

COMPUTER VIRUS SPREADS TO HUMANS

by Tom Wacaster

I want my readers to know that I am not in the habit of reading the tabloids at the local newspaper stand. I certainly would not spend the money on such papers, though I have been tempted to buy one just to see what lies behind the front page "eye catchers." Well, I was recently visiting in the home of some long time acquaintances (I'll not mention their name, but their initials are Ed and Nelda Clark), and this good sister in Christ handed me the March 20, 2006 issue of the "Weekly World News." I was assured that someone gave it to her, so I was relieved to know that she, too, was very cautious as to where she obtained her daily dose of news. The front headline immediately caught my eye: "Computer Virus Spreads to Humans." I was a little skeptical, but my skepticism immediately disappeared when I noticed the disclaimer on the front of the paper: "The World's Only Reliable Newspaper." So with that assurance, it was full speed ahead to get the scoop on this amazing technological and medical discovery. As I turned to page 26, the sub-header read: "Watch out PC owners. There's something far worse for your computer than malicious hacking: dry hacking." No doubt there had been an extensive study of this malicious virus to human infection, so I read with great interest of the first (out of who knows how many hundreds or thousands of cases) official report of the symptoms and treatment. The symptoms included a repeated warning that would appear on the screen, "system error: you will loose all unsabed inforbation" (sic). The computer Tech had never seen anything like this, and concluded that the "computer had somehow caught a human virus." Back at Tech (no doubt the name of their research lab), experiments with nanotechnology suggested that "biological viruses could bind with particles of silicon and infect a machine's microprocessors." The result? Elevated machine temperature, accelerated activity, just like a fever; there was green and yellow discharge from the machine's port, called a 'runny node.'" After careful study the folks at Tech decided to issue a warning: "It's only a matter of time before the machine's modified strain starts infecting people." Their worst fears evidently came to pass. One "unofficial documented case" told of a man catching a computer virus: "Pete knew a professor back at Tech who accidentally broke a vial full of silicone-clad viruses. He was never the same. He was freezing all the time - not cold, but blank and unresponsive, with an hour glass shaped glint in his eye. And his personality changed. Like a failing hard drive, he was no longer as magnetic. He also suffered memory loss and printing problems. He had to write all of his equations in cursive. The professor's hair turned a lovely copper before he passed away." The cure: "We recommend staying away from an afflicted computer and covering its fans with handkerchiefs. It's not worth the risk. We can treat an infected machine with a little warmth from the motherboard. But if you're exposed, it's a one-way trip to reboot hill."

It is very doubtful that anyone who read that report in "The World's Only Reliable Newspaper" actually believed a word of what was printed, but it was "interesting," and provided a really good laugh. But you know what? There are some folks out there who are telling stories about "religious" happenings that are just as incredible, just as ridiculous, and just as unbelievable. When I read of someone paying \$500 for a cheese sandwich wrapped in a sealed baggie for no other reason than the fact that it had an image of some departed saint, or someone claiming that they saw a man's leg grow back after someone slapped him on the forehead, or someone wallowing in the church isle and

frothing at the mouth, my interest is peaked for a moment, but upon further investigation, I realize that these religious "stories" are just as incredible, perhaps even more incredible, than someone claiming that a computer virus can somehow be transmitted to human beings. And while we may laugh at the tabloid that ran this most unbelievable story, for some reason I don't get the impression that a lot of what we read and hear in the religious tabloids today are really that funny. Do you?