

4 The computer revolution and evangelical mission research and strategy: An historical overview¹

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Abstract

This chapter consists of a short history of the impact of computer technology on Christian evangelical mission research from the 1970's to the present. The trail winds through World Vision, MARC, the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, *Operation World*, SIL, OC International, DAWN, Global Mapping International, the AD2000 and Beyond Movement, and Joshua Project. Attention is given to projects in Asia, to some remarkable contributions from and to Silicon Valley, and to the origin of the well known missionary strategic map the '10/40 Window'. It ends with a discussion of tools and tasks, of whether the Internet and computers have helped or harmed the Christian missionary enterprise.

Keywords: missions and technology, computers in the Church, history of Internet in the Church.

1. Introduction

Mainframes, then minis, then micros, like a blinking, buzzing hoard, computers invaded the countryside of the global human experience, set up occupation, and

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instigated change everywhere. They have marched in by the thousands, then by the millions, and then, thanks to the Internet, connected with each other into a vast network like one enormous, pulsing, global brain¹. The worlds of agriculture, architecture, art, commerce, communication, development, education, engineering, entertainment, finance, government, industry, politics, scholarship, science, sports, warfare, and more will never be the same.

2. Overview of missions, computer usage and mapping

What about the world of Christian mission? Almost all Western missionaries, and many non-Western missionaries, now head to their holy assignments with computers in their baggage, if not clutched in their hands. Much could be said about the impact of computer-aided translation, dubbing, and production of media, email and VoIP communication, Internet-based training, Internet evangelism, non-residential missionaries, on-line missiological academic and historical resources, Web 2.0 social networking, and Web-delivered Christian media –but the focus of this article is on Evangelical global mission research and strategy.

Tools shape tasks, and tasks shape tools. Here is this powerful, influential, even intoxicating tool, the computer. As an astute journalist observed in 1996, “[t]here’s no sure way to measure how much the Internet will change our lives, but the most basic truth about technological revolutions is that they change everything they touch” (Ramo, 1996, p. 67).

Consider the saying, “To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail”². Maybe when the computer revolution invaded the world of Evangelical mission

1. One perspective on this: “... humans began animating inert objects with tiny slivers of intelligence, connecting them into a global field, and linking their own minds into a single thing. [...] There is only one time in the history of each planet when its inhabitants first wire up its innumerable parts to make one large Machine. Later that Machine may run faster, but there is only one time when it is born. You and I are alive at this moment. [...] This will be recognized as the largest, most complex, and most surprising event on the planet” (Kelly, 2005, p. 133).

2. Usually attributed to Mark Twain.

strategy, it brought in new tools, enormously helpful tools, for the tasks at hand. Here were nails sticking up, and, happily, hammers arrived. Then again, maybe these exciting new tools led Evangelical mission strategists to see the world in a different way, a less organic and more mechanical way, a less holistic and more divided way. Hammers arrived, and, unhappily, the world began to look like a bunch of nails.

World Vision and Campus Crusade for Christ were among the first American Christian organizations to use computers. They were applied to accounting, receipting, and other repetitive finance-related tasks. These mission organizations thus saved vast amounts of staff time and expense. Ed Dayton left his career in aeronautics engineering for missions, and became a key leader in World Vision, a leading Christian relief and development agency. When a computer arrived in the office, he wondered if this power to organize and present large masses of information could somehow be yoked to the global task of world evangelization. Thus MARC was born, the Missions Advanced Research and Communication center, as an entity within World Vision. Among other tasks, MARC set their computer to compiling the data for, or producing, ten editions of the *Mission Handbook*, the definitive directory and guide to the North American Protestant missions movement¹.

Dayton served on the Strategy Working Group that emerged from the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. This Group was quick to latch onto, and promote, the priority of reaching the world's unreached people groups, or the cause of Frontier Missions. In 1976 Ralph and Roberta Winter founded the US Center for World Mission (USCWM) in Pasadena, California, to also vigorously and extensively promote this cause. MARC started a database of unreached peoples, compiled from submissions sent in from near and far. From that they published a series of books, the Unreached Peoples annuals², seeking to identify and describe these peoples for prayer and evangelizing activity.

1. MARC compiled the data for the 8th, 9th, and 10th editions, and then both researched and produced the 11th to the 17th editions of the *Mission Handbook*. That last one was [Siewert and Valdez \(1997\)](#).

2. The first of the series was *Unreached Peoples '79: The Challenge of the Church's Unfinished Business* ([Wagner & Dayton, 1978](#)); the seventh and final was *Unreached Peoples: Clarifying the Task* ([Schreck & Barrett, 1987](#)).

David B. Barrett, an aeronautics engineer and test pilot in Britain, felt the ‘call of God’ to missionary service, left his career, studied theology and missions, and was sent to serve God in Kenya. Years later, he was working on the first edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Barrett, 1982). When Ed Dayton visited Barrett, Dayton saw the masses of information Barrett was compiling and organizing, and recognized this as a task crying out for computing power, so he helped Barrett acquire a minicomputer. Actually, computers were nothing new to Barrett, even then. Between 1946 and 1960 he published “*Missionary Notes*, a publication that applied scientific and aeronautical methodologies to mission, utilizing Britain’s first operational computer, the electromechanical Colossus with its 18,000 vacuum tubes and covering some 2,000 square feet of floor space” (Bonk, 2007, p. 1). Before the *World Christian Encyclopedia* was published in 1982, Barrett’s World Evangelization Research Center was extensively supported by database technology.

Patrick Johnstone, trained as a chemical engineer, became an itinerant missionary evangelist in southern Africa, and compiled the first global *Operation World* in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) while traveling and preaching¹ (Johnstone & Mandryk, 2001). Years later, when Johnstone was working from the WEC International headquarters near London, Ed Dayton helped him acquire a multi-user computer, which took its place at the center of the production of the 1986 edition (Johnstone, 1986), an information-packed, thoroughly-researched guide to praying for every country in the world. Note that both of these enormously influential research products, the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and *Operation World*, were born in Africa.

Summer Institute of Linguistics (now SIL International, related to the organization Wycliffe Bible Translators), in their quest to see the Bible translated into every language on earth, entered the world of computers well before the personal computer (PC) revolution erupted. SIL collected a vast trove of detailed information on the world’s languages, published in the series of *Ethnologies*

1. A short history of Operation World can be found in Johnstone and Mandryk (2001).

(Lewis, 2009¹). Again, here was a mountain of names, alternative names, facts, statistics, and more that cried out for the organizing power of computer technology.

Jim Montgomery, a missionary with an organization, Overseas Crusades (now OC International or One Challenge), was one of the first students of Donald McGavran² in his nascent Institute of Church Growth, based in Eugene, Oregon. Montgomery, following the earlier work of Leonard Tuggy (1971), studied the growth of evangelical denominations in the Philippines, compiling facts and statistics at every turn. His work led to the development of the DAWN (Discipling A Whole Nation) idea, with its vision of a church, a living expression of the Body of Christ, in every community of the nation; such that everyone has a church they can get to (close enough in physical distance) and a church they would go to (close enough in cultural distance). This strategy called for extensive new church planting guided by detailed information on all the peoples and places of the diverse, complicated nation of the Philippines.

Montgomery eventually moved to the OC headquarters in San Jose, California, to become their director of research. Coincidentally, San Jose is in the heart of Silicon Valley, where the personal computer revolution was, at that time, exploding. Silicon Valley is an area near San Francisco that has been the birthplace of the vacuum-tube amplifier, Hewlett-Packard, radar, Fairchild Semiconductor, computer networking, Intel, the floppy disk, gene splicing, the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), Apple Computers, relational database technology, Sun Microsystems, Silicon Graphics, Cisco Systems, Mosaic, Netscape, Yahoo!, and Google (Silicon Valley website³).

Bob Waymire was a hard-driving, fast-moving and ambitious rocket engineer for Lockheed. In this fast-paced life his marriage failed and he saw his life spiraling downward rapidly. His secretary, a committed Christian, cared and prayed for

1. Current edition.

2. Dr Donald MacGavran was a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, USA and known in evangelical circles as the father of the Church Growth Movement.

3. Retrieved from www.netvalley.com/svhistory.html

him, and he was later converted to Christ. Soon after, he entered the missionary vocation. By the early 1980's Bob Waymire and Jim Montgomery together led the Research and Strategy Department of OC, and acquired a computer to help with DAWN-related research. Waymire attended a computer convention and for the first time in his life saw computer-generated maps, which displayed quantitative data linked to geographic locations. Waymire testifies to a powerful spiritual experience at that moment, walking and praying behind the booths at this high-tech convention, 'claiming' GIS (geographic information systems) for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Bill Dickson became a Christian in college while earning a degree in Electrical Engineering with concentrations in computer science and communication systems. He came home from the 1976 Urbana missionary convention discouraged that none of the scores of mission agencies represented had any idea what to do with an electrical or computer engineer. Dickson met Bob Coleman, a graduate of Cal Tech, the California Institute of Technology, one of the world's leading science and technology universities. Coleman was then serving as an assistant to Ralph Winter. When Dickson learned of the unreached peoples it seemed clear to him, "if you're dealing with thousands of anything, you've got to get a computer in there somewhere" (Dickson, personal communication, January 27, 2008). Coleman introduced Dickson to Waymire, which led to Dickson helping Waymire with technological tasks at the OC headquarters.

Pete Holzmann's father worked for General Electric, and Pete grew up in one of the few homes in the world at that time equipped with a computer teletype terminal. By the time he finished high school Pete had mastered a dozen programming languages. He had also made a firm decision to avoid computers, feeling they fostered unhealthy isolation. Later, as a student at Stanford University, needing money, he helped with certain well-paying computer tasks, and in the process found himself working with some of the world's leading computer experts.

At one point, Pete devoted his life to the Christian faith in a dynamic way, partly influenced by the tragic and untimely death of a Christian friend from high

school. He graduated with a degree in semiconductor electronics, and discovered the only jobs he could get had to do with computers, even though he had a personal distaste for them. In time, he had a strong conviction that somehow God was saying to him, “I gave you this for a reason”. After a time of prayer with his wife Leslie, in 1981 Holzmann became an independent consultant, to free up time for Christian lay ministry as a technologist. Soon, one ‘high-tech’ company agreed to pay him a full salary and cover all his work and travel expenses in exchange for one-quarter of his time. His feelings about computers changed. As he was helping to invent and maintain a new technology called ‘email’ he saw that computers could help, and not just hinder, human communication and interaction.

One day Holzmann was helping Dickson string network cables in the false ceiling of the OC headquarters building. Standing on a ladder, Holzmann was wondering to himself whether there might be any mission-related tasks that could make better use of his knowledge and skills than this simple chore. At that moment, Bob Waymire burst in, enthusiastically jabbering about what he had just seen of cutting-edge, sophisticated, computer-generated mapping and the potential it held for mission understanding, mobilization, and strategy. Holzmann responded, “It can’t be that hard, really”, and Bob Waymire, in his typical impulsive style, pointed his finger at Holzmann and bellowed, “This is going to happen, and *you’re* the one who’s going to do it!”

Holzmann gathered a group of friends, serious computer experts all, who worked for many months on what turned out to be a serious programming challenge. Their first triumph was a simple map of Guatemala, with data displayed by province, data related to the progress of evangelization and evangelical Christian presence. The base map was drawn with an early mouse pointing device that had a paper clip taped to it, and the programming and print-generating functions were similarly jerry-rigged. This humble map was in fact the first computer-generated, information-bearing map ever produced from the PC platform. In this case, and others, it was not a new technology shaping the Christian world mission, but the Christian world mission shaping the emergence of a new technology.

The moment he saw this humble map, Jim Montgomery was thrilled. Soon he boarded an airplane for Guatemala armed with a series of such maps, to promote the DAWN idea in that country. DAWN in time became a major force in the expansion of Evangelicalism in Guatemala, a process that eventually led to the election of an Evangelical (Efraín Ríos Montt) as President of the nation.

That Guatemala data came from the Global Research Database, or GRDb. Bob Waymire had asked permission to be released from OC for two years for a special project, to develop an extensive, comprehensive database of global missions-related information, linked to computerized mapping. In those heady early days of the PC revolution, Waymire expected that in the span of two years he could produce a database (the GRDb) that would contain and display dozens of categories of information on every country and people of the world, on the status of religion, Christianity, evangelization, and the like.

Bill Dickson had moved to Pasadena and was helping with technological tasks at the *US Center for World Mission* (USCWM). He had discovered there were mission agencies who desperately needed computer people, and computer people who desperately wanted to serve missions, but that the two would never find each other without some kind of intentional, visible structure. Thus in 1982, he formed *DataServe*. Ralph Winter, an engineer before he was a missionary, was himself a computer enthusiast. Bob Waymire moved to the USCWM in the summer of 1983, and Global Mapping Project (GMP; later Global Mapping International or GMI) was born there. In Pasadena Waymire found not only his former colleague Bill Dickson, but a group of technologically-astute Frontier-Missions zealots recruited from the *Cal Tech Christian Fellowship*.

Pete Holzmann balanced his time between serving as GMP's vice-president of research and development, and working with a commercial software company. In the latter role, he became the chief architect for the world's first PC-based geographic information system (GIS). Thus this significant technological development was largely crafted by a gifted brother who all along had in view its usefulness for world mission. The leading PC-based GIS software in the world today, ARC View, is the direct descendant of Holzmann's work. GMI's current

Global Ministry Mapping System, built on ARC View, is now being used by more than two hundred mission organizations around the world; about eighty of them are indigenous Indian missions.

Over time, the missiological perspective of GMP/GMI shifted. Their initial focus was on evangelization alone, from DAWN, Church Growth, and Frontier Missions thinking. In the late 1980s they joined with a zealous Norwegian missionary entrepreneur named Frank Kaleb Jansen, and with the missionary organization, *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM), to produce the book *Target Earth* (Jansen, 1989). Completed in 1989, in time for Lausanne II in Manila, it sold about 30,000 copies. *Target Earth* reflected a wide-ranging holism, drawing readers' attention not only to God's global concern for the lost, but also to his concern for the poor, the oppressed, the diseased, and the environment.

By the early 1990's, missionaries and national Christians in various places in the Majority World began applying the tools brought by the PC revolution to local, national, and regional mission research. Paul Hattaway, based in northern Thailand, has written many important books on China and Southeast Asia, some of which are products of his computer-based research, notably: *China's Unreached Cities, Vol. 1* (Hattaway, 1999a); *Faces of the Unreached in Laos* (Hattaway, 1999b); *Operation China: Introducing All the Peoples of China* (Hattaway, 2000); *China's Unreached Cities, Vol. 2* (Hattaway, 2003); and *Peoples of the Buddhist World* (Hattaway, 2004).

A missionary researcher in Asia who uses the name Omid, through brilliant, thorough, painstaking research, brought together a huge, detailed mass of information on communities and languages. Bob Waymire introduced him to computers. One database, on communities in South Asia, has 334,000 lines of data with about twenty-five fields of information per line. Another, on languages, has 545,000 lines of data, with about ten fields of information per line. Asian researchers also, with the help of computers, have produced such resources as *Unreached Mega Peoples of India* (Sathiaraj, 1999), *Operation Japan* (Mitsumori, Wright, & Cho, 2000), and *Indonesia's Unreached People Groups* (PJRN, 2003).

Thomas Wang was director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in the late 1980's. He and others noted the large number of significant Christian missions and denominations that were setting ambitious goals related to world evangelization by the year 2000 (Wang, 1987). Luis Bush, an Argentine, then president of Partners International, worked with Thomas Wang and others to plant seeds in Manila that blossomed into the founding of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement. Soon this ministry adopted the two-pronged goal of “A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the Year 2000”¹ (Starling, 1981).

Luis Bush asked Pete Holzmann to help him better visualize and understand the global geography of the unreached peoples, the unevangelized, and human need. Using newly-released mapping software and data, Holzmann produced a series of maps that displayed, by country, such variables as religion, evangelization, and poverty. Bush was excited by these maps and the story they told. Better than ever before, he could clearly see and understand the wide swath of the Eastern Hemisphere where most of the world's non-Christians and unevangelized lived (and live). This belt extends across North Africa, much of the Middle East, Central Asia, much of South Asia, and parts of China and Southeast Asia. He defined this belt by latitude numbers, and spoke of the ‘10/40 Box’ until his wife Doris got the idea in a prayer retreat that it should be a ‘window,’ like a window of opportunity for Jesus Christ. Thus the concept of the 10/40 Window was born. Bush wrote and published a full-color pamphlet, with five computer-generated maps, that enjoyed wide distribution and set a key term at the heart of Evangelical mission activity for the decade² (Bush, 1992).

Bush, who became the director of AD2000 and Beyond, insisted on a solid program of monitoring. How could progress toward the goal of “A Church for Every People” be measured? Ron Rowland, then head of SIL's strategic information office, was the founder and leader of an inter-mission ad-hoc group

1. The first half of this slogan, “A Church for Every People By the Year 2000,” came from Edinburgh '80. See Starling (1981).

2. Maps by Pete Holzmann, unattributed.

called Peoples Information Network, or PIN. By 1994, PIN became a task force of AD2000 and Beyond. A draft book (Rowland,1995) was published for the AD2000-sponsored Global Consultation on World Evangelization in Seoul (GCOWE '95). This merged every major list of unreached peoples, or peoples that needed a church-planting movement if the goal of “A Church For Every People” was to be met.

The bad news is that this published list was so clogged with inaccuracies, duplications, omissions, and the like, that it was made useless. The good news is that it sparked new and better research. The Joshua Project was formed, as a ministry of AD2000 and Beyond. Dan Scribner, trained as a mechanical engineer, was introduced to the Frontier Missions vision, left his career, and joined the staff of the USCWM. Seconded to AD2000 and Beyond, he, together with Bill Morrison and others, leaped urgently into developing a viable unreached peoples database. They worked extensively with existing peoples and languages databases, received much help from Patrick Johnstone, and sought information from Christian workers in many countries. Luis Bush traveled to and fro around the world with printouts of people group lists tucked under his arm, for local leaders to add to, subtract from, and correct.

Soon, it was all refined down to a list of 1,539 groups, and countdowns began. By the time of the Amsterdam 2000 conference in July/August of that year, many unreached peoples still had no church-planting team present in their midst. Most of them, however, had at least been ‘adopted’ by one mission or another that promised to seek to reach them. Only 239 peoples remained ‘unadopted’ by any mission for church-planting ministry. As it turned out, top leaders of several major Evangelical agencies¹ found themselves together at “Table 71” at the conference, and agreed to move that number to zero. So at least that goal, to that extent, was reached by the set AD 2000 deadline. The Joshua Project database lives on. Scribner, Morrison, and their colleagues expanded it to assess all peoples of all countries and all sizes. In 2007 their

1. These included Campus Crusade for Christ, YWAM, Walk Thru The Bible, Intl. Mission Board (So. Baptist), DAWN Ministries, SIL/Wycliffe, and Mission Spokane. See www.table71.org.

website had 600,000 visits, 2.9 million page views, and about twenty thousand downloads of data.

The second edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, published in 2001 (Barrett, Kurian, & Johnson, 2001), was largely built from a complex set of linked databases that each enhanced the usefulness and accuracy of the others. This set of databases, including ones on countries, religions, Christian churches and denominations, peoples, cities, provinces, languages, organizations, and bibliography, is now largely available on the Web as the World Christian Database.

Now many large, complex, mission-relevant databases are accessible on the Internet. Mapping capabilities figure prominently. A broader and more holistic vision of Christian missions is appearing, including through these websites:

- www.4kworldmap.com. A global plan of YWAM built around a detailed map that divides the world into about four thousand zones, with assessment of physical and spiritual needs in each.
- www.ethnologue.com. Global languages information from SIL International, with extensive bibliography.
- www.joshuaproject.net. Information on all ethnic peoples of the world, with loads of mission-related resources including profiles, pictures, stories, and links.
- www.missioninfobank.org. A collaborative missions library, database, and mapping site from Global Mapping International. In a way this represents the fulfillment of the old GRDb vision.
- www.peoplegroups.org. Contains religious and demographic information for ethno-linguistic peoples globally. From the International Mission Board (Southern Baptist).

- <http://worldchristiandatabase.org>. From the research of David Barrett, Todd Johnson, and Peter Crossing. Comprehensive statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations, countries, regions, people groups, cities, and provinces.
- www.worldmap.org. Country profiles and many maps, including Churches in Habitat information seeking to show the status of Evangelical church presence in all cities, towns, and villages, globally.

3. Evangelicals, tools and tasks

How then, does this story of Christian evangelicals inform the question of tools and tasks?

1. Whenever someone had the opportunity to computerize a mission research task, it seemed an easy decision. It would save much time, money, and knowledge. It would gain much efficiency, speed, accuracy, and power in analyzing, presenting, depicting, and communicating mission-relevant information. Good things were saved; good things were gained; were any good things lost?

On this point we have a debate. On the one hand, people like [Schultze \(2002\)](#) exhort:

“After admitting the ‘lightness’ of our digital being –its cosmic and moral shallowness– we should distrust the prevailing techno-magic that promises us inflated benefits from our use of cyber-technologies. We also need continually to [sic] de-technologize our religious traditions by ridding them of excessive technique and renewing their virtue-nurturing practices” ([Schultze, 2002](#), p. 24).

On the other hand, consider the perspective of [Nye \(2006\)](#):

“Technology [...] is a fundamental human expression. [...] Cultures select

and shape technologies, not the other way around [...]. For millennia, technology has been an essential part of the framework for imagining and moving into the future, but the specific technologies chosen have varied. [...] Each group of people selects a repertoire of techniques and devices to construct its world” (Nye, 2006, p. 210).

Nye (2006) sees that the varied cultures of the world remain varied partly because of their decisions about technologies, decisions that are instinctual or examined, but that very often prove to be creative and wise. People do not blindly choose the technologies they adopt.

2. Repeatedly in this story we came across Christians who (i) had technical expertise, and (ii) wanted to serve God in world mission. Should they have left their knowledge outside the gate, or did they do the right thing in bringing what gifts they had to the Church? Note this amazing convergence: Ed Dayton, David Barrett, Patrick Johnstone, Ralph Winter, Bob Waymire, Bill Dickson, Pete Holzmann, and Dan Scribner were all trained as engineers before they entered their missionary vocations. Would the world of Evangelical missions have been better off if all the engineers and technicians had been turned away at the door?

3. Rynkiewich (2007) has taken a direct shot at the people group approach to world evangelization, and by implication, at all the peoples-based, computerized research efforts described above. He wrote:

“There is an assumption here that the world is made up of discrete groups, and that persons have a clear-cut identity as a member of one or another of those groups. The world is not like that. It is questionable whether it was ever like that, except in the eyes of European explorers, missionaries, and 19th century anthropologists” (Rynkiewich, 2007, p. 224).

There is a powerful, maybe suspicious, convergence between the rise of the people group approach to world evangelization, and the rise of the powerful data-sorting and information-defining tool of PC-based databases. When the

computer revolution was shaping the world, the people group approach was shaping Evangelical missions' understanding, mobilization, and action.

But then again, do none of the citizens of Fiji see themselves as ethnic Fijian, Hindi, Tamil, or Chinese? Do none of the citizens of Belgium ever talk about Flemish, Walloon, or German? Do none of the citizens of South Africa recognize any difference between Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, Afrikaner, English, or Indian? Certainly the world missionary enterprise should work zealously toward racial and ethnic reconciliation, but in our present fallen world there is no sense in pretending these realities are only artificial outsider constructs, or imagining "the world is not like that". It was not a modern European or American who named categories of division when speaking of "every nation ... all tribes, and peoples, and languages" (Revelation, 7:9).

Thanks to globalization, in many places, ethnic identity and loyalty are growing weaker. Then again, in other places, ethnic identity and loyalty are growing stronger. A study of the Bible suggests that (and the wide experience of world mission confirms) God has created a world diverse in languages and peoples, all of whom will bring their praise to Him at the end of age. There are many cultures. There is more than one way to be human, and more than one way to be Christian.

4. Some rebuke the computer-based Evangelical mission research enterprise for setting the focus too much on evangelization alone. But is this critique against the use of computer technology itself, or against the missiological agenda to which the technology was applied? Current global mission research databases reflect a response to the wider range of human need. Computers are enormously flexible tools, as adaptable as they are powerful. As ministry perspectives moved, applications moved.

4. Conclusion

The Internet and the computer revolution brought change. Not all change is evil. The technology of the printing press moved the church well away from

earlier methods of evangelism, discipleship, teaching, and theologizing. The printed word became a tool of the Christian Church as well as a tool of the devil, spreading both truth and error as it was with the electronic word, the computer, the Internet, and all such media. The person who declares that computers take us a step away from being more authentically human or more faithfully Christian, must at the same time declare that the printing press also takes us a step away from being more authentically human or more faithfully Christian.

The power of technology need not be feared, but must be respected. When we are confronted with the next decision to computerize something, we do well not just to ask, “What can this do for us?” but also, “What will this do to us?”

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