

Missionaries on a Quest

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Movements don't go anywhere without zealots. While Biological Engineering is not what some would call a religion, it has many of the elements nonetheless: there is an underlying need, its principles are emerging, and those dedicated to its cause can exhibit a strong passion for its spread.

Passion and emotional involvement beget excitement, and excitement is what Biological Engineering is all about. You hear the excitement in the voices of those discussing the field, and you see it in their actions. It is the same excitement that comes from discovering a new connection in your research findings, or from experiencing a new piece of music for the first time, or from learning some new skill.

I have seen this same excitement in the field of biomedical engineering when it was first being formed. During those years, if you wanted to provoke raised voices and passionate debate, you just had to bring up the issue of what the field should be called or what specialties should be included. Many a late night was spent and many a malt was consumed debating the nuances of biomedical engineering.

Those days for biomedical engineering have passed. The field is mature now, and in gaining maturity, a lot of the passion of the new field attenuated.

There is no reason to expect any different from Biological Engineering. The time for passion is now. The time to debate its qualities and inclusions is the present. Soon enough, should we succeed, Biological Engineering will enter into its mature phase and people will think little of what it has become or how it got there. And few will appreciate the passion of its founders.

You will read elsewhere in this newsletter about the efforts by several passionate people to reach out to the rest of the engineering community to bring more people into the fold. This effort is to be applauded. If it succeeds then Biological Engineering can achieve permanence.