

Franz A. Foltz and Frederick A. Foltz. *Faith, Hope, and Love in the Technological Society*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 200 pages. \$25.

In *Faith, Hope and Love in the Technological Society*, Frederick and Franz Foltz examine how modern technology has influenced our understanding of faith, hope, and love, three words that express the virtues and experience of Christianity. As a Lutheran pastor and technology professor, respectively, this father and son team bring together their knowledge of technological theories and theology.

The authors argue that attitudes about technology have shifted over the century, from encouraging appeal to discerning its limitations. They use Jacques Ellul's theory of *technique*, which is often used in critiques of technology. *Technique* is "the totality of methods" that creates an artificial world disconnected from community, nature, place, and time (10, 12). As the authors indicate, *technique* falsely deceives us into thinking that technology has the capacity to solve all of humanity's problems. Christianity has also been influenced by the technological society and *technique*. For instance, televangelists formulate and teach their own religious techniques to obtain health, happiness, and prosperity.

In addition, words have lost their sense of meaning in this electronic age. As Henry Frankfurt indicates, "bullshit" has become a technique for obtaining what a writer or speaker wants, irrespective of truth. Hollow, "plastic" words can be disconnected from their context and actual meaning (54-55). I found the authors' analysis of the denigration of words to be provocative, particularly considering current American politics.

Interestingly, the authors identify the difference between interactivity and interaction. They claim that digital communication and participation is not interaction, but an inferior interactivity, whereby a person communicates with a machine or with another person through a digital device. The authors assert that technology encourages "anonymity, immediacy, and individuality," which are opposed to the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

At the heart of their argument, the authors assert that faith and trust are mediated today through technology, such as the use of baggage screenings. Digital systems are "more reliable" than trusting in people (89), particularly boarding an aircraft. However, our faith in God is foundational and intrinsically linked to every facet of humanity. The authors criticize that technological advancements do not incite hope for humanity, but a trickle-down theory and an opportunity for financial gain for the rich. Yet Christian hope is found in God's vision of a community that is peaceful, just, and loving, which exemplifies how people can be truly human. In a technological society, love, friendship, and charity have been reduced to a commodity that can be measured, regulated, and professionalized. However, Christian love encompasses "unconditional care, sacrifice, and forgiveness" (142), and it is the means by which the beloved community is formed.

Within the limitations of this volume, I believe that the authors achieved their stated purpose and assessment. I found the authors' critique of technology to be insightful and provocative; however, their assessment of technology's capacity was inadequate. For example, the authors reject the ability of technology for virtual worship and for vulnerable, rich communication. I question if the authors' perspective is more indicative of their own generational and personal perspectives rather than the actual limitation of technology itself. As they acknowledge, their younger family members challenge their perspective. Individual experiences of technology are subjective and can vary greatly from person to person. Rich,

vulnerable conversation between two people can occur through a digital device, particularly if that is the only means of communication. I do not believe we should disregard digital forms of church, as they are an enriching resource for those who cannot attend in person due to illness, disability, or location. Furthermore, while televangelist and religious television supported their argument of *technique*, the authors did not discuss the countless local church pastors who broadcast their sermons on social media.

Amid the technological and religious genre, this book is similar to Charles Fensham's *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead* (Novalis, 2008); however, it offers an updated argument of *technique* considering current American politics. In contrast to the authors' perspectives, Deanne Thompson's [The Virtual Body of Christ In A Suffering World](#) (Abingdon, 2016) makes a theological case for virtual presence and meaningful digital connection.

The present book would be a helpful resource for scholars and students interested in the intersections between Christianity and technology, particularly those who are seeking a critique. Perhaps, in our highly dependent digital culture, this resource could be beneficial to all people who want to be more aware of their use of digital devices.

Cassandra Granados, Knox College, University of Toronto, ON