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"Frederick Loomis: The Third Covenant, Steven Wolf Fine Arts." *Artillery* (March/April 2008)

Within computer science exists a group of dedicated Artificial Intelligence researchers, committed to unlocking human cognition and investing machines with abilities for general learning comparable to ours. This scientific field incorporates neuroscience, behavioral science, natural language and linguistic theory, psychology, information architecture, mathematics and physics. At the periphery of this community, two interconnected faiths have taken hold that are more religion than science: Singularitarianism, belief in the impending moment when computer evolution outpaces that of humans; and Transhumanism, adherents of which aspire to a posthuman condition of cybernetic integration, or reincarnation through uploading.

San Francisco-based Frederick Loomis is neither a computer scientist nor an AI researcher, but he understands religion and is a man of his times. Loomis employs low-tech media, pencil and colored pencil on paper, to describe a detailed mythology of "the coming race of human computers" which in a thousand years will evolve their own souls and cultures. Loomis attributes his story to an alter ego, a prophet called Edward Mathew Taylor whose biography is a fictionalized version of the artist's own. Taylor has envisioned androids with microchip-endowed souls, evolved circa 3013 A.D. Like any Christian-derived religion, this one has a Madonna—Miriam Mosher, the first sentient Class 5 Anthropomorphic Computing Platform, known as the "Mother Platform." In a large pencil and colored pencil drawing, Loomis depicts her with skin made of conductive 24-carat gold and a nervous system that is a network of fiberoptic threads.

Loomis renders the soul chip, called the DIOS Neurocontroller, in pencil on paper as a combination circuit diagram, architectural plan and mandala. It contains markers which correlate directly to the Twelve Steps of addiction recovery and indirectly to the Twelve Stations of the Cross. Rather than surpassing our human faults, the super-evolved human computer is itself imperfect, susceptible to depression, dependency and destruction of the self and others. This echoes a real concern driving "friendly AI" philosophy, as some researchers believe we will inherently pass our failings on to any human creation unless we are extremely careful to preempt this.

Accompanying the larger, recent drawings is a series of ten small drawings made between 1991 and 2002 which Loomis has reproduced as a book, also called *The Third Covenant*. These include several images which link Taylor's contemporary mythos to varied precedents in western religion. Significant moments in Christianity, Mormonism and Theosophy figure in these drawings, as do scenes from Edward Mathew Taylor's life, and prospective milestones in the impending canonization of The Third Covenant.

These small and detailed drawings read as plates from an illustrated manuscript, or templates for stained glass windows in an as-yet-unbuilt cathedral. The book is a gospel, but Loomis is an artist, not a prophet, and he isn't looking for followers. His narrative of posthuman transcendence and failure is a metaphor for our need to believe, whether in a deity or in the all-healing powers of technology. Like all good science fiction, Loomis' fantasy speaks volumes about the realities of the world we live in today.