THE UNDIVIDED BODY: AN ECCLESIAL RESPONSE TO SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES AND PRACTICES

By Michael Morelli, PhD

Obvious, ubiquitous, and important realities

The late novelist David Foster Wallace opened the only graduation commencement speech he ever delivered with the following story. Two young fish pass an older fish who says, "Morning, boys. How's the water?" The "two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually, one of them looks over at the other and goes, 'What [is] water?'" The parable's moral, Wallace says, is "that the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are the hardest to see and talk about." He continues: "Stated as an English sentence, of course, this is just a banal platitude—but the fact is that, in the day-to-day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have a life-or-death importance."[1] Wallace's story and the moral he derives from it narrates quite well a significant part of theological work concerned with ethical applications: to see and to talk about the obvious, ubiquitous, important realities that are hard to see and talk about, realities that, as Wallace observes, are of life-and-death importance.

This essay will do the hard work of seeing and talking about surveillance—not only about what it is and does today, but also and more importantly about how churches can create spaces where surveillance technologies and practices are either restricted or removed altogether. It will explore surveillance from multiple perspectives. It will prioritize a theological perspective because theology has something unique and important to say about this obvious, ubiquitous, life-and-death reality. Surveillance technologies and practices can appear to offer gains in power, profit, and safety. The costs of such technologies and practices tends to be a kind of bodily "dissension" (1 Cor. 12:25) that occurs when some people are watched, tracked, analyzed, categorized, and/or manipulated for other peoples' personal gain. An increasing number of social institutions, including churches, have become comfortable with the costs because the gains are appealing. But if churches are meant to be "joined and knit together" (Eph. 4:16) as the Body of Christ on earth, this essay contends that churches and the people in them ought to be limiting rather

[1] David Foster Wallace, *This is Water: Some Thoughts Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 3-8.

than expanding the reach and effects of such bodily distending technologies and practices.

The primary conversation partners in this essay are Shoshona Zuboff, Rachel Muers, Eric Stoddart, and the two biblical texts just referenced. The first section draws from Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* to describe what surveillance is and does today to show the extent to which surveillance technologies and practices pervade and shape not only the spaces that the average person would call *public*, but also the spaces they would call *private*. This section concludes with a preliminary ethical evaluation of this pervasive and (mal)formative collection of technologies and practices and a brief attempt to answer the obvious but important question: are technologies and practices like surveillance capitalism problematic, and if so, how might we limit their expansion?

Building from the mostly sociological analysis of the first section, the second section moves into theological and ethical territory through engagement with Muers' *Keeping God's Silence* and Stoddart's *Theological Perspective on a Surveillance Society*. It shows how Muers' theological-ethical framing of God's "hearing knowledge"[2] and Stoddart's exploration of how "communities of Christian faith practiced [and can practice] (in)visibility"[3] gives churches resources to answer the question posed and provisionally answered at the end of section one. From there, it pushes Muers' emphasis on *hearing* and Stoddart's emphasis on *seeing* into broader and deeper sensory territory to create theological and ethical space for the *entire body of the person* and the *entire Body of Christ* to inform and guide how churches answer the question: are technologies and practices like surveillance capitalism problematic, and if so, how might we limit their expansion? Then, section two concludes where the final section of this essay begins and ends, with an extended examination of how 1 Corinthians 12:25 and Ephesians 4:16 can show churches how to be undivided bodies that resist the divisive effects of surveillance technologies and practices.

A new economic order

A growing body of literature shows that surveillance extends beyond the boundaries of the devices and procedures encountered at airports, borders, and

[2] Racher Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethic of Communication* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 208.
[3] Eric Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society: Watching and Being Watched* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011), 8.

prisons, although the term "surveillance" tends to be associated with military and law enforcement technologies and practices.[4] Citing sociologist David Lyon, Stoddart defines the term as follows: "[It's] the diverse socio-technical practices that we encounter (knowingly or unknowingly) on an almost daily basis." It includes "focused, systematic, and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection, or direction."[5] In other words, imagine any social space in which an individual or group wants to enhance their influence, management, protection, and/or direction and chances are that surveillance technologies and practices are in that social space. For example, when people scan a customer loyalty card at a grocery store checkout to get discounts and special offers or use a smartphone app to collect enough purchase points to get a free coffee or enter an GPS address to figure out how to get where they want to go, surveillance is happening. The forms of and motivations for the surveillance may vary, but the technologies and practices themselves quite uniformly influence, manage, and direct individuals and groups through information collection for various stated and unstated reasons: protection, control, power, and/or profit to name a few. What used to be reserved for the prisoner, suspect, and soldier has now become the lot of everyone, it seems. Surveillance has become such a part of everyday life that most people cease to be concerned by the reality that technologies and practices typically used for war and incarceration are now being used in public and private spaces to create loyal consumers and generate substantial profits.[6]

The more surveillance technologies and practices appear in, and shape spaces typically delineated as public *and* private, the more boundaries between public and private spaces erode. As Zuboff demonstrates at length in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, this reality has caused a novel economic order to emerge that

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[4] See, for example, Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2019); Jillian C. York, *Silicon Values: The Future of Free Speech Under Surveillance* Capitalism (London, UK: Verso Books, 2021); Kirstie Ball, Kevin Haggerty, and David Lyon, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2014); Tom Engelhardt, *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014); and, Glen Greenwald, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015).

[5] David Lyon, *Surveillance Studies: An Overview* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 14, cited in Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society*, 1.

[6] See Michel Foucault, "Part Four: Prison," *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 195-309, for a landmark treatment of this universal, uniform phenomenon. Although the historical veracity of Foucault's work in this text has been questioned by proper historians, what he exposes in it with his archaeological/genealogical method is nevertheless verifiable in many cases. For work that insightfully builds on Foucault's, see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 69-106.

significantly influences individuals, groups, and entire societies. Surveillance capitalism, Zuboff says, is an "economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales."[7] And whereas loyalty cards, coffeeshop apps, and GPS are relatively un-invasive, other everyday examples of surveillance are more invasive. Zuboff writes,

> In [the] commercial dreamscape [of surveillance capitalism], words that were once conceived of as "behind closed doors" are eagerly rendered as surplus. These new supply operations convert your behavior for surplus in two ways. The first derives from *what* you say, the second from *how* you say it. Smart-home devices such as Amazon's Echo or Google Home render rivers of casual talk from which sophisticated content analyses produce enhanced predictions that "anticipate" your needs.[8]

In some cases, people speak directly to virtual assistants to order things they would rather not have to drive to a store to purchase or go online to order. In other cases, passing mention of running low on a particular item, considering out loud the purchase of a product or service, or discussing an ordinary or extraordinary life circumstance in the vicinity of a virtual assistant is recorded and analyzed for a variety of reasons. Zuboff describes some of these reasons as follows:

> Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. Although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary *behavioral surplus*, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as "machine intelligence," and fabricated into *prediction products* that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later. Finally, these predictions

[7] Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, vii. Although much of Zuboff's descriptions of surveillance capitalism are prescient and precise, her argument that surveillance capitalism is a "rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of wealth, knowledge, and power," (vii) and surveillance capitalism is "not technology; it is a logic that imbues technology and commands it into action" (15) is flawed. As I see it, the mutation described here is not *rogue*, but is *in sync with* capitalism's evolution, and *technology* imbues and commands into action *the logic* of surveillance capitalism, not the other way around. To argue both points is not to position myself as an economic or technological determinist, however. It is to point out for critical and constructive purposes that (1) inherent to capitalism is a ceaseless drive to evolve and expand to accumulate wealth, knowledge, and power, and (2) techno-*logy* generates particular *logic-s*—including the economic logic of surveillance capitalism that Zuboff so presciently and precisely describes. I am arguing these points because conscious or unconscious neglect of these distinctions increase rather than decrease the likelihood of economic and technological determinism.

[8] Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 261. Author's emphasis.

> products are traded in a new kind of marketplace for behavioral predictions that I call *behavioral future markets*. Surveillance capitalists have grown immensely wealthy from these trading operations, for many companies are eager to lay bets on our future behavior.[9]

With surveillance technologies and practices like these, companies no longer need focus groups and questionnaires to gather information to improve their products and enhance their marketing. Now, spaces like the home replace the classic focus group and consumer questionnaire and countless companies are competing to get their surveillant devices in peoples' homes to use and/or sell the mass amounts of data they can gather. For this reason,

> [T]he idea is that in time, [smart -home devices] will claim for rendition a theoretically limitless scope of animate and inanimate domestic activities: conversations, lightbulbs, queries, schedules, movement, travel planning, heating systems, purchases, home security, health concerns, music, communication functions, and more.[10]

And while "tech companies insist that such recordings are anonymous... one journalist who signed on to a virtual job as an audio recording analysis concluded just the opposite, as she listened to recording full of pathos, intimacy, and easily identifiable information."[11] In fact, "[i]n 2015 privacy advocates discovered that [Samsung's] smart TVs were actually too smart, recording everything in the vicinity of the TV—*please pass the salt; we're out of laundry detergent; I'm pregnant; let's buy a new car; we're going to the movies now; I have a rare disease; she wants a divorce; he needs a new lunch box; do you love me?*"[12] Although many people accept this level of surveillance because the benefits of the surveillant devices seem to outweigh the costs, and many people respond with an ambivalent shrug when learning about these technologies and practices, there are a good many others who

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[9] Ibid., 8. Author s emphasis.

[10] Ibid., 262. Author s emphasis.

[11] A.J. Dellinger, "I took a job listening to your SIRI conversations," *Daily Dot*, https://www.dailydot.com/debug/siri-google-now-cortana-conversations/, March 2, 2015, cited in Ibid., 263.

[12] Alex Hern, "Samsung Rejects Concern over 'Orwellian' Privacy Policy," *Guardian*, February 9, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/09/samsung-rejects-concern-over-orwellian-privacy-policy cited in Ibid., 264.

are unaware of and would be disturbed if they knew how much their public *and* private conversations and behaviors are being recorded, analyzed, used, and sold for profits.

At this point, the particular, critical question for Christians is as follows: would they be disturbed if they knew that these surveillance technologies and practices are being used in their homes and churches? This is not a hypothetical question, because many churches already are using them—and not only that, there are churches learning from and teaching surveillance capitalist giants like Facebook for the purposes of mutually enhancing their efforts to surveil and shape people and generate profits.[13] To the question posed in the introduction to this essay, whether technologies and practices like surveillance capitalism are problematic, and if so, how their expansion might be limited, the provisional answer is that surveillance capitalism technologies and practices should be considered problematic in general, and problematic for Christians in particular. God asks his people to do certain things publicly and certain things privately. The ways in which Jesus speaks about giving, praying, and fasting in the gospels, for example, should alert his people to the truth that God counts it important that they think meaningfully about what is "done in secret," and that the "Father who sees in secret will reward [them]" according to what they do and do not do in public and in private (Matthew 6:3-4; 6; and 18).

Theologically, it can be said that all that is secret belongs to God, not surveillance capitalists. Scriptures like Luke 12:2-3 are stark reminders; all that is covered, secret, said in the dark, and whispered behind closed doors—including the surveillance capitalists who tend to avoid transparency—will be exposed and judged by God.[14] For this reason, unless it can be convincingly argued that surveillance is for the purposes of care and that it does not increase intrusion and harm, churches and Christians should make concerted attempts to limit if not eliminate altogether the presence of surveillance technologies and practices in spaces like the home and the

[13] See, for example, Elizabeth Dias, "Facebook's next target: the religious experience," *New York Times*, July 25, 2021, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/25/us/facebook-church.html; Elizabeth Culliford, "Facebook decided faith groups are good for business. Now it wants your prayers," *Reuters*, July 21, 2021, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/technology/facebook-decided-faith-groups-are-good-business-now-it-wants-your-prayers-2021-07-22/; and, Isobel Asher Hamilton, "Facebook is letting religious groups charge users $10 per month for exclusive content, such as messages from their bishop," *Business Insider*, July 26, 2021, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-sheryl-sandberg-courts-religious-groups-monetization-tools-2021-7. Thanks to my friend Emily Beth Hill for bringing the Dias article to my attention and our many conversations about surveillance and the church.

[14] Continuing past verse 3 up to verse 8 verifies this, and remarkably, shows just how intimately we are watched, loved, and protected by God.

church to create surveillance free refuges in their communities that constantly are being surveilled. As the home and the church are places where God's people have a considerable degree of control over what is and is not permitted to appear and shape them in the spaces, the decision to limit or remove all surveillance technologies and practices from these areas of their lives could become a powerful witness in a world where surveillance capitalism is becoming status quo.[15]

Surveillance, hearing, and seeing

Muers and Stoddart show from interdisciplinary, but primarily theological perspectives, that surveillance technologies and practices are problematic when they separate *what is known* (information) from *who is known* (people) to generate profit and/or power. As Muers puts it, "We are accustomed [to] the idea that 'information'—by which is meant, roughly, knowledge considered in abstraction from its knower—can be treated as a commodity."[16] But, she says, Christians ought to resist such ideas and the technologies, practices, and social spaces such ideas generate, because objectification and commodification of people do not square with the ways the God Christians worship interacts with all of his creation, including the humans he has created. On this point, Muers writes,

> God's omniscience understood as "hearing knowledge" can be seen to underlie (by no means "violate") relationships of privacy. God's act of hearing can be understood as the granting of time for innerworldly creativity, change, and growth—which is possible not only on the basis of the world's immanent resources, but out of the future granted to it by God.[17]

In other words, the God who is present, watching, listening to, and guiding his creation—even numbering their hairs, collecting their tears, and singing over them (cf. Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7; Psalm 56:8; and Zephaniah 3:17)—does not exercise surveillant, objectifying, manipulative, and commodifying ways of watching and listening to his creation. Instead, the God who is present, watching, listening to, and guiding his creation knows and guides all of creation in an intimate, relational way

[15] See Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society*, 41-68 and 103-170 for extended discussion of how such care and protection may look, theoretically and practically.
[16] Muers, *Keeping God's Silence*, 185.
[17] Ibid., 209.

that lovingly honors and blesses it, including people. It is *this way*, the way of God (John 14:6), not the way of technologies and practices like surveillance capitalism, that creates creativity, change, and growth in the future and the present for all of creation, including the humans in it. To provide one of many scriptural examples of this truth and its ethical applications, Muers captures the essence of this intimate hearing knowledge of God with her commentary on Exodus 2:23-25:

> In the narrative of Exodus as it stands, [there] is a significant turning point [when God hears Israel's "groaning"]. It is the first reference to the intention of God to save the people of Israel from slavery, and it immediately precedes the account of Moses' vision on Mount Horeb. This, then, is the preface to the narrative of the saving action that became central to Israel's understanding of God, and of herself as a people of God—a narrative that is inaugurated by the act of divine hearing.[18]

In sum, scripture reveals that God's way of listening and watching leads to liberation and justice. In contrast, technologies and practices like surveillance capitalism watch and listen to monitor, manage, manipulate, and constrict people for the generation of power and profit.[19] Accordingly, the people of God learn from, are held responsible by, and are empowered by their loving, liberating, and just God to be in relationship with God and other people in ways that reflect this love, liberation, and justice. Muers writes, "'Hearing knowledge' can be understood only within the relationship of knower and known, to which love, the acceptance of responsibility to

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[18] Ibid., 209.

[19] In regard to the latter kind of watching and listening, one sees this happening in Exodus 1 as the new Pharaoh who does not know Joseph reacts as follows to the growth of the Israelite populations: "'*Look*, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, *let us deal shrewdly with them*, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.' Therefore *they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor*. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that *the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.* The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, '*When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool*, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.' But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?'" Emphasis added. The imposition of such grueling tasks and order of infanticide certainly would have been aided by pre-modern surveillance. How else would have the Israelites be forced into and managed as "forced labor"? How else would the Pharaoh have noticed the growth of the Israelites and known the midwives were not killing the newborn boys?

and for the other, and the exercise of patience are integral."[20] God's hearing of Israel's groans prompts God to lovingly and patiently liberate Israel; surveillant hearing maintains if it does not extend distance between knower and known so that watching, tracking, analyzing, categorizing, and/or manipulating can persist over extended periods of time. It is the former, not the latter, that ought to be the church's sole model and agent for hearing, knowing, and being known by God and other people.

Stoddart builds on Muers' work, shifting the focus from the illuminating hearing knowledge of God to the revelatory (in)visibility of God and God's people. As Stoddart puts it, "The ubiquity of surveillance ought not intimidate us because, whilst it may have many features that are profoundly concerning, we have the possibility of honing our practice of negotiating how we are viewed and, perhaps even more importantly, recovering our sense of empowered responsibility for our own (in)visibility."[21] For Stoddart, "It is by this route that we finally find ourselves considering wisdom from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament that can imaginatively invigorate our appreciation of the quite ancient skill of being seen and being unseen."[22] With many intra- and extra-biblical examples and concepts, he offers considerable conceptual frames and resources for living in a world in which surveillance technologies and practices have no indication of being limited, let alone disappearing altogether. Stoddart does not think Muers' work needs to be replaced; rather, he thinks it "requires strengthening" to form a thicker "account of dataveillance, assemblage, sousveillance, and other developments in our understanding of surveillance."[23] Although Stoddart proposes and describes in detail three primary ways Muers' work can be enhanced to aid critical thinking and practical action in response to the steadily increasing presence and sophistication of surveillance technologies and practices to which he alludes, his proposal is too extensive to comment on at length here.[24] Instead, the essence of his proposal is that God's people ponder from multiple perspectives the (in)visibility of God, and in so doing, come to think and act more intentionally in spaces that are or could be surveilled. Applying Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the crucified, suffering God to the subject of surveillance, Stoddart writes, "We can state quite baldly that it is the

[20] Muers, *Keeping God's Silence*, 183.
[21] Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society*, 7.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society*, 145.
[24] Ibid., 145.

crucified God who knows what it is to be under surveillance, and we are to understand his surveillance of us from the perspective of the Cross."[25] Stoddart "takes seriously Moltmann's injunction to consider God as we have access to the history of the crucified God, Jesus Christ,"[26] framing our "access" to this history as reciprocal surveillance: we look at the Crucified Christ and the crucified Christ looks back—not just at us, but at all of creation, in its past, present, and future state. Ultimately, Stoddart says, God's people encounter, embody, and are formed by this "bald truth" every time they join with the Body of Christ in worship and approach the communion table to receive the body/bread and blood/wine of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. Stoddart writes,

> In gathering at the Eucharist, the Christian community makes itself visible—intentionally to one another, to the world, and to God. We rehearse and participate in the liturgical drama of being visible that we might be forgiven, that we might [be] invisible in ourselves but made visible as we participate in His redemption, in the wonderful exchange.[27]

The implications of this communion for any questions regarding surveillance technologies and practices, Stoddart writes, are as follows:

> The Eucharist is not where we go to escape from the world, its technologies and its systems of surveillance. It is the moment in which we are offered a particular promise that He is present so that we might come to ourselves. We are dismissed to love and serve the Lord—to be surprised by those other sacramental moments when, within our technologized world, we encounter God's Spirit in the little explosions of liberation that reintegrate what we have rent asunder. Surveillance of people has dominated our culture of technologized risk and eager claims to isolating privacy. As one who knew its gaze, suffered its harsh consequences, and now watches over us that we might flourish and not wither, the crucified God reorientates our perspective. Surveillance ought first and foremost to be for people, and only as we,

[25] Ibid., 170.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 170-171.

> individuals and groups, lay and expert, keep holding it to account can we claim to be practicing it carefully.[28]

Combined with Muers' observations and proposals as outlined above, Stoddart's work thickens theological and ethical responses to the expansion of surveillance technologies and practices into places that can no longer be adequately described with adjectives like private, secret, and/or intimate. That being said, not all theologians, including this author, would be as comfortable as Stoddart with describing Jesus Christ's gazing upon his people from the cross as "surveillance...from the perspective of the [c]ross."[29] The word "surveillance" has denotations and connotations that detract more than they add to the significance of how God With Us intimately, lovingly, and pleadingly looks down from the cross and says to his beloved disciple and his mother: "'Woman, here is your son.'" Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home" (John 19:26-27). This is a gaze and exclamation of love from the cross that creates familial, liberating bonds of care in the family of God. This is not a detached, objectifying, and commodified way of looking reflected in the watching, listening, and unspeaking way of surveillance. On the one hand, it may be argued that a literal definition of the word "surveillance" (to watch over) makes it possible for Jesus' gaze from the cross to be described as such. On the other hand, the term has taken on a particular meaning in the late-modern world that causes me to conclude there are numerous terms and concepts that better describe how Jesus gazes from the cross upon his mother, his beloved disciple, and all of creation, and more compellingly articulate why he gazes in this loving, intimate way, and not in the typically distant and unfeeling look of the technician who surveils.

Whatever the case, in the final section, this essay will try to strengthen the work of Muers' and Stoddart. It will push Muers' emphasis on hearing and Stoddart's emphasis on seeing into broader and deeper sensory territory to create theological and ethical space for the entire body of the person and the entire Body of Christ, to inform and guide how churches answer the question: are technologies and practices like surveillance capitalism problematic, and if so, how might we limit their expansion? In particular, it will use 1 Corinthians 12:25 and Ephesians 4:16 to

[28] Ibid., 171.
[29] Ibid., 170-171.

show how churches can be undivided bodies that resist the divisive effects of surveillance technologies and practices.

An undivided body and response

As shown above, Muers and Stoddart have theologically and ethically elaborated how *hearing* and *sight* at the individual (disciple) and corporate (ecclesial) levels in the Christian life can expose and resist surveillance technologies and practices that problematically objectify and commodify individuals and groups in and beyond the space of the church. There can also be theological and ethical elaboration of how other bodily characteristics, including but not limited to bodily senses, at individual and corporate levels may also holistically and robustly alert Christians to the presence of problematic surveillance technologies and practices in their midst so they may respond with thoughtful, gracious, concerted, and undivided resistance. To perform such an elaboration, this essay will focus on what it means to cause dissension in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:25) and what it means to be joined and knit together in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16).

The kind of dissension, joining, and knitting in the Body of Christ spoken of in these famous Body of Christ passages do not speak directly to the questions about surveillance technologies and practices that have been examined in this essay. That being said, these passages form two contrasting visions of the Body of Christ that can be applied to the questions and answers that have been posed and sought. On the one hand, there is a vision formed in 1 Corinthians 12:25 of a distended Body that ought not to be. On the other hand, there is a vision of a joined and knitted Body in Ephesians 4:16 that ought to be. What kind of Body is more likely to be created by churches that surveil people to separate what is known (information) from who is known (people) to generate profit and/or power: a distended Body or a joined and knitted Body?

To return to the moral of the David Foster Wallace story, the answer to this question is "obvious," a "banal platitude," but "in the day-to-date trenches of adult existence" it actually "can have a life-or-death importance."[30] Surveillance technologies and practices incline more towards the dissension of 1 Corinthians 12:25 than the joining and knitting of Ephesians 4:16. But this obvious answer to the question does not yield easy answers to follow-up questions like: if that is the case,

[30] Foster Wallace, *This is Water*, 3-8.

what should God's people do?[31] To answer such questions, 1 Corinthians 12:25 read in its fuller context is a good place to start:

> The members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

First, there is the symbolic and literal point that no particular aspect of the Body, including any bodily senses or bodies (i.e., people), is better than any other aspect of the Body. The problem with surveillance technologies and practices, however, is that they tend to focus on particular bodily movements, expressions, and capabilities because they are perceived as relevant and valuable. In doing this, surveillance technologies and practices often exclude from view the people whose movements, expressions, and capabilities do not count as relevant and valuable from the perspective of the people doing the surveilling. Consequently, surveillance technologies and practices tend to construct perceived and actual hierarchies of value in social spaces wherein what some people do and say is counted as important and others less so. Ought such hierarchies of value exist in churches? Ought the expressions and movements of some people be treated as more worthy of attention than others? The passage from 1 Corinthians referenced above formulates a definitive answer of *no* to both questions and goes so far as to suggest that the hierarchy be inverted. For it is the people who are considered weaker, less honorable, less respectable, and inferior in the Body who are to be given unique honor and respect. If every member in the church is called to "have the same care for one another" and to "suffer together" and "rejoice together" in the Body, exclusionary hierarchies of value work in the opposite direction of this non-hierarchical care, suffering, and rejoicing together.

[31] This question is a colloquial but serious gloss on scriptures like 2 Peter 3:11-18.

With this teaching in view, a significant problem with many surveillance technologies and practices is that they work against, not with, the visions formed and the practices proposed in these passages. As they tend to distend bodies through the watching, tracking, analyzing, categorizing, and/or manipulating of people to generate profit and power, surveillance technologies and practices often construct harmful hierarchies of value that ascribe significance to some people and information and push other people and information to the periphery, if not totally out of view. The good news, however, is that verse 24 reveals "God *has so arranged* the body"[32] in ways that dismantle these hierarchies and replaces them with otherworldly value systems and practices in the Body that are evidence of God's Kingdom appearing explosively, relationally, graciously, and justly here on earth. For Christians, the past tense in this verse means that the critical ethical questions are a question of participation in this work that has been done, is being done, and will be done by God in the Body of Christ as described here.[33] Or, to put it simply, the Holy Spirit is already doing the work of knitting and joining the Body together, and God's people ought to gratefully and joyfully join in this work rather than work against it.

Ephesians 4:15-16 in its fuller context reads, "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." Ultimately, the work of watching and listening to the Body of Christ belongs to its head, Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can teach and enable all the other members in the Body how to do this work well, to work together so that they might collectively experience a joining, knitting, and equipping that promotes the Body's growth and builds it up in love. What this work looks like practically varies from body to body and it eludes comprehensive description. However, it is clear from Ephesians 4:15 that much of this work starts with "speaking the truth in love" about the "obvious, ubiquitous, important realities [that] are the hardest to see and talk about," that "in the day-to-day trenches of adult existence," actually "have a life-or-

[32] Emphasis added.

[33] Luke 12 and Matthew 10 elaborate at length on this work the God has done, is doing, and will do. For example, in Luke 12:1-3, Jesus says, "Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops." Verses like these should prompt anyone using, or considering using, surveillance technologies and practices to consider: whose work is it to do the uncovering and proclaiming, and when it is time for the uncovering and proclaiming to happen, what of our own cover ups, secrets, and whispers will be uncovered and proclaimed?

death importance."[34] This essay attempts to speak the truth in love, in the form of a final question. What would the world look like if the Body of Christ showed the world what knitting and joining together really looked like in a world with bodies that are being distended by surveillance technologies and practices?

Michael Morelli holds a PhD in Theological Ethics from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and is the author of *Theology, Ethics, and Technology in the Work of Jacques Ellul and Paul Virilio: A Nascent Theological Tradition* (Lexington Books). He publishes and presents on a variety of topics within the fields of theology, morality, culture, politics, and technology. He has also worked in local church ministry and continues to serve the church in a lay capacity.

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[34] Foster Wallace, *This is Water*, 3-8.

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