AI – Utopian Enabler or Dystopian Threat

Notes for Revive Message 16th November 2025. These draw very heavily on '2084 And the AI Revolution' by John Lennox, Zondervan 2024 and were produced to inform my own understanding.

Ian Groves

1. Introduction

Let me open with a disclaimer, I have no expertise in Artificial Intelligence, like many of us I am aware of the growing prominence of AI in news items and of the promises and threats that various 'experts' predict. Will it bring prosperity, or will it wipe out the human race? Can it become conscious?

My background, as an engineer, is in electronics and telecommunications. In the latter part of my career I worked as a part time project auditor for Innovate UK who fund research and development projects with UK universities and small business consortia. One of the last series of projects I looked after explored 'AI' (specifically convolutional neural networks) to read mammograms (x-rays) for the rapid and early detection of breast cancer; the results of this work are now being gradually rolled out across the NHS, so I have seen first-hand the beneficial use of AI.

At the beginning of this year, I set out better to understand the topic - about as close to a New Year's Resolution as I managed. My curiosity was sparked by the technology itself – how does it work [if that interests you, I'd recommend this Grant Sanderson YouTube series[i]]; the implications for society – is it a good or bad thing; and the theological issues surrounding the premise of a machine becoming conscious or sentient.

One major source I turned to, and would highly recommend, is a book by the Oxford Professor John Lennox, entitled 2084[ii]. You may well know of Prof Lennox from his film 'Against the Tide – finding God in an age of science'. He is an Emeritus Professor in Mathematics and a Christian scholar based at Green Templeton College in Oxford.

His book, 2084 and the AI Revolution, gives a technical overview and history of AI and concludes with a theological exploration of the topic - I readily admit that I found it a challenging read.

The book's title was suggested by one of his colleagues and pays homage to George Orwell's novel 1984.

Not surprisingly, Lennox opens with a look at both Orwell's 1984 and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. Both of which are dystopian novels, written in the middle of the last century. They describe a future shaped by technology in an imagined society in which people lead wretched, dehumanized and fearful lives.

Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.

Of course, neither Orwell nor Huxley knew anything about AI, but nevertheless they imagined a future shaped by the technology around them and by their ability to imagine future developments in that area, many of which imaginings turned out to be prescient.

We can see very clear evidence of both in today's world . . .

In the East, China is using AI driven facial recognition to control and oppress the Uyghur population. Technology that was developed for good as in law enforcement, is being misused.

In the West social media is coming to dominate people's lives, much of it driven by the AI algorithms implemented by the likes of Facebook, TikTok and Meta; these add to your news feed to reinforce your views and biases – the so-called echo chamber effect.

Whilst Orwell and Huxley demonstrated foresight, we can read in Timothy (2 Ti 3: 1-5) a far earlier warning:

But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

Since the invention of the transistor in 1947 and the integrated circuit in 1959, the computer revolution has been in full swing, leading to the Information Age with the invention of the internet and world wide web. Driven by global commercial interests, billions of dollars are now being invested in the development of AI systems.

Not surprisingly there is a great deal of interest in where this is all going: will it bring about a better quality of life through digital assistants, medical innovation and human enhancement on the one hand or will it lead to massive job losses, loss of freedom, Orwellian totalitarianism and, possibly, the end of humanity on the other?

In 2019, the Pope sounded a warning that the race to create AI posed the risk of increasing social inequality unless the work was accompanied by an ethical evaluation of the common good, arguing that the risks of technology lacking human values of compassion, mercy, morality and forgiveness are too great.

2. So, what is AI?

At present the most typical functional AI system is a high-powered computer equipped with a very large database and an algorithm to do one and only one specific thing that would normally take human intelligence to carry out. Examples could include playing chess or identifying a particular disease from an x-ray or CT scan. Other systems perform language translations, recognise faces or compose music. Such Artificial Intelligence is known as Narrow AI. The machine is not intelligent; the intelligence comes from the people who wrote the software and the medics who annotated the x-rays used to train the system using Machine Learning (ML). The system can, however, operate far faster and more reliably than any human.

The other main example with which we may be more familiar is the so-called Large Language Models (LLMs) such as Open AI's ChatGPT series, Google's Gemini or Anthropic's Claude. These systems are trained on vast amounts of text data to understand, generate and process human language for tasks such as translation, content creation, and question answering. They use specific computer architectures to identify patterns, relationships and nuances within language. They are a form of Generative AI, meaning they can create new content based on the data from which they have learned. At a simplistic level you can view these as a sophisticated predictor of the next word in a sentence, much like the predictive text we are used to on our phones.

An everyday example of the use of AI, with which many may be familiar, is using Amazon. If, for example, you buy a book on Amazon you will very soon get little pop-ups suggesting that people who bought that book are usually interested in this book and what's happening is that the AI system is creating a database of your preferences, your interests, your likes, your purchases and is using that to compare with its vast database of available things for sale so that it predicts what else you might like to buy . . . this is of huge commercial value and it leads to something else which most of us don't know about called surveillance capitalism. Global corporations are using your data, without your permission, and are selling it off to third parties making a lot of money in the process; this raises deep questions of privacy and ethics.

The holy grail of computer science, however, is to develop systems that can replicate all that human intelligence can do and more, so called Artificial General Intelligence or AGI. And, of course, to do this faster and better than any individual. There are two distinct paths towards this, firstly the attempt to build computer-based machines made from silicon, plastic metal etc. And secondly the idea of taking existing human beings and enhancing them with bioengineering, drugs, genetic modification and even the idea of incorporating technology to create cyborgs – cybernetic organisms. A combination of biology and technology. So that we move beyond the human; an idea known as Transhumanism.

Then beyond AGI is Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI) where the machine become more intelligent and more able than humans. The point at which this happens is described as the Singularity. At this point the machine would outstrip human endeavours and be able

to redesign and re-program itself to become ever more able . . . Most future dystopian warnings of the machines replacing the human race are founded on this.

The view of many (atheist?) people is that humans are just a stage in the evolution of biological organisms, that we have developed according to no particular direction through the blind forces of nature; however, we now have the intelligence to take evolution into our own hands and begin to reshape the generations to come, making them according to our specifications. Homo deus – man as god (little a small 'g'). This again raises huge questions from a philosophical, ethical and biblical perspective - rather beyond the scope of this discourse.

The historian Yuval Noah Harari has written two major selling books; one called Sapiens (as in Homo Sapiens – human beings) and the other Homo deus (man as god). I quite enjoyed the first which addresses where humans come from but, as a Christian, I found the second quite distasteful. In it he addresses re-engineering human beings, giving them super, god-like powers. Harari sees the 21st Century as having two major agendas: the first, to solve the physical problem of death, that people may 'live' forever; the second is to massively increase human happiness by re-engineering them, genetically, drugs, implants whatever, until we move the humans from the animal stage into super humans. And if we do that, will they eventually take over?

This is known as transhumanism which, coupled with AI, gives rise to the idea of the superhuman. There are those who love the idea, particularly in the USA, where people have had their brains frozen at death in the hope that they will one day be able to upload its contents into some silicon-based thing that will last forever and give them some sense of immortality.

Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of hype and sensationalism associated with both AGI and especially ASI; this could simply mean making computers behave like they do in the movies. Films such as 2001, The Matrix or Ex Machina might come to mind where machines warrant the name AI when they become sentient or at least self-aware enough to act with expertise, volition and surprise.

3. AI – A Good or a Bad Thing?

This is the age-old question for any technology, to quote John Lennox's example a sharp knife can save a life in the hands of a skilled surgeon or take a life in the hands of a criminal. Technology of itself is generally neutral, it's who uses it and how . . .

Today's Narrow AI is widely used now to benefit society, perhaps more widely than we might realise. To cite a few examples:

Email: for advanced spam recognition, auto correction of spelling and grammar, and text prediction to help us write messages more quickly.

Language Translation: tools such as Google Translate are a huge benefit to any of us who have spent time with a bilingual dictionary.

Digital assistants: such as Alexa, Siri, Google Now that give spoken answers to our queries or control devices in our homes. These result from the huge advances in the area of linguistics known as natural language processing (NLP).

Medicine: It is no exaggeration to say that AI will revolutionise medicine. From the development of new drugs to diagnostics as an aid to increase the efficiency of health provision. Many leading healthcare systems have adopted some form of AI to identify conditions in medical imaging.

Molecular biology: in 2021 DeepMind constructed an AI system called AlphaFold that could crack the hitherto impenetrable problem of determining how proteins fold in three dimensions. Proteins direct and power the processes of life. It used to take one PhD researcher five years to work out one protein structure. It can now be done in seconds. Such a research result is beyond impressive and is being used to develop new antibiotics, enzymes, and a host of other valuable products.

Autonomous vehicles: a huge amount of effort is being poured into self-driving vehicles with the aim of improved safety. But this gives rise to a further series of ethical issues. Systems must necessarily have values built in, and a human operator has to decide what those values are; this is the tip of the iceberg for AI.

While Narrow AI holds tremendous promise, it also raises serious political and ethical concerns:

- **Job Displacement:** As machines take over tasks, many fear unemployment and inequality will grow, perhaps 40% of jobs lost within 15 years.
- **Bias and Injustice:** AI systems can inherit the prejudices of their creators, and the material on which they are trained, leading to unjust decisions.

- **Surveillance and Privacy:** Governments and corporations may misuse AI for control, surveillance, and manipulation.
- **Autonomy and Decision-making:** As we increasingly delegate decisions to algorithms, we risk surrendering moral and ethical responsibility.
- **Fake News:** particularly the ability of bad actors to mimic a famous personality and present some false views as though they came with authority.
- **Pornography:** The creation of fake pornographic videos from a single posted image.
- **Lethal Autonomous Weapons**. Rather than a remote-controlled drone where a human operator makes the decision to fire a weapon at an enemy, giving over that decision to an AI system, trained on an image of the target or person they seek to annihilate.

Used with care, and guided by ethical regulation, the tasks where narrow AI can outperform human ability should largely benefit society. But what of AGI?

In 2017 Vladimir Putin proclaimed:

Artificial Intelligence is the future not only for Russia but for all humankind. It comes with colossal opportunities but also threats that are difficult to predict. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world.

With the idea of superhumans, either individuals with access to vast AGI systems or 'human enhanced' beings will AGI or ASI prove beneficial? Vast data centres for AI are being built on an unimaginable scale – even needing a nuclear power station to supply their energy needs. The AI future would seem to reside in the hands of a limited number of corporations in the West and governments in the East. Power and control in the natural world is falling into the hands of progressively fewer individuals. Indeed one could imagine a single world power might eventually arise, and in a fallen world, more likely tyrannical than benevolent!

Geoffrey Hinton, the 'godfather of AI', argues for a world government, one that really works, run by thoughtful, intelligent people which is something we do not have. . .

World government as an idea was common in the dystopian novels, Big Brother in 1984, Mustapha Mond in Brave New World (one of 10 world controllers), and The Head in C S Lewis's That Hideous Strength.

4. The Need for Regulation

Some 50 years ago, the science fiction writer Isaac Asimov[iii] commented:

"The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gather wisdom".

So how, as a society, should we address issues surrounding AI? The usual response is Regulation – the introduction of laws governing the development and use of a technology. Familiar examples are Care Quality Commission (CQC) for our Health, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) for our money and Ofcom for telecommunications and broadcasting industries. These are bodies established by, but independent of, Government that oversee specific sectors and professions to protect consumers, promote fair competition, and ensure safety and quality.

There is, as yet, no such body for AI, although the UK Government[iv] did publish a regulation white paper in March 2023 setting out initial proposals to develop a pro-innovation regulatory framework for AI. So currently, there are no overarching regulations governing AI in the UK. The EU introduced legislation in August, the AI Act, whose tiered introduction runs until August '26 and which is having a significant impact on the development of AI systems globally. The US has been slow to regulate and there is marked opposition from the major players . . .

In 2017, a group of prominent AI researchers met in California and developed what are known as the Asilomar AI Principles, some examples of which are:

- to create beneficial intelligence
- to be safe and secure and demonstrably so throughout their operational life
- to have goals and behaviours aligned with human values
- compatible with the ideals of human dignity, rights, freedoms and cultural diversity
- to benefit and empower as many people as possible
- economic prosperity should be shared broadly to the benefit of all humanity
- superintelligence should only be developed in the service of widely shared ethical ideals and for the benefit of all humanity rather than one state or organisation.

But who will regulate and police such laudable principles? In the west, capitalism would need to be well regulated such that when making a profit an organisation acts for the good of society.

In totalitarian states, no doubt central government already has such control . . .

Ultimately it is our Governments and politicians who will decide if an activity is good for their society. But they have failed to regulate the internet whose dark side has grown faster than it could be contained. The flood of online pornography overwhelmed our systems, and the US cried 'free speech' while the rest of us scrambled for safeguards.

Today, AI is rolling out a feature that turns selfies into sexualised videos without consent.

- Innovation speeds ahead.
- Regulation limps behind.
- Ethics are optional.
- Profit is not.

We didn't control the internet and now we are repeating the cycle with AI, only this time, the stakes are exponentially higher. The 1990s were about content access. AI is about content manipulation, deepfakes, voice clones, fake identities. Real people are being harmed. Real democracies are being undermined. Real businesses are being scammed: M&S, the Co-op and Jaguar Land Rover have all featured highly in the press recently . . .

We Failed to Regulate the Internet. Are We About to Fail Again with AI? [see LinkedIn[v]]

As a community of believers, what should be our role in lobbying those who govern us?

5. Biblical Perspectives

What might we learn from the God's Word?

Narrow AI:
There is a very good video produced by John Mark Comer's Practicing the Way organisation which is available on YouTube[vi]. One point that is made, which really struck me, is to compare how Jesus replied to questions with how Chat GPT and other LLMs operate. As we have seen an LLM can be regarded as a very sophisticated predictor of the next word in a sentence, so it always gives the most probable answer based on all the input text it has assimilated. When Jesus is asked a question in the New Testament, he very rarely gives a direct answer, he answers with another question or a story . . .

Luke 10:25, "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replies "What does the law of Moses say?

In Luke 10:29, when asked “and who is my neighbour?” Jesus replies with a parable – that of the good Samaritan. He doesn’t give a direct answer and certainly not the most obvious one.

On the rare occasions Jesus does reply directly to a question, he gives not one but two answers! Matthew 22:36, when asked “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?’

Jesus replied, “you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”

Jesus responds with the mind of God, but with the consciousness that makes Him fully human.

I think the lesson here is that Narrow AI is a tool which used with care, and guided by ethical regulation, should largely benefit society. But it is <u>not</u> a substitute for human wisdom and empathy. We should not be turning to it for our pastoral support.

But what of AGI?

I think the concern with AGI and transhumanism lies in human pride and the desire to be like God; this has its origins in the Fall, Genesis 3. The serpent tempts Eve, saying ‘your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil’.

The homo deus projects, creating superhumans, whether genetically, having our brains connected to an AI computer or uploaded into that computer echoes that same delusion. Indeed Harari’s (and certain rich Americans’) desire to overcome death (what I’d call earthly) immortality is, as John Lennox asserts, a parody of the Christian message

We face death in this world because of the Fall, but Jesus overcame death by His resurrection some 2000 years ago and promised eternal life to those who believe in Him. Eternal life is the life to come which begins now for those who accept Jesus as their saviour.

Paul points us to the real Homo Deus, Jesus Christ.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and

on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

Quoting Lennox:

"The merely human *homo deus* projects we have considered originate in *human pride* the desire not only to be better than other humans but to be like God. Paul condemns this attitude by pointing to the real Homo Deus, Jesus Christ whose lack of pride is demonstrated in that though he was always God, and never ceased to be God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. This is a clear allusion to Genesis 3 the source of all *homo deus* fantasies. Grasping or snatching at godhead is what the first humans did by eating the forbidden fruit. Snatching at the godhead is characteristic of transhumanist projects.

The attempt to make a super intelligent *homo deus* will lead neither back to God, nor to God, but rather to the greatest rejection of God the world has ever seen. There is no way to a glorious future that bypasses the problem of human sin, and the only one who has offered a viable solution to that problem is Jesus Christ, who faced it head-on on the cross.

The path to true glory and exaltation involved God becoming human in Jesus Christ, who lived, died, rose, and ascended to the world from which he originally came. We are invited to benefit from that staggering sequence of events, but in order to do so we must first repent of the sinful pride that messed up humanity in the first place, and then we need to entrust our lives to Christ as Saviour and follow him as Lord.

That will involve the ever-present temptation to allow technology to distract us into spending, and wasting, valuable time on gadgets rather than developing our relationship with Christ. The real challenge we face as Christians isn't just about how we avoid being sucked in by the allure of AI, but how to follow the true Homo Deus, who calls us to imitate him."

The Time of End and World Government

What does the Bible say about the future of this planet; this will take us into some of the more inaccessible areas of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation. But let's start with Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, where false teachers had turned up suggesting that Christ had already returned and the day of judgement come. Paul reminds them that Christ would not return until certain things had happened – things that would be so publicly visible, striking and obvious that you wouldn't need to be told about them. In Matthew 24 Jesus had warned that many would turn up saying that they were the Christ but that we shouldn't listen to them since the true Christ will return under circumstances that will be spectacularly obvious.

Paul tells of the appearance of a tyrannical leader – the 'man of lawlessness' – energised by satanic power and enabled to deceive people by false signs and wonders. The climax will come when, in Lennox's words, Christ bursts onto the scene and destroys the tyrant by his appearing. Clearly nothing on this scale had happened in Paul's day nor has it subsequently. Its intensity and global dimensions ensure that when it does happen, the whole world will be all too aware of it.

This scenario is about as far as it could be from the view that Christian teaching will gradually permeate the planet until peace reigns. [*I recognise that before reading Lennox, and despite having read Revelation more than once, I still held the view that such would be the end result of 'going and making disciples'*].

Rather, Paul says there will be a supernatural, cataclysmic intervention by God that will put a stop to a regime of maximal evil. The question arises, how do we know whether this apocalyptic scenario is true or not?

In the latter chapters of 2084, Lennox goes to great length establishing the validity of Biblical prophecy and analysing the visions of Daniel 7 and those of Revelation 17. In very brief summary, both speak of an immensely powerful beast with ten horns (identified as ten kings) that makes war on the saints and prevails, the Son of Man comes on the clouds of heaven, judgement is passed on the beast, it is destroyed, and the saints receive the kingdom. I have always rather liked R T Kendall's summary of Revelation – "Jesus wins!"

In the latter days, a picture emerges of an extraordinary political arrangement in which ten kings or leaders cede their authority to a totalitarian leader of immense power and authority – the man of lawlessness, energised by the evil power of the devil. Since he appears to hold sway over the entire planet, we are now looking at a totalitarian world government.

The view that Lennox suggests, from studying these visions of Daniel 7, Revelation and 2 Thessalonians 2, is of a future single world Government led by a charismatic but evil individual, supported by advanced AI . . . This totalitarian government will be very much at odds with Christianity, but after being 'allowed by God' to rule for a certain time will eventually overcome by the return of Christ.

Lennox calls for more teaching on the Second Coming.

<u>Finally let's turn to the question of whether AI could ever become sentient or conscious?</u>

John Lennox is critical, rightly in my view, of much of the vocabulary used in AI: artificial intelligence, machine learning, deep learning and so on which can lead to a perception that we are well on the way to constructing machines that can think like humans. For instance when AI makes mistakes, it is referred to as "hallucinating!". This is much like

the analogy of computer viruses that 'infect' computer systems. Machines are not organic organisms, nor do they have minds that can perceive.

Lennox cites the work by the neuro-scientist Iain McGilchrist on different modes of perception employed by the two hemispheres in the human brain. McGilchrist[vii] argues that AI cannot become conscious, it can only simulate, asymptotically approaching a divide it can never cross.

To have the consciousness that makes a human being AI systems would have to have an emotional life, a moral life and a physical life embedded in flesh that dies and suffers.

Without that they cannot know what it is that we experience, what it is that we mean when we mean things and what it is when we understand things. He, too, warns of the danger of the modern tendency to liken ourselves, our brains, our thinking to machines - machines as a metaphor for how our minds work, the suggestion that we are merely 'organic or meat computers'.

Will humans ever be able to 'breath life' into any material artifact they have constructed?

As we know from Genesis, we are created in the image of God:

So, God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Gen 1:27 (NLT)

We come from a super intelligent, superhuman God who created us intentionally in his image using material found in the earth:

The Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. Gen 2:7 (NLT)

That is human beings are the result of the mind of God working on pre-existing matter that God originally created. One of the aims of AI is to create artificial life using the minds of humans working on pre-existing matter.

The Bible tells us that the source of life is the breath of God, a divine intervention, apparently distinct from material creation.

The Hebrew word *nephesh* for 'breath' used in Genesis is variously translated as 'soul', 'person' or 'self' – none of which concepts make sense for a machine. And in the NT, Jesus shows that the soul is not understood in this text to be the living body, as it cannot be killed by humans.

Do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

In this we recognise there is a nonphysical aspect to human beings, physical body and immortal soul – the philosophical concept of dualism. The case for which is strengthened by the biblical teaching that matter is not primary but derivative. It is spirit that is primary, and it is God who is spirit who generates matter.

It is clearly one thing to try to build AI systems that seek to mimic aspects of what the human mind can do; it is an entirely different thing even to try to recreate what it feels like to be human.

A biblical overview of what it means to be a human can be found in the second part of Genesis, (verse 4 of Ch 2 to the end of Ch 4), what makes life meaningful . . .

- Made of the dust of the ground (2.7)
- A living organism (2:7)
- In possession of an aesthetic sense (2:8-9)
- Endowed with curiosity (2:10-14)
- Given work to do (2:5, 15)
- A moral being (2:9,16-17)
- Given the potential of relationship (2:18-25)
- Tasked with naming the animals (2:19-20)
- Capable of developing industry and the arts (4:21-22)

American academic Ian Bogost[viii] has commented "In most cases the systems making claims to artificial intelligence aren't sentient, self-aware, volitional or even surprising. They're just software."

As already noted, McGilchrist argues that AI cannot become conscious, it can only simulate, asymptotically approaching a divide it can never cross. To be conscious one must have an emotional life, a moral life and a physical life embedded in flesh that suffers and dies.

From a biblical perspective, a view with which I can only concur.

6. Summary

I can do no better that summarise Lennox from the final Chapter of 2084.

"Our consideration of AI, both present and future, presents a mixed picture. The technology has brough many major benefits: new medicines, improved diagnostics, new tools for making routine tasks more efficient. But there are also major problems: job losses, loss of privacy, increased state control. And as people lose their economic value, they might also come to lose their political power, as pointed out by Harari. The same technologies that might make billions of people economically irrelevant might also make them easier to control.

We should be grateful for the positive developments, developing AI systems that benefit humanity, addressing such global problems as feeding the world, combating climate change, eliminating devastating diseases and finding new sources of renewable energy.

But the most difficult challenge is that of setting up a mandatory ethical policy that is truly anchored in values that reflect our moral status as made in the image of God.

We may feel helpless and overwhelmed by what seems to be a vast irresistible juggernaut steamrolling towards us. AI is a buzzword on everybody's lips, but it's a topic with which we can all engage. Many of the discussions revolve around ethics and values, areas where everybody is entitled to a viewpoint and where we might use such opportunities wisely to bring the Christian perspective to bear.

One of the key matters for discussion is our own value as human beings, which is under threat from AI when job losses result from the introduction of new technology. Work is part of God's creative plan, it has immense dignity, so loss of one's job can be devastating and is often accompanied by a profound sense of worthlessness.

It is suggested that within 15 years some 40% of jobs in the world will be displaced – especially, but not only repetitive jobs. The consequences for the fabric of society of an unprecedented change of such magnitude are almost impossible to imagine. We need to show others that they are valued for who they are and not for what they do. At the same time we should be sympathetic to those who have lost jobs to AI (or anything else . . .).

Churches need to address the problems of the workplace and teach the biblical view of work – that all work, of whatever kind, should be done for the Lord, whether it is using AI to develop a vaccine, working in a school, store or hospital or preaching and teaching in a church context.

We further need to recalibrate our relationship with technology. We need to treat people as people and not as machines, and we need to treat machines as machines and not as people. One way of doing this is to prioritise time people over time with machines and gadgets – not so easy in today's digital environment and easy to let slip.

Nor should we abdicate our moral responsibility by devolving our decisions to machines that are programmed by others whose ethical convictions are opaque or different from our own.

Our children need to be aware of the dangers of using social media, of uploading material to the internet that will later be used against them, of opening themselves up to online grooming, of clicking on porn sites, of getting so absorbed in virtual reality that their sense of normal healthy reality is stunted – and of wasting swathes of time engaging in pursuits that demean rather than advance them. This will not be easy since it now defines our culture, and since 'everybody is doing it'. It is hard to swim against such a relentless tide.

Christian leaders, ministers, pastors and teachers need to have the courage of their convictions and step up by teaching about such things from a Biblical perspective.

The real challenge we face as Christians isn't just about how we avoid being sucked in by the allure of AI, but how to follow the true Homo Deus, Jesus Christ, who calls us to imitate him.

It is this and only this message that can bring real hope to the world, and we who believe it have to be prepared to face a hail of opposition. Daniel and his friends in their day and Jesus and his apostles in theirs, were prepared to protest against authorities that usurped the place that only God should fill. We shall need all the wisdom from above that God can give us in this AI age to fulfil Christ's directive that we should be salt and light in our society. We have often referred to the fact that we live in a surveillance society. Let us therefore live with the myriad cameras and traces on our lives in such a way that even the monitors can see we have been with Jesus. After all, whereas the 'artificial' in artificial intelligence is real, the divine upgrades are real and not artificial."

7. Closing Remarks

While preparing this I was prompted in my daily reading by Romans 1:25

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator . . .

If you take nothing more away, I suggest two key messages:

- It is a conscious human being who has programmed an AI system and who is thus responsible for the outcomes and any unintended consequences.

- There is a real and increasing crisis as to what we mean by truth - the poisoning of truth on the internet in general, and by AI in particular; this is probably one of the most important issues of our time.

And some advice:

- Be aware of how your personal data is being used (and abused), online 'take care what you share!'

- Reflect on what you post on social media – to paraphrase James 2:19, be quick to read and slow to post!

As AI systems become increasingly sophisticated, we must be careful how we approach and use them.

I would further cite Matthew 10:16 (ESV) where Jesus advises his disciples how to navigate a challenging world:

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves"

- Wise as serpents**:** having the ability to discern danger, to understand the tactics of those who might oppose us, and act with prudence and strategic thinking. It's about being clever and knowing how to navigate difficult situations without being naive or easily manipulated.
- Innocent as doves**:** emphasizes the importance of maintaining a pure heart, avoiding malice and guile, and acting with gentleness and integrity. It means being harmless and free from deceit, even when facing opposition.

Essentially, Jesus is instructing us to be both discerning and pure, to be smart about our interactions with others while remaining morally upright, a combination that allows us to be effective in our mission while upholding our Christian values.

History:
V2: early draft 13 Aug '25
V3: first serious draft 27 Aug '25
V4: minor edits, add section on Biblical Future, expand conclusions 3 Oct '25
V5: major edits & revision, adding more on homo deus 9-10 Oct '25

Books Read or Consulted

John Lennox - 2084 How Artificial Intelligence Informs Our Future

Nigel Toon – How AI Works

Yuval Noah Harari – Sapiens, Homo Deus, 21 Lessons

Max Tegmark – Life 3.0

Hannah Fry – Hello World

Meredith Broussard – Artificial Unintelligence

Recent BBC News Item – What is AI
a readable and accurate summary in my view

---

[i] Grant Sanderson, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZHQObOWTQDNU6R1_67000Dx_ZCJB-3pi

[ii] John C Lennox, *2084 How Artificial Intelligence Informs Our Future* (Zondervan Reflective 2024)

[iii] Quoted in Max Tegmark, Life 3.0: *Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* (New York: Knopf, 2017), 316.

[iv] UK Government, https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ai-regulation-a-pro-innovation-approach-policy-proposals/outcome/a-pro-innovation-approach-to-ai-regulation-government-response#:~:text=In%20March%202023%2C%20we%20published,and%20respond%20to%20technological%20progress.

[v] Pat Chapman Pincher, LinkedIn, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/pat-chapman-pincher_we-failed-to-regulate-the-internet-are-we-activity-7359486032741863426-6Wp4?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAAD3fDgBxGvYxwkPtbdhPeEiLQfPyYnfjns

[vi] John Mark Comer, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2j8053yxbE

[vii] Ian McGilchrist, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ldZ_TS-vxg

[viii] Ian Bogost, "*'Artificial Intelligence' has become meaningless*", Atlantic 4 March 2017