



Making a Christian difference



November 2018

Greetings from CARE!

May I start by reminding you that I try only to ask for your financial support directly once a year. Your ongoing generosity means that we can continue to respond to the growing challenges of secularisation with a high biblical view of what it means to be human. If it's appropriate please consider giving at this time.

I was shocked recently to read of a teacher of seven-year-olds who asked her class to describe something they wished had never been invented. One child replied, 'the mobile phone, because my parents are on it every day'. Her drawing of a crossed-out mobile beside a sad face saying, 'I hate it!' was shared all over Facebook. The teacher said, 'We had a class discussion and every single child said their parents spent more time on social media than talking to them.'

For the sake of the future

CARE has been concerned about the impact of robotics and AI for a while. Over the past year we've sold thousands of copies of Nigel Cameron's book *The Robots are Coming: Us, Them and God*. In June, CARE's *For the Sake of the Future* conference at the British Library considered the Church's response to the technological revolution, and featured outstanding contributions from Prof Nigel Cameron, Jon Cruddas MP, Dr Patrick Dixon, Prof John Lennox, Matt James, Dr



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Kathleen Richardson and Prof John Wyatt. You can watch their talks at www.robotrevolution.org.uk. Clearly, we all can benefit from technology's fantastic advantages but, there is also a need for it to be wisely regulated, to protect society from potential negative effects so that human beings made in God's image can flourish. **We are made for relationships but we're witnessing how the worldwide use of mobile phones is increasingly causing us to withdraw from face-to-face conversations and interact online instead.** Many people admit to becoming addicted to their phones, perhaps motivated by something called FOMO - fear of missing out. Google has observed that 70 per cent of its users are concerned about balance in their digital lives, and Microsoft has signs on the walls of its London offices saying that employees should always get up and speak to colleagues rather than email.

Earlier this year Nola and I read an important, challenging and scholarly book called *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in the Digital Age* by Professor Sherry Turkle. We agreed there was a need for someone to write in layman's language from a clear Christian standpoint on this subject; how Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially in the form of a mobile phone, is changing our lives. So we asked Professor Nigel Cameron if he'd do it! **The result is *God and My Mobile* which I highly recommend to you or as a gift for family and friends.**

Digital technology - transforming our world

President Vladimir Putin has said, 'Artificial intelligence is the future, not only for Russia but for all humankind. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world'. It's not hard to find evidence of this. For example, digital technology giants like Google, Amazon and Facebook are amassing people's personal information on a huge scale, purely because it can give them both money and control. On Radio 4 recently, the former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks commented, 'Already there are companies that know more about us than we know ourselves'.

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There are millions of ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) is a positive force for good. The explosion of information through the internet has been a wonderful means to spread the gospel. Let's not be like the nineteenth century Luddites who opposed the new machinery that heralded the Industrial Revolution. **Robots and AI are here to stay, part of the raw material of God's creation to be developed and guarded. Our most obvious encounter with AI is through mobile phones, a billion times more powerful than the biggest computers of a generation ago!** Some people for very good reasons choose not to use the internet or join social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram – although Facetime and Skype are wonderful for keeping in touch with far-flung families

and friends free of charge. But the rest of us, especially if we're in contact with children and young people, need to get our heads around the implications of these rapidly developing communication tools.

Humans search for security, significance and self-worth

Experts predict that over the next few decades millions of jobs will be given over to robots, leaving people with far more time to do other things. What an opportunity! But we need to think biblically about today's preoccupation with screens and AI, when the first place people go to for advice might be intelligent virtual assistants like Siri on Apple phones and Amazon's Alexa.

People are increasingly recognising that their mobile phone may be negatively affecting relationships, productivity, and the ability to engage with life. We have a friend who flatly refused to

install even a landline telephone in case it made his children visit him less! Perhaps this is a reflection on the statistic that an estimated 1.9 million older people say they often feel ignored or invisible, which has a significant impact on their wellbeing. The late Selwyn Hughes used to say that we need three things: security, significance and self-worth and, from a Christian standpoint, these are only truly found in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's interesting to note the number of stories of technology experts who are keen to restrict their own children's access to phones and other screens. For wise, practical advice aimed at parents do read Katherine Hill's excellent book which I read with great interest, *Left to their own devices? Confident parenting in an age of screens*. You can obtain it from Care for the Family.

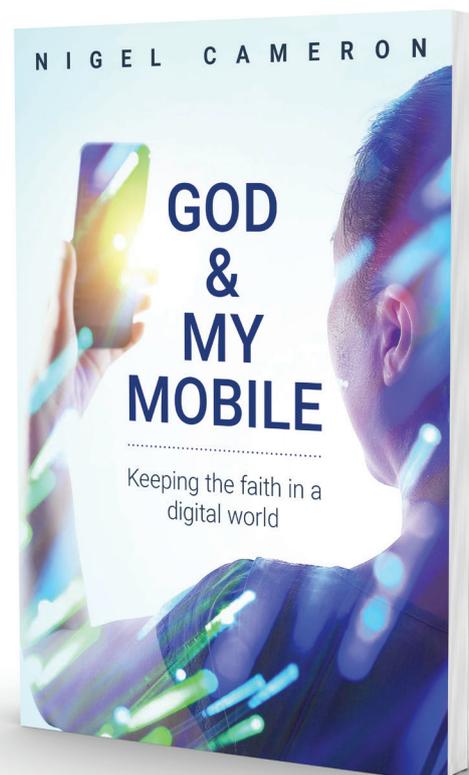
1.9 million older people say they often feel ignored or invisible

What next?

First and foremost, **please order a copy of *God and My Mobile!*** It will help you to understand more about the digital world of social media and other online applications – you can use the enclosed flyer or just phone our team on 020 7233 0455. Meanwhile, **CARE is working with others to recommend ethical ways for the Government to regulate** wisely for the inevitable advances that will come. We hope to appoint a dedicated member of our Public Affairs team to spearhead this.

It's crucial to restrain any free market ambitions to develop AI in ways that only benefit the big companies financially. Max Tegmark, a leading thinker in the AI and robot world, tells how privately, top technology bosses are seriously concerned that advances could harm humanity.

Please pray about such concerns and ask God to guide CARE through these complex issues.



Providing for the coming generations

CARE has been granted a significant role over the last forty years within the UK Parliaments and Assemblies and encouraging Christians to be effective light and salt in society.

We've been inspired by 1 Chronicles 22, the story of how David served God throughout his lifetime as Israel's greatest king, a 'man after God's own heart'. He was also guided by the Lord to make substantial financial and material provision for Solomon his son to fulfil the purposes of God in his generation by building the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem.

So, with this in mind I appeal for your financial support at this time. **Many of the implications of today's new technology will come to pass after we've gone. At CARE we want not only to be ahead of the curve and involved now but also lay firm foundations for future generations**, so they can continue to make a Christian difference in this area as well as all the other issues close to your heart.

Finally, reaching 70 this year, I've felt it right to draw back from CARE's day-to-day management so I've dropped 'Executive' from my job title to take up a more presidential role. Drawing from experience gained from my 40 years of helping to lead this organisation, I'll continue to work closely with our dedicated Chief Executive, Nola Leach, as well as the Trustees, in shaping the strategic development of CARE, particularly among younger generations. You'll still receive letters from me and I'll continue to build relationships with you if you've particularly blessed CARE through your prayer, financial support and other valuable help.

Thank you again for your faithful prayers and generosity which have enabled us to achieve significant successes this past year. Your ongoing support is **deeply** appreciated.

Yours in Christ,

Rev Lyndon Bowring
CARE Chairman

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