environment is almost intrinsically impatient, and so doesn't always foster quiet, reflection and deliberation—the low-anxiety cast of mind which often produces the best thinking about God." This is a profound consideration for youth ministry. Many churches specialize in high-energy events and hyped excitement, which are not necessarily conducive to thinking about God.

Stewart also distinguishes between the library and the "info-quagmire" and the problem that the presence of so much data on the Web obscures its source. In contrast, "in the print environment, publishers evaluate manuscripts, then painstakingly edit and review them before sending them to press. Likewise, libraries scrutinize items carefully according to standards and policy before adding them to their collection.[5] Because there is no similar possibility for such vigilance on the Web, the result is a "treasures-to-trash disparity.[6] How much trash have the youth we serve imbibed from their wired world? How will we help them want to search for genuine treasure?

In another article Scott Cormode discerned that using PowerPoint for lectures "does not create actively engaged students." He noted that instead students "can become passive, believing that the pithy summaries on the projection screen encapsulate what they should learn." We should similarly question whether PowerPoint offers great advantages for sermons or Bible studies with youth. Cormode suggests instead using technology to foster seminary class discussion by such means as requiring students to send a summary of their reflections on class readings by e-mail before the class meets.[7] Similarly, I am not rejecting any use of the wired world's tools for youth ministry. I am simply urging better questions instead of blind acceptance of contemporary fads, such as the false assumption that using PowerPoint will make sermons more "attractive" to young people. One question instead could be how we can help congregants, especially youth,

become more actively *engaged* in the Scriptures and in worship. We already have more than enough passivity in our culture; we certainly don't want to foster more.

Keep remembering that my purpose here is in nurturing the practice of asking better questions. Being wired is not the problem. Using technology is not the problem. Tom Beaudoin similarly showed that consumerism is not the problem; rather, the ideology behind it must be questioned. Consequently, he explored the theology of capitalism, and my goal here is to explore the theology of technology.

Jacques Ellul's Prophetic Insights

Fifty years ago Jacques Ellul's original French version of what in English came to be called *The Technological Society* warned us that one of the greatest dangers of technology would be its development into the totality of an overwhelming milieu. He realized that human beings would become immersed in and "completely subjected to an omnipotent technique.[8] He theorized that it would be vanity to pretend that this monolithic technical world could be checked or guided, for people would discover that "enclosed within [their own] artificial creation…there [would be] 'no exit'… (428). We will see later in this essay that we do have possibilities for exits, but that these must be attended to with extreme care.

Ellul exclaimed that this situation of an overbearing milieu would be new in the history of humankind. He called it a "profound mutation," "a new dismembering and a complete reconstitution of the human being" (431) because technology and its paradigm would become the defining force of civilization. Prior to the eighteenth century, technique was applied only in certain narrow, limited areas (64). There was also a limitation of technical means, and this was compensated for by the skill of the worker. Efforts were made to improve the use of a tool, not the tool itself, so everything varied according to the gifts of persons, "whereas technique in the modern sense seeks to eliminate such variability" (67). We can immediately recognize the danger of this improvement of gadgets rather than of persons' skills because if our work does not require skill from us it is not as enjoyable.

Two other problems highlighted by Ellul were that in a technological milieu the primary criterion is efficiency and that the proliferation of means would bring about the disappearance of ends (80). Perhaps all of us in ministry struggle with this loss of the ends because of too many means: we have so many things to do, we forget why we are doing them.

William Kuhns, an early commentator on technology, cited *The*

Technological Society as the only comprehensive treatment of modern technology to understand it as a distinct and unique phenomenon with a central force that has repercussions on every aspect of life. He especially lauded Ellul for being the first to place values within technology rather than outside of it.[9] This is critical for my thesis because, as I continually reiterate, the problem is not technology or the wired world itself but its paradigm, its language, its theology.

The following three points from a later article by Ellul summarize some of my primary concerns about this theology:

> a. The technical world is one of material things…[but] spiritual values cannot evolve as a function of material improvement.

> b. Technical growth leads to a growth of power…[but] when power becomes absolute, values disappear.… Power eliminates, in proportion to its growth, the boundary between good and evil, between the just and the unjust.

> c. Technique[10] can never engender freedom.… The problem is deeper—the operation of Technique is the contrary of freedom, an operation of determinism and necessity.[11]

When Ellul first issued his warnings in *The Technological Society* describing this Technique and its attributes of totalitarianism, rationality, artificiality, automatism of choice, self-augmentation, monism, universalism, autonomy, efficiency, and necessity, he was accused of being nothing but an overly dramatic pessimist. However, Ellul had used overstatement for the same reason that Flannery O'Connor wrote stories using grotesque characters—both recognized that when people are really deafened and deadened by the surrounding ethos we need a megaphone to wake them up, to get their attention. Moreover, thirty years later sociologists wondered why they had not paid more attention to his concerns. Meanwhile, Ellul expanded his cautions in *The Technological System* (English version, 1980) and *The Technological Bluff* (English version, 1990).

When we are working with youth, how will we teach them to put limits on technology—on their involvement in the wired world and their employment of technological devices? This is one of the main questions we must ask in ministry, since one great gift of the Gospel is that it enables us to de-idolize, de-sacralize, de-divinize those elements of culture that begin unduly to take primary place in our lives. If we want youth ministry to enable those we serve to keep God at the center of life, then we must find ways to equip

them with skills for putting limits on their wired existence.

In the interviews with Ellul recorded by Madeleine Garrigou-Lagrange in *In Season, Out of Season,* Ellul elaborated his critique that Christians seem always to be behind when they should be ahead of cultural developments. He expressed immense disappointment at "the extreme incapacity of Christians to intervene when situations are fluid" and urged Christians to learn to pursue their mission of thinking "before events become inevitable," at "moments when history is flexible,…when we must put ourselves inside to move the works.[12]

I am very grateful to have been invited to The 2001 Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry because it seems to me the event gave us the opportunity to follow Ellul's instruction, to be prophetic (instead of behind the times) concerning the nature of the wired world, its influence on youth ministry, and the kinds of questions we should be asking for the sake of limiting what might be destructive to genuine ministry. So often our churches simply play catch-up, jumping on fads without asking theological/biblical questions.

Can We See the "Bluff"?

Do we see how the advertising world bluffs us into thinking that more technology or more implementation of the wired world's possibilities is the only solution to world problems in economics and politics and to such church problems as the decline in worship attendance, the reduction of membership numbers, or the lack of interest in "church" on the part of youth?

Ellul wants to help us notice in our technological milieu

> the gigantic bluff in which discourse on techniques envelops us, making us believe anything and, far worse, changing our whole attitude to techniques: the bluff of politicians, the bluff of the media, ... the bluff of publicity, the bluff of economic models.... And when I say bluff, it is because so many successes and exploits are ascribed to techniques (without regard for the cost or utility or risk), because technique is regarded in advance as the only solution to collective problems (unemployment, Third World misery, pollution, war) or individual problems (health, family life, even the meaning of life), and because at the same time it is seen as the only chance for progress and development in every society. There is bluff here because the effective possibilities are multiplied a hundredfold in such discussions and the negative aspects are radically concealed.

How often do we hear of the great advantages of the wired world, but do we comparably hear about its disadvantages? Ellul concludes that the result of this

bluff is that it "causes us to live in a world of diversion and illusion… It finally sucks us into this world by banishing all our ancient reservations and fears.[13]

The bluff in youth ministry is that greater use of the gadgets of the wired world will "attract" young people and keep them involved in the church. That bluff causes us to lose our reservations about using certain media in worship and mission and ministry, so we plunge ahead without asking better questions.

The Bluff Hides Our Loss of Culture

Christopher Clausen, professor at Penn State, comments in *Faded Mosaic: The Emergence of Postcultural America* that the word *culture* signifies a morally demanding setting for one's life. It defines our existence in comparison with other cultures and by means of its own traditions differentiates good and evil. In such a view of culture, we see the importance of the Christian culture with its emphasis on justice, economic redistribution, peacemaking, and mission.

In the twenty-first century, North America is experiencing a denuded nonculture. (Tom Beaudoin made the same point in his discussion of "domesticating tolerance.") We no longer have shared values by which we can assess good and evil and by which character is formed and focused, and this contributes to the personal de-centering that characterizes postmodernity. This leads, Clausen suggests, to a loss of identity, a loss of direction or certainty as to who one is and to what one does in life.[14]

What should a culture supply? It offers habits, customs, traditions, and rules for behavior in certain settings. By the latter I do not mean rules that are oppressive or legalistic, but those that actually free us to behave appropriately for the sake of relationships and communal well-being. The absence of such a culture is evident in our society's lack of conversation about sacrifice or the common good.

If there is no orientation to any culture and its authority or ideals, then young people more easily conform to the latest fads, to the media's bluffs, to the theology of capitalism. They become pseudo-individualists, dominated by narcissism.

This, of course, is my view from a Christian perspective. Might some of the same concerns be voiced from other perspectives, especially by someone in the midst of the wired world?

Warnings from the Inside of the W ired World

Ellen Ullman's *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents* raises an alert from the inside vision of a computer software engineer.

Endorsements on the book cover say that her "story of life in the electronic world is a reckoning, a warning, a seduction" and that "this book is a little masterpiece, an exquisitely melancholy cry from a body disappearing into the machine. It is a wrenching swan-song for human beings.[15]

Ullman admits that she would

like to think that computers are neutral, a tool like any other, a hammer that can build a house or smash a skull. But there is something in the system itself, in the formal logic of programs and data, that recreates the world in its own image.… [I]t forms an irresistible horizontal country that obliterates the long, slow, old cultures of place and custom, law and social life.…

She describes at length her work in designing a system for a collaboration of groups ministering to AIDS victims. While trying to fix some bugs in the software (and descrying that all systems have bugs of some sort), she discovered that she had "passed through a membrane where the real world and its uses no longer matter" (3). She admits, "I'd like to claim a sudden sense of real-world responsibility. But that would be lying. What I really thought was this: I must save the system." As a result,

The image of patients with AIDS recedes… We give ourselves over to the sheer fun of the technical, to the nearly sexual pleasure of the clicking thought-stream.

Some part of me mourns, but I know there is no other way: human needs must cross the line into code. They must pass through this semipermeable membrane where urgency, fear, and hope are filtered out, and only reason travels across.[16]

Later, when she returned to assess how well her system was working with the AIDS project, she found the workers in the organizations making comments such as these:

"I worry that e-mail is breaking down our system of care."
"We relied on knowing each other. Now we don't." (82)

Perhaps you know, as I do, some pastoral staffs that function in the same way. Sometimes large staffs, in the face of the difficulty of scheduling time to be together, no longer meet face to face, but simply send e-mails. There is nothing inherently wrong with e-mail, of course, unless we forget that it is not genuine *communication* since it is two steps removed—it doesn't involve facial expressions or tone of voice.

Ullman also raises the problem of the impossibility of always keeping

up with the latest developments. It is quite astonishing that a person in the thick of software engineering would have to admit this:

> It had to happen to me sometime: sooner or later I would have to lose sight of the cutting edge. That moment every technical person fears—the fall into knowledge exhaustion, obsolescence, techno-fuddy-duddyism—there is no reason to think I could escape it forever. Still, I didn't expect it so soon. (95)

If a person whose life work is in the midst of the wired world can't keep up, how could our churches and we in ministry hope to keep pace in utilizing the best tools of the wired world?

The most poignant of all Ullman's revelations concerns the "virtual life" and its bluffs. She asserts that the word *virtual* once meant "the sense of the false note, something missing, an ineffable quality of not-quite-happy" (126). Now, however, the word

> retains the sense of the missing, the not real. But somehow this not-ness has become a good thing. To be ephemerally existent, to float in some indefinable plane now known as cyberspace—that's supposed to be grand.… [Companies used to be like families, but that is changing.] There was something in this long-term commitment, this human putting up with one another that I know has passed away… (127)
>
> [Now her software company functions like this:] assemble a group of people to do a job, get it done, then disassemble… The skill-set changes before the person possibly can, so it's always simpler just to change the person. Take out a component, put in a zippier one. The postmodern company as PC—a shell, a plastic cabinet. Let the people come and go; plug them in, then pull them out. (129)
>
> Families scatter, marriages end, yet the office and the factory have hung on a bit longer as staple human gathering places. Maybe this is why the decline of industrial work and the downsizing of corporations have produced such anxiety: the final village is dissolving, and those of us without real jobs or fakes—where will we meet each other now?
>
> On line, I suppose. As virtualized creatures swimming alone in private pools of time. (145)

This sense of emptiness from lack of relationships is amplified when Ullman describes her association with the workers in her company and her affair with another software engineer. Once when she took her "company" out for a celebrative lunch, she admits, "we were careful not to say too much

about ourselves, careful not to make assumptions about the future. We were all practiced virtuals. We knew better than to get involved." Later, when she went home to her silent computers in one corner of the house, "I had a rush of affection for the machines. They had a presence, a solidity, that made the empty office feel occupied." So she gave her four computers names (147)[17]

Near the end of Ullman's involvement with Brian (who at the same time actually had a different, serious girlfriend, from whom, he said, he needed a lot of psychic distance), she realized one morning that in her relationships she "had stopped expecting much… It was too easy to live in these discrete, free-roaming capsules, a life like particles from an atom smasher, exploding into spectacular existence—for an instant—then gone." When she looked over at Brian asleep, she "felt sorry for both of us. We weren't very brave. Surely we were missing something essential if our idea of other people was a program downloaded from the Internet" (180-181).

Recognizing her own deep sadnesses and writing about them so poetically, Ullman compares herself to the birds sent down first into the mine shafts to determine whether the air in the cavern is toxic. She offers this warning:

> We virtual workers are everyone's future. We wander from job to job, and now it's hard for anyone to stay put anymore. Our job commitments are contractual, contingent, impermanent, and this model of insecure life is spreading outward from us. I may be wrong, but I have this idea that we programmers are the world's canaries. We spend our time alone in front of monitors; now look up at any office building, look into living-room windows at night: so many people sitting alone in front of monitors. We lead machine-centered lives; now everyone's life is full of automated tellers, portable phones, pagers, keyboards, mice. We live in a contest of the fittest, where the most knowledgeable and skillful win and the rest are discarded; and this is the working life that waits for everybody. Everyone agrees: be a knowledge worker or be left behind. Technical people, consultants, contract programmers: we are going first. We fly down and down, closer and closer to the virtualized life, and where we go the world is following. (146)

Do we want, in our youth ministry, to follow down and closer to the virtualized life? Or do we follow Jesus, who was God's love incarnate and who invites us so also to love our neighbors?

Ullman's descriptions raise critically urgent questions for us as we

serve young people who face the future she exhibits. Jacques Ellul had called our attention to bluffs, and, in this case, the bluff hides the fact that "virtual" reality is so virtual it is not reality—or at least not a reality that is desirable.

Christian Realism

With such a strong critique of the tendencies of a wired world to displace or distort relationships, you might object that I should not be so pessimistic. It is vitally important that we realize that Christians are not, by definition (and doctrine), pessimistic.

We can't be pessimists as Christians because we know the future, and the promise that our future will be enjoyed in the fullness of God's presence has been secured by the resurrection of Christ. Moreover, that future aeon has already broken into this present age, and God's kingly reign has already begun.

On the other hand, however, Christians cannot be optimists because we know that this aeon is still in severe trouble. This time and this world are still characterized by sinfulness, brokenness, evil, and idolatries.

Instead, Christians are hopeful realists. We have to be realistic about the nature of our present society. Nevertheless, because we have hope, we are able, as Ellul says, to get outside ourselves through faith and thereby to have objectivity in studying the cultural forces that alienate us. Ellul insists that Christian freedom makes him "able to hold at arm's length these powers which condition and crush me...[and to] view them with an objective eye that freezes and externalizes and measures them." Consequently, we as Christians can scrutinize our concrete world and call it into question prophetically.[16]

The biblical disciple Thomas shows us the importance of both sides of being a hopeful realist. Poor Thomas has gotten a "bad press" undeservedly since he certainly wasn't any more "doubting" that any of the other disciples. He was truly a realist and was the first actually to face Jesus'death—as evidenced by his comment when Jesus tardily (from a human perspective) determined to go to Lazarus, "Let us also go that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Thomas's problem was that his realism was not coupled with the hope he could have had if he had believed Jesus' words about his own resurrection.

A great gift that we can offer in our youth ministry is the proclamation of resurrection hope, even as we are bluntly realistic about the dangers of the wired world. We are explicitly and unambiguously realistic, so that people

are freed from their false hopes, their idolatries, the techno-dazzling wonders that hide our culture's deceptions and bluffs. Let's consider a few and realistically, hopefully laugh at them.

A Sampling of Bluffs

No doubt we can all identify with, or at least recognize as true, the following bluffs sketched by Jacques Ellul in *The Technological Bluff*[18] The first is the notion that the faster anything is, the better. The result is that we find ourselves as L'homme pressé, the pushed and pressured person. We ask people, "How are you?" and they answer, "Busy," as if that were a badge of honor. (I try to avoid that tension by answering, "I'm joyfully and thoroughly engaged in focal practices that are truly meaningful because they are directed toward what's really important.")

When Ellul asked people who took the speed train from Paris to Lyons what they were doing with the time they saved, he reported that "no one was ever able to give me any answer." Ellul observed,

> The time saved is empty time. I am not denying that on rare occasions speed might be of use, for example, to save an injured person… But how few are the times when it is really necessary to save time. The truth is that going fast has become a value on its own… [T]he media extol every gain in speed as a success, and the public accepts it as such. But experience shows that the more time we save, the less we have. The faster we go, the more harassed we are. What use it is? Fundamentally, none. I know that I will be told that we need to have all these means at our disposal and to go as fast as we can because modern life is harried. But there is a mistake here, for modern life is harried just because we have the telephone, the telex, the plane, etc. Without these devices it would be no more harried than it was a century ago when we could all walk at the same pace. "You are denying progress then?" Not at all; what I am denying is that *this* is progress!" (258)

Consider also the bluff that we'll have more time if we use more technological gadgets. Do any of us have more time?

A third kind of bluff concerns "gadgets"—that we must have the newest gadget[19] or we will be hopelessly outdated. As Tom Beaudoin emphasized in his first lecture, developments do make it impossible for us to stay with the status quo, but it is a bluff that the upgrades are always improvements or that being outdated is necessarily bad. The ludicrousness of this bluff strikes me as I work to type this essay. Because of my visual impairment, I can't use

Windows and land an arrow on the right icon—and yet with only two typed words I can move from my DOS operating system into this file and start writing this project immediately while Windows users are still playing with their mice.

Neil Postman, author of an urgently important book for youth ministers called *Amusing Ourselves to Death*[20] suggested at an education conference at Penn State that we should always ask the following about the newest technology: "What problem do I have that this technology solves?" He told amusing stories about trying to buy a car that invariably came with both cruise control and automatic windows. When he objected to the cost of including them, he asked, "What problem do I have that this technology solves?" and to the salesman's answers he replied, "But I *live* in New York City!" There is no freeway on which to cruise, and one *needs* the exercise of cranking the windows. Yet it is impossible to buy a car without the gadgets, so we pay for them whether we need them or not.

What about the bluff that computers will make useful, wise decisions? Computers are programmed by persons with human foibles, and our human methods are always incomplete. Or what about the fact that we're deluged with so much information that people can't make decisions. The excess of information has only produced paralysis, not more engaged citizens (278). If television produces what Postman called a "Low Information-Action Ratio," think how much that impotent passivity is multiplied by the plethora of information on the Web.

The result of all these factors is "empty time"—an artificial world that dislodges time and space, that causes people "to lose their sense of reality and to abandon their search for truth" (337). As my husband discovers when he urges his fifth-grade students to observe "National Turn Off the TV Week," "The experience of empty time which we have to fill on our own by conversation, by relations with other people, by reflection, or by reading, has become a traumatic one for our generation" (338).

As a result, many escape into the diversions of the wired world.

Diversions

As Ellul notes, with our culture's diversions "we take a giant stride along the path of abstraction and addiction" by means of the wired world and its fascinations. He is referring to diversions not just in the sense of amusement but in the sense of Pascal that we are "diverted from thinking about ourselves and our human condition, and also from our high aspirations, from the meaning of life, and from loftier goals" (358)[21] Pascal also recognized

that another diversion quickly has to replace the previous one. We jump endlessly from one amusement to another, one distraction to the next and never step aside to assess what we are doing. We fly off in all directions. Moreover, contemporary diversions are universally available—even when we are alone, before our own screen. Ellul concludes,

> as in the case of all our base, vile, and dangerous pursuits, we have to cast a large veil of idealism, grandeur, and seriousness over them.... Conversely, we have a poor, foolish, mediocre idea of freedom if we call all these exploits freedom! For diversions are always against freedom inasmuch as they are against conscience and reflection. (359)

Because our society has been so good at inventing diversions, because the wired world is inundated with them, the media have to bluff us into thinking that consumption is our absolute duty. For if we do not consume, the pace of the economy will slow down, money will not circulate, and people will be forced out of work. Consequently, we are also bombarded with the bluff that we should follow the opinions and styles propagated by the media (406). Thus we are always directed toward self concern and the various idolatries of possessions and the "Mammon" that purchases them, instead of Christian concern for such things as justice building and peacemaking.

What should we do in the face of our wired world and its diversions—we who are ministers of the Gospel for the sake of youth? Ellul begins to move toward hope.

> He emphasizes that the only way to find a narrow passage in this enormous world of deceptions (expressing real forces) as I have attempted to describe it is to have enough awareness and self-criticism to see that for a century we have been descending step by step the ladder of absolute necessity, of destiny, of fate.
>
>   Following Hegel, Marx, and Kierkegaard, I have often said that we show our freedom by recognizing our nonfreedom. (411)

Luther, too, knew that our best hope for deliverance from our human fatality is by knowing that we are in bondage to sin (in all its manifestations) and cannot free ourselves.

Are we, then, hopelessly "shut up, blocked, and chained by the inevitability of the technical system which is making us march like obedient automatons thanks to its bluff?" Ellul answers Yes and No. We have to be realistic that we are caught in a system that is too intertwined, complex, universal, and

autonomous for us to think that we can master the machinery.

However, we also recognize that every example of growth at some extreme reaches the point of imbalance and rupture. Moreover, "the gigantic bluff is self-contradictory and it leaves a margin of chaos, it covers gaps without filling them, it gives evidence of mistakes, and it has to multiply deceptions to veil the absence of feedback in the system."

Consequently, we who serve the Gospel can reveal the fracture lines (Ellul's phrase) and revel in them (my phrase). Also, with humility and weakness and "by the sole aptitude for astonishment, we profit from the existence of little cracks of freedom, and install in them a trembling freedom which is not attributed to or mediated by machines or politics, but which is truly effective" (412), so that we bring to humankind the new thing for which everyone waits (often without knowing that)—the kingdom of God.

I love that phrase, *trembling freedom*! The church is the developer of trembling freedom! We who minister to youth in the wired world offer them the hope of release from bondage to technology into the trembling freedom of the kingdom of God (which then gives us the capacity to choose whatever technology is useful and good for our purposes as God's servants and stewards).

Albert Borgmann's "Focal Concerns and Practices"

One contemporary philosopher who offers a way to find trembling freedom is Albert Borgmann, professor at the University of Montana in Missoula and author of *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life.* Borgmann recognizes, with Ellul, that the problem is not technology *per se* but its "device paradigm."[22]

Technology in its best sense releases us from burdens. Most of the life-endangering or onerous burdens, however, have already been lifted from a large proportion of North Americans, so for the past half century or so technology continues to be developed in the form of what Ellul calls "gadgets," for the sake of diversion, but not corresponding to genuine needs. Borgmann recognizes that now we are getting rid of burdens that perhaps we should not eliminate—such as those that provided chores for children.

The paradigm of the technological milieu is that devices produce commodities, and the media support this paradigm by the barrage of advertisements urging us to acquire more commodities. Meanwhile, the accumulation of more and more commodities merely deepens our insatiable appetites.

The problem is not the commodities nor the technological devices that produce them. The problem is the paradigm. Therefore, my purpose here is not to disparage the wired world or its technologies. Instead, we must reform

the paradigm and the whole theology that accompanies it.

Borgmann offers reform by means of emphasizing engagement in practices related to our "focal concerns," the dimensions of life to which we are most committed. Under the heading of "engagement" he brings together traits such as "the acquisition of skills, the fidelity to a daily discipline, the broadening of sensibility, the profound interaction of human beings, and the preservation and development of tradition" (214).

By such engagement we deepen relationships and use the devices and commodities of the wired world with skilled selectivity. Borgmann elaborates his rehabilitation of the wired world as follows:

> A reform of the paradigm is even less, of course, a dismantling of technology or of the technological universe. It is rather *the recognition and the restraint of the paradigm.* To restrain the paradigm is to restrict it to its proper sphere. Its proper sphere is the background or periphery of focal things and practices. Technology so reformed is no longer the characteristic and dominant way in which we take up with reality; rather it is a way of proceeding that we follow at certain times and up to a point, one that is left behind when we reach the threshold of our focal and final concerns. The concerns that move us to undertake a reform of the paradigm lead to reforms within the paradigm as well. Since a focal practice discloses the significance of things and the dignity of humans, it engenders a concern for the safety and well-being of things and persons. (220)

I believe that as Christians our focal concerns are primarily two: the love of God and the love of neighbors. Because of these focal concerns, we are able to put a limit on technology.

Borgmann gives three steps by which our "focal commitment leads to an intelligent limitation of technology." The first is "to clear a central space for the focal thing." Borgmann gives as models of people establishing an inviolate time for running or developing the space and time and skills in one's home for the culture of the table. The latter is an especially good specimen for illustrating Borgmann's emphasis that "this central clearing goes hand in hand…with a newly discriminating use of technology." For example, if we are interested in the "culture of the table," we would use certain technologies such as a stove or oven for cooking while refraining from those, such as a microwave and pre-packaged food commodities, that prevent us from enjoying the process of cooking and its fragrances.

At the Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry I used the example of the

chapel's organ to consider how its builder, Paul Fritts, cleared a central space for his focal concern. He learned many skills—of design, of pouring out the molten metal and rolling pipes, of building tracker connections—even as his sister Judy learned to carve the beautiful artworks that grace organ facades. The more their skills developed, the more they could carefully discriminate in their use of technology for the sake of genuine, breathtaking craftsmanship. Similarly, I want to help young people in the Church to clear a big space for God, so that God is no longer in competition with consumerism, with the diversions of the wired world.

Borgmann's second direction of reform is "the simplification of the context that surrounds and supports the focal area" (222). If we have truly cleared a space for focal things and practices, technology will be returned to its proper role in the background (as a means to serve the focal ends), rather than the foreground. This is essential because

> this broader sense of the means-ends relation is in conflict with the means-ends structure embodied in the device paradigm.... In the common view, the distinction [of means-ends] is placed within the device paradigm, in alignment with the machinery-commodity distinction. Thus the role of technology remains invisible and unchallenged. The present proposal is to restrict the entire paradigm, both the machinery and the commodities, to the status of a means and let focal things and practices be our ends. (220)

Clearly to help young people utilize the tools of the wired world only as means and to enable them more faithfully to remember their focal ends will also equip them with better skills for simplifying the "context that surrounds and supports" their focal concerns.

Third, the more we clear space for our ends and are able to limit technology and consumerism to their proper spheres, the more we can extend the sphere of engagement as far as possible. As Borgmann exults, "Having experienced the depth of things and the pleasure of full-bodied competence at the center, one seeks to extend such excellence to the margins of life" (222). Our focal concern starts to help us with every dimension of life—how we spend our time, our money, our energy, and our love. All our practices become more centered in our focal concern.

Practices for the Sake of Focal Concerns

The theological language of "practices" was restored to Christian ethics by Alisdair MacIntyre's book, *After Virtue*[23] and is very useful for us here to consider how, in the wired world, we can help young people to find

a genuinely Christian way of life that enables them to develop moral virtues and skills for keeping technologies and commodities in the background.

In what practices can we engage that will empower us to be Christians in a wired world? Let me sketch ten practices that clear the space for our focal concerns and help us limit the influence of, and the destructions caused by, the wired world. What might be a danger in our present milieu, and what will the Church be in response? How could our local churches and youth ministries foster these ten practices for the sake of counteracting the harmful effects of our environment?

1. Against the societal destruction caused by the denial of historicity and particularity (see comments by Tom Beaudoin), *the Church celebrates the unique creation of each individual and his/her particular gifts and distinctive ministry to the world.* Benjamin Barber, director of the Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy at Rutgers University, has written a book called *Jihad Vs. McWorld,* which criticizes the capitalistic society's escalating world "monoculture" that destroys local institutions and folkways.[24] When multinational corporations invade other cultures, the latter sometimes react with "jihad," or holy war, because the promotion and packaging of the huge entities destroys their own ethnic particularity, their own historical placed-ness.

Can we instead set young people free from the monoculture of their wired world—so that, for example, they don't feel compelled to listen to the same music as their peers, so that they can enjoy their own distinct gifts for making music, so that they aren't narrowed in their tastes by our society's passivity-producing bombardments? Can our ministry free them from the idolatry of our culture's images because Christians are believers in the one true Word, who is our focal concern?

The problem of images/monoculture versus a historical Word goes back to our Jewish roots, to the protest of the Israelites that led them to want a golden calf and the Baals instead of the Word of the Lord. Can we help young people know that Word well enough to give them the resources to discern and discard all idolatries of faddish images? Do we realize what a great gift the Word is—a Word that is authentic, particular, incarnated in one specific time and place, acting on our behalf and present with us now through the Spirit, present in bread and wine?

2. The development of technology has led to a correlative decrease in intimacy, but the Church engages in many forms of genuine love. The wired world has reduced our skills, time, and social fabric for genuine intimacy. Since our society recognizes that, but habitually solves its problems with

technological remedies, we find ourselves reversing the poles and technologizing our intimacy while we intimize our technology.

In the face of this, the Church is the bearer of true intimacy because we know many kinds of love. This is often missed because our English language is so paltry that we use the same word, *love,* for our deepest commitments as for hamburgers. The Hebrew language of the First Testament and the Greek language of our New Testament offer many words for love to teach us many skills:

Racham—the Hebrew word from the root for "womb" that signifies God's compassion and invites us to have such deep tender mercy towards one another;

Storgé—the Greek noun for the blood love of parents for their children;

Agape—intelligent love that is selflessly directed toward the needs of the other without needing anything in return;

Philia—friendship love, deepened by shared focal concerns;

Philadelphia—brotherly/sisterly friendship love

Philostorgé—blood-tied friendship love, translated with such phrases as "tenderhearted affection" in Romans 12:10 but signifying a much deeper bond than mere affection.

All these kinds of love the Church can offer, according to the needs of the one loved, as gifts to a wired world dying for genuine intimacy. With these skills we also recognize that truly to love our neighbor will cost us time and work and suffering.

3. Against the destructions of family and home augmented by such aspects as the wicked pace of the wired world, the Church offers genuine "family" because we share in the household of God. Such books as Barbara Defoe Whitehead's *The Divorce Culture* and Judith Wallerstein's *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* document the destructions of our society.[25] In response members of the Church since its beginning have had the practice of being family to each other—not nuclear family or scattered family, but committed family. Christians can be a family to the homeless, parents to those without them, a community of caring for young people who need such support.[26]

4. Against the technological milieu's primary criterion of efficiency, the Church speaks a language of patience, waiting, and eternity. We practice worship that is unhurried. (If your congregation's worship is efficient and seems to rush, perhaps you should collect watches at the door.[27] We practice waiting for God and can exercise delayed gratification. We spend time in prayer, which is grossly inefficient but remarkably productive. We speak the

language of intimacy and caring for community members, and that takes time and sacrifice.

5. Against the device of advertising, which produces the commodity of more consumption and demands that things be always new, the Church is not only ever new and millennia old, but timeless. Our lives are based on eternal foundations. There is a great amount of interest among young people in Orthodoxy and Catholicism, because they are looking for roots, for something that has lasted for a long time, for symbols that carry a weight of meaning, for holy silence that immerses us in the eternal.[28]

A Presbyterian pastor in Portland told a workshop group that he never writes his sermon until after he has done *lectio divina* with the congregation's teenagers. They love the ancient practice of Scripture reading, meditation, silence, and prayer—and they give him profound ideas for the rest of the congregation.

6. Against the technological milieu's attitude that if we just find the right technique we can fix things, the Church lives with steadfastness, faithfulness, and "hanging in there" when things can't be fixed. We follow a Savior who invited us to take up our cross and follow him, so we engage in mission for the long haul.

Many worship problems in churches arise because leaders respond to declining numbers with quick-fix solutions that only "work" in the short-term.[29] Similarly, many members want a quick-fix to their own spiritual hungers. The results can include anxiety, overwork, isolation, loneliness, meaninglessness, and manipulation. In contrast, the Church's practices invite trust through the turmoil, listening for God's directions against problems, community engagement in mission.

7. Against the super-objectivity of technological logic and scientific hyper-rationalism, the Church bows before mystery. In response to the false notion of modernity that thinkers could be entirely objective, our present culture increasingly responds with postmodern rejection of all truth and claims that any truth is merely a bid to power. Christians instead recognize that truth is best found in narratives, song, and poetry. We also know that truth is not so much a *what* as a *who*.

8. Against the passivity of an entertained, wired world, the Church is composed of saints engaged in mission. Christians are formed by Scriptures that constantly call us to a way of life, to commitment, to active love for God and neighbor. For example, Matthew 28:19 should not be translated, "Go therefore and make disciples," for the first word is a participle in Greek. The verse literally says, "Going, therefore, make disciples." This prohibits

passivity, for it calls us to be about the mission of making disciples wherever, whenever, however we are going. We are always being Church for the sake of the world.[30]

9. Against the "so what?" and "why not?" culture of the wired world, the Church gives authentic meaning and the true humility of obedience. Midge Decter's 1995 Erasmus Lecture sketched our culture in terms of these two main questions, highly indicative of the kind of nihilism ("so what?") and arrogance ("why not?") that correlate with the moral paralysis of our society. These two traits are prominent in much of the music of our wired world and augmented by the superficiality of most advertising. Instead, can we help our youth to revel in the meaning of the Gospel and to be grounded in the morality of humble responsiveness to God's Word? Instead of the senselessness and haughty narcissism of our culture, consider the obedience and humble confidence of Mother Teresa, who brought meaning to many and challenge to us all.

10. Against the economic disparity of our wired world, the Church practices generosity, critiques the principality of Mammon, and builds genuine Shalom. If I say it to others, that Hebrew word means that if they lack anything for their well-being, then I will do whatever I can to provide it for them. *Shalom* means peace and much more than that, for it connotes sharing, contentment, fulfillment, and wholeness. We encourage giving on the part of Christians not only to build justice in the world but also to free them from the burden of idolatries.

These ten practices make the Church a "parallel culture." The title comes from Miroslav Václav Havel, president of the Czech Republic and, before that, dissident playwright under communist rule. Mary Jo Leddy describes the development and importance of a parallel society in the face of an alien dominant culture as follows:

> Havel and other dissidents began to ask, "How can we live the truth in a culture based on a fundamental lie, especially since the lie is in our heads? How can we begin to live into the truth? We desire so much more than just things. We want something to hope in, a reason to believe."
>
>   So in his country, as in other iron-curtain countries, people began to set up what he called "parallel cultures." They had underground study groups. They studied Plato. They had drama. They had music groups. They wrote novels and poetry, and published them underground.… It was not a counter-culture because, he said, it was impossible for us to live totally outside the system. You cannot live

outside a culture. But you can create within it zones and spaces, where you can become who you really are. It is in such places that one can speak the truth, where one can gather with others who share that truth. This went on for years, not without difficulties, but for years. Over time, the truth became stronger and stronger, and at a certain point people began to walk in the streets and to say to the system, "We don't believe you anymore." And the system fell. It fell, not because of the power of Western nuclear equipment, but because the people said within the system, "We don't believe you anymore." It was a vision that had been nourished within those parallel cultures.[31]

In the same way, against the materialism, the consumerism, the passivity, the violence, and all the other dimensions of our wired world alien to the Gospel, Christians understand themselves as citizens of two kingdoms: We can't escape the wired world, nor do we wish to withdraw from it. Instead, we live in the wired world and also in the kingdom of God, our parallel culture. And in that parallel culture, we tell our stories, we sing our songs, we pray our prayers, we proclaim in worship the truth—until we know that truth so well that we can say to the wired world, "We don't believe your lies anymore," and it opens up a trembling freedom!

Let us pray: Triune God, we are grateful for the grace-full privilege of being citizens of your eternal kingdom and servants of your enduring purposes. May we each, in our own particular place and ministry, expose the bluffs of the technological milieu and reject the idolatries, lies, delusions, and diversions of the wired world. Thank you that your forgiveness is always with us and your grace is always rich.

We pray for the youth in our care—that we might equip them with courage to resist the onslaught of media bombardment, with skills to clear a space for their focal concern of loving you, and with tenacity to limit consumerism and the other encroachments of our inescapable culture. May your people together be a parallel society for the sake of knowing, proclaiming, and living the truth—to your honor and glory and for the sake of our neighbors. And we ask all of this confidently, eagerly, expectantly, because of the victory of our resurrected Lord and the empowerment of the Spirit. Amen.

NOTES

1. Throughout my essay, I will use capitalized "Church" to signify the ideal as Christ would have his Body to be and lowercased "church" to name concrete, fallen, and seeking to be faithful realities.

2. Kate Kelly, "False Promise: Parking Your Child in Front of the Computer May Seem like a Good Idea, but Think again," *U.S. News & World Report* 129, no. 12 (September 25, 2000), pp. 48-55.

3. Ted Schroeder, "A Place to Come Together," *Correspondent* (March/April 2001), p. 29.

4. Raymond B. Williams, "Getting Technical: Information Technology in Seminaries," *Christian Century,* 118, no. 5 (February 7-14, 2001), pp. 14-17.

5. Ellen Ullman (see discussion below) makes much the same point in a footnote stating that because there is so much information, "the search engines themselves are beginning to incorporate biases and strategies that could be characterized as ordering sensibilities. However, these strategies are not in the public domain, in a sense making each search engine a private card catalog, a personal collection." Ellen Ullman, *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997), p. 78.

6. David Stewart, "Nurturing Curiosity: A Librarian's View," *Christian Century,* 118, no. 5 (February 7-14, 2001), p. 18.

7. Scott Cormode, "Engaging Students," *Christian Century,* 118, no. 5 (February 7-14, 2001), p. 19.

8. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society,* trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 411. Page references to this book in the following discussion are given parenthetically in the text See also his essays from 1946 and 1947 in Marva J. Dawn, trans. and ed., *Sources and Trajectories: Eight Early Articles by Jacques Ellul That Set the Stage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997).

9. William Kuhns, *The Post-Industrial Prophets: Interpretations of Technology* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1971), pp. 84, 110.

10. This word, often capitalized in his writings, is Ellul's shorthand for the conglommerate correlation of technology with capitalism, media, politics, the military-industrial complex, Mammon, and the entire paradigm/theology that links them.

11. Jacques Ellul, "The Technological Order," trans. John Wilkinson, *Technology and Culture* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1962), pp. 401-2.

12. Jacques Ellul, based on interviews with Madeleine Garrigou-Lagrange, in *In Season, Out of Season: An Introduction to the Thought of Jacques Ellul,* trans. Lana K. Niles (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1982), pp. 106-7.

13. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff,* trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), p. xvi.

14. Christopher Clausen, *Faded Mosaic: The Emergence of Postcultural America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 2000).

15. Ellen Ullman, *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997). Page references to this book in the following paragraphs will be given parenthetically in the text.

16. This is a heartbreaking example of the turnabout I describe (based on Ellul's work) that when technicization reduces our skills, time, and social fabric for intimacy, we reverse the poles and technologize our intimacy while we intimize our technology. See Marva J. Dawn, "The True Source of the Pain," chap. 2 in *Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993).

17. Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom,* trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 233, 235. See also Dawn, "Political Realism (Problems of Civilization III)," chap. 3 (from 1947) and "On Christian Pessimism," chap. 4 (from 1954) in *Sources and Trajectories.*

18. Page references to Ellul's *The Technological Bluff* in the following paragraphs will be given parenthetically in the text.

19. Keep in mind that I am not opposed to technology. If objects are useful and correspond to true and

original needs, they are not mere gadgets.

20. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985). See also his *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

21. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées,* trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966). Pensée #764 warned that "All the major forms of diversion are dangerous for the Christian life."

22. Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (University of Chicago Press, 1984). Page references to this book in the following paragraphs will be given parenthetically in the text.

23. Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1981).

24. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad Vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).

25. Barbara Defoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996) and Judith Wallerstein, Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25-Year Landmark Study* (New York: Hyperion, 2000).

26. For an excellent discussion of the concerns and the church's gift in response, see Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993) and Ibid., *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996). See also Marva J. Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause? Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997).

27. See Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989).

28. See Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

29. See Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

30. See Marva J. Dawn, *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

31. Mary Jo Leddy, "The People of God as a Hermeneutic of the Gospel," *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America,* ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), p. 311. See also Miraslav Václav Havel, *Living in Truth,* ed. Jon Vladislav (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989).