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TASC's mission is to rebuild and strengthen the foundation of the Christian faith by increasing awareness of the scientific evidence supporting the literal Biblical account of creation and refuting evolution.

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EVERLASTING LIFE: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE OR THE GREAT COMMISSION?

By Jeff Gift, Ph.D.

Many of you will remember with me the epic TV series *Mission Impossible* which chronicled the adventures of the Impossible Mission Taskforce, a team of government spies and specialists who were assigned "impossible missions" by the unseen "Secretary". If not, you may have seen the more recent movie of the same title. If not, well, bear with me. I think you'll get the point. In the original series, the Team Leader (Dan Briggs the first season, then Jim Phelps the other six) was always given a mission, usually involving the impossible (hence the title) task of disarming an alarming situation within a time limit (inevitably by the end of the show). If you've read any recent news regarding the science of aging you may know that the government and other organizations have amassed similar teams of specialists today and tasked them with a similarly serious and seemingly impossible mission, to seek out and find scientific answers to the secret of everlasting life.¹ The primary premise of most of these teams of specialists is that our bodies are of faulty design and contain many individual "time bombs" (e.g., faulty organ systems) that are doomed to eventual failure. Some very intelligent people are claiming that, because of an exponential increase in human knowledge related to the science of aging, we will soon be able to take control of and even halt the aging process by defusing these internal time bombs. Given the intriguing prospects of this mission, many Americans and people all over the world are taking stock, both literally and figuratively, in the work of these scientists. Can death be conquered by a taskforce of specialists armed with incredible intelligence, strong determination and ample funding? Are these the ingredients for everlasting life? Let's take a look at some scientific and Biblical reasons why it may or may not be a good idea to put faith, hope and funding in the hands of these individuals.

Mission Possible?

Is there any merit to the claims that the fountain of youth can be obtained through science? The fields of these specialists are seeded with many grains of truth. After all,



Cast from television series *Mission Impossible*
c. 1967

single-celled creatures like bacteria don't die of old age, but continue to divide into two new copies, each of which divides into two more, and so on. Humans have organs such as the liver and kidneys that are made of many individual cells. Why don't these cells keep on dividing, repairing and renewing our organs forever? True, the Second Law of Thermodynamics dictates that all fixed structures will eventually wear out. However, biological organisms are not fixed structures, but contain built-in repair mechanisms. Even from a Biblical perspective, it is reasonable to conclude that these repair mechanisms were once sufficient to allow humans to live nearly 1,000 years (see Genesis 5). Why not longer, if God should ordain it so? Indeed, though an average "upper limit" seems to be programmed into each species alive today, breeding experiments have shown that this limit can be altered, even dramatically. Experiments with fruit flies and worms have shown that extra longevity can be bred into and out of populations. A genetic

switch involved in longevity has been identified in a species of worms and it is likely that such switches exist in humans as well.²

Currently, and for the past 3-4,000 years, our organs wear out within a period of 100 years.³ It is well known today that ordinary human cells will only divide some 80-90 times, then stop. However, there is scientific and Biblical basis to believe that this was not always so. On the tips of each of our DNA chromosomes is a structure called a telomere. It is apparently a counting device, with a number of beads on the end. Every time the cell divides, it is as if a bead is “snipped off,” shortening the telomere.⁴ Once all of the beads are gone, cell division can no longer take place. From then on, as each cell wears out, it is not replaced by any new ones and the organ system will eventually die. Thus, the answer to the question of whether the mission of these scientists is solvable appears to be yes, at least for God.

What’s the Harm in Trying?

In a recent interview⁵ and in his publication *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever*⁶ 56 year-old inventor and computer scientist Dr. Ray Kurzweil urges people to take care of themselves and live long enough to benefit from a coming explosion in technology that he predicts will make infinite life spans possible. He believes that we will one day be able to inject ourselves with millions of blood cell-sized robots called “nanobots” that will swarm throughout the body, repairing bones, muscles, arteries and brain cells. He believes that we will also be able to download improvements to our genetic code via the internet. Dr. Kurzweil has credibility. He did, after all, win the prestigious \$500,000 Lemelson-MIT prize and the 1999 National Medal of Technology Award. The *Christian Science Monitor* even called him a “modern Edison” and he was inducted into the Inventors Hall of Fame in 2002. He says that his predictions are based on carefully constructed scientific models that he has used in the past to predict the development of the internet and computers that can beat a chess champion.⁷ Dr. Kurzweil’s current passion, or “mission” if you will, is to cross the three bridges that he says will lead to immortality. The first bridge is a healthy lifestyle. As part of a daily routine, he himself takes 250 vitamins and supplements, 8-10 glasses of alkaline water and 10 cups of green tea. The second bridge is gene control that will, as has been demonstrated for fruit flies and worms, remove disease causing genes and introduce genes that slow the aging process. The final bridge is nanotechnology and the introduction of nanobot “janitors” into our bloodstream.

Even if this mission of Dr. Kuzweil’s and others turns out to indeed be impossible, some may ask “where’s the

foul?” What harm is there in allowing this perhaps a bit narcissistic but potentially useful intellectual pursuit among a select group of brilliant men? In the process of seeking their own immortality the technology they develop might do a lot of people good. However, the danger is that their mission would impede the greatest and most important mission of all time, the great commission, by making many less receptive to the most important message they will ever receive, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The very idea that human technology can overcome death takes away the whole reason for the Gospel message and the need for a savior and lessens (for some) the need for a loving God. According to the Bible, death is a penalty for our sin and there is only one way to remove that penalty, through belief in Jesus, who died on the cross as a substitute for our sin. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Jesus is the one and only reliable answer to defusing the ticking time bomb that is death, for he has promised to trample this last enemy under His feet when he returns. “For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Further, Jesus is the one and only bridge that must be crossed to obtain not only eternal life, but eternal life in the presence of our loving God and creator. Despite what scientists may tell us about the benefits of healthy living, gene control and even nanobots, impossible missions require sensational miracles. And sensational miracles are only reliably administered by an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God, not an Impossible Mission Taskforce nor any other form of human intelligence. ❧

¹ Several hundred scientists recently met for a conference called “Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence: Reasons Why Genuine Control of Aging May be Foreseeable.” A detailed report from this meeting (110 articles, 597 pages) was published in the June 2004 issue of the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (www.annalsnyas.org/content/vol1019/issue1)

² Wieland, 1998. Living for 900 Years. *Creation* 20(4):10-13. Available online at www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v20/i4/years.asp

³ In Psalm 90:10 we read “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” This declares man’s average lifespan to be seventy to eighty years. Today, over 3,000 years later, our average lifespan is essentially the same.

⁴ Wieland, 1998. One exception is that in our brain cells, the telomere does not seem to shorten.

⁵ Wellesley, 2005. Inventor preserves self to witness immortality. Associated Press article available online at www.cnn.com/2005/health/diet.fitness/02/15/one.mans.immortality.ap/index.html

⁶ Kurzweil, R. 2004. *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever*. Holtzbrinck Publishers. ISBN 1-57954-954-3.

⁷ Kurzweil, R. 1990. *The Age of Intelligent Machines*. MIT Press. ISBN 0-262-61079-5.

MEETING NEWS

February 10 Meeting Review: *Icons of Evolution*

Mel Blinson, who has taught creation science classes at Providence Baptist Church for several years, led our group of 18 attendees in a lively discussion after showing the new video, *Icons of Evolution*. The first part of the video dealt with the difficulties that a biology teacher, Roger DeHart, from Burlington, Washington, has experienced while teaching new scientific updates and information on the naturalistic evolutionary theory. He was actually forced to leave his school district to another school district. The new information, such as from the book, *Icons of Evolution*, and other published scientific journal articles that he has presented to his students, brings to light the inadequacies and actual misrepresentations that appear in current public education textbooks on naturalistic evolution. It appears that persons such as Eugenie Scott, director of the National Biology Teachers Association, and others in the circle of influence on public education do not want the established evolutionary theory, often taught and accepted as fact, questioned.

The video brought out that persons of the establishment are not only receiving challenges from creation scientists but are receiving challenges from others in the scientific fields who want a fair and balanced, more accurate and thorough, presentation on scientific information related to origins. The turn of events above is ironic in our supposedly enlightened time when so many new discoveries and information are coming out that should be addressed in a responsible, academic approach. It calls for us, too, to stand up for proper representation of the scientific data as the teacher, Roger DeHart, has, even if it does threaten or result in some unfair treatment. Sometimes it has to be for right to be achieved.

The last half of the new video exposed several of the foundational renderings of established, naturalistic evolution as not backed by new scientific discoveries and understandings. One particular icon of evolution that is

exposed as false in the video is Ernst Haeckel's drawings of embryos espousing that evolution takes place in the development of the human embryo. Yet, these drawings are still being reproduced in current public school biology textbooks to continue to train our children's minds to accept naturalistic evolution as fact. You may wish to pick up a copy of the book or film, *Icons of Evolution* by Jonathan Wells, to equip yourself to better stand up against evolution taught largely as fact in our schools and defend your faith in Genesis and God, our Creator. Thanks, Mel, for bringing us this enlightening program!

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 10, 7:30 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh

Phil Johnson, MCE, will present "Can Biblical creation be harmonized with the philosophy of evolution?" Every Christian should hear this enlightening talk to clear up the great confusion about whether God used naturalistic evolution to create. The basic doctrine of the fall of mankind through disobedience resulting in struggle and eventual death with the need for reconciliation and salvation is contrasted with the assumption of naturalistic evolution that struggle and death and survival of the fittest was the means of creation. Would God have used this evolutionary mechanism to create before there was even sin or a penalty for sin? If so, what does this do to our doctrine, our foundations? Come out, bring a friend, and clear up confusion and deceit on this matter.

Thursday, April 14, 7:30 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh

Stan Atwood, MS. "A scientist's stand for creation over evolution; Sticking with God, our Creator, in a secular world that would dismiss God."

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