**Fear Not the Machine: A Reflection on Social Media – By Thailer Jimerson**

Toyohiko Kagawa was a brilliant mind and one of my heroes. He was a famous early 20th century Christian author and social reformer. I just finished one of his biographies by William Axling. What is particularly helpful about the author’s style is that he’s content to allow Kagawa to speak for himself, since much of the book is a compendium of his quotes. Towards the end, there’s a chapter almost wholly devoted to his meditations and I found this gem among them:

*"There are those who pour out curses on the machine. That is a mistake. The machine is not a thing to be cursed. If it is utilized as a medium for the expression of love for others, the machine is a magnificent creation.*

*“The evil arises when the machine is taken advantage of for individual profit. If love is made the basic force and factor in the utilization of machinery, no one ought to complain. For this reason, I say curse not the machine.*

*“If the machine becomes monopolistic, let the community affected by its monopoly reverse the situation by taking control of it. To me the facts are simple. Even the machine was invented by God through the use of human brains as a blessing for mankind. I do not fear it."*

The wisdom found in this short paragraph is not only immensely practical, but well before its time. While reading it, did you think of screen usage, mobile phones, and social media like I did? His words are so prophetic and timely for us even as we seek to understand the place social media should have in our lives.

 We’re living in a time well beyond the advent of modern technology, and it seems like the general thrust of conversation surrounding the ubiquity of screens is how we should use them. Now that we’re over the novelty, folks are wondering are there dangers? Should we limit screen usage? What are the pros/cons to the information age and the use of social media in particular? I’ve preached on this topic before, and it’s refreshing to hear that momentum is picking up. Just this week, I heard about a book by Jason Lanier who happens to be a scientist working in Silicon Valley, entitled *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*. Now, I’ve not read the book yet (evinced clearly by the fact that I still have many of my social media accounts) – but I plan to. And I hope that many voices will rise to finally persuade us to think critically about the habits (or addictions) we’re developing with regards to technology and its use.

 Here’s a few things I think we can learn from Kagawa’s quote in the meantime.

1. **It’s a mistake to blame the machine itself.** There are many Luddites in the world that would prefer if we all pulled on our Amish garb and joined the local commune, free from all technology – but I don’t think we should be one of them. To say the problem is in technology itself is over-simplistic and downright naïve. Instead, we need to blame how humans have misused the machine. The problem was never in discovering steel, since steel can create plows and other helpful tools. The problem was when man used it to make swords. Likewise, the problem is not in technology itself. So how can we correct this? Not by destroying the machine, but by educating ourselves. Learning about the health risks and implementing some discipline into its use.
2. **The use of the machine should be motivated by love.** What if instead of allowing selfish, slavish ambitions motivate our use of social media, we instead sought how we might glorify God? What if we used facebook not as a platform to beat others down with increasingly partisan political opinions, but promoting polite conversation and face-to-face connections? What if love for God and fellow man possessed our finger tips and hearts and this translated in what we decided to post, how we decided to inform or encourage, and what we decided to shut down? Historically speaking, technology was at the forefront of some of the most important events in Christianity. Paul spreading the gospel quickly and easily? The roads of a peaceful Rome were there. Martin Luther critiquing a bloated and abusive church? The Gutenberg Press was recently invented.
3. **The community can take control of the machine.** The question is not has social media and screens been abused in our lives. That is a definite yes. The question instead is will we rise up to learn about social media, educate ourselves about it and implement change and control, not only in our personal lives, but even in our children’s? God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and of a sound mind – and we can use this to effect change for the better. Christians can rise to the task of bringing shalom to a world shattered into polarized segments through an out-of-control technological beast. It’s our job to tame it, and use it for good.