

The Automated Earth

The Earth has become automated in so many aspects. There seems to be no limit to how far humans will apply automation. It may end up being in everything we touch. But are there dangers in automation that the Christian should consider?

Automation has been around as early as 100-150 BC. The Antikythera mechanism, an ancient Greek creation, is a discovery of the first analog computer. This machine used clockwork and gears to predict astrological events. The term automation started in 1947 when Ford created an automation department to help assemble automobiles. Automation is simply transforming a manual process into a completely automatic process from the beginning to the end. Automation has helped production and efficiency increase and saves us time and money. So what should we do with all this extra time?

Automation and computers were made to assist humans. Now computers and robotics are starting to take over the work we once did. Humans are just not needed for every job. We are becoming the assistants to the supercomputers and robots that make the products we once made by hand. Automation has, in some ways, made us lazier. Self-driving tractors and robots that milk cows are very helpful but need less human support. When you visit the Ford Rouge Factory Tour, the robots build the trucks, and the humans assist the robots in the work process. If something goes wrong, the humans press a button, and all robots stop their work until the issue is resolved. Self-driving cars and trucks are being released, and humans are just assisting the computer inside.

Automation is starting to take over in every industry that we see. If the current trend continues, machines could replace 40% of the world's workers within 15 to 25 years. While the advancement in technology still contributes to the growing number of jobs lost to automation, many industries and workflows still need humans.

Humans have started to create computers and robots that can teach other robots. These technologies are very advanced. AI or machine-based learning algorithms have the potential to revolutionize what we do. Will our world benefit from this intelligence, or will it take over decisions and make us humans more like robots? We are beginning to allocate the responsibility of making many of our decisions to computers. Computers can undoubtedly make choices based on the data that is available to them. However, that is very different from "judgment." Judgment is based on values, and values are learned from life experience. Our spirit comes from God, and no animal or machine can make decisions as we can. Our decisions are made based on right and wrong and what we believe. *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Gen 2:7).*

Artificial intelligence (a very advanced computer) still doesn't experience life as we do and so does not develop what we would call "values." In addition, they have no significant basis on what or who is important (they react to instructions given to them). A drone dropping a bomb doesn't calculate for innocent people

below. A self-driving car has to choose between the driver or the pedestrian in an emergency. That places a moral limit on the role that they can occupy in our lives and society.

We must look at some questions and answer them for ourselves. What tasks would we be willing to delegate to a machine? Is the data that we give it enough to ensure that it can decide according to values God has for us? Would we trust our life to a robot? Does God approve of mankind creating an intelligence that grows each day? Are virtual assistant technologies like Google, Alexa, and Siri important technologies to us, or are they intrusive? What areas of our life will we turn over to the automated world? Will robots ever infiltrate our lives so much that we become lazy? Does the automation in our lives assist us in our work, or are we assisting the computers around us to do all the work in our lives?

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies (2Th 3:10-11). For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee (Psa 128:2).

When we look at the many areas of automation that surround us, we recognize that there are dangers in embracing the technology that is taking jobs and trying to control areas of our lives. We are losing human interaction with each other. We now ask our computers the questions we used to ask each other. How do we remain spiritually centered, not allowing automation to dull us into robotic, mindless living? We must desire to do the work that God commanded us to do. We should allow Christ to make improvements in our life based on what we need, to become more like Him. We need to allow God's Spirit to help us make the moral decisions that no computer or robot can ever make. We must value the intelligence that God gave us and not default to seeking wisdom through computers. Realizing that God gave us moral judgment and a Spirit to make decisions, we know we have invaluable discernment and worth, beyond what man can ever create or duplicate. God gave us work to do and human interactions that are so valuable.

And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:28).

Eternal life is not automated; it is manual; it is something Christ offers with His hand to man.

~Will Taylor