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Would You Want Your “Eternal Life” inside a Computer Memory?

Reflections [Covenant and Doctrine](#) 28 July 2017

[2 Corinthians 5:2-3](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:25-26](#)

[Revelation 21:4](#)

[Hosea 13:14](#)

Let us face it: death, though the most dreaded and inescapable reality, makes our living worthwhile. Had the milestone of death not stood before us, we would have lost the purpose in our existence, and the urgency to get matters done and move on to the next. Humanity would have roamed the world like zombies, having lost all sense of time and of the relevance of our work, food, relationships, and sexuality. Anything we read or hear about what happens beyond our biological death, outside the framework of the Bible, is no more than a figment of fertile imagination and speculation. No one, except for the Lord Jesus Christ through His Resurrection, has ever returned from death to tell us what to expect after death. The religions of the world have, for centuries, tried to deal with the question of mortality without any definitive and credible evidence to substantiate their claims. Here again, Christianity stands apart from all of them: we know our destination, and our eternal existence after we cross over.

Gnostics have been active since the first century, advocating a mystical or esoteric knowledge based on direct participation with the divine. In substance, Gnosticism undermined the eminence of Jesus Christ, His sacrificial death for the redemption of the sinful human race, and His offer of Grace for eternal existence in His glorious presence. Gnosticism has persisted throughout the centuries as an undercurrent of Western culture, resurfacing with the Renaissance as Western esotericism, and taking further prominence within modern spirituality. Its argument is that there is something more to our mortality, to be found in the realm of higher knowledge.

This line of thinking has given rise to the idea of transhumanism. Ray Kurzweil, a prophet of transhumanism, believes that "Our bodies are governed by obsolete genetic programs that evolved in a bygone era, so

we need to overcome our genetic heritage." The idea of transhumanism is that we can evade our biological bodies. See how close this thought is to Biblical teaching. In 2 Corinthians 5:2-3 we read, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." Kurzweil believes this can be achieved technologically through what he calls "mind uploading," which he describes as "the ability to extract the cognitive dimension of the human experience, digitize it, separate it from biological mass, discard the biological body, and end up with some sort of consciousness contained inside a computer who is you, eternal you, deathless you." In simple terms, your inner self, which survives death, is uploaded into a computer along with your experiences and "knowledge," and you continue to exist inside the computer's memory for eternity, all-knowing but without the ability to act.

For the sake of discussion, even if we accept this conjecture, imagine the state of our inner self. Tony Reinke, senior writer at desiringGod.org, describes it thus: "In the transhumanist view, all of the things we now take for granted: our biology, our sexuality, our reproduction, our biological gender, our work, our food, and the fabric of our family heritage, all of it gets quickly emptied of its embodied value. The ideal becomes the liberated self-consciousness, now free to evolve in perpetuity, unburdened from biological baggage." Placed in such a state, we would be like people stuck in a conscious coma, aware of everything around them but unable to move their mouths or their bodies. At some point in such an existence, our conscious self would yearn for an escape, the Control-Alt-Delete which may or may not be available to us. The question remains: even if a technologist presses Control-Alt-Delete for us, where would the released soul go? The transhumanist has failed to answer that question.

Christianity teaches us how to deal with our death. In 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 we read, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The defeat of death comes when it becomes a gateway into the New Creation of Jesus Christ, His Kingdom, and the possession of eternal life. In His Kingdom, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

It is necessary to touch briefly upon the various world views of existence after death, to put matters in perspective. Atheists believe that at death one ceases to exist; there is no afterlife or eternal soul that continues into eternity. Some religions, including Hinduism, hold a pantheistic world view, and teach that one goes through an endless

cycle of reincarnation until the cycle is broken and the person becomes one with the divine. Others believe that after death the human soul remains on the earth, or travels to join the departed spirits of the ancestors in an unknown world, believed by some to be a realm of shadows. Islam teaches that at the end of time, God will judge the works of all men, and that those whose good works outweigh their wrongdoing are received into Paradise, while others are consigned to Hell. Most world views of this kind rest upon supposition, and are not supported by hard evidence.

Christianity, however, is quite different. The nature of our eternal existence is demonstrated by Jesus Christ through His Resurrection and His appearances to many people. It would not be wrong to say that while the leaders of every other religion lie dead in their graves, Christians have a living God, Who has conquered death. That brings us to the subject of resurrection. What really is a resurrection? Though the term is not found in the Old Testament, I am inclined to accept the definition found in Hosea 13:14a, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." The meaning of this passage may be that from the power of death and the grave, Jesus will redeem and recover us. He has already redeemed us, in our life before death, through His sacrificial death on the Cross, and will now proceed to redeem us from death and the grave. It may sound confusing: this second redemption may be the resurrection of our inner self, or soul, by which we are brought into His magnificent presence. Some believe that upon death the soul comes at once into the presence of Jesus, and that on the last day, at the resurrection, the body will be raised to receive back the soul. Assuming that we were born perfect in body, it seems unlikely, after the process of ageing and the abuse the body sustains, that it would be the most fitting vessel for our purified soul. Jesus would not want to reunite a deficient body with a glorified soul. I would not want my present body back for my eternal life with my Lord. What matters is where our souls will be for eternity — certainly not inside a computer's memory. The Bible teaches that the soul is the entire person, not merely some part that survives death: the person I am is my soul. Close your eyes, and meditate upon the person that you are. You will see yourself apart from your body, and that is your soul.

One day, the Technological Gnostics of this new era will understand their folly, when they stand before the Judgement Seat of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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