



A Theological Approach to the Social Problems Associated with the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

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Abstract

Today's world is characterized by the appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in all areas of life. There is much talk of the benefits, but little of the risks of a thoughtless, uncritical and unlimited appropriation of technological advances. *Cyberbullying, sexting, nomophobia, cyberdependencies*, among others; they are some of the most well-known social problems that affect current generations. Therefore, it is urgent to deepen our knowledge of the problems associated with the use of ICTs and to build from a biblical hermeneutics a theology of technology - *cyberteology* - that contributes to the formulation of a timely pastoral in this context. The theological approach proposed in this article, takes the advance of other disciplines, but interprets the problems as the manifestation of a technological idolatry - *cyberidolatry*. To achieve this, biblical principles applied to the technological world are presented, the exegetical model elaborated by José Luis Sicre is adapted on the denunciation of the pre-exilic prophets to the secular idolatry and the manifestation of them is observed in the context of some ecclesial communities. It concludes the presence of the problem in the young population and the feasibility of its study from a biblical, theological and pastoral reference framework.

Keywords: Communication; Technology; Cybertheology; Practical theology; Social problems

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Introduction

The development of science, technology and innovation (STI) is an ongoing priority and its goal is technological appropriation in all areas of life. To STI are conferred important capacities for showing, prevent and intervene social problems¹. In recent years, only in Colombia, investment for STI development exceeded 18 billion of Colombian pesos and is projected to increase to 26 billion in 2018², all under the promise of "providing solutions to the great problems faced by Colombian society"³. It is believed that with technological appropriation there will be a new human being, for

whom "imperfection, intellectual, corporeal and ethical limits" will not be present. Information and communication technologies (ICT) do not escape this mission. Affordability, ubiquity, versatility and diversity are not only admired but desired qualities of ICT and, as with the STI, and are considered as essential inputs for social transformation⁵.

However, there is another side of the coin. The dependencies⁶ to

¹ Baron LF, Gomez R (2012) From infrastructure to social appropriation: overview of information and communication technology (ICT) policies in Colombia. In: *Sign and Thought* 31: 38-55.

² Consejo Privado de Competitividad, "Ciencia, Tecnología E Innovación. Informe Nacional De Competitividad 2015-2016," October 21, 2015.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Pastor LM, Garcia JAC (2015) Modernity and postmodernity in the genesis of transhumanism-posthumanism. *Bioethics Notebooks* 115: 335-350.

⁵ Cumbre Mundial Sobre La Sociedad De La Información, "Informe final de la fase de ginebra de la cumbre mundial de la sociedad de la información", Documento WSIS- 03/GENEVA/9(Rev.1)-S, Ginebra, 12 de mayo de 2004, 67.

⁶ Given the lack of consensus in studies, the term dependence is used instead of addiction. However, is still recognized the negative impact on the environment of the individual in academic, social, economic and labor

the internet (cyber dependence) and cell phones (nomophobia and phubbing), harassment or bullying through social networks and internet (cyberharassment, cyberbullying), production, dissemination and exchange of sexual content (sexting, online pornography), online sexual extortion (sextortion), deception and harassment through false profiles in social networks (grooming), extortion, theft and identity theft (cyberextortion, phishing, smishing), among others, are some of the new social problems for the appropriation of ICT without limits or reflection. Several of them are unknown by most people although there are a growing number of cases⁷. The study of them is scarce with a remarkable empirical approach and few conclusive works⁸ [1].

Despite that there is no abundant academic development in this setting, the severity of the cases has motivated the execution of programs aimed at prevention and intervention, in which, description, and empowerment and social denunciation are the main actions⁹. The legislation is scarce for these issues [2]. In Colombia, for example, only some behaviours are criminalised by justice¹⁰.

The question resulting from this scenario is: If the ICTs are thought and developed to generate well-being and progress, why they cause destruction for the human being today? Tillich would answer that it is due to the ambiguity of the technique. It "simultaneously presents its positive and negative aspects, in a confused way and with the trouble to establish with certainty which of these two forces is dominating"¹¹. But even if there is such ambiguity, the balance is more inclined to promote the virtues and possibilities of the technique than its risks. This has placed the technique and its discourse - technology in the words of Ellul¹²- in a preponderant

aspects. J.A. CRUZADO RODRÍGUEZ, "Adicción a internet: de la hipotética entidad diagnóstica a la realidad clínica," *Psicopatología Clínica, Legal y Forense* 1 (2001), ss. 93–102.

⁷ DATEXCO, *Estudio uso y apropiación de las TIC en Colombia*, 2016

⁸ PEDRERO PÉREZ EJ, RODRÍGUEZ MONJE MT, RUIZ SÁNCHEZ DE LEÓN JM "Adicción o abuso del teléfono móvil. Revisión de la literatura". *Adicciones* 24/2, (2012) 139–152...

⁹ One of the most developed programs in the prevention of these problems in Spanish is called "PantallasAmigas", whose mission is "to promote the safe and healthy use of new technologies and the promotion of responsible digital citizenship in childhood and adolescence" (<http://www.pantallasamigas.net>). In Colombia is the program "EnTicConfío" from the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications (<http://www.enticconfio.gov.co>), which is based mostly in the developed content of PantallasAmigas.

¹⁰ The Law 1273/2009 typified some actions related to the handling of personal data as crimes, with the purpose of safeguarding and preventing the use of personal data in contexts mainly business, economic and political. However, phenomena such as grooming, sexting and cyberbullying, which have a great impact on the young population, do not have a legal framework for judging those responsible.

¹¹ R. NIÑO DE ZEPEDA GUMUCIO, "La ambigüedad de la técnica. Comprensión de la técnica en la perspectiva de su ambigüedad, en la teología de la mediación de Paul Tillich", en *Teología y Vida* 54 (2013), ss. 487–507.

¹² The perceptions, definitions or even emotions generated by a particular technique is what Ellul would call technology. Pieter Tijmes in its analysis of Jacques Ellul work, synthesizes as follows "the technology is the logos of the speech about technique". P. TIJMES, "Jacques Ellul,

place, full of hopeful affirmations and promises, which generate immeasurable affections and dedications. Reflecting theologically on technological appropriation, considering its limitations and risks, is necessary for a more objective understanding of this appropriation and generate a humanising equilibrium in which the human being is appreciated and understood with or without technology.

Rather than offering a definitive answer to the ambiguity of ICT, this theological approach seeks to contribute to the progress made by specialists in psychology, anthropology and sociology who have explored ICT phenomena, characteristics, inputs and possible solutions, with the intention of preventing and intervening the harmful effects of an indiscriminate, unlimited and irresponsible technological appropriation¹³. Although they have not found consensus on clinical definitions and are not endorsed by regulatory agencies for their nominations or solutions¹⁴, it is possible to see in them a common mission: to stop the consequences of inadequate appropriation of technology. This is in a direct relationship with the understanding of a practical theology [3], which must respond to the contemporary demands and rise from its knowledge pertinent and relevant solutions for the world of today¹⁵. On the other hand, theology, in dialogue and at service of other disciplines, achieves its function of mediating between the transcendent and the intransigent, between the unobjectionable and the object, allowing the church to act in the human problematic to accomplish with its pastoral mission [4].

In addition, the theological approach is necessary before the proposal of humanist prevention and intervention proposed to ICT problems. Appealing to the modification of behaviour by means of an individual will as an exit from the technological pit, dug precisely by the absence of limits and responsible conceptions of the technological appropriation, is to attribute salvific abilities to the same suffering individual by the consequences of his wrong actions. To consider human limitation as a reality of the being in opposition to the limitless human capacity stated by humanism opens the possibility to live the redemption executed and revealed by God. To deny it, reaffirming independence, autonomy and human potential without contingency, is to leave alone and adrift those who are destroyed by their inadequate decisions and actions. Christian theological reflection brings hope in itself since it announces the salvific mission of God in the person of Jesus in all areas of life, including the technological one. In doing so, theology becomes a humanizing agent because it contributes to the strengthening of the being in relation, giving new insights and experiences of its finitude and its contingency.

In order to fulfill the purpose of this theological approach, it is necessary to construct a Christian worldview where there are transverse Biblical principles, to apply a hermeneutic model and

entre el pesimismo sociológico y la esperanza bíblica", en *Boletín CFS*, n.º 37 (2002): 7

¹³ Laespada MT, Estevez A, *EXISTEN LAS ADICCIONES SIN SUSTANCIAS?*, (BILBAO 2013).

¹⁴ *Íbid.*

¹⁵ A. VIGUERAS CHERRES, "La teología práctica de Karl Rahner: Una teología pastoral en perspectiva escatológica", en *Teología y Vida* 51 (2010), ss. 445–476.

to observe the problems within the ecclesial communities. In this way, theological reflection, if it has to be presented within a framework of the Christian understanding of society, involves the Biblical, the referential and the contextual in order to state pertinent and transcendental actions. In this way, the see-judge-act of the Inter-Loci pastoral theological model¹⁶ is transcended by the Biblical foundation: we see, judge and act from a Christian Biblical worldview. Theology is "the commitment made as God's people to understand the revelation of God in context for our context"¹⁷. The Scriptures provide essential concepts and references for understanding the contexts in which human beings live, explaining the implications of human action and revealing the scope of divine intervention. When applying them to the reality of ICT, is possible the development of a Biblical cybertheology¹⁸, a theological reflection on Scripture in response to human transformations in and by ICT.

Biblical Principles across the ICT

Everything is created by God. The Scriptures reveal the creative act as exclusive, sovereign, generous and self-sufficient on the part of God. His work comes from nothing (Gen. 1) and is an expression of His abundant love¹⁹. "He is not beholden to create, creates by himself, moved by love flowing to and from the interior of the Trinity"²⁰. He performs as a divine initiative of revealing himself. All his work is an accurate reflection of His "God's invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature" (Rom. 1:20). Therefore, the whole creation is essentially "very good"²¹, admirable, wonderful (Ps. 139:13-14) because it comes from a gorgeously perfect, unsullied, almighty God (Ps. 19:1, 33:6, 102:25; Isa. 40:28; Jer. 32:17, 10:12; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 1:10, 3:4; Eph 2:10).

But even creation itself with its greatness and complexity is not autonomous or self-sufficient. It is sustained and maintained by His word, wisdom and power (Job 38-40; Am. 4:13; Mat. 10:29-30; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:7). He gives and sustains life. The Biblical conviction of the divine sustainability of the creation supports the hope not only of its control before the calamity but also its salvific intervention in it. God is savior

¹⁶ C. BACHER MARTÍNEZ (2012). "Nos habla en el camino. Consideraciones preliminares en torno al sujeto, objeto y método de una Teología Pastoral Inter Loci", en *Teología y Vida*, 53, 307–323

¹⁷ D. SALINAS, "Teologías Latinoamericanas", Paper presented at: Teologías Latinoamericanas, Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia, September 22, 2016.

¹⁸ A. SPADARO, *Ciberteología. Pensar el cristianismo en tiempos de la red.*, (Barcelona 2014)

¹⁹ D. DEL SALTO, *Teología de la creación. Fundamentos e implicaciones para la iglesia*, (Medellín, 2011), 2.

²⁰ DEL SALTO, *Teología...*, 2.

²¹ The antimythical essay of Génesis (T. DONNER, *El texto que interpreta al lector: una exposición de la Biblia*, (Medellín: Publicaciones FUSBC, 2009), 34) has not just the particularity of answering to the challenges of Mesopotamian myths -and the present ones- about the origin of nature and human being but also to qualify the creation. It has 7 times -the same number as the number of days- the adjective "good" and ends by saying that the Creator himself "felt very good" when he saw the conclusion of his work (Gen. 1:31) or "exceedingly good" (LBA).

because he is the creator (Job 38-40; Psalm. 121:1-2, 124:8). Thus, "by emphasizing the power of God over creation, the man recognizes its finiteness"[5] and emphasizes the need for intervention before hardship and crisis. To consider the technique as the result of human effort to solve their problems²² is a source of hope and saving definition that is unfounded. A speech²³ away from the natural reality and sustained by the sophistry of human independence. By contrast, a theology of creation allows an objective understanding of the human condition and challenges to understand the relationship between the Creator and the created²⁴. To consider the divine creation of everything, regardless of methods, times and forms, is to reaffirm objectively the very humanity of the human being.

Man and woman, as created beings, share a differential condition compared to the rest of creation. They are described as "the image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1:27), an affirmation that does not reject or modify its materiality, but enhances its ability to interact with the Creator by making them partakers of its divine attributes²⁵. Human beings, from a Biblical perspective, "cannot be thought but in relation to God"²⁶. This distinction is accompanied by the giving of the creation for its administration (Gen. 1:29, 2:15), thus giving man and woman responsibilities over the created. "The consequences of this delegation of power are man's dominion over all the works of God's hands"²⁷. The human being in relation to the Creator is responsible for the cultivation -development- and care of the created, which was delivered to him.

Technological advances and ICT are essentially "very good" because they come "from the Father, from whom all things come" (1 Cor. 8:6). God gave all the resources created by him necessary for technological development so that they would be "cultivated and cared for" by the human being. He gave life to those who research and develop technologies. He sustained them, providing them with health, physical and mental capacities for their realizations, which were not created out of nothing or stand autonomous or independently. "All other reality is God's creation and therefore depends on its existence and support"²⁸. The human being has the power for the transformation and innovation, but not to create or have the ability to sustain itself its embodiments. Its power is limited. "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" Jesus would say in this regard (Mat. 6:27). It is in this reality that the Pauline assertion "Everything has been created through him" -meaning God- (Col. 1:16) not only confirms a divine quality directly but also indirectly alludes to the same finitude and dependence of human beings before the Creator, whose consistent result is a submissive and obedient attitude toward the magnificence and divine superiority

²² D.C. SCHUURMAN, "Formando una Visión Cristiana de la Tecnología Informática", en *Journal of the Association of Christians in the Mathematical Sciences ACMS* (2007), ss. 1–11.

²³ TIJMES, *Jacques Ellul...*, 7.

²⁴ DEL SALTO, *Teología...*, 3

²⁵ LONA, *Qué es el hombre?*, 106.

²⁶ LONA, *Qué es el hombre?*, 100.

²⁷ LONA, *Qué es el hombre?*, 107.

²⁸ DEL SALTO, *Teología...*, 2.

(Col. 1: 16b). A humble and objective understanding of human finitude and contingency triggers recognition of the divine, where worship and service are natural results and generators of well-being. The opposite is incoherence and motive for the destruction of their humanity (Rom. 1:20-31).

Everything is corrupted by the idolatrous attitude. Man and woman, as individuals essentially in relation to the Creator and the created, mold their context, environment and habitat with their attributions, attitudes and actions. The great rupture between the perfect, harmonious and "very good" of creation is human disobedience and rebellion. In the story of Genesis 1, everything obeys the Creator. The light, the firmament, the earth, the water, the plants and the animals. Everything fulfills the Word of God. It is, it separates, it produces and it is sustained by obedience to the divine dictates. But those who are the "image of God," which bestows powers of freedom and decision, in the story of Genesis 3, are the only created being capable of directly disobeying the Creator. With willful ability "man makes the illusion of wresting from the divinity his prerogatives and considers God as an antagonist to be fought"²⁹. By not abiding the prohibition of eating a certain fruit, which is no more than the obvious limit for one who has abilities as "the image and likeness of God," the human being vehemently declares his independence, autonomy, and self-control of the Creator. By listening to and supporting the claims of the mythical serpent, men and women legitimize for them another source of truth, externalize their appreciations in front of their discourse, show attitudes of appreciation and purpose and end up exhibiting with their actions the course of their wrong decisions. In short, the men and women noted a lie, valued and embraced it, and finally integrated it into its existence³⁰. Thus, what happened in Genesis 3 is nothing more than the formation of a new god, the human being, and the beginning of the consequences of such an act. With the deification of the created enters the death to human reality, irrefutable consequence of the breakdown of submission to the Creator³¹. But death not only subscribes to the individual, it also broadens its relations with the other and its environment. The harmonious relationship with his neighbor is now characterized by imposition and subjugation (Gen. 3:16). The nature, source of

well-being and fulfillment, is now cursed, generating discomfort and pain (Gen. 3:17).

The manifestations of death and destruction in the current reality of ICT, where the relations with the other and the environment are distorted and negatively affected, are symptoms of a problem greater than that of excessive, unlimited and irresponsible use. It is the evidence of the formation of a god who has been credited with his salvific discourse, granting him potential beyond his capacities and limitations and has been given with affection and commitment every area of contemporary existence. One lives the consequences of technological divinization. One suffers from cyberidolatry.

Cyberidolatry: A Hermeneutic Model

The divinization of technology, like that of any object or reality, is above all the human desire for self-sufficiency and independence. It is the Edenic idea of pretending to be like God in control of existence and the future. In this perspective, everything can be deified because it does not depend on the object or reality itself but on the subject. Tim Keller states that:

Everything can function as a false god, especially the best things in this life. We think idols are bad things, but almost never are. The better they are, the more likely we are to hope they can meet our deepest needs and desires³².

The human capacity to create idols is sustained by its very weakness and limitation. Christopher Wright states that "we have a tendency to value everything that makes us tremble in wonder when we see our smallness, insignificance, compared to the great magnitudes that surround us"³³. The final result is a secular idolatry as harmful and destructive as the liturgical or cultic one³⁴, because they "work detrimental to the essence of our humanity"³⁵, distorting, degrading and reducing human beings³⁶. However, divinization of objects, such as ICT, dehumanizes even more the human being. "If we worship what is not God we reduce the image of God in ourselves. If we worship what is not even human, we reduce our humanity even more"³⁷.

Divinization of an object is not produced by its holding or permanent usage. According to Sicre, "the actions are only idolatrous when they are backed by a deeper attitude that divinizes earthly reality, placing affection or trust in it"³⁸. Keller explains that if "something is more important to you than God, anything that captivates your heart and imagination rather

²⁹ G. RAVASI, *Guía espiritual del Antiguo Testamento*, (Barcelona, 1992)

³⁰ These three elements, attribution, attitudes and actions are part of the work of Jose Luis Sicre, who defines a process of deification and non-cultic or secular idolatry of the prophets in the Old Testament. To analyze the secular idolatry Sicre made a "scheme made of five factors. The god, his gifts, idolatrous attitude, idolatrous actions and victims". The god, as a purely human construct, is credited falsely benefits or powers that motivate idolatrous attitudes and actions to eventually trigger "sacrifices", worship offerings and delivery, or victims. Sicre explains his model observing the worship of Baal: "This scheme is not preconceived and arbitrary. You get to it taking into account a number of idolatrous cults widespread in ancient Israel, especially Baal worship. In the latter, for example, it is warned the existence of a god (Baal), who offers to give gifts (wheat, wool, linen, water) when the man adopts before him an attitude (love, follow) and performs some actions (sacrifices, sacred prostitution, pleas); this cult often involves some victims (oxen, cows)". J.L. SICRE, *Los dioses olvidados. Poder y riqueza en los profetas preexilicos*, (Madrid, 1979).

³¹ LONA, *Qué es el hombre?...*, 119.

³² T. KELLER, *Dioses que fallan. Las promesas vaías del dinero, el sexo y el poder, y la única esperanza verdadera*, (Madrid, Publicaciones Andamio, 2015)

³³ C. WRIGHT, *La Misión de Dios*, (Buenos Aires: Certeza Unida, 2009), 222.

³⁴ The denouncement of the construction of secular gods in Scripture is evident in the Old Testament prophets. Based on their study, José Luis Sicre deepens into the secular idolatrous reality and contemplates the profound implications and consequences, independent of the forms of their manifestation.

³⁵ WRIGHT, *La Misión...*, 224.

³⁶ WRIGHT, *La Misión...*, 226.

³⁷ WRIGHT, *La Misión...*, 225.

³⁸ SICRE, *Los dioses olvidados*, 96.

than God, whatever you expect to provide what only God can give³⁹ that is an idol. Idolatrous attitude is to place fear, trust and affection in an object or reality determined⁴⁰. It tends to confuse hobby with idolatry, but "idolatry does not lie as much in the action as in the attitude"⁴¹. Being fan of technology, buying and using the latest technological device, having and using a profile on a social network, being considered as a "digital native" does not make someone a cyberidolatorous person. It is when it considers that everything in its being, affections, relations, projections and resources, depend and is by and for the ICT. To the cyberidolatorous the ICT "becomes more fundamental than God for their happiness, the meaning of life and identity"⁴².

But idolatry does not remain in the plane of the immaterial of beliefs, feelings or perceptions; it materializes through the sacrifices and their victims. Xavier Alegre says "idols are negatively characterized by the facts that demand the sacrifice of many victims by people who love them"⁴³. Destruction and death are consequences of any idolatry because it is intended to divert from the only true source of life to a false god. Wright explains that "false gods destroy and devour lives, health and resources; they distort and limit our humanity; they promote injustice, greed, perversion, cruelty, lust and violence."⁴⁴ In this understanding, God revealing himself as jealous, not only of our worship but of all spheres of our life, does so out of love for the human being. Alegre concludes:

The fundamental difference, then, between the God who reveals the Bible and the idols that the Bible denounces would be found in the fact that the true God, the God who revealed Himself to Israel in deliverance from slavery in Egypt and did with He an alliance in Sinai, he is a God who loves human beings, wants his good⁴⁵.

Sacrifices and Victims of Cyber-Idolatry

For several authors, the problems associated with the appropriation of ICTs are due to the early introduction to the digital world, the excessive promotion of technological appropriation, the increase in internet access and the permanent

³⁹ KELLER, *Dioses que fallan*, 8.

⁴⁰ Sicre defines fear as that feeling of anxiety in the event of losing or not having that object. Trust as "when God ceases to be the only point of support, the only refuge, man seeks other realities that offer him security and absolutizes them" and affection is the displacement of God as a source of love and desire for another reality. Sicre concludes: "In principle, in order to exist a sin of idolatry, there must be an attitude of fear, confidence or absolute attachment to any reality. This means that no action is idolatrous in itself, but only insofar as it responds to one of these attitudes". SICRE, *Los dioses olvidados...*, 175. Keller would define affection as "inability of loving God above all". KELLER, *Dioses que fallan...*, 177.

⁴¹ SICRE, *Los dioses olvidados...*, 50.

⁴² KELLER, *Dioses que fallan...*, 10.

⁴³ X. ALEGRE, "Por qué la Biblia presenta a Dios como teniendo celos de los ídolos? Una aproximación a la idolatría ayer y hoy, desde la perspectiva bíblica", en *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* (2012), 221

⁴⁴ WRIGHT, *La Misión...*, 226

⁴⁵ X. ALEGRE, *Una aproximación a la idolatría...*, 224

and rapid emergence of new, attractive and versatile technological developments⁴⁶. According to Laespada and Estevez, problems can be classified by the existence of legal and illegal harmful content on the Internet, by the action of others using ICT, by scams and frauds supported in electronic and virtual media, by ignorance, recklessness, neglect or combined actions of these three and the abusive use of ICT⁴⁷.

Among the *risks associated with legal or illegal harmful content* is promotional information anorexia and bulimia. These conditions, determined by the World Health Organization -WHO- in 2004 as "the third most common chronic condition among adolescent girls in the United States after obesity and asthma"⁴⁸, are open and legally promoted throughout the internet. A Google search with acronym "pro ana" -pro anorexia-, "pro mia" -pro bulimia- or "thinspiration" throw thousands of pages, forums, chats, blogs and videos dedicated to informing and promoting diet, exercise and practices to achieve and maintain stereotypes of extreme thinness under the concept of "lifestyles" and "free development of personality," using a distinctive language that influences and motivates millions of young people in the world to destroy their bodies, lives and families⁴⁹.

Another of the most prolific legal harmful content in the network is pornography. According to Oscar Tokumura 30% of internet traffic in 2006 was pornography, currently generating higher profits than "Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Apple and Netflix together"⁵⁰. This is one of the more searched content on the net, around 68 million queries a day, accounting for 25% of all Google searches. In 2012 there were found about 4.2 million pornographic sites⁵¹ and it is estimated that the sex industry in the world exceeds 97 billion dollars⁵². Feelings of anxiety, power, instant control, excitation and abstinence when people is restrained from pornography are symptoms to consider it today as a psychological pathology whose treatment requires a basic detoxification of at least 10 days, routines and disciplines to combat stimuli and relapses in consumption⁵³. In the worst case the medication with drugs for patient recovery is necessary. There is no legislation against pornography despite the damage generated by its consumption. It is only illegal if minors participate in production. Although it is estimated that:

The average age of access to pornography at the global level is

⁴⁶ LAESPADA Y ESTEVEZ, *Existen las adicciones...*, 88.

⁴⁷ LAESPADA Y ESTEVEZ, *Existen las adicciones...*, 119.

⁴⁸ ORGANIZACIÓN MUNDIAL DE LA SALUD, *Prevención de los trastornos mentales*. (Ginebra: 2004), 10, http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/Prevention_of_mental_disorders_spanish_version.pdf.

⁴⁹ B. G. BERMEJO, L. ÁNGEL SAÚL Y C. JENARO, "La anorexia y la bulimia en la red: ana y mia dos 'malas compañías' para las jóvenes de hoy", en *Acción Psicológica*, n.º 8 (2011): 73.

⁵⁰ Ó. TOKUMURA, *La Pornografía Online, Una Nueva Adicción*, (Madrid: VOZdePAPEL, 2015), 75.

⁵¹ TOKUMURA, *La pornografía...*, 44.

⁵² A. LUNA, "Una pareja bien avenida: el porno en internet no entiende de crisis", *elconfidencial.com*, http://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/2012-10-13/una-pareja-bien-avenida-el-porno-en-internet-no-entende-de-crisis_769607/, último acceso 7 de octubre de 2016..

⁵³ TOKUMURA, *La pornografía...*, 66.

between 6 and 11 years, but there are cases of 4 and 5 years of age. In the United States the average age of onset in pornography is 9 years⁵⁴.

Among the *risks by the action of other people*⁵⁵ this category is the cyberharassment⁵⁶, harassment to another or others characterized by the use of different digital media⁵⁷. "Although cyberbullying -cyberbullfighting- can be considered as a new form or subtype of bullying⁵⁸ -Bullfighting-, the use of electronic means to commit aggression makes this type of harassment has some different characteristics"⁵⁹. In this type, the victim has no rest from the mockery, offense, discrimination, persecution because there is no a determined place or time to perform it. It is at all times, in all places and with all kinds of people who participate as "aggressors, victims and active or passive spectators"⁶⁰. Among the latter, the same family of the victim may be part and this exacerbates the condition of the affected⁶¹. Cyberbullying began to be treated from 2002⁶². At 2005 Bill Besley coined the term to refer to the "use technology as a basis for a deliberate, repeated and hostile behavior developed by an individual or group to harm others"⁶³. At present, the impact of this phenomenon is worldwide. Although "some studies in Europe, Mexico and Brazil indicate that up to 83% of students have dealt in some way (as actors or spectators)"⁶⁴ in this practice, in other studies "has been found that one in four students is involved in this

⁵⁴ TOKUMURA, *La pornografía...*, 13.

⁵⁵ LAESPADA Y ESTÉVEZ, *Existen Las Adicciones...*, 119.

⁵⁶ A. I. RINCÓN RUEDA y W. D. ÁVILA DÍAZ, "Simbiosis vital para describir el cyberbullying en Colombia" en *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, n.º 12 (2014): 150. It also calls it "electronic bullying, online bullying, e-bullying, online harassment, cybernetic bullying, cyberstalking, online social cruelty, or cyber bullying".

⁵⁷ G. G. MALDONADO, V. M. JOFFRE VELÁSQUEZ, G. J. MARTÍNEZ SALAZAR y A. LLANES CASTILLO, "Cyberbullying: Forma Virtual De Intimidación Escolar", *Revista Colombiana de Psiquiatría*, n.º 40 (2011): 116. They state that according to Smith et al. they divide cyberbullying into seven subtypes: text messages received on the mobile phone; photographs or videos made with the cameras of the mobiles, and later used to threaten the victim; harassing calls to the mobile phone; insulting or threatening emails; chat rooms in which there is an attack or social exclusion against one of the participants; harassment through instant messaging programs; and web pages where the victim is defamed, personal information is downloaded to the network or contests are made where the others are ridiculed.

⁵⁸ M.A CAMPBELL, "Cyberbullying: An old problem in a new guise?", *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, n.º 15 (2005): 69.

⁵⁹ S. BUELGA, M. J. CAVA, y G. MUSITU, "Cyberbullying: victimización entre adolescentes a través del teléfono móvil y de internet", en *Psicothema*, n.º 22 (2010): 785.

⁶⁰ G. CÁRDENAS GUZMÁN, "Ciberacoso", en *Revista Cómo Ves?*, n.º 197 (2015): 11

⁶¹ PANTALLAS AMIGAS, "El cyberbullying, cosa de ex-amigos", *ciberbullying.com*, <http://www.ciberbullying.com/cyberbullying/2013/01/23/el-ciberbullying-cosa-de-ex-amigos/>, último acceso 7 de octubre de 2016.

⁶² CÁRDENAS, *Ciberacoso...*, 12

⁶³ L. M. VELÁSQUEZ REYES, "Sexting, sextasting, sextorsión, grooming y cyberbullying. El lado oscuro de las TICs", (ponencia, *XI Congreso Nacional de Investigación Educativa. Convivencia, Disciplina y Violencias en las 2011*, Instituto Superior de Ciencias del Estado de México, 2011), 8.

⁶⁴ CÁRDENAS, *Ciberacoso...*, 12.

problem as a victim, an aggressor or both"⁶⁵. The United Nations Organization -UN- estimates that 55% of young Latin Americans have suffered cyberbullying⁶⁶. At October 31, 2015 in Colombia it was recorded about 9,773 complaints of cyberbullying⁶⁷. Victims of cyberbullying experience "sadness, instability, anxiety, feelings of worthlessness and rejection, sleep and food disturbances, poor academic performance and desire not to go to school"⁶⁸. The life becomes a nightmare for those victims and many end up in suicide.

One of the practices linked to cybermatoneo is the recording of attacks where videos of rape, beatings or suicide are made to spread them through social networks. Although audiovisuals became evidence and allowed the capture and prosecution of their perpetrators, they exacerbate the trauma of the victims due to the popularization of the act. One form of this modality is the so-called "Happy Beating," which consists of a "preadolescent or adolescent walking and striking someone, while another person, also another preteen or teenager, records the aggression with a phone with built -in camera"⁶⁹. This practice of "being cruel to another person by sending or posting harmful material"⁷⁰ is a new nuance of violence, "forms of social aggression using Internet or other digital technologies"⁷¹ highly influenced by the mediation and the desire to be visible through the media.

Another *risk related by action of third parties* are theft, scams, fraud and extortion supported by digital media. It is estimated that worldwide losses exceed 9,1 billion dollars a year of virtual identity theft - phishing - in Colombia more than 1,400 crime incidents were reported⁷². There is also the mode data sequestration -ransomware-, which was the most representative criminal trend 2016⁷³. During the last three years in Colombia, there were 13,774 complaints of theft by computer and similar media (68%), abusive access to a computer system (13%), violation of personal data (12%) and other offenses under Law

⁶⁵ CÁRDENAS, *Ciberacoso...*, 13.

⁶⁶ MINISTERIO DE LAS TECNOLOGÍAS DE LA INFORMACIÓN Y COMUNICACIÓN, "El 55% de los jóvenes latinoamericanos han sido víctimas de Ciberacoso según la ONU", *Mintic.gov.co.*, <http://www.mintic.gov.co/portal/604/w3-article-2757.html>, last accessed: October 7, 2016.

⁶⁷ TE PROTEJO, "Informe al 31 de octubre de 2015", *teprotejo.org*, <http://www.teprotejo.org/index.php/es/logros-2015>, last accessed: October 7, 2016.

⁶⁸ A. MERA, "El ciberacoso, un fenómeno que crece a la velocidad de la internet", *elpais.com.co*, <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/cal/noticias/ciberacoso-fenomeno-crece-velocidad-internet>, last accessed: October 26, 2016.

⁶⁹ RINCÓN Y ÁVILA, *Simbiosis Vital...*, 156.

⁷⁰ VELÁSQUEZ, *Sexting, Sextasting...*, 2.

⁷¹ VELÁSQUEZ, *Sexting, Sextasting...*, 2

⁷² CÁMARA COLOMBIANA DE INFORMÁTICA Y TELECOMUNICACIONES, El Centro Cibernético de la Policía Nacional y la CCIT presentaron el Primer Informe sobre el Ciberdelito en Colombia, 31 de Marzo de 2017, <http://www.ccit.org.co/noticias/centro-cibernetico-la-policia-nacional-la-ccit-presentaron-primer-informe-ciberdelito-colombia/>, last accessed: June 20, 2017.

⁷³ KASPERSKY LAB, *Consumer security risks survey 2016*, (2016)

1273/2009 (7%)⁷⁴.

But risks with ICT are not triggered only externally. There are those *given by ignorance, carelessness, negligence or combined actions of these*⁷⁵. Among them is the cyber sexual harassment, which is the systematic seduction, misleading and manipulated through social networks, chats, forums and mobile from one person to another⁷⁶. Although in most cases can be generated by an unknown -grooming- there are cases where the harasser is a person known by the victim⁷⁷. Alarms against cyber sexual harassment light up when victims are minors, however, can also be adults⁷⁸. In both cases the operation mode is the same. Usually it happens in three stages: first a contact or friendship takes place, then begins a relationship based on mutual trust and finally physical contact occurs, which usually ends up in sexual abuse⁷⁹. However, the dynamics of cyber sexual harassment can also empower sexual extortion -sextortion-, kidnapping, and trafficking or organs black market. The interest of meeting new people through the network, establishing friendships or virtual relationships, marriage promises, and work or travel abroad are among many the insinuations used in this practice⁸⁰. An estimated cyber sexual harasser -or groomer- can have on his network more than 200 potential victims⁸¹, devoting more than 6 months to gain confidence, esteem and feelings of their victims.

Within the category of reckless use of ICT is the digital self-portrait -selfie- and sexting. The first is a common practice among cell phone users and for its excessive use has been converted according to some research as a generator of "anxiety disorders and depression in adolescents, especially in women, who tend to compare their realities with who see in this ideal world of social networks"⁸². The self-portrait is currently taking

⁷⁴ POLICIA NACIONAL, *Amenazas del cibercrimen en Colombia 2016-2017*, (2017)

⁷⁵ LAESPADA Y ESTEVEZ, *Existen las adicciones...*, 119.

⁷⁶ S. TEJEDOR Y C. PULIDO, "Retos y riesgos del uso de Internet por parte de los menores. cómo empoderarlos?" en *Comunicar* n.º 20 (2012): 67.

⁷⁷ TEJEDOR, "Retos y riesgos", 69

⁷⁸ SURVIVORSMANCHESTER.ORG.UK, "Grooming", *survivorsmanchester.org.uk*, <http://www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk/impact/legacy-issues/grooming/>, último acceso octubre 7 de 2016.

⁷⁹ INTECO, *Guía legal sobre ciberbullying y grooming*, (Madrid, 2009), 12, <https://www.educacion.navarra.es/documents/57308/57740/ciberbullyng.pdf/1c169fb5-b8ab-478f-b7f4-7e3d22adab14>

⁸⁰ LA CAPITAL, "El rapto de una chica de 15 años alerta el peligro que encierran las redes sociales", *lacapital.com.ar*, <http://www.lacapital.com.ar/el-rapto-una-chica-15-anos-alerta-el-peligro-que-encierran-las-redes-sociales-n494289.html>, last accessed: October 7, 2016.

⁸¹ PANTALLAS AMIGAS, "El ciberbullying, uno de los principales riesgos para los niños en Internet, según investigadores de UNICEF", *ciberbullying.com*, <http://www.ciberbullying.com/cyberbullying/2011/12/15/el-ciberbullying-uno-de-los-principales-riesgos-para-los-ninos-en-internet-para-investigadores-de-unicef/>, last accessed: October 7, 2016.

⁸² DIARIO ADN, "'Selfie' o autorretrato en redes: el riesgo de trastorno de apariencia", *diarioadn.co*, <http://diarioadn.co/vida/>

dimensions and applications unthinkable a few years ago. One of such contemporary phenomena is the aftersex, a practice of taking a picture after having sex and then publishes it on social networks, especially Twitter with the hashtag: #aftersex⁸³. "«Experimenting» with his personal image, thus contributing to the construction of identity and self-esteem"⁸⁴ is the basis for this practice in young people who do not measure the consequences of posting pictures of their "sexual conquests" and then become an input for cyberharassment or cyberextortion.

Parallel to this phenomenon of self-portrait is sexting. It is the "dissemination or publication of images or videos of a sexual nature, produced by the sender itself, mainly through the mobile phone"⁸⁵. However, production may also be given with video cameras on computers or tablets. Within the dynamics of sexting is who produces and sends the video (sexting active) and who only receives the material (passive sexting)⁸⁶. Some studies claim that "older adolescents are more likely to receive sexting. 4% of 12-year-olds have received a message with suggestive images (nude or semi-nude) of a person they know"⁸⁷. Among the main motivations to participate in this practice are

- 1) The pressure by friends, boyfriends or strangers,
- 2) The desire to impress other or the group, to which it belongs,
- 3) Finding a sexual experience,
- 4) To generate a safe substitute for a sexual relationship,
- 5) To imitate practices of the group of friends, and
- 6) To respond to the cultural and sexualized context to which one belongs⁸⁸.

In 2012 a Latin American study was published, with the participation of 3,538 youth. It concluded that "despite being an increasingly common practice, particularly among young people -66% have posted photos in their social network insinuating be naked or being it-"⁸⁹, 70% of them are unaware of the term. The study also found that 56% sent erotic content of themselves as a "sexy gift to your partner" and 40% as a joke of friends. "62% of sexting practitioners fully trust people who share the contents of sexting"⁹⁰. Among the many risks of sexting is possible to determine

- 1) A loss of privacy,
- 2) Personal degradation,

tendencias/trastornos-generados-por-redes-sociales-1.58265, último acceso octubre 7 de 2016.

⁸³ RED.ES, *Monográfico Sexting*, (Madrid: Gobierno de España, 2015), 10.

⁸⁴ RED.ES, *Monográfico...*, 12

⁸⁵ RED.ES, *Monográfico...*, 4.

⁸⁶ RED.ES, *Monográfico...*, 4.

⁸⁷ VELÁZQUEZ, *Sexting, Sexcasting...*, 8.

⁸⁸ Red.es, *Monográfico*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ ECGLOBAL SOLUTIONS, PANTALLAS AMIGAS, ECMETRICS Y CLIPS, "Sexting en américa latina. una amenaza desconocida", (2013): 2, <http://es.slideshare.net/ecglobal/sexting-amenaza-desconocida>.

⁹⁰ ECGLOBAL SOLUTIONS, *Sexting...*, 9

3) Vulnerability to criminal behavior such as grooming, cyberbullying and sextortion⁹¹.

The last three can trigger the victim such a strong pressure that can take him to suicide⁹². It is estimated that 70% of cases of sexting end in blackmail and extortion, 57% damages the reputation, privacy and image and 61% ends up in child pornography⁹³.

Finally, there are the *risks of misuse of ICT*, which has shades ranging from fear, as nomophobia, to dependence and addiction, such as gambling online, cyberdependence or cyberaddiction. The nomophobia is a term used from 2012 to define "irrational fear to leave home without a mobile phone"⁹⁴. Although there is a debate in the academic community to consider it as an addiction⁹⁵, for many people when cannot "speak through the phone develop real restlessness, anxiety, irritability, until they could start again, and for them any call is vital"⁹⁶. To have physical or visual contact with the smartphone permanently, to sleep with it, to have the constant feeling that someone will call, to use it anytime and anywhere ignoring other when they are close - phubbing - or while driving, among others, are evidence of a dependence to the mobile. In the case of use of cell phones while driving, there is an approximate 37% reduction of concentration on the wheel and increased up to 70% the risk of an accident⁹⁷. However, cell phone use while walking in the street also generates high risk of injury or death⁹⁸.

The online gambling refers to gambling addiction, especially to games of chance, developed through internet portals. Although pathological gambling is identified clinically⁹⁹, there are other recreational types such as videogames that are not. Despite this, there is already the definition of Internet Gaming Disorder as a phenomenon to be investigated, which is particularly concerned with the high levels of impact on young people of multiplayer

⁹¹ M. I. FAJARDO CALDERA, M. GORDILLO HERNÁNDEZ, y A. B. REGALADO CUENCA, "Sexting: nuevos usos de la tecnología y la sexualidad en adolescentes", *International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology* 1, (2013): 522. They define sextortion as "the blackmail that a person (elder or minor) performs to another through the use of messages, photos or videos that the victim has generated, threatening to publish, to obtain some benefit," economic or sexual.

⁹² Jessica "Jesse" Logan (2008), Amanda Todd (2012) and Tiziana Cantone (2016) are, among others, the most worldwide recognized cases of suicide. They all were victims of cyberharassment produced by an initial practice of sexting.

⁹³ ECGLOBAL SOLUTIONS, *Sexting...*, 20.

⁹⁴ V. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ y A. M. FABILA ECHAURI, "Nomofilia vs. Nomofobia, irrupción del teléfono móvil en las dimensiones de vida de los jóvenes. Un tema pendiente para los estudios en comunicación", *Razón Y Palabra*, n.º 86 (2014): 3.

⁹⁵ LAESPADA Y ESTÉVEZ, *Existen las adicciones*, 82.

⁹⁶ PÉREZ Y MARTÍN, *Nuevas Adicciones*, 15.

⁹⁷ D. AGÜERO, G. ALMEIDA, M. ESPITIA, A. FLORES, y H. ESPIG, "Uso del teléfono celular como distractor en la conducción de automóviles", *Salus* n.º 18 (2014): 7.

⁹⁸ E. CANO, "La mayoría de jóvenes cruza la calle hablando por el móvil", *abc.es*, http://www.abc.es/motor/reportajes/abci-riesgo-atropello-mayoria-jovenes-cruza-calle-hablando-movil-201511020255_noticia.html, last accessed: October 7, 2016.

⁹⁹ LAESPADA Y ESTÉVEZ, *Existen Las Adicciones?...*, 14.

online games, "one of the activities that most problems are causing in the net"¹⁰⁰.

In relation to addiction or dependence on the Internet -cyberaddiction or cyberdependence- there is no consensus among experts about the characteristics and scope of this problem. There are several definitions, as well as the analysis of the scope thereof. Catalina García and others perform the following inventory of terms used by various authors:

The problematic Internet use, abuse, compulsive use, pathological use, dependence on Internet, poor use or simply Internet addiction or cyberaddiction, among others. This terminological profusion demonstrates the difficulty in reaching a consensus on its meaning and diagnosis¹⁰¹.

Despite this, some specialists are able to determine the existence of negative consequences in the lives of those with excessive use of the internet. Loss "in controlling its use, which is symptomatic of cognitive, behavioral and physiological level events" [6] are analyzed elements, complemented by the features in the "frequency of use, the money invested, the need or compulsion, as well as the interferences that can cause in the daily life of a person making him stop complying its obligations"¹⁰². Addiction to Internet and everything that moves in it is a debate to define despite the undeniable reality of those who suffer its consequences.

Based on the above, the presence of harmful, fraudulent and distorted content; aggressive, cruel and criminal actions; loss of control, limits and evidence of destruction and death in these issues; it is possible to ratify the cyberidolatry as a sin in today's world. Is a "wrongful act" as defined by Orlando Costas, "any lack of consideration of the welfare of others, all trampling of human dignity and all violence of man by man"¹⁰³. It is a relational sin because it significantly affects the person and its relationship to the other¹⁰⁴. It is structural because it springs from the individual and is manifested in the collective¹⁰⁵. It is above all a manifestation of a dehumanization characterized by the rupture of being in relationship, with himself, with others and with God¹⁰⁶. The cyberidolatry is quietly dehumanizing a generation, which worships a false, tyrannical and cruel god who hides behind his flash of beauty and innovation, the physical, familiar, economic and social hazards of its destructive power.

¹⁰⁰ LAESPADA Y ESTÉVEZ, *Existen Las Adicciones?...*, 24.

¹⁰¹ C. GARCÍA, M. C. LÓPEZ DE AYALA, y A. GARCÍA. "Los riesgos de los adolescentes en Internet: los menores como actores y víctimas de los peligros de internet", *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, n.º69, (2014): 464

¹⁰² GARCÍA, *Adicciones...*, 6 6.

¹⁰³ O. COSTAS, "Pecado y Salvación en América Latina", (ponencia, América Latina y La Evangelización en Los Años 80, Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 1981), 272.

¹⁰⁴ COSTAS, *Pecado y Salvación...*, 271.

¹⁰⁵ COSTAS, *Pecado y Salvación...*, 274.

¹⁰⁶ COSTAS, *Pecado y Salvación...*, 273.

The Cyberidolatry in the Ecclesial Context

With the aim to firstly diagnose the consequences of cyberidolatry in the context of Protestant Christian communities, a random sample of 161 young people from different churches in different municipalities of the Aburrá Valley (Bello, Medellín, Itagüí, Envigado and Sabaneta) was taken. A consultation was made on ownership and use of ICT, participation in social networks, actions and attitudes with cell phones, church involvement, classroom activities and profile of respondents that allowed identifying:

1. Youth population in Protestant Christian churches are not exempt from the social phenomena related to the deification of the technologies. The technological devices are part of their life, they get connected for long periods -96% connect daily, 27% does so permanently and 46% by more than two hours.
2. They share and actively participate in social networks (93%), with an average of 781 contacts in them and only 65% affirmed to have their parents linked to their virtual communities. They did not show measures for evaluation of profiles and 50% affirmed to receive invitations from strangers. These elements are input to the practice of grooming.
3. 14% claimed to have been a victim of cyberbullying, receiving messages of mockery, threats, persecution or intimidation through social network in the last year. 39% declared to know cases in other people. When asked which their attitude was when they saw this content, 55% affirmed that they denounced it and 10% showed to parents and spiritual authorities. Only 2% erased the contents.
4. The nomophobia is a reality in the church's context. For the 58% the cell phone is first and last thing that sees at day, 25% always maintains eye contact with it, 11% constantly checks whether it received calls. 34% sometimes answer a call no matter where he is and 24% sometimes feel insecure without the cell. 4% avoid areas of no coverage of the cell signal.
5. In 9% there is evidence of sexting practice. 15% were requested a sensual photography in the last year, 61% of whom were

women. 25% of requests came from a stranger in a chat, 38% from a friend in networks, 16% from boyfriends and 3% from husbands.

6. 28% of respondents affirmed to be exposed by pornographic content mainly sent by their boyfriends, in the case of women (42%), and by strangers in chat or social network friends (35%) in the case of the men.
7. 35% of respondents claimed to know the problems associated with the use of ICT within the churches, 30% of these claims come from believers with more than 5 years within the church. Only 6% identified their pastors and parents are trained on these issues.

Conclusion

Technology and ICT are no the savior god of human condition, or the determining factor in their progress and achievement. They are simple tools created and given to the welfare and progress of human beings. They will pass and will cease to be as will do everything created. They are not worthy of trust, affection and complete dedication. They are simply "like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale" (Job 21:18). To deify it is insane, baseless and with terrible consequences. Let's go back to the giver of life and find in Him the very essence of humanity, one that is inconceivable without the harmony of relations in every aspect of life.

When performing the hermeneutical bridge between the realities described in Scripture and lived today, it is possible to denounce the destructive presence of cyberidolatry. The way is therefore, to look again at the highest humanizing expression of history, the Incarnation of the Word, and from there to have an understanding of the truth in the technological discourse in order to bring life back to the context of the technological reality. While human being in Eden incarnated the lies, in Belen truth became flesh to redeem mankind.

It remains to live dying to technological gods, dedicating existence to the search of the one true God and focus life with a humble and rational conviction that being God, the human being finds life.

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