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Re: “A Security Analysis of the Verichip Implantable RFID Device” JAMIA PrePrint: Accepted Article. Published August 23, 2006 as doi:10.1197/jamia.M2143

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Dear JAMIA Editor(s):

In a recent article, “A Security Analysis of the Verichip Implantable RFID Device,” authored by John Halamka, Ari Juels, Adam Stubblefield, and Jonathan Westhues, the authors state that “Religious groups have gone so far as to state that the VeriChip may be a realization of the Mark of the Beast as described in the New Testament.” The authors support this statement with an endnote referencing a book of which I am the co-author.

The statement is wrong on several counts.

First, neither I nor my co-author, Liz McIntyre, head up or have formed any “religious group.” I am the director of CASPIAN (Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering), a 12,000 member consumer privacy organization which I founded in 1999. CASPIAN has worked on secular RFID privacy issues since 2002 and is not a religious organization. Our website clearly states that “CASPIAN is a secular (non-religious) organization which welcomes members from all faiths and backgrounds,” and that “CASPIAN members span a wide range of political, philosophical, and social viewpoints.”¹

Second, neither I nor my co-author call the VeriChip RFID implant the biblical mark of the beast. Indeed, in the introduction to *The Spyships Threat*, we state that “we do not believe the current incarnation of RFID is the mark of the beast as prophesied by John in Revelation 13.” And on p. 184 we state, “There are many ways in which current versions of RFID devices like the VeriChip implant do not match the description of the mark of the beast in Revelation.”

What we do say in *The Spyships Threat* is more complex. We observe that modern database and communications technologies, coupled with point of sale data-capture equipment and sophisticated ID and authentication sys-

tems, now make it *possible* to require a biometrically associated number or mark to make purchases.[†] The ability to implement such a system, which even skeptical observers acknowledge closely resembles the “mark of the beast” prophecy puzzled over by Christian scholars for two millennia, is historically unprecedented. This development has particular significance to Christians, who have been mandated by their faith not to participate in such payment systems.² However, one needn’t be a Christian to find this noteworthy. From an academic and historical perspective alone, this development would be fascinating and well worth pointing out.

In a final faux pas, the authors have misstated the title of our book as “The Spyships Threat: Why Christians Should Resist RFID and Computer Tracking,” when its actual title is “The Spyships Threat: Why Christians Should Resist RFID and Electronic Surveillance.” Interestingly, this same error has appeared in several pro-RFID industry articles attacking our work. One wonders if the authors actually read our book, or relied on the commentary of others to draw their conclusions.

Errors and theological issues aside, it is crucial to point out that individuals of all faiths—whether Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, B’hai, or atheist—have an inherent right to privacy, irrespective of their religious practices and beliefs. People across all walks of life have a reason to be concerned about Verichip implants and other RFID technologies that pose serious dangers to their privacy and civil liberties.

With best wishes for continued freedom,

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[†]On p. 186 of *The Spyships Threat* we state, “The mark described in the Book of Revelation is now technologically feasible. Thanks to RFID, the Internet, wireless and satellite communications, and POS terminals linked in real time to vast customer information databases, it is now technically possible to require every last human being on the planet to provide an authenticating number before he or she can make a purchase or complete a sale.”

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Co-author of *THE SPYCHIPS THREAT: Why Christians Should Resist RFID and Electronic Surveillance*.

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1. "About Us" CASPIAN FAQ. Available at: http://www.spychips.com/about_us.html. Accessed on:
2. The Christian Bible, Revelation 13:16–18; 14:9–11.