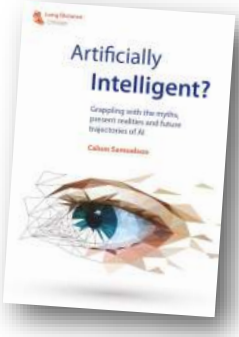
Executive Summary

Artificially Intelligent? Grappling with the myths, present realities and future trajectories of AI



Jubilee Centre
BIBLICAL THINKING FOR PUBLIC LIFE

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1 What AI is not: exposing 'myths'

Many prominent figures are worried about AI, and predictions for the future either tend to anticipate the apocalypse, or believe that AI will enable us to transcend human limitations. We assert a need to expose these 'myths'. We use this term not because such ideas are totally implausible, but because they're driven as much by *powerful fears and aspirations* as by science. We argue that AI will spell neither humanity's doom, nor its salvation, and that such 'myths' (including the singularity and computer consciousness) have attracted too much attention, obscuring productive dialogue and policy-making. More debate is needed in the middle ground.

2 What AI is: framing the conversation

- Following the advice of our expert interviewees, we argue that AI is best conceived *as a highly complex tool that helps humans perform repetitive tasks*. To this end, we use the term 'AI tools'.

- Drawing on Martin Buber's distinction between 'it' and 'thou', we argue that we interact with AI tools as an object or an 'it', which often influences the way we interact with further objects and subjects. Although AI tools will increasingly simulate subjects, they are unlikely ever to be encountered as a truly free 'thou.'

- Since AI is both *a tool for our tasks* and *an intermediary in our relationships*, we need to understand how it should be directed to achieve human flourishing. This requires insight from fields outside of the narrow range of AI, computer science and neuroscience.

3 Biblical analysis: understanding humanity

Imago Dei

Considering the perilous state of human identity in the postmodern world, it is hardly coincidental that humans are increasingly being compared

to computers. We draw on the Imago Dei (image of God) to affirm the distinction between humans and AI. Three essential markers of the Imago Dei are the human capacity for *relationships, responsibility and self-giving love.* Humans are diverse, created for meaningful relationship with others and given the responsibility for creation (which affects whether we design AI tools to shirk the weight of that responsibility or to aid in wisely ruling). Although some might praise exceptional feats as markers of human uniqueness, such as the works of Beethoven, these accomplishments of creativity pale in comparison to the greatness of self-giving love—a latent capacity within every human being. The greatness of self-giving love is possible for all people, requires sacrifice and can't be reduced to a task for AI tools, or making a process more efficient.

Doctrine of the Fall

Secular thinking is not adequately equipped to account for or anticipate the realities of imperfection and malevolence in human nature and the world. The Fall challenges the field of AI development in which progress, success, benevolence and good behaviour are simply taken for granted. One direct implication for AI development could be insisting upon designing systems in such a way that expects them as a rule to break down, be misused and impact unexpected stakeholders.

Eschatology

What does the Bible say about humanity's ultimate end? It says we'll be *embodied*, which counters views that the body is inconvenient and hopes that AI will help us to discard it. It also points towards a *dynamic pan-ethnic* community that challenges aspirations for seamless technological uniformity. Finally, it characterises the kingdom of God as a place of *simplicity and purity*, which resists some secular narratives which aspire to vast knowledge, efficiency and complexity.

A theology of surprise may lead us to find unexpected hope in AI tools.

In the meantime, the parable about the *wheat and the tares* can help Christians navigate seemingly conflicting reports about the world's trajectory, as it insists that both evil and good will continue to increase in the world until Jesus' return. Moreover, a *theology of surprise* actively anticipates God doing surprising things as Christians act as salt and light in the world, which may lead us to find unexpected hope via AI tools.

4 Trajectories: the impacts of AI

As AI tools are increasingly implemented in societies, they will have both positive and negative impacts upon relationships. By default, many of the impacts are likely to be somewhat negative, further entrenching the current ideologies of capitalism, individualism and consumerism. But it is also possible for AI tools to help bring reform, although this will require intentional and concerted efforts.

Area	Negative Trajectory	Positive Trajectory
Investment: shareholders, start-ups and universities	The main concern is AI tools increasing disparity of wealth and risk in society. AI tools allow those with capital to leverage their resources to new degrees, eliminating many of the costs involved with labour. Negative trajectories of AI vis-à-vis investment are heavily connected with corporations, and concerns over Big Tech's growing monopolies.	On a different trajectory AI tools could decrease inequality as AI becomes cheaper and more accessible for small organisations. This can only be influenced by shareholders, directors and other managers seeking to promote human flourishing. Reframing investment as *involvement*, and reward as *quality relationships* could help ensure that investment in AI research and training moves in the best direction.
Employment/ work: companies, churches and communities	Negative trajectories see companies replacing human employees with AI tools in a race for the bottom line. Middle-income earners are particularly vulnerable because companies can generate more cost-saving here than by automating low paid jobs. It may be that the biggest threat is not so much the elimination of work across the board, but an even greater disparity between demeaning work and fulfilling work, leading to a growing underclass in society.	*Enhancement* rather than replacement should be the ultimate goal of AI tools in the workplace. This requires a broader vision for work than mere labour and provides opportunity for Christian business leadership to draw on the profound Christian legacy surrounding work and vocation. Churches and communities should begin considering what fulfilling and meaningful volunteer work could be created; even if universal basic income never becomes a reality, there will be an increasing need for re-training and re-skilling that cannot be fully met by the state.

Area	Negative Trajectory	Positive Trajectory
Regulation: Big Data, Big Tech, states and the environment	Globalisation has put many aspects of the corporate world outside the effective control of current governance structures. If AI development continues its current trajectory, societies might increasingly be controlled by tech companies rather than political governments. The most important aspect here is the use, control, protection and privacy of data, with GDPR as a good first step in regulating use. As long as corporate profit and national GDP are the primary aims, AI regulation will be characterised by strained relationships between companies and authorities.	It is possible to envisage a trajectory where sophisticated data analysis significantly streamlines the relationship between companies and states by providing superior and timely information for policy planning, which would benefit many. We could also consider a scheme of 'employability permits' (much like those for carbon emissions). Although any form of 'robot tax' will be difficult to implement, it is worth pursuing whilst in the early stages of human labour displacement so that unexpected consequences can be corrected with minimal collateral damage.
Products/ services: efficiency, entertainment and escape	There is an urgent need for the public to become aware of the fact that they are simultaneously customers and products. The current trajectory of AI involves many tools that operate with a type of inbuilt dependency upon the company. This changes the relationship between customers and companies to one of resigned dependency rather than one of freely-chosen loyalty. Rather than feeling fundamentally empowered by a tool that can help them achieve the tasks they want to achieve, people are increasingly expressing that they feel trapped in a cycle of pursuing tasks they never intended to do in the first place.	The best AI-powered products and services will be those that foster human flourishing by strengthening individuals' self-control and relationships with other people. AI tools work best in helping people achieve previously established goals as opposed to helping determine what those goals are. This is the difference between entering a website with the goal of purchasing a specific product and letting the shopping algorithms help find the best one, versus entering a website with an itch to buy anything that will satisfy and letting the algorithms determine what exactly that is.

5 What AI can be: application

Guidelines for engagement with AI, which are applicable at both the expert and non-expert level:

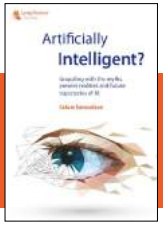
- *Mastery* – using AI tools in a way that is the most effective, safe and beneficial.
- *Accountability* – in both design and use.
- *Diversity* – challenging homogenous thinking amongst developers.

Let us use and design AI tools for the *enchancement* of human tasks, rather than their replacement.

- *Transparency* – in both internal operations and ultimate purposes of AI tools.
- *Precision* – clarity and simplicity in the design and focused, measurable purposes for AI use.
- *Empowerment* – using and designing AI tools for the *enhancement* of particular human tasks rather than their replacement.
- *Efficiency* – developers to design for efficiency rather than just functionality, and users to benefit from efficiency, whilst also remembering that efficiency is not an appropriate priority for many personal, human tasks.

Conclusion

As ambassadors and servants of Christ, Christians especially should strive to direct the impacts of AI in ways that help people live life to the fullest and bless the communities, cities and countries where they live.



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