

An Excerpt from:

Cosmic Witness, George L. Murphy, LaVonne Althouse and Russell Willis (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co., 1996. (pp. 168-169)

Human Being And Responsibility

The category of **Human Being and Responsibility** focuses on the human dimension of existence. Here it is helpful to think of science and technology as modes of human activity. Science is the extension or enhancement of human knowledge and understanding of the physical universe. Likewise, technology is the extension or enhancement of human capacity and power by artificial means. Considering science and technology as forms of human activity allows us to approach the biblical witness for insight into this aspect of the human condition.

In the section called **Science, Technology and Human Vocation**, we encounter texts which explore these modes of human being as a calling or vocation, established by God, to be fulfilled by God's people. These texts also depict the character of human *responsibility* for the products and processes of human endeavor, including those related to science and technology. The challenge for the preacher is to explore how notions of vocation and responsibility found within the biblical witness can be appropriated in our time, even with respect to human activities which persons in biblical times could never have imagined, even in their wildest dreams.

The category of **Appropriate Technology** includes texts which suggest that certain forms of technological activity may or may not correspond to God's will for humanity or God's purposes in creation. These texts are sometimes associated with prophetic visions of the "Day of the Lord," when destruction is replaced by nurture (symbolized in Isaiah 2, for instance, with the turning of swords into plowshares). Other texts refer to common time, when our technological (and scientific) activity is, nevertheless, to be judged as being appropriate in God's sight. Often, in such cases, appropriateness refers to the ideals of justice or peace. Taken as a whole, these texts can be used to preach about morally justifiable technology in the present day.

Related to the notions of vocation, responsibility, and appropriateness are the issues of **Idolatry and Hubris** (sinful pride) in relation to science and technology. The texts in this section portray our predilection to pay homage to some of the more awesome and powerful products of human endeavor. They also provide a means for the preacher to underscore our human tendency to try to use science and technology to "make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4, the story of Babel), to attempt to be like God.

Taken as a whole, texts within the categories related to human being and responsibility allow the preacher to focus on both positive and negative features of life in a scientific and technological age. From portraying a sense of vocation, to warning of the temptation to idolatrous and prideful behavior, these texts can help to illuminate the human condition at the intersection of science, technology and faith.