

Concerns About Hydrofracking

Hydraulic fracturing, also known as hydrofracking, is the process whereby a mix of water, sand and chemicals under high pressure are used to blast through rock in order to free natural gas for extraction. The Marcellus Shale is a huge underground formation containing natural gas which stretches from New York to West Virginia. The gas is trapped below a layer of low permeable rock. The depth of the formation, up to 7000 feet, prevents easy extraction, thus this method is used to retrieve the difficult to obtain gas.

So why might a Christian want to weigh in on this process and express concerns about its use in the context of faith? First, in the book of Genesis of the Hebrew Scriptures, we discover that human beings are tasked by God to extend proper stewardship of the creation. We are given dominion which does not mean that we get to do with it what we please. We are to use it in a way that glorifies God and benefits the creation as a whole.

More specifically for the Christian faithful, the resurrection of Jesus is the first fruit of the new creation, that is, a new heaven and a new earth. Care for the creation is then a response to the resurrection of Jesus as a promise that God is indeed making all things new and the Risen Christ is the foretaste of that hope. In our care of all that God has made, we are anticipating and preparing for the new creation that God will bring about in its fullness, inaugurated in Jesus' resurrection.

In examining the process of hydrofracking, a person of faith must be aware of the best science available. But as has been observed, just because we have the technology to do something does not mean that we ought to do it. Proper concern as stewards of God's good earth demands that we take into account that high-volume hydraulic fracturing requires large amounts of water, indeed millions of gallons. The withdrawal of large amounts of water from streams, lakes and rivers has the potential to cause harm to these bodies of water and all that depends on that water for life. Natural water flows are often disrupted. After the gas is extracted the mixture of water, sand and chemicals becomes wastewater. The disposal of this water, where and how, has often caused problems due to leakage, storms, equipment failure and bad planning.

The threat to drinking water is well documented and certainly not an isolated incident in Dimock, Pennsylvania. There is evidence of well water contamination in many places where hydrofracking has been used. Eleven of Philadelphia's thirty-nine water wells have chemicals present in them that are used in hydrofracking. One has to wonder, since hydrofracking is now banned in the Skaneateles, New York watershed as well as in the formation under the watershed of New York City's drinking water in the Catskills, perhaps there is indeed something about which we ought to be concerned and we all need to be monitoring the use of this procedure with vigilance. There is also the threat of loss of forest habitat due to the installation of roads, pipelines and well pads. A hydrofracking operation takes up acres of land which is often of the forest.

Our faith calls forth an expectation that we will use the utmost care in the application of technology and do everything possible to assure that what is done is done safely, with proper caution and the best science. There have been too many mistakes and accidents in the use of hydrofracking. So far the evidence would indicate that it is not safe enough to use. And certainly at this time, it does not seem to contribute to the building of the new creation which God seeks for all people.

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Resources for this article: The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, various newspaper articles

Check out: ***Split Estate***, a movie providing insight into gas drilling operations

<http://waterunderattack.com>

www.un-naturalgas.org

[Youtube.com/Gasdrillingtruth](https://www.youtube.com/Gasdrillingtruth)