

Responding to the Power of FANG

Stephen Doel celebrates the creative and communal gifts brought by God through the companies that dominate the internet, notes the dangers and problems of accountability and regulation which their power implies, and concludes with a positive as well as critical appraisal of how Christians could react to the reality of their power. One day they will be no more, but God will always be.

We are all aware of the huge power now concentrated in the hands of a few US companies that dominate the Internet: Facebook, a massive global club; Amazon, a vast global bazaar; Netflix, a global TV, movie and video service; and Google, essentially a huge global library. You could throw Apple and Microsoft in as well as the main suppliers of software and hardware. It is interesting that Europe seems to have conceded US domination in this area very easily.

China is putting up more of a fight.

This article seeks to address such a massive concentration of power from a Christian perspective, hopefully without reacting in a knee-jerk way but with a mature assessment, weighing the ways these companies use their power both for good and bad. Clearly there are issues of censorship as well as market dominance, which are now extremely topical.

The Rise of FANG

Facebook has 2 billion active users – that’s almost 30% of the world’s population. Amazon is worth more than all the bricks and mortar retailers in USA – combined. 65% of 16-24 year olds in USA use Netflix every month. Google processes over 1 trillion searches per year – that’s 40,000 per second.

And yet less than a quarter of a century ago, none of these companies existed.

