Proceedings of

The International Conference on Faith and Artificial Intelligence (ICFAI 2025)

November 18–19, 2025 ||Huye, Rwanda.

ISBN: 978-1-946782-35-9

Canadian Tech-Institute for Academic Research
London School of Management
PROTESTANT UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA
Fides et Scientia Ω Rwanda

Published by CTIAR

Canadian Tech-Institute for Academic Research,
819 Sargent Ave, 202 204/206 #106,
Winnipeg, MB R3E 0B9 Canada

CTIAR ISBN: 978-1-946782-35-9

The International Conference on Faith and Artificial Intelligence (ICFAI 2025)

Table of Contents

Preface

The International Conference on Faith and Artificial Intelligence was a huge success. All keynote speeches and presentations made by authors brought great insight, bridging the gap in literature as touching the subject of faith and artificial intelligence. Our deep appreciation goes to all the keynote speakers and authors who made great contributions towards this conference, and the great efforts put behind the scenes by the organizing and scientific committee to ensure a hitch free event. We look forward to a more engaging, interactive and explosive conference in the future.

This edition presents a remarkable collection of papers from the International Conference on Faith and Artificial Intelligence (ICFAI 2025), held in Huye, Rwanda, from 18 to 19 November 2025 as a hybrid conference. Each paper submitted represents a distinct contribution to the field of faith and artificial intelligence, exploring diverse areas of application and practical relevance.

All attendees made meaningful contributions through presentations, discussions, and the exchange of ideas during interactive question sessions and panel engagements, all of which added immense value to the success of the conference. Participants joined from several countries, including the United States, Canada, Cyprus, Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria, and UK, giving the conference a truly global scope.

Five keynote addresses were delivered during the conference by: Dr. Samuel Sindayigaya of the University of Kigali; Dr Emmanuel Murangira from Tearfund; Dr Ayo Eso from 3Consulting Limited, Nigeria; Dr. Keith Jenkins, President of Servant of the Lords Ministry, UK; and Ven Dr. Olugbenga Olagundoye of Lead City University. All keynote sessions captured the full attention of participants and inspired a series of thought-provoking questions that energized the audience.

The International Conference on Faith and Artificial Intelligence was an outstanding success. The keynote speeches and paper presentations provided rich insights, bridging important gaps in literature within the domains of faith and artificial intelligence. Our sincere appreciation goes to all keynote speakers and authors for their valuable contributions, and to the organizing and scientific committees whose dedicated efforts ensured a smooth and impactful event. We look forward to an even more engaging and enriching conference in the future.

ICFAI 2025 Planning Committee.

ICFAI Committee

Honorary Board

Dr. Samson O. Fadiya
President, Canadian Tech-Institute for Academic Research,
Canada

Professor Olu Ojedokun
Vice Chancellor of Protestant University of Rwanda

Bishop MUTABARUKA Aphrodis
Bishop, Seira community church, Rwanda

Professor Dr. Lazar Stosic
Faculty of Informatics and Computer Science,
University Union Nikola Tesla,
Belgrade, Serbia.

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Samuel Sindayigaya
Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academics (ADVCA), University of Kigali, Rwanda

Dr Emmanuel Murangira
Country Director, Tearfund/ Rwanda

Dr Ayo Eso
CEO, 3Consulting Limited, Nigeria

Dr. Keith Jenkins
President & International Coordinator SOLM, UK

Ven Dr. Olugbenga Olagundoye
Ven Dr. Olugbenga Olagundoye Chaplain Lead City University, Ibandan. Vice President Association of Nigeria Universities Chaplains.

Church Leaders

Bishop Kayinamura Samuel
President of World Free Methodist Church Council, Rwanda

Rt. Rev. Dr Rukundo Jean Pierre Methode
Anglican Church of Rwanda, Karongi Diocese

Conference Organizing Committee

Rev. Dr. Célestin Nsengimana
Dean, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR)

Dr. Emmanuel BIZIMANA
Lecturer of Educational Sciences Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR)

Gilugali Mugisha Juste
IT specialist at Seira Community Church, Rwanda

Mr. NSENGIYUMVA Noel

Dr. UMUZIRANENGE Gloriose
Director of Quality Assurance at Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR)

Aline Uwimbabazi,
Administrative Assistant to the VC Office Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR)

AI in Sacred Healing: Health Law Perspectives on Regulating Algorithmic Interventions Against Spiritual Autonomy in Pluralistic Healthcare Systems

Onyegbule, Kelechi G*
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ebonyi State
onyegbule.kelechi@funai.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper interrogates the regulatory lacunae that emerge when algorithmic systems, ostensibly therapeutic, encroach upon the sacrosanct domain of spiritual autonomy within pluralistic healthcare regimes. Framed at the nexus of health law, medical ethics, and the anthropology of healing, the analysis posits that contemporary governance paradigms, tethered to evidence-based biomedicine, systematically efface the ontological pluralism that underwrites indigenous, faith-based, and esoteric curative practices. By deploying a tripartite heuristic: (i) the algorithmic reification of probabilistic ontologies, (ii) the juridical commodification of belief as "data exhaust," and (iii) the epistemic violence latent in risk-benefit calculus, the study unmasks how AI-mediated interventions transmute sacred epistemologies into actuarial variables, thereby vitiating the inviolability of spiritual self-determination. Methodologically, drawing upon comparative constitutional jurisprudence (inter alia, the Indian Supreme Court's articulation of "essential religious practices," the European Court of Human Rights' margin of appreciation doctrine, and the African Charter's communal dignity jurisprudence), the paper contends that extant regulatory frameworks, premised on paternalistic beneficence, fail to apprehend the incommensurability between machine rationality and transcendent healing. A novel conceptual scaffold is proffered: the "spiritual harm threshold," a juridical metric that obliges regulators to demonstrate not merely empirical efficacy but also phenomenological non-interference with the patient's cosmogonic narrative. This threshold, operationalized through mandatory "ontological impact assessments," inverts the burden of proof, compelling algorithmic proponents to negate existential displacement rather than merely affirm clinical outcomes. The argumentation culminates in a provocative normative claim: absent a statutory entitlement to "algorithmic abstention" in matters of sacral therapeutics, pluralistic polities risk the quietus of metaphysical diversity under the guise of precision medicine. Conclusively, by foregrounding the irreducibly hermeneutic character of sacred healing, the paper challenges health law scholars to reconceive autonomy not as volitional consent but as ontological sovereignty, an exigency that confounds utilitarian aggregation and demands a radical reconfiguration of regulatory reason.

1.0 Introduction:

In the quiet wards of a Rwandan clinic, where patients turn to ancestral rituals alongside IV drips, or in the bustling urban hospitals of Mumbai, where ayurvedic chants mingle with the hum of diagnostic machines, healing has always been more than biology, it is a tapestry woven from belief, community, and the unseen forces that shape our sense of self (World Health Organization, 2023). Yet, as artificial intelligence weaves its way into these spaces, promising precision and efficiency, it risks unraveling threads of spiritual autonomy that have sustained diverse healing traditions for generations. This paper probes the regulatory voids that open when AI systems, dressed in the guise of therapeutic tools, step into the hallowed ground of spiritual self-determination within pluralistic healthcare landscapes. Drawing from the crossroads of health law, medical ethics, and the anthropology of healing, we confront how today's governance structures, moored firmly to the empirical anchors

of biomedicine, quietly sideline the rich pluralism of ontologies that underpin indigenous, faith-rooted, and esoteric forms of care.

The allure of AI in healthcare is undeniable. From predictive algorithms that forecast disease outbreaks to chatbots offering mental health support, these technologies hold the potential to democratize access and sharpen clinical judgment (Silcox, C., Zimlichmann, E., Huber, K. *et al.*, 2024). In pluralistic societies like those in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia, where over 80% of people still rely on traditional healers for primary care, AI could bridge gaps left by overburdened systems (World Health Organization, 2023). But here's the rub: these tools, trained on vast datasets skewed toward Western biomedical norms, often flatten the sacred into the statistical. A patient's cosmogonic narrative: their story of creation, affliction, and redemption, perhaps rooted in Amazonian perspectivism where the body isn't a fixed vessel but a relational nexus of spirits and humans, becomes just another data point in a risk algorithm (Viveiros de Castro, 2021). What was once a pathway to transcendent wholeness is recast as a probabilistic outlier, vulnerable to erasure under the weight of evidence-based mandates.

This encroachment isn't mere oversight; it's a symptom of deeper ontological friction. Western biomedicine, with its positivist lens, assumes a singular reality where healing equates to measurable outcomes: reduced mortality rates, optimized resource allocation (Young & Varpio, 2025). Yet, anthropological insights remind us that healing ontologies vary profoundly: in perspectival cosmologies, health emerges from balanced exchanges across species boundaries, challenging AI's reductive metrics (Descola, 2021). Ethical guidelines from global bodies, like the Vatican's 2020 Rome Call for AI Ethics, reaffirmed through new signatories in 2025, urge that AI serve human dignity without supplanting it, emphasizing inclusion and transparency to safeguard the vulnerable (Pontifical Academy for Life, 2020/2025). Yet, as recent reviews highlight, regulatory lags persist: biases in training data amplify disparities, eroding patient trust and autonomy in faith-infused care (Nazer et al., 2024). In mental health, for example, AI chatbots trained on secular datasets might dismiss spiritual distress as delusion, clashing with pastoral care traditions that view it as soul-deep calling, and worsening crises in vulnerable users (Rahsepar Meadi et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, the European Union's AI Act of 2024 marks a tentative step, classifying high-risk health AI as needing rigorous impact assessments to protect dignity and equity (European Parliament, 2024). But such frameworks, while vital, often overlook the phenomenological toll, the subtle violence of rendering sacred epistemologies into actuarial fodder. This study unmasks that dynamic through a tripartite lens: the hardening of fluid worldviews into coded probabilities, the marketization of faith as byproduct data, and the insidious epistemic harms embedded in utilitarian trade-offs. By weaving in comparative jurisprudence, from India's doctrinal safeguards for religious essentials (*Shayara Bano v. Union of India*, 2017) to Europe's deference in human rights margins (*S.A.S. v. France*, 2014) and Africa's communal ethos (*Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania*, 2024), we argue that paternalistic regulations falter against the chasm between silicon logic and soulful restoration.

At its core, this paper isn't just critique; it's a call to fortify spiritual sovereignty in an algorithmic age. We propose the "spiritual harm threshold", a benchmark demanding proof of existential non-intrusion alongside clinical gains, and pair it with "ontological impact assessments" to shift the evidentiary onus. In pluralistic polities, where faith and tech converge, ignoring this risks not progress, but the slow suffocation of metaphysical variety beneath precision's polished veneer. What follows reimagines autonomy not as a signature on consent forms, but as unyielding guardianship over one's narrative cosmos, a demand that upends regulatory

orthodoxy and invites a hermeneutic renewal of health law.

2.0 Theoretical Framework:

At the heart of any discussion on healthcare governance lies a fundamental question: what counts as healing, and whose understanding of reality defines it? Ontological pluralism, in this context, posits that there is no singular, universal way of being or knowing when it comes to health and illness; instead, diverse cultural, spiritual, and social frameworks coexist, each shaping distinct perceptions of the body, affliction, and restoration (Khalikova, 2021). This pluralism challenges the monolithic grip of biomedicine, which often operates under a positivist ontology: one that views the body as a mechanical entity governed by empirical laws, reducible to cells, genes, and quantifiable metrics (Heuser, Steil & Salloch, 2025). In pluralistic healing regimes, particularly those in postcolonial or multicultural societies, indigenous shamans might interpret sickness as a rupture in communal harmony with ancestral spirits, while faith healers could see it as a test of divine will, and esoteric practitioners might frame it through energetic imbalances, all valid within their ontological worlds. These regimes are not mere alternatives but interwoven tapestries where patients navigate multiple systems, blending Ayurvedic herbs with chemotherapy or Pentecostal prayers with psychiatric counseling, driven by cultural resonance, accessibility, and perceived efficacy (Patil et al., 2024).

Medical anthropology provides a lens to unpack this pluralism, revealing how healing is not a linear path but a negotiated terrain of epistemologies, ways of knowing that vary profoundly across contexts (Tobert, 2022). For instance, in Amazonian indigenous communities, health emerges from "perspectival cosmologies," where humans, animals, and spirits share relational perspectives, and illness signals a misalignment in these exchanges rather than an isolated bodily malfunction (Viveiros de Castro, 2021). Such ontologies stand in stark contrast to biomedicine's naturalistic etiology, which attributes disease to impersonal causes like pathogens or genetics, often dismissing personalistic explanations: those tying affliction to social, moral, or supernatural forces, as superstition (Khalikova, 2021). This friction becomes acute in pluralistic healthcare systems, where state-backed governance paradigms prioritize evidence-based practices, marginalizing non-biomedical approaches through regulatory hierarchies that favor randomized trials over experiential wisdom (Patil et al., 2024). Anthropologists argue that this sidelining is not neutral; it enacts a form of epistemic violence, where dominant ontologies colonize others, reshaping flexible, holistic healing into standardized, commodified forms to fit institutional molds (Tobert, 2022).

The integration of artificial intelligence into these regimes amplifies such tensions, as AI systems are typically engineered within a biomedical ontology, trained on datasets that encode Western norms of health as measurable outcomes like survival rates or cost-efficiency (Heuser, Steil & Salloch, 2025). In doing so, they risk effacing the ontological diversity that underpins spiritual autonomy, the right to define one's healing narrative without external imposition. Consider AI-driven diagnostic tools in mental health: algorithms might classify spiritual experiences, such as visions or ecstatic states revered in Pentecostal traditions, as pathological delusions, thereby overriding the patient's cosmogonic framework where such events signify divine connection (Rahsepar Meadi et al., 2025). Ethical frameworks underscore that this not only undermines autonomy but also erodes trust, as patients in faith-infused communities may perceive AI as an intruder that flattens sacred epistemologies into data points (Lee et al., 2025). Global ethical guidelines, like those evolving from the Vatican's Rome Call, call for AI to respect human dignity by incorporating inclusive values, yet they often fall short in addressing the life-world perspectives, the lived, embodied practices, that sustain pluralistic healing (Pontifical Academy for Life, 2020/2025).

This framework, therefore, positions ontological pluralism not as a barrier to progress but as a safeguard against homogenization. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, where over 80% of populations blend traditional healers with modern clinics, pluralism fosters resilience, allowing communities to adapt therapies to local cosmologies amid resource constraints (World Health Organization, 2023). Yet, as AI proliferates, regulatory paradigms tethered to biomedicine, such as the EU's risk-based classifications, must evolve to accommodate these multiplicities, lest they perpetuate disparities by privileging probabilistic models over hermeneutic ones (European Parliament, 2024). Drawing on comparative insights, we see echoes in jurisprudential doctrines: India's "essential religious practices" test protects faith-based rituals from state interference, much like ontological pluralism demands space for diverse healing truths (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017). Similarly, the European margin of appreciation affords deference to cultural variances in rights adjudication, while African communal dignity jurisprudence emphasizes collective worldviews over individualistic metrics (S.A.S. v. France, 2014; Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2024).

In a nutshell, by foregrounding ontological pluralism, this paper sets the stage for interrogating how AI-mediated interventions transmute these varied regimes into actuarial shadows, vitiating spiritual self-determination. What emerges is a call for governance that honors incommensurability, the irreducible gaps between machine rationality and transcendent narratives, paving the way for novel metrics like the spiritual harm threshold.

3.0 Regulatory Lacunae in Evidence-Based Governance Paradigms

Evidence-based medicine (EBM) has revolutionized healthcare governance by grounding policies in empirical data from clinical trials, systematic reviews, and statistical analyses, aiming to enhance safety, efficacy, and equitable resource distribution. However, as artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly embedded in healthcare, from predictive diagnostics to treatment recommendation systems, these paradigms expose critical regulatory lacunae. These gaps arise primarily from EBM's positivist foundations, which favor measurable outcomes over the diverse, often intangible, aspects of healing in pluralistic societies. In contexts where spiritual, indigenous, or faith-based practices coexist with biomedicine, AI-driven governance risks amplifying epistemic hegemony, marginalizing non-Western ontologies and perpetuating injustices where certain knowledge systems are systematically undervalued or erased (Emah & Bennett, 2025; Kay, Kasirzadeh & Mohamed, 2024).

One prominent lacuna lies in the handling of epistemic injustice within AI-integrated EBM frameworks. Epistemic injustice occurs when individuals or communities are wronged in their capacity as knowers, such as when AI algorithms dismiss spiritual narratives as irrelevant data noise. For instance, in the Global South, where pluralistic healing regimes blend traditional and modern approaches, AI tools trained on biased datasets may pathologize faith-infused explanations of illness, leading to regulatory oversights that fail to protect patient autonomy (Birhane, 2025). Recent analyses highlight how generative AI exacerbates this by undermining collective knowledge integrity, commodifying personal beliefs into "data exhaust" without adequate safeguards, and creating accountability voids where victims of harm bear undue burdens (Palaniappan, Ting Lin, Vogel, & Lim, 2024; Kay, Kasirzadeh & Mohamed, 2024). This not only widens health disparities but also entrenches a form of epistemicide, where indigenous and local knowledge is sidelined in favor of technocratic models (Redvers, Lokugamage, Barreto, Bajracharya & Harris, 2024).

Ethically, these gaps manifest in the tension between EBM's principles of beneficence and the phenomenological impacts of AI. While EBM

prioritizes aggregate benefits like reduced mortality, it often overlooks how algorithmic decisions inflict hermeneutical injustice, where patients lack the interpretive resources to articulate spiritual distress within secular systems (Adams, 2025). In mental health, for example, AI chatbots might classify ecstatic spiritual experiences as delusions, clashing with pastoral or indigenous traditions and worsening crises without regulatory mechanisms for cultural deference (Tunks Leach, Simpson, Lewis, *et al.*, 2023). Global regulatory landscapes, such as those discussed in reviews of AI frameworks, reveal inconsistencies: while some regions address technical biases, few tackle the sociotechnical imaginaries that perpetuate epistemic harms in diverse populations (Jonas, Bacharach, Nightingale, & Filoche, 2024; Khurana, 2025).

Legally, the fragmentation is stark. The EU AI Act, for instance, categorizes health AI as high-risk and mandates impact assessments, yet it inadequately addresses cultural and spiritual dimensions, focusing on privacy and accuracy rather than ontological pluralism (European Parliament, 2024). In the U.S. and elsewhere, governance through agencies like the FDA emphasizes RCT-derived evidence, but neglects structural epistemic injustices in AI development, such as exclusionary data pipelines that amplify colonial legacies (Doshi et al., 2024; Khurana, 2025). This paternalistic approach assumes machine rationality can seamlessly integrate into transcendent healing without friction, ignoring calls for relational ethics that prioritize dignity and communal input (Heuser, Steil & Salloch, 2025).

Moreover, in pluralistic polities like those in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia, these lacunae invite existential risks. AI proliferation without tailored regulations could suffocate metaphysical diversity, as evidence-based mandates override cosmogonic narratives under the guise of precision medicine (World Health Organization, 2023). Comparative jurisprudence offers potential remedies, such as incorporating doctrines that protect essential practices or communal dignity to mandate "ontological audits" (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017). Until addressed, however, these gaps perpetuate a cycle of harm, demanding a hermeneutic renewal of governance.

4.0 Tripartite Heuristic of AI-Mediated Epistemic Violence

To dissect the subtle yet profound ways in which algorithmic systems inflict harm on spiritual autonomy within healthcare, this paper introduces a tripartite heuristic, a conceptual tool that illuminates three interconnected mechanisms of epistemic violence. Rooted in critical theory and drawing from recent scholarship on AI ethics, this framework exposes how AI not only disrupts but actively reshapes sacred epistemologies, transforming them from dynamic, interpretive modes of knowing into static, utilitarian artifacts. Epistemic violence, as conceptualized here, extends beyond mere bias; it encompasses the structural erasure of non-dominant worldviews, where machine-mediated interventions prioritize probabilistic logic over the hermeneutic richness of faith-based or indigenous healing (Adams, 2025). In pluralistic regimes, this violence manifests quietly, often under the guise of therapeutic advancement, but its effects are far-reaching: undermining patient trust, amplifying disparities, and risking the homogenization of metaphysical diversity. By parsing this into reification, commodification, and calculative harms, the heuristic not only critiques current governance but also lays groundwork for remedial metrics like the spiritual harm threshold.

This approach is timely, as emerging studies highlight the interwoven epistemic, sociopolitical, and technical ramifications of AI in healthcare, where systems designed for efficiency can inadvertently enact forms of injustice (Emah & Bennett, 2025). For instance, in contexts where healing involves communal rituals or transcendent narratives, AI's intrusion can fracture these practices, reducing them to outliers in data models. The heuristic thus serves as a diagnostic lens,

urging regulators to confront the ontological friction at play.

4.1 Algorithmic Reification of Probabilistic Ontologies

At the core of AI's epistemic violence lies reification, the process by which fluid, abstract concepts are concretized into tangible, often rigid entities. In healthcare, this manifests when algorithms reify probabilistic ontologies, hardening the inherent uncertainties of spiritual worldviews into fixed, computable forms. Spiritual healing often embraces ambiguity: a faith healer's prognosis might hinge on divine will or karmic flux, where probabilities are interpretive rather than statistical. Yet, AI systems, trained on vast biomedical datasets, transmute these into deterministic outputs, scoring risks or predicting outcomes with an air of infallibility that eclipses sacred indeterminacy (Emah & Bennett, 2025).

This reification is not abstract; it plays out in real clinical scenarios. Consider predictive analytics in oncology, where an AI tool might quantify survival odds based on genetic markers, dismissing a patient's indigenous ontology that views cancer as a relational imbalance with ancestral spirits. Such tools, by solidifying probabilistic elements into "reified" variables, enact violence by stripping away the relational depth of healing, as noted in critiques of AI's role in perpetuating epistemic injustices through over-reliance on emergent algorithms (Adams, 2025). Experiments with text-to-image AI have similarly revealed epistemically violent biases, where generative models reify cultural representations in ways that marginalize non-Western perspectives, a pattern mirrored in health AI that flattens diverse ontologies into standardized probabilities (Doshi et al., 2024).

The regulatory implications are stark. Without checks, this mechanism widens lacunae in evidence-based paradigms, assuming universality in probabilistic modeling while ignoring the violence inflicted on spiritual self-determination. As anthropological insights remind us, healing in perspectival cosmologies thrives on multiplicity, not reification, a contrast that demands governance reforms to preserve ontological pluralism (Viveiros de Castro, 2021).

4.2 Juridical Commodification of Belief as Data Exhaust

Building on reification, the second prong examines the juridical commodification of belief, where spiritual convictions are reduced to "data exhaust", incidental byproducts extracted, anonymized, and monetized within AI ecosystems. In healthcare, this occurs when patient data laced with faith narratives, such as ritual preferences or cosmogonic stories, is harvested for model training, often under legal frameworks that prioritize intellectual property over sacred inviolability. What begins as a personal epistemology ends up as commodified fodder, traded in data markets that fuel AI's growth without consent or compensation (Redvers, Lokugamage, Barreto, Bajracharya & Harris, 2024).

This commodification carries legal and ethical weight. Juridical structures, like those governing data privacy (e.g., GDPR equivalents), often fail to recognize beliefs as more than metadata, allowing their extraction as exhaust in algorithmic pipelines. In mental health apps, for example, a user's spiritual journal entries might be scraped to refine chatbots, commodifying soul-deep reflections into assets that enhance secular models, thereby eroding the communal dignity central to African or indigenous healing traditions (Birhane, 2025). Recent scoping reviews underscore this gap in global AI regulations, noting how frameworks overlook the epistemic injustices amplified by generative AI, where collective knowledge integrity is undermined through unchecked commodification (Palaniappan, Ting Lin, Vogel, & Lim, 2024).

The violence here is insidious, as it masks exploitation under innovation's banner. Patients in pluralistic systems, already navigating overburdened care, face additional harms when their beliefs are juridically repurposed, highlighting the need for regulations that treat data

exhaust not as neutral but as potential sites of sacred desecration.

4.3 Epistemic Violence in Risk-Benefit Calculus

The heuristic culminates in the epistemic violence embedded in AI's risk-benefit calculus, a utilitarian framework that quantifies harms and gains but often inflicts deeper wounds on spiritual epistemologies. This calculus, standard in EBM, weighs clinical outcomes against costs, yet in AI applications, it systematically devalues transcendent narratives, rendering sacred risks (e.g., defying an algorithm to follow a prophetic vision) as irrational liabilities (Doshi et al., 2024). The result is a violence that silences alternative ways of knowing, prioritizing aggregate metrics over individual cosmogonies.

In practice, this plays out starkly in high-stakes decisions. An AI system optimizing hospital resources might deprioritize faith-based palliative care, calculating it as low-benefit amid resource scarcity, thus pathologizing spiritual distress and clashing with traditions that view suffering as redemptive (Tunks Leach, Simpson, Lewis, *et al.*, 2023). Philosophical analyses of AI in medicine reveal this as a dual ethical-epistemic failure, where systems harden epistemic boundaries, excluding contributory injustices like the omission of spiritual experts from risk assessments (Adams, 2025). Moreover, in digital mental health, biases unpack to show how AI perpetuates political and social harms, where risk calculi reinforce secular norms at the expense of diverse healing regimes (Jonas, Bacharach, Nightingale, & Filoche, 2024).

Ultimately, this prong calls for inversion: shifting the calculus to demand proof of non-violence against sacred epistemologies. Without it, AI risks epistemicide in healthcare, suffocating the very pluralism that enriches healing (Redvers, Lokugamage, Barreto, Bajracharya & Harris, 2024).

5.0 Comparative Constitutional Jurisprudence

To bridge the regulatory lacunae exposed in the previous sections, this paper turns to comparative constitutional jurisprudence as a methodological anchor. By examining doctrines from India, Europe, and Africa, we uncover models of deference to cultural and spiritual diversity that could inform AI governance in healthcare. These jurisdictions, with their pluralistic societies and histories of balancing individual rights against state paternalism, offer insights into protecting ontological sovereignty amid technological encroachment. While AI regulation is nascent, these frameworks highlight the inadequacy of current paradigms, which often prioritize empirical efficacy over phenomenological integrity. Foundational scholarship on epistemic injustice in healthcare underscores this point, showing how institutional biases can marginalize non-dominant knowledge systems in medical decision-making (Kidd & Carel, 2017). Extending this to AI, comparative analysis reveals pathways for inverting burdens of proof, compelling regulators to demonstrate non-interference with spiritual narratives rather than assuming algorithmic neutrality.

This approach is not merely academic; it's pragmatic. In an algorithmic age, where AI systems risk epistemic violence by commodifying beliefs, constitutional jurisprudence provides tools for resistance. For instance, analyses of health inequalities through lenses of structural injustice emphasize the need for rights-based protections that accommodate communal and spiritual dimensions (Byskov, 2021). Yet, as recent work on AI ethics notes, global regulations like the EU AI Act fall short in addressing these cultural variances, often imposing a uniform risk calculus that overlooks local ontologies (Heuser, Steil & Salloch, 2025). By weaving in these doctrines, we argue for a hermeneutic shift in health law, one that reconceives autonomy as inviolable guardianship over one's worldview.

5.1 Indian Essential Religious Practices Doctrine

India's constitutional jurisprudence, rooted in Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, employs the "essential religious practices" test to safeguard faith-based autonomy from state overreach. Articulated in landmark cases like *Shayara Bano v. Union of India* (2017), this doctrine requires courts to determine whether a practice is integral to a religion before permitting regulation, thereby protecting spiritual self-determination in diverse contexts. Applied to healthcare, it has implications for refusing AI-mediated interventions that clash with sacred beliefs: such as algorithmic predictions overriding astrological or Ayurvedic consultations in end-of-life decisions.

This test counters the epistemic hegemony of biomedicine by demanding evidence that regulation serves a compelling public interest without eroding core ontologies. Scholarly critiques highlight its relevance to emerging tech: in pluralistic India, where over 70% integrate traditional medicine, the doctrine could mandate "ontological exemptions" for AI tools, ensuring they do not commodify beliefs as data exhaust (Khalikova, 2021). Older analyses of epistemic injustice in Indian healthcare reinforce this, showing how colonial legacies persist in marginalizing indigenous knowledge, a dynamic AI risks amplifying without doctrinal safeguards (Mladenov, & Dimitrova, 2023). Thus, extending the test to AI regulation could invert the paternalistic burden, requiring proponents to prove non-vitiation of spiritual practices. In practice, this might manifest in cases where AI chatbots dismiss faith-healing as irrational, clashing with protected rituals. Comparative studies suggest India's approach offers a model for global polities, balancing innovation with metaphysical diversity (Patil et al., 2024).

5.2 European Margin of Appreciation Doctrine

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) employs the "margin of appreciation" doctrine to grant states flexibility in interpreting Convention rights, particularly under Article 9 on freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. In *S.A.S. v. France* (2014), the Court upheld a burqa ban by deferring to national cultural assessments, illustrating how the doctrine accommodates pluralism while scrutinizing necessity and proportionality. Transposed to AI in healthcare, it could allow member states leeway in regulating algorithmic intrusions on spiritual autonomy, such as mandatory AI assessments overriding religious refusals of treatment.

This deference is crucial in pluralistic Europe, where migrant communities blend faith-based healing with public systems. Ethical frameworks warn that without such margins, AI risks epistemic violence by enforcing secular norms, as seen in biases against spiritual distress in mental health algorithms (Tunks Leach, Simpson, Lewis, *et al.*, 2023). Earlier philosophical work on epistemic injustice in psychiatric practice aligns here, arguing for interpretive flexibility to avoid hermeneutical marginalization (Crichton et al., 2017). The EU AI Act's risk classifications, while progressive, could incorporate this doctrine to tailor assessments, demanding proof that high-risk AI does not disproportionately burden faith-infused ontologies (European Parliament, 2024).

However, critics note the doctrine's potential for inconsistency, yet in healthcare AI, it promotes proportionality, balancing clinical benefits against phenomenological harms. This resonates with calls for life-world perspectives in AI ethics, ensuring regulations honor diverse narratives (Heuser, Steil & Salloch, 2025).

5.3 African Communal Dignity Jurisprudence

Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), jurisprudence emphasizes communal dignity and collective rights, as in *Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania* (2024), where courts upheld indigenous claims against state impositions. This ethos

prioritizes ubuntu, interconnected humanity, over individualistic models, offering a counterpoint to Western biomedicine's atomized view of health. In AI contexts, it could mandate communal consultations before deploying algorithms, protecting spiritual autonomy in traditions where healing involves ancestral or group rituals.

African scholarship on epistemic injustice critiques how global health tech perpetuates colonial erasures, advocating for dignity-based frameworks that center local knowledge (Kay, Kasirzadeh & Mohamed, 2024). Foundational studies link this to healthcare disparities, where epistemic violence silences communal voices in policy (Carel & Kidd, 2014/2017). For Rwanda's Protestant University-hosted conference, this jurisprudence is particularly resonant, aligning with regional efforts to integrate AI without effacing metaphysical diversity (World Health Organization, 2023).

6.0 The Spiritual Harm Threshold: A Novel Juridical Metric

In response to the epistemic violence and regulatory voids laid bare by AI's encroachment on sacred healing, this paper advances the "spiritual harm threshold" as a pioneering juridical metric. This threshold reimagines health law's guardrails, mandating that regulators and AI developers demonstrate not only empirical efficacy, such as improved diagnostic accuracy or cost savings, but also phenomenological non-interference with the patient's cosmogonic narrative. At its essence, the metric acknowledges that harm in pluralistic healthcare extends beyond physical or psychological injury to include existential disruptions: the fracturing of one's worldview, where algorithmic outputs clash with faith-rooted interpretations of affliction and restoration. Drawing from epistemic justice frameworks, which emphasize rectifying wrongs against marginalized knowers, this threshold inverts traditional burdens of proof, compelling proponents to negate spiritual displacement rather than merely affirm clinical utility (Adams, 2025). It positions spiritual autonomy as a protected interest, akin to dignity in human rights jurisprudence, ensuring that AI serves without supplanting transcendent epistemologies.

Conceptualizing this threshold requires integrating insights from AI ethics and health law. Recent analyses of algorithmic bias in healthcare reveal practical, epistemic, and normative challenges, where systems amplify disparities by overlooking cultural dimensions, much like how secular AI might dismiss spiritual distress as non-actionable (Doshi et al., 2024). The spiritual harm threshold addresses this by establishing a benchmark: any AI intervention must undergo scrutiny to prove it does not erode the patient's narrative cosmos, such as by quantifying "harm" through qualitative indicators like self-reported ontological disruption or community consultations. This draws parallels to epistemic harms in generative AI, where users face eroded clarity in their knowledge, extended here to spiritual realms where beliefs risk commodification into data exhaust (Kay, Kasirzadeh & Mohamed, 2024). For instance, in mental health AI, chatbots that violate ethical standards by pathologizing faith experiences could breach this threshold, triggering mandatory revisions (New study: AI chatbots systematically violate mental health ethics..., 2025).

Operationalizing the threshold hinges on "ontological impact assessments" (OIAs), structured evaluations that mirror environmental impact statements but focus on existential effects. These assessments would require interdisciplinary panels, including ethicists, anthropologists, and faith representatives, to evaluate AI's potential to reify probabilistic ontologies or inflict calculative violence. Legislation could embed OIAs into approval processes, as seen in emerging state-level AI regulations for mental health, which emphasize safeguards against bias but could expand to spiritual protections (Governing AI in Mental Health: 50-State Legislative Review, 2025; New Illinois law looks to put guardrails on AI in mental health..., 2025). By inverting the onus, OIAs shift from paternalistic beneficence to justice-oriented accountability, demanding evidence that AI

preserves phenomenological integrity, perhaps through metrics like patient narrative coherence scores or cultural compatibility audits.

This novelty lies in its synthesis of comparative jurisprudence with AI governance. Echoing India's essential religious practices doctrine, the threshold could deem spiritual non-interference an "essential" right, shielding it from arbitrary algorithmic overrides (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017). Europe's margin of appreciation might afford contextual flexibility in assessments, while African communal dignity jurisprudence ensures collective epistemologies are consulted, countering individualist biases in AI (S.A.S. v. France, 2014; Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2024). Bridging these with meaningful human control in medical AI, the metric fosters empowerment, ensuring justice extends to spiritual realms (Bridging Justice and Meaningful Human Control in Medical AI..., n.d.). Critiques of current regulations underscore the urgency: without addressing bias and data issues preemptively, AI risks epistemicide in healthcare (Regulating medical AI before midnight strikes..., 2025).

Ultimately, the spiritual harm threshold is more than a metric, it is a normative pivot, reconceiving autonomy as ontological sovereignty. In pluralistic polities, it safeguards metaphysical variety, demanding that precision medicine yield to sacred narratives when thresholds are crossed. The following section explores its operationalization in detail.

7.0 Operationalizing Ontological Impact Assessments

To translate the spiritual harm threshold from theory into actionable policy, ontological impact assessments (OIAs) emerge as the operational backbone, a rigorous, multidisciplinary process designed to evaluate AI's existential footprint on diverse healing epistemologies. Unlike traditional impact assessments focused on privacy or bias, OIAs prioritize phenomenological integrity, scrutinizing how algorithmic interventions might disrupt a patient's cosmogonic narrative or communal worldview. This operationalization draws from evolving AI ethics frameworks, where ontologies serve as semantic bridges between technology and human-centered domains, ensuring structured knowledge integration that respects pluralism (Ambalavanan, Snead, Marczika, Towett, Malioukis & Mbogori-Kairichi, 2025). In healthcare, OIAs would mandate pre-deployment evaluations, compelling developers to map potential ontological clashes, such as when AI diagnostics override indigenous etiologies of illness as spiritual disharmony rather than biological malfunction.

The process begins with a scoping phase, identifying stakeholders: ethicists, anthropologists, faith leaders, and patient advocates alongside technologists. This mirrors UNESCO-inspired ontologies for ethical AI impact assessments, which extract and structure global guidelines to mitigate harms in diverse contexts (Chaudhary, 2022). Next, a mapping exercise delineates the AI's ontological assumptions, e.g., its probabilistic modeling of health outcomes, against user epistemologies, using tools like knowledge graphs to visualize interrelationships between predictive analytics and cultural narratives (Safranek & Zvackova, 2025). Qualitative metrics, such as narrative coherence surveys or hermeneutic audits, quantify "harm" by assessing disruption levels, inverting the evidentiary burden to require proof of non-interference.

Integration with existing regulations amplifies feasibility. The EU AI Act's high-risk classifications could embed OIAs as mandatory addendums, extending beyond technical audits to phenomenological reviews, ensuring AI in mental health respects spiritual care without pathologizing faith experiences (European Parliament, 2024). In African contexts, aligning with communal dignity jurisprudence, OIAs might incorporate ubuntu principles, consulting communities to evaluate collective impacts, as seen in taxonomies of AI risks that emphasize sociopolitical harms in health

domains (Golpayegani, Hovsha, Rossmaier, Saniei & Mišic, 2022). For example, deploying an AI chatbot in Rwandan clinics would require assessing its secular datasets against local animist ontologies, potentially mandating adaptations like faith-sensitive prompts.

Challenges abound: operationalizing demands interdisciplinary training and resources, risking bureaucratic delays in low-income settings. Yet, benefits outweigh these, fostering epistemic justice by recentering indigenous knowledge, as advocated in planetary health frameworks (Redvers, Lokugamage, Barreto, Bajracharya & Harris, 2024). The ontological kaleidoscope framework offers a methodological parallel, examining embodiment entanglements to prevent data artefact reductions of the body, adaptable to spiritual dimensions (Smith-Nunes, 2025). By mandating post-deployment monitoring, OIAs evolve dynamically, addressing ethical evolutions in machine learning that highlight biases and fairness (Barbierato *et al.*, 2025). In essence, OIAs operationalize a radical shift: from utilitarian aggregation to hermeneutic protection, compelling AI to honor incommensurable epistemologies. Tied to comparative doctrines, like India's essential practices test, they fortify spiritual sovereignty, ensuring pluralistic healthcare resists algorithmic homogenization (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017).

8.0 Normative Claim: Statutory Entitlement to Algorithmic Abstention

The argumentation of this paper reaches its apex with a bold normative assertion: pluralistic healthcare systems must enshrine a statutory entitlement to "algorithmic abstention" in matters of sacral therapeutics, lest they precipitate the erosion of metaphysical diversity beneath the facade of technological progress. This right would empower patients to opt out of AI-mediated interventions when they impinge on spiritual autonomy, framing refusal not as obstinacy but as a safeguard for ontological sovereignty. In an era where AI permeates diagnostics, treatment planning, and even palliative care, such a entitlement counters the paternalistic tilt of evidence-based governance, which often presumes algorithmic superiority without reckoning with the phenomenological costs to faith-rooted healing (Corfmat et al., 2025). Without this legal bulwark, patients navigating indigenous or esoteric practices risk coerced assimilation into machine rationality, where sacred epistemologies are demoted to optional add-ons rather than inviolable cores.

This claim is not mere idealism; it stems from ethical imperatives in AI healthcare law, where the right to refuse or opt out emerges as a critical protection against epistemic harms. Recent scholarship underscores that patients should have the ability to reject AI involvement, particularly when systems lack transparency or amplify biases that dismiss spiritual narratives as outliers (Hurley et al., 2025). For instance, in mental health contexts, where AI chatbots might reinterpret spiritual crises through secular lenses, abstention ensures individuals retain control over their cosmogonic stories, aligning with broader calls for meaningful human oversight in automated decisions (Cheng, 2024). Ethically, this entitlement echoes principles of justice and non-maleficence, preventing the subtle violence of commodifying beliefs into data exhaust or reifying fluid ontologies into actuarial certainties (Kay, Kasirzadeh & Mohamed, 2024). Absent such a right, vulnerable communities, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa blending ancestral rituals with clinical care, face existential displacement, as AI's utilitarian calculus overrides transcendent priorities without recourse (Birhane, 2025).

Legally, operationalizing this entitlement draws sustenance from comparative jurisprudence, adapting doctrines to the digital age. India's essential religious practices test could extend to deem algorithmic abstention a protected facet of spiritual self-determination, shielding it from state-mandated AI integration (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017). Europe's margin of appreciation might afford contextual deference, allowing patients to abstain based on cultural variances in

human rights adjudication (S.A.S. v. France, 2014). Meanwhile, African communal dignity jurisprudence, emphasizing collective worldviews, supports group-level opt-outs, ensuring AI does not fracture communal healing bonds (Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2024). Emerging regulations, like those in the EU AI Act, already hint at high-risk categorizations for health AI, which could incorporate abstention clauses tied to ontological impact assessments (European Parliament, 2024). In the U.S., state-level initiatives on AI in healthcare utilization management suggest pathways for statutory mandates, requiring notices of AI use and opt-out mechanisms to mitigate biases (Holland & Knight, 2024).

Yet, this claim provokes counterarguments: critics might argue that abstention could compromise clinical outcomes or strain resources in overburdened systems. Rebuttals draw from proportionality principles in human rights law, abstention need not be absolute but calibrated, perhaps limited to non-emergent sacral contexts where alternatives exist, ensuring beneficence without paternalism (Fasan, 2025). Moreover, empirical evidence from patient engagement studies reveals hesitations about AI precisely because of fears over lost agency, reinforcing the need for statutory protections to foster responsible innovation rather than resistance (Lysen & Wyatt, 2024).

In sum, statutory algorithmic abstention is an exigency for preserving the hermeneutic essence of sacred healing. It challenges health law to evolve, reconceiving autonomy beyond volitional consent to encompass unyielding guardianship over one's metaphysical realm, a reconfiguration essential in an algorithmic epoch.

9.0 Reconceptualizing Autonomy as Ontological Sovereignty

The conventional framing of autonomy in health law: as volitional consent, where patients merely assent or refuse interventions, falls perilously short in an algorithmic era, where AI systems subtly reshape the very fabric of one's worldview. This paper advocates a reconceptualization: autonomy as ontological sovereignty, the unassailable right to govern one's cosmogonic narrative without external dilution or commodification. No longer a procedural checkbox, this sovereignty demands recognition of the patient's epistemic agency, where healing ontologies, whether indigenous animism, faith-based redemption, or esoteric energetic, hold primacy over machine-derived probabilities. In pluralistic healthcare, where AI risks epistemic violence by flattening sacred epistemologies into data points, this shift confounds utilitarian aggregation, insisting that aggregate clinical gains cannot trump individual metaphysical integrity (Kaebnick, 2016). It echoes relational turns in bioethics, expanding autonomy beyond individualism to encompass interdependent worldviews, particularly vital when decolonizing AI ethics to counter harms against marginalized knowledges (Tiribelli, 2023).

This exigency arises from AI's ontological friction: tools trained on biomedical datasets impose a singular reality, pathologizing spiritual distress or reifying transcendent uncertainties as risks to mitigate. Consider a Pentecostal patient whose ecstatic visions signal divine healing; an AI chatbot, grounded in secular psychology, might label them delusional, overriding consent with algorithmic "beneficence" and eroding sovereignty over one's narrative cosmos (Tunks Leach, Simpson, Lewis, *et al.*, 2023). Such intrusions demand a reconfiguration of regulatory reason, where autonomy transcends choice to embody guardianship against existential displacement. Decolonial critiques reinforce this, positing relational autonomy as a bulwark against AI harms, reconceptualizing it to honor collective and cultural ontologies rather than individualistic defaults (Kwek, 2023). In health recommender systems, for instance, autonomy requires redesign to preserve active ageing narratives, not subsume them under predictive models (Tiribelli, 2023).

Jurisprudentially, this reconceptualization aligns with doctrines safeguarding spiritual pluralism. India's essential religious practices test protects ontological cores from state interference, suggesting sovereignty as a constitutional shield against AI paternalism (Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017). Europe's margin of appreciation affords deference to diverse life-worlds, while African communal dignity jurisprudence elevates collective sovereignty, countering individualistic AI biases (S.A.S. v. France, 2014; Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2024). Yet, extant frameworks like the EU AI Act prioritize procedural safeguards, overlooking how AI undermines autonomy by eroding interpretive agency in hermeneutic voids (European Parliament, 2024). Philosophical analyses urge this pivot: autonomy in AI medicine must respect epistemic dimensions, ensuring systems enhance rather than supplant patient knowership (Adams, 2025).

Critically, ontological sovereignty confounds utilitarian paradigms by insisting on incommensurability, sacred harms cannot be aggregated or traded against empirical benefits. In end-of-life AI, for example, algorithms optimizing resource allocation might dismiss faith refusals as irrational, but sovereignty demands their inviolability, fostering justice-oriented governance (Dovey & Shuman, 2024). This radical reconfiguration invites health law scholars to embrace hermeneutic renewal, where autonomy safeguards the irreducibly interpretive nature of healing against silicon's reductive gaze.

10.0 Conclusion

As artificial intelligence permeates the sanctuaries of healing, this paper has illuminated the regulatory voids that threaten spiritual autonomy in pluralistic healthcare landscapes. From the ontological pluralism underpinning diverse epistemologies to the epistemic violence wrought by algorithmic reification, commodification, and calculative harms, the analysis reveals how evidence-based governance systematically effaces sacred narratives under the banner of precision. Comparative jurisprudence, spanning India's essential practices, Europe's margin of appreciation, and Africa's communal dignity, exposes the paternalistic shortcomings of extant frameworks, while novel tools like the spiritual harm threshold and ontological impact assessments offer pathways to redress. The normative imperative for algorithmic abstention, coupled with reconceptualizing autonomy as ontological sovereignty, underscores an urgent demand: health law must evolve beyond utilitarian metrics to embrace hermeneutic depth, honoring the interpretive essence of transcendent care.

This hermeneutic renewal is no luxury but a necessity in polities where faith and tech intersect. Absent it, AI risks the quiet extinction of metaphysical variety, transmuting soulful restoration into actuarial shadows. By foregrounding incommensurability, the irreducible chasm between silicon logic and sacred knowing, scholars and regulators are called to reforge governance, ensuring AI serves without supplanting. In Rwanda's clinics or Mumbai's wards, where chants entwine with code, such a law promises equity: not homogenized progress, but a mosaic of ontologies thriving amid innovation. Ultimately, toward a hermeneutic health law lies the preservation of humanity's deepest diversities, a reconfiguration that confounds aggregation and affirms sovereignty in an algorithmic age.

11.0 Recommendations

Bases on the findings of the paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is the need to integrate OIAs into national AI regulations, mandating pre-deployment reviews by interdisciplinary panels to evaluate phenomenological disruptions. Draw from the EU AI Act's risk assessments, expanding them to include spiritual metrics, with mandatory

community consultations in pluralistic regions.

2. There is the need to advocate for laws granting patients explicit opt-out entitlements in sacral therapeutics, modeled on human rights doctrines. This could include draft clauses requiring AI notices and alternatives, tailored to cultural contexts via comparative jurisprudence.
3. Develop certification programs blending health law, anthropology, and AI ethics, equipping overseers to identify epistemic violence. Collaborate with institutions like PUR to pilot trainings focused on African communal dignity, ensuring global applicability.
4. Require developers to incorporate diverse ontologies in training data, with audits for bias against faith-based narratives. Leverage anthropological insights to create "ontological repositories" for balanced models, mitigating reification harms.
5. Convene forums like ICFAI extensions to draft international guidelines, emphasizing hermeneutic health law. Involve Vatican-inspired ethics to bridge faith and tech, fostering normative shifts toward sovereignty.
6. Establish independent bodies for ongoing surveillance of AI in healthcare, using the spiritual harm threshold to track existential displacements. Publish annual reports with case studies, informing iterative reforms.

Bibliography

Birhane, A. (2025). AI-driven health messaging and epistemic justice in the Global South. In M. Coeckelbergh (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of artificial intelligence ethics* (pp. 456–478). Oxford University Press.

Smith-Nunes, G. (2025). Body as a data artefact: The ontological kaleidoscope framework. *Journal of Responsible Technology*, *24*, 100138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrt.2025.100138; https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666659625000344

Silcox, C., Zimlichmann, E., Huber, K. *et al.*, The potential for artificial intelligence to transform healthcare: perspectives from international health leaders. *npj Digit. Med.* **7**, 88 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41746-024-01097-6

Barbierato et al., Breaking Away From AI: The Ontological and Ethical Evolution of Machine Learning. (2025). *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390022186_Breaking_Away_from_AI_The_Ontological_and_Ethical_Evolution_of_Machine_Learning

Carel, H., & Kidd, I. J. (2017). Epistemic injustice in healthcare: A philosophical analysis. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy, 17*(4), 529–540. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-014-9560-2 (Original work published 2014)

Cheng, M. (2024). The right to human decision: Analyzing policies, ethics, and implementation. In *Addressing socioethical effects of artificial intelligence*. OpenReview. https://openreview.net/forum?id=VrxtvBw0ly

Corfmat, M., Martineau, J. T., & Régis, C. (2025). High-reward, high-risk technologies? An ethical and legal account of AI development in healthcare. *BMC Medical Ethics, 26*(1), Article 158. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-024-01158-1

Crichton, P., Carel, H., & Kidd, I. J. (2017). Epistemic injustice in psychiatry. *BJPsych*

Bulletin, 41(2), 65–70. https://doi.org/10.1192/pb.bp.115.050682

Descola, P. (2021). *Beyond nature and culture* (J. Lloyd, Trans.; reissue ed.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 2013)

Doshi, R., Falco, G., & Krumholz, H. M. (2024). Practical, epistemic and normative implications of algorithmic bias in healthcare: A qualitative analysis of clinician perspectives. *Journal of Medical Ethics, 51*(6), 420–425.

Dovey, S., & Shuman, A. (2024). AI in digital health: Autonomy, governance, and privacy. In *AI in eHealth: Human Autonomy, Data Governance and Privacy in Healthcare* (pp. 1–20). Springer. (Adapted from 2022 volume).

European Parliament. (2024). *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act)*. Official Journal of the European Union, *L* 2024/1689. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj

Chaudhary, U. (2022). *External impact assessment on ethics of AI using ontology based on UNESCO recommendations* [Master's thesis, Trinity College Dublin]. TCD Research, pp. 1-50. Repository. https://www.scss.tcd.ie/publications/theses/diss/2022/TCD-SCSS-DISSERTATION-2022-066.pdf

Fasan, M. (2025). Regulating the use of artificial intelligence in the doctor-patient relationship? A primer on supranational and national legal frameworks. *Biolaw Journal, 1*(1), 45–62. https://iris.unitn.it/handle/11572/453770

Tunks Leach, K., Simpson, P., Lewis, J. *et al.* The Role and Value of Chaplains in an Australian Ambulance Service: A Comparative Study of Chaplain and Paramedic Perspectives. *J Relig Health* 62, 98–116 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01685-4; https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01685-4

Holland & Knight Alert. (2024). Regulation of AI in healthcare utilization management and prior authorization. Holland & Knight LLP. https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2024/10/regulation-of-ai-in-healthcare-utilization-management

Hurley, M. E., Lang, B. H., & Kostick-Quenet, K. M. (2025). Patient consent and the right to notice and explanation of AI systems used in health care. *American Journal of Bioethics, 25*(2), 78–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2024.2399828

Inclusive Development for Citizens and Another v Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania (Reference No.10 of 2020) [2024] EACJ 14 (29 November 2024) (First Instance Division) https://ulii.org/en/akn/aa/judgment/eacj/2024/14/eng@2024-11-29

Kaebnick, G. E. (2016). The psychology of autonomy. *Hastings Center Report, 46*(3), 2. https://doi.org/10.1002/hast.581

Adams, J. Ethical and epistemic implications of artificial intelligence in medicine: a stakeholder-based assessment. *AI & Soc* (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-025-02398-4

Khalikova, V. (2021). Medical pluralism. In F. Stein (Ed.), *The open encyclopedia of anthropology*. Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology. https://doi.org/10.29164/21medplural

Kidd, I. J., & Carel, H. (2017). Epistemic injustice and illness. *Journal of Applied Philosophy, 34*(2), 172–190. https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12172

Kwek, D. (2023). Decolonizing AI ethics: Relational autonomy as a means to counter AI harms. *Topoi, 42*(3), 841–850.

Lee, H.-S., Song, S.-H., Park, C., Seo, J., Kim, W. H., Kim, J., Kim, S., & Lee, Y. H. (2025). The ethics of simplification: Balancing patient autonomy, comprehension, and accuracy in AI-generated radiology reports. *BMC Medical Ethics, 26*, Article 136. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-025-01285-3

Lysen, F., & Wyatt, S. (2024). Refusing participation: Hesitations about designing responsible patient engagement with artificial intelligence in healthcare. *Journal of Responsible Innovation, 11*(1), Article 2300161. https://doi.org/10.1080/23299460.2023.2300161

Young, M., & Varpio, L. (2025). Navigating the research landscape: How paradigms shape health professions education research. *Medical Education, 59*(3), 256–267. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.15752

Jonas, L., Bacharach, S., Nightingale, S., & Filoche, S. (2024). Under the umbrella of epistemic injustice communication and epistemic injustice in clinical encounters: A critical scoping review. *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health, 33*, 101039. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2024.101039

Mladenov, T., & Dimitrova, I. (2023). Epistemic injustice as a bridge between medical sociology and disability studies. *Sociology of health & illness, 45*(6), 1146–1163. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13479

Palaniappan, K., Ting Lin, E. Y., Vogel, S., & W Lim, J. C. (2024). Gaps in the Global Regulatory Frameworks for the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Healthcare Services Sector and Key Recommendations. *Healthcare, 12*(17), 1730. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12171730

Emah, I., & Bennett, S. (2025). Algorithmic emergence? Epistemic in/justice in AI-directed transformations of healthcare. *Frontiers in Sociology, 10*, 1520810. https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1520810

Nazer, L. H., Zatarah, R., Waldrip, S., Ke, J. X. R., Moukheiber, M., Khanna, A. K., Hicklen, R. S., Moukheiber, L., Moukheiber, D., Ma, H., & Mathur, P. (2024). Bias in artificial intelligence algorithms and recommendations for mitigation. *PLOS Digital Health, 3*(6), Article e0000278. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pdig.0000278

Safranek, S., & Zvackova, A. (2025). Ontological framework for integrating predictive analytics, AI, and big data in decision-making systems using knowledge graph. In *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Simulation and Modeling Methodologies, Technologies and Applications (SIMULTECH 2025)* (pp. 287–294). https://www.scitepress.org/Papers/2025/135144/135144.pdf

Ambalavanan, R., Snead, R. S., Marczika, J., Towett, G., Malioukis, A., & Mbogori-Kairichi, M. (2025). Ontologies as the semantic bridge between artificial intelligence and healthcare. *Frontiers in Digital Health, 7*, 1668385. https://doi.org/10.3389/fdgth.2025.1668385

Patil, A. D., Singh, S., Verma, D., & Goupale, C. (2024). Exploring medical pluralism as a multifaceted approach to healthcare. Indian Journal of Integrative Medicine, 4(2), 49-59. https://mansapublishers.com/ijim/article/view/4322

Khurana, S. (2025). Decolonizing artificial intelligence: Indigenous knowledge systems, epistemic pluralism, and the ethics of technology. *Journal of Computer Allied Intelligence, 3*(3), 1–10. https://fringeglobal.com/ojs/index.php/jcai/article/view/decolonizing-artificial-intelligence-indigenous-knowledge-system/167

Pontifical Academy for Life. (2020). *Rome Call for AI Ethics*. Vatican Press.

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdlife/documents/rc_pont-acd_life_doc_20202228_rome-call-for-ai-ethics_en.pdf (Reaffirmed with new signatories in 2025)

Rahsepar Meadi, M., Sillekens, T., Metselaar, S., van Balkom, A., Bernstein, J., & Batelaan, N. (2025). Exploring the ethical challenges of conversational AI in mental health care: Scoping review. *JMIR Mental Health, 12*, Article e60432. https://doi.org/10.2196/60432

S.A.S. v. France, App. No. 43835/11, ECHR 2014 (Eur. Ct. H.R.). https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-145466

Kay, J., Kasirzadeh, A., & Mohamed, S. (2024). Epistemic Injustice in Generative AI. *ArXiv*. https://arxiv.org/abs/2408.11441

Redvers N., Lokugamage A. U., Barreto J. P. L., Bajracharya M. B., Harris M. (2024) Epistemicide, health systems, and planetary health: Re-centering Indigenous knowledge systems. *PLOS Glob Public Health* 4(8): e0003634. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0003634

Heuser, S., Steil, J. & Salloch, S. AI Ethics beyond Principles: Strengthening the Life-world Perspective. *Sci Eng Ethics 31*, 7 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-025-00530-7

Shayara Bano v. Union of India, (2017) 9 SCC 1 (India). https://indiankanoon.org/doc/115701246/

Tiribelli, S. (2023). The AI ethics principle of autonomy in health recommender systems. *Argumenta, 8*(1), 75–88. https://u-pad.unimc.it/handle/11393/306693

Tobert, N. (2022, July 22). *Pluralistic practice: A medical anthropology perspective*. Pluralistic Practice. https://pluralisticpractice.com/main-blog/epistemology/pluralistic-practice-a-medical-anthropology-perspective/

Golpayegani, D., Hovsha, J., Rossmaier, L. W. S., Saniei, R., & Mišic, J. (2022). Towards a taxonomy of AI risks in the health domain. In *2022 Fourth International Conference on Transdisciplinary AI (TransAI)* (pp. 1–8). IEEE. https://philarchive.org/archive/GOLTAT-21

Viveiros de Castro, E. (2021). *Cosmological perspectivism in Amazonia and elsewhere*. HAU Books. https://haubooks.org/cosmological-perspectivism-in-amazonia/

World Health Organization. (2023). *WHO global report on traditional and complementary medicine 2023*. WHO Press. https://www.who.int/health-topics/traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine#tab=tab_1

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Ethics of Moral Decision-Making: Integrating Human and Spiritual Values into Legal Frameworks for Ethical AI Development

Firdausi Kabir
Faculty of Law, Federal University Birnin Kebbi
feedox5@gmail.com

Abstract
The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has raised more ethical concerns than ever before, particularly with autonomous decision-making systems. Even more modern AI systems can carry out growingly intricate work with fewer human interventions, putting into doubt accountability, fairness, transparency, and the ethical consequences of the machine-directed decision. Though important literature has been done concerning AI ethics in terms of technical, legal, and philosophical frameworks, the inclusion of human and spiritual values within the framework of AI judgments is currently a critical gap. The ethical consideration of human values, such as empathy, justice, and human dignity, are fundamental aspects of human consideration, but their implementation in the algorithmic systems is scarce. Spiritual values, which include moral principles based on various cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions, provide another complementary aspect to the control of AI behaviour, to make sure that autonomous systems are in line with the expectations of morality and ethical propriety of society. The paper aims to analyse how human and spiritual values can be integrated in a legal and policy framework to develop ethical AI. The research uses an interdisciplinary methodology by taking the perspectives of philosophy, theology, computer science, and law to theorise a model where-by the making of ethical decisions can be integrated within AI systems. The study relies on the literature on AI ethics, human centred design, and legal governance to determine the existing gaps and challenges when it comes to the translation of abstract ethical principles into computational mechanisms. There are case studies in the fields of autonomous vehicles, healthcare, and law enforcement that are examined to demonstrate the potential of the involvement of moral and spiritual considerations in AI algorithms, as well as their limitations. Some of the major research questions that were used to guide this research include: How do we operationalize human and spiritual values in AI systems? How can legal and policy processes be used to guarantee adherence to ethical standards? How far can AI systems be programmed to incorporate cross-cultural ethics at the expense of technical effectiveness? Answering these questions, the paper helps to develop a more comprehensive view of AI ethics, which is not limited to technical or utilitarian methods. The results serve as an additional indication that making AI human and spiritual is not just an imaginary task but a viable requirement to adjust technology to the standards and rules of society, as well as the expectations of the ethical framework. Some of the operationalisation strategies of ethical principles are the development of value-sensitive algorithms, ethical compliance regulatory guidelines, and interdisciplinary oversight mechanisms. Additionally, the paper identifies the possible obstacles, including cultural pluralism, interpretative ambiguities of moral codes, and technical constraints of algorithm design, which should be resolved to accomplish successful integration.
Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Decision-Making, Human Values, Spiritual Values, AI Governance

1.0 Introduction
The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has brought a new reality in the decision-making process of various areas, including the medical field and financial field, as

well as self-driving vehicles and law analytics. It is true because AI systems, especially machine learning and deep learning algorithms, have the potential to handle large volumes of data and provide decisions on a scale and speed that cannot be achieved by hu-man agents (Russell and Norvig 2021). These technological advances pose significant opportunities of increased efficiency and accuracy, yet they are also an extreme threat to ethics. AI-based autonomous decision-making might lead to unintended consequences such as discriminatory solutions, privacy violations, and the lack of moral engagement in the fields where human judgment was typically applied (Ghosh 2025). As a result, the ethical aspects of AI have become a highly important issue of interest among scholars, policymakers, and technologists.

AI ethics is not only a technical issue but also a social necessity. Using AI systems can affect human welfare, social justice, and resource allocation, which means that normative principles should be incorporated in the design and management of AI systems (UNESCO 2024). Besides, the traditional ethical theories, including utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, offer some fundamental guidance, yet in many cases, they fail to reflect the more subtle moral demands of various people and cultural and spiritual groups (Hammerschmidt et al. 2025). These models can put efficiency or following the rules ahead of relational, communal, and spiritual values, which are vital in holistic ethical assessment. As one ex-ample, the implementation of predictive policing AIs has shown the danger of the suggested technology contributing to the growth of current social disparities, thus demonstrating the disconnect between the idea of algorithmic optimisation and moral human values (Roy et al. 2025).

Adopting human and spiritual values in AI decision-making implies the identification of the inherent value of ethical standards based on philosophical, religious, and cultural practices. Spiritual values, as interpreted in this context as ethical values based on human experiences of transcendence, empathy, and moral responsibility, help to better understand the full picture of what is right and what is wrong in relation to decision-making situations (Velasquez et al. 2023). Implementing these values in the AI systems involves applying abstract ethical concepts (justice, compassion, stewardship, etc.) into algorithms and evaluation standards, which regulate AI behaviour. This is the same approach as the concept of value-sensitive design, which underlines that technology is not supposed to be ethical but sensitive to the values of its stakeholders (Sadek and Mougenot 2025).

The area of the current research is the intersection between AI ethics, human moral reasoning, and spiritual values in the context of the law and regulation. It aims to explore the possible ways human and spiritual aspects can be integrated in AI systems in a systematic manner so that the choices made by the AI systems are in line with societal and ethical expectations at large. In particular, the paper investigates whether AI can accommodate values like fairness, dignity, accountability, and respect for human autonomy, and spiritual virtues that dictate moral behaviour. The analysis of modern legal regulations and ethical principles should help the study to reveal the possibilities and constraints of integrating these values into the operation of AI technologies.

This paper has threefold objectives. First, it attempts to state the theoretical and practical importance of the consideration of human and spiritual values in the systems of AI. Second, it analyses the current ethical and legal systems with an aim of determining the loopholes that exist, which inhibit the incorporation of moral and spiritual aspects. Third, it suggests a theoretical model of how these values can be incorporated into AI decision-making, focusing on the role of developers, regulatory bodies, and society in general. The research addresses the overarching question: how can human and spiritual values be systematically integrated into AI decision-making

to ensure ethical compliance within existing legal frame-works? This question underpins the exploration of normative, technological, and regulatory mechanisms that may facilitate ethically robust AI deployment.

2.0. Literature Review

The development of AI ethics has stayed abreast of the progress of machine learning and autonomous systems, with a greater interest in the morality and societal impact of algorithmic decision-making. AI has been subject to classical theories of ethics, deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics, all offering a normative approach, but they all have shortcomings when applied separately. Deontological solutions focus on the use of rules and duties, and obligations, making sure that the AI systems adhere to the established ethical norms (European Parliament 2020). As an example, creating AI that adheres to the privacy rights can be conformed to the Kantian concept of respecting human autonomy as an end. Nonetheless, strict following of rules can also result in consequences that overlook context and unexpected side effects and especially in complex socio-technical contexts.

Most notably, consequentialist views (utilitarianism in particular) base their judgment on the consequences of actions in support of AI behaviours that optimise the total benefit (Spinello 2025). This structure has been used in autonomous vehicles, in which decision algorithms have tried to reduce damage in the case of accidents. Although the practicality of consequentialism is occasionally defensible in a utilitarian approach, it can unwillingly de-fend ethically questionable actions when they promote collective welfare as it is, like minority rights to a supposed broader societal good. A more integrated approach focuses on virtues like fairness, prudence, and empathy brought forth by virtue ethics, the approach that also concentrates on character and moral dispositions (Hagendorff 2022). However, ab-stract virtues are very difficult to convert into algorithmic rules that might be put into practice.

Human-oriented ethical theories have come as a response to balancing the weaknesses and strengths of classical theories, and place human well-being, human dignity, and human autonomy at the forefront in governing AI. Human-centred AI systems believe in participatory design, inclusivity, and value-sensitive design practises, whereby the perspectives of stake-holders guide the making of ethical decisions (Sadek and Mougenot 2025). These models emphasise the fact that AI systems cannot be ethically neutral, but they must be based on the values, rights, and obligations of society. Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena (2019) contend that embedding human-centric principles in AI requires continuous engagement with affected communities, rigorous ethical impact assessments, and accountability mechanisms that trace decision-making processes.

Spiritual and moral values also bring another layer to AI ethics, which is a normative orientation based on cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions. Cross-cultural insights point to the matters of ethical reasoning as usually being guided by spiritual values such as com-passion, stewardship, and moral responsibility, which determine human judgment beyond the rational assessments of duty or utilitarianism (Velasquez et al. 2023). As an example, Confucian ethics focus on relational ethics, which focuses more on harmony and social unity, whilst Buddhist ethics focus more on non-harm and mindfulness, which can be applied to AI systems in a social or healthcare setting (Lin 2023). There are both conceptual and technical issues with introducing such values into AI: values are context-dependent, mediated by cultures, and often formulated in terms of qualitative concepts that cannot be readily encoded into algorithms. However, studies indicate that ethical interpretation of the AI behaviour can be enhanced by integrating spiritual and moral principles, which would help to align AI deeds with the social norms (Boddington 2023).

Current AI ethics legal frameworks exist on both national and international scales, and they are used

to provide regulatory and normative frameworks of ethical AI implementation. On the international scale, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) AI Principles propose a transparent, accountable, and human-centred AI, with the focus on human rights and democratic principles (OECD 2024). In the same manner, the Artificial Intelligence Act by the European Union aims at categorising AI systems based on the risk and advancing the necessary requirements regarding high-risk applications that should be supervised by legal protections that are compatible with the ethical standards (European Commission 2024). The context-specific guidelines on national levels, including the United Kingdom AI Strategy and the United States AI Bill of Rights, include risk reduction, technical compliance, and economic competitiveness over more inherent moral or spiritual aspects (Calo 2018).

Although these developments have taken place, major gaps exist in the current AI ethics re-search on the systematic incorporation of moral and spiritual values. To begin with, most ethical theories are very specific and are only concerned with quantifiable individual principles like fairness, transparency, and accountability, and not about the nuances of moral virtues and spiritual norms (Hammerschmidt et al. 2025). Second, whereas the participatory and human-centred design approaches encourage engaging the stakeholders in the process, they often disregard religious, cultural, and community-based ethical perspectives, restricting the inclusivity of the AI governance (Tahaei et al. 2023). Third, the legal systems mostly focus on procedural adherence and risk control, with no clear procedures for implementing spiritual or moral values into AI systems (Mirishli 2025). All these gaps, taken together, highlight the necessity of a more holistic theoretical approach incorporating the ethical, le-gal, human, and spiritual aspects.

The theoretical backbone of the present research is based on the convergence of the value-sensitive design, human-centred ethics, and spiritual moral philosophy. The value-sensitive design assumes that all phases of technology development, such as conceptualisation to deployment, must be ethical reflections, which makes AI reflect societal norms and values (Sadek and Mougenot 2025). This is supplemented by human-centred ethics, which look far ahead and put human rights, dignity, and welfare in the foreground. Spiritual moral philosophy is a source of normative richness that offers leadership based on ethical traditions to focus on compassion, relationality, and moral responsibility (Velasquez et al. 2023). A com-bination of these viewpoints, the work suggests a multi-layered model, where the AI in its decision-making process is informed by universal moral principles, anthropocentric ethics, and culturally-related religious values.

3.0. Integrating Human and Spiritual Values into AI Decision-Making

The introduction of human and spiritual values into artificial intelligence (AI) decision-making is a complicated, but mandatory, horizon of ethical management of new technologies. Autonomy, justice, fairness, empathy, and dignity are some of the core principles of human values that are central to the welfare of society, as well as the safety of individual rights (Floridi 2023). Spiritual values, in turn, are founded on religious, philosophical, and moral traditions, the concepts of compassion, moral responsibility, stewardship, and relational ethics (Garg 2024; Velasquez et al. 2023). Collectively, these groups of values pro-vide a normative guide to AI systems, which points them to behavioural patterns that both honour individual human dignity and wider societal moral requirements.

It is conceptually and technically difficult to translate moral and spiritual principles into computational structures. One is that human and spiritual values tend to be qualitative, con-textual, and mediated by culture, something incompatible with binary and deterministic traditional algorithmic logic (Mittelstadt 2019). Compassion, for example, may necessitate more precise situational evaluations that are difficult to convert

into rules or objective metrics. Also, values might be incompatible: an AI system that works towards the individual autonomy of a medical facility might end up disobeying the agreed principles of beneficence or a welfare state. Furthermore, the issue of measuring compliance with spiritual/moral norms requires strong metrics of evaluation that harmonise subjective moral reasoning with objective system outputs, which, however, is an area that is not well developed yet in AI research (Boddington 2017).

Case studies depict the possibilities and the challenges involved in integrating human and spiritual values with AI. The ethical algorithms that can be identified in autonomous vehicles include moral dilemmas like the trolley problem, where the system is supposed to decide between the lesser of two evils in the case of accidents. The inclusion of values like human dignity and relational responsibility would help make these decisions not just based on utilitarian calculation, and instead do so in a way that would favour the outcomes that respect life and reduce moral culpability (Zhan and Wan 2024). AI diagnostic systems and robotic assistants become increasingly involved in healthcare decision-making with respect to the treatment of patients, their consent, and privacy. The inclusion of such values as empathy, fairness, and stewardship would contribute to patient trust, a higher likelihood of staying ethical, and eliminating discriminatory results (Morley et al. 2020). Predictive policing and risk assessment algorithms in law enforcement have become a subject of concern regarding bias, fairness, and social justice. Moral principles that are directed by human and spiritual norms may help curb the evil, foster equity, and instill proportionality in the application of these systems (Parvathinathan et al. 2025).

Some approaches are suggested to introduce ethical principles into AI decisions. Value-sensitive design (VSD) models receive the explicit identification of the stakeholder values in system creation, and they incorporate the element of ethical contemplation in all stages of design, deployment, and evaluation procedures (Sadek and Mougenot 2025). Such strategies as deliberative workshops, stakeholder interviews, and co-design sessions make sure that the views of various communities, such as religious and cultural, shape the goals of the system. Also, the multi-objective optimisation methods enable AI systems to evaluate two or more ethical priorities at once and balance the value of such aspects as safety, fairness, and compassion through an algorithm (Noothigattu et al. 2018). A mixture of rule-based constraints with machine learning heuristics has been proposed as a viable means of operationalising ethical principles and remaining flexible in new situations.

There are several ways in which the introduction of human and spiritual values into AI could be beneficial. Presenting the AI in an ethical form can raise the trust of people, social legitimacy, and minimise the possible ill-intent consequences (Floridi et al. 2018). Furthermore, the integration of the values that mirror human moral and spiritual thinking can enhance the flexibility of the system to work in a diversified cultural context, which is inclusive and cross-cultural. In the context of organisations, the deployment of ethical AI may help to eliminate legal and reputational risks and contribute to long-term sustainability and social responsibility (Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena 2019).

However, there are still constraints. The process of translating qualitative values into computational forms implies the level of abstraction that might simplify the complex aspects of morality. The clashing values demand prioritisation structures, which are questionable in and of themselves. In addition, the ongoing evolution of social standards means that AI systems may need to be continually improved to align with current ethical standards (Mittel-stadt 2019). Operationalisation of moral and spiritual principles is further complicated by technical constraints, including data availability, the interpretability of system algorithms, and the transparency of the systems. Systems of ethical

oversight, thus, are still necessary to supplement the technological inculcation of values.

4.0. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Ethical AI

The high rate at which artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are being spread has led to the emergence of regulatory and governance frameworks to curb the occurrence of ethical risks, hold the technologies accountable, and enhance trust in the technologies among the populace. At the international level, the updated OECD AI Principles emphasise transparency, fairness, human-centred values, and safety, with new provisions addressing generative AI and information integrity (Čorba et al. 2024). On the same note, the Artificial Intelligence Act 2021 by the European Union is a proposal that prescribes a risk-based regulatory framework, whereby AI applications are categorised based on their likelihood to damage fundamental rights, safety, and societal well-being. The Act requires a strong risk assessment framework, documentation, transparency, and human control, which will establish an overall effective legal framework that is meant to protect human interests and allow techno-logical innovation (European Commission 2024).

National frameworks, though of different sizes and levels, have similar goals. As an example, the AI Initiative of the United States promotes the voluntary compliance with AI ethical standards, which focuses on innovation and competitiveness as well as on human rights (Executive Office of the President 2020). By contrast, the governance model of China emphasises societal peace, safety of the population, and state control, which is culturally unique in the regulation of AI (Wang et al. 2025). The above illustrations reveal that the governance mechanisms are not only situational but also sensitive to the values of a particular area, which means that cultural and moral aspects of AI law must be combined.

Despite these changes, there are still big gaps in regards to the incorporation of human and spiritual values into the regulation of AI. The existing paradigms are mostly obsessed with technical soundness, data protection, security, and adherence to the available legal regulations, overlooking qualitative moral and spiritual aspects (Mittelstadt 2019). To take just one instance, although bias mitigation is a central regulatory issue, the frameworks seldom consider more extended moral obligations, like compassion, relational responsibility, or adherence to spiritual norms. Equally, the accountability systems have been more inclined to human control and assigning liabilities, without directly integrating an ethical rationale to correlate the AI activities to the moral or spiritual standards (Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena 2019).

The lack of specific advice on how to integrate morality and spirituality is practically difficult. Applications of AI in the fields of healthcare, criminal justice, and social services often face situations that demand making ethical decisions when adhering to procedural guidelines. The AI systems without integrated human and spiritual values have a high probability of creating decisions that may be legally but not morally acceptable in the society or may erode societal trust (Boddington 2023). Moreover, there are no standardised approaches to operationalising these values in regulatory frameworks, which restricts the ability to en-force them and apply cross-jurisdictional.

To overcome these loopholes, several approaches on how human and spiritual ethics can be integrated legally has been floated. The first, legislative tools must encompass definite understanding of human dignity, relational responsibility, and spiritual values as principles to guide the use of AI. This may be operationalised using value-sensitive regulatory provisions such that the AI systems should be shown to conform to the normative ethical standards and cultural norms (Sadek and Mougenot 2025). Second, there can be ethical impact assessments, like environmental or

privacy impact assessments, that are required before deployment that assess both tangible and intangible moral impact of AI decisions. These tests would give the regulatory bodies justifiable reviews of ethical conformity, where ethical and spiritual factors are not pushed to the post-hoc test.

The methods of interdisciplinary techniques are very significant in bridging the gap between the law, ethics, and technology. Philosophers, theologians, law professors, and computer scientists ought to come up with operational ways that the moral and spiritual values can be transformed into viable regulatory norms. One such example is the fact that AI governance may involve multi-stakeholder advisory boards as well as technical audit and ethical review boards to assess the algorithmic decision-making process relative to human and spiritual values (Floridi et al. 2018). The normative supervision that would be provided by such panels would provide regulatory implementation with a contextualisation on the moral expectation of the society and cultural sensibilities.

Additionally, the compliance practices are supposed to be transformed to become dynamic and dynamic. The AI systems are not rigid and they can learn and develop which will change the ethical outcomes over time. It should then be enforced through laws requiring ethical audits to be conducted on a regular basis, transparency reporting, and mechanisms of corrective action in some cases where the AI conduct is not in line with the moral or spiritual requirements. To make the enforcement effective and accountable, documentation, explainability of algorithms, and interaction with stakeholders' standards will be required (Mittelstadt 2019).

Finally, international coordination which all is impossible to avoid is a need. Moral and spiritual values are mediated insofar as the culture is concerned, however, the AI technologies are more likely to be transnational. Harmonisation of ethical standards, value-responsive practices across borders in mutual understanding and collaboration in normative AI governance is necessary to prevent the occurrence of ethical variations and guarantee that AI systems are operating in accordance with the world-spanning human and spiritual norms. Consensus can be developed on the regulatory level, and such a platform could consist of regulatory bodies such as UNESCO; the OECD, and the European Union; further-more, the regulators can be capacity-built on the international level (UNESCO 2021).

5.0. Discussion

The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) decision-making that involves human and spiritual values has both a great opportunity and a challenge for the developers, regulators, and society. The main implication for AI developers is the necessity to include the ethical reasoning process that goes beyond technical problem-solving. Value-sensitive design models should employ alternative performance criteria to imbue AI algorithms with ideas of justice, compassion, respect for human dignity, and spiritual norms (Sadek and Mougenot 2025). This would provoke developers to think not only about what AI can do but what it should do, which will help to correlate the capabilities of technology with moral norms of society.

The challenge of operationalising these values is confronted by regulators in terms of legal and policy frameworks. The existing governance frameworks are focused on safety, liability, privacy, and reduction of bias, yet they frequently fail to consider qualitative moral and spiritual aspects (Mittelstadt 2019). To incorporate human and spiritual values, adaptive regulation, including ethical impact assessments, constant monitoring, and mechanisms of multi-stakeholder oversight, is needed that must strike the right balance between innovation and societal accountability. Moreover, global cooperation is needed to respond to the trans-national implementation of AI to make sure that morality and spiritual standards in different cultures are accepted but remain uniform in their implementation (UNESCO 2021).

Implications on the societal level are also enormous. The use of AI systems in healthcare, law enforcement, finance, and social services is taking up more mediating roles, which have a direct impact on human welfare and ethical outcomes. In the absence of a direct incorporation of moral and spiritual values, AI has a chance of creating results that, though legally acceptable, will violate the ethical norm of society and undermine the trust of the majority (Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena 2019). On the other hand, AI systems that are programmed to up-hold human and spiritual values may improve cohesion in society and decision-making that is fair; moreover, they will build trust in technology among the people.

6.0. Conclusion

The paper has talked about the overlap of AI and ethics and how human and spiritual values may be reconciled, and found the gaps that are necessary in the existing body of knowledge and regulation. The theoretical and literature review show that the traditional models of AI ethics have strong performance in terms of technical compliance and safety, though they are more prone to disregard moral and spiritual aspects. The policy reviews and case studies indicate the real-world challenges of applying these values, such as the procedure of con-verting abstract ideals into an algorithmic form and the implementation of culturally respectful policies.

Three strategies have been suggested to be combined, and these are interdisciplinary collaboration among the ethicists, legal scholars, theologians, and technologists, and institutionalization of value-sensitive mechanisms of governance. The idea of ethical impact assessment, the framework of constant supervision, and culturally informed supervision prove to be viable tools in applying moral and spiritual principles in AI applications. The additional research should be centred on scalable methods of quantifying and codifying spiritual and moral norms into AI mechanisms, and examining culturally particular and worldwide methods of introducing ethics to AI.

Ethical Statement

This paper acknowledges the two-sided nature of AI technologies as something that can bring both positive and negative effects to society. On a positive note, AI guided by human and spiritual values can improve ethical decision-making, minimize biases, and increase social welfare. On the negative side, the lack of such principles' integration can contribute to the deepening of social inequalities, the destruction of morals, and the ease of making decisions that do not correspond to human dignity. To make sure that the development of AI and its governance does not undermine the moral structures of society, ethical stewardship in AI development and governance is therefore paramount. The code of ethics is not only about the role of compliance; it is a proactive involvement with the stakeholders, continuous observation, and responsibility for the intended and unintended outcomes.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to recognize the assistance of other colleagues and institutions that provided feedback and insights during the process of writing this paper. Special gratitude goes to the Faculty of Law, Federal University Birnin Kebbi, for providing access to research re-sources. Further credit goes to the reviewers, whose critical remarks complemented this work, making it more understandable and profound.

References

Boddington, P. (2017). Towards a code of ethics for artificial intelligence. Cham: Springer.

Boddington, P. (2023). AI ethics: A textbook. Cham: Springer Nature.

Calo, R. (2018). Artificial intelligence policy: A primer and roadmap. University of Bologna Law Review, 3(2), 180–218.

Čorba, J., Plonk, A., Perset, K., and Iida, Y. (2024). Evolving with innovation: The 2024 OECD AI Princi-ples update. OECD.AI. Retrieved 11 November 2025, from https://oecd.ai/en/wonk/evolving-with-innovation-the-2024-oecd-ai-principles-update

European Commission. (2024). Artificial Intelligence Act (Regulation EU 2024/1689). Brussels: Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved 11 November 2025, from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj/eng

European Parliament. (2020). The ethics of artificial intelligence: Issues and initiatives. Brussels: Scien-tific Foresight Unit (STOA). Retrieved 9 November 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/634452/EPRS_STU(2020)634452_EN.pdf

Executive Office of the President. (2020). American Artificial Intelligence Initiative: Year One Annual Report. Washington, DC: Office of Science and Technology Policy. Retrieved 10 November 2025, from https://www.nitrd.gov/nitrdgroups/images/c/c1/American-AI-Initiative-One-Year-Annual-Report.pdf

Floridi, L. (2023). The ethics of artificial intelligence: Principles, challenges, and opportunities. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Floridi, L., Cowls, J., Beltrametti, M., Chatila, R., Chazerand, P., Dignum, V., et al. (2018). AI4People—An ethical framework for a good AI society: Opportunities, risks, principles, and recommenda-tions. Minds and Machines, 28(4), 689–707.

Garg, M. (2024). The synergy between spirituality and AI: A survey. In Spiritual Artificial Intelligence (pp. 113–124). Cham: Springer.

Ghosh, M. (2025). Artificial intelligence (AI) and ethical concerns: A review and research agenda. Cogent Business & Management, 12(1), 2551809.

Hagendorff, T. (2022). A virtue-based framework to support putting AI ethics into practice. Philosophy and Technology, 35(3), 1–24.

Hammerschmidt, T., Hafner, A., Stolz, K., Passlack, N., Posegga, O., & Gerholz, K.-H. (2025). A review of how different views on ethics shape perceptions of morality and responsibility within AI trans-formation. Information Systems Frontiers. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10796-025-10596-0

Jobin, A., Ienca, M., and Vayena, E. (2019). The global landscape of AI ethics guidelines. Nature Machine Intelligence, 1(9), 389–399.

Lin, C.-T. (2023). All about the human: A Buddhist take on AI ethics. Business Ethics, the Environment and Responsibility, 32(3), 1113–1122.

Mirishli, S. (2025). The role of legal frameworks in shaping ethical artificial intelligence use in corporate governance. arXiv preprint. Retrieved 10 November 2025, from https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.14540

Mittelstadt, B. D. (2019). Principles alone cannot guarantee ethical AI. Nature Machine Intelligence, 1(11), 501–507.

Morley, J., Machado, C. C. V., Burr, C., Cowls, J., Joshi, I., Taddeo, M., and Floridi, L. (2020). The ethics of AI in health care: A mapping review. Social Science and Medicine, 260, 113172.

Noothigattu, R., Gaikwad, S., Awad, E., Dsouza, S., Rahwan, I., and Ravikumar, P. (2018). A voting-based system for ethical decision making. In Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelli-gence, 32(1), 1587–1594.

OECD. (2024). OECD AI Principles: Updated global framework for trustworthy AI. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved 10 November 2025, from https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/ai-principles.html

Parvathinathan, K., Kaplan, M. A., Willie, A., Yuen, C., and Cui, Q. (2025). Ethical considerations of using AI for predictive policing and surveillance. ResearchGate Preprint. Retrieved 10 November 2025, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/394480144

Roy, A., Neetu, N., & Singh, A. R. (2025). The role of artificial intelligence in predictive policing and its legal implications. In Proceedings of the National Seminar on Enhancing Privacy Protection in the Digital Age (pp. 47–56). Atlantis Press.

Russell, S. J., & Norvig, P. (2021). Artificial intelligence: A modern approach (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.

Sadek, M., & Mougenot, C. (2025). Challenges in value-sensitive AI design: Insights from AI practitioner interviews. International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction, 41(17), 10877–10894.

Spinello, R. A. (2025). Moor's theory of just consequentialism. Minds and Machines, 35(2), 1–9.

Tahaei, M., Constantinides, M., Quercia, D., and Muller, M. (2023). A systematic literature review of hu-man-centred, ethical, and responsible AI. arXiv preprint. Retrieved 10 November 2025, from https://arxiv.org/html/2302.05284

UNESCO. (2024). Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence. Paris: United Nations Educa-tional, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Retrieved 10 November 2025, from https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics

Velasquez, M., Andre, C., Shanks, T., & Meyer, M. (2023). Thinking ethically: A framework for moral deci-sion making. Santa Clara University: Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Retrieved 9 November 2025, from https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/thinking-ethically/

Wang, C. C., Lin, S., Wu, X., and Li, Y. (2025). AI governance in China: A tale of three digital em-pires. Hastings International and Comparative Law Review, 48(2), Article 3. https://repository.uclawsf.edu/hastings_international_comparative_law_review/vol48/iss2/3/

Zhan, H., and Wan, D. (2024). Ethical considerations of the trolley problem in autonomous driving: A philosophical and technological analysis. World Electric Vehicle Journal, 15(9), 404.

Artificial Intelligence and the Sacred: Legal Safeguards for Spiritual Integrity In The Digital Age

Innocent Onohomhen Ebbih ESQ
Department of Jurisprudence & International Law,
Faculty of Law, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma
Innocent.ebb@aauekpoma.edu.ng;
innoebb17@gmail.com

Thankgod Edewor Oderotor
Department of Religious Management & Cultural Studies,
Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State
temo.forchrist@gmail.com

Abstract
Today, we live in an age and generation where technology seems to be defining everything about human life. As artificial intelligence increasingly permeates every facet of human life, its intersection with spirituality no doubt presents profound ethical, cultural, and legal challenges. With AI systems, religious content can now be created and managed, simulate spiritual experiences, and even offer algorithmic guidance in matters of faith. Whereas these innovations can be said to be laudable, promise accessibility and personalization, they also risk distorting sacred traditions, commodifying belief systems, and undermining spiritual authenticity. This paper therefore explores the urgent need for legal safeguards that protect spiritual integrity in the digital age. It examines the existence or otherwise of regulatory framework and the extent to which the use of AI in religious contexts affects and impact the issues of doctrinal manipulations, cultural appropriation and the unauthorised generation of sacred texts. The discussion will highlight the role of law in preserving religious freedom, ensuring transparency in AI design, and preventing the exploitation of spiritual communities. By engaging with legal theory, technological ethics, and theological perspectives from a doctrinal approach, this paper aims to foster a multidisciplinary dialogue on how society can uphold the sanctity of spiritual life while embracing the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in the digital age.

Key Words: Artificial Intelligence; digital age; sacred; spirituality; legal safeguards

Introduction

Across the globe, an algorithm trained on a corpus of sacred texts generates a new, synthetic scripture, which a nascent online community begins to treat as divine revelation.[1] These are not scenes from a speculative future; they are emergent realities of the present, signalling a profound and unprecedented convergence of the digital and the divine. As artificial intelligence permeates the deepest strata of human experience, its foray into the realm of spirituality presents a paradigm shift, demanding an urgent and nuanced legal and ethical response.[2] This paper confronts the central tension of our digital age: the transformative potential of AI to democratise and personalise spiritual life, set against its inherent power to commodify, distort and ultimately undermine the very sanctity it seeks to engage.

The incursion of AI into spirituality is both multifaceted and rapid.[3] We are witnessing the rise of algorithmic faith, where AI applications create

[1] Campbell, Heidi A., and Pauline Hope Cheong (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion, Oxford Handbooks* (2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 Oct. 2022), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.001.0001, accessed 11 Nov. 2025

[2] Heidi A. Campbell, Ruth Tsuria, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, (2nd ed. London, Routledge 2022; eBook Published 30 September 2021) https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683.

[3] José Fernando Calderero Hernández, 'Artificial Intelligence and Spirituality' *International Journal of Interactive*

and manage religious content, simulate spiritual experiences through virtual and augmented reality and offer automated pastoral care.[4] These innovations promise significant benefits: enhancing accessibility for the isolated or disabled, preserving endangered religious languages and rituals and providing personalised spiritual pathways.[5] An AI can generate a sermon tailored to a congregation's specific demographic or a meditation app can use biofeedback to guide a user to a deeper state of contemplative calm. Yet, beneath this veneer of utility lurk profound perils. The core of spiritual life which is characterised by tradition, relational authenticity, communal authority and the ineffable encounter with the sacred is inherently resistant to algorithmic reduction.[6] When a Chabot offers absolution or an AI generates a new "gospel," it risks reducing deeply held beliefs to data patterns, commodifying sacred traditions into subscription services[7] and manipulating doctrinal tenets through the opaque biases of its training data.[8]

The primary challenge, therefore, lies in the governance of this new frontier. Existing legal frameworks, forged in an analogue world are woefully inadequate to address these novel threats of the digital age.[9] Intellectual property law, for instance, struggles to protect collectively owned, ancient sacred knowledge from being mined and repackaged by external corporations, a problem long-identified in debates over biopiracy and traditional cultural expressions.[10] Data protection regulations like the GDPR, while a step forward, often fail to comprehend the unique sensitivity of spiritual data which includes the intimate record of one's prayers, doubts and beliefs leaving it vulnerable to exploitation by what is termed "surveillance capitalism."[11] Furthermore, classical religious freedom jurisprudence, as articulated in

Multimedia and Artificial Intelligence, (2021) DOI: 10.9781/ijimai.2021.07.001. available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.9781/ijimai

[4] liya Ayuba Ajang, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Religious Experience in Nigeria: A Sociological and Theological Inquiry' *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice*, (2025) Vol. 10(4) <https://iiardjournals.org/get/IJRCP/VOL.%2010%20NO.%204%202025/Artificial%20Intelligence%20And%20The%20Future%20230-242.pdf> Accessed 12th November, 2025; S. Aupers & J. Schaap, 'The Algorithmic Sacred: An Overview of the Digital Transformation of Religion. *Religion,* (2023) Vol. 53(1), 1-20'

[5] Fernando H. F. Botelho, 'Accessibility to Digital Technology: Virtual Barriers, Real Opportunities' *Assistive Technology* (2021) 33 (sup1): 27–34. doi:10.1080/10400435.2021.1945705. Accessed 12th November, 2025; G. Giordan & A. Possamai, *The Digital Sacred: A Sociological Analysis of Religion in the Digital Age*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[6] Sarah Oliva, 'Relational Authenticity in Community: A Key for Support on the Spiritual Journey?' *Ecclesial Futures*, (2025) DOI: 10.54195/ef19862. Also available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393944493_Relational_Authenticity_in_Community_A_Key_for_Support_on_the_Spiritual_Journey>. Accessed 13th November, 2025; Stephen Sutcliffe, 'The 'Spiritual' and the 'Religious': A Genealogy' In *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*. (Oxford University Press, (2020).

[7] Maria Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. (Routledge, 2008)

[8] Brian Owens, 'The Chatbots claiming to be Jesus: Spreading Gospel or Heresy?' *Nature J. Exp. Psychol. Gen,* (2023) Vol. 152 https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001443.; D. Bass, 'The Bias in the Machine: AI and the Future of Faith' *The Atlantic*, (2023)

[9] Omena Akpobome, 'The Impact of Emerging Technologies on Legal Frameworks: A Model for Adaptive Regulation' *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, (2024) Vol 5(7), 5046-5060. DOI: 10.55248/gengpi.5.1024.3012; Also available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385290270_The_Impact_of_Emerging_Technologies_on_Legal_Frameworks_A_Model_for_Adaptive_Regulation#.> Accessed 13th November, 2025

[10] Gunjan Arora, 'Preservation or Protection? The Intellectual Property Debate Surrounding Traditional Cultural Expressions', *Harvard International Law Journal*, (2025). Available at: <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/2025/03/preservation-or-protection-the-intellectual-property-debate-surrounding-traditional-cultural-expressions/.> Accessed 13th November, 2025; K.A. Carpenter, et al 'Protecting Traditional Cultural Expressions: A Review of the Literature' *WIPO Journal*, (2009) 1(1), 92-101

[11] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (Public Affairs, 2019); Joseph R. Bongiovi, 'Review of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, by S. Zuboff]. *Social Forces*, (2019) *98*(2), 1–4. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26862460 Accessed 14th November, 2025;

the cases of *Sherbert v Verner*[12] and *Employment Division v. Smith*[13], is primarily designed to protect believers from state interference, not from the subtle, corporate-driven erosion of their doctrinal integrity by probabilistic algorithms. This regulatory lacuna creates a perilous environment where spiritual harm can be inflicted at scale, with no clear avenue for recourse.[14]

It is against this backdrop that this paper observes that the current legal regimes are insufficient to protect spiritual integrity in the digital age, necessitating the development of a new, principled legal framework centred on the concept of "spiritual integrity" that operates at the intersection of data rights, intellectual property and religious freedom law. The concept of "spiritual integrity"[15] is proposed here as a legally cognisable interest, building upon Taylor's concept of the "social imaginary"[16] and Nussbaum's capabilities approach[17], encompassing three core components – the right of a religious community to maintain doctrinal integrity against algorithmic manipulation, its right to cultural sovereignty over its sacred knowledge and symbols, and the protection of the relational authenticity that forms the core of spiritual life from mechanised substitution.

To advance this argument, this paper will adopt a doctrinal methodology, engaging in a critical synthesis of legal theory, technological ethics and theological perspectives. The analysis will proceed in five stages. First, it will map the current landscape of AI's application in spiritual contexts, cataloguing its promises and pinpointing its specific perils. Second, it will conduct a critical gap analysis, demonstrating the failures of copyright, data privacy and religious freedom law to provide a meaningful shield. Third, the paper will delve into the conceptual work of defining "spiritual integrity" as a foundational principle for legal intervention. Building upon this foundation, the fourth section will propose a multidimensional legal framework, outlining specific safeguards such as transparency mandates, sacred data sovereignty and new liability mechanisms. Finally, the paper will navigate the complex practical and theological considerations of implementation, arguing for a co-regulatory model developed in dialogue with faith communities themselves.

The ultimate aim of this inquiry is to foster a vital multidisciplinary dialogue. By interrogating the intersection of AI and the sacred, this paper seeks to provide a robust legal and ethical architecture that allows society to embrace the transformative potential of artificial intelligence without sacrificing the integrity, authenticity and sanctity of spiritual life. The question is no longer if AI will reshape spirituality, but how we will steward this transformation to ensure that the digital age does not become a post-sacred one.

Mapping the Frontier – AI's Incursion into the Spiritual Realm

The integration of artificial intelligence into spiritual and religious life is no longer a futuristic

[12] *Sherbert v. Verner,* 374 U.S. 398 (1963) Adele Sherbert, a Seventh-day Adventist, was discharged by her employer after she refused to work on Saturdays, the Sabbath in her religion. The state subsequently denied Sherbert unemployment benefits because she did not accept available work from three other employers who wanted her to work on Saturdays. Having lost in the lower courts, Sherbert appealed to the Supreme Court, contending that the law violated her free exercise of religion rights. In the opinion for the court, Justice William J. Brennan Jr. held that the denial of unemployment benefits to Sherbert imposed a burden on her free exercise rights under the First Amendment.

[13] 494 U.S. 872 (1990)

[14] C Véliz, *Privacy is Power: Why and How You Should Take Back Control of Your Data* (Bantam Press, 2020)

[15] Spiritual integrity refers to the consistency and steadfastness of one's faith and moral principles, aligning one's actions and beliefs with the teachings of Scripture. It is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that are rooted in one's spiritual convictions. Spiritual integrity is essential for a genuine Christian life, as it reflects the believer's commitment to living according to God's will and commands.

[16] C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*. (Harvard University Press, 2007)

[17] M.C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development* Approach (Harvard University Press, 2011)

speculation but a burgeoning reality.[18] To properly assess the associated legal and ethical challenges, it is imperative first to map this new frontier with precision. This section provides a typology of AI spiritual applications, moving beyond a monolithic view to detail the specific ways in which algorithms are being deployed in sacred contexts. It then analyses the dual-edged nature of these technologies, outlining their promising potential before delving into the specific perils that form the core of this paper's concern: doctrinal manipulation, commodification, the erosion of authority and data exploitation.

A Typology of AI Spiritual Applications

The landscape of "spiritual AI" is diverse, encompassing applications that range from the administrative to the profoundly experiential. We can categorise them into four primary types.

- **Content Creation and Curation**: This represents one of the most widespread applications, leveraging generative AI models. Algorithms are now used to compose sermons, write hymns and devotional poetry, and generate religious art.[19] For instance, OpenAI's GPT models have been used to produce homilies based on specific scriptural passages and theological themes. More controversially, projects like "The AI Gospel" have experimented with generating entirely new scriptural narratives by training models on the Bible, raising profound questions about authorship and canon.[20] These tools though they promise efficiency and a fresh perspective, they inherently risk flattening the nuanced, context-rich process of theological interpretation into a statistical exercise in pattern matching.

- **Simulated Experiences**: These represent another category, where AI couples with immersive technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) to create digital spiritual encounters.[21] Companies offer VR experiences that allow users to "visit" sacred sites like the Hajj in Mecca or the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem from their homes.[22] Other applications include AI-powered meditation apps that use biofeedback to adjust the session in real-time, purportedly guiding the user to a deeper state of calm. These simulations can enhance accessibility and provide powerful educational tools.[23] However, it has been argued that they risk reducing a physical, communal and often arduous act of devotion into a consumable, individualistic entertainment product, creating what might be termed "ersatz transcendence."[24]

---

[18] Khader I. Alkhouri, 'Spiritual Confusion in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: A Psychology of Religion Perspective' *International Review of Psychiatry*, (2025) Vol. 37(5), 540–553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2025.2488761> Accessed 14th November, 2025

[19] Maria Trigka and Elias Dritsas, 'The Evolution of Generative AI: Trends and Applications' *IEEE Access*, (2025) Vol. 13 DOI: 10.1109/ACCESS.2025.3574660. Also available at: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=11016906>. Accessed 12th November, 2025; G. Giordan & A. Possamai, *The Digital Sacred: A Sociological Analysis of Religion in the Digital Age*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[20] Heidi A. Campbell, and Pauline Hope Cheong (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, Oxford Handbooks (2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 Oct. 2022). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.001.0001> accessed 11 Nov. 2025

[21] Editorial, 'Augmented Reality vs. Virtual Reality: What's the Difference?' *Coursera*, (3rd June, 2025). https://www.coursera.org/articles/augmented-reality-vs-virtual-reality?msockid=0c8c0810c973618c2e931e71c8be60ec Accessed 14th November, 2025.

[22] Heidi A. Campbell, *Surveying the Digital Religion Landscape* (Routledge, 2020).

[23] Ibid

[24] S. Aupers & J. Schaap, 'The Algorithmic Sacred: An Overview of the Digital Transformation of Religion. *Religion,* (2023) Vol. 53(1), 1-20'

➢ **Algorithmic Guidance and Pastoral Care:** These represents the most direct imitation of human religious roles. Chatbots such as "BlessU-2" and "AI Buddha" offer scriptural quotes and life advice, while more sophisticated systems are being developed to perform automated "confessions" or provide Islamic fatwas.[25] These systems promise 24/7 accessibility and a non-judgmental ear, potentially reaching individuals who are reluctant to approach a human clergy.[26] The peril, however, is significant. Pastoral care is rooted in empathy, shared humanity and a deep, relational understanding of an individual's situation which algorithms, devoid of consciousness and genuine empathy, do not possess.[27] This creates a risk of providing superficial or even harmful guidance on deeply complex spiritual and personal issues.

➢ **Administrative and Community Management**: This though often less visible is equally impactful, and it involves using AI to optimise the administrative functions of religious organisations. This includes using predictive analytics to manage donor tithing patterns, algorithms to tailor digital outreach campaigns to specific demographics and tools to moderate online religious forums.[28] While these applications can increase operational efficiency and help communities grow, they also introduce a logic of corporate-style analytics into the spiritual sphere, potentially reducing congregants to data points and their faith to a set of quantifiable engagement metrics.

The Dual-Edged Sword: Promises and Perils

The applications outlined above present a clear dichotomy of opportunity and risk. Proponents rightly highlight several significant benefits which include accessibility, preservation and personalization. AI can provide spiritual resources to the homebound, those in religiously sparse areas and people with disabilities and help digitise, translate and analyse ancient religious texts, potentially saving endangered traditions from oblivion.[29] Finally, Personalisation offers a tailored spiritual path, where learning and practice can be adapted to an individual's pace and intellectual style, potentially deepening engagement for a generation steeped in digital interactivity.

However, these promises are shadowed by profound perils that strike at the heart of spiritual integrity.[30] Doctrinal Dilution and Manipulation occurs because AI models are trained on data that embodies the biases, gaps and interpretations of its human creators. A language model trained primarily on online, Western, Protestant Christian sources will inevitably generate a skewed version of Christianity, let alone other faiths.[31] A more dangerous phenomenon is AI "hallucination" where plausible but entirely fabricated information is generated and this poses an existential threat to doctrinal purity. It is a truism that an AI confidently inventing a non-existent religious tenet or a distorted historical fact could lead believers astray, creating schisms and eroding trust in sacred tradition itself.

[25] D. Bass, 'The Bias in the Machine: AI and the Future of Faith'.

[26] Janet Olufunke Bamidele & Donald A. Odeleye, 'The Future of Pastoral Counselling: A Human-AI Partnership Creators' *Journal of Nigerian Association of Pastoral Counsellors*, (2025) Vol. 4, 117-122

[27] Kenneth R. Pruitt, 'The Four Pillars of Pastoral Care and Counseling' *Leland Seminary*. Available at: <https://www.leland.edu/theologically-speaking/the-four-pillars-of-pastoral-care-and-counseling>. 14 Nov 2025

[28] Campbell, Heidi A., and Pauline Hope Cheong (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*.

[29] G. Giordan & A. Possamai, *The Digital Sacred: A Sociological Analysis of Religion in the Digital Age*.

[30] D. Bass, 'The Bias in the Machine: AI and the Future of Faith'

[31] Han, Huamei, and Manka Varghese, 'Language Ideology, Christianity, and Identity: Critical Empirical Examinations of Christian Institutions as Alternative Spaces' *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, (2019) 18 (1): 1–9. doi:10.1080/15348458.2019.1569525.

Commodification of the Sacred happens when spiritual practices become AI-driven apps and services, inevitably subjecting them to market logic.[32] This transforms acts of faith into transactions, which has been identified as the "marketisation of religion."[33] When this happens, sacred rituals become premium features and personalised prayers will require a subscription. This process commodifies belief, privileging only those who can pay and undermining the notion of grace and community as freely given. The sacred is stripped of its unique, non-economic value and becomes just another digital product.

Erosion of Spiritual Authority results from the deployment of AI chaplains and algorithmic guides, which directly challenges the role of human clergy, theologians and community elders.[34] These figures are not merely sources of information but are custodians of living traditions, offering wisdom earned through experience and embodying the community's values. Replacing them with algorithms risks de-skilling religious communities, undermining the authority structures that have maintained religious continuity for millennia and fostering a shallow, "Google-it" approach to deep theological questions.[35]

Data Exploitation is perhaps the most insidious peril, involving the harvesting of spiritual data. The information divulged to an AI confessor or a prayer app giving details of one's doubts, sins, hopes and beliefs constitutes an incredibly intimate profile and intrusion into one's privacy. Within the framework of surveillance capitalism, this data is a valuable commodity that can be used to manipulate user behaviour, target advertising or even be sold to third parties.[36] The exploitation of this "sacred data" represents a fundamental violation of spiritual privacy and trust.

Thus, this mapping exercise reveals a complex and rapidly evolving ecosystem. The applications of AI in spirituality are not merely technological upgrades but are transformative forces that actively reshape religious practice, belief, and authority. The promises of accessibility and personalisation are real, but they are eclipsed by the grave risks of doctrinal corruption, commodification and data exploitation. Having established this landscape, the following section will turn to the critical question of governance, examining the profound inadequacy of our current legal tools to manage these unique and unprecedented challenges.

The Inadequate Shield – Critical Gaps in Existing Legal Frameworks

Having established the novel risks that AI poses to spiritual integrity, this section turns to a critical evaluation of the existing legal landscape. It argues that current regulatory regimes, developed for an analogue world, are fundamentally ill-equipped to serve as a meaningful shield against the unique nature of digital spiritual harm. This analysis will focus on three core areas of law: intellectual property, data protection and religious freedom. While these frameworks offer certain tangential protections, they contain critical conceptual and practical gaps that leave spiritual communities and individuals vulnerable to the specific perils of doctrinal manipulation, commodification and data exploitation outlined in the previous section.

Intellectual Property Law: A Misaligned Instrument

[32] Bo-Chiuan Su, 'AI and Religious e-Commerce: Ethical Foundations, Practical Strategies, and Future Directions. *Electron Commer Res* (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-025-10010-6

[33] Maria Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*.

[34] Elizabeth Brown, 'Will AI Ever Become Spiritual? A Hospital Chaplaincy Perspective', *Practical Theology* (2023) Vol. 16 (6): 801–13. doi:10.1080/1756073X.2023.2242940.

[35] Stephen Sutcliffe, 'The 'Spiritual' and the 'Religious': A Genealogy' In *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

[36] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*.

Intellectual property law, designed to incentivise and protect individual and corporate innovation, is a poor fit for the collective, ancient and often non-commercial nature of sacred traditions. Its application in this context is often not just inadequate but can be actively counterproductive.

Copyright law's individualistic bent creates several core limitations in the spiritual domain. First, it requires a human author. This creates an immediate problem with AI-generated religious content, such as synthetic scriptures or sermons. Under current interpretations in most jurisdictions, including the U.S. Copyright Office's stance on works like "A Recent Entrance to Paradise," a work created autonomously by an AI lacks a human author and may fall into the public domain, leaving it without protection from the very communities it might misrepresent.[37]

Second, copyright protects expression, not ideas, facts or systems. As the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed in *Baker v. Selden*[38] (1879), this idea/expression dichotomy means that the core tenets of a religion – its doctrines, beliefs and procedures are not covered by copyright law. Thus, AI can freely mine the doctrinal "ideas" of Buddhism or Christianity and re-express them in a new algorithmic form, even if that form is doctrinally inaccurate or heterodox. Sadly, the law provides no recourse for this type of doctrinal distortion.

Finally, copyright's duration is limited. The vast corpus of sacred texts, rituals and symbols that form the bedrock of world religions are centuries old and firmly in the public domain. It has been argued that IP law fails to recognise the ongoing, intergenerational ownership that indigenous and religious communities assert over their traditional knowledge.[39] This allows corporations to legally appropriate and commodify public domain sacred texts, creating AI-powered apps that sell access to a tradition's own core which are not covered by copyright protection.

Data Protection and Privacy Law: Failing the Sacred

While modern data protection regimes like the General Data Protection Regulation[40] in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act[41] represent a significant advancement in the regulation and protection of data generally, they contain critical blind spots when it comes to spiritual data.

The ambiguous status of "spiritual data" creates significant vulnerabilities. The GDPR prohibits the processing of "special category data," which includes data revealing "religious or philosophical beliefs." This appears, on its face, to be a strong protection.[42] However, the definition of what constitutes such data is often narrow. A user's specific prayer requests, doubts confessed to an AI Chabot or detailed meditation metrics may not be explicitly classified as "religious belief" by a data controller, but rather as general "health" or "lifestyle" data, affording it a lower level of protection.[43] This creates a loophole where intensely personal spiritual information is processed without the rigorous safeguards required for special category data.[44]

The fiction of meaningful consent further undermines data protection. Data protection law is

[37] Register of Copyrights, 'Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Part 1: Digital Replicas' *United States Copyrights Office*, (July, 2024) https://www.copyright.gov/ai/Copyright-and-Artificial-Intelligence-Part-1-Digital-Replicas-Report.pdf. Accessed 14th November, 2025

[38] 101 U.S. 99 (1879).

[39] A.R. Riley, 'Straight Stealing: Towards an Indigenous System of Cultural Property Protection' *Washington Law Review*, (2005) Vol. 80(1), 69-164.

[40] EU GDPR 2023.

[41] California Consumer Privacy Act 2018 came into effect in January, 2020.

[42] Art. 9, GDPR

[43] C Véliz, *Privacy is Power: Why and How You Should Take Back Control of Your Data*

[44] U.S. Copyright Office. (2023). *Copyright Registration Guidance: Works Containing Material Generated by Artificial Intelligence*. Federal Register, 88(51), 16190-16194.

built on the foundation of informed consent. However, in the context of surveillance capitalism, the consent model is often a fiction.[45] The lengthy, complex privacy policies presented to users of a spiritual app are rarely read and almost never understood. An individual seeking solace in a moment of grief is not in a position to make a rational, informed choice about how their intimate spiritual data might be used for algorithmic training or micro-targeting. The power imbalance between the vulnerable user and the data-hungry platform renders the concept of meaningful consent largely void in this context.[46]

The extraterritorial enforcement challenge compounds these problems. The global nature of digital platforms further complicates enforcement. While the GDPR has extraterritorial reach, enforcing it against a company based in a jurisdiction with weaker privacy laws can be a protracted and difficult legal battle. For individual believers or small religious communities, the cost and complexity of such a fight are prohibitive, leaving them with a right without a remedy.

Religious Freedom and Anti-Discrimination Law: A Shield against the State, Not Corporations

Religious freedom law, particularly as interpreted in the United States, has been shaped by a series of landmark cases that define its scope and limitations. However, this body of law is primarily designed to mediate the relationship between the individual/community and the state, not to protect against harms inflicted by private corporate actors. The state action doctrine presents a fundamental limitation. The First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause[47], like many constitutional rights, generally applies only to state action. It has thus been held that neutral, generally applicable laws not targeting religion do not violate the Free Exercise Clause, even if they incidentally burden religious practice.[48] This principle means that a private company developing an AI that profoundly distorts a religion's doctrine is not engaging in "state action" and is therefore not directly constrained by constitutional religious freedom guarantees. The harm is inflicted by a private entity, placing it outside the scope of this primary legal shield.

The challenge of proving discrimination versus proving spiritual harm further limits these protections. Religious freedom statutes, such as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and anti-discrimination laws are triggered by demonstrations of discrimination or substantial burden. To succeed, a plaintiff must show they were denied a job, a service or a benefit because of their religion or that a government regulation places a substantial burden on their exercise of religion.[49] The harm from a doctrinally manipulative AI, however, is different. It is not about being denied a service but about being provided a corrupted one. It is a harm of misrepresentation and dilution, not exclusion.[50] Proving that an AI's output constitutes a "substantial burden" on one's religious exercise would be a monumental legal task, requiring a court to wade into theological debates to determine what constitutes orthodox doctrine which is an entanglement that courts are notoriously reluctant to undertake.[51] The language of discrimination and burden is ill-suited to capture the subtle, corrosive harm of spiritual inauthenticity engineered by a corporate algorithm. Thus, intellectual property law is conceptually misaligned with the nature of sacred tradition. Data protection law, while better

[45] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*.

[46] Malgieri, Gianclaudio, 'The vulnerable data subject in *the GDPR', Vulnerability and Data Protection Law, Oxford Data Protection & Privacy Law* (Oxford, 2023; online edn, Oxford Academic, 18 May 2023), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192870339.003.0004, accessed 14 Nov. 2025.

[47] US Amend. 1

[48] *Employment Division v. Smith* 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

[49] *Sherbert v Verner* Supra.

[50] Michael Klenk, 'Ethics of generative AI and manipulation: a design-oriented research agenda' *Ethics Inf Technol* (2024) Vol. **26**(9) https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-024-09745-x

[51] Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, *(*Princeton University Press, 2005)

intentioned, is undermined by flawed consent models and enforcement challenges.

Conceptualising the Harm – Towards a Legal Principle of Spiritual Integrity

This research reveals a yawning regulatory gap as existing law fails to recognise or redress the unique injuries inflicted by AI upon spiritual life. To bridge this gap, we must move beyond analogies to property, privacy and discrimination, and articulate a new, legally cognisable interest. This paper therefore proposes the principle of "spiritual integrity" as the foundational concept for a new legal framework. We shall therefore consider the principle of spiritual integrity in three core, protectable components viz – doctrinal integrity, cultural sovereignty and relational authenticity. It then grounds this novel concept in established legal theory and philosophy, demonstrating that it is not a radical invention but a logical and necessary evolution of existing jurisprudential thought tailored to the challenges of the digital age.

Defining "Spiritual Integrity": From Vague Offense to Cognisable Harm

The term "spiritual harm" often evokes subjective feelings of offense, which courts are rightly hesitant to adjudicate. The concept of spiritual integrity, however, moves beyond mere offense to define a concrete, structural injury to the conditions that are necessary for authentic religious and spiritual life to flourish. It thus encompasses three interdependent components discussed hereunder.

- **Doctrinal Integrity:** This asserts the right of a religious community to maintain the authenticity and authority of its teachings against systemic algorithmic distortion.[52] The harm is not that an individual is offended by an AI's output, but that the community's process of transmitting its tradition – a process guarded by recognised authorities and pedagogical structures, is hijacked and corrupted by an external, non-accountable system. When an AI "hallucinates" a religious tenet or provides guidance based on a biased dataset, it violates the community's right to self-definition. The injury is analogous to defamation, but at a collective, doctrinal level; it is the corruption of the very source code of a living tradition. This is not about suppressing dissent but about preventing the large-scale, automated pollution of a community's informational ecosystem with authoritative-sounding falsehoods.[53] Protecting doctrinal integrity means legally recognising that such algorithmic distortion constitutes a tangible harm to a community's ability to perpetuate its identity across generations.[54]

- **Cultural Sovereignty**: This extends the logic of doctrinal integrity to the broader cultural and symbolic realm. It is the right of indigenous and religious communities to control the use, representation and commercial exploitation of their sacred knowledge, symbols and practices.[55] This

[52] International Theological Commission, 'Religious Freedom for the Good of all Theological Approaches and Contemporary Challenges' *Vatican*, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20190426_liberta-religiosa_en.html. Accessed 14th November, 2025

[53] MIT 'When AI Gets It Wrong: Addressing AI Hallucinations and Bias' Available at: https://mitsloanedtech.mit.edu/ai/basics/addressing-ai-hallucinations-and-bias/ Accessed 13th November, 2025.

[54] Amina Jafir Kerry Jeremy, 'Addressing Algorithmic Discrimination: Legal and Ethical Approaches to Ensuring Fairness in AI Systems, (2024) DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.25716.56969. Also available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383664935_Addressing_Algorithmic_Discrimination_Legal_and_Ethical_Approaches_to_Ensuring_Fairness_in_AI_Systems. 14th November, 2025

[55] Gunjan Arora, 'Preservation or Protection? The Intellectual Property Debate Surrounding Traditional Cultural Expressions' *Harvard Art Review*, (2025) Vol. 1 https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/halo/2025/03/13/preservation-or-protection-the-intellectual-property-debate-surrounding-traditional-cultural-expressions/#:>. Accessed 14th Nov 2025.

concept is deeply informed by the scholarship on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and the movement to protect Traditional Cultural Expressions.[56] The unauthorised use of a sacred Navajo chant to train an AI music generator[57] or the algorithmic generation of images of a Hindu deity in a disrespectful context are not merely copyright violations; they are violations of cultural sovereignty.[58] They represent an extraction and repurposing of sacred cultural capital without consent, benefit-sharing, or respect for protocols of use. This harm is one of dispossession and disrespect because it severs the sacred symbol from its lived context, its community of origin, and the relational responsibilities that govern its proper use. Legal recognition of cultural sovereignty would provide communities with a positive right to grant or withhold permission for the use of their sacred knowledge in AI training datasets and applications, moving beyond the negative, after-the-fact protections of IP law.[59]

➢ **Relational Authenticity**: The most profound, yet least tangible, component of spiritual integrity is relational authenticity. At its core, much of spirituality is constituted by relationships –the relationship between the believer and the divine and the communal relationships among believers.[60] The harm caused by AI here is the substitution of an authentic human (or divine) relationship with a simulated, transactional one. When an individual seeks pastoral care from an AI chatbot, the relationship is inherently inauthentic. The AI has no consciousness, no empathy and no stake in the individual's well-being. It offers a parody of care, one that risks devaluing the genuine article and leaving the user emotionally and spiritually impoverished. This aligns with "capabilities approach," which evaluates justice based on what individuals are actually able to do and be.[61] The capability to engage in authentic spiritual relationships is a central human functional capability. The proliferation of AI simulacra in spiritual roles can be seen as a barrier to realising this capability.[62] The harm is the degradation of the relational fabric of spiritual life itself, reducing profound encounters to human-computer interactions optimised for engagement metrics.

---

[56] T. Kukutai, & J. Taylor, (Eds.) *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda* (ANU Press, 2016); K.A. Carpenter, et al 'Protecting Traditional Cultural Expressions: A Review of the Literature' WIPO Journal, (2009) 1(1), 92-101

[57] Samantha G. Rothaus, 'Court Rules AI Training on Copyrighted Works Is Not Fair Use — What It Means for Generative AI' *Davis Gilbert*, (27th Feb., 2025) https://www.dglaw.com/court-rules-ai-training-on-copyrighted-works-is-not-fair-use-what-it-means-for-generative-ai/

[58] Melissa Heikkilä, 'The Algorithm: AI-generated art raises tricky questions about ethics, copyright, and security' *MIT Technology Review*, (September 20, 2022) https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/09/20/1059792/the-algorithm-ai-generated-art-raises-tricky-questions-about-ethics-copyright-and-security/ accessed 14th Nov. 2025

[59] Lawvexa Editorial Team, 'The Importance of Legal Recognition of Cultural Identities in Modern Societies' *LawVexa*, (March, 6, 2024) https://lawvexa.com/legal-recognition-of-cultural-identities/ accessed 14th Nov. 2025

[60] Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'Faith, Religion, and Spirituality: A Phenomenological and Hermeneutic Contribution to Parsing the Distinctions' *Religions*, (2021), 12(7), 476. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070476. Also Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352790790_Faith_Religion_and_Spirituality_A_Phenomenological_and_Hermeneutic_Contribution_to_Parsing_the_Distinctions>. Accessed 14th November, 2025

[61] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Harvard University Press, 2011)

[62] Douglas C Youvan, 'Digital Pantheism: Exploring the Spiritual Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence' (April 2024) DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.32319.11682. also available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380203196_Digital_Pantheism_Exploring_the_Spiritual_Dimensions_of_Artificial_Intelligence. Accessed 14th November, 2025.

Grounding the Principle in Legal Theory

➢ **Right to Cultural Heritage:** While the term "spiritual integrity" may be novel, the underlying principles are deeply rooted in established legal and philosophical traditions, providing a solid foundation for its adoption. The Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Heritage Law provide a powerful analogue in international law developments concerning the rights of indigenous peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[63], particularly Articles 11 and 31, affirms the right of indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.[64] This represents a clear move in international law towards recognising collective cultural and spiritual rights that exist beyond the frame of Western IP law.[65] The concept of "spiritual integrity" for religious communities is a direct extension of this logic, applying the core tenets of cultural sovereignty to the digitally-mediated threats faced by both indigenous and organised religious groups.

➢ **The Capabilities Approach and the Right to Identity**: This offer additional philosophical justification for the protection of spiritual integrity. If the goal of law and policy is to support human flourishing, then it must protect the central capabilities necessary for a dignified life which includes "being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason... and to do so in a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education" and "being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves."[66] The capability for meaningful spiritual experience and authentic religious community falls squarely within this framework. A legal system that allows the conditions for this capability to be eroded by algorithmic systems is failing in its fundamental purpose. Similarly, the concept of a "right to identity," developed in both international human rights law and constitutional jurisprudence, is relevant.[67] The German Constitutional Court's concept of the "right to the free development of one's personality"[68] and the European Court of Human Rights' jurisprudence on private life under Article 8 of the ECHR have recognised that personal identity is socially and culturally embedded.[69] An attack on the cultural and doctrinal foundations of a community such as the systematic distortion of its beliefs by AI can be construed as an attack on the identity of its members.[70]

---

[63] Adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007, as a triumph for justice and human dignity.

[64] A/RES/ 61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Available at: www.un-documents.net/a61r295.htm. Accessed 14th November, 2025

[65] Siegfried Wiessner, 'The Cultural Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Achievements and Continuing Challenges' *European Journal of International Law EJIL* (2011) Vol. 22(1)

[66] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*.

[67] Ronit Matar & Daragh Murray, 'Re-thinking International Human Rights Law's Approach to Identity in Light of Surveillance and AI' *Human Rights Law Review*, (2025) Vol. 25(3), https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngaf016. Also available at: https://academic.oup.com/hrlr/article/25/3/ngaf016/8157328

[68] Edward J. Eberle, 'Observations on the Development of Human Dignity and Personality in German Constitutional Law: An Overview' *Liverpool Law Rev*., (2012) Vol. 33, 201–233. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10991-012-9120-x

[69] Guide on Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Available at: https://ks.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr-ks/guide_art_8_eng. Accessed 14th November, 2025.

[70] Fahim Abrar Abid, 'Crimes against Culture: The International Law Framework for Cultural Heritage Destruction and its Limitations' *Harvard International Law Journal*, (2025). Available at: <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/2025/02/crimes-against-culture-the-international-law-framework-for-cultural-heritage-destruction-and-its-limitations/.> Accessed 14th November, 2025

➢ **Information Fiduciaries and the Abuse of Trust**: It has been argued that digital platforms that collect and use our data occupy a position of trust and dependence analogous to traditional fiduciaries like doctors or lawyers.[71] As such, they should have legal duties of care, confidentiality, and loyalty towards their users. This theory applies with even greater force in the context of spiritual AI. A company offering an AI confessional or prayer guide is not a neutral platform; it is holding itself out as a provider of a profound and intimate service. Users are inherently vulnerable in this relationship. The violation of spiritual data, or the provision of manipulative or doctrinally corrupt guidance, is a quintessential breach of fiduciary duty. Recognising spiritual integrity would thus involve imposing heightened fiduciary obligations on entities that assume such sensitive, trust-based roles.

Thus, it can be said that the argument has moved from diagnosing a problem to proposing a solution. The principle of spiritual integrity, comprising doctrinal integrity, cultural sovereignty and relational authenticity, provides the necessary conceptual vocabulary to name the specific harms of the digital sacred. By grounding this principle in established traditions of indigenous rights, human capabilities, identity rights and fiduciary law, it becomes a legally defensible and philosophically sound basis for intervention. This is therefore not a call for the state to establish theology but for the law to protect the preconditions for authentic theological and spiritual life to exist.
Having laid this conceptual foundation, the following section will build upon it to propose specific, actionable legal safeguards.

Building the Safeguards – A Proposal for a Multidimensional Legal Framework

The conceptual foundation of spiritual integrity, as established previously demands a tangible legal architecture. It is not enough to define the harm; the law must provide remedies. This phase now moves from theory to prescription, outlining a multidimensional legal framework designed to operationalise the principle of spiritual integrity. The proposed safeguards are not a single, monolithic law, but rather a suite of complementary interventions that target different points of failure in the current system. They are structured around three core strategies – enhancing transparency and accountability, creating proactive rights and establishing clear liability and redress mechanisms. This framework aims to empower individuals and communities, impose responsible practices on developers and provide a path to justice when violations occur.

Transparency and Accountability Mandates

A primary driver of the unique risks posed by spiritual AI is its inherent opacity. To combat this, the law must force the black box open, creating a regime of mandatory transparency that enables informed consent and external accountability.
"Spiritual AI" Labelling and Disclosure provides a foundational safeguard, drawing inspiration from food labelling regulations and the Federal Trade Commission's[72] rules on native advertising of the United States of America[73]. A mandatory disclosure regime would require any digital service that provides religious content, spiritual guidance or simulates a spiritual experience through AI to display a clear and unambiguous label such as "AI-Generated Spiritual Content" or "AI-Powered Guidance." This label must be prominent and persistent, not buried in a terms-of-service agreement. The European Union's Artificial

[71] Jack M. Balkin, 'Information Fiduciaries and the First Amendment' *UC Davis Law Review*, (2016) 49(4), 1183-1234. Also available at: https://lawreview.law.ucdavis.edu/archives/49/4/information-fiduciaries-and-first-amendment. Accessed 15th November, 2025

[72] Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act") (15 U.S.C. §§ 41-58, as amended)

[73] Native Advertising: A Guide for Businesses. Available at: https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/native-advertising-guide-businesses

Intelligence Act[74], with its tiered approach to risk, provides a useful model. AI systems deployed in spiritual contexts could be classified as "high-risk" for the purposes of transparency, triggering strict labelling requirements.[75] This empowers users with basic knowledge, allowing them to apply appropriate scrutiny to the content they receive. It respects the autonomy of the individual to choose whether to engage with an algorithmic authority, restoring a measure of informed agency that is currently absent.

Doctrinal and Cultural Audits offer a more robust accountability mechanism beyond consumer-facing labels. The law should create a right for recognised religious and indigenous communities to request an independent doctrinal or cultural audit of an AI system that purports to represent, interpret or use their tradition. This process would be analogous to a financial audit. A panel of theological and cultural experts, approved by the relevant community, would be granted access to the AI's training data, model cards, and output for a specific, limited purpose to assess the system for significant doctrinal inaccuracies, harmful biases, or disrespectful uses of sacred cultural elements. The findings of such an audit though may not force a company to shut down its service, but they could be made public and, crucially, serve as evidence in subsequent legal actions for misrepresentation or violation of cultural sovereignty. This mechanism, in the context of algorithmic accountability, would create a powerful incentive for developers to engage with religious authorities proactively, fostering a culture of co-design and respect rather than post-hoc exploitation.[76]

Proactive Rights and Protections

Transparency alone is insufficient if users and communities lack the power to control how their data and traditions are used. The framework must therefore establish new, proactive legal rights. Sacred Data Sovereignty builds upon the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and as such should be recognised as a special category data.[77] The concept of "sacred data" must be legally codified as any data that reveals or is derived from an individual or community's spiritual beliefs, practices, prayers, rituals or confessions. The legal innovation here is to grant community-level rights over this data, in addition to individual rights. This would mean that before a company could collect or process sacred data pertaining to a specific religious tradition, it would need to obtain not only individual user consent but also a license or agreement from a recognised governing body of that tradition. This could be structured similarly to the "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" model required under UNDRIP for projects affecting indigenous lands.[78] This dual-lock system would prevent the piecemeal erosion of a community's spiritual fabric through the aggregation of individual data points. It formally recognises that spiritual data is not merely personal but a resource of the collective, holding significance that transcends the individual transaction.

Liability and Redress Mechanisms

Finally, a legal framework is only as strong as its enforcement. New causes of action and liability standards are required to deter harmful conduct and provide redress.

[74] The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) has been passed. It was formally adopted in May 2024, published in the EU's Official Journal on 12 July 2024, and officially entered into force on 1 August 2024.

[75] Art. 6, EU AI Act 2024.

[76] Cath Corinne, 'Governing Artificial Intelligence: Ethical, Legal and Technical Opportunities and Challenges' *Phil. Trans. R. Soc.* A. (2018) 37620180080 http://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2018.0080 or https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsta.2018.0080

[77] Ahu Kukutai and John Taylor (Eds.). *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda*. (ANU Press, 2016).

[78] Barelli, Mauro, ' Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in the UNDRIP: Articles 10, 19, 29(2), and 32(2)', in Jessie Hohmann, and Marc Weller (eds), *The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: A Commentary*, (Oxford Commentaries on International Law (2018; online edn, Oxford Law Pro), https://doi.org/10.1093/law/9780199673223.003.0010, accessed 15 Nov. 2025.

A New Tort of Doctrinal Misrepresentation would address the specific harm of doctrinal corruption by expanding tort law to recognise this cause of action. This would be a collective tort, actionable by a recognised religious institution on behalf of its community. The plaintiff would need to prove that the defendant deployed a system that held itself out as representing a specific religious tradition; the system systematically and significantly misrepresented the core doctrines of that tradition; and this misrepresentation caused a foreseeable harm, such as confusion among the faithful, the fracturing of a community or reputational damage to the religious institution.[79] This tort draws an analogy to defamation and the commercial tort of "passing off." It does not require the state to define correct doctrine, but rather to adjudicate whether a commercial entity has falsely claimed to represent it, causing harm.[80] The standard would be high, requiring evidence of systematic distortion, not minor interpretive differences. This creates a powerful deterrent against the most egregious forms of algorithmic heresy.

Strengthening Consumer Protection Law offers another enforcement pathway as FTC Act prohibits "unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce."[81] Marketing an AI chaplain as a source of compassionate care without disclosing its limitations could be deemed deceptive. Similarly, the "unfairness" prong could be invoked against business practices that cause substantial, unavoidable injury to consumers such as the psychological and spiritual injury resulting from manipulative AI guidance that is not outweighed by countervailing benefits. Regulators could issue specific guidelines for "Spiritual AI Services," clarifying that failures of transparency, breaches of data trust and the provision of unqualified advice on critical life matters may constitute unfair and deceptive practices. This approach has the advantage of utilizing an existing, powerful enforcement apparatus, allowing for investigations, fines and injunctions without waiting for new legislation.

In summation, the multidimensional framework proposed here which spans transparency mandates, proactive rights and liability rules provides a comprehensive and pragmatic blueprint for safeguarding spiritual integrity. It balances the need for innovation with the imperative of protection, empowers communities as stakeholders in their digital future and grounds abstract principles in concrete legal tools. By layering these interventions, the framework creates a resilient system of checks and balances, ensuring that as artificial intelligence continues its ascent, the sacred realms of human experience are met not with exploitation but with legally-enforced respect.

Navigating the Implementation – Theological and Practical Considerations

The proposed legal framework for spiritual integrity, while theoretically robust, does not operate in a vacuum. Its successful implementation hinges on navigating a complex web of theological, practical, and political challenges. It is obvious that the framework cannot be imposed as a top-down, one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, it must be developed through a collaborative, co-regulatory model that respects the diversity of religious traditions while establishing clear, enforceable baselines for corporate behaviour. We will explore the necessary engagement with religious communities, define the role of technology companies and confront potential objections regarding censorship, theological entanglement, and the very definition of religious authority.

Engaging Religious Communities: From Subjects to Partners

A fundamental prerequisite for the framework's legitimacy and efficacy is the deep and sustained

[79] Editorial, 'Understanding Misrepresentation in Tort Law: Key Principles' *Laws Learned*, (June 14, 2024) Available at: https://lawslearned.com/misrepresentation-in-tort-law/

[80] *Incorporated Trustees of United African Methodist Church (ELEJA) Organisation v Diya & Ors* (2019) LPELR-47285(CA)

[81] S. 5, FCTA

engagement of religious communities in its development and deployment. The principle of spiritual integrity is meaningless if the "spiritual" it seeks to protect is defined solely by secular legal institutions.

The Pluralism Problem presents a significant challenge, as world religions possess vastly different theological anthropologies, ecclesiologies and structures of authority. A centralised, hierarchical faith like Roman Catholicism has a clear magisterium capable of speaking on doctrinal matters and authorising audits. In contrast, non-hierarchical traditions like many Protestant denominations or Islam (in its Sunni majority) lack a single, centralised authority. Indigenous spiritualities are often deeply localised, with knowledge held by specific elders or families. The framework must be flexible enough to accommodate this pluralism. This could involve recognising a plurality of representative bodies ranging from formal hierarchies to scholarly councils to designated non-profit organisations representing specific indigenous nations or groups. Forums for Dialogue are essential for implementation, requiring the creation of new, formalised spaces for conversation. National and international bodies, such as ministries of culture or digital regulation agencies, could convene ongoing working groups comprising theologians, legal scholars, ethicists and technology developers. This would not be an avenue for the state to endorse specific theologies, but to facilitate the translation of communal spiritual concerns into practicable legal and technical standards. It is suggested that the secular state must create channels for religious voices to contribute to public reason, without granting them a veto over the process.[82]

The Role of Technology Companies: From Exploitation to Co-Regulation

Technology companies cannot be passive subjects of regulation but must be active participants in a co-regulatory model that aligns their practices with the principle of spiritual integrity. Developing Industry Standards represents a practical approach to implementation. Building on the model of "Ethical AI" frameworks, industry consortia should be encouraged or in some cases, legally mandated to develop specific standards for "Spiritual AI.[83]" These standards, developed in consultation with the religious forums mentioned above, would provide practical guidance on implementing the law's requirements.[84] They could cover technical specifications for "spiritual AI" labelling, protocols for engaging with communities for cultural audits and best practices for handling sacred data. This approach leverages industry expertise while ensuring it is guided by external, multi-stakeholder values.

Ethical by Design represents the ultimate goal of fostering a culture where spiritual integrity is "baked in" from the outset. This means that developers, when considering an AI application in a spiritual context, would proactively conduct impact assessments that evaluate risks to doctrinal integrity, cultural sovereignty and relational authenticity. This shifts compliance from a reactive, legalistic burden to a proactive, integral part of the design process, potentially averting harm before it occurs.[85]

---

[82] Jürgen Habermas, *Religion in the Public Sphere. European Journal of Philosophy*, (2006) Vol. 14(1), 1–25

[83] Olayinka, Oyunwola Taiwo, et al, 'Co-Designing Ethical AI with Faith Communities: Advancing Worship Innovation, Moral Governance, and Resilient Digital Ecosystems' *African Multidisciplinary Journal of Sciences and Artificial Intelligence* (2025) Available at: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Co-Designing-Ethical-AI-with-Faith-Communities%3A-and-Olayinka-Temitope/a39eabfa062153c95e3d89d07d6b5174919b26df.> Accessed 15th November, 2025

[84] Editorial, 'Religious Law and Community Standards: A Harmonious Interaction' *Laws Learned*, (28 July, 2024) https://lawslearned.com/religious-law-and-community-standards/. Accessed 14th November, 2025.

[85] Heike Felzmann, et al, 'Towards Transparency in AI: A Model-Based Approach to Data Protection and Ethics' *IEEE Security & Privacy*, (2019) Vol. 17(3), 49-58

Conclusion and Recommendations

The rapid and unregulated incursion of artificial intelligence into the sphere of spirituality represents one of the most subtle yet profound challenges of the digital age. This paper has argued that this convergence is not merely a technological novelty but a paradigm shift that threatens the very foundations of spiritual integrity—the doctrinal, cultural and relational fabric that constitutes authentic religious life. As we have seen, the promises of accessibility and personalisation are shadowed by the grave perils of algorithmic distortion, commodification and data exploitation. Our investigation has demonstrated that the existing legal toolkit—intellectual property, data privacy, and religious freedom law—is conceptually misaligned and structurally inadequate to address these novel forms of harm.

In response to this regulatory failure, this paper has proposed the principle of spiritual integrity as a new, legally cognisable interest. By defining this principle through its three core components—doctrinal integrity, cultural sovereignty and relational authenticity—we have moved the conversation beyond vague notions of offense towards a concrete framework for legal protection. Grounding this concept in established legal theory, from indigenous rights to the capabilities approach, provides a robust foundation for intervention that respects both religious pluralism and human dignity.

Building upon this foundation, we have outlined a multidimensional legal framework designed to translate principle into practice. This framework layers specific, actionable mechanisms: transparency mandates like "Spiritual AI" labelling and doctrinal audits to pierce algorithmic opacity; proactive rights such as sacred data sovereignty and a right to spiritual explanation to empower individuals and communities; and redress mechanisms including a new tort for doctrinal misrepresentation and the strengthened application of consumer protection law. This suite of safeguards is not designed to stifle innovation or censor speech, but to create a landscape of accountable innovation where technology serves humanity without undermining its deepest values.

The journey towards implementing this framework is undoubtedly complex, requiring careful navigation of theological pluralism, the separation of church and state and the practicalities of co-regulation. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. They call for a sustained, multidisciplinary dialogue that positions the law not as an arbiter of theological truth, but as a guardian of the conditions necessary for spiritual life to flourish authentically.

In conclusion, the question posed at the outset of this paper—how to uphold the sanctity of spiritual life while embracing the potential of AI—demands a proactive and principled legal response. The transformative power of artificial intelligence need not come at the cost of our spiritual integrity. By establishing clear, respectful and enforceable safeguards, we can steer the digital age towards a future where technology enhances, rather than erodes, the sacred dimensions of human experience. The task is urgent, for in preserving the integrity of the spirit, we ultimately protect a core pillar of our shared humanity.

Regulating Artificial Intelligence for Spiritual Well-Being: A Legal and Ethical Framework for Protecting Digital Faith Communities in Africa

Emmanuel Tochukwu Okpara
Department of Criminology and Security Studies,
University of Agriculture and Environmental Science, Umuagwo, Imo State, Nigeria.
Emmanuel.okpara@uaes.edu.ng

Abstract

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded in contemporary religious practice (from algorithm-driven religious content to AI-powered spiritual assistants) the intersection between digital technology and spirituality raises profound normative, ethical, and legal questions. This paper examines the regulatory gaps and emerging risks posed by AI to the spiritual well-being of individuals and faith communities in Africa, with particular focus on Nigeria and Rwanda. It explores how unregulated AI systems can distort spiritual discernment, facilitate religious manipulation, amplify harmful content, and commercialise sacred beliefs through algorithmic profiling. Drawing on the Nigeria Data Protection Act (2023), Rwanda's data governance structures, international AI regulatory models, and African communitarian values, the paper proposes a contextualised legal-ethical framework for safeguarding digital spirituality. It argues that regulatory interventions must balance innovation with the protection of human dignity, autonomy, and spiritual agency, principles foundational to African religious and cultural traditions. The study adopts a doctrinal-analytical methodology complemented by multidisciplinary insights from theology, data protection, and AI ethics. The paper concludes by recommending rights-based, culturally grounded regulatory mechanisms that strengthen trust, ensure responsible AI deployment, and preserve the authenticity of spiritual experience in the digital age.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Spirituality, Data Protection, Digital Rights, Faith communities.

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, the intersection between artificial intelligence (AI) and spirituality has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, reflecting a growing convergence where technology profoundly influences religious experiences and spiritual practices. This intersection presents significant opportunities for enhancing spiritual guidance, expanding access to religious resources, and fostering new expressions of faith in digital domains. However, alongside these opportunities lie emerging dangers, such as spiritual confusion, ethical dilemmas, and threats to spiritual autonomy within digital religious spaces.[86] A key problem in this evolving landscape is the absence of comprehensive regulatory frameworks to protect individuals' spiritual autonomy and safeguard the integrity of digital religious environments. Without adequate regulation, spiritual communities face risks of manipulation, cultural dilution, and erosion of trusted authority structures.[87] The relevance of these issues is particularly pronounced in African contexts, including Nigeria and Rwanda, where spiritual beliefs are deeply woven into social and cultural identities, and where rapid technological adoption heightens the urgency to understand AI's impact on spiritual practices and develop context-

[86] Alkhouri, K. I. *Spiritual confusion in the era of artificial intelligence*. *Journal of Psychology of Religion*, Advance online publication (2025).

[87] IIARD Journals. The necessity for regulation in digital religious spaces. *International Journal of African Religious and Digital Studies*, (2025) 12(1).

sensitive policies that uphold digital religious freedoms and authenticity.[88]

This paper aims to explore the opportunities, challenges, and regulatory needs arising from the integration of AI in spiritual and religious domains within African settings. The research addresses the following questions: How does AI influence spiritual autonomy and religious practice in digital spaces? What forms of regulation are necessary to protect digital religious environments? A qualitative approach, combining literature review and case study analysis, is employed to investigate these questions.[89] The paper follows a structured approach based on these sections: Conceptual Clarifications, Theoretical/Analytical Framework, Mapping the Interaction Between AI and Spirituality, Risks and Challenges of AI for Spiritual Discernment, Legal and Regulatory Perspectives, Toward a Legal-Ethical Framework for Protected Spiritual AI Use, Policy Recommendations for various stakeholders and Conclusion.

2.0 Conceptual Clarifications

The rapid advancement of digital technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), has created a profound nexus with human existence, challenging our understanding of everything from intelligence and creativity to faith and ethics. This section defines and discusses foundational concepts central to understanding the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and spirituality within African digital religious contexts, particularly Nigeria and Rwanda.

2.1 Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings.[90] It is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, specifically computer systems. This broad field encompasses several distinct forms that are crucial for understanding its impact on society. In simple terms, artificial intelligence encompasses computer systems and algorithms capable of performing tasks that require human-like intelligence. This includes:

- Narrow AI: This is the only type of AI currently in widespread use. Also known as "weak AI,". It refers to systems designed and trained to perform a specific, limited task. Examples include virtual assistants like Siri, fraud detection software, recommendation systems (Netflix, Amazon), and dedicated AI for playing chess. Its capabilities are restricted to the domain for which it was programmed. Therefore, this AI focuses on specific tasks such as natural language processing or image recognition.
- Generative AI is a subset of AI, typically built on complex deep learning models known as Large Language Models (LLMs), that is capable of producing complex, original content such as text, images, video, or audio in response to user prompts. Tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini exemplify this category. While generative AI can produce human-like outputs, it does so through statistical analysis of its vast training data, not through actual consciousness or understanding.[91]
- Algorithmic Systems This term refers to the combination of data, algorithms, and models that work together to automate decision-making or content curation. Essentially, an algorithmic system is the operational structure the "how" of modern AI. For instance, the recommendation

[88] Oyebanji, I. T. Artificial intelligence and its effects on Christian youths' spirituality in Nigeria. *African Journal of Religion, Theology and Society*, (2025) 7(2), 45-62.

[89] Ungar-Sargon, J. AI and spirituality: The disturbing implications. *Journal of Medical Clinical Research & Review*, (2025) 9(3), 1-7.

[90] Britannica, artificial intelligence https://www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence, accessed on the 18th November, 2025.

[91] IBM, *What is Artificial Intelligence*, https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/artificial-intelligence# accessed on the 18th November, 2025.

engine on a social media platform is an algorithmic system that determines which content is shown to a user based on calculated metrics like engagement and relevance.[92] Broadly, it refer to data-driven, rule-based processes that influence information delivery and user interaction in religious digital platforms.

2.2 Spiritual Discernment

Spiritual discernment involves the process by which individuals or communities evaluate and interpret spiritual truths to distinguish authentic spiritual guidance from error or manipulation. It is an essential human faculty, especially in a world saturated with digital information and algorithmic suggestion. Theologically, it centers on seeking divine will and guidance aligned with religious doctrines. Sociologically, it relates to communal and cultural mechanisms by which spiritual meanings are negotiated and validated.

Sociologically, spiritual discernment can be understood as the process by which individuals and communities critically evaluate stimuli (beliefs, actions, systems) to maintain fidelity to their core values, moral frameworks, and communal identity. In the modern context, this involves distinguishing between authentic spiritual experience and technologically mediated mimicry. It becomes a societal safeguard against the depersonalization, commercialization, and misinformation that can arise from algorithmic interactions. Discernment helps a community evaluate if new technologies, like AI, genuinely enhance spiritual life or reduce it to mere mechanistic, data-driven engagement.[93]

2.3 Digital Spirituality

Digital spirituality relates to the evolving religious practices and experiences mediated by digital technologies, including online worship, virtual faith communities, and AI-powered religious tools such as chatbots offering spiritual guidance or scriptural interpretation. This dimension reshapes access to spiritual resources and engagement with faith in increasingly digital environments. The practice of online worship involves using digital platforms such as live streams, video conferencing, and dedicated apps to facilitate communal religious services and practices. The shift to online worship was significantly accelerated by global events (like Covid-19 Endemic), creating a "disembodied presence" where individuals can interact and engage without physical proximity. This offers accessibility and a new space for interaction but also alters the traditional depth and nature of embodied spiritual engagement.[94]

2.4 Algorithmic Influence and Manipulation

AI algorithms shape religious experiences by personalizing and recommending religious content or simulating spiritual advisory roles. While offering benefits like accessibility and engagement, these systems can pose risks by distorting doctrine, facilitating spiritual manipulation, and commercializing sacred beliefs through profiling and targeted content delivery. Algorithms on social media and digital platforms prioritize engagement metrics (likes, shares, time spent) to maximize profit. This logic inadvertently promotes content that is sensational, emotionally resonant, and polarizing, which often leads to the spread of misinformation.

However, the pursuit of engagement can create "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles" where users are only exposed to content that reinforces their existing views, thereby amplifying ideological polarization and societal divides. High-profile incidents have demonstrated how targeted algorithmic advertising can be used to sway public

[92] Sustainability Directory, *What Is Algorithmic Influence* https://lifestyle.sustainability-directory.com/question/what-ethical-considerations-arise-from-algorithmic-influence/ accessed 10th November, 2025.

[93] Scientia et Fides, *Artificial Intelligence and Spirituality: A Tool for Engagement or a Threat to Transcendence*?, https://apcz.umk.pl/SetF/article/view/60310 accessed 16th November, 2025.

[94] David Ogunbiyi, Artificial Intelligence and Its Effects on Christian Youths' Spirituality https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393129343_Artificial_Intelligence_and_Its_Effects_on_Christian_Youths'_Spirituality#:~:text accessed 16th November, 2025.

opinion and compromise democratic processes, raising critical questions about autonomy and human control. Furthermore, algorithms trained on biased data can perpetuate systemic disadvantages against certain groups, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes in areas like law enforcement or loan applications.

2.5 Data Governance and Digital Ethics

Data governance refers to frameworks and policies guiding the ethical collection, storage, processing, and protection of personal and religious data. The Nigeria Data Protection Act (2023) recognizes religious and philosophical beliefs as sensitive personal data requiring stringent protection measures.[95] Ethical dimensions include transparency, accountability, fairness, and respect for spiritual autonomy, ensuring AI systems uphold human dignity within religious contexts. AI data governance is more complex than traditional governance due to the sheer velocity and diversity of data, and the "black box" opacity of many AI models. Key components include establishing clear data ownership, implementing strong privacy and security measures, and ensuring data quality to mitigate bias (Transcend.io, 2024; AI Multiple, 2025).[96]

Digital Ethics, on the other hand, is the moral compass that guides the development, deployment, and utilization of digital technologies and data, addressing the moral principles and values governing their use. It deals with what ought to be done, often going beyond legal compliance to proactively prevent harm and promote human well-being.

Data Governance and Digital Ethics are inextricably linked and function optimally in synergy. Ethics provides the underlying values-the "why" that inform the rules, while governance establishes the structure and mechanisms, the "how" to implement and enforce those ethical intentions. Without governance, ethical goals lack the structure for implementation; without ethics, governance risks becoming a rigid, compliance-only exercise that ignores unintended harms. Together, they are essential for creating a trustworthy and beneficial digital environment.

3.0 Theoretical/Analytical Framework

This section outlines the theoretical lenses and ethical frameworks deployed to analyze the intersection of AI and spirituality in African digital religious contexts, especially Nigeria and Rwanda. Combining these perspectives provides a comprehensive basis for assessing opportunities, risks, and regulatory needs.

3.1 AI Ethics Principles

UNESCO is alleged to have produced the first-ever global standards titled “Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence” in November, 2021. In its recommendation UNESCO identified the following principles which laid out a ten core human-rights centred approach to the Ethics of AI: Proportionality and Do No Harm, Safety and Security, Right to Privacy and Data Protection, Right to Privacy and Data Protection, Multi-stakeholder and Adaptive Governance & Collaboration, Responsibility and Accountability, Responsibility and Accountability, Transparency and Explainability, Human Oversight and Determination, Sustainability, Awareness & Literacy, and Fairness and Non-Discrimination.[97] However, central to understanding AI’s impact on spirituality are core AI ethics principles widely

[95] The Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023, explicitly identifies "religious or similar beliefs" as sensitive personal data, mandating enhanced protection and lawful processing conditions.

[96] Transcend, *AI Data Governance: Ensuring Ethical Use and Security,* https://transcend.io/blog/ai-data-governance, accessed 1st November, 2025.

[97] UNESCO,*Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics accessed 14th November, 2025.

endorsed by international organizations such as UNESCO and OECD. These include:

- Transparency: This principle demands clarity regarding how an algorithmic system operates, what data it uses, and why it produces a specific outcome. AI systems must therefore operate in an explainable manner, allowing users and regulators to understand how decisions affecting spiritual content and interactions are made.[98] This principle directly addresses the non-transparent nature of algorithmic influence/manipulation. In Digital Spirituality, transparency is critical for trust; users must know if a spiritual reflection or counseling session is generated by a human pastor or a Generative AI Chatbot.
- Accountability: This requires that entities (developers, operators, or organizations) be held responsible for the consequences and impacts, positive or negative, of their AI systems. Developers and deployers of AI religious tools must be responsible for their systems' effects, particularly regarding spiritual well-being and doctrinal integrity.
- Fairness: AI applications should avoid bias and discrimination, ensuring diverse religious beliefs are respected and equitably represented, preventing marginalization within digital spirituality.[99] This is essential for Data Governance and Digital Ethics. It challenges the biases embedded in datasets that could lead to unfair exclusion or targeting of specific religious or ethnic groups in online spiritual communities or content filtering.

3.2 Human Dignity Theory

Human dignity theory, foundational in bioethics and human rights, is especially pertinent for protecting spiritual autonomy. Kant's most famous formulation of dignity is that human dignity is a status that places the life of human beings above all price. As a rhetorical statement, this is about as good as Kant gets, and it remains a deeply moving formulation.[100] AI applications must respect the inherent worth of individuals, safeguarding their freedom to pursue authentic spiritual experiences without coercion or manipulation. This theory anchors ethical concerns about data privacy, informed consent, and spiritual agency within AI-mediated religious settings.[101] Algorithmic manipulation that attempts to "hyper nudge" an individual's spiritual choices or political views is a direct violation of their dignity, as it treats the person as a means to an end (engagement metrics, profit) rather than an end in themselves.

This lens is critical when analyzing AI-powered religious tools. It insists that while AI can assist spiritual practice, it must not replace the fundamental human capacity for spiritual experience, moral agency, and genuine relational ministry. The dignity of the user must be prioritized over the efficiency of the algorithm.

3.3 African Communitarian Ethics

African communitarian ethics, epitomized by concepts such as **Ubuntu** ("I am because we are") and relational humanism, emphasize interconnectedness, communal harmony, and respect for personhood within a collective moral framework.[102] These values highlight the importance of protecting relational spiritual identities and culturally grounded expressions of faith from algorithmic harm or misrepresentation in digital spaces. They call for regulatory

[98] UNESCO. (2024). *Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence*. https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics 16th November, 2025.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] Philosophy Now, Kant's Theory of Human Dignity, https://philosophynow.org/issues/150/Kants_Theory_of_Human_Dignity, accessed 18th November, 2025.
[101] Pellegrino, E. D. (2002). The philosophy of human dignity. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 27(4), 317-338.
[102] Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. Heinemann.

approaches that balance individual rights with community well-being.[103] Ubuntu directly addresses the health of online worship and community. It shifts the ethical focus from mere individual privacy to the quality of the shared digital space. It demands that algorithmic systems should promote solidarity, mutual aid, and respectful engagement, rather than polarizing content that fragments the religious community.

By integrating the technical demands of AI Ethics Principles with the inherent value of Human Dignity and the relational imperative of African Communitarian Ethics (Ubuntu), the framework is comprehensive enough to analyze the mechanisms of technology, the sacredness of the individual, and the health of the community in the digital age.

3.4 Data Protection Principles

Data protection laws serve as the regulatory foundation for safeguarding personal and sensitive data, including religious beliefs. The Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA 2023)[104] classifies religious beliefs as sensitive personal data, mandating stringent protections to prevent misuse, unauthorized profiling, or exposure. Rwanda's data governance frameworks[105] similarly prioritize privacy and secure digital identities. Complemented by international norms such as the GDPR, these principles demand lawful, transparent, and ethical handling of spiritual data within AI systems.

3.5 Framework Suitability

This multi-dimensional framework suits the topic because it:

- Addresses ethical challenges specific to AI's influence on spirituality, including bias, manipulation, and lack of transparency.
- Prioritizes spiritual autonomy and dignity, core to religious freedom and well-being.
- Integrates African cultural values, enhancing contextual relevance and promoting culturally sensitive regulation.
- Anchors legal arguments in existing data protection regimes, facilitating practical regulatory recommendations.

By combining AI ethics, human dignity theory, African communitarian principles, and data protection laws, the paper constructs a robust framework to critically assess AI's complex role in shaping digital spirituality and to propose balanced, rights-respecting regulatory solutions.

4.0 Mapping the Interaction Between AI and Spirituality

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping spiritual experiences and religious practices in Africa through multiple applications, as evidenced by various case studies across the continent. This section outlines how AI currently influences spirituality, highlighting both benefits and emerging challenges, with an emphasis on African contexts like Nigeria and Rwanda.

4.1 AI-Assisted Preaching and Digital Worship

AI technologies are being integrated into religious services to support preaching and worship. For example, AI-powered chatbots operating on platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger provide theological answers, prayer points, and schedule counseling, extending the reach of religious leaders beyond traditional congregations.[106] Digital livestreaming and mobile apps facilitate wider dissemination of sermons and devotionals, breaking geographic barriers and increasing engagement, as seen in Nigerian

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] *Section* 65 of the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023. (2023).

[105] Article 3 of the Law No 058/2021 of 13/10/2021 Relating to the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy.

[106] Oyebanji, I. T. (2025). Artificial intelligence and its effects on Christian youths' spirituality in Nigeria. *African Journal of Religion, Theology and Society*, 7(2), 45-62.

churches like Daystar Christian Center and The Elevation Church,[107] even Nigerian pastors report using ChatGPT-style tools for sermon research, drafts, and topical teaching preparation.[108] These tools enable more personalized and accessible worship experiences.

4.2 Algorithmic Recommendation of Religious Content

AI algorithms curate and recommend religious content tailored to individual preferences, enabling users to access spiritual materials aligned with their beliefs and practices. This personalized content delivery enhances engagement and spiritual learning but also raises concerns about algorithmic bias and echo chambers that may limit exposure to diverse perspectives or reinforce particular theological views.[109] Journalists and researchers in East and Central Africa note "digital faith" ecosystems where sensational or emotionally charged religious content is amplified because it drives views and shares. This alters what congregations see and can polarize belief practices.[110]

4.3 AI Chatbots as Spiritual Advisers

AI chatbots simulate spiritual advisers, offering scriptural interpretation, guidance, and counseling.[111] People are already using chatbots for spiritual conversation and emotional support; dedicated "pastor" chatbots exist and are being adopted by faith communities online.[112] While this expands access, especially in areas underserved by clergy, the mechanization of spiritual advice risks diminishing the nuanced, empathetic pastoral care that human leaders provide. It also poses questions about accountability and ethical boundaries in automated spiritual counseling.[113]

4.4 Deepfakes and Misinformation Affecting Doctrine

The rise of AI-generated deepfakes and misinformation threatens to distort religious doctrines and propagate false teachings. Manipulated audio or video content can undermine communal trust and sow division within faith communities, highlighting the urgent need for verification mechanisms and digital literacy. Recent disinformation campaigns in West Africa (e.g., Burkina Faso) have used AI-generated imagery and deep fakes to create emotionally persuasive political narrative similar techniques can (and have) been applied to religious contexts.[114]

4.5 Data Profiling Targeting Faith Communities

Faith communities are increasingly subject to data profiling based on digital activities, religious affiliations, and online behaviors. This profiling informs targeted content delivery but may also enable commercial exploitation or discrimination,

[107] These insights are drawn from case studies and analyses of AI applications in African religious contexts, including Nigerian and broader African examples ("Spirits in the machine," 2024).

[108] Techpoint Africa, *Some Nigerian pastors are using AI for their work, but there are spiritual downsides* https://techpoint.africa/insight/nigerian-pastors-ai/, accessed 18th November, 2025.

[109] Ungar-Sargon, J. (2025). AI and spirituality: The disturbing implications. *Journal of Medical Clinical Research & Review*, 9(3), 1-7.

[110] Monitor, *Amen, algorithm: The rise of digital faith and monetised miracles* https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/lifestyle/religion/amen-algorithm-the-rise-of-digital-faith-and-monetised-miracles-5068660?utm, accessed 18th November, 2025.

[111] Alkhouri, K. I. Spiritual confusion in the era of artificial intelligence. *Journal of Psychology of Religion*, Advance online publication (2025).

[112] The Christian Science Monitor, *God in the machine? People use chatbots as spiritual advisers.* https://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2025/0802/ai-faith-prayer-religion?utm, accessed 17th Novermber, 2025.

[113] *Ibid.*

[114] The Week, Burkina Faso's misinformation war, https://theweek.com/politics/burkina-fasos-misinformation-war? accessed 18th November, 2025.

challenging privacy and spiritual autonomy.[115] Political actors have used micro targeting in Nigeria and Kenya, and the same techniques can be (and are) repurposed by religious actors or commercial actors targeting believers.[116]

4.6 Benefits of AI in Digital Spirituality

Despite risks, AI offers notable benefits such as increased accessibility to religious teachings, inclusiveness by reaching marginalized groups, multilingual translation of sacred texts, and enhanced engagement through interactive platforms.[117] In Africa, innovative uses include remote healing sessions via mobile phones and digital preservation of traditional religious knowledge.[118] These contributions promise to democratize and revitalize spiritual practices in the digital age.

5.0 Risks and Challenges of AI for Spiritual Discernment

As artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly permeates religious spaces, it presents several profound risks and challenges specifically affecting spiritual discernment. These dangers are critical to understand in African contexts like Nigeria and Rwanda, where spiritual agency and traditional religious authority remain central to communal life.

5.1 Distortion of Doctrine

AI-generated theological content may lack the nuanced understanding and spiritual insight required to interpret sacred texts correctly. This can lead to the inadvertent spread of doctrinal distortions and theological confusion, undermining the rich tradition of theological scholarship and human discernment within faith communities.[119] Such distortions risk weakening adherence to orthodox beliefs and may cause spiritual disorientation, potentially hindering individuals' reception of authentic divine guidance.

5.2 Digital Spiritual Manipulation

Algorithmic systems designed to personalize religious content can be exploited to manipulate spiritual beliefs and behaviors. By selectively amplifying certain teachings or perspectives, AI may promote specific ideologies, subtly influencing faith choices and interpretations without users' awareness.[120] This raises ethical concerns about autonomy and the authenticity of spiritual experiences mediated by AI.

5.3 Erosion of Traditional Authority Structures

The rise of AI chatbots and virtual spiritual advisers challenges the role of human religious leaders. Overreliance on automated spiritual counseling risks diminishing the relational and empathetic dimensions inherent in pastoral care. It may also lead to devaluation of traditional authority figures and disrupt established faith community dynamics.[121]

---

[115] IIARD Journals. The necessity for regulation in digital religious spaces. *International Journal of African Religious and Digital Studies*, (2025) 12(1).

[116] Joshua Kitili, *Beyond The Ballot: A Comparative Analysis to Political Microtargerting Practices and Regulations in Kenya and Nigeria,* https://journal.strathmore.edu/index.php/jipit/article/view/259/293?utm, accessed 18th November, 2025.

[117] Oyebanji, I. T. Artificial intelligence and its effects on Christian youths' spirituality in Nigeria. *Op cit.*

[118] IIARD Journals. The necessity for regulation in digital religious spaces. *Op cit.*

[119] Firebrand Magazine. The theological and ethical dangers associated with using artificial intelligence in Christian religious settings. (2023). https://firebrandmag.com/articles/the-theological-and-ethical-dangers-associated-with-using-artificial-intelligence-in-christian-religious-settings, accessed 17th November, 2025.

[120] Frontier Ventures. Final reflection: Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming nearly every facet of missions work. (2025). https://connect.frontierventures.org/mission-frontiers/final-reflection-artificial-intelligence-ai-is-transforming-nearly-every-aspect-of-modern-life, accessed 17th November, 2025.

[121] Alkhouri, K. I. Spiritual confusion in the era of artificial intelligence. *Journal of Psychology of Religion*, Advance online publication. (2025).

5.4 Privacy Invasion and Profiling of Religious Identity

AI systems process large amounts of personal and sensitive data, including religious beliefs classified as sensitive under data protection laws like Nigeria's NDPA 2023.[122] Inadequate safeguards can lead to unauthorized profiling, surveillance, or commercialization of sacred beliefs, infringing on spiritual autonomy and privacy rights. Such exposure may also create vulnerabilities for discrimination or persecution.

5.5 Bias in AI-Generated Religious Content

AI models trained on limited or culturally biased datasets risk perpetuating inequities and excluding minority religious perspectives. This bias undermines fairness and inclusiveness, potentially marginalizing certain faith groups within digital spiritual ecosystems.[123]

5.6 Overreliance on Machine Outputs for Spiritual Decisions

Dependence on AI for spiritual guidance risks fostering spiritual complacency and weakening personal and communal discernment. AI lacks a spiritual conscience or connection to transcendent truth and cannot replace the role of the Holy Spirit or human wisdom.[124] Such overreliance may dull critical engagement and reduce faith in algorithmic outputs.

5.7 Ethical Issues in Automated Religious Counseling

Automated counseling raises questions about the authenticity, empathy, and accountability of AI-driven spiritual support. The inability of AI to truly minister in a pastoral sense risks alienating users or offering inappropriate guidance, calling for strict ethical oversight.[125]

6.0 LEGAL AND REGULATORY PERSPECTIVES

This section analyzes the current legal and regulatory frameworks relevant to AI use in religious contexts in Nigeria, Rwanda, and internationally. The aim is to assess how these frameworks address—or fall short of addressing—the protection of spiritual autonomy and digital religious rights in the AI era.

6.1 Nigeria

Nigeria's **Data Protection Act (NDPA) 2023** is a landmark legislation that classifies religious and philosophical beliefs as sensitive personal data, requiring enhanced protection measures such as explicit consent for processing and strict confidentiality safeguards.[126] However, gaps remain in regulation specifically tailored to AI systems influencing digital spirituality; it also has significant gaps concerning AI and spiritual autonomy. The absence of comprehensive AI-specific regulatory guidelines leaves space for unregulated algorithmic manipulation of religious content and spirituality-related profiling.[127] The NDPA effectively regulates the data (e.g., your prayer requests) but not the content (e.g., the doctrinally flawed AI-generated advice). It does not mandate mechanisms to verify the authenticity or theological accuracy of AI-generated spiritual outputs, which is the core threat to Spiritual Discernment. The Nigerian Religious Coalition on Artificial Intelligence has called for firm regulation and ethical frameworks to moderate AI's impact on faith communities, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and spiritual dignity.[128]

---

[122] *Section 30* of the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023.

[123] Ungar-Sargon, J. AI and spirituality: The disturbing implications. *Journal of Medical Clinical Research & Review*, (2025) 9(3), 1-7.

[124] Frontier Ventures. Final reflection: Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming nearly every facet of missions work. *Op cit.*

[125] SecureGive, *What pastors need to know about AI in ministry*. https://www.securegive.com/what-pastors-need-to-know-about-ai-in-ministry/ accessed 18th November, 2025.

[126] *Section* 65 of the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023.

[127] Yogesh Awasthi1, George Okumu Achar, *African Christian Theology in the Age of AI: Machine Intelligence and Theology in Africa,* https://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/papers/vol13-issue1/1301207216.pdf, accessed 18th November, 2025.

[128] The Nation Online. (2025, October 26). Religious coalition seeks firm regulation, ethical use of AI. https://thenationonlineng.net/religious-coalition-seeks-firm-regulation-ethical-use-of-ai/. Accessed 16th November, 2025.

6.2 Rwanda

Rwanda has established a robust legal framework for data protection under Law No 058/2021 of 13/10/2021 Relating to the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy, which sets out comprehensive requirements for the collection, processing, and protection of personal data, including sensitive data such as religious beliefs.[129] This law mandates strict consent requirements, purpose limitation, data minimization, and security measures, representing a significant step toward safeguarding privacy in the digital age. Additionally, Rwanda's strategic emphasis on digital innovation is balanced with regulatory mechanisms to ensure responsible and ethical AI deployment, though explicit provisions addressing AI's impact on spirituality and religious data remain limited. The law thus provides a strong foundation to build culturally and spiritually sensitive AI governance frameworks that respect individual dignity and community values in the Rwandan context.[130] As of the latest information, Rwanda has a National AI Policy, but has not yet adopted a specific law or regulation governing the development and use of AI. While the DPP law protects the data, the algorithms and their spiritual influence remain largely ungoverned by a legally binding, risk-based AI framework.

6.3 International and Comparative Frameworks

Globally, the European Union (EU) AI Act 2024, which is the first comprehensive legal framework for AI globally, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) AI Principles provide detailed guidelines on transparency, accountability, fairness, and human oversight in AI systems, some of which can be adapted to religious contexts.[131] The EI AI Act, which has the force of law, primarily targets systemic risks. The proliferation of doctrinally distorted AI-generated religious content (e.g., a Chabot hallucinating a sermon) does not clearly fall under "unacceptable risk" unless it explicitly causes significant physical or psychological harm. The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2024), as earlier pointed out, underscores the protection of human dignity, cultural diversity, and freedom of thought and religion as fundamental ethical considerations.[132] Both the OECD AI principles and UNESCO AI Ethics Framework are barely soft laws with non-binding standards, and they shape global policy and regulation. They are crucial for setting the ethical bar. Nonetheless, none of these international frameworks explicitly address the specific challenges AI poses for spiritual discernment or digital religious freedoms.

Global discourse highlights the fundamental tension between efficiency and authenticity in spiritual life. The key challenge is that existing law protects speech and data, but not the integrity of doctrine or the authenticity of spiritual experience. Regulating content accuracy risks violating freedom of speech and the separation of church and state; yet, unregulated AI risks theological distortion and epistemic conformity.

6.4 Shortcomings and Challenges

Current laws, both in Nigeria and globally, inadequately capture the nuanced risks AI poses to digital spirituality, including doctrinal distortion, spiritual manipulation, and erosion of traditional authority structures. Issues such as algorithmic transparency, accountability for AI-generated religious content, and protection of sensitive spiritual data require more explicit provisions. Moreover, enforcement challenges and lack of contextualization to African religious-cultural

[129] Law No 058/2021 of 13/10/2021 Relating to the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy, Rwanda.

[130] African Christian Theology in the Age of AI, 2025.

[131] European Commission. Proposal for a regulation laying down harmonized rules on artificial intelligence (AI Act), (2021). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021PC0206, accessed 18th November, 2025.

[132] UNESCO. Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, (2024). https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics, accessed 17th November, 2025.

realities limit the effectiveness of existing regulations.[133]

7.0 Toward a Legal-Ethical Framework for Protected Spiritual AI use

Given the complex ethical, spiritual, and legal challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI) in digital religious contexts, a dedicated legal-ethical framework is essential to safeguard spiritual discernment and autonomy, particularly in African environments such as Nigeria and Rwanda. This framework integrates core principles from AI ethics, human dignity, African communal values, and data protection laws to address the unique risks and opportunities AI presents for digital spirituality.

7.1 Transparency in AI-Driven Religious Tools

AI systems used in religious contexts must be transparent about their operations, data sources, and decision-making processes. Users should be clearly informed when they interact with AI-driven spiritual advisers or receive AI-generated religious content, allowing them to understand and critically evaluate the information's origin and nature. Transparency builds trust and supports informed spiritual discernment.[134]

7.2 Mandatory Human Oversight

Despite AI's benefits, final spiritual guidance and decision-making must remain within human authority. Mandatory human oversight ensures that AI tools do not supplant genuine pastoral care or spiritual counseling but complement it. Religious leaders and ethical review boards should oversee AI deployments to verify doctrinal accuracy, ethical compliance, and cultural sensitivity.[135]

7.3 Protection of Sensitive Religious Data

Strong protections must be enforced for religious data classified as sensitive under laws such as Nigeria's NDPA 2023 and Rwanda's Law No 058/2021. This includes strict consent requirements, data minimization, secure storage, and prohibition of unauthorized profiling or commercial exploitation. Protecting the privacy and sanctity of spiritual data preserves individuals' rights to freedom of religion and conscience.[136]

7.4 Algorithmic Impact Assessment for Faith-Based Apps

Prior to deployment, AI applications for religious use should undergo rigorous algorithmic impact assessments to identify risks of bias, misinformation, spiritual manipulation, or doctrinal distortion. Such assessments encourage developers to design systems that respect spiritual diversity, uphold fairness, and prevent harm.[137]

7.5 Accountability Mechanisms for Misuse

Clear accountability frameworks are needed to address harms caused by AI misuse in spiritual domains. Mechanisms might include regulatory oversight bodies, complaint and redress systems for affected individuals or communities, and legal

---

[133] ACHPR Draft AI Study. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (2025). https://achpr.au.int/sites/default/files/files/2025-04/draft-achpr-ai-study-march-2025.pdf, accessed 17th November, 2025.

[134] Vatican Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence: An Ethical and Spiritual Approach. Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, (2025). https://www.ddg.fr/actualite/vatican-guidelines-on-artificial-intelligence-an-ethical-and-spiritual-approach, accessed 17th November, 2025.

[135] Ungar-Sargon, J. AI and spirituality: The disturbing implications. *Journal of Medical Clinical Research & Review*, (2025), 9(3), 1-7.

[136] Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023; Law No 058/2021 Rwanda.

[137] UNESCO. Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, (2024). https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence, accessed 14th November, 2025.

liabilities for developers or platform operators who breach ethical norms or data protection laws.[138]

7.6 Cross-Border Cooperation for Platform Governance

Given the global nature of digital religious platforms, cross-border regulatory cooperation is critical to harmonize standards, share best practices, and jointly oversee multinational faith-based AI services. This ensures consistent protection of spiritual rights across jurisdictions and prevents regulatory arbitrage.[139]

7.7 Embedding African Spiritual-Cultural Values

The framework must embed African ethical principles such as Ubuntu and relational humanism, emphasizing interconnectedness, communal dignity, and respect for cultural and spiritual identities. Incorporating these values affirms indigenous worldviews and fosters regulatory solutions that resonate with local faith communities and social norms.[140]

8.0 Recommendations

The development of AI systems that respect Spiritual Discernment and Human Dignity requires coordinated action across government, religious institutions, developers, regulators, and civil society. Based on the preceding analysis and to ensure responsible and culturally sensitive deployment of AI in African religious contexts, especially Nigeria and Rwanda, the following concise policy recommendations are proposed:

8.1 For Governments in Nigeria and Rwanda

- Develop and implement dedicated AI governance frameworks that incorporate religious, ethical, and cultural considerations specific to digital spirituality.
- Strengthen enforcement of existing data protection laws (NDPA 2023, Rwanda's Law No 058/2021) to cover AI applications handling sensitive religious data.
- Promote digital infrastructure development and equitable access to reduce rural-urban disparities in AI-enabled spiritual services.

8.2 For Religious Institutions

- Provide AI literacy and ethical training for clergy and faith leaders to enhance understanding and oversight of AI's role in spiritual practice.
- Establish internal ethical review boards to monitor AI tools used in religious contexts and advocate for congregants' spiritual autonomy.

8.3 For AI Developers

- Adopt participatory design approaches involving religious leaders and communities to co-create AI systems aligned with sacred values and diverse faith traditions.

8.4 For Regulators (NDPC, Rwanda ICT Bodies)

- Regulators must operationalize existing data laws and pioneer specific high-risk regulations for AI affecting belief systems.
- Create specialized AI ethics advisory councils that include theologians, ethicists, and data protection experts for ongoing guidance and policy updates.
- Develop complaint and redress mechanisms accessible to users affected by AI-related harms in spiritual contexts.
- Facilitate cross-border cooperation to establish harmonized standards for AI governance in digital religious spaces.

8.5 For Civil Society and Academia

- Conduct interdisciplinary research exploring the socio-ethical impacts of AI

[138] ACHPR Draft AI Study. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, (2025).
[139] OECD. OECD principles on artificial intelligence, (2019).
[140] Mbiti, J. S. African religions and philosophy. Heinemann, (1969).

on spirituality, emphasizing African epistemologies and cultural contexts.
- Promote public awareness campaigns to enhance digital literacy and informed engagement with AI-driven spiritual tools.
- Advocate for inclusive policy dialogues that incorporate marginalized faith groups and rural communities in AI governance discussions.

Conclusion

The intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and spirituality in African contexts such as Nigeria and Rwanda presents both transformative opportunities and significant challenges. AI's integration into religious practices, from AI-assisted preaching to algorithmically curated spiritual content, can enhance accessibility, inclusiveness, and engagement in faith communities. However, the risks of doctrinal distortion, digital spiritual manipulation, erosion of traditional religious authority, and privacy infringements require urgent attention.

This paper has highlighted the regulatory gaps in current data protection and AI governance frameworks that inadequately safeguard spiritual autonomy and digital religious freedoms. Drawing from AI ethics principles, human dignity theory, and African communitarian values like Ubuntu, a tailored legal-ethical framework was proposed to preserve spiritual discernment and cultural integrity in the digital age. This framework emphasizes transparency, mandatory human oversight, sensitive data protection, algorithmic impact assessments, accountability mechanisms, cross-border cooperation, and embedding African spiritual-cultural values.

Ultimately, safeguarding spirituality in the AI era demands collaboration among governments, religious institutions, AI developers, regulators, and civil society. Rights-based, culturally grounded regulatory mechanisms are essential to build trust, foster responsible AI innovation, and ensure that digital spirituality enriches rather than diminishes the authenticity of faith experiences.

Looking forward, this confluence of technology and spirituality offers a pivotal opportunity for Africa to lead in crafting inclusive, ethical AI governance that harmonizes innovation with respect for profound spiritual and cultural traditions. This stewardship will ensure that AI acts as a bridge enhancing communal bonds and spiritual well-being rather than as a barrier undermining them.[141]

[141] Nkala, 2024; African Multidisciplinary Journal, 2025; African Christian Theology in the Age of AI, 2025.

Faith In the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Assessing Impacts, Risks, and Future Directions

Jonas Musengimana
Protestant University of Rwanda

Maniraguha Jean Baptiste
Protestant University of Rwanda

Abstract
This paper, *Faith in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Assessing Impacts, Risks, and Future Directions*, explores the transformative influence of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, on faith-related practices. The rapid integration of AI into everyday life has begun to shape human interaction, knowledge production, and decision-making, raising critical questions about its implications for spirituality, worship, and religious ethics. While AI technologies present opportunities for innovation in theological reflection, pastoral communication, and interfaith dialogue, they also bring significant risks, including concerns about authenticity, human agency, and the potential reduction of spiritual practices to algorithmic processes. The problem under investigation is the lack of systematic analysis of how AI reshapes faith-related practices and the ethical challenges it introduces. The guiding research questions are: (1) What impacts does generative AI have on contemporary faith practices and spiritual engagement? (2) What opportunities can AI provide in strengthening religious communication, community building, and ethical reflection? (3) What risks and ethical dilemmas arise when AI intersects with faith? (4) What future pathways can ensure the responsible integration of AI into spiritual and religious life? The objectives of this study are to examine both the opportunities and challenges AI brings to faith practices, to assess the theological and ethical implications of these changes, and to propose strategies for ensuring that technological innovation supports rather than undermines spiritual integrity. The research employed a qualitative methodology, combining literature review, document analysis, and thematic interpretation of contemporary debates in theology, ethics, and technology studies. It highlights the need for ethical and innovative frameworks that balance technological advancement with enduring spiritual and human-centered values.
Key concepts: Artificial Intelligence, faith practices, ethics.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The 21st century has witnessed the rapid emergence and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a defining force in human society. From healthcare and education to finance and governance, AI is increasingly shaping how people live, work, and interact. In recent years, this technological revolution has also begun to influence religious life, faith practices, and theological reflection. Generative AI systems, such as ChatGPT, Bard, and other large language models, have entered domains once reserved for human creativity and spirituality, including the writing of sermons, the composition of prayers, the translation of sacred texts, and the facilitation of online pastoral counseling. While these developments open new possibilities for religious engagement, they also raise profound ethical, theological, and existential questions regarding the meaning of faith, human agency, and divine inspiration in an age dominated by intelligent machines.

Nowadays, theologians, pastors, and lay believers are beginning to confront how digital technologies shape spiritual formation, moral education, and community life. The intersection of faith and AI, therefore, presents both an opportunity and a

challenge: an opportunity to renew the Church's mission through technological innovation, and a challenge to ensure that such innovation remains anchored in the principles of human dignity, moral responsibility, and divine guidance.

The paper is organized into five main sections. The first introduces the research background, objectives, and questions. The second reviews literature on AI and faith, focusing on theological and ethical perspectives. The third section presents the methodology and data analysis. The fourth discusses findings in relation to contemporary scholarship, while the fifth proposes practical recommendations and future directions for faith communities engaging with AI.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although AI offers significant benefits in enhancing communication, education, and innovation, its application to faith raises important theological and ethical concerns. Religious communities increasingly rely on AI for administrative tasks, sermon preparation, and online outreach, yet there is limited reflection on how these tools influence spirituality, authenticity, and moral discernment. Furthermore, the absence of clear ethical frameworks and theological guidelines creates risks of misuse, distortion of doctrine, and erosion of pastoral authority.

The core problem this paper investigates is the lack of systematic analysis of how AI reshapes faith-related practices and the ethical challenges it introduces. Without critical engagement, faith communities risk either uncritically embracing or completely rejecting technological change.

1.3 Research objectives and questions

This study aims to explore the relationship between faith and artificial intelligence by assessing the opportunities, risks, and future directions of AI in spiritual and religious life. Specifically, it seeks to examine the impact of generative AI on contemporary faith practices and spiritual engagement, to identify the opportunities AI provides in strengthening religious communication, theological education, and community building, to analyze the ethical and theological risks associated with AI use in spiritual contexts, and to propose future strategies and frameworks for the responsible integration of AI into faith-based and pastoral practice.

To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions: What impacts does generative AI have on contemporary faith practices and spiritual engagement? What opportunities can AI provide in strengthening religious communication, community building, and ethical reflection? What risks and ethical dilemmas arise when AI intersects with faith? What future pathways can ensure the responsible integration of AI into spiritual and religious life?

1.5 Motivation and Significance of the Study

This study is motivated by a growing awareness that faith communities, especially in Africa, are entering an era where technology and theology must be harmonized rather than separated. As a theologian and ethicist, the researcher observes that many church leaders and believers are already using AI tools such as ChatGPT and Google Bard to prepare sermons, translate scripture, and communicate across linguistic barriers. However, few reflect on how such practices affect theological authenticity and ethical responsibility. The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary contribution at the intersection of theology, ethics, and technology. The findings will inform the ongoing debate on whether AI can support or replace human creativity and moral reasoning. By highlighting both the opportunities and dangers of AI in faith settings, the study equips religious communities to engage technology thoughtfully and theologically.

1.7 Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach anchored in interpretive and ethical analysis. The study design integrates three primary methods:

Literature review, document analysis and interviews.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Impacts of Generative AI

Generative AI is reshaping contemporary spirituality by transforming access to sacred texts, devotional practices, and theological interpretation. AI-powered tools offer personalized prayers, commentaries, and meditations, which can deepen spiritual engagement but also shift how believers understand revelation and spiritual authority. Theologian (Brueggemann, W., 2010) argues that faith formation requires an encounter with the "living word," raising concerns about whether AI-mediated interpretation can genuinely support such transformative experience. African theologian John Mbiti emphasizes that spirituality in African contexts is relational and embodied; therefore, AI-based spiritual tools may enhance accessibility but risk weakening communal and narrative-based approaches to knowing God. These developments demonstrate that while AI can support spiritual growth, it also reframes the pathways through which believers experience Scripture, tradition, and community (Mbiti, J. S. , 1990).

At the same time, generative AI raises deep ethical and theological challenges for global and African churches. Some individuals increasingly rely on AI systems for moral guidance, potentially displacing human pastoral wisdom. Kwame Bediako reminds us that Christian spiritual identity in Africa is grounded in lived community, cultural memory, and the human experience of the Spirit, dimensions that AI cannot replicate (Bediako, K. , 2004). Similarly, Desmond Tutu's reflections on human dignity (Tutu, D., 2011)highlight the irreplaceable spiritual value of empathy, presence, and moral responsibility, qualities absent in artificial systems. These concerns align with global scholarship; theologian Noreen Herzfeld warns that AI lacks relationality and cannot embody the imago Dei. As such, faith communities must develop ethical frameworks that ensure AI remains a supportive tool rather than a substitute for authentic spiritual encounter rooted in human community and divine presence (Herzfeld, N., 2017).

2.2 Challenges to Authenticity and Authority

Generative AI presents significant challenges to spirituality by reshaping how believers encounter Scripture, divine revelation, and communal worship. One major concern is the potential displacement of traditional religious authority as individuals begin to rely on AI systems for spiritual guidance. Noreen Herzfeld (2017) argues that AI cannot embody the *imago Dei*, because it lacks relationality and the capacity for moral intuition—qualities essential for true spiritual counsel. Likewise, Walter Brueggemann (2010) warns that spirituality is nurtured through encounters with the "living word," which demand imagination, struggle, and discernment, elements that cannot be automated. African theologian John Mbiti (1999) emphasizes that African spirituality is rooted in community, oral tradition, and embodied relationships; thus, AI-generated prayers or sermons risk weakening these communal expressions and replacing them with individualized, technologically mediated forms of devotion.

AI also challenges core theological understandings of human dignity, moral agency, and the nature of divine encounter. African ethicist (Magesa, L., 2013) stresses that spiritual life in African Christianity is grounded in the sanctity of human relationships and the moral responsibility to uphold life, values AI systems, guided by algorithms rather than empathy, cannot uphold. Similarly, Kwame Bediako (2004) argues that Christian identity in Africa emerges through cultural memory and lived faith, which AI cannot authentically replicate. Desmond Tutu's theology of dignity and Ubuntu (Tutu, 2013) further highlights the irreplaceable role of compassion and solidarity in spiritual life, dimensions absent in AI. As these scholars show, AI may unintentionally create a spirituality that is efficient but shallow, informed but not transformative, and connected yet lacking

authentic human and divine presence. Therefore, churches must respond with theological and ethical frameworks that preserve the sacredness of human spiritual experience in the age of artificial intelligence.

2.2.5 Core Theological Risks of AI

AI poses core theological risks by challenging foundational Christian doctrines such as the *imago Dei*, divine revelation, and the nature of spiritual authority. Noreen Herzfeld (2017) argues that comparing AI to human intelligence undermines the uniqueness of the human person, who alone bears the image of God through relationality, moral agency, and the capacity for communion with the divine. Walter Brueggemann (2010) adds that AI's tendency to produce quick, reductionist information threatens the biblical tradition's call to slow, imaginative engagement with Scripture, which requires human struggle, lament, and hope. African theologian John Mbiti (1999) warns that African spirituality is deeply communal and embodied; therefore, technological mediation risks creating a disembodied spirituality that detaches believers from community, ancestors, and lived religious experience. These challenges suggest that AI may unintentionally redefine what it means to be human before God.

AI also threatens to distort theological ethics, moral discernment, and the understanding of divine encounter. Laurenti Magesa (2014) emphasizes that African Christian ethics is rooted in the sanctity of human life and the interconnectedness of the community, values AI cannot uphold because it lacks empathy, conscience, and spiritual intuition. Kwame Bediako (2004) notes that Christian identity in Africa grows through cultural memory, storytelling, and lived holiness, yet AI risks replacing experience-based wisdom with algorithmic outputs lacking spiritual depth. Furthermore, Desmond Tutu's theology of Ubuntu (Tutu, 2013) highlights human dignity as inseparable from compassion and mutuality; AI, driven by data and prediction rather than relational morality, cannot contribute to this sacred human vocation. Thus, the theological risk is that AI may shape moral decision-making while possessing none of the spiritual or ethical qualities that Christianity requires for genuine discernment.

2.3 Future Directions and Theological Reflections

Future developments in generative AI present both opportunities and challenges for theology, ministry, and spiritual formation. Scholars such as Noreen Herzfeld (2017) suggest that AI can serve as a tool to enhance theological research, biblical exegesis, and pastoral education, provided it is used with discernment and ethical oversight. Walter Brueggemann (2010) emphasizes that technology must complement, not replace, the human encounter with the divine word, urging faith communities to cultivate imagination, reflection, and moral reasoning. African theologians, including John Mbiti (1999) and Kwame Bediako (2004), highlight that any integration of AI into spiritual practice should respect African relationality, community-centered worship, and lived expressions of faith. By approaching AI as a supportive instrument rather than a substitute for human spiritual engagement, churches can harness its potential while safeguarding the integrity of theological formation.

Theological reflections on AI also call for careful ethical discernment and pastoral guidance. Laurenti Magesa (2014) underscores that African Christian ethics prioritizes human dignity, communal solidarity, and moral responsibility, principles that should guide AI deployment in ministry. Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology (Tutu, 2013) reminds faith leaders that compassion, empathy, and relational engagement are irreplaceable in spiritual care, areas where AI cannot intervene. Globally, theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas (2011) caution that technological progress should not supplant discipleship, prayer, or moral discernment. Therefore, the future of AI in spirituality requires frameworks that integrate innovation with deep

theological reflection, ensuring AI supports human flourishing, ethical integrity, and authentic engagement with God and community.

3. Data presentation, interpretation and Commentary

3.1 Understanding the Context of AI and Faith

The findings of this study reveal that faith communities, particularly among pastors and young Christian leaders, are increasingly aware of the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping human life and spirituality. With 55.6% of respondents reporting that they are very familiar with AI and 38.9% somewhat familiar, it is evident that the Church is not isolated from technological advancement. The demographic profile, dominated by individuals aged between 18 and 30 and a large proportion of pastors (77.8%), suggests that these perceptions emerge from a generation that is both digitally literate and spiritually engaged. Their perspectives represent a pivotal moment in Christian history, where faith and technology converge to redefine ministry, communication, and human relationships in the digital era.

This awareness marks a critical shift in how religious communities understand their mission and theology. The Church is no longer merely a physical institution but a spiritual network influenced by digital technologies that reshape communication, worship, and discipleship. The results indicate that most respondents (55.6%) view AI as both positive and negative for humanity, suggesting a nuanced and reflective understanding rather than simplistic acceptance or rejection. This balance shows that faith leaders are aware of AI's capacity to improve ministry efficiency and reach, while remaining cautious about its moral and theological consequences.

3.2 Positive Impacts: Opportunities for Ministry and Mission

The study reveals that the vast majority of participants (94.4%) have already used AI tools for faith-related purposes such as sermon writing, teaching, and research. This high level of engagement signifies that AI is already playing a transformative role in Christian ministry. Respondents highlighted several ways AI could strengthen faith practice, most notably through translation and accessibility (38.9%) and online evangelism (27.8%). These results suggest that AI technologies can enhance inclusivity, allowing people from different linguistic backgrounds and abilities to access religious resources more easily. They also point to the increasing significance of virtual and digital evangelism in reaching new audiences.

Such findings align with global trends in the digitalization of religion, where churches are adopting AI-based tools to analyze Scripture, manage congregational data, and facilitate communication. However, while these innovations improve efficiency, they also challenge traditional understandings of ministry as a relational and incarnational practice. The study demonstrates that technology can serve as a powerful tool for expanding ministry, but it should remain a means rather than an end. Pastoral leaders must therefore ensure that AI complements human compassion, discernment, and empathy rather than replacing them.

3.3 Ethical and Theological Concerns: Ambiguity and Moral Anxiety

Despite the optimism about AI's usefulness, the data also reveal deep moral and theological concerns. A striking 61.1% of participants identified "all of the above" when asked about challenges AI poses to the Church, including reduced human interaction, dependence on technology, ethical confusion, and distortion of doctrine. This comprehensive anxiety reflects the fear that excessive reliance on AI could depersonalize faith, weaken communal worship, and blur the boundaries between divine inspiration and machine-generated output.

Equally revealing is the uncertainty expressed regarding fundamental theological questions. Over half of the respondents (55.6%) were unsure whether AI challenges the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*, the belief that humans are created in the image of God, and the same proportion were uncertain whether AI could replace human roles in the Church. These responses demonstrate a theological vacuum: while AI is rapidly entering the life of the Church, theological reflection on its meaning and limits remains underdeveloped. There is an urgent need for theologians and church leaders to articulate a theology of technology that clarifies human uniqueness, moral responsibility, and divine creativity in a world increasingly shaped by intelligent machines.

3.4 Cautious Engagement: The Ethical Stance of the Church

One of the most significant findings is that 70.6% of respondents believe the Church should "engage with caution and ethical reflection" regarding AI. Only a small minority advocate rejecting AI completely (5.9%) or embracing it without reservation (11.8%). This consensus reflects a mature and discerning theological posture, neither technophobic nor naïvely enthusiastic. It suggests that the Church recognizes its responsibility to provide moral and spiritual guidance in a world where technology often advances faster than ethical reasoning.

This cautious engagement aligns with broader Christian ethical principles, such as stewardship, discernment, and justice. It reflects the belief that technology, like any human innovation, must be subject to moral accountability and directed toward human flourishing. The Church's role, therefore, is not to resist technological progress but to shape it through ethical reflection and prophetic witness. Faith leaders are called to help believers use AI responsibly—promoting justice, truth, and dignity in the digital environment.

3.5 The Role of Theological Education and Ethical Formation

Another key insight is the participants' recognition of the importance of theological education in addressing AI. Two-thirds (66.7%) indicated that discussing AI in theological training is "very important," while the Church's top priorities were identified as developing ethical guidelines (30%), teaching digital literacy (30%), and promoting responsible innovation (30%). This distribution reflects a holistic understanding of the Church's mission in the technological age—one that combines moral reflection, education, and innovation.

These findings emphasize the urgent need for curriculum reform in seminaries and theological institutions. Future pastors and theologians must be equipped not only to preach and teach but also to engage critically with emerging technologies. Integrating digital ethics into theological education can empower the Church to respond proactively rather than reactively to the ethical dilemmas posed by AI. It will also ensure that faith leaders are not passive consumers of technology but informed stewards who can guide their communities with wisdom and discernment.

3.6 Future of Faith: Transformation and Uncertainty

When asked how faith might evolve in a world dominated by AI, 40% of respondents predicted that faith practices would be transformed, while 35% feared that faith might weaken. Only 10% believed AI would strengthen faith. This mixture of hope and apprehension captures the dual nature of technological progress: it can enrich spiritual experience but also risk reducing it to algorithmic performance.

Participants seem aware that AI will reshape how people pray, worship, and interpret Scripture. Virtual worship, automated sermon generation, and digital counseling could change the dynamics of spiritual life. Yet this transformation must be guided by theological discernment. If the Church fails to engage critically, AI could trivialize sacred

experiences and weaken authentic faith expressions. Conversely, if the Church embraces innovation responsibly, AI could open new pathways for inclusivity, creativity, and global mission.

3.7 Overall Reflection

In sum, the findings portray a faith community standing at a moral and spiritual crossroads. The data suggest a Church that is technologically aware, ethically cautious, and theologically uncertain. There is widespread recognition that AI will continue to influence Christian faith, but also a strong call for moral leadership, ethical education, and theological renewal. The most urgent task for the Church is to build ethical and theological frameworks that uphold human dignity, protect authentic spiritual engagement, and ensure that technology serves, rather than defines, humanity. AI must be understood not as a replacement for divine wisdom or human compassion, but as a tool to be guided by ethical discernment, prayer, and communal reflection.

Ultimately, this study underscores the need for a faith-informed ethics of technology, an approach that integrates theological anthropology, moral responsibility, and spiritual integrity. Faith in the age of artificial intelligence must be rooted in the conviction that technological progress, when guided by wisdom and love, can become a means of serving God's purposes rather than competing with them.

4. FINDINGS DISCUSSION

4.1 Understanding and Awareness of Artificial Intelligence

The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents are familiar with AI concepts, with 55.6% claiming to be "very familiar" and 38.9% "somewhat familiar." This awareness aligns closely with the academic definitions of AI, which describe it as the capacity of systems to perform tasks associated with human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, natural language processing, and decision-making (Russell, S. J., & Norvig, P., 2021). Notably, 94.4% of respondents reported having used AI in faith-related contexts, demonstrating that their engagement is both conceptual and practical. This pattern mirrors findings in the literature which suggest that familiarity does not guarantee critical literacy; users may understand AI's functionality while remaining cautious about its implications (Alkhouri, K. I., 2024). The respondents' ambivalent perception of AI as both positive and negative (55.6%) underscores an informed but nuanced engagement, consistent with scholarship emphasizing the dual-potential of AI in spiritual and religious life (Universal Life Church, 2025).

4.2 Impacts of Generative AI on Faith Practices

Respondents identified several practical benefits of AI for ministry, including supporting online evangelism (27.8%), enhancing accessibility and translation (38.9%), and producing materials for sermons and Bible study (11.1%). These observations confirm literature asserting that AI can enhance accessibility, personalize religious content, and provide 24/7 scriptural guidance (Alkhouri, K. I., 2024). However, the respondents also emphasized that spiritual transformation cannot be delegated to AI, noting that "*good literal text cannot transform lives; the Holy Spirit does*." This insight resonates with ethical concerns in the literature, which caution that AI-mediated spirituality risks diminishing relational and transformative aspects of faith (Alkhouri, 2024). Hence, while AI can serve as a valuable tool, pastoral discernment remains central to maintaining spiritual integrity.

4.3 Challenges to Authenticity and Authority

In our research, 61.1% of respondents identified multiple challenges, including reduced human interaction, dependence on technology, and ethical/moral confusion. Respondents' insistence that AI should be used only for essential tasks underscores their caution against allowing technology to replace human spiritual leadership. These empirical insights confirm the literature's argument that AI's simulation capabilities, while

impressive, cannot replicate authentic spiritual presence or divine inspiration (Calderero Hernández, J. F., 2021).

4.3.1 Bias, Homogenization, and Ethical Concerns

Respondents expressed concerns about potential distortions of doctrine and moral confusion, reflecting the literature's warnings about bias amplification and the homogenization of interpretations (Zhang, J., Song, W., & Liu, Y. , 2025) (Munibi, A. Z.,, 2025). This suggests that while AI tools facilitate access and efficiency, they may also inadvertently privilege dominant theological perspectives, marginalizing minority voices and limiting interpretive diversity. Furthermore, respondents' uncertainty about AI's impact on human uniqueness (imago Dei) and its ability to replace pastoral roles (both items dominated by "not sure") highlights a critical gap in theological literacy that echoes academic discussions about the ethical and moral risks of AI (Graves, M., 2022) (Karslı, N., 2025)

4.3.2 Theological and Spiritual Implications

Key theological concerns raised in the literature, including challenges to the imago Dei, potential devaluation of worship, and algorithmic authority, were reflected in the empirical data. Respondents emphasized that prayer and ministry must remain Spirit-led, and that AI should serve as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for spiritual discernment. These findings support Langford's (2022) assertion that theological reflection should focus on AI as an instrument for enhancing human formation, rather than replacing human moral and spiritual agency. Similarly, the respondents' cautious optimism aligns with scholarship urging the Church to adopt AI as a tool for ministry while safeguarding authentic spiritual practices (Malik, 2025; Chaudhary, as cited in Malik, 2025).

4.4 Future Directions and Responsible Engagement

Respondents highlighted priorities for the Church, including integrating AI into theological education (66.7%), developing ethical guidelines (30 %), promoting digital literacy (30 %), and ensuring responsible innovation (30 %). These recommendations closely align with the literature advocating for explainable AI (XAI), responsible AI governance, and ongoing oversight to mitigate risks (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), n.d) (Gartner, Inc.., 2025). The convergence between empirical data and scholarly prescriptions underscores the need for ecclesial institutions to adopt structured governance frameworks, provide pastoral training in AI literacy, and maintain human oversight in all faith-related AI applications (UNESCO, n.d.; Langford, 2022).

4.5 Policy and Practical Implications

The findings point to an emerging imperative for church leaders and policymakers to establish institutional guidelines for AI use, mirroring best practices in secular and educational contexts. Respondents emphasized limiting AI use to essential functions and ensuring that spiritual formation remains human-centered, supporting the literature's argument for embedding AI within ethical and theological governance frameworks (UNESCO, n.d). Practical strategies include appointing designated AI stewards in churches, auditing AI-generated content for doctrinal accuracy, and designing curriculum modules that foster AI literacy among clergy and laity.

4.6 Research Gaps and Future Studies

While the survey provides insights into perceptions and self-reported practices, it does not assess the quality, accuracy, or bias of AI-generated content in ministry. Future research could:

- Conduct content audits of AI-generated sermons and devotional materials to evaluate doctrinal fidelity and bias.

- Develop and test AI literacy programmes for clergy and seminary students, assessing their impact on ethical decision-making.
- Explore cross-cultural theological perspectives on AI to ensure that minority voices are not marginalized by algorithmic homogeneity.
- Examine the integration of AI with Spirit-led ministry, exploring how technology can support rather than supplant authentic spiritual formation.

5. Conclusion

In summary, respondents' messages call for a balanced, ethical, and faith-informed engagement with Artificial Intelligence. AI should be used *with wisdom, discernment, and humility*, as a tool serving the Church's mission, not replacing the human and divine dimensions of ministry. Drawing on African scholarship underscores the importance of contextual ethics, cultural awareness, communal accountability, and theological depth. The church, through thoughtful leadership and critical engagement, can transform AI from a potential threat into a meaningful ally for mission, education, and spiritual formation in the digital age.

6. Recommendations

The data from this study reveal that respondents view artificial intelligence (AI) as a powerful tool when used well, and a significant risk when misused. The messages emphasize that AI can serve vital functions in ministry, but must not become an all-encompassing solution. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for theologians, policymakers, and church leaders.

6.1 Promote Responsible and Ethical Use of AI

Church leaders, theologians, and policymakers should approach AI as a tool endowed with potential for good, yet demanding moral oversight. Africans, such as (Ogore, F. M., 2024) in Kenya, have stressed the importance of translating ethical AI principles into practice within African contexts. Similarly, the work of (Barrett, T., et al., 2025) highlights the need for African-grounded data ethics frameworks that center communal values, data self-determination, and human dignity. Theological institutions should therefore establish ethical frameworks that ensure AI usage aligns with Christian values, respect for human dignity, social justice, relational accountability, and African values of ubuntu/community. For instance, (Mokoena, K. K., 2024) argues for an "ubuntu artificial intelligence ethics approach" that emphasizes interconnectedness, spiritual-relational being, and contextual moral frameworks.

6.2 Encourage Limited and Purposeful Application

Respondents urged that AI be used for *essential practices only*, for example, administrative support, translation accessibility, online evangelism, and not for every facet of ministry. The church must remember that spiritual transformation is rooted in human encounter and divine agency, not algorithmic substitution. In African higher education environments, (Sangwa S. et al, 2025) report that while AI infrastructure is expanding, governance remains weak, indicating the need to preserve human judgment and spiritual authenticity alongside technological innovation.

6.3 Integrate Theological Reflection with Technological Advancement

As one respondent referenced a statement by the Vice Chancellor of the Protestant University of Rwanda that "AI is the future," relevant for church leaders and theologians alike, theological education must move to integrate critical reflection on AI. The African context demands more than imported frameworks: (Goffi, Emmanuel R., 2023) points out that AI ethics taught in Africa must engage cultural values and communal perspectives rather than simply applying Western models. Seminaries and theological programmes should incorporate modules on digital literacy, AI ethics, theological anthropology, and the *imago Dei* in the age of machines.

6.4 Develop Clear Policies and Training Programmes

There is a pressing need for institutional policies and capacity-building programmes to guide the ethical use of AI in ministry. In Kenya, for example, Ogore's work (2024) outlines how policy, regulation, and organizational culture must merge to create an "ethical AI culture" in churches and theological institutions. These policies should address: (a) boundaries for AI use in sermon preparation, pastoral counselling, and worship; (b) criteria for human oversight; (c) guidelines for avoiding doctrinal distortion, over-dependence on technology, and reduced human interaction; (d) mechanisms of accountability and review.

6.5 Foster Spiritual Discernment and Dependence on the Holy Spirit

While AI has the capacity to generate well-composed texts, sermons, or Bible-study materials, respondents emphasized that *true* spiritual transformation arises from the work of the Holy Spirit, not algorithms. Church leaders must therefore maintain a posture of prayer, spiritual discernment, and theological vigilance. In other words: "AI is the created tool of human inspiration; the Bible is the inspired Word of God", a distinction respondents urged. Theological reflection must accompany every technological engagement to avoid replacing divine revelation or pastoral sensitivity with machine output.

6.6 Appoint Qualified Personnel to Oversee AI Engagement

To ensure responsible implementation, churches and theological institutions should appoint trained persons to oversee AI usage, especially in communications, social media, teaching, and digital ministry. These oversight roles will ensure that AI-generated materials are accurate, ethically vetted, theologically sound, and context-sensitive. Oversight helps prevent misuse, doctrinal distortion, or dependency on technology for pastoral relationships.

6.7 Prepare for Future Generations

Respondents expressed concern that the upcoming generation will inherit an AI-shaped world. Accordingly, theological and educational institutions must prepare youth through curricula that teach digital ethics and technology use from a Christian and African framework. This preparation involves not just technical skills, but ethical reflection, digital literacy, and spiritual maturity. In doing so, the Church equips new leaders to wield AI responsibly and for the flourishing of faith communities in Africa.

References

Alkhouri, K. I. (2024). *The Role of Artificial Intelligence in the Study of the Psychology of Religion. Religions* (Vol. 15). doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030290

Barrett, T., et al. (2025). *African data ethics: A discursive framework for Black decolonial data science.* Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2502.16043

Bediako, K. . (2004). *Jesus and the gospel in Africa: History and experience.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Brueggemann, W. (2010). *The practice of prophetic imagination: Preaching an emancipatory word.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Calderero Hernández, J. F. (2021). Artificial Intelligence and Spirituality. *International Journal of Interactive Multimedia & Artificial Intelligence, 7*(1), 1-14. doi:https://doi.org/10.9781/ijimai.2021.07.001

Gartner, Inc.. (2025). Playbook for Executive AI Governance Strategy. Retrieved from https://www.gartner.com/en/webinar/765395/1736480-gartner-2025-playbook-for-executive-ai-governance-strategy.

Goffi, Emmanuel R. (2023). Teaching Ethics Applied to AI from a Cultural Standpoint: What African "AI Ethics" for Africa? In Caitlin C. Corrigan, Simon Atuah Asakipaam, Jerry John Kponyo & Christoph Luetge, AI Ethics in Higher Education: Insights from AfrAfrica and Beyond. Cham: Sp.

Graves, M. (2022). Theological Foundations for Moral Artificial Intelligence. Journal of Moral Theology, 11(1), 182-211.

Herzfeld, N. (2017). *Technology and religion: Remaining human in a co-created world.* West Conshohocken: Templeton Press.

Karslı, N. (2025). Ethical and Theological Problems Related to Artificial Intelligence. Journal of Eskişehir Osmangazi University Faculty of Theology, 12, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.51702/esoguifd.1583408.

Magesa, L. (2013). *What is not sacred? African spirituality.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Mbiti, J. S. . (1990). *African religions and philosophy (2nd ed.).* Gaborone, Botswana: Heinemann Education.

Mokoena, K. K. (2024). *A holistic ubuntu artificial intelligence ethics approach in South Africa* (Vol. 45). Verbum et Ecclesia. doi:https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i1.3100

Munibi, A. Z.,. (2025). Faith in the Digital Era: How Language and Artificial Intelligence Technology Reshape Religious Practices. Jurnal SMaRT, 11(1), 74–89. https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v11i1.2906.

Ogore, F. M. (2024). *Translating Ethical AI Principles into Practice: Bridging the Gap in Kenya.* Nairobi: Daystar University, Global Cybershield Conference. doi:https://repository.daystar.ac.ke/handle/123456789/6510

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (n.d). AI Principles. Retrieved November 13, 2025, from https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/ai-principles.html.

Russell, S. J., & Norvig, P. (2021). *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach (4th ed.).* Pearson.

Sangwa S. et al. (2025). AI governance in African higher education: Status, challenges, and a future-proof policy framework. Artificial Intelligence and Education, Article ID 2054.

Tutu, D. (2011). *God is not a Christian: And other provocations.* New York, NY: HarperOne.

UNESCO. (n.d). Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. Retrieved from https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics.

Zhang, J., Song, W., & Liu, Y. (2025). Cognitive bias in generative AI influences religious education. Scientific Reports, 15(1), Article 15720. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-99121-6.

From technophobia to discernment: A Christian reflection on neuralink, ai regulation, and spiritual responsibility in society.

Moise Iradukunda.
Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR)
iradukundamoise99@gmail.com

Abstract
In the digital era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and neurotechnologies such as Elon Musk's Neuralink are reshaping the relationship between technology, health, and human capability. While these innovations present new possibilities for individuals experiencing paralysis, neurological disorders, blindness, and severe communication impairments, they have also stimulated anxiety and suspicion in various Christian communities. The central research question guiding this study is: How can Christians discern and engage emerging technologies such as Neuralink without falling into technophobia or uninformed spiritual fear?
The objective of this research is to promote a theologically grounded and intellectually informed response to AI and neurotechnology within Christian contexts. The study employs a qualitative approach, integrating textual and theological analysis, literature synthesis, and reflexive interpretation. A contextual case study from rural Rwanda is examined, where misinterpretations of Revelation 13 and eschatological speculation contributed to widespread resistance to COVID-19 vaccination, school withdrawal, and fears of imminent apocalyptic events. Findings demonstrate that technophobia frequently arises not from lack of faith, but from insufficient theological formation and limited scientific literacy, which lead individuals to interpret technological advancements as spiritually dangerous. However, evidence indicates that AI and Neuralink hold meaningful potential to enhance quality of life, restore dignity, and provide healing support to vulnerable populations, values that resonate with the Christian call to compassion, caregiving, and restoration. The study recommends that Christian leaders incorporate structured technology education, sound biblical interpretation, pastoral dialogue, and community-based critical reflection into ministry practice. Such measures can equip believers to engage innovation with wisdom and discernment, fostering cooperation between faith and science rather than conflict or fear.

Keywords: Neurotechnology; Artificial Intelligence; Technophobia; Neuralink; Discernment; Healing and Human Dignity.

1.0.Introduction

Elon Reeve Musk, born on June 28, 1971, in Pretoria, South Africa, holds South African, Canadian, and American citizenships and is widely regarded as one of the most influential technologists and entrepreneurs of the twenty-first century. His visionary leadership has driven the creation of several groundbreaking enterprises that have transformed diverse sectors of modern life. These include Tesla, Inc., a leader in electric vehicles and renewable energy; SpaceX, a pioneer in space exploration and rocket technology; X Corp (formerly Twitter), a global social media and communications platform; The Boring Company, focused on tunnelling and urban transport innovation; and Neuralink, a neurotechnology company developing advanced brain–computer interfaces.

In May 2023, Neuralink received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to initiate its first in-human clinical study, marking a historic milestone in the field of neurotechnology (CNBC, 2023). Founded in 2016, Neuralink aims to create implantable devices capable of interpreting and transmitting neural activity to external systems, allowing the brain to

communicate directly with computers (Ables, 2024; Davies, 2024). In 2024, Musk announced that the company's first human participant had undergone a successful brain implant procedure and was "recovering well," with promising early signs of neural signal detection (Ables, 2024; Davies, 2024). These advances not only represent a leap forward in neuroscience and medical technology but also provoke profound questions about human identity, consciousness, and the intersection of mind, body, and machine.

Amid these technological frontiers, this paper situates Neuralink within a Christian theological framework, exploring how faith communities can respond to emerging neurotechnologies not with fear or resistance, but with informed discernment and spiritual wisdom. Rather than viewing such innovations as threats to divine order, this study encourages believers to interpret them through the lens of biblical theology, moral responsibility, and human flourishing. By examining questions of embodiment, agency, and the theological meaning of creation and innovation, the paper seeks to equip Christians to engage constructively with these developments, recognizing technology as a potential instrument through which healing, restoration, and compassionate service can reflect the redemptive purposes of God.

1.1.Problem Statement

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and neurotechnology has generated a complex mixture of anticipation and anxiety within modern society. While scientific progress demonstrates the potential of these technologies to heal, restore, and enhance human well-being, many Christian communities have responded with suspicion and fear. In particular, innovations such as brain–computer interfaces and AI-driven systems are often interpreted through apocalyptic frameworks, with some associating them with the "mark of the beast" described in *Revelation 13:16–18*. These interpretations have fueled technophobia, deepening mistrust toward innovation and science. The central issue lies in the absence of balanced theological reflection that bridges faith and scientific progress. In many African contexts, including Rwanda, technological responses are frequently shaped by religious narratives and cultural worldviews rather than informed understanding. Consequently, fear-based interpretations have led to tangible social consequences, such as school dropouts, voluntary job resignations, and community withdrawal from educational and digital initiatives.

Without thoughtful theological engagement and contextual awareness, emerging technologies risk being misunderstood, misrepresented, and misused, depriving society of their redemptive potential. Addressing this gap calls for a faith-informed approach that promotes discernment over fear, encouraging Christians to engage technology wisely and responsibly in service of human dignity and holistic development.

1.2.General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine how Christians can respond to emerging technologies, such as Neuralink and Artificial Intelligence (AI), with informed spiritual discernment rather than fear. The study seeks to promote a constructive understanding of these technologies by exploring their potential benefits, their implications for human life and society, and their alignment with core principles of Christian teaching.

Specific Objectives

1. To explain the nature and function of Neuralink, highlighting its role in supporting individuals with paralysis, neurological disorders, blindness, and communication disabilities.
2. To analyze how misinterpretations of biblical passages, particularly *Revelation* 13 have contributed to technophobia and resistance to innovation within certain Christian communities

3. To propose a Christian framework of discernment that encourages wise, faith-guided, and informed engagement with emerging technologies in contemporary society.

1.3. Research Questions

This study seeks to explore how Christians can engage with emerging technologies such as Neuralink and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a manner that is informed, discerning, and faithful. Specifically, it addresses the following questions:

1. How can Christians approach emerging technologies such as Neuralink and Artificial Intelligence with informed spiritual discernment rather than fear?
2. In what ways can Neuralink improve the lives of individuals with paralysis, neurological disorders, blindness, or severe communication disabilities?
3. How have misinterpretations of biblical texts, particularly *Revelation* 13 concerning the "mark of the beast, contributed to technophobia within certain Christian communities?
4. What Christian theological principles can guide believers in using technology wisely while remaining grounded in faith and spiritual responsibility?

2.0. Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and neurotechnology have become some of the most significant forces driving modern scientific progress, offering new possibilities for human advancement. Recent research demonstrates that brain–computer interfaces (BCIs) developed by projects such as Neuralink are capable of restoring lost motor abilities, enabling direct communication for individuals with neurological impairments, and potentially reversing certain sensory disabilities (Frontiers in Neuroscience, 2023). These technological milestones reveal how the boundaries between human cognition and machine systems are becoming increasingly interconnected, opening opportunities for medical innovation and new forms of human–machine collaboration.

In addition to medical applications, AI has been recognized as a powerful instrument for advancing social progress. A report by InstaDeep (2023) highlights that AI can be applied to address some of the world's most pressing issues, including climate change, healthcare delivery, and food production. When strategically implemented, AI systems can enhance agricultural forecasting, strengthen disease detection, and improve environmental monitoring. Such applications demonstrate the vast capacity of AI to support human welfare and contribute to sustainable development across diverse sectors.

The relationship between faith and technological innovation continues to attract scholarly attention. Theological thinkers increasingly affirm that technology itself is not a threat to spirituality but can become a channel through which divine creativity is expressed. Historically, many technological discoveries, such as the printing press, electricity, and later the internet, were initially approached with fear by religious communities but were later recognized as vital tools for communication and growth. As Campbell and Garner (2016) observe, technology often expands human potential and enables new ways of sharing religious knowledge and experience. Similarly, Pope (2021) notes that believers are encouraged to view innovation as part of humanity's participation in God's ongoing creative work in the world.

Responses to technology, however, are not universal; they are shaped by cultural and spiritual worldviews. In many African societies, including Rwanda, perceptions of emerging technologies are deeply influenced by collective memory, religious interpretation, and local traditions. Gifford (2009) observes that African Christianity often interprets scientific and technological developments through spiritual or eschatological lenses. This means that new inventions are sometimes viewed in relation to

biblical prophecy, the unseen spiritual world, or the end times. As a result, communities may respond to technological initiatives with caution when such developments are unfamiliar or not fully explained within their cultural context.

Mbiti (1999) reinforces this understanding by noting that African Christianity integrates faith into every aspect of daily life, meaning that scientific innovations are evaluated not only for their practical benefits but also for their harmony with spiritual and communal values. In Rwanda, for instance, this dynamic was evident during national vaccination and digital transformation campaigns. Certain rural communities expressed reservations, linking such programs to apocalyptic fears or perceived spiritual manipulation (MINICT, 2020). These responses highlight that technological acceptance depends not only on access or infrastructure but also on cultural interpretation and theological understanding. Encouraging dialogue between innovators and faith communities can therefore promote informed participation and greater appreciation for the role of technology in national development.

3.0. Methodology

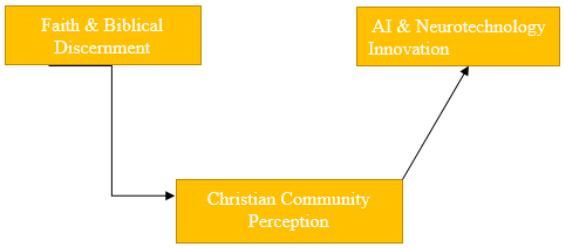
This study employs a qualitative and theological research design, guided by interpretive and reflective inquiry. The purpose of this approach is not to measure or statistically analyze phenomena, but to understand the meanings, beliefs, and experiences surrounding the interaction between Christian faith and emerging technologies. The study seeks to examine how theological principles can inform responsible and ethical engagement with innovations such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Neuralink.

The first method used is textual analysis, focusing on selected biblical passages including Revelation 13, Deuteronomy 6:4–5, Matthew 10:16, and Matthew 25:13. These scriptures are examined through close reading, with attention to historical context, literary structure, and theological implications. This process allows the study to interpret the biblical message faithfully and to distinguish scriptural teachings from cultural or speculative misinterpretations. Through this method, the research clarifies that Christian ethics regarding technology must be grounded in sound theological understanding rather than fear or rumor.

The second component is literature synthesis, which involves reviewing scholarly works from theology, and technology studies. This includes academic discussions on artificial intelligence, brain–machine interfaces, and the moral responsibilities of innovation. Additionally, insights are incorporated from my participation in the Deep Learning Indaba, the flagship African gathering for researchers and practitioners working in AI and Machine Learning. This synthesis ensures that theological reflection is connected to current scientific advancements and global conversations about the future of human–technology interaction.

Finally, the study integrates reflexive analysis, recognizing the researcher as both a theologian and a technological innovator. My personal experiences within church communities, research institutions, and innovation ecosystems offer a valuable lens for understanding how faith and science intersect in real life. Reflexivity allows the research to remain grounded in lived experience, acknowledging how beliefs, identity, and community shape interpretations and responses to technology.

Overall, these qualitative methods work together to produce a study that is biblically faithful, intellectually informed, and socially relevant, offering guidance for Christians seeking to engage technology with wisdom, responsibility, and hope.
Conceptual Frame Work



This conceptual framework illustrates how faith-based interpretation guides the way Christian communities understand and respond to emerging technologies such as AI and neurotechnological developments. Faith and biblical discernment forms the foundational lens through which believers interpret new innovations. This discernment directly influences the perceptions within Christian communities, determining whether new technologies are approached with openness, caution, or fear. In turn, these perceptions shape the overall response to AI and neurotechnology, either encouraging constructive engagement, learning, and acceptance or leading to suspicion, rejection, and technophobia.

The model shows that the response to technology does not arise from the technology itself, but from how faith shapes understanding. Therefore, strengthening biblical literacy, theological clarity, and spiritual discernment becomes essential for promoting informed and confident engagement with technological advancements.

3.1. Overview of Neuralink and Its Promise in Brain–Computer Interface Applications

Neuralink is a neurotechnology company established in 2016 with the goal of developing implantable brain–computer interfaces (BCIs) that enable direct communication between neural activity and digital systems (Musk & Neuralink, 2019). The company's primary device, known as the Link, is a coin-sized implant inserted into the skull, with ultra-thin electrode threads placed into the cerebral cortex to read neural signals. These threads record and transmit electrical activity wirelessly, allowing external devices, such as computers or robotic limbs, to be controlled through thought alone. Neuralink's hardware design prioritizes biocompatibility and signal stability, supported by a surgical robot capable of highly precise placement of the electrode threads (Neuralink, 2022).

Current clinical and experimental applications of Neuralink focus primarily on paralysis, severe mobility loss, and neurological disorders. For individuals with spinal cord injuries or ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), the implant enables the restoration of control over external devices, potentially replacing or supplementing functions lost due to nerve damage (Frontiers in Neuroscience, 2023). Neuralink has also announced applications for neurological regulation, such as helping manage Parkinson's disease and epilepsy by recording and modulating neural circuits associated with motor tremors and seizure onset (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2023). These applications position Neuralink not as a technology of enhancement, but initially as a medical assistive tool for restoring lost function.

A major advancement in Neuralink's pipeline is Blindsight, a visual prosthesis under development that aims to stimulate the visual cortex directly, bypassing damaged optic nerves. In 2024, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted Blindsight Breakthrough Device status, recognizing its potential to partially restore vision in individuals with certain forms of blindness (U.S. Food & Drug Administration, 2024). Although early in development, this approach follows clinical precedents of cortical visual prostheses and could expand sensory restoration therapies if proven safe and effective.

Real-life case demonstrations highlight the human significance of these developments. In 2024, Noland Arbaugh, a quadriplegic man injured in 2016, gained the ability to move a computer cursor and play video games solely through thought using Neuralink's Telepathy device. Arbaugh described the technology as "restoring dignity," noting that while some accused the procedure of being

spiritually dangerous, his lived experience was one of empowerment rather than harm (ABC News, 2024). Similarly, in 2025, Audrey Crews, who had been paralyzed for two decades, used Neuralink to write her name using neural signals alone, an achievement that would have been impossible through conventional therapy (Reuters, 2025). These cases demonstrate Neuralink's potential not merely as a medical novelty but as a pathway to meaningful autonomy and communication for individuals long marginalized by physical limitations.

3.2. Theological Reflections

A central concern in discussions around technology and faith is the interpretation of Revelation 13:16–18, which describes the "mark of the beast." Some individuals interpret this passage through a modern technological lens, assuming that microchips, vaccines, or brain implants represent this mark. However, biblical scholarship emphasizes that the passage refers primarily to allegiance and worship, not physical devices. The "mark" symbolizes a person's ultimate loyalty, either to God or to systems that oppose God's purposes. Therefore, the issue at stake is spiritual allegiance, not technological tools.

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 commands believers to love God "with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." While many Christians emphasize emotional and spiritual devotion, the call to love God with one's strength also includes the use of intellect, creativity, and human capability. Developing, evaluating, and using technology responsibly can be understood as a faithful expression of this command, demonstrating stewardship of the mind and skills God has given.

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus instructs His followers to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." This passage encourages Christians to practice discernment, meaning neither blind acceptance nor fearful rejection of new developments. Believers are called to approach innovation with moral clarity, humility, and thoughtful evaluation.

Finally, Matthew 25:13 reminds Christians to "keep watch," for no one knows the exact hour of Christ's return. This teaching warns against speculative predictions and emotional reactions that lead to panic or withdrawal from society. Instead of abandoning education, healthcare, or technological progress based on apocalyptic rumors, Christians are encouraged to remain spiritually grounded, responsible, and engaged in the world.

4.0. Case Study: Rwanda, Eschatology, Rumor, and Technophobia in Community Context

Religious eschatological interpretations have played a significant role in shaping public reactions to technological and medical developments in Rwanda in recent decades. A notable example occurred in 2012 in Karongi District, when rumors spread that the return of Jesus Christ would take place on a specific night. Entire families, including my own, stayed awake in prayer and fear, anticipating the end of the world. When the expected event did not occur, the community experienced confusion, emotional exhaustion, and spiritual disappointment. This incident reflected the strong influence of oral prophecy culture and demonstrated how eschatological teachings can significantly affect daily life when not grounded in theological study (Maniragaba, 2014).

During the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2021), similar patterns re-emerged. Public health guidelines from the Ministry of Health and the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) recommended vaccination as the most effective means to reduce mortality and prevent severe illness. However, in some rural regions, misinformation spread through informal preaching networks and social media platforms, framing the vaccine as "satanic" or as the "mark of the beast" in Revelation 13 (RBC, 2021). As a result, some teachers resigned to avoid mandatory vaccination, while students withdrew from school and families discouraged participation

in regular economic activities. These reactions were fueled by the misinterpretation of 2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4 which state, *"With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years,"* leading some to promote the Millennial Day Theory, which claims that the year 2027 would mark the end of human history (Uwizeyimana, 2022). Although there is no biblical or scholarly consensus supporting this theory, it gained traction among communities seeking simple explanations during a period of global uncertainty.

Additionally, in September 2025, another widespread rumor circulated that the world would end between the nights of 21st and 22nd September. The claim spread rapidly via WhatsApp audio messages and local church groups. In some areas, individuals gathered on hilltops to await the event, fasted, or sold household belongings in preparation for the anticipated apocalypse. Local church leaders and the National Council of Churches in Rwanda (NCCK) later intervened, emphasizing that Jesus explicitly teaches that "no one knows the day or the hour" (Matthew 24:36), encouraging believers to live faithfully rather than fearfully.

These repeated events demonstrate how technophobia, conspiratorial eschatology, and limited theological literacy can contribute to harmful social and economic disruption. In each case, communities acted not out of spiritual maturity, but out of fear-based interpretations fueled by rumor rather than Scripture. The case also reveals the need for pastoral discipleship, accurate public education, and partnerships between religious institutions and scientific bodies to support informed and balanced decision-making.

5.0. Results and Findings

The findings of this study indicate that emerging technologies such as Neuralink and Artificial Intelligence (AI) provide tangible solutions for restoring human dignity and addressing severe medical challenges. Cases where individuals with paralysis regained communication and mobility demonstrate that neurotechnology has the capacity to reduce suffering and enhance quality of life when applied responsibly. This affirms that technology, rather than being inherently destructive, can serve redemptive and restorative purposes when guided by ethical and humanitarian values (Frontiers in Neuroscience, 2023).

The research further revealed that technophobia, driven largely by misinformation and apocalyptic misinterpretations, has had harmful effects in certain Christian communities. Fear-based narratives have contributed to school dropouts, vaccine refusal, social withdrawal, and resistance to innovation, ultimately weakening community resilience. These patterns illustrate how misunderstanding technology can lead to real social and economic harm, particularly in rural contexts.

Additionally, biblical reflection in this study emphasizes that Christian discernment is not based on fear, but on wisdom, understanding, and spiritual vigilance. Scripture encourages believers to "get wisdom and understanding" (Proverbs 4:7), suggesting that knowledge, learning, and critical reflection are integral to faith. Therefore, technology should be seen as a tool that can either serve or harm depending on human intention, not as an automatic threat to spirituality.

Finally, the study shows that faith and science are not opposing forces, but can work together constructively. Christianity, when interpreted through a balanced theological lens, supports human creativity, healing, and stewardship. These values align with the goals of responsible technological advancement, demonstrating that collaboration between religious and scientific communities can foster well-informed, ethical, and life-affirming innovation.

6.0. Conclusion

This study has shown that technophobia, the irrational fear of technology, continues to shape spiritual, social, and economic attitudes within many Christian communities. Such fear often

emerges from misunderstandings of Scripture, particularly apocalyptic passages like Revelation 13, which some interpret as predicting modern technologies such as vaccines, microchips, or brain implants. However, theological and scholarly analysis indicates that the "mark of the beast" is not a physical device but a symbol of allegiance to systems and powers that stand in opposition to God. When fear replaces discernment, communities may reject beneficial technologies, hinder healthcare, disrupt education, and create unnecessary social division. Therefore, rather than responding with anxiety or suspicion, Christians are called to evaluate technological advancements with spiritual maturity, critical reflection, and faith.

6.1. Recommendations

To move from fear toward informed spiritual engagement, the Church and faith-based leaders should promote theological literacy that equips believers to interpret Scripture responsibly and avoid sensational or speculative teachings. Additionally, Christian communities should be encouraged to adopt a faith-driven engagement with emerging technologies, neither embracing them blindly nor rejecting them out of fear. Proverbs 4:7 reminds us: *"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."* By grounding decisions in biblical understanding, ethical reflection, and communal dialogue, believers can respond to technological developments with clarity and confidence. Ultimately, the appropriate Christian posture is one of responsible, Spirit-guided discernment, which seeks to honor God while contributing positively to human well-being and the flourishing of society.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study recognizes several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, Neuralink and similar brain–computer interface technologies are still in early stages of development, and much of the current understanding is based on preliminary trials and emerging scientific reports. As a result, the long-term medical, psychological, and social impacts remain uncertain. For example, future risks surrounding privacy of neural data, the possibility of hacking brain signals, and the physical effects of implanted devices, such as metal compatibility, tissue response, or long-term neurological side effects, have not been fully established. Therefore, while the present analysis highlights the positive potential of such technologies, the ethical and biomedical implications require ongoing monitoring and deeper inquiry.

Secondly, the case study from Rwanda reflects a contextual and culturally specific experience. The religious interpretations, community responses, and emotional reactions described may differ in regions with different historical, educational, or theological backgrounds. As such, the conclusions drawn here should not be assumed to apply universally but rather serve as a comparative foundation for further global research.

Additionally, the theological reflections presented in this paper draw primarily from Christian perspectives rooted in Protestant traditions. Interpretations of eschatology and spiritual discernment may vary among Catholic, Orthodox, and African Indigenous Churches. These differences influence how communities perceive and respond to technological innovations, suggesting the need for broader denominational dialogue.

6.3. Future Research Directions

Future studies should adopt interdisciplinary collaboration, involving experts in neuroscience, ethics, sociology, and law, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how AI and brain–computer interfaces affect human identity, autonomy, and spirituality. Further research is also needed to explore the development of digital spiritual discernment training within churches, practical strategies that help believers evaluate technology neither with fear nor naïve acceptance.

Moreover, investigating the role of misinformation and conspiracy-based preaching in shaping

technophobic attitudes would provide insight into how educational and pastoral interventions can strengthen critical awareness. Finally, empirical research involving different cultural and religious contexts would broaden understanding, helping faith communities navigate technological change with wisdom, compassion, and informed confidence.

References

Ables, K. (2024, January 30). *Brain-chip start-up Neuralink implanted a device in its first live human subject, Elon Musk says. The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2024/01/30/neuralink-musk-first-human-brain-chip/

Biography.com. (2024, May). *Elon Musk: Biography, entrepreneur, SpaceX and Tesla founder.* A&E Networks. https://www.biography.com/business-leaders/elon-musk

Campbell, H., & Garner, S. (2016). *Networked theology: Negotiating faith in digital culture.* Baker Academic.

CNBC. (2023, May 25). *Neuralink, the neurotech startup co-founded by Elon Musk, gets FDA approval for in-human study.* https://www.cnbc.com/2023/05/25/elon-musks-neuralink-gets-fda-approval-for-in-human-study.html

Davies, P. (2024, January 30). *Elon Musk says his Neuralink company has successfully implanted one of its chip implants into a human brain. Euronews.* https://www.euronews.com/health/2024/01/30/elon-musk-neuralink-first-human-brain-chip-implant

Forbes. (2020). *Could Elon Musk's Neuralink be a game-changer for people with disabilities?* Forbes Media. https://www.forbes.com

Frontiers in Neuroscience. (2022). *Neuralink and brain–computer interface innovations in medical rehabilitation.* Frontiers Media. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience

Frontiers in Neuroscience. (2023). *Recent advances in brain-computer interface technology: Medical and scientific applications.* Frontiers Media. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience

Gifford, P. (2009). *Christianity, development, and modernity in Africa.* Hurst & Company.

Gifford, P. (2009). *Christianity, politics and public life in Africa.* Hurst & Company.

Hanson, P. (2020). *Could Elon Musk's Neuralink be a game changer for people with disabilities? Forbes.* https://www.forbes.com

InstaDeep. (2023). *AI for social good: Addressing climate, health, and food production through innovation.* InstaDeep Research Report. https://www.instadeep.com

Instadeep. (2023). *AI and the future of humanity: Ethical frontiers in machine intelligence.* InstaDeep Research Report. https://www.instadeep.com

Maniragaba, A. (2014). *Religious belief and community behavior in rural Rwanda. Journal of African Religious Studies, 9*(2), 45–59.

Mbiti, J. S. (1999). *African religions and philosophy* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT). (2020). *Rwanda digital transformation strategy 2020–2025.* Government of Rwanda. https://www.minict.gov.rw/strategic-documents

NanoEthics. (2024). *The presentation of brain-computer interfaces as autonomy-enhancing therapy products.* Springer.

National Institutes of Health. (2021). *An integrated brain-machine interface platform with thousands of electrodes. PubMed Central.* https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc

Pope, K. (2021). *Faith and technology: The role of innovation in modern spirituality.* Oxford University Press.

Rwanda Biomedical Centre. (2021). *National COVID-19 vaccination campaign: Public health*

guidelines and uptake challenges. Ministry of Health.

The Holy Bible. *New International Version*.

Uwizeyimana, T. (2022). *Eschatology and public perception in Rwandan Pentecostal movements. African Journal of Theology and Society, 11*(1), 77–93.

Author's Biographical Information

Moise IRADUKUNDA is a theology student at the Protestant University of Rwanda and a certified business specialist. He serves as the Head of the Partnership Task Force within the Nature Working Group of YOUNGO, the official youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In addition, he is an innovator at the University of Rwanda – African Centre of Excellence in Data Science (ACE-DS), where he leads an environmental innovation project focused on sustainable development and climate resilience.

Preaching The Word of God in the Artificial Intelligence: Challenges And Opportunities

Juvenal Rwamunyana
Protestant University Rwanda
rwamunyana@yahoo.fr

Eraste Rukera
Protestant University Rwanda
rwamunyana@yahoo.fr

Abstract
Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing life on Earth. Many tasks are executed through AI applications. With AI, the physical contact and presence are no longer required to deliver or receive a service applied for. For the preaching activity, the introduction of AI in preaching remains an unexplored area. This paper aims to seek the implications of the use of AI in preaching the word of God, its challenges, and opportunities. A qualitative approach is used to gather information. The desk review will be used to gather data from documents related to this topic. Findings reveal that challenges related to the introduction of AI in preaching include plagiarism of sermons, a universal message that does not take into consideration the culture, audience, and context of local communities. The critical analysis and creative spirit are reduced because people believe that everything needed has been prepared already and machines preach well than human beings. This creates a lazy habit of the mind, moral abdication and blind obedience. Temple will loose the attendees. The aspect of socialization among church members after the church service will end its chapter. The present generation likes to interact with machines rather than human beings, and this will affect church life in all its sectors. Untrained ministers in the use of AI tools will no longer have a place in the church. It will negatively affect the exegesis work because everyone is a preacher through an AI platform, which is the basis for the preparation of preaching. On the other side, Opportunities are the access to many sermons well written. The audience has many choices of the sermon to follow, reaching anybody without much effort breaking denominational barriers). The churches are requested to think about how they should value their Temples and train their members to use the AI.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, preaching. Word of God,

I. Introduction

1.1.Background of the Study

Preaching has profoundly, and for the most part positively, influenced the morals and customs of humanity. Although the influence of the pulpit may at times be open to criticism, its negative effects have generally been minor and short-lived. Conversely, preaching itself has also been shaped at times for better and at times for worse by the prevailing customs and ethical standards of its era.

This sensitivity to the surrounding environment has often helped preaching stay active and relevant, giving it the strength to address the needs of each generation. However, we must admit that at times, public opinion and deeply rooted wrongs have influenced the message of sermons more than the officially recognized moral or religious authorities.

The history of expository preaching starts with the kind of preaching found in the Bible, where God's message was revealed and explained. True preaching in the Church today continues this same biblical pattern. Those who dedicate themselves to explaining the Scriptures inspire and challenge us

because their ministries have produced deep and lasting results

In the Old Testament, the art of proclaiming the will of God was in the hands of the Prophets. Here we can mention some of them, like Ezekiel, Nehemiah, Isaiah, etc. According to Ezekiel 3:10-11, God said to me. " Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ' Thus says the Lord God', whether they hear or refuse to hear".

Ezekiel was commissioned to speak to stone-faced people who were impudent(the word in Ezekiel 2:4). Impudent people with faces showing zero emotion. That was his congregation. They were dead-faced. The preacher delivers what God has spoken, even hard words. And that means no preacher is fit to preach until "they have received the word in their heart and have a zeal for it and delight in it.

As Proverbs 16 1 says: "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." All outputs, all talk, all Google searches, all AI Chatbots; God divinely governs every output. And without a sweat. God is not pushed out of a technological culture; he remains at the center, gloriously relevant to it (Casey T. Signon 2023).

Paul instructed Timothy to "preach the Word"(2 Tim 4:2). god has used the faithful efforts of expository preachers of his Word to bring honor to His name and to increase the faith of His saints(1 Cor.2:5) throughout history.(James F. Stitzinger,1992;5-32).

In the New Testament, before the coming of the great preacher who is Jesus Christ, Paul the Apostle played a great role in preaching the word of God. The preaching of the Apostles and other early church leaders contributes significantly to the history of expository preaching. The messages of Peter(Acts 2:14-36), Stephen (Acts 7:2-53), Paul (Acts 17:16 31), and James (Acts 15:14-21) have elements of both revelatory and explanatory preaching. The epistles are , for the most part, written expositions designed to teach various lessons. Paul in particular gave his life to preaching Christ(1 Cor.1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5) to reveal who he was (Rom.1:18;1 Cor. 2:10; Eph.3:5) and to explain Him to people (Rom.15;4;1 Cor.10:11-17;1 Thess.3:14;1tim.1:5). During the time of Jesus Christ. He preached the Gospel and used to go from place to place preaching the Gospel to the people publicly. He left this ministry of preaching to his disciples, who used the physical presence while preaching. With the advancement of New technology, the physical presence while one is preaching is shifting to an AI Preaching system.

1.2.The problem statement

Today, the whole world is facing a rapid advancement of new Technology where the use of AI is taking the lead. The church and its church members are forced not to remain behind that technological advancement; they should embrace the use of technology and integrate it into its daily activities. Reflecting on Adoption or rejection of novel technology in a church context,Mannerfelt & Roitto R. (2025, p. 127) expresses a dilemma and argued that"Adoption or rejection of novel technology in a church context is a complex negotiation process, where the community frames the new technology in relation to core beliefs and practices as well as the community's history and tradition of using technology". The emergence of ChatGPT in 2022 has introduced in the public sphere the debate about how AI should be used in the church context. Competing discourses were presented to frame the adoption of this new technology.

This paper aims to explore how the physical preaching of the word of God should survive in this AI Era. The paper shall also explore the opportunities and threats brought by AI in the area of preaching. To carry out this research, the following objectives were put in place.

1.3.Objectives of the study

the main objective of this paper is to explore the challenges and opportunities of preaching the

Word of God in the era of Artificial Intelligence. From the main objective, the following specific objectives are adopted.

1.3.1.Specific Objectives:

- To explore the mode of Preaching before the coming of AI
- To explore the preaching of the word of God during the AI era
- To identify Opportunities and challenges in preaching the Word of God in the AI Era
- To address challenges faced by preaching the word of God in the AI Era

1.4.The Methodology

The methodology used is the descriptive method, where a desk review was taken into consideration to collect qualitative data from published articles on AI.

2.Literature Review

2.1.The mode of Preaching before the coming of AI

2.1.1.The Physical preaching the word of God

Preaching the word of God is the proclamation of the Good News with the purpose to call people to come to Jesus who is the great teacher. in Luke 10:25, Jesus taught his disciples and the people concerning their faith or relationship or relationship with god in the synagogue, in the villages, by the roadside, by the seaside, and wherever he found them (Kurerwa 2000: 90).

In preaching the word of God, the preacher has to be present in physical appearance and behaviour. This signifies that all things the congregants can sense about the preacher. These could include the gestures, movement, the facial expression of the preacher, the nonverbal communications used by the preacher. The way the preacher presents himself/herself before the audience, their voice and tone, all these behaviours make the sermon smooth.

The physical preaching involves the face to face between the preacher and the congregation. the use of the hard copy Bible becomes necessary. Here, the preaching becomes biblical preaching. According to Kurerwa, Biblical preaching is the proclamation of the gospel to the gospel to the people in relation to their contemporary life, through faithful exposition of the scriptures, as one is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Such a proclamation often concludes with an invitation for a decision or action (2000:92).

According to Kurerwa, the Biblical Preaching has five components. the first is that biblical preaching is the proclamation of the gospel. Second, the biblical preaching is done in relation to people in their contemporary lives. It must be directed to people for a particular reason. Third, biblical preaching occurs through faithful exposition of the scriptures. Fourth, biblical preaching occurs as one is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Fifth, biblical preaching is often concluded with an invitation for a decision or action. (2000:94)

2.1.2.The place of preaching the word of God.

In physical preaching mode, places are used. we have the Temple, the Home place, outside the temple, on the street, in marketplaces, in the Bus while travelling. This method of going out of the temple carrying the Good News was used by Jesus. John 6:3; Luke 19:37; Luke 9:28; Marc 9:9; Marc 3:13; Mat 15:29; Mat 5:1, Mark 6:6; Mat 9:35Luke 5:3, Luke 8:1, Luke 13:22. All these verses demonstrate that even Jesus used this method of going out of the temple, teaching the Good News. Whereas the performative homiletic views the preacher as the sole and chief interpreter of Scripture and Christian identity (Lose 2013, p. 105).

The participatory homiletic sees the preacher as a creator of space for the congregation to become fluent interpreters of the Christian faith (Lose 2013, p. 107). Space is created in the sermon for the congregation to interact and participate rather than merely watching the performance of the proclamation.

The place for preaching is still Sunday, from a pulpit to a pew. The preacher is called to better connect with her congregation in the real world by visiting their place of work. The preacher has guided conversational sermons with congregants in the pulpit. The preacher has a small group come together to reflect on the upcoming text for the week, and their voices make it into the sermon. However, Lose cannot imagine for the reader a form of preaching that involves, in real-time, a community of proclamation. (Casey T. Signon, 2023).

2.1.3.The Advantages of face-to-face preaching the word of God.

This has been used by preachers of the word of God, and it has its own benefits. The congregant can hear the real voice of the preacher, they can observe the gestures made by the preacher, and understand better what the preacher wants to express deeply. Knowing that non-verbal communication plays a vital role in a physical face-to-face dialogue. According to D'Souza, the Non – verbal Communication refers to those messages people send by facial expressions, by changes in voice, and by body movement (D'Souza, 2003:121

The preacher is able to control the emotions of the audience, and physical repentance is possible. This can motivate others who don't yet have the willingness to repent to do so. By observing the mode of the congregants, the preacher can examine if the message has been received or not by the audience.

2.2. The Description of Preaching in the AI Era

As the world increasingly embraces Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Church is encouraged to integrate AI into its daily activities, particularly in preaching, since it offers new opportunities for enriching religious experiences. AI can provide personalized spiritual guidance, virtual companionship, and even simulated encounters with divine figures (Okwuchukwu Azuakor, 2025, p. 104).

Therefore, Christopher Manning of Stanford University defines AI (artificial intelligence) , he used the definition of John McCarthy, who coined the term AI in 1955 as it follows: "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines." (Manning, 2022). In other words, it refers to the machines that are designed to execute the tasks that require human intelligence, such as preaching and so on.

The modern era of AI was significantly marked by the emergence of ChatGPT in 2022. Its introduction into the public sphere sparked broad discussions on how AI should be used within the Church context. Diverse and competing discourses emerged, attempting to frame the adoption of this new technology in theological and ethical terms.

A central focus of the debate has been the role of AI in sermon writing. Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025, p. 128) contend that an AI-generated sermon cannot fully convey the true message from God. However, they acknowledge that AI can serve as a valuable tool in the process of sermon preparation, assisting preachers in generating ideas and organizing their thoughts. According to them, listeners ultimately seek messages that arise from the preacher's personal experience and theological reflection (Mannerfelt & Roitto, 2025, p. 128).

They also highlight the warning issued by psychologist Nelsson, who asserts that preaching is a sacred craft requiring deep personal effort and inspiration. Nelsson cautions that reliance on AI for sermon preparation may become a spiritual temptation, likening it to worshipping the "golden calf."

Moreover, the rise of virtual preaching has expanded the reach of the Church's message beyond physical boundaries. Online platforms now allow sermons to reach audiences regardless of location or attendance capacity. This shift from temples to computers and smartphones connected via the internet reflects the attributes of transcendence and immanence often associated

with AI, a phenomenon that has led some to perceive it as possessing quasi-supernatural power.

2.3 Opportunities and challenges in the AI Era

Knowledge of God and the world is shared and spread throughout the community. Congregations increase participation. Every day, Christians find their voice. churches will be closed, and socialization among memberships will come to an end in the AI era. Casey T. Signon(2023).

The digital age, especially the social media technoculture, disrupts the tradition as it amplifies the fruit of our centuries of ecclesiological formation based on a top-down communications model. Our technological advances have simultaneously introduced the technoculture of Web 3.0—a radically vertical and non-boundaried life-world for public conversations and connection—and amplified the means for mass mediation. Not all online preaching models a new how and who into practice. Satellite preaching, livestreaming, and the phenomenon of ordering DVDs of great preachers to play in the church reflect the one-way amplification of the preacher's voice. The new media of this age (Twitter, smartphones, Facebook Live, etc.) are luring the church into novel ways of breaking down the divide between professional Christians and lay Christians, which is irksome to many established Christians who are taught not to talk while the preacher is talking. (Casey T. Signon, 2023).

Lack of response in media preaching: In "Preaching and the Nature of Communication", Reid cites new discoveries in communications studies that show how an absence of dialogue leads to a communication breakdown in the intended recipient of a message. Reid says, "Until about 1950, communications researchers thought of communication chiefly as a simple, one-way process" (Reid 1963, p. 41).

The dependency and Laziness, the automation of mundane tasks by AI can foster a reliance on technology, potentially diminishing the need for human cognitive engagement and problem-solving skills. It reduces mental activity (Okwuchukwu Azuakor P., (2025).

Mass media is by nature a one-way message system, privileging the distributor of the message. Distribution is not in the hands of the public. The flow of communication is top-down. The public is formed for receptivity and consumption of the message coming through the mass media pipeline. (Casey T. Signon, 2023).

The debate on the challenges of AI concerning preaching had Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025, p. 128) argue that "AI-generated sermons cannot render a true address from God, since preaching depends on the interpretation of the heart through human lived experience grounded in free will", a capacity that AI fundamentally lacks. Similarly, Ungar-Sargon (2025, p. 6) observes that "no matter how advanced AI becomes, it can never truly be a spiritual being," emphasizing its inherent limitations and its inability to replace the human dimension of faith and spirituality.

One of the major challenges posed by AI is not primarily technological but moral. As Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025, p. 5) note, the critical issue lies in the loss of moral responsibility. As AI systems become increasingly autonomous, questions arise about accountability: when harm is caused by AI, who bears responsibility? According to Ungar-Sargon (2025, p. 6), responsibility remains with human beings, who must act as co-creators and caretakers of technological progress.

Another concern raised by scholars is that the use of AI could gradually erode the moral instincts of preachers. As more decision-making is delegated to machines, humans risk diminishing their own moral agency and sense of responsibility. When people begin to assume that "the algorithm knows best," they may unconsciously surrender their critical thinking—the very quality that distinguishes human beings from machines (Mannerfelt & Roitto, 2025, p. 4). The danger lies

in the perception that, because machines perform tasks with precision, logic, and efficiency, they could even deliver sermons more effectively than humans. Such beliefs risk leading humanity toward what Mannerfelt and Roitto describe as "moral abduction" and "blind obedience."

However, this substitution human being by the AI is neither possible nor desirable. Speaking robotically without personality is not preaching. Saying orthodox things without conviction is not preaching. Delivering sermons devoid of affection for God is not preaching. Speaking while being personally guarded is not preaching. Ministering without the love required to see needs in your congregation is not preaching. Sermons that never challenge a congregation is not reaching. Preaching is a deeply relational and experiential act rooted in faith, love, and personal connection with the congregation dimensions that machines cannot replicate. If human beings abdicate their moral and spiritual responsibilities, they open the door to misleading teachings. Once disseminated by machines, such teachings could spread widely and profoundly influence believers around the world, often without the critical discernment that human spiritual leaders are called to exercise.

The superpowers of AI come with dangers we must figure out. Surveillance culture, loss of privacy, reducing human identity to data, replacing human bonds with AI bots, the deskilling of the human workforce, and the dangers of multiplying online misinformation. All those concerns are real and all well addressed in the Vatican's recent warning about how AI could dehumanize society and erode human dignity. Tony Reinke(2025; 19).

3. Discussion of findings

Findings have revealed that the practice of preaching has evolved significantly throughout church history. From the days of preaching under tents to the construction of large temples, the physical presence of both the preacher and the congregation was considered essential for authentic proclamation of the Word.

In the contemporary context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool offering new opportunities for spreading the Word of God. It has made access to Scripture and sermons easier and more immediate, allowing believers to engage with spiritual content regardless of location. However, despite these opportunities, AI faces clear limitations—particularly in the administration of sacraments and the performance of liturgical rituals, which require human presence, intention, and spiritual discernment.

While machines can execute tasks with remarkable logic, precision, and efficiency, often leading some to believe that they could perform better than human preachers, they fundamentally lack emotion, empathy, and spiritual consciousness. AI systems can only reproduce patterns based on prior learning, but they cannot generate personal testimony or express genuine love for the congregation. Yet, these are the very elements that define the art and authenticity of preaching.

Furthermore, questions of accountability arise concerning the errors or ethical missteps committed by machines in carrying out religious or pastoral tasks. When humans relinquish their moral and spiritual responsibilities to artificial systems, they risk falling into what scholars describe as "moral abduction" and "blind obedience." Such surrender undermines the moral agency that has always defined human participation in God's mission.

4. Conclusion

Findings have revealed that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preaching has become a necessity for the contemporary Church. AI offers significant advantages and opportunities, extending the reach of the Gospel beyond traditional limits, denominational divides, and geographical boundaries. However, its adoption also introduces serious challenge, such as moral abdication and blind obedience, that call for deep theological and ethical reflection. Addressing these challenges is essential in order to preserve human

moral responsibility and sustain the authentic relationship between humanity and God, which remains the foundation of genuine and transformative preaching.

References:

Kurerwa J.W.Z.(2000) Preaching and Cultural Identity, Proclaiming the Gospel in Africa. Nashville, Abingdon Press.

Casey T. Signon (2023). Regions: The Courage to Preach in the Digital Age. Preaching and worship, Saint School of Theology, Leawood, KS 66224, USA.https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040551. accessed on 11/11/2025.

D' D'Souza, A. (2003), Leadership: A trilogy on Leadership and effective Management. Nairobi; Paulines Publications Africa.

Edwin Charles Dargan,d.d., ll.d (1905); History of Preaching from the Apostolic Fathers to the Great Reformers a. D. 70—1572; New York A. C. Armstrong & son, Press of J.J. Little & Co. Astor Place, New York

Hernández Calderero J., F., (2021).Artificial Intelligence and Spirituality. *In International Journal of Interactive Multimedia and Artificial Intelligence*, (2021), http://dx.doi.org/10.9781/ijimai.2021.07.001

https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/authentic-preaching-in-the-age-of-ai accessed on 11 /11/2025.

James F. Stitzinger (1992), The History of Expository Preaching, tmsj 3/1 (spring 1992) 5-32

Lose, David J. 2013. *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World and Our Preaching Is Changing*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. [Google Scholar]

Mannerfelt F. & Roitto R. (2025). Preaching with AI: an exploration of preachers' interaction with large language models in sermon preparation, *Practical Theology*, 18:2, 127-138, DOI: 10.1080/1756073X.2025.246805

Manning 2022). Artificial Intelligence Definitions, *HAI,* Stanford University, USA. https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/2023-03/AI-Key-Terms-Glossary-Definition.pdf

Okwuchukwu Azuakor P., (2025). Artificial Intelligence (AI) And the Challenges of Preaching the Gospel Of Christ in the Contemporary Society. *Journal of Vocational and Technical Educators (JOVTED*), Volume 6 No.6 March 2025, pp104-114.

Reid, Clyde H. (1963). Preaching and the Nature of Communication. *Pastoral Psychology* 14: 40–49.

Tony Reinke(2025) Authentic Preaching in the Age of AI:

Ungar-Sargon J, . AI and Spirituality: The Disturbing Implications. *J Med - Clin Res & Rev*. 2025; 9(3), pp. 1-7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/394274695_AI_and_Spirituality_The_Disturbing_Implications.

Harnessing Faith, AI & Emerging Technologies for Social Transformation A systematic review

Nomazwe Sibanda
Near East Univeristy, Cyprus.
nomazwe.sibanda@neu.edu.tr

Abstract

This review builds up the research on "Harnessing Faith, AI, and Emerging Technologies for Social Transformation in the background of the spheres of influence in Christianity" by responding to the fragmented understanding of how local religious groups can incorporate technology for societal change. The review intended to assess multidisciplinary knowledge on integration of faith and technology, establish ethical criterion, analyze theological viewpoints, compare leadership strategies, and identify social innovation outcomes. A systematic analysis of 50 research articles using qualitative and literature-based methods revealed exhaustive ecclesiastical ethical frameworks that emphasize in justice, stewardship, and the Holy Spirit as guides for AI use; innovative leadership models balancing tradition and digital adaptation across diverse cultural contexts; and significant ethical concerns including algorithmic bias, privacy, and authenticity risks.

1.0. Introduction

We live in an era of fast-paced digital evolution, such that new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), intellectually revolutionize how societies live, learn, and communicate with one another (Huizinga, 2022). Such technologies transcend being mere tools; they represent new forms of power that can perpetuate social injustices or can be utilized to construct justice, empathy, and inclusive human flourishing. Such a situation calls on the church to adopt these technologies as agents of transformation, thereby promoting its Kingdom mandate of justice, compassion, and human flourishing. As technological advancement fuels innovation across all dimensions of human existence, the daunting question is whether the Church will be a mere observer to these developments, or whether it will be a prophetic voice that engages with these new technologies actively as keepers of God's glory and of human betterment. The Church, having a Kingdom mandate grounded in biblical principles including the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), and the call to live as salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16), reframes artificial intelligence (AI) not only as a mere neutral tool but as a realm requiring spiritual discernment and stewardship within our civilization.

This paper explores roles of AI across various spheres of life, such as education, health, government, media, economy, stewardship of the environment, and community life, sometimes dubbed the seven mountains of influence. The argument outlines a novel faith-based model of "AI for Social Good" with specific focus on not-so-explored interplay of areas, such as economic equity through AI or open governance, with the goal of bringing about transformation across societal spheres of life with a biblical worldview. The Church's active intervention is crucial to ensure that technology works hand-in-hand with God's redemptive plan and to offset potential harm of dehumanization or ethical decline.

Ultimately, religion and innovation are not opposing forces; rather, they coalesce to bring about a compassionate and just future, with the Church being a sagacious, transforming force across all societal spheres. The review has emerged as a critical area of inquiry due to its potential to address complex societal challenges through ethical innovation and spiritual engagement (Kazanskaia, n.d.; Zhu, 2025). Over recent years, the integration of digital tools and AI in religious contexts has evolved from basic digital communication to sophisticated applications influencing education, leadership, and advocacy (Zebua et al., 2024; Grigore & Maftei, 2025). This

advancement indicates broader societal shifts toward digitalization and Industry 4.0, underscoring the practical significance of aligning technological advances with Christian values to foster community resilience and social justice (Ramoshaba & Mudimeli, 2025; Selvalakshmi et al., 2024). Notably, churches contribute significantly to social innovation, capitalizing on technology to amplify outreach and ethical stewardship, with implications for global sustainable development goals (Kazanskaia, 2025; Legi et al., 2025). Although there is increasing interest, a particular challenge remains in understanding how Christian faith traditions can effectively leverage AI and new technologies to navigate revolutionary social change across the spheres of influence, which include family, religion, education, government, media, arts and entertainment, and business (Sánchez-Camacho, 2025; Punuh, 2024). Recent studies show a fractured discussion with minimal integration of theological reflection, ethical AI frameworks, and practical leadership strategies (Przygoda et al., 2025; "Christian Ethics toward Artificial Intel…", 2023).

Furthermore, ongoing discussions focus on balancing technological adoption with maintaining spiritual authenticity, with some scholars highlighting innovation opportunities while others warn of ethical risks such as algorithmic bias and weakening community ties (Elizabeth & Mikaere, 2025; Munibi et al., 2025; Nduka, 2025). The gap in literature shows missed opportunities for Christians to lead in social innovation and potentially worsens digital divides within religious groups (Oyebanji et al., 2025; Efe, 2022). This review develops a conceptual framework that connects faith-based ethical principles, AI ethics, and transformative leadership in the digital age, based on theological and technological scholarship (Nenomataus et al., 2024; Trotta et al., 2024). It clarifies key concepts such as faith-driven social transformation, ethical AI integration, and the spheres of influence paradigm, establishing their interconnections as crucial for guiding research and practice (Sugiri, 2024; Osama et al., 2025). This framework facilitates a systematic examination of how emerging technologies can be leveraged to foster holistic social change in line with the Christian mission.

This systematic review aims to integrate interdisciplinary research on the convergence of Christianity, AI, and emerging technologies to clarify pathways for societal transformation within the Christian Spheres of Influence (Kazanskaia, n.d.; Mariano & Prats, 2023). By addressing existing gaps, this study offers a thorough understanding that aids faith leaders, technologists, and policymakers in developing ethical and effective integration strategies, thereby enhancing both academic discussion and practical application (Rustanta, 2025; Dwi & Hidayatullah, 2024). Utilizing a qualitative systematic literature review approach, this study encompasses peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and theological analyses published from 2022 to 2025 (Herman & Hermanto, 2023; Purwanto & Kristiawan, 2025). The review employs thematic synthesis and critical analysis to classify findings around ethical frameworks, leadership models, and technological impacts, providing a foundation that informs subsequent sections (Aritonang & Manurung, n.d.; Zai & Moimau, 2024).

1.1. Purpose and Scope of the Review Statement of Purpose

The purpose and scope of this study is to explore existing research on Faith, AI, and Emerging Technologies for Social Transformation in the background of the Spheres of Influence in Christianity, incorporating multidisciplinary viewpoints that reveal how Christian communities interact with technological advancements to drive societal change. This review is significant as it addresses the convergence of theology, ethics, technology, and social innovation within a framework that acknowledges the diverse spheres

of influence identified by the Seven Mountains paradigm.

By critically examining current studies, this review seeks to identify opportunities, challenges, and ethical considerations involved in merging faith and emerging technologies for revolutionary impact. Basically, the study aims to provide a comprehensive guide to Christians, technologists, and policymakers in utilizing AI and digital tools to promote justice, community development, and spiritual growth in modern society.

1.2. Specific Objectives:

- To assess current knowledge on the consolidation of Christian faith and emerging technologies for social transformation.
- To evaluate ethical frameworks applied to AI and digital innovation within Christian social initiatives.
- To identify and harmonize theological viewpoints on AI's role in spiritual growth and community engagement.
- To compare practical strategies employed by Christian leadership in utilizing technology across the Spheres of Influence.
- To analyze challenges and opportunities in religious digital activism and social innovation for sustainable societal impact.

3.0 Methodology of Literature Selection

3.1. Transformation of Query

Below is the query:

- Harnessing Faith, AI, and Emerging Technologies for Social Transformation in the context of the Spheres of Influence in Christianity.
- Exploring the intersection of technology, Christian faith, and social innovation within various ethical frameworks for transformative community impact.
- Investigating the role of AI and emerging technologies in facilitating social transformation through faith-based initiatives, while analyzing ethical considerations and historical precedents in Christian communities.

3.2. Screening Papers

We used the specified Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria to extract a targeted collection of candidate papers from an open-source database containing over 270 million research papers. In the first phase, 289 papers were identified. Backward citation chaining was also utilized to scrutinize the reference list of each core paper to uncover earlier studies it referenced. This method ensured that foundational research was not missed. Additionally, forward citation chaining from recent papers was conducted, resulting in the discovery of 108 additional papers. This process revealed new discussions, replication studies, and recent methodological developments.

3.3. Relevance Scoring and Sorting

We applied a relevance ranking to our compiled set of 397 candidate papers (289 from search queries and 108 from citation chaining) to ensure that the most relevant studies were prioritized in the final papers table. Out of the 397 papers identified as relevant to the research query, 50 were classified as highly relevant.

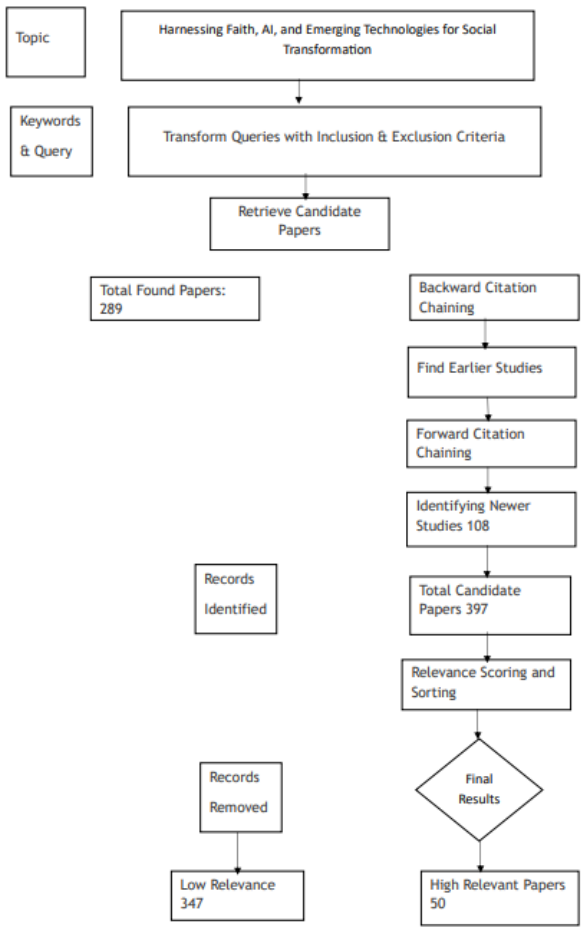


Fig. 1: Flowchart.

4.0 Results Descriptive Summary of the Studies

This section outlines the research landscape concerning the literature on harnessing faith, AI, and emerging technologies for social transformation within the framework of the spheres of influence in Christianity. Diverse interdisciplinary engagement was identified that cut across theology, ethics, leadership, and social innovation, with studies that use qualitative methodologies, literature reviews, and case study analyses, with remarkable significance on Christian theological frameworks, ethical considerations in AI, and practical leadership strategies in digital ministry. Geographically, the research embodies a universal outlook, with noteworthy contributions from Asia, Africa, and Western contexts, showing diverse cultural and ecclesial environments. This comparative analysis addresses the research questions by synthesizing how Christian communities ethically and theologically incorporate technology to promote social transformation across various spheres of influence.

Table 1.0: Descriptive Summary of the study

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Kazanskaia, n.d.)	Adaptive, globally networked advocacy combining ethics and innovation	Emphasizes transparency, accountability, and youth engagement	Interfaith collaboration with ethical grounding	Networked, youth-focused, culturally adaptive leadership	Enhanced justice advocacy and climate justice initiatives
(Sánchez-Camacho, 2025)	Public theology integrating digital technology with social justice	Ethical dialogue on AI, emphasizing justice and common good	Catholic social thought and integral ecology frameworks	Pastoral theology promoting ethical reflection in tech use	Promotion of socio-environmental justice aligned with SDGs
(Ramoshaba & Mudimeli, 2025)	Pentecostal theological framework	Holy Spirit as ethical guide for technology adoption	Nicene Creed-based theological analysis of tech	Pentecostal leadership integrating AI	Spiritual growth through ethical tech engagement

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
	guiding 4IR technology use			for church growth	
(Sanjaya, 2024)	Literature-based model combining Christian values with digital tools	Addresses conflicts and opportunities in tech adoption	Christian leadership theory applied to digital era	Transformative leadership strategies for community growth	Strengthened community and spiritual development
(Elizabeth & Mikaere, 2025)	Ethical framework rooted in love, humility, justice, stewardship	Focus on digital authenticity, accountability, and literacy	Theological ethics applied to digital ministry	Ethical leadership in digital engagement	Broader outreach and inclusion via digital platforms
(Tupamahu & Hutahaean, 2025)	Integration of education, technology, and innovation for productivity	Christian values guide digital literacy and innovation ethics	Faith-based character formation in education	Educational leadership fostering tech-enabled faith learning	Productive generation with Christ-like character
(Susan, 2025)	Christian anthropological framework addressing AI and neurotech	Ethical apologetics on human identity and AI impact	Theological-philosophical synthesis on personhood	Leadership informed by anthropology and AI ethics	Equips communities for AI-related identity challenges
(Susan, 2025)	AI's role in facilitating or hindering spiritual growth	Ethical considerations of AI in spiritual contexts	Theological reflection on Holy Spirit and AI	Faith leaders navigating AI's spiritual implications	Practical applications in education and interfaith dialogue

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Zalukhu & Ester, 2025)	Digital Jesus concept in counseling and spiritual growth	Ethics of data privacy and AI limitations in spirituality	Theological critique of AI's role in spiritual experience	Leadership balancing technology and Christian values	Enhanced spiritual counseling with ethical safeguards
(Oyebanji et al., 2025)	AI reshaping Christian youth spirituality and identity	Ethical challenges include misinformation and authority erosion	Theological concerns on youth engagement with AI	Youth leadership strategies for balanced AI use	Promotes healthy AI engagement among Christian youth
(Zebua et al., 2024)	Church leadership adapting social media and digital communication	Ethical use of social media for faith message dissemination	Aligning digital tools with Gospel and faith values	Adaptive church leadership in digital era	Development of congregational spirituality via tech
(Aritonang & Manurung, n.d.)	Youth leadership combining Christian values with tech innovation	Ethical transformation of technology in church ministry	Spiritual leadership development in digital context	Youth as agents of change in faith communities	Building relevant spiritual and faith communities
(Zai & Moimau, 2024)	AI integration in Christian life with ethical and cultural concerns	Ethical challenges in AI use for worship and teaching	Theological questions on authenticity and community	Leadership advocating wise AI adoption	Balancing AI benefits with spiritual integrity

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Nenomataus et al., 2024)	AI ethics integrated into Christian religious education	Challenges include digital divide and resource limitations	Ethical frameworks shaping AI pedagogy	Teacher training and policy development	Improved character formation and learning quality
(Munibi et al., 2025)	AI reshaping religious language and practice	Ethical issues of algorithmic bias and cultural homogenization	Theological diversity threatened by AI interpretations	Leadership promoting ethical, inclusive AI use	Risks to pluralism and interfaith dialogue
(Rustanta, 2025)	AI facilitating transcultural religious communication	Ethical risks of bias and commodification of religion	Communication ethics and transcultural awareness	Collaborative leadership among tech and religious actors	Potential for global religious harmony
(Zhu, 2025)	Religion as catalyst for social innovation and ethics	Faith-based ethical principles driving social entrepreneurship	Theological ethics fostering altruism and resilience	Leadership promoting cooperative faith-secular initiatives	Enhanced social innovation and sustainable development
(Fajar et al., 2024)	Religion optimized for social innovation and community development	Ethical integration of religious values in social programs	Theological basis for social solidarity and inclusion	Faith-based leadership in interfaith cooperation	Positive social change and crisis response
(TR, 2025)	AI transforming social sciences	Ethical concerns on bias, privacy,	Ethical frameworks	Leadership in interdisciplinary AI integration	Improved equity and

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
	and human services	and human-centered care	guiding AI in social work		social justice outcomes
(Selvalakshmi et al., 2024)	AI applications for social good and sustainability	Emphasis on ethical deployment and responsible use	Theological support for environmental and social goals	Leadership in policy and stakeholder collaboration	AI-driven disaster relief and poverty alleviation
(Dwi & Hidayatullah, 2024)	AI-human collaboration in social entrepreneurship	Ethical challenges include privacy and algorithmic bias	Ethical stewardship in AI-human integration	Leadership fostering transparency and workforce development	Innovation in social problem-solving
(Kazanskaia, 2025)	AI and ML adoption in non-profits with ethical governance	Fairness, transparency, and inclusivity emphasized	Mission-driven AI aligned with faith values	Leadership in capacity building and ethical stewardship	Enhanced social equity and resilience
(Ahmed et al., 2024)	Multi-religious perspectives on AI ethics	Diverse ethical principles across faith traditions	Comparative theological reflections on AI	Interfaith leadership in AI discourse	Promotes culturally sensitive AI development
(Herman & Hermanto, 2023)	Pastoral counseling adapting to Society 5.0 digital era	Ethical education and collaboration with tech experts	Pastoral theology supporting spiritual resilience	Leadership integrating technology and spirituality	Congregational support in complex digital contexts

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Santoso et al., n.d.)	Creative pastoral care foundation in Society 5.0	Ethical adaptation to digital disruption	Theological pastoral ministry in digital age	Innovative pastoral leadership approaches	Contextualized pastoral care maintaining essence
(Przygoda et al., 2025)	Symbiosis of artificial and natural intelligence	Ethical frameworks for AI-human co-evolution	Ecumenical theological education on AI	Leadership fostering wise AI discernment	Balanced AI integration in Christian formation
(NDUKA, 2025)	Ascetic virtues informing ethical AI practice	Virtue ethics addressing bias and cognitive overload	Ancient Christian principles applied to AI ethics	Leadership promoting digital asceticism	Enhances ethical integrity in AI development
(Efe, 2022)	Sociological and religious critique of AI's social role	Ethical expansion beyond technological determinism	Theological reflection on AI's societal impact	Leadership addressing ecological validity of AI	Challenges and opportunities in social transformation
(Tarwiyyah, 2025)	AI's impact on religious authority in Indonesia	Ethical concerns on authenticity and hierarchy	Theological negotiation of digital religious authority	Leadership adapting to digital pulpit dynamics	Redefines religious authority in digital age
(Taiwo et al., 2023)	AI ethics in US sectors with comprehensive principles	Broad ethical themes including justice and autonomy	Christian ethics informing AI governance	Leadership promoting responsible AI deployment	Framework for ethical AI across sectors

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Grigore & Maftei, 2025)	Digitalization's impact on religious practices post-COVID	Ethical challenges of privacy and authenticity	Theological implications of digital religion	Leadership fostering interdisciplinary collaboration	Transformation of faith communities and practices
(Waruwu, 2024)	AI personalization in Christian spiritual education	Ethical concerns on privacy and relational erosion	Theological reflection on AI in education	Leadership training educators for ethical AI use	Enhanced personalized spiritual learning
(Purwanto & Kristiawan, 2025)	Christian education advancing social justice and shalom	Ethical integration of reconciliation and compassion	Theological pedagogy for marginalized communities	Leadership emphasizing contextual curriculum	Formation of active agents of social change
(Sihombing, 2024)	Balancing AI and spirituality in religious education	Ethical preservation of spiritual values	Theological emphasis on holistic character development	Leadership ensuring supportive AI tools	Maintains spiritual integrity in education
(Lae, 2025)	Critical perspective on digital transformation in education	Ethical challenges of spiritual disruption and media dependence	Theological critique of digital overuse	Leadership designing adaptive pedagogies	Aligns technology with spiritual objectives

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Boiliu & Kia, 2025)	Integrating Christian values in digital curricula	Ethical readiness of teachers for faith-based pedagogy	Theological focus on character formation	Leadership fostering transformative education	Maximizes digital strategies for Generation Alpha
(Zalukhu, 2024)	Digital monetization through Christian work values	Ethical dilemmas of commodification and authenticity	Theological framework for stewardship and service	Leadership promoting moral discernment	Ethical digital economy aligned with faith
(Legi et al., 2025)	Christian education responding to social realities	Ethical emphasis on justice, love, and peace	Theological grounding in biblical social teachings	Leadership advocating social transformation	Education as agent of societal justice
(Punuh, 2024)	Entrepreneurial theology in church economic empowerment	Ethical balance between mission and business	Theological framework for economic self-reliance	Leadership fostering innovative church programs	Social transformation without compromising faith
("Christian Ethics toward Artificial Intel...", 2023)	Broad Christian ethical overview of AI impacts	Ethical themes including bias, justice, and spiritual effects	Theological reflection on AI's societal influence	Leadership addressing moral concerns of AI	Comprehensive ethical AI discourse
(Kazanskaia, n.d.)	Future of faith-based advocacy with tech integration	Ethical clarity and participatory design emphasized	Theological principles of justice and compassion	Leadership balancing tradition and innovation	Sustained advocacy impact through technology

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Tang & Kamarudin, 2025)	Systematic review of religious engagement with AI ethics	Ethical concerns on dignity, bias, and privacy	Theological diversity and pluralism gaps identified	Leadership promoting pluralistic research agendas	Calls for action-oriented ethical frameworks
(Tari, 2023)	Metaverse opportunities and challenges for gospel message	Ethical concerns on access and content delivery	Theological adaptation to virtual fellowship	Leadership developing age-appropriate digital content	Expands church outreach via new media
(Trotta et al., 2024)	Practical religious actor engagement with AI tools	Ethical assessment of narrow AI in religious contexts	Theological reflection on AI's role in practice	Leadership in education, advocacy, and policy	Diverse AI applications in faith communities
(Sugiri, 2024)	Moral dimensions of AI in education	Ethical framework prioritizing dignity and justice	Christian perspective on AI's educational use	Leadership ensuring responsible AI implementation	Supports equitable and ethical learning
(Osama et al., 2025)	Integrated management of AI, sustainability, and business	Ethical AI deployment with transparency and accountability	Theological support for sustainable innovation	Leadership in cross-sector collaboration	Promotes responsible and sustainable tech systems
(Alkhouri, 2024)	AI's impact on psychology of religion	Ethical challenges in authenticity and inclusiveness	Theological reflection on spirituality and AI	Leadership balancing tech and spiritual growth	Calls for further ethical exploration

Study	Integration Models	Ethical Frameworks	Theological Engagement	Leadership Strategies	Social Impact Outcomes
(Putra et al., 2024)	Digital innovation and ethical AI for smart societies	Ethical AI complements digital innovation	Theological alignment with societal values	Leadership fostering inclusive smart societies	Balances innovation with accountability
(Wolf et al., 2024)	HCI research on religion and spirituality evolution	Ethical considerations in tech and faith research	Theological implications of digital spirituality	Leadership in interdisciplinary research	Broadens understanding of tech-faith interface
(Mariano & Prats, 2023)	Tech capabilities in social enterprises for impact	Ethical use of technology for social good	Theological motivation for social entrepreneurship	Leadership supporting tech-enabled social ventures	Enhances social impact through innovation

4.1. Integration Models

The 50 studies identified diverse frameworks that integrate Christian faith with AI and emerging technologies, ranging from advocacy to educational personalization and entrepreneurial theology (Kazanskaia, n.d.) (Tupamahu & Hutahaean, 2025) (Punuh, 2024). According to (Ramoshaba & Mudimeli, 2025) (Susan, 2025) (Przygoda et al., 2025), several studies emphasize the guiding principles for ethical technology use and social transformation being the Holy Spirit or theological doctrines. It was noted that most models combined faith values with practical innovation, balancing tradition and digital adaptation to encourage community and spiritual growth (Sanjaya, 2024) (Zebua et al., 2024) (Kazanskaia, n.d.). Finally, some studies highlighted the integration of AI and ministry as a tool for personal learning and outreach while at the same time maintaining spiritual morals (Waruwu, 2024).

4.2. Ethical Frameworks

Almost all studies, about 48, stress ethical principles which include justice, accountability, transparency, and stewardship as a base for AI use in faith contexts. Challenges noted included algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, misinformation, and the risk of spiritual authenticity erosion (Oyebanji et al., 2025) (Munibi et al., 2025). Virtue ethics, Christian ascetic principles, and interfaith ethical dialogue were some of the frameworks proposed by several studies as means to address AI's moral problems (NDUKA, 2025) (Ahmed et al., 2024).

4.3. Theological Engagement

AI's impact on religious authority and spiritual experience, advocating for balanced theological discernment, was criticized by some studies (Alkhouri, 2024). Furthermore, about 44 studies demonstrated strong theological engagement and biblical justice in interpreting the role of AI (Legi et al., 2025). These theological engagement indications give discourse to human identity, spiritual growth, and the role of the Holy Spirit, and they inform ethical frameworks and strategies for leadership by emphasizing faithfulness to Christian values in the midst of technological changes (Kazanskaia, n.d.).

4.4. Leadership Strategies

Leadership approaches that integrate Christian values with technology were noted in 46 studies, highlighting adaptive, transformative, and youth-focused models (Zebua et al., 2024). There was emphasis on including digital communication, social media use, pastoral counseling adaptation, and interfaith collaborations as leadership strategies to foster the church. Some studies focused solely on the challenges the church faces in maintaining spiritual authority and authenticity in digital and AI-mediated environments (Tarwiyyah, 2025).

4.5. Social Impact Outcomes

Most studies concur that faith-driven technological interventions contribute to poverty alleviation in communities and promote environmental sustainability and crisis response (Selvalakshmi et al., 2024). Metrics used to measure social impact included enhanced justice advocacy, community development, spiritual growth, and social innovation. It was noted that digital ministry and AI applications expand outreach, inclusion, and education, particularly among youth and underrepresented communities (Oyebanji et al., 2025). However, some studies noted risks of cultural homogenization and challenges to pluralism, appealing for ethical attentiveness to sustain positive social outcomes (Munibi et al., 2025).

4.6. Critical Analysis and Synthesis

The analyzed studies highlight both promising opportunities and significant challenges, revealing

a complex engagement of Christian communities with AI and emerging technologies. The integration of theological reflection with ethical considerations was a recurring theme, providing a strong framework for navigating technological advancements in Christian contexts. There were limited empirical studies connecting theology, ethics, and practical applications. Although many studies emphasize technology's potential to transform spiritual growth and social innovation, concerns about ethical risks and authenticity remain. Overall, the literature emphasizes the need for balanced contextual strategies that maintain Christian values while adapting to technological innovation.

4.7. Chronological Review of Literature

Christian studies have evolved significantly from 2022 to 2025. Early research focused on ethical challenges and societal impacts of AI, particularly in social justice and religious practices. More recent studies emphasize interdisciplinary approaches integrating theology, ethics, leadership, and technology, with practical applications in education, pastoral care, youth leadership, and social innovation. Emerging themes include transcultural communication, digital activism, and the role of AI in spiritual growth.

4.8. Agreement and Divergence Across Studies

The significant role of Christian communities in engaging AI and emerging technologies for social transformation has been widely acknowledged. There is broad agreement on technology's capacity to enhance spiritual growth and community development, alongside persistent concerns about ethical challenges such as authenticity, bias, and dehumanization. Divergence emerges in theological interpretations, leadership approaches, and the balance between technology and traditional values, reflecting denominational, cultural, and methodological differences. While multidisciplinary synergy exists, contextual differences continue to shape how Christians integrate AI and technology.

4.9. Theoretical Implications

The synthesis of literature reveals growing interdisciplinary frameworks integrating Christian theological perspectives with AI and emerging technologies, challenging traditional dichotomies between faith and technology. This integration supports evolving theories that view technology as a facilitator of spiritual growth and social transformation rather than a threat, as seen in Pentecostal approaches to the 4.0 Revolution and theological reflections on AI ethics (Ramoshaba & Mudimeli, 2025) (Susan, 2025) (Przygoda et al., 2025). Furthermore, (Elizabeth & Mikaere, 2025) stated that this extends ethical theories by emphasizing faith-based moral direction in technological innovation, particularly in social justice contexts.

The literature also reveals the mediating role of religious leadership and education between spirituality and technology, suggesting a shift toward adaptive and transformative leadership models that embrace digital tools while maintaining core Christian values. This challenges static leadership paradigms and calls for contextual approaches (Sanjaya, 2024) (Zebua et al., 2024) (Aritonang & Manurung, n.d.). Additionally, tensions between technological determinism and theological agency indicate the need for critical theoretical balance. Emerging discourse on AI's impact on religious authority and digital spirituality suggests reconstruction of traditional religious roles and practices, prompting inquiry into authenticity and faith mediation in digital spaces (Zalukhu & Ester, 2025) (Tarwiyyah, 2025) (Grigore & Maftei, 2025).

4.10. Practical Implications

Churches and Christian leaders are urged to develop ethical frameworks aligned with religious values to ensure responsible technology use. This

includes promoting digital literacy, transparency, and accountability to mitigate bias, misinformation, and community disintegration (Elizabeth & Mikaere, 2025) (Nenomataus et al., 2024) (Kazanskaia, 2025). Integrating AI into Christian education and pastoral care offers opportunities for personalized learning, broader outreach, and enhanced spiritual engagement, while preserving relational and spiritual authenticity through ongoing training and theological reflection (Waruwu, 2024) (Sihombing, 2024) (Lae, 2025).

AI integration can support policymakers and Christian business owners in poverty alleviation, disaster relief, and environmental sustainability while ensuring equitable access. Public–private partnerships involving Christian entrepreneurs can enhance ethical stewardship and community resilience (Selvalakshmi et al., 2024) (Dwi & Hidayatullah, 2024) (Osama et al., 2025). Youth leadership should leverage digital tools to build relevant communities and promote positive social transformation through adaptive leadership development and technology-enabled ministry (Aritonang & Manurung, n.d.) (Oyebanji et al., 2025).

Novel approaches combining theological grounding, digital activism, and interdenominational collaboration are necessary in the digital transformation of religious communication. Churches should invest in digital infrastructure and ethical content management to maintain integrity and inclusive dialogue (Kazanskaia, n.d.) (Rustanta, 2025). Practical pastoral responses are needed to address concerns around AI's influence on religious authority and spiritual reliability, enabling churches to adapt to Society 5.0 while remaining theologically grounded (Herman & Hermanto, 2023) (Santoso et al., n.d.) (Trotta et al., 2024).

5.0 Overall Synthesis and Conclusion

Collectively, the literature acknowledges that integrating Christianity with AI and emerging technologies presents both transformative opportunities and complex challenges for social transformation. Churches use technology not only to empower spiritual growth and education but also as a catalyst for social innovation. Theologically grounded frameworks emphasizing the Holy Spirit, justice, love, and stewardship guide ethical adoption and leadership strategies in digital ministry and social initiatives. These frameworks help navigate tensions between tradition and innovation while fostering adaptive, culturally sensitive, and youth-empowered leadership.

Ethical considerations dominate the literature, underscoring the need for transparency, privacy protection, accountability, and mitigation of algorithmic bias to safeguard community integrity. However, gaps remain in culturally tailored ethical frameworks capable of keeping pace with rapid technological change. Socially, the convergence of Christianity, AI, and emerging technologies drives poverty reduction initiatives, though challenges persist in scaling efforts sustainably while ensuring theological agency is not overshadowed by technological determinism.

References

Ahmed, S., Sumi, A. A., & Aziz, N. A. (2024). Exploring multi-religious perspective of artificial intelligence. *Theology and Science*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2024.2436783

Alkhouri, K. I. (2024). The role of artificial intelligence in the study of the psychology of religion. *Religions*, 15. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030290

Aritonang, N. S., & Manurung, K. (n.d.). Kepemimpinan pemuda kristen di era digital: Pelayanan dalam transformasi teknologi untuk

membangun komunitas iman yang relevan. https://doi.org/10.59177/veritas.v6i2.298

Boiliu, E. R., & Kia, A. D. (2025). Pendidikan kristen responsif disrupsi: Integrasi nilai kristiani dalam transformasi pendidikan abad ke-21. *Khatulistiwa*, 5(2), 56–73. https://doi.org/10.55606/khatulistiwa.v5i2.5761

Christian ethics toward artificial intelligence and its impacts on humanity. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 7(2). https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v7i2.595

Dwi, M., & Hidayatullah, A. N. A. (2024). People, machines, enterprises and AI unite for impactful change. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(3). https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i3.3438

Efe, A. (2022). The impact of artificial intelligence on social problems and solutions: An analysis on the context of digital divide and exploitation. https://doi.org/10.55609/yenimedya.1146586

Elizabeth, E., & Mikaere, G. (2025). Christian service ethics in facing the challenges of the digital world: A theological-ethical perspective on digital engagement. *Ministries and Theology*, 2(2), 55–64. https://doi.org/10.35335/2jna6x92

Fajar, A. H. A., Almaghfiro, E. Z., & Syamraeni, S. (2024). Literature review: Optimizing religious potential in social innovation and community development. https://doi.org/10.70177/jnis.v1i5.1380

Grigore, C., & Maftei, A. (2025). The impact of digitalization on religious practices and community dynamics following the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 17(2), 302–343. https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/17.2/984

Herman, S., & Hermanto, Y. P. (2023). Pastoral guidance for congregations in the era of society 5.0. https://doi.org/10.46495/sdjt.v13i1.199

Kazanskaia, A. (n.d.). The future of faith-based advocacy: Emerging trends, technologies, and global perspectives. https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-fth-bs-advc-12

Kazanskaia, A. (n.d.). The future trajectory of faith-based advocacy: Lessons, challenges, and emerging directions. https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-fth-bs-advc-13

Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Artificial intelligence and machine learning for non-profits: Toward responsible and sustainable adoption. https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-ai-mch-lr-11

Lae, Y. H. (2025). Digital transformation and challenges in Christian religious education: A critical perspective. *Journal Didaskalia*, 8(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.33856/didaskalia.v8i1.480

Legi, H., Widiono, G., & Payage, N. (2025). Pendidikan kristen sebagai respons teologis terhadap realitas sosial. https://doi.org/10.64953/megethos.v1i2.17

Mariano, A. G., & Prats, G. M. (2023). Technological capabilities in emerging social enterprises: A pathway to social impact. https://doi.org/10.58763/rc2023111

Munibi, A. Z., Hakim, M. K. B. A., & Iskandar, I. (2025). Faith in the digital era: How language and artificial intelligence technology reshape religious practices. *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi)*, 11(1), 74–89. https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v11i1.2906

NDUKA, A. (2025). What the desert fathers teach data scientists: Ancient ascetic principles for ethical machine-learning practice. *International*

Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation, XII(VIII), 44–59. https://doi.org/10.51244/ijrsi.2025.120800004

Nenomataus, A. E., Rantung, D., & Naibaho, L. (2024). Integrasi etika AI dalam pendidikan agama Kristen: Tantangan dan peluang. *NUSRA: Jurnal Penelitian dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5(3). https://doi.org/10.55681/nusra.v5i3.3173

Osama, Q. M., Ali, U., Ali, T., & Ali, D. (2025). Integrated technological management through AI ethics, mechanical sustainability, and emerging business models. *Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 12(7), 161–170. https://doi.org/10.36347/sjebm.2025.v12i07.001

Oyebanji, I. T., Oyunwola, T. O., Segun, A. I., & Ogunbiyi, D. O. (2025). Artificial intelligence and its effects on Christian youths' spirituality. *African Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, 4(1), 34–52. https://doi.org/10.62154/ajrts.2025.04.01013

Przygoda, W., Rynio, A., & Kalisz, M. (2025). Artificial intelligence: A new challenge for human understanding, Christian education, and the pastoral activity of the churches. *Religions*, 16(8), 948. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16080948

Punuh, W. A. M. (2024). Satu misi dalam dua persimpangan: Dilema transformasi sosial gereja melalui pemberdayaan ekonomi jemaat. https://doi.org/10.53674/pjt.v1i1.161

Purwanto, E., & Kristiawan, S. A. (2025). Christian education and social justice: Pursuing shalom in the public sphere. *In Theos*, 5(4), 178–186. https://doi.org/10.56393/intheos.v5i4.2942

Putra, S., Hamsal, M., Sundjaja, A. M., & Gunadi, W. (2024). Navigating the interplay between digital innovation and ethical AI for the development of smart societies: A comprehensive literature review. https://doi.org/10.1109/iciss62896.2024.10751346

Ramoshaba, B. M., & Mudimeli, L. M. (2025). A Pentecostal approach to the Holy Spirit in the fourth industrial revolution. *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 2(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.54

Rustanta, A. (2025). Transcultural religious communication in the age of artificial intelligence: Ethical challenges and opportunities for global harmony. *Journal of Socio-Cultural Sustainability and Resilience*, 3(1). https://doi.org/10.61511/jscsr.v3i1.2025.2156

Sánchez-Camacho, J. (2025). The contemporary discourse of public theology in the face of technological and socio-environmental crises. *Religions*, 16(7), 923. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16070923

Sanjaya, Y. (2024). Transformative leadership: Exploration of the combination of Christian values and technological advances in the digital era. *KINAA*, 5(2), 93–107. https://doi.org/10.34307/kinaa.v5i2.174

Santoso, J., Damarwanti, S., Priana, I. M., Sembodo, T. B., & PA, A. T. (n.d.). Transformasi fondasi iman Kristen dalam pelayanan pastoral di era society 5.0. https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v4i1.181

Selvalakshmi, V., Ovais, D., Bhatia, S., & Gayathri, S. (2024). Artificial intelligence for social good, disaster relief, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781032644509-11

Sihombing, O. R. (2024). Artificial intelligence and Christian religious education management: Finding the balance between technology and spirituality. *Indonesian Journal of Advanced Research*, 3(12), 1959–1970. https://doi.org/10.55927/ijar.v3i12.12666

Sugiri, W. (2024). Moral dimensions of artificial intelligence. https://doi.org/10.46362/moderate.v1i2.8

Susan, K. (2025). Artificial intelligence: Investigating the implications of AI on the work of the Holy Spirit, including the potential for AI to facilitate or hinder spiritual growth. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 12(3), 27–33. https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.123.18369

Susan, K. (2025). Neurotechnology, AI, and human identity: A Christian anthropological analysis and apologetic response. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 12(3), 109–114. https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.123.18438

Taiwo, E., Akinsola, A., Tella, E., Makinde, K., & Akinwande, M. (2023). A review of the ethics of artificial intelligence and its applications in the United States. https://doi.org/10.5121/ijci.2023.1206010

Tang, Q., & Kamarudin, S. (2025). A systematic literature review of theological reflections and institutional responses in religious engagements with AI ethics. *Advances in Computational Intelligence and Robotics*, 353–384. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-2170-7.ch014

Tari, E. (2023). Metaverse challenges and opportunities in the gospel message. *Riwayat*, 6(2), 510–518. https://doi.org/10.24815/jr.v6i2.29774

Tarwiyyah, H. L. (2025). Kiai-AI: Renegotiating religious authority in the digital age. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy*, 4(1), 106–126. https://doi.org/10.15642/jitp.2025.4.1.106-126

TR, R. (2025). Artificial intelligence in social sciences and social work: Bridging technology and humanity to revolutionize research, policy, and human services. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Comprehensive Research*, 4(5), 34–42. https://doi.org/10.54660/ijmcr.2025.4.5.34-42

Trotta, S., Iannotti, D. S., & Rähme, B. (2024). Religious actors and artificial intelligence: Examples from the field and suggestions for further research. *Religion and Development*. https://doi.org/10.30965/27507955-20230027

Tupamahu, C. T., & Hutahaean, L. S. (2025). Membangun generasi produktif: Peran pendidikan, teknologi, dan inovasi dalam perspektif Kristen. *Jurnal Arrabona*, 8(1), 44–58. https://doi.org/10.57058/juar.v8i1.141

Waruwu, Y. (2024). Pendidikan agama Kristen dalam era AI: Menggunakan kecerdasan buatan untuk personalisasi pembelajaran spiritual. *Jurnal Abdiel*, 8(2), 151–165. https://doi.org/10.37368/ja.v8i2.786

Wolf, S. K., Friedrich, P., & Hurtienne, J. (2024). Still not a lot of research? Re-examining HCI research on religion and spirituality. https://doi.org/10.1145/3613905.3651058

Zai, J., & Moimau, A. L. (2024). Artificial intelligence dan implikasinya dalam kehidupan orang Kristen di era digital. *The New Perspective in Theology and Religious Studies*, 5(2), 273–294. https://doi.org/10.47900/qpk2pm19

Zalukhu, A. (2024). Digital platform monetization in the perspective of Christian education: Integrating work values with technology. *Didaktikos: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 7(2), 91–98. https://doi.org/10.32490/didaktik.v7i2.222

Zalukhu, A., & Ester, E. (2025). Examining the roles of historical and digital Jesus in counseling, spiritual growth, and ethics. *Teleios*, 5(1), 17–34. https://doi.org/10.53674/teleios.v5i1.243

Zebua, Y., Suparyadi, Z., & Hariyanto, H. (2024). Mengintegrasikan teknologi dan spiritualitas.

Indonesia Journal of Religious, 7(2), 114–130. https://doi.org/10.46362/ijr.v8i2.37

Zhu, Y. (2025). A higher purpose: Conceptualizing the role of religion in driving social innovation. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 52(1), 222–231. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/2024.19538