

Biblical Guidelines for Computing Professionals:  
What Does God Have to Do with Computers?

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With its many benefits and dangers, computer technology is something that is becoming more and more prevalent in our lives, whether we like it or not. Some people are too optimistic about the direction computer technology is going in, while others are completely against it, and there are certainly others that feel rather neutral or indifferent towards it. In such a world, how should Christians react to computer technology? Does God have anything to do with computer technology in the first place? Derek Schuurman defines computer technology as: “a distinct cultural activity in which human beings exercise freedom and responsibility in response to God, to unfold the hardware and software possibilities in creation with the aid of tool and procedures for practical ends or purposes.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to answer to first question: we must react to and engage with computer technology responsibly in a way that honors God, and to answer the second question: yes, God has everything to do with computer technology. To further guide this discussion, three topics will be examined to shed light on how Christians are to exercise this responsibility in the realm of computer technology. These three topics are: technicism, technological singularity, and identity.

Technicism is defined by Egbert Schuurman as: “the pretension of humans, as self-declared lords and masters using the scientific-technical method of control, to bend all of reality to their will in order to solve all problems, old and new, and to guarantee increasing material prosperity and progress.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is the faith and trust in the power of technology to rescue the human condition and solve all of mankind’s problems.<sup>3</sup> It is essentially a form of idolatry, as this replaces God with “a sense of autonomy and a reliance on technology.”<sup>4</sup>

However, Christians should not replace their trust in God with a trust in created things, and there

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<sup>1</sup> Derek C. Schuurman, *Shaping a Digital World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

are many verses that speak against idolatry. For one thing, idolatry is against the Ten Commandments:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.<sup>5</sup>

Jonah 2:8 says that those who replace God “forsake their hope for steadfast love,”<sup>6</sup> and Psalm 16:4 indicates that “the sorrows of those who run after another god” will multiply.<sup>7</sup> God commands against idolatry, and there is nothing good for those that pursue it. Therefore, Christians must find a balance between trusting in technology to an extent and not abandoning their trust in God. The most important thing is to recognize that technology is part of the possibilities of creation and it is manmade, and so it would be foolish to uphold creation higher than the Creator and to put trust in man over God. Christians are certainly allowed to use and enjoy technology, but must remember to continue trusting and relying on God above all else, to seek him as the answer to our problems, and to realize that we can live without technology but not without God.

Technological singularity “refers to the point at which artificial intelligence or some combined human-machine intelligence advances so far that we cannot comprehend what lies on the other side.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, it is “an event that will produce greater-than-human

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<sup>5</sup> Exodus 20:3-6 ESV

<sup>6</sup> Jonah 2:8 ESV

<sup>7</sup> Psalms 16:4 ESV

<sup>8</sup> Sara Baase and Timothy M. Henry, *A Gift of Fire* (New York, NY: Pearson Education, 2018), 398-399.

intelligence.”<sup>9</sup> Now, computer technology will certainly continue to progress, and progress itself is not necessarily a bad thing. However, the direction of progress could be something of concern – for instance, when progress is going in the direction of technological singularity. There are many people who welcome this idea and think that it will happen in the near future. Such people are optimistic that we will be able to do things like upload our consciousness into a computer<sup>10</sup> and “welcome the idea of humanity transforming into an unrecognizable race of superintelligent, genetically engineered creatures.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, there are also many people who find the idea of technological singularity to be horrifying, and there are others that believe its occurrence to be unlikely.<sup>12</sup> These people view technological singularity as a threat to the survival of the human race and are very critical of this idea.<sup>13</sup>

In a time when progress is inevitable, how should Christians approach progress like those heading towards technological singularity? The author of Psalm tells us, “Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”<sup>14</sup> The author of Romans says, “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”<sup>15</sup> There are also many other verses, like 1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 2:22, and Isaiah 51:1, that tell us to pursue righteousness. Therefore, in pursuit of technological advances, we must only pursue what is good in God’s eyes, which includes things like peace, mutual upbuilding, and righteousness. Does technological singularity promote these things, or is it more likely to promote evil? Will it contribute to idolatry? These are the questions to consider as Christians when thinking about technological singularity. Essentially, it

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<sup>9</sup> Schuurman, *Shaping a Digital World*, 111.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Sara Baase and Timothy M. Henry, *A Gift of Fire*, 399.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 34:14 ESV

<sup>15</sup> Romans 14:19 ESV

is about our motives and intent in pursuing it. Can we pursue technological singularity with the goal in mind that it will honor and serve God?

It is also useful to consider whether technological singularity is in alignment with our cultural mandate. Schuurman introduces this notion, and defines our cultural mandate as: “the divine injunction that was given to human kind in Genesis 1” when God told Adam and Eve to fill the earth.<sup>16</sup> He goes on to say that we are to fill the earth with the products of human culture, which includes computer technology,<sup>17</sup> and as God’s stewards, we must use the earth’s resources responsibly to develop tools that will help us serve him.<sup>18</sup> Is the pursuit of technological singularity a way in which we can responsibly serve God? Can the event of technological singularity itself be something that serves God? Is this an appropriate way to fill the earth? With something as serious and difficult as this, it is critical that Christians seek God’s word as guidance to determine whether the pursuit of such things is good or not.

Another area of concern in the realm of computer technology is the topic of identity. There are various issues that can be raised here. Because our identities are reduced to numbers and other forms of data on the web and in other forms of computer technology, identity theft and privacy has become more and more of an issue. Others just do not like the idea of our identities being reduced to these things, as we are certainly more than that. Some may seek their identity in computer technology, as it has become their life, and when the technology fails, they face an identity crisis. As Christians, we must remember that our identity is in Christ, and not let ourselves be defined by the technology we create and use or to be tied down by the data we become on the web. Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created mankind in his own image – that

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<sup>16</sup> Schuurman, *Shaping a Digital World*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 36.

defines our identity.<sup>19</sup> Galatians 3:27 tells us that those who have been “baptized into Christ have clothes [themselves] with Christ” – again, that is where our identity lies.<sup>20</sup> Whenever we interact with computer technology, we must remember who we are, who we are serving, and how we can serve the one that we are serving. When we have a firm foundation on this, and when we truly know how our identity is defined, we can realize that there is no need to fear losing our identity, and we can take on computer technology with responsibility and confidence.

Ultimately, computer technology is a gift from God, so we must treat it as such. And us being made in the image of God, we must develop and use computer technology in ways that show love to our neighbors, serve God and all kinds of life, and not seek to use technology to become like or better than God.<sup>21</sup> We must be responsible with computer technology and serve God with it, because that is our calling. We must also stick to God’s word and constantly rely on and trust in him. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”<sup>22</sup> A lamp can only shine so much light, which indicates that we can only see so much of our future – and God only shines so much intentionally, because he wants us to rely on him and trust in him. It is critical that we let God lead us in our pursuits in the field of computer technology. As long as we seek his word and guidance, and work to serve him in a responsible and honorable way, we can be great computing professionals in his eyes.

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<sup>19</sup> Genesis 1:27 NIV

<sup>20</sup> Galatians 3:27 NIV

<sup>21</sup> Schuurman, *Shaping a Digital World*, 36-37.

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 119:105 ESV

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