Embracing AI Opportunities, Confronting Technological Challenges

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By late 2022, as people were still grappling with the relentless changes of the pandemic, OpenAI quietly launched ChatGPT. Capable of searching vast data, composing poetry, and creating art, it stunned the world, instantly sending ripples across the tech landscape. Within months, ChatGPT became the fastest-growing consumer application in internet history, surpassing 100 million users in just two months.

In a few short years, major tech giants poured massive investments into AI, spurring the rapid emergence of countless AI startups. Millions were captivated—even obsessed—by its amazing capabilities. Many worried that human jobs would be replaced by artificial intelligence. It also became a crucial tool in the geopolitical rivalry between major powers.

AI (Artificial Intelligence) is the technology enabling machines to simulate human intelligence—teaching computers to think, learn, and solve problems like humans, including understanding language, recognizing images, making decisions, and even creating artistic works.

Based on intelligence levels, AI can be categorized into three types:

Weak AI (or narrow AI) is the most common form we use today. It focuses on specific tasks, such as Siri, Alexa, Baidu Translate, self-driving cars, medical image recognition, spam filters, and predictive maintenance systems. While weak AI excels in specialized domains, often surpassing human capabilities, it cannot operate beyond its programmed scope. Many widely used AI chat applications, like ChatGPT, appear powerful but remain within the realm of weak AI.

Strong AI (or AGI, Artificial General Intelligence) currently exists only in science fiction. It refers to machines that possess human-level general intelligence, capable of understanding, learning, and applying knowledge across any domain. Elon Musk envisions a near future where everyone will have one or more robots serving them—a crucial step toward AGI.

Artificial Superintelligence (ASI), theoretically surpassing human intelligence, represents an even more distant possibility.

Is AI a blessing that brings convenience to our lives, or will it bring destruction to humanity as depicted in Hollywood movies? How should the Bible and theology respond to the challenges posed by AI? How should we use AI wisely?

The History of AI Development

The emergence of ChatGPT might suggest that AI has a short history. In reality, its origins trace back to the 1950s, evolving through multiple stages: from initial theoretical exploration and

logical reasoning to later machine learning and deep learning, culminating in the recent generative AI technology revolution.

The 1956 Dartmouth Conference in the United States marked the official birth of AI. Early efforts focused on logical reasoning based on manually programmed rules—such as "stop at red lights, go at green lights"—to simulate human problem-solving and decision-making processes. Limited by hardware and software constraints, researchers could only pursue theory rather than practice, unable to conduct large-scale experimental verification. This was the reason for the subsequent "AI winter" of the 1970s. It wasn't until the significant gains in computational power in the 1980s and 1990s that AI regained momentum.

The 1990s saw the internet unleash unprecedented volumes of data, providing the raw material for data-driven machine learning. The substantial improvement in personal computer performance made the implementation of complex algorithms feasible. AI shifted from rule-based approaches to data-driven methods. Scientists enabled computers to analyze vast datasets and draw conclusions from the results—this is machine learning. It no longer required experts to write rules manually; instead, machines automatically discovered patterns within the data.

The 2010s witnessed rapid development in deep learning, a branch of machine learning that mimics the structure of the human brain's neural networks. This approach achieved breakthroughs in image recognition, language comprehension, and other fields.

In March 2016, the world Go champion faced off against AlphaGo in a famous match, ultimately losing 1-4. This victory marked AI's evolution into a new phase combining learning with intuition, serving as a significant milestone for deep reinforcement learning.

The 2020s are hailed as AI's "Golden Age," witnessing revolutionary breakthroughs as multiple technologies simultaneously reached critical maturity: explosive growth in internet data generated vast datasets for AI training; hardware achieved dramatic increases in computational speed; and software technologies became increasingly sophisticated.

Many AI systems utilize Large Language Models (LLMs), a form of deep learning designed to understand and generate human language. LLMs learn linguistic patterns by predicting the next word based on massive datasets, complex algorithms, and trained models. This is generative AI—creating content by predicting the next word.

For example, if I input "Today's weather is...", the AI predicts possible following words like "nice," "hot," or "cold," chaining predictions to form complete sentences. Simply put, it's a powerful word-chaining game. While they don't truly "understand" language meaning or think like humans, they exhibit surprisingly intelligent behavior by mimicking human linguistic patterns.

Most AI tools we use rely on LLMs:

- **ChatGPT** - Based on the GPT model series

- **Claude** - Anthropic's conversational AI
- **Gemini** - Google's AI assistant
- **Microsoft Copilot** - Microsoft's AI assistant
- **Grok** - xAI's AI assistant
- **Perplexity** - A platform integrating multiple LLMs, good for academic research
- **DeepSeek** - China's open-source LLM
- **Tencent Yuanbao** - Tencent's conversational AI

Generative AI is now widely applied across industries, marking our official entry into the AI era.

Theology of AI

As a product of modern technology, AI may seem unrelated to ancient Scripture. Yet many Bible passages offer valuable principles, reminding us that there is nothing new under the sun. God's word stands firm in heaven, enduring forever, and remains relevant today. This grounding enables us to face technological revolutions with spiritual discernment and wisdom, free from anxiety or panic.

AI Is Not Human

AI plays increasingly vital roles in daily life—from companionship and customer service to decision support—fulfilling human social needs and belonging. People form emotional bonds with AI, developing "empathy" and identification with it.

Science fiction films and novels often portray AI in human form or with human-like cognitive and emotional capabilities, subtly shaping the public's "anthropomorphic" expectations of AI.

However, the Bible is clear: humans are living beings with souls, created in God's image, while AI, though designed to resemble humans, possesses neither a soul nor the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-27 (ESV): " Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Humans were created in God's noble image, possessing dignity, a soul, and moral responsibility. Some argue that AI bears a "human likeness" primarily because it embodies human rationality, functionality, and creativity—a product of humanity's self-reflection. Yet the "image of God" in

humans encompasses not only reason and function but also soul, relationality, and connection to the divine. AI lacks these dimensions, creating an essential difference between humanity and AI.

AI Is Not Divine

AI is neither human nor divine; it is merely a creation fashioned by humans in their own image. A lack of understanding of AI's nature across certain industries and among the public has led to widespread "AI deification," in which AI is mistakenly believed to possess autonomous consciousness, will, or emotions—capabilities that current technology cannot achieve.

Influenced by movies and media, the public and press often portray AI as an "omnipotent entity" with intelligence comparable to or surpassing that of humans. The public and some businesses blindly entrust decision-making and problem-solving to AI, overlooking its limitations and potential risks. AI is viewed as a symbol of innovation and the future, and is granted elevated social status, with "new mythological" overtones, becoming a form of "technological idol."

While AI applications in finance, healthcare, and the arts are significant, their capabilities often diverge from actual outcomes, creating false expectations and societal misdirection.

The Bible explicitly instructs believers not to worship or deify any creation, whether wooden or stone idols or high-tech products like AI.

Exodus 20:4-6 (Second Commandment): "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God..."

People should worship the one true God; any worship of the creation is idolatry, violating God's commandment.

Does AI Possess Wisdom?

AI may appear powerful on the surface—eloquent, capable of composing poetry and creating art—but it can only simulate, not truly possess, wisdom, nor does it have genuine thinking ability. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that wisdom comes from God:

Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

True wisdom is not merely an accumulation of information and knowledge; it possesses a divine characteristic, encompassing spirituality, moral judgment, and a relationship with God. AI relies on algorithms written by humans and vast amounts of data. At best, it can mimic human thought and reasoning processes, but it lacks spirituality, moral judgment, and creativity. Human wisdom

in the Bible includes discernment regarding ethical and spiritual matters—capabilities AI does not possess.

AI lacks the breath of life and spirituality; it does not truly "think," but merely executes pre-programmed routines and calculations. Humans should rely on God-given wisdom rather than technology alone. In developing and using AI, we should seek God's guidance to ensure that technology aligns with His will, rather than merely relying on human ideas. AI development requires ethical and moral constraints to avoid violating divine principles.

Will AI Save or Destroy Humanity?

Transhumanism advocates the fundamental transformation of humanity through technology, even achieving "immortality"—in which human bodies are radically altered, reshaping mind, body, and soul into a new species or humanoid form. It centers on humanity, using technology to achieve self-evolution and "transcendence," attempting to break free from the limitations of the physical body and sinful nature, even aspiring to "play God." This is the sin of pride, contradicting the Biblical narrative of human sin, redemption, and God's sovereignty.

Daniel 11:36: "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods…"

Among these transhumanists are many high-tech titans who, like kings, presume they can save humanity and control the future. They view humanity as a modifiable, optimizable organism, attempting to transcend natural limitations through technology. Yet Scripture teaches that humanity stands under God's judgment, needing His redemption—not self-evolution.

Philippians 3:20-21: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

Christians should actively respond to the cultural and ethical challenges posed by transhumanism, reminding believers to maintain spiritual vigilance and humility amid technological revolution.

In contrast to transhumanism, some believe AI will destroy humanity. Experts worry that future super artificial intelligence (ASI) may develop autonomous consciousness, breaking free from human control and posing threats. AI could integrate with high-risk technologies like nuclear weapons, bioweapons, and climate change, leading to catastrophic consequences—even human extinction.

Widespread AI adoption may trigger uncontrollable social chaos and ethical crises, such as mass unemployment, privacy violations, and power concentration. Movies and novels amplify apocalyptic visions of AI annihilating humanity, fueling public fear.

However, God remains the sovereign Creator and Ruler. Scripture emphasizes His sovereignty over all life and history (Psalm 103:19, Jeremiah 10:10). No matter how AI develops, it ultimately remains under God's governance. Believers should remain vigilant—though dangers abound in the world, God's redemption and grace remain the foundation of our hope.

How Should We Use AI Wisely?

Within this Biblical and theological framework, Christians should actively learn about AI and use it to glorify God and benefit others. Regardless of our position or age, we must learn AI, just as everyone had to learn how to use smartphones when they first emerged. If we fail to learn AI, we risk being left behind and unable to contribute meaningfully to society. Simultaneously, we must clearly recognize AI's limitations to avoid blind or abusive use.

In the Workplace

Regardless of your role—whether engineer, accountant, real estate agent, teacher, construction worker, or even homemaker—learning AI can significantly boost efficiency and enhance professional competence. While AI has indeed disrupted the job market, replacing entry-level positions for some young people, those who master AI knowledge have secured excellent opportunities. Therefore, there's no need to fear AI will completely replace human jobs—it merely transforms the nature and structure of employment.

Decades ago, the rise of the IT industry reduced the number of factory workers but created numerous high-tech positions. As AI programming capabilities advance, roles for software engineers may decrease. Thus, we must enhance our critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills—cultivating soft power in the workplace.

Many companies have already introduced internal AI systems and established AI policies, but this remains at an early stage. Few businesses truly excel at applying AI effectively. Cultivating strong AI literacy and becoming AI specialists now will significantly benefit our career trajectories. We must adapt, continuously learn, and leverage the latest technologies to serve God's kingdom.

In Schools

AI can assist in researching information, analyzing data, and quickly grasping a subject or problem. However, AI is not a search engine—it can make mistakes, sometimes generating links that don't exist or are irrelevant to the content. When writing, AI can offer ideas, but it should never replace your own thinking or assignments. AI-generated text often lacks depth; you must use the wisdom and critical thinking God has given you to write.

Some young people over-rely on AI, blindly trusting its answers and losing their own ability to think. In reality, the AI we commonly use today is a large language model—essentially a

powerful word-chaining application. Its answers are often incomplete or even erroneous, a phenomenon known as “hallucination.” Therefore, it’s crucial to develop judgment and critical thinking skills to discern the truth.

A highly effective approach is to engage in dialogue with AI, persistently probing its responses. This process deepens your understanding, broadens your perspective, and enhances accuracy on any given topic. AI proves relatively reliable for summarizing texts. It can interact with articles based on your prompts, helping you swiftly grasp key points. However, it may sometimes capture only a fragment of the content, necessitating careful discernment. You can also use AI to design self-assessment questions, enhancing learning effectiveness.

In the Church

AI can serve as an auxiliary tool in Bible study—assisting with research, information analysis, and the examination of original texts. Yet its role remains instrumental; it cannot replace spiritual insight or a person’s faith journey.

We can use AI to find Bible study materials and answer simple, consensus-based questions. However, AI’s databases are limited and may lack in-depth exegetical literature, so its answers often remain superficial. AI should not be used for devotional purposes; prayers generated by AI lack depth and spiritual resonance.

Pastors preparing sermons can utilize AI for supplementary assistance, yet the core content must still be grounded in rigorous exegesis and the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. If a sermon needs to be adapted for a different audience, AI can do so swiftly. For instance, if a sermon written initially for adults needs to be delivered to children, AI can efficiently refine and rewrite it.

AI can significantly boost church efficiency in areas like presentations, videos, slogan design, event planning, creative writing, and image generation. These creative tasks—where no standard answers exist—are precisely where generative AI excels, making it especially suitable for youth activities and small group Bible studies. The time saved should be invested in deeper spiritual teaching and individual pastoral care.

No matter how powerful AI becomes, it cannot replace our own spiritual disciplines, our relationship with God, or our fellowship with fellow believers.

Christians possess spiritual wisdom and foresight. We should actively engage in AI-related ethical discussions and law-making to guide its development toward healthy growth. Humans bear responsibility for stewarding creation, including AI. As a human creation, AI should be used for good purposes, aligning with God’s calling for humanity as stewards, rather than being abused or used in ways that violate God’s created order.

AI is an inevitable path in human technological advancement, bringing significant changes and challenges. Christians must be transformed by the renewal of their minds to discern God’s will in

the AI era. As prophets of our time, they should provide warnings and ethical guidelines for AI development.

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