

# Virtual Christian Magazine

hope and encouragement for the real world

Volume 2 Number 7

August 2000



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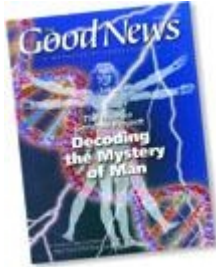
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### **The Human Genome Project: Decoding the Mystery of Man**



In an ambitious effort comparable to the race to put a man on the moon, the Human Genome Project aims to decode each of the 80,000-100,000 genes that comprise the instruction book for forming a human being. With more than 100 trillion cells in our body and possessing a brain with 100 billion neurons, we humans are astoundingly complex. But what are we? Can scientists decode the mystery of what man is?

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## Virtual Christian MAGAZINE Editorial

### The Politics of Education -- "It's Not the Money, Stupid!"

by Cecil E. Maranville

*"It's the economy, stupid!" was posted in the campaign headquarters of Governor Bill Clinton during his run for the White House in 1992, reminding staff of the primary issue on the minds of the voting public. One of the greatest issues arising out of the present presidential election is the crisis in education. Most proposals include injecting large sums of money into the current educational system. But money alone will not bring the desired results.*

"U.S. educational system gets a failing grade" is a commonly acknowledged fact. What can be done about it? How can we make the schools "stay after school" until they bring their grades up? This is a broad issue with numerous ramifications and complexities. Should we hire more teachers, so class sizes can be cut and the teacher-student ratio improved? Do we need to pay teachers a better salary, in order to retain the good ones and attract high caliber ones from other professions? Do we need to separate children with behavior problems from the normal student population?

Both presidential candidates of the major parties proffer a large influx of federal moneys to address the problems. That's the first thought -- reach for the checkbook -- especially with the burgeoning federal budget surplus.

But, will more money produce the desired result? Congress already passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2000, allocating \$1.3 billion for "class size reduction."

However, few seem to realize that class "sizes in public schools *have actually been declining* over the past 30 years. In 1970, the average class contained 22.3 students. Today, the average is 17 students per teacher" (syndicated columnist Mona Charen, "Who Needs Computers in Schools," June 27, 2000, emphasis added).

Has student performance improved? The "National Assessment of Educational Progress, the gold-standard test of academic achievement given every two years to students in grades four, eight and 12 nationwide, shows *no discernible educational benefit* in reading scores for children in smaller classes" (ibid. emphasis added).

### **Missing dimension in education**

One of the presidential candidates, campaigning in California was chided by a member of the audience for not proposing even more money for education. He replied that spending money wasn't the only solution to educational problems. How true that is! A good education is not directly proportional to the amount of money spent on it! There is a missing

dimension in education, and it's not dollars.

Three phenomena have affected the U.S. educational system greatly: working mothers, single mothers and feminism. They all relate to "the missing dimension in education."

Regardless of the quality of care provided to infants, no program and no human being can replace the good accomplished by the full-time presence of a mother. Until recently, few studies had linked this unique mother-care with educational performance.

"An extensive study of child development suggests that children's educational achievement can be significantly held back if their mothers work," reported Ed Crooks in a May 15, 2000 article in *The Financial Times*. He was referring to a survey of over 4,000 children in the U.S. published by the non-partisan National Bureau of Economic Research.

The survey discovered that the full-time presence of the mother in the life of a young child is essential for optimum verbal and math skill development. The child's first year is apparently critical in the development of verbal ability, and his or her first three years in the development of math skills.

### **Single-mother homes**

The National Fatherhood Institute reported that 18 million children lived in single-parent homes in 1995 (Melinda Sacks, "Fatherhood in the 90s: Kids of Sbsent Fathers More 'At Risk,' *San Jose Mercury News*, October 29, 1995).

But how does this relate to the school issue? "The impact of parental divorce and subsequent father absence in the wake of this event has long been thought to affect children quite negatively. For instance, parental divorce and father loss has been associated with difficulties in school adjustment" (Thomas S. Parish, "Children's Self Concepts: Are They Affected by Parental Divorce and Remarriage?" *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 1987, vol. 2, #4, pp. 559-562, quoted on [fathermag.com](http://fathermag.com)).

Societal pressures and trends have encouraged women to remove themselves and their children from the children's father. Of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders, 85 percent come from fatherless homes (Center for Disease Control). Children from fatherless homes are *20 times more likely* to have behavioral disorders than those from homes with a father and mother. A University of Michigan study showed that 56 percent had poor grades or grades substantially below ability and/or past performance (Statistics from "Fatherless Homes Breed Violence," p. 1 and "Fatherless Homes Statistics," p. 1, *Fathering Magazine*, [fathermag.com](http://fathermag.com)).

It *should be* self-evident that the children populating our schools have come from our nation's homes. As goes the health of our homes, so goes the behavioral health of our nation's students.

"Because schools reflect the families from which pupils come, school discipline was bound to worsen as more broken families resulted in more troubled or badly reared children" (columnist George Will, "Schools Beset by Lawyers and Shrinks," June 15, 2000).

## Consequence of feminism

Enter the consequences of two decades of feminism. Evidence of feminism from Christina Sommer's book, *The War Against Boys* is related by columnist by John Leo:

"When Barbara-Wilder Smith, a teacher and researcher in the Boston area, made 'Boys Are Good' T-shirts for her class, all 10 female teachers under her supervision strongly objected to the message. One of the 10 was wearing a button saying 'So many men, so little intelligence.'"

Leo adds: "Teachers know that girls are better suited to schooling. So, if you want to teach boys, allowances must be made. One of the tragedies of the last 20 years or so is that school systems are increasingly unwilling to make those allowances. Instead, in the wake of the feminist movement, they have absorbed anti-male attitudes.... They are now more likely to see ordinary boy behavior as something dangerous that must be reined in. Or they may tighten the screws on boys by drafting extraordinarily broad zero-tolerance and sexual-harassment policies. Worse, they may simply decide that the most active boys are suffering from attention deficit disorder and dope them up with Ritalin...."

"The Department of Education reported this year: 'There is evidence that the female advantage in school performance is real and persistent.' The school failure of so many boys, magnified and fanned by anti-male hostility, is a severe social problem" ("It's Tough to Be a Boy in American Schools," July 10, 2000).

## Children oppress, women rule, leaders mislead

In a long ago prophecy of the consequences of moral corruption of a nation, God warned His people, "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths" (Isaiah 3:12).

Children, whose lives have been scrambled by incomplete homes and who have been abused by a society confused about sexual identity, truly have become oppressors. Their behavior is making them unteachable and the teaching profession untenable. Women are often the sole authority figures in the home; men are largely absent. Not a *feminine*, but a *feminist* philosophy leads education.

One of the primary reasons why it is difficult to obtain and retain good teachers is the fact that schools are not safe places in which to work. Students are increasingly violent in their behavior and less inclined to subject themselves to the discipline of a learning environment. They effect an unsafe environment and one in which both learning and teaching are impossible. Gifted teachers who love their profession are being driven from the classroom, but not over pay issues. More dollars in their paychecks can not compensate for the unworkable circumstances.

How long will it take to rectify the current condition? If how God ordered His model nation of Israel's children is an indication, it will take at least one generation that believes and lives by godly values, which in turn passes those values on its children. Then, children will be

teachable. When the Israelites were poised to enter the Promised Land, God explained how they could ensure a peaceful society:

"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you -- 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'... And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

"It's not the money, stupid" that will solve the educational problems of America. When its homes are healthy again, then its schools will pass the grade.



# Quest for Immortality

*The desire to prolong life or find the key to preserving life forever goes back a long way. But the real answer goes back further than even the ancient Chinese or Egyptians.*

**By Gerhard Marx**



**E**ARLY 1997 SAW THE END of a special exhibition on pre-Christian Chinese civilization in London's British Museum. The most spectacular element was the concept of the afterlife and to what extent the ancient Chinese went in order to ensure their immortality. Like the Egyptians before them, they were very meticulous in their quest for everlasting life.

Said *The Times* (London), which sponsored the museum exhibition, "If the Chinese had not believed so passionately in the spirit world and the afterlife, they would never have ensured that their tombs carried such resplendent cargoes. The wealth of refined bronzes, jades and ceramics installed there testifies to the importance of their faith in life after death" (September 10, 1996).

The *Times* article went on to say: "Avoiding death was all important. Another way this might be achieved was by ensuring that the body was transformed into a light jade-like substance, by following special diets and exercise regimes."

## What happens after death?

Throughout the ages relatively few people have wanted to die. Like the ancients, some have gone to great lengths to hold on to life. Yet none are able to forestall the divine decree recorded in the creation epic: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

On the other hand, the Creator of the human race has also decreed a way to attain everlasting life: a fail-safe formula for attaining eternal existence, backed up by the highest source of authority in the world--God's Word. The beauty of it is that this opportunity is available as a gift to all, not just a select few.

God's Word records that the patriarch Job posed a very poignant question about life and death: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" His answer was unequivocal. "All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes" (Job 14:14).

This patriarch's firm belief was based on God's promise of a time when a miraculous change would occur. He looked forward to a transformation to immortality--not just a permanent perpetuation of his physical body.

The Hebrew prophet Daniel recorded another brief glimpse into the next world: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-3).



## Preparations for immortality

The apostle Paul tells us how immortality will come about. He wrote of when a remarkable change takes place, "when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Paul makes this point crystal clear. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (verses 42-44).

Yet death of the physical body is inevitable and is described as a temporary sleep--a state of total unconsciousness (Ecclesiastes 9:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). As King David exclaimed: "For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?" (Psalm 6:5).

The apostle Paul continues to explain: "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [have died]. For since by man came death, by Man [Christ] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).



So in order to be resurrected, one has to die first. The only way a person can inherit eternal life is by means of a resurrection. The Bible shows that no other means of attaining immortality is available.

### **Candidates for immortality**

But who can be a candidate for eternal life? What must a person do to live forever? Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ's offer of eternal life as a gift (Romans 6:23; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 8:9-11) and then in deep appreciation strives with God's help to live by the code of conduct as expounded by Jesus Christ. Christ Himself told the rich young ruler to keep the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:17-19). The Commandments are the very foundation of God's law of love.

Just accepting Christ in name only won't do. "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" asked Jesus (Luke 6:46). He also said: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

In ancient Egypt and China, the stress was on sumptuously clothing the physical in order to preserve the human body. Our quest for immortality can only be fulfilled if we walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6), and are willing to follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21).

God alone provides us with the only true way to eternal life, which is found in His Word, the Bible.

### **Recommended reading**

Many of the points we could only touch on in this article are covered in detail in [What Happens After Death?](#) This booklet unlocks the mystery of death while exposing the fact that a number of popular ideas are not found in the Bible. This booklet contains essential knowledge no one can really afford to be without. To request your free copy, [click here](#).



# Hope for Unbelieving Loved Ones

*What does one say at the funeral of an atheist especially when that atheist is one's own father?*

**By Melvin Rhodes**



**I** UNEXPECTEDLY SPENT the first few days of this year in England, in my hometown of Grimsby. I wish I could have made the trip under more pleasant circumstances.

Early one Sunday morning, I received word that my father had died. Suddenly. Unexpectedly, if you can say that the death of anyone aged 75 is unexpected.

Several months earlier I had accompanied both my parents on a bus tour of central Europe. Then my father had seemed healthy and alert. I expected him to live for a few more years. But it was not to be.

He woke up that Sunday with a pain in his leg, which then spread to his abdomen. He went to lie down. Within minutes, he was gone.

It had been many years since he had seen a doctor and at first the family physician would not give issue a death certificate. He wanted to do a post-mortem examination (autopsy). After reviewing my father's medical history, the doctor changed his mind. My father had two heart attacks in 1986. All indications were that this was a third and fatal heart attack.

Dad was not a religious man. In fact, he was very much against all forms of religion, especially the Christian kind. He had been a lifelong committed atheistic communist. Dad dismissed religion as "the opium of the masses," often quoting Karl Marx, founder of modern communism.

### **To go or not to go?**

When my brother called me to tell the news, he said that my mother did not want me to go over for the funeral. She would have seen the sense in my coming over to see my father if he were sick. To spend hundreds of dollars on a plane fare to attend a funeral seemed a wasted unnecessary expense.

But I wanted to go. I needed to go. I also wanted to officiate at his funeral, with my mother's consent. I couldn't bear the thought of a generic minister who didn't know my father getting up and talking about Dad going to heaven. As an atheist, my father never believed in heaven. He was not tolerant of sanctimonious religious people--psalm singers--as he often called them. He certainly would not have wanted to be sentenced to eternity in heaven with them.

When I arrived in Grimsby, I called the funeral director to discuss arrangements with him. My mother had chosen to have my father cremated, which is more common in England than burial. The crematorium only allows 20 minutes for each service, with an additional 10 minutes for all the people attending a funeral to leave the facility before the next party comes in. Every 30 minutes a funeral is held. It felt like we were going to be part of an assembly line. The speed at which families have to say good-bye to their loved ones gives little time for anybody to think about the meaning of death and the hope of eternal life. Perhaps that's the way most people want it in post-Christian England, where only 3 percent of the people attend church with any regularity.

I have four brothers. Except for one brother, no one else in the family, immediate or extended, adheres to any religion. None has ever read a Bible. All of them know that I am a Christian minister and know some of my beliefs.

My brother, who is religious, and his wife wanted to sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd" at the funeral. Their daughter Judith had written a poem about her granddad that she wanted to read. All this had to be a part of our allotted 20 minutes. Included also was the actual walk into the hall as the family slowly followed my father's coffin. My mother had also requested that the hymn "The God of Love My Shepherd Is" be sung prior to my speaking. There would be only 10 minutes for a message. What can you say about your father in 10 short minutes?

### **What do you say about an atheist?**

I decided to be honest and open about Dad, which is the way he always wanted it to be. He felt no shame or embarrassment about not having a religion. To the contrary, he was proud of the fact. Religion, in his mind, was for "weak" people who needed a crutch to lean on. So I began by saying that he had no religious beliefs and always ridiculed the idea of going to heaven.

I went on to show that in this respect he was biblically quite sound--that we don't go to heaven when we die. In that brief 10 minutes I read from Ezekiel 18:4, showing the soul is not immortal; Ecclesiastes 9:5, which reveals that "the dead know nothing"; John 3:13, which tells us that "No one has ascended to heaven"; and Acts 2:34, where Peter told the multitudes that even the righteous king David had not ascended into heaven.

Then I asked the question: "Does this mean that we will not see Dad again?" Quoting from 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 and 22, I continued: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." These words reveal a resurrection of Christ's followers.

"Those who are Christ's," wrote Paul. But what about everyone else--the vast majority of people who, like my Dad, never knew Christ? What about them?

The apostle Peter wrote that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). These are most encouraging words for those who lose loved ones who have not believed.

The Bible reveals more about a resurrection in Revelation 20:4-6. This passage takes us forward in time to the 1,000-year rule of Jesus Christ. This Millennium of time follows His return. At the beginning of that time, those who are Christ's (1 Corinthians 15:23) are resurrected to rule with Him, to sit on thrones with Him (Revelation 20:4).

We also learn from this passage (in verse 6) that there is a second death for some. This means that there must be a second life, another physical life similar to this one. If there weren't, there could be no second death. Verse 5 helps us understand this: "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished."



Who are the rest of the dead? By definition it must be those who are not Christ's, those who never knew Jesus Christ or never knew Him well enough to accept Him as their personal Savior, the Savior through whom one can receive eternal life.

Verse 5 calls the resurrection to eternal life of those in Christ as "the first resurrection." Upon these the second death does have power. This shows, then, that there is a different, subsequent resurrection for those who were not Christ's. This is a resurrection to a physical existence.

This second resurrection is described in more detail in Ezekiel 37. Here Ezekiel describes a vision in which he was projected into the future where he saw a valley full of dry bones, the skeletons of people long since dead. Verses 5 and 6 follow: "Thus says the Lord GOD unto these bones:

'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live. I will put sinews [muscles] on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'"

Could it be any clearer? Here is a prophesied resurrection to a physical existence. If it weren't physical, there would be no need for muscles, skin and breath. Spirit beings given eternal life wouldn't need these. Only physical human beings do.

Continuing with Ezekiel's vision, we see clearly that once God has reassembled these bones, covered them with muscle and skin and given them life, He promises to give them the opportunity to "know that I am the LORD." This is their opportunity for salvation, an opportunity they never had before. This is my father's opportunity for eternal life. A future reunion with loved ones who have already accepted Jesus Christ and are part of the first resurrection.

What a glorious future we have to look forward to! Trying to encourage the people of Thessalonica during a time of great persecution, the apostle Paul pointed them to the hope of the resurrection. After describing the first resurrection in 1 Thessalonians 4, the apostle adds in verse 18: "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

I was glad to be able to give this truthful and comforting message during my father's funeral. Because it is a comfort to know the truth of God. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" and receive eternal life. His marvelous plan includes my father and billions of others who did not believe during their lives. What an awesome future God has prepared for His creation, mankind!



# Label Products, Not People

*Labels can be helpful for products, but not for people. Categorizing is too often accompanied by criticizing and condemning.*

**By Larry J. Walker**



**A**T A RECENT GET-ACQUAINTED MEETING for area pastors and religious leaders, each attendee was asked to state his or her religious affiliation and give a short introduction to the group. One person, whose church is not considered part of mainstream Christianity, shared that many people consider her church a cult. Despite this conclusion, I feel that she is a better example of the teachings of Christ than those who freely administer the cult label.

Labels can be helpful for products, but not for people. Categorizing is too often accompanied by criticizing, condemning, or seeking to convert others whose beliefs differ from our own. History offers numerous examples of the tragic effects of branding people for alleged unorthodox beliefs. This approach spawned the Holocaust and the Inquisitions. True to Jesus Christ's chilling prediction to His disciples, "the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2). This sober warning remains for all generations of spiritual vigilantes. Jesus has not deputized anyone to separate the sheep from the goats.

Even the apostle Paul had to learn that bitter lesson prior to his conversion to Christianity. As he later admitted, "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). At the time, he considered this to be religious zeal (Philippians 3:6).

Religious persecution is a sober reality in a world divided against itself (Matthew 5:10-12, John 15:18-20). Jesus warned, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Being a victim of persecution often goes with the territory of being a Christian (II Timothy 3:12); being a persecutor does not. Jesus teaches us to love everyone, even our enemies (Matthew 5:43-45). How much more should we love and seek to understand fellow believers, despite our differences of belief. Paul the zealot was an instrument of intolerance and violence. Paul the Christian was an agent of understanding and peace. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

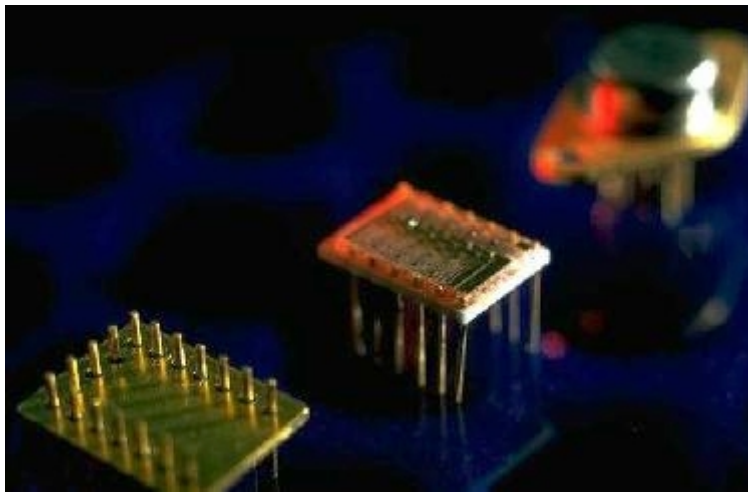
The live-and-let-live message of Romans 14 has long been one of the most neglected teachings of professing Christianity. In his book, *The Mark of the Christian*, Francis Schaeffer eloquently argues, "We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians.... Our sharp tongues, the lack of love between us--not the necessary statements of differences that may exist between true Christians--these are what trouble the world." Labels are fine for products on the shelf. But human beings are complex creatures whose diversity defies description. Any person or religion that does not respect the rights of others to worship God with beliefs different than theirs, runs counter to the teachings of Christ and the values upon which the United States was founded.



# Artificial Intelligence— *Improving on God's Creation?*

*Scientists predict astounding advancements in artificial intelligence in the coming years. Can it help us solve our chronic problems?*

**By Noel Hornor**



**I**NTELLIGENT MACHINES will soon surpass the abilities of human beings, say enthusiasts of artificial intelligence. Such predictions are no longer espoused only by science-fiction aficionados. Some serious scientists are saying the same thing.

Why would anyone want to create an artificial entity more intelligent than man? The reasoning of some proponents of artificial intelligence (AI) is that, although mankind represents the pinnacle of intelligence on the planet, we have proven inept at handling many of our problems. Thus we need a new and better solution. "We could turn to these superior intelligence's for advice and authority in all matters of concern--and the humanity-induced troubles of the world could at last be resolved" (Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind*, 1994, p. 11).

Such thoughts set off alarm bells in the minds of people who fear such creations could take over society and enslave us or even decide they don't need us. This concept has provided the themes for several Hollywood action films, including the popular 1999 release *Matrix* and several *Terminator* movies.

## **Artificial intelligence still young**

"Super artificial intelligence" is not anticipated until well into the 21st century. AI's current state is still in its childhood. Recent developments include a chess-playing IBM computer named Deep Blue that defeated the reigning (human) world champion in 1997. AI-infused



machines can also perform complicated analytical chores such as scheduling maintenance of the space shuttle.

On the horizon lies enhanced speech recognition, which some experts consider a part of AI technology. Many companies already use sophisticated computers to answer their phones. Callers dial into a switchboard and an auto-attendant directs their calls. Videocassette recorders (VCRs) and personal computers that respond to spoken commands already exist. Automobile ignition systems that recognize drivers' voices are on the horizon. The front door of your home may someday be equipped with a system that will unlock after a recognizable spoken command.



AI developers hope "heuristic" computers, equipped with vast databases and programmed to analyze and dissect problems, will be in extensive use around 2020. Heuristic computers might provide services normally supplied by a doctor or lawyer.

Designing such systems may prove more difficult than many envision. "Ask a computer about a rusty car and it might blithely diagnose measles" (Michio Kaku, *Visions: How Science Will Revolutionize The 21st Century*, 1997, p. 62). Some scientists believe machines with even more humanlike traits will become commonplace. "It is reasonable to assume that by 2050 we may have robots that can interface intelligently with humans, machines with primitive emotions...and common sense" (Kaku, p. 90). Some expect robots will have the capacity to actually love their masters.

### **How to explain consciousness**

If these things sound fantastic, that's because they are. Major gulfs exist between the present state of AI and the imagined bold new world. One of the problems is how to create a conscious entity out of the inanimate. To be conscious, in a human sense, means to be aware of one's own existence, sensations, thoughts and surroundings, to learn from the past and experiences of others and be able to plan for the future.

Can true intelligence exist without such consciousness? This presents a huge problem to the development of AI because science cannot yet fathom the secrets of human consciousness. The consciousness of a human being has been called the ultimate mystery of existence. As Albert Einstein put it: "The hardest thing to understand is why we can understand anything at all" (Kaku, p. 338).

How does consciousness arise? Some call it an emergent phenomenon, something that "happens naturally when a system becomes complex enough" (Kaku, p. 94). Working from this theory, some scientists believe that eventually a form of consciousness will emerge in a laboratory environment. Others are skeptical, calling the emergent theory of consciousness "more a matter of faith than a strategy for success" (Kaku, p. 94).

Consciousness is a remarkable phenomenon, one that separates us from simpler life forms. For instance, most people would agree that human consciousness is far above any kind of awareness exhibited by insects. Researchers have recorded film footage of one insect

devouring another while apparently unaware that it was being eaten by yet a third insect. This raises the question of whether insects have any awareness or consciousness at all. Nor do insects demonstrate any appreciation of art and beauty.

Of course, primates and dolphins may reflect a small degree of what we may provisionally describe as a limited animal "consciousness." But our ability to think, reason and plan clearly sets us apart from other creatures. Humans also have the ability to think intuitively. An example of intuitive thinking is the moment when we grasp things "in a flash," as when we are trying to solve a word puzzle. Some scientists realize this judgment-making ability will be difficult, if not impossible, to program into artificial intelligence. "One human mental function that is extremely hard to duplicate on a machine...is the intuitive leap--the sudden inspiration that allows you to 'get it'" (James Trefil, *Are We Unique?*, 1997, p. 130).

We can overestimate the potential of computers because their components "fire" much more rapidly than the neurons in the human brain. They perform mathematical calculations faster and more accurately than humans. But no computer yet designed understands what it is doing. Computers are woefully inferior to humans in other ways. One is the ability to recognize patterns--human faces, for example. Robots can be programmed to recognize a face, but they are thrown off if the face is rotated by a few degrees. Humans, on the other hand, can instantly pick a familiar face out of a large crowd. Recently it was considered a major achievement when a researcher created a computerized neural network that was able to recognize patterns with the same accuracy as a bee's brain (Kaku, p. 87).

### **The origin of consciousness**

Scientists have formulated explanations for the origin of consciousness. The generally accepted scientific view is that "after billions of years of swirling around, matter and energy evolved to create life-forms--complex self replicating patterns of matter and energy--that became sufficiently advanced to reflect...on their own consciousness" (Ray Kurzweil, *The Age Of Spiritual Machines*, 1999, p. 62). When this had happened, according to this perspective, consciousness had evolved.

The Bible gives us God's vantage point. As our Creator, He is in a position to know. God made man in His "image," forming man from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life; and man became "a living being" (Genesis 1:26; 2:7).



Before God enlivened the first man, he was a lifeless creation. Afterward he was a living being, made in the image of God. God placed a unique consciousness in human beings. We can recognize beauty, make judgments and perform other mental tasks that are unique to humans.

Man is the only creature that puzzles over the reason for his existence. We are the only physical beings that demonstrably can ponder past, present and future. This ability did not evolve; God created it. He is the author of human consciousness and intelligence.

As for man developing a source of artificial intelligence that can supply answers to our insoluble problems, his new knowledge tends to produce even more problems in

approximate proportion to the amount of new information he discovers. If we are wise, we will look to God for answers through His revelation, the Bible.

Man cannot find lasting solutions to his problems because they are, at their core, spiritual in nature (Isaiah 59). Unless and until humanity as a whole is ready to recognize the true source of its problems and seek God's solutions, we will continue to face the dilemmas and difficulties that have plagued mankind for thousands of years.

The Bible shows us human problems will not be resolved until Jesus Christ returns. "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed" (1 Peter 2:6, New American Standard Bible).

### **Recommended reading**

There is indeed a new world coming, a world vastly different from our expectations but far better than anything we have imagined. The Bible calls it "the Kingdom of God" and tells us it will include a transformation of peoples' thoughts and behaviors. To learn more about the differences between this biblical picture and mankind's fascination with technologies such as artificial intelligence, be sure to request our free booklets [\*What Is Your Destiny?\*](#), [\*You Can Understand Bible Prophecy\*](#) and [\*The Gospel of the Kingdom\*](#).

Also, if you have any doubts about the authenticity or veracity of God's Word, please request your free copy of [\*Is the Bible True?\*](#) It may surprise you to what extent archaeological and historical evidence has confirmed the accuracy of the Bible. Don't delay requesting your personal copy.

