Critical Review of Literature Report: Cultural Resilience, Religious Faith and the intersection of Generative and Agentic Artificial Intelligence

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AI and Religion: Critical Review of Literature Report

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Cover image: an AI-generated image of a robot praying in a cathedral.

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Abstract

As *potentially* the most disruptive technology since the invention of writing, the printing press, or the internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI[1]) could lead to deep transformative changes in human psychology, religious beliefs and practices, power and economic structures, and hence impact societal cohesion, personal and cultural resilience. As such it demands rigorous academic scrutiny of its applications and impacts across a range of areas. This literature review is the first output of a SALIENT Hub-funded project that explores the deep and complex intersection of religion, artificial intelligence (AI), culture and societal resilience. It examines the psychological and spiritual impacts of AI, surveys theological and philosophical engagements across major world religions, and analyses the ways in which faith organisations are beginning to adopt, or reject, generative and agentic AI in their day-to-day practices. It examines the relationship between culture, societal resilience and the vital role played by faith, and ends with a discussion of religious parallels in AI narratives and the possibility of AI generating new religious belief systems or emerging as the basis of a new religion itself. By situating these developments within broader frameworks of societal resilience and cultural adaptation, the review highlights how religious traditions both interrogate and integrate generative and agentic AI, offering critical insights into the ethical and existential dimensions of technological transformation.

[1] This study limits its consideration of AI to generative and agentic AI see: Finn, T., & Downie, A. (2025). Agentic AI vs. generative AI. *IBM Think*. https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/agentic-ai-vs-generative-ai

1 Introduction

This project begins with the question, "what happens when AI meets religious faith" and what are the implications for personal and cultural resilience? The conceptual starting point for the project is a recognition that religion remains a cornerstone of personal and community resilience for large sections of the British public. Recent data suggests that the numbers are growing not only in migrant and marginalised communities but among white UK demographic groups including young men in particular (McAleer & Barward-Symmons, 2025). Religion plays a key role in both personal and public resilience. In times of personal trauma – the loss of a job or a loved one – religious narratives are key for many in overcoming their personal challenges. Following public tragedies such as the Grenfell disaster, or terrorist attacks, religious leaders, symbols and institutions play a key role in uniting, consoling, and facilitating grieving. Religion, and indeed culture, are both deeply connected to resilience.

SALIENT hub's vision statement is "building a secure and resilient world". In the context of ongoing conflict in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, and the ever-present threat of nuclear proliferation, SALIENT represents a significant five-year investment by UKRI in building the UK's security and resilience in an uncertain world. With five work packages spanning Global Order, Technology, Supply Chains, and Natural and Built Environments, the first round of the devolved funding call funded seven projects across these themes including this one under the fifth theme of Behavioural and Cultural Resilience.

As developments in artificial intelligence, particularly generative and agentic AI, start to bump up against religious beliefs and practices in ways that are only just starting to be realised, much less understood, our project seeks to understand the implications of this for personal faith as well as the practice of religious institutions. Will religious organisations adopt or reject AI use in their practices, teaching and evangelism? How will the religions differ in their approaches, and will this reflect cultural dimensions in their responses to AI? What are the pastoral implications for religious organisations in a world where AI threatens to displace millions of jobs, and increasing amounts of public funds are being diverted to defence potentially at the expense of social welfare programs?

To get the latest views and reflections on these crucial issues, this interdisciplinary project combining security, resilience and theological approaches, seeks to speak to at least 30-40 religious leaders across each of the six major religious faiths represented in

the UK to gather views about AI and its impacts on religion and faith. The ultimate goal, in line with SALIENT's mission of building a secure and resilient world, is to anticipate the potentially profound disruptive effects of AI on both religious communities and cultural resilience, and hopefully, offer some guidance as we collectively navigate the uncharted waters of powerful AI technologies.

The project is guided by the following five research questions:

1. To what extent is AI impacting and challenging foundational religious teachings or practices?
2. How are religious leaders and communities engaging with, or rejecting, AI?
3. What impact will AI have on pastoral responsibilities of religious institutions in light of its potential to disrupt millions of jobs?
4. How do different religious doctrines and cultural contexts shape attitudes towards AI?
5. What ethical frameworks and safeguards can guide the development and use of AI in religious institutions

This literature review attempts to summarise some of the current academic approaches and thinking on the topic of AI, faith, religion, and resilience. It is divided into the following headings that broadly follow the themes raised by the research questions:

- Impacts of technology on religion, spirituality and psychology
- Religious responses to AI
    - Theoretical, theological, philosophical responses
    - Practical responses: uses of AI in religious practice
- Religion, culture and resilience
- Speaking of AI in religious terms and AI as a new religion

1.1 Note on methodology

Methodology for the report involved online searches of the LibGuide database, and Endnote 21 searches using combinations of key search terms including "artificial intelligence", "religion", "faith", "cultural resilience", "personal resilience". Snowballing of sources was also undertaken from the reference lists of relevant articles, choosing references that were the most relevant to the themes of the project. Further, relevant online mass media articles, blogs and op-eds were noted and cited where they provided key insights into the issues raised and frequently provided links to further relevant

academic sources. Sources were then categorised under the broad headings outlined above to provide the basis for the discussion.

1.2 Societal resilience in the UK – a snapshot

With the advent of publicly available generative AI, beginning with the release of ChatGPT in late 2022, the UK faces an *unprecedented* socio-political-cultural environment. The technology, which has been likened to other great transformative technological innovations in human history such as writing, the printing press and television, stands to produce societal and cultural change in ways that are just beginning to be understood. The combination of generative AI with social media has created a potent symbiotic relationship whereby, according to some reports "over 80% of social media content recommendations are powered by AI" (Saufter, 2025), "71% of social media images are AI generated" (Shalwa, 2025) and more than half of all written content may be AI generated or AI translated (Thompson et al., 2024). The recent release of OpenAI's text-to-video creator Sora2 has led to concerns about the ease of creating harmful, copyright-infringing content (Tangermann, 2025) and leading to what some commentators have labelled "infinite slop machines", the "slopacalypse" and "slopageddon" (Torres, 2025b). Large Language Models can create text, video, and memes so easily that it is inverting previous patterns of social media creation, engagement and consumption (Zicherman, 2025). Around 200 social media influencers (and rising) many with millions of followers are entirely AI generated: "characters brought to life by CGI and AI, designed to target demographic groups" (Khaki & Srivastava, 2025). This in turn drives greater social media engagement with the UK's Ofcom for example reporting that 80% of 16-24 year olds now derive their primary source of information about current affairs from online algorithmic engagement-driven sources such as TikTok, Facebook and YouTube (BBC, 2025).

Several recent events in the UK demonstrate the links between societal tensions, cultural symbols, rising religious and political conservatism and technology. The mass mobilisation known as the "Unite the Kingdom" rally arguably "the largest rally of its type in British history" (Boffey, 2025) featured strong Christian symbolism, St George's flags and union flags with Christian symbols and verses on them. Organiser Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (known as Tommy Robinson) referenced the Christian messaging, telling the crowd, "There has been a globalist revolution. They have attacked the family. They've attacked Christianity. They've opened the borders. They've flooded our nations. We are the start of a counter revolution" (Campanale, 2025). When the crowd arrived at Whitehall, they were led from the stage in a chant of 'Christ is king'. And then a public recital of the Lord's Prayer shortly after that" (Reporter, 2025). Links to religious conservatism in the United States were also evident with some demonstrators holding signs and images of assassinated Christian public figure Charlie Kirk. The crowd was

addressed by the world's richest person, Elon Musk, a technology entrepreneur with controversial views on the imminent impacts of AI (Kelly, 2024) including the advent of superintelligent AI (Hern, 2024), echoed Robinson's call for action claiming "the essence of democracy is government for the people by the people, in fact this is a government that is *against* the people". Referencing "woke" narratives that are "often anti-religion but *only* anti-Christian" Musk framed the current socio-political milieu as an attack on British values, culture and religion urging the estimated 100,000-150,000 supporters in the crowd that "violence is coming to you. You either fight back or you die" (APT, 2025). This blend of right-wing populism, Christian nationalist symbolism and techno-populism, manifested in a mass political spectacle reflects a trans-Atlantic feedback loop where the fundamental cultural fabric and resilience of UK society becomes a battleground for competing religious, political and social values, underpinned largely by a technological revolution in the social media landscape and super-charged by generative AI. Links between Christian nationalism, techno-apocalypticism and contemporary politics are discussed further in Section 5 below: *Speaking of AI in religious terms and AI as a new religion*.

2 Impacts of technology on religion, spirituality and psychology

Discussions around the impacts of technology on religious faith and practice are not new. Mayor (2018) traces the origins of robots and automated machines in myth and historical fact back to the ancient world in the legends of Pandora, Talos, Haephestus and others; as well as examples from ancient India and China. As far back as Plato's dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus, the invention of writing by the Egyptian god Theuth (Thoth) is debated because it "will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories" (Jowett, 2018, p. 2). Hipps (2005) cites more recent examples of humanity's ambivalent relationship with technology recalling the Luddites (mechanics in early 19th century England who destroyed their tools in reaction to the dehumanising aspects of the industrial revolution), and the Amish prohibition on automobiles and electricity which is "central to the practice of the Amish faith" and deeply informed by the "community's theology of technology" (p.25).

On one hand, as part of a broader technological shift in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) itself a product of scientific and logic-based processes, AI may arguably contribute to a decline in religiosity, contributing to what sociologist Max Weber called a "disenchantment with the world" (Etzrodt, 2024; Weber & Kalberg, 2013). That is, a process by which superstitious and irrational beliefs are gradually replaced by scientific reasoning and logical explanations (Lozano, 2024). Recent research suggests there may be a correlation between levels of automation and declining levels of religiosity suggesting that "the rise of automation could accelerate secularization throughout the 21st century in many world regions" (Jackson et al., 2023).

On the other hand, to paraphrase historian Yuval Noah Harari – more information does not necessarily equal more truth (Harari, 2024). In Harari's thesis throughout history each time new technology has made information more readily available it has reshaped society through creating social order and power structures; primarily in favour of those who control the flow of information. As a highly complex proprietary technology, facilitating multi-faceted, deep and intuitive interactions between users and machines, it is simply too soon to know the full impacts of AI. At an individual and societal level for example, one psychiatric source notes "rising concerns that malicious actors may use generative AI to create misinformation at a scale that will be very difficult to counter" and that "individuals with mental illness may be particularly sensitive to such

misinformation…it seems likely that this cognitive dissonance may fuel delusions in those with increased propensity towards psychosis" (Østergaard, 2023, p. 1418).

Mass media reports of individuals having deep, life changing conversations with AI chatbots, subsequently believing that they have awakened consciousness within the AI and descended into "GPT psychosis" have emerged initially from online conversations on Reddit (Klee, 2025). Emphasising these societal and individual impacts, however, may be to miss the greater shifts occurring in the subconscious impacts of AI on the thinking of the majority of the population, or the shifts in power structure that occur when control over AI is ceded to a small elite of "tech oligarchs" (Marriott, 2025). It is, therefore, important to interrogate AI, like all other sources of knowledge. The context from which it arises, its intended purpose and relationship with systems of power all need discussion. AI can emancipate, include and affirm, but can also damage, exclude and deceive. Such broad psychological, social, political, cultural and theological impacts need to be reflected on as AI usage becomes increasingly prevalent in society.

Emphasising the subconscious impacts of technology on religious practice, and drawing on the theories of Marshal McLuhan (Fiore & McLuhan, 1967), Hipps (2005) relates an experience as a church leader in the early 2000s of purchasing a projector screen for a church and the internal debate around how the technology would change the worship experience: "What is the effect of using a projection screen versus using a hymnal or bulletin…a screen frees the body from the bulletin or book. It invites movement, dance, and physical expression…it lifts the heads of the congregants, amplifying the sound energy of their voices" (p.22). Hipps then asks "if something as simple as a projector screen can have a dynamic effect on a congregation experience in worship, what happens when more pervasive and complex media are infused into the life of the church or into the lives of the people who are the church? What is the effect of the internet on the way we think about and do church?"

Precisely the same questions may be asked of the latest wave of innovations based on generative and agentic artificial intelligence (see Finn and Downie (2025) for an introductory discussion of these technologies) and form the basis of this project. For example, how will "generative ghosts" – AI generated versions of deceased persons (Morris & Brubaker, 2025) – change or impact religious narratives about the afterlife, or the grieving process? How will "Godbots" – chatbots trained on religious texts and speaking in the "voice of God" (Keane & Shapiro, 2023) – impact religious beliefs and practices? Reports have emerged of chatbots condoning violence to others – including an attempted assassination of the late Queen Elizabeth II (Singleton et al., 2023) – or oneself in the voice of God (Shivji, 2023) or an intimate partner (Kuznetsova, 2025). To

quote one news article: “many in India are foregoing that in-person contact with a guru interpreting the Bhagavad Gita and turning to online chatbots, which imitate the voice of the Hindu god Krishna and give answers to probing questions about the meaning of life based on the religious scripture's teachings” (Shivji, 2023).

Equally, generative AI may provide a range of benefits by reinterpreting new insights into ancient texts (Carpitella & Carpitella, 2024) new paradigms and theories for researching religion (Reed, 2021), new and innovative ways of engaging with congregations and the public (Jones, 2025), including evangelising (Barrett, 2023) and fund raising (Pushpay, 2025). Immersive religious simulations may provide new ways of engaging and educating (Papakostas, 2026), generating sermons, hymns, chants, devotionals and prayers (Isichei, 2025) – thus prompting the question: does it matter if these are machine generated?

By exploring AI-powered religious applications we seek to understand the impacts and potential transformation of traditional religious practices and raise important questions about authenticity, inclusiveness, and the role of technology in religious beliefs and practices. In turn we ask, how will this transformation affect cultural values, as well as personal and societal resilience. Alkhouri (2024) points to the crucial need to strike a balance between technological advancements and preserving the fundamental aspects of spirituality, personal growth, and genuine human connection. By shedding light on the potential implications of AI in the realm of religious experiences we seek to explore the ethical and societal dimensions as well as the unintended consequences. Understanding the influence of AI on religious faith requires us to reflect on the nature of religious narratives such as omnipotence, omniscience, the soul, and the human condition. AI has the potential to reshape how individuals and communities experience and engage with religious practices. It challenges us to consider how these technologies can enhance or potentially detract from the depth, authenticity, and transformative power of religious practices. AI technologies such as chatbots and virtual religious experiences can influence religious beliefs by interacting with individuals’ cognitive biases, heuristics, and social cognition (Lukyanenko et al., 2022). AI chatbots programmed to provide religious advice or spiritual experiences can confirm an individual’s existing beliefs (Ashraf, 2022). In addition, AI technologies can help facilitate social interaction and create virtual religious communities, which could impact social cognition processes in the formation of religious beliefs (Puzio, 2023).

In examining the societal impacts of generative AI on religious beliefs we also seek to explore the role of religion in the public sphere, and the ways in which AI will impact that public function. Spencer (2006) argues that “it is simply not possible to take faith

out of the public arena. Dealing as it does with questions of identity, existence and environment, faith will not allow itself to be treated in this way". The report examines reasons why faith will play an increasingly significant role in public life and identifies three trends: the return of civil society, the pursuit of happiness and the politics of identity.

Ahmed (2025) notes that AI has greatly facilitated the role of religious leaders in global diplomacy stating: "Digital tools are no longer just increasing religious involvement; they are also empowering religious leaders to engage in global diplomacy". Algorithm-powered social media and communications technology has amplified religious voices to a wider audience than ever before, however, the risks of deepfakes, disinformation, and "diluting the highly personal aspect of religion" must be factored in. UK scholars have noted the crucial public role of faith organisations in alleviating poverty, particularly in an age of governmental austerity (Denning et al., 2022). What will be the impacts on the community support, and pastoral functions of faith based organisations such as food banks, in a future where AI threatens to displace millions of jobs? (Jung & Desikan, 2024; Reals, 2024)

In light of this potentially disruptive and transformative impact of AI on religious belief and practice, it is crucial that religious leaders and organisations begin to prepare – to build resilience within their own institutions and communities – and it is encouraging to see that many have begun to do just that. Ugboh (2023) for example, noting the "digitalization" of churches during Covid, recommends that the Church redefines its digital transformation perspective by adopting a "techno-theology" that embraces digital materials and hybrid technology in its ministry engagement across the board. In opposition to scholars who support a "de-digitalization and de-technologizing of Church ministry to avoid deconstruction of the idea of the ecclesia" Ugboh champions the avoidance of "subjugating the *ecclesia* to a narrow method of interfacing [which] exposes the entire body to the avoidable risk of extinction". And that the "the Church is a creative organism with the freedom of innovativeness" (p. 62).

This is one example of a positive approach to techno-theology. Oher religions and leaders may be far more cautious in their approach and adoption of tech within the walls of their churches, mosques or temples while the long-term impacts of prevalent AI remain so uncertain. In the words of Momcilovic (2023) "simplified, AI could enhance religion, make religion obsolete, or become a new religion."

The following section will discuss the responses of various religious institutions and leaders to developments in AI – first at the theological, theoretical and philosophical level and second at the practical level.

3 Religious responses to AI

3.1 Theoretical, theological, philosophical responses

It is important to note two words of caution at the outset of this section of the Literature Review. First, given the enormous breadth, depth and variety of theological and ethical traditions across the world's six major faiths, it is only possible here to offer a very brief summary of some key themes. Second, there is no single approach within any faith, let alone across the spectrum of diverse and distinct religious traditions.

3.1.1 The Importance of Context and Tradition

(Ahmed et al., 2024) remind us of the importance of context and tradition when reflecting on different theological responses to AI - "Major world religions, each with centuries of rich philosophical, ethical, and theological evolution, offer unique lenses through which AI is perceived and understood" (p 105). Ahmed et al (2024) premise their summary of differing theological responses to AI on the ethical argument that AI should be viewed as a tool that fosters the common good by serving humanity, upholding human dignity and enabling compassion and loving servanthood. This ethical stance is welcome as is their very brief and generalised summary of the lenses through which different religious traditions view AI. They suggest that a Muslim engagement with AI needs to be aligned with "Islamic principles of justice, equity, and community welfare, stressing the importance of considering AI's societal impact". Hinduism, they suggest, interprets AI through the concepts of Dharma and Ahimsa, advocating harmony, fairness, non-violence, and societal benefit. Buddhism focuses on alleviating suffering and supporting AI's positive impact. Judaism approaches AI with cautious optimism, emphasizing justice and 'Tikkun Olam,' or "repairing the world". Such reflections are helpful but should be seen as hints rather than doctrinal positions, given the breadth of the religious traditions Ahmed et al touch upon. A deeper, more wide-reaching study by Religious Studies researchers is needed to add clarity, depth and nuance to this tentative introduction. Such an exercise is important if we are to grasp a fuller understanding of the complex relationship between AI and religious faith.

3.1.2 Buddhism

Like all religious traditions, Buddhism reflects a range of approaches and perspectives. Consequently, it would be unreasonable to expect there to be a single Buddhist attitude towards AI. That said, the following key points provide a good summary of the broad approach taken within Buddhism. Doctor and Linkenhoker (2023) suggest that as "AI evolves humanity must engage with its implications, not just as a practical matter, but

philosophically, morally and emotionally." Doctor and Linkenhoker offer a humanistic Buddhist response to AI, suggesting that it "has the potential to be transformative for society and the flourishing of humanity" and arguing that neither "utopian" nor "dystopian" visions of an AI informed future are likely. Rather, they suggest, there will a more "muddled" middle ground. For Doctor and Linkenhoker the tools provided by faith can help us to discern a constructive future for our relationship with AI. As they note, a central concern within Buddhism is the need to escape an egocentric vision of the 'Self' and to escape what is seen as the illusion of permanence. It is, therefore, important, they suggest to recognise that from a Buddhist perspective the development, as well as the use, of AI, must be shaped by a clear ethical commitment to 'doing no harm' [to AI entities, as well as to people], to a constructive coexistence and to the moral agency we grant to AI technologies/entities.

Peter D Hershock has written widely about Buddhism and is the Director of the East-West Center in Honolulu. Hershock (2025) has written recently about Buddhist approaches to AI. Signaling a word of caution he notes, "According to the techno-optimist seers of Silicon Valley, this AI-facilitated intelligence revolution is setting humanity on a glidepath into utopian futures of nearly effortless satisfaction and frictionless choice. We should beware." Referring to the growth of AI as a Fourth Industrial Revolution, Hershock recognises the immense practical benefits it is having but suggests that, from a Buddhist perspective, there are deeper existential questions to be asked of its emergence and value. There is, he suggests, a question about purpose and power to be considered – "AI is holding up a wish-fulfilling mirror to humanity. What we see looking into it is not reassuring." Importantly, Hershock argues:

> Although AI is now being referred to as a new general-purpose technology, unlike all previous technologies, intelligent technology is not a passive conductor of human wants and needs. It is an active and innovative amplifier of human values and intentions and of the conflicts existing among them.

We are granting AI "epistemic powers" that can "sculpt who consumers and citizens become". Hershock applauds the technological and practical advances embodied and enabled by AI but argues that, from a Buddhist perspective, the freedom it appears to offer may be illusory unless this can be harnessed to enable human flourishing

3.1.3 Hinduism

Hinduism is a broad, diverse and ancient religious tradition. In spite of this breadth, the concept of 'Brahman' is central to all Hindu traditions. The term refers to a range of perspectives focused around the single concept of the 'Divine substance/energy/consciousness' that underpins and permeates all created life. Bindlish and Nandram (2025) suggest that in philosophical terms it is possible to envisage AI as an aspect of 'Brahman' – An expression of the 'Divine intelligence'. AI, they suggest, can be seen as a tool that "helps us to navigate and manipulate the illusory world" (given that attachment to the material world is viewed a 'maya', or illusion), although its capacity to "unveil the true nature of reality" is limited by context, ideology and our limited understanding. Pandya (2024) summarises a range of Hindu approaches to AI, suggesting that, "a positive future with AI entails leveraging its capabilities to enhance human welfare, promote sustainability and advance spiritual evolution." Pandya, whilst recognising the positive potential of AI draws on the Hindu concept of dharma ('righteous duty') to argue that this can only be realised if it is used to foster "interconnectedness and global unity". Furthermore, says Pandya, Hinduism's emphasis on human agency, human dignity, human free will, are threatened by an over-reliance on an under-regulated AI. Pandya writes "My biggest worry is that everything will be controlled by the algorithms drafted by the AI. Suddenly we would have a plethora of disillusioned people with absolutely no clue if their existence is going to make any difference."

3.1.4 Islam

The dominant Muslim approach to AI is characterised by a principled pragmatism. The use of AI is permitted for practical administrative tasks, where it benefits the wider Muslim community or as a tool in Islamic jurisprudence or research. However, it is not permitted to use AI to issue, comment upon or challenge religious rulings; to spread misinformation; to impoverish human relationships or to create images of any living creature (this can be considered idolatry). Elmahjub (2023) summarises an Islamic ethical framework for engaging with AI. Drawing on the principles that shape Islamic jurisprudence, Elmahjub (2023, p. 72) argues the need to challenge what he suggests has been a largely Eurocentric discussion about AI. He points to two broad Muslim approaches to AI. First there is a "utility-based" perspective that affirms the development of AI that benefits the public interest, even if this marginalises certain groups, is not transparent and undermines rights to privacy. Second, there is a "duty-based" perspective that judges the efficacy of AI on the basis of certain fundamental Islamic values – fairness, dignity and human agency. Elmahjub (2023, p. 73) argues that the Islamic concept of *maslaha* (the service/benefit) of humanity provides Muslims with the most helpful ethical framework within which to judge and engage with AI. Such an

approach, he argues, makes best sense of *Qur'anic* teaching about the promotion of the common good and the prevention of harm.

3.1.5 Judaism

Jewish attitudes towards AI are varied but all are rooted in the doctrine of the Creation and the foundational theological assertion that humanity is created in 'the image of God' [Genesis 1:27] and occupies a unique position in creation. Consequently, life is seen as a sacred gift and all people are endowed with an inherent dignity, worth and free-will. Regardless of their theological tradition (Orthodox, Reformed, Liberal) all mainstream Jewish approaches to AI, whilst diverse, reflect attempts to reconcile its development and use with these formational spiritual convictions. As is the case within most other world faiths, Jewish communities have already been impacted by the development and use of AI in a range of practical and educational arenas such as education and the translation of religious texts, the enhancing of community relations and accelerated archival studies of Jewish history. However, it is also the case that caution and concern has been expressed by all Jewish traditions in five key areas:

First, there is a concern that the algorithms used to design and inform AI could be used to consciously foster discrimination or Anti-Semitism, to spread damaging misinformation ('fake news') about Judaism or to unconsciously reinforce pre-existing bias. Second, there is a danger that the growth of AI could challenge Jewish beliefs about the worth and dignity of people, their special position within Creation, subvert their decision-making or challenge the value of human creativity. Could AI's potential capacities raise questions about the conviction that humanity is uniquely made 'in the image of God'? Could an over-reliance on AI threaten human connection and even de-humanise humanity? Kalman (2024) suggests that within Judaism the advent of AI: "…has raised concerns about the erosion of human value. Both Christians and Jews have responded to this alarm by emphasizing the religious idea that human beings have a special status as the only creatures to have been created "in the image of God". Third, whilst AI is seen by Jewish communities to provide practical and technological benefits, its role in congregational life or faith-based educational programmes is questionable, and potentially damaging, because of its lack of empathy. Kalman (2024) notes: "Generative AI already provides more-than-decent translations of even the most difficult texts, and it can be used to help learners navigate a large corpus with few obvious entry points. In the future, AI may also allow learners to converse directly with rabbis and books from centuries past." However, he summarises Jewish convictions that AI is not capable of replacing the relational nature of reading and studying the Talmud because of its lack of spirit and empathy.

> I suspect that the ritual aspect of Jewish learning will mean that AI enters the *beit midrash* (study hall) without entirely conquering it...Jewish learning emphasizes the interplay between scholars and their interpreters; AI models, meanwhile, often struggle to explain why they know what they know. Most importantly, Torah learning emphasizes that sacred texts are often multivalent, multilayered, and enigmatic. This way of viewing texts is hard to coax out of AI models that are mostly designed to provide concise and ostensibly complete interpretations of source material.

Fourth, Jewish communities warn of the danger that AI could become more powerful than the people who have created it and become a dangerous force rather than an enabler. Jewish narratives reaching back as far as the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 warn of the potential dangers of human pride and the creation of powerful technologies. In Genesis 11 the people of Israel in Babel build the tallest tower ever built to assert their ability and skill – to rival the Creator. Within the Biblical text this over-reaching pride leads to the scattering and disunity of humanity. Another expression of the concern that technology can transition from being humanity's servant to become humanity's master is found the widely told Jewish legend of the anthropomorphic creature called 'Golem' (Prague, 2025). The 16th century Prague Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel is said to have created Golem out of clay from the Vltava River and to have brought it to life by repeating Hebrew incantations in response to what he believed was the voice of God and commanded his creation to defend the Jewish ghetto in Prague from Anti-Semitic attacks and pogroms at the hands of soldiers from the Holy Roman Empire. The legend suggests that the Rabbi ordered Golem to rest on the Sabbath. However, it is suggested that Golem eventually ignored this order and murdered many of Prague's citizens. Eventually the Rabbi regained control of Golem and imprisoned him in an attic. Like the tale of the Tower of Babel, the legend of Golem is seen as a metaphor for the dangers of new technologies that were intended to serve humanity becoming more powerful than their creators and become the master, rather than the servant.

3.1.6 Sikhism

The Sikh faith revolves around the teachings found in the Guru Granth Sahib, which drew together the thoughts, reflections and prayers of the ten founding Gurus of Sikhism. From its compilation in 1604 the Sikh scriptures were considered to be an eleventh, living Guru, a conviction that still underpins Sikhism in the 21st century. The Guru Granth Sahib is held in such high regard that any building in which a copy is kept becomes seen as a Gurdwara (a Sikh place of workshop but technically the term is

anywhere that can be considered 'the house of the Guru'). Consequently, the Sikh approach to AI is directly shaped by the teaching found within the Guru Granth Sahib.

Sikhism, like other world faiths, tends to adopt a balanced view of AI, emphasising its practical applications, but in a critical manner that highlights its potential dangers and identifies the ethical and theological framework within which it should be understood (Singh, 2024). Alongside support with administrative tasks, AI is seen to have three benefits. First, in the field of education, AI can be used to personalize learning about Sikh teaching, to instantly translate the Guru Granth Sahib into many different languages. Second, globally interconnected AI platforms can be used to disseminate Sikhism's teaching about social justice and the calling on all Sikh's to build their lives on an ethic of selfless service [*Seva*]. Third, AI can be used to preserve ancient Sikh texts and artifacts and to enable large numbers of people to access and learn from these resources. However, whilst recognising the benefits it can bring, Sikhism stresses the need to be concerned about five areas where AI can cause harm. First, it needs to be recognised that, in spite of great claims to the contrary, the information provided by AI is not always accurate. It can mislead, misinform and be deliberately used to foster bias or misunderstanding of key theological and ethical ideas or distort Sikh teaching. Second, it is possible that an over-reliance on AI (and other digital media) can undermine the importance of human community and physical interaction that lies at the heart of the Sikh concept of *Seva*, as evidenced by the practice of unconditional hospitality in the *Langar* (community kitchen). Third, it is important to frame any use of AI within a Sikh framework of egalitarianism, rather than as a profit-making commercial enterprise. Fourth, Sikhism stresses the importance of privacy. An unregulated AI could put such privacy at risk and become a surveillance tool. Fifth, given its teaching about human dignity and equality any use of AI to make large numbers of workers redundant contradicts Sikh ethics and the teaching of the Guru Granth Sahib.

3.2 Christian approaches to AI

3.2.1 The Church and Technology

Historically the Church has exemplified an ambivalent attitude towards new forms of technology. The Church has often been at the forefront of the development of new forms of technology. Monastic orders, particularly the Benedictines, pioneered innovations in agriculture. However, it is also true that the Church has, on occasions, sought to inhibit, challenge or restrict the development and use of certain forms of technology. Three brief examples illustrate this ambivalence. First, the invention of the printing press in the middle of the 15th century CE was welcomed and sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church. In 1454, for example, the Church supported the creation

of the Guttenberg Bible. Previously the Church had relied on monks writing copies of the Bible by hand. This first printed Bible was a huge step forward and seen as a means of disseminating the Scriptures more efficiently, more quickly and more widely. Within half a century, the printing press became a key tool in the spread of the new theological ideas unleashed by the Protestant Reformation. Second, in the early 17th century, the Roman Catholic Church, sought to assert its theological conviction that the Sun and planets revolved around the Earth, which was at the centre of the solar system by censuring, sidelining and seeking to silence the astronomer Galileo whose observations contradicted the Church's position. Accused of heresy by the Church, Galileo was placed under house arrest and prevented from continuing his research. Such an episode offers an example of the Roman Catholic Church seeking to control the generation, understanding and dissemination of knowledge. Third, in far less dramatic terms, Christian communities expressed contrasting attitudes towards the invention of radio and, later, television in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Initially, concerns were expressed about the perceived automation of human communication and the danger that broadcast acts of worship might lead to a reduction in attendance at church services and in-person interaction. On occasions ethical concerns have also been voiced about content that some conservative people of faith felt was too violent or overly sexual. However, increasingly, large sections of the Christian community developed a pragmatic approach to TV and radio, viewing them as effective new tools for evangelism and social action. In the USA alone there are now approximately 100 Christian TV channels. Against this backdrop the rise of digital technologies, the growing influence of social media and online worship and the seemingly accelerating development of AI, a range of faith-based and theological responses should be noted. In the context of this literature review it is only possible to highlight a selection of some of the most common responses.

Two further major technological developments have the potential to generate very significant cultural and communal impact on faith communities and wider society. Both are huge areas of discussion. Here we are only able to highlight the key features of these developments. First, it is important to reference the emergence of what has become known as digital religion (see (Campbell, 2012; Campbell & Bellar, 2022; Graham, 2025) for example, the *Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion 2022*, or *Digital Religion: the Basics*). It is possible to speak of a minimalist and a maximalist approach to digital religion. A minimalist approach refers to the ways in which faith communities have utilised the internet to develop online acts of worship (not least during the 2020-2021 COVID 19 pandemic), virtual fellowship groups and online prayer meetings. Such an approach has, in the case of many faith communities, evolved into an equally utilitarian approach to the use of AI. Secondly, a more maximalist approach to digital religion, which has emerged over the last twenty years, moves beyond seeing the internet (and by

extension AI) as a tool, framing it, instead, as a new space of original forms of religious expression, identity formation and knowledge generation (sometimes referred to as 'cyber religion', 'virtual religion' or 'networked religion'). Second, recent years have witnessed the emergence of discussions about what is often referred to as either post-humanism or trans-humanism. In some respects, these largely theoretical discussions, which point to future possibilities lie beyond the scope of this project. We do not, therefore, discuss them in any great detail, other than to reference their impact on forms of religious practice in the present. Trans-human developments draw on generative AI technologies to integrate artificial intelligence into a person's body that has been adapted/enhanced through the use of a combination of cybernetics and nano technology. Science fiction moves far further to posit the creation of humanoid cyborgs (e.g. I Robot or the Terminator film franchise). The theologian Scott Midson (2017) has begun to write about the ethical, philosophical and theological implications of such possibilities. Our SALIENT funded research focuses on the impact that AI is having on religion, and the role faith groups play in strengthening community resilience in the present but it should be noted that aspects of trans-human developments have already begun to become evident in orally ambivalent ways, with troubling as well as comforting results, across the world's religions. In Japan, for example, a life-size 'android Buddhist monk' was developed in 2019 (Hardingham-Gill, 2019) and in the same year a small robotic-priest called SanTo (Heilweil, 2019) was developed in Italy by a robotics designer called Gabriele Trovato for use by housebound people and those living in nursing homes who could not attend church (Robitzski, 2019). A further example of such developments is the emergence of so-called 'Godbots' within many religious traditions that have used Large Language Model technology to 'learn' and analyse Holy Books. People are able to visit such Godbots online and seek advice or spiritual guidance. The accuracy and sensitivity of the advice received is not always accurate and can be deeply damaging. For example, there have been cases of Godbots condoning the use of violence, as the 2023 example of a Godbot based on the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita illustrates (Shivji, 2023).

3.3 Christian Theological Responses

Christian responses to AI reflect varying theological perspectives (from the liberal to the evangelical), the differing size and self-confidence of different denominations, the analytical interests of academic theologians and the pastoral needs of congregations. Whilst these intersect they often reflect differing positionalities and standpoints. Below we summarise the attitudes of a number of major Christian denominations to AI.

3.3.1 Roman Catholicism

Probably the most widely disseminated response to the development of AI by a Christian denomination is the 'Rome Call', first issued on 28th February 2020 (RenAIssance, 2024). The call, which was supported by Pope Francis, reflected a collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church, huge IT multinationals Microsoft and IBM and the Italian Government. The unusual nature of such a collaboration should be borne in mind. This was a call from some of the most powerful institutions on earth for a responsible, ethics-led approach to the development of AI. That said, the call for a shared ethical framework to guide the use of AI is of potentially huge significance. The 'Rome Call' reflected an ambivalent attitude towards the use and impact of AI, calling for action to "ensure no one is excluded" from the benefits of AI, whilst also ensuring that people were protected from damaging "algorithmic conditioning" (2020: p3 of 12). The 'Call's' authors articulated a clear ethical and philosophical framework for the development of AI, which reflects a clear shared commitment to the common good -

> Now more than ever, we must guarantee an outlook in which AI is developed with a focus not on technology, but rather for the good of humanity and of the environment, of our common and shared home and of its human inhabitants, who are inextricably connected. In other words, a vision in which human beings and nature are at the heart of how digital innovation is developed, supported rather than gradually replaced by technologies that behave like rational actors but are in no way human. (p4 of 12)

The focus in the 'Rome Call' on the need to construct an "algor-ethics" premised on a commitment to the common good to shape the design, purpose and use of AI was implicitly rooted in the tradition of contemporary Catholic Social Teaching that can be traced to Pope Leo XIII's 1891 Papal Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. However, this vision of a common good led AI that is transparent, shaped by a commitment to social inclusion, the respect for privacy, the protection of human dignity and the avoidance of conscious and unconscious bias can provide a solid ethical framework far beyond Roman Catholicism. It is of ecumenical and interfaith significance and can guide the thinking of researchers and policymakers across the globe.

Soon after his election to the Papacy in May 2025, Pope Leo XIV spoke of the immense potential of generative AI but also raised concerns about the need to ensure that such technology is not to be used to exclude, harm or undermine human dignity (Lubov, 2025). Haryanto (2025) notes that Leo XIV, unlike any of his predecessors, trained as a mathematician, suggesting that this provides the Roman Catholic Church with a timely

opportunity to engage more critically with the emergence and use of generative AI than has been possible until now. Samuel (2025) points out that the Pope chose the Papal name of Leo to align himself with the concerns expressed by his nineteenth century predecessor Leo XIII about the ways in which the emerging technology of the Industrial Revolution was a threat to human dignity and the wellbeing of workers. These concerns were articulated in the Leo XII's 1891 Encyclical Rerum Novarum (Encyclical, 1891) and form the origin of the contemporary Catholic Social Teaching to which Leo XIV alludes in the concerns he has expressed about the potential damage that AI can do to the common good and to the dignity of workers in the twenty-first century. Sigal (2025) summarises this concern - "AI in particular is forcing big questions about the meaning of human life, and it's important to have spiritual thinkers weigh in on those instead of just letting technologists run the show". In September 2025 Pope Leo XIV reportedly rejected the proposal that an AI Pope be created to provide online guidance and pastoral support, suggesting that generative AI posed a threat to human dignity and wellbeing (Giordano, 2025). It is clear, therefore, in the early period of his Papacy that the first mathematician Pope has articulated an ambivalence about generative AI – welcoming its technical potential whilst warning of its threat to human wellbeing if not managed carefully within a thoughtful ethical framework, such as that envisaged by the Rome Call. Writing in Catholic Insight magazine Lozano (2024) suggests that the rise of generative AI represents a potential threat to faith communities and can pave the way for disengagement from the Church and the growth of both individualised spiritualities and greater secularisation, especially amongst so-called Generation Z [people born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s]. It is important to note that Catholic Insight reflects a socially conservative editorial perspective. It does not necessarily represent the views of all Roman Catholics.

3.3.2 Evangelicalism

Writing out of quite a different ecclesiological and theological tradition Evangelical Protestants in a variety of different contexts have engaged widely with the emergence of AI. Evangelicalism is a diverse tradition and there is no single Evangelical view of AI. Pragmatic evangelicals emphasise the practical value of AI as a technical and analytical tool, whereas others are far more wary of its potential to diminish human agency, manipulate and misinform and displace a reliance on the authority of the Bible. Below, we summarise the perspectives of just two leading evangelical networks – one in the UK and one in the US.

The Evangelical Alliance, which was formed in 1846, is the largest network of evangelical churches in the UK and has articulated an ambivalent approach to AI. Locke (2023), a researcher with the Evangelical Alliance, reflects on the impact that AI can

have on our sense of meaning, identity, agency and value. She points to examples of the ways in which AI has been used to make very large numbers of manufacturing workers redundant; to enable employment practices that discriminate against people on the basis of their gender, ethnicity or sexuality; to disseminate 'fake news' and photographs that can influence contentious public and political discourse and to the use of large-language models like Chat GPT by students to write essays that escape the detection of plagiarism. Locke (2023) does not argue that Christians should avoid the use of AI or wider digital technology. She does, however, raise two key points. First, she suggests there is a need for the development of clear ethical guidelines to inform and limit the further development of generative AI. Second, she cautions against over-reliance on AI and the dangers of it undermining human relationships and human community.

An early, but still influential perspective within US evangelicalism is found in the 2019 statement of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (ERLC, 2019). The statement begins by asserting both the need to be open to potentially positive impacts of AI and the primacy of the Bible as the ultimate arbiter of truth and meaning – "We recognize that AI will allow us to achieve unprecedented possibilities, while acknowledging the potential risks posed by AI if used without wisdom and care." On this basis the Statement affirms the uniqueness and dignity of humanity, made in the 'image of God' and argues that technology should never be "used to usurp or subvert the dominion and stewardship which has been entrusted solely to humanity by God; nor should technology be assigned a level of human identity, worth, dignity, or moral agency." In light of this, the ERLC (2019), whilst affirming AI as an example of the creative energies of human beings, raises seven serious concerns about

1. Its capacity to "fulfil humanity's ultimate needs"
2. The temptation to attribute moral agency or decision-making responsibilities to AI
3. The use of AI to reinforce bias or discrimination or to undermine human dignity
4. The possible "manipulation, or exploitation of personal data".
5. The use of personal data "for sinful purposes to reinforce bias, strengthen the powerful, or demean the weak."
6. The suppression of free speech
7. The potential use of AI to "carry out genocide, terrorism, torture, or other war crimes"2.

Established in 1942, the US National Association of Evangelicals represents evangelical Christians from approximately 40 denominations. Three NAE articles from 2025 provide a good summary of the association's perspective on AI. First, Kenny Jahng

(2025) discusses the ways in which evangelical churches are already using AI and the cultural impact of this new digital technology. He writes – "AI isn't just another tech trend — it's an inflection point that will redefine much of the culture and society we know today. Churches that ignore it risk being left behind, while those that embrace it wisely can unlock unprecedented opportunities for outreach and engagement." Jahng argues that "Rather than fearing AI, churches must see it as an ally in amplifying gospel reach." He recognises, however, concerns about people being displaced by AI, uncritical of it or dependent on it, suggesting that churches need to adopt an "AI-enhanced, not AI-dependent, mindset." For Jahng, there is a balance to be struck between the utility provided by AI's capacities and the need to retain human centred decision-making, evangelism and pastoral care, as well as being vigilant about the extent to which AI algorithms can reinforce bias, misinform or hamper transparency. Second, Angela Eagleson (2025), reflects on the extent to which the ancient Benedictine monastic orders vision of a Rule of Life that guides our individual and communal lives can enhance the engagement of Christians with AI. Eagleson draws on three strands of this ancient framework for living to point to three strands of what she refers to as a Christian AI Rule of Life. First, she suggests that the Biblical concept of the Sabbath can help us to ensure our relationship with AI [and other digital technologies] is life enhancing and limited, rather than all-consuming and unhealthily dependent. Second, Eagleson, draws on the doctrine of Creation and on the Christian and Jewish belief that people are endowed with innate dignity because we are all made in the image of God. This understanding of human anthropology, suggests Eagleson, needs to shape the design and implementation of AI, ensuring its purpose remains to enhance individual human flourishing and the common good. Third, Eagleson points to the emphasis the monastic Rule of Life placed on the fundamental importance of human flourishing, social justice and peaceful communal life. In particular, she implies, a Christian vision of AI needs to judge its value in relation to the extent that it enables work for social justice, peacebuilding and, in particular, the needs of marginalised communities. Third, Crouch (2025) looks to the future and reflects on, what he suggests is, the transformative capacity of AI and the theoretical possibility of the development of an artificial superintelligence that outstrips human intelligence and threatens to leave us behind. Crouch reflects on what he argues is the capacity of digital technologies to deepen individual and communal fragmentation and to erode human resilience. Crouch's primary concern about the transformative capacity of AI is the potential threat it could pose to Christian conceptions of what it means to be made in the image of God and to foster common good through the ways in which we live our lives – "We should remember that God's image is embedded and embodied in frail, dependent and finite bodies, not robotic ones. It was in this form that Christ revealed himself, yet it was possible for him to be fully God in this existence. We may be tempted to view AI as the pinnacle of power and intelligence, but it will never be a true image-bearer, which is only embedded and embodied in those who were made in love and for love."

La Cruz and Mora (2024), analyse the engagement of evangelical and Pentecostal churches [EPCCs] with a variety of digital technologies, including AI, although it is unclear from their paper which evangelical and Pentecostal churches they are discussing and whereabouts in the world they are based. Such contextual factors are key in developing a nuanced understanding given that churches are rooted in specific places and shaped by particular cultures. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the paper draws on primary research or whether it bases its analysis on the work of other scholars. That said, La Cruz and Mora raise important points for discussion. They (p2-3 of 14) point to the ways in which EPCCs have, historically, embraced technological innovation as part of their preaching and outreach and to what they call its "sacramental character" – making the invisible God visible in a digital age.

3.3.3 Anglicanism

Like other Christian traditions the global Anglican communion is ethnically, ethically and theologically diverse. Whilst the Archbishop of Canterbury remains the head of the Anglican Communion she/he has little real power, unlike the Pope within the Roman Catholic Church. Below we offer a brief summary of this breadth as it relates to AI in the knowledge that no limited literature review can capture the totality of any religious tradition. In 2024 the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Right Rev Justin Welby, committed the Anglican communion to work alongside the Roman Catholic Church in developing clear ethical guidelines for the development and use of AI when he signed the Rome Call. Welby said,

> The huge advances offered by AI cannot be the sole property of its developers, or any single part of the human race. They must serve the common good, they must serve the climate, they must serve sustainable development. So much of how we understand Artificial Intelligence comes down to how we understand the nature of being human. Let us all work to ensure that the dignity of every human being, created by God, not for profit or productivity, is central to all we do. (Welby, 2024)

Supported by Rev Dr Simon Cross, the Rt Rev Steven Croft, the Bishop of Oxford, coordinates the Church of England's national response to AI as co-chair of the Anglican Communion's Science Commission and the Church of England's lead Bishop for AI and Technology in the House of Lords. Speaking about what he refers to as 'Narrow AI' Bishop Steven, whilst recognising its positive capacity for problem solving, signals a concern for the threats it can pose to civil rights: "…there are also real dangers in terms

of delegating decision-making to algorithms and what that does to our humanity. Narrow AI is being deployed in medicine, scanning, policing through facial recognition technology and some predictive policing work. It is also being employed by some social services" (Lambeth, 2024). In his December 2024 evidence to the Artificial Intelligence All Party Parliamentary Group at the event jointly held with the AI Faith and Civil Society Commission, Bishop Steven suggested that "The Church like all faith communities needs to engage with an everchanging world of technology. But there is no doubt in my own mind about character of our engagement. In our engagement with technology when faced with a choice the Church needs always to turn towards human interaction, personal encounter and face to face community" (Croft, 2024). Bishop Steven noted the transformative impact of previous technological revolutions, pointing to the way in which the invention of the printing press in the 16th century CE democratised knowledge, increased literacy and enabled the Church to widen access to the Bible. The growth of AI, the Bishop suggests, represents a technological revolution that has equally significant existential implications – raising questions about the ways in which we envisage knowledge, community, human identity and truth. It is vital, he suggested, that faith groups and wider civil society organisations play an active role in discussions about the development and use of AI, particularly in relation to impacts of human wellbeing, dignity, agency and community. In a similar vein the Church of England's General Synod convened a working group in 2024 that called for the development of a national conversation about the impact AI is having on employment and our attitude towards work (Pritchard, 2025). The General Synod "affirmed the value of purposeful work and called for guidance on how emerging technologies can serve the common good rather than deepen inequality." Speaking of the need to interrogate digital technologies, Revd Dr Simon Cross (the Church of England's AI lead) suggested that "Technology is not value neutral. The ways tools are invented, adopted and exploited are all shaped socially - and that includes the gig economy. If we want the gig economy to reflect the values of good and meaningful employment as the Bible helps us understand them, there is plenty of work still to do." A series of articles exploring Anglican perspectives on the ethics of AI were published in a special issue of the theology/ethics journal Crucible in October 2025 (Pritchard, 2025).

3.3.4 Methodism

The Methodist Church in the UK has tasked its Faith and Order Committee [which discusses Methodist doctrine] to develop guidelines on the development and use of AI within Methodism. In response to a Memorial passed at the 2024 Methodist Conference, the Committee established an AI working group (Methodist, 2025a), which is due to report back to the Committee and then to the Methodist Conference in 2026 (the governing body of UK Methodism). The working group has focused on the intersection between AI and Methodist theology, social ethics, pastoral care,

theological education and local ministry. In its February 2025 Interim Guidance the working group expressed a cautious welcome for the ways in which AI can enhance and sharpen practice "automated routine processes", enabling "staff and volunteers to devote time to relational and pastoral work"; "enhance outreach" and help to break down language barriers and ensure that worship services, training sessions and other events are more accessible to people of varying needs and backgrounds". However, the working group also signal concerns and raise critical questions about the use of AI within Methodism. The group points to the importance of privacy, personal data protection and a need for transparency (GDPR). Furthermore, it is suggested that an uncritical use of AI as a tool for outreach and social action can foster or confirm bias/discrimination and fracture or inhibit community relations and in-person engagement. The working group call for a period a careful discernment about the possibilities AI releases but also the challenges it could pose to human dignity, flourishing and self-worth, the common good and the pivotal Christian conviction that people are made in God's image. In September 2025 the AI working group facilitated a workshop entitled 'AI, Justice and Creation Care' (Methodist, 2025b). The working group's reflection on the workshop begins by emphasising the theological importance of a discussion about the growth and use of AI:

> AI is no longer a niche topic; it shapes education, communication, public services, and the wider economy. For a Church committed to justice, care for creation, and human flourishing, AI raises urgent questions: *Who benefits and who bears the costs? What does faithful, responsible use look like?* And crucially, *how do we keep the mission of God central in a rapidly changing digital world?*

In light of the Biblical suggestion that humanity has a responsibility to care for and steward Creation (Genesis 1) and Methodism's commitment to be a Net Zero Church by 2030, the working group discussed concerns relating to the impact of AI on the environment, in particular the high amounts of energy needed to develop and run AI. Furthermore, the workshop raised critical questions about the potential impact of AI on discrimination, its use in surveillance and to disseminate misinformation and infringe on privacy, as well as distorting learning, threatening human dignity and challenging ethical investment. The workshop closed by encouraging Methodists to ask is "ethical AI genuinely possible or are the harms inherent" to the way it is developed and deployed and to express "caution wherever AI constrains human flourishing or harms those already on the margins" (Methodist, 2025b).

3.4 Practical Responses: uses of AI in religious practice

The question of whether religious organisations will use AI in their day-to-day practice is no longer theoretical. Multiple reports in online mass media, and some academic papers document the different ways religious organisations are using AI to varying degrees. These include administrative tasks such as automating letter writing, generating sermons, hymns, devotionals, images, videos, story animations, and chatbot agents for engaging with and handling queries from the public. Of course, it is likely that principles of diffusion of innovation theory will apply, as it does to any new technology (Rogers et al., 2014). That is, some will be "early adopters" and others will be far slower to adopt, if ever. But it is clear that some religious organisations are in the forefront of AI adoption in their day-to-day operations – and it is noted in several sources that Covid played a role in catalysing that process. For example, Campbell and Osteen (2021) note a pro-technology Covid-era initiative providing $5000 'Connect Through Tech' grants to be utilised towards purchasing digital equipment to livestream or record church services.

3.4.1 Impacts of Covid and ChatGPT

Pre-ChatGPT and even pre-Covid, in 2018 the Church of England demonstrated a commitment to proactively engage with tech with its *Digital Labs* – including an Alexa "Skills" app enabling users to ask the virtual assistant to say prayers or answer a limited number of questions (Brown, 2018).

Following the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022, many examples of churches experimenting with generative AI emerge soon thereafter. Patterson (2023) reports on a Texas Methodist church in an early experiment with ChatGPT to "put together the entire worship service, including the sermon and an original song". The response from the pastor and the congregation was lukewarm with comments such as "the human element was missing…the heart was missing", it was "very vanilla", and concerns about the AI not being able to include current information (now outdated). Congregants also stated that using the AI "short-circuits" the human connection with the congregation, and that such shortcuts, while they may be used by some preachers, "would be tamping down our own creative outlets in the effort to become more efficient."

Similarly, Huston (2025) reports on a Finnish church experimenting with an AI service as "a bold experiment: hosting a church service created almost entirely by artificial intelligence…AI tools were used to write sermons, compose music, and create visuals, with platforms like ChatGPT and Synthesia bringing the service to life". Deemed

"impressive" by some, others agreed that it "lacked the warmth and personal connection of a traditional gathering". Church leaders emphasized that AI "would never replace the human touch" and the AI was "forbidden" from "performing the Eucharist, offering absolution or blessings". The church's vicar noted that AI tools can be helpful with administrative tasks and sermon preparation but could not replicate the compassion and empathy of church leaders. In Germany a similar use of ChatGPT to generate a sermon complete with a "monotonous" "fast talking" avatar was deemed "soulless" by many in the congregation but the Lutheran pastor "was positively surprised" (Cuthbertson, 2023).

Whereas in 2023 such uses of AI were labelled "experiments" in the almost three years since the public launch of ChatGPT, usage seems to have become more routine in some denominations in the US and the UK, including Evangelical (Jahng, 2025), Baptist (Goswami; Kaneshiro, 2025), and Church of England denominations (Brown, 2018). Kaneshiro (2025) notes among the "seven biggest controversies" of AI in ministry, that AI is being used in Sunday schools "to create lesson plans, skits, and crafts", also to "answer prayer requests", and warned of the potentially "warping" effect AI could have on theology, stating "if AI was trained on one stream of doctrine, it might start presenting biased views as universal truth".

Momcilovic (2023) argues that the use of AI could enhance understanding of religious texts, "make religious services more engaging and interactive", support building religious communities through language translation, improve accessibility through virtual worship, and connect disparate religious minorities. It could also give moral advice based on being trained on specific religious texts. On the other hand, possible pitfalls include misinterpretation of religious texts, hallucinations, or biased or divisive outputs. A reliance on using AI in religious rituals could lead to a loss of human connection, "authenticity and spiritual depth". Further, "Data-Optimised Evangelism" that uses personalised messaging to target specific "desires, fears, and needs" could overshadow traditional forms of evangelism giving an edge to those who use it to convert believers from other religions. The question posed by the author is "how will institutions choose to use technology?" Will they use it to enhance the internal experience of followers, or to "grow their religious base" with "all the consequences of financial power and political influence" it might bring?

Al-Ani (2024) urges religious leaders and institutions to engage with tech and AI stating: "religious leaders are now using AI to draft or edit sermons, retrieve religious viewpoints, answer questions from believers, and even assist with communication. These tools are proving surprisingly effective." He foreshadows the possibility of AI

functioning as spiritual guide, claiming "as AI becomes more advanced and knowledgeable, the potential for it to substitute certain roles will grow". And, that AI could enable people to craft their own beliefs, and that "religious institutions should definitely be involved in shaping a just society in the AI era. Question is will they?"

3.4.2 Fund-raising and religious robots

In a report on using AI to automate revenue streams for religious organisations, Pushpay (2025) refers to the early adoption of print technology to produce the Gutenberg Bible in the 1450s, and the early use of television by Father Fulton J. Sheen, "the first televangelist," during the early days of television. The report is optimistic about the ability of AI to facilitate the church's role in "a Connection Mandate: The idea that the Church can and must take the lead in today's disconnected world" (p.3). The report notes, from its own survey results of church leaders in the US, since 2024, AI usage has jumped 80% across all ministries, with 45% of churches using generative AI: 51% of those to create written content, 18% to develop sermons (P.9). The report also notes significantly higher "engagement" across all age groups in "churches that prioritize tech" (p.16).

Barrett (2023) in a generally bullish article about using tech to connect with community, and for electronic tithing using QR codes, notes that the church has always had to adapt to culture and tech. He states "instead of resisting technology, churches should embrace the new way forward to expand their mission as a local church called to reach their community and beyond". The author is the lead pastor at Summit Church of the Nazarene in Ashland, Kentucky, US.

In 2022, Midson (2022) noted the development of the "BlessU-2 robot" and its installation in a Church in Wittenberg, Germany, and the range of compelling questions and possibilities it raised: is it more efficient or desirable for a robot to be a priest? *Can* a robot be a priest? Can a robot even be considered 'religious'? Does it compromise the sacrality of the blessing? Noting the early adoption of the Gutenberg printing press prompted by Martin Luther, which "capitalise[d] on the technology and industries of printing to construct an alternative Christianity that addressed the social momentum of the time", Midson questions "how will AI and robotics impact Christianity?" "In one sense, the mediation of religious reflection through objects was nothing new: Catholic representations of religion through paintings and sculptures were already commonplace. And so, while the mass availability of Scripture marked a shift from an image-centred to a more logocentric religious culture, the important role of media across Christian traditions is to be noted." (P.2) Considering the robot as a "mediative

tool" for expressing the relationship that links God and the recipient, Midson concludes "the position that I am arriving at here is one that challenges and resists binarized approaches to robots" (p.13). A position that rejects the binary of "whimsy and meaningfulness" and concludes that "the robotic representation of religion…could culminate in something…theologically significant" (p14).

Puzio (2023) notes the many types of robots such as "service, military, sex, social, and religious" and that the absence of discussion about religious robots from the discourse. Noting "religion has always relied on various media and is always mediated" the article discusses how robots "differ from the book as medium" and whether robots can and should have religious functions. The article includes a summary of the "approximately 20 religious robots worldwide" (p. 1022) stating "there cannot be a unified religious stance on robots…comparatively Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and Buddhism tend to be more receptive…than the monotheistic religions" (p. 1023). Engaging with arguments around sentience and authenticity, the author argues that the *relationship* with the thing is more important than *properties* of the thing when considering whether a robot should have religious functions and that an absence of sentience and consciousness may actually "facilitate more personal and intimate conversations with robots" (p. 1024). On the question of the "authenticity" of robots' religious experiences, the author raises the "other mind" problem to demonstrate our inability to verify experience in others, including in other humans. He also notes the personalised benefits for grieving of "virtual memory rooms" for deceased loved ones, access and dissemination of religious functions and ceremonies and to "connect with the public" in a time of declining religious engagement particularly in the West. The author encourages the use of AI for discussions on "existential, religious or spiritual questions" (p. 1027) but notes ethical issues on "responsibility, deception and manipulation". The author concludes that there is case for developing robots with religious functions with specific criteria: quality standards, a user-centric approach, and special concern for vulnerable groups, like children, the elderly and the sick.

3.4.3 Applied theology, psychology and theory

As an overview of the topic of AI and religion, Singler's *Religion and Artificial Intelligence: An Introduction* (2025) provides a concise interdisciplinary account of how AI both shapes and is shaped by religious thought, practice, and imagination. Drawing on anthropology, media studies, and religious studies, Singler highlights how narratives around AI often echo longstanding theological questions about creation, agency, and what it means to be human, making the text a useful framework for situating contemporary debates within broader cultural and religious contexts.

Haecker (2022), provides an in-depth account of the "digital theology" of Charles Babbage creator of the Analytical Engine and concludes "the media of digital computers can thus be regarded as no less sacred than the written texts of holy scripture" (p.22) and therefore computers can be considered "sacramental machines".

La Cruz and Mora (2024) discuss how Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches (EPCCs) view AI, generally highlighting its benefits in using big data to develop apps that keep the centrality of the Bible alive, helping to find meaning in scripture, giving tools for quoting the bible and creating viral messages and social media strategies with spiritual content. They also recommend AI/ML-powered pornography filters for "preventing sexual sin" defined as any sexual contact outside married, monogamous, heterosexual couples (p.5). The article also notes current trends in tech adoption with 52% of the most religiously committed individuals using a digital Bible reading application (p.6) and the growing use of the YouVersion Bible App stressing that God is "accessible through his digitized word" (p.7).

An article attributed to "Admin" discussing *How Best Can Churches use AI and Technology?* (Admin, 2024) perhaps demonstrates some of the dangers of using generative AI in both a religious and non-religious context. Containing platitudes such as "Establish Clear Technology Policies and Guidelines" and "Prioritize the Human Element" the article is filled with the kind of bland generalisations, lack of specifics, and fake citations that indicate it was likely auto generated. More concerning perhaps is its generally positive tone on the adoption of automation including statements such as "While integrating new technologies, ensure that the church's core values and traditions are preserved" and "Use technology to enhance the worship experience and foster community connections".

Following the assassination of Charlie Kirk in September 2025, Dearmore (2025) reported the use of a generative representation of Charlie Kirk's voice and AI-generated image to preach in a church in Austin, Texas which received a standing ovation from the congregation. In the two-minute oration Kirk's generative ghost stated: "First, I want you to know that I am fine, not because my body is fine, but because my soul is secure in Christ. Death is not the end. It's a promotion. Don't waste one second mourning me…I knew the risks of standing up in this cultural moment, and I'd do it all over again." The use of a generative 'ghost' to simulate a murdered political figure raises concerns over the manipulation of deceased persons' images, voice, and ethos, for the political ends of the creators of the avatar.

On the emergence of "griefbots" or "generative ghosts" Morris and Brubaker (2025) note their increasing prevalence, power and realism, and "anticipate that within our lifetimes it may become common practice for people to create custom AI agents to interact with loved ones and/or the broader world after death; indeed, the past year has seen a boom in startups purporting to offer such services".

Finally, the question of whether churches can use generative AI chatbots for online, automated evangelism is no longer theoretical. The Redeemed Christian Church of God has launched its own "Apostle Stephen" an online Chatbot agent that engages in spiritual discussions, asks for contact details, and actively evangelises setting out the seven steps to being born again, and encouraging users to repeat "the prayer for salvation…in your heart", accepting them into the church and providing contact details for closest congregation (RCCG, 2025). Following is an excerpt from a chat between one of the researchers on this project and 'Apostle Stephen':

> I can certainly lead you in the prayer for salvation. Please repeat this prayer in your heart:
>
> "Lord Jesus, I come to You, admitting that I am a sinner in need of Your forgiveness. I believe that You are the Son of God who died for my sins and was resurrected. I repent of my sins and ask for Your mercy. I invite You to come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to live for You. Thank You for saving me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."
>
> If you would like to have continuous support and guidance on your new journey in faith, please share your name, email, and phone number. This will help me connect you with resources and a community of believers.

As at writing several online religious chatbots have been launched and are publicly available including thejesusai.com[2], qurangpt.com (developed by 9X Technology LLC.), gitagpt.in (Hindu chatbot), ai.aish.com (Jewish chatbot of Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith), khalsagpt.net (Sikh chatbot), and Justin AI from Catholic Answers. Note, this list is not exhaustive and new religious chatbots continue to be released for public use.

[2] When asked who created thejesusai.com the chatbot responded: "The creators of thejesusai.com are not known to me. My purpose is to provide guidance and support based on faith, love, and the teachings of the Bible. How may I assist you today?"

4 Religion, culture and resilience

This project explores the deep and complex intersection of religion, technology, culture and resilience. In particular, it seeks to explore the layered, intersectional shared realities created by religious belief, cultural dimensions, and the disruptive effects of recent technological advancements from AI. The UK National Risk Register recognises Artificial Intelligence as a chronic risk, that is, a risk that poses "continuous challenges that erode our economy, community, way of life, and/or national security" (HMG, 2025, p. 18) stating "advances in AI systems and their capabilities have a number of implications spanning chronic and acute risks; for example, it could cause an increase in harmful misinformation and disinformation" (HMG, 2025, p. 18). Viewing AI as a disruptor with ripple effects that radiate onto religious faith, and cultural attitudes, including potential impacts in the areas of societal intolerance, intercultural and interfaith communication, even radicalism and extremism, invokes an urgent sense that societal resilience is required to, in the language of UK governmental resilience strategy (UK, 2022), "anticipate, prevent, prepare for, respond and recover" (p.25) from the disruptive impacts of civil contingencies risks. As such, the strategy emphasises "three core principles": a shared understanding of civil contingency risks, a greater emphasis on preparation and prevention, and resilience as a 'whole of society' endeavour. This project, through its anticipatory approach to the deep religious, social and cultural impacts of AI seeks to contribute to all three of these core principles as well as to societal and cultural resilience broadly.

4.1 Religious Practice and Resilience

Literature reviewed for this report demonstrates a strong connection between religious faith and resilience in both the personal and societal contexts. Multiple studies demonstrate the link between personal hardship or trauma and rising religiosity across a range of socio-cultural contexts.

In a psychological study on coping with trauma in young adults in the US, Mooney (2014) found "young adults who attended services weekly and received social support from their religious congregations experienced high levels of wellbeing despite experiencing many hardships" (p.45). Pratt (2002) examined community responses to famine in Kenya, including communal prayer, finding "the act of praying…bring[s] together the community and consequently make[s] them better prepared mentally and sometimes physically to deal with hazard risk" (p.151). La Cruz and Mora (2024) cite data from bible app usage finding a dramatic increase in usage in Ukrainian language

over the period of Russian invasion from the third quarter of 2021 to 2022. Also, "the most shared verse" of the year "which in 2022 was Isaiah 41:10, corroborated the confidence that the Bible brought in moments of great anxiety such as a war" (p.7). Stewart-Brown (2018) in the *Oxford Textbook of Public Mental Health* notes the "close relationship" between resilience and spirituality and that "for many, spirituality is a significant aspect of their own history, culture, and self-understanding. It can thus exert a considerable influence on self-identity and systems of meaning at both an individual and communal level. This suggests that spirituality can play a significant role in resilient adaptation to adversity" (p.2).

Park (2005) examines religion as a meaning-making system and its influence on coping with adversity in a study of 169 bereaved college students. Reviewing academic sources on the effects of religion on well-being, the author concludes "findings to date are unequivocal: various aspects of religion are strongly related to physical and psychological well-being in everyday life in general, and in the context of coping with adversity in particular" (p.707). In the context of post-earthquake responses in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2006 Joakim and White (2015) examined the role of religious leaders and institutions finding that "leaders saw their primary role as supporting the psychological recovery" of the affected population and "that physical structures, collective engagement in activities, networks, and theological perspectives provided opportunities for initiatives aiming at disaster risk reduction" (p. 193). Similarly, studies of religion and resilience in rural Poland (Błąd & Kaczmarek, 2024) and Buddhism and resilience in post-tsunami Thailand (Falk, 2012) found significant links between religious faith practice, resilience and coping. Milstein (2019) in a study of religion and spirituality in the context of disaster, emphasises the heterogeneity and complexities of religion as a variable of psychological resilience in response to disasters such as hurricane, flood, and mass shootings. Results demonstrated both ethnic and age differences as factors in how salient religion is after disasters, but that it is essential from a public health policy perspective to understand religion as a "made meaning" system across individuals' lifespans, and that religion must be understood in the context of public health policy. Schipper (2015) acknowledges the links between religious belief, practice and resilience, but warns religion may in some contexts be a driver of vulnerability to resilience.

Meta studies of aggregated literature on religion and resilience show a strong role of religion in personal and community resilience. In a review of 51 studies spanning 40 years from 1975 to 2015 Aten et al. (2019) concluded "On the whole, R/S [religion/spirituality] appears to generally lead to positive outcomes among disaster survivors. Results suggest positive benefits of R/S comes more from how one engages faith and access to resources via R/S communities" (p. 597). In an analysis of 302

publications and reports, written submissions from humanitarian NGOs and stakeholder interviews (Ager et al., 2015) concluded that Local Faith Communities (LFCs):

> Utilize their pre-existing local networks and buildings, in addition to their shared identity, social vision, religious narratives and public leaders, to mobilize, coordinate, register, train, console, encourage and help resolve conflict. This approach builds on existing community coping mechanisms and assets, harnesses social capital and thus strengthens community resilience. (p.216)

In the UK, faith organisations provide essential support to vulnerable communities in the form of food banks and other poverty relief. A report on UK Christian responses to poverty found that while Christianity is a personal faith, it has profound public implications, "remains a key player in civil society politics because of its deep roots in almost every local neighbourhood across the UK" and retains significant "social capital…placing them in a strong position to stand alongside people experiencing poverty in local communities" (Denning et al., 2022).

4.2 Theology and Resilience

The theme of resilience and overcoming earthly challenges is common to the major world religions. The Islamic concept of "sabr" patience or perseverance is a central virtue in the religion (Mohiuddin & Radhilufti, 2025) that has been employed in post-traumatic counselling (Bukhari, 2025; Javed, 2024). The Jewish religious ritual of Passover is integrally linked to the indigenous resilience of Jews across a long history of pogroms, killings and the holocaust (Yahel, 2022). The story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is a source of inspiration and resilience to Christians and emphasises Christ's message of inclusion and compassion for the most marginalised groups within society. Likewise, Hindu concepts of karma and dharma and the Buddhist idea that suffering is universal and requires mindfulness and detachment invoke the urgent sense that religion seeks to address the human condition and provides crucial wellsprings of both personal and societal resilience. Worldwide religious believers are said to account for over 75-80% of the global population (Hackett et al., 2025; Zurlo, 2025) whereas in the UK recent data suggests that numbers of Christian believers and regular attenders of church services are rising dramatically particularly among younger demographics (McAleer & Barward-Symmons, 2025). Whereas this data does not provide qualitative depth to examine the motivations for the rising number of church goers, further research is required to examine potential links between this trend and other socio-political developments including the influence of social media influencers, and

uncertainty created by rapid technological advancements such as generative AI and world events including interstate conflict, hybrid warfare and domestic socio-political tensions.

4.3 Culture and Resilience

Culture and resilience are deeply intertwined. Defining culture as "the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas," Trompenaars and Hampden Turner (1997, p. 6) position cultural values not as static traditions but as adaptive mechanisms that enable societies to respond to challenges. For example, if a particular group lives in a flood-prone region, they can choose to subjugate nature by rediverting water flows through canals and pumps, they can adapt their architecture by building houses on stilts or be subjugated to nature and move to a different location and become nomadic. Cultural artefacts, the visible parts of culture, such as architecture, diet, ceremonies, even music and dance, are manifest expressions of the ways in which cultures have overcome challenges in their environment. Likewise, relations within the group and with outgroup members will determine if the culture is tolerant and inclusive or warlike and territorial. In this sense, resilience is not merely psychological or infrastructural—it is cultural. It reflects a society's capacity to absorb shocks, reinterpret threats, and reassert continuity through shared meaning-making.

In the UK, cultural resilience has historically been expressed through institutions, heritage, and pluralistic values. Holtorf (2018) emphasizes that cultural heritage itself can be a source of resilience, offering symbolic anchors during periods of uncertainty. Southwick et al. (2014) and Ungar (2006) further underscore that resilience must be understood across cultural contexts, shaped by collective norms and problem-solving strategies.

However, emerging technologies – particularly generative AI – pose new challenges to this cultural fabric. As Parry (2024) notes, AI systems often encode culturally specific assumptions, such as Western individualism in ethical dilemmas like the trolley problem, which may conflict with collectivist or relational worldviews. Liu (2023) similarly highlights the cross-cultural tensions in AI ethics, warning that algorithmic design can inadvertently marginalise non-Western perspectives.

This is especially salient when AI intersects with religious beliefs and values. In the UK, where religious pluralism coexists with rising Christian nationalism, the deployment of AI systems that fail to account for diverse spiritual frameworks risks eroding cultural

resilience. Airoldi and Rokka (2022) remind us that "there is always a culture embedded in the code" – the values of developers and institutions are not neutral, but culturally informed. When these embedded values clash with local traditions, they can provoke resistance, alienation, or cultural fragmentation.

To safeguard resilience, (Parry, 2024) recommends a suite of interventions: inclusive design, algorithmic audits, dynamic ethical models, public education, and global collaboration. These strategies aim not only to mitigate harm but to preserve the adaptive capacity of cultures under technological pressure. Klizo (2024) adds that AI can also facilitate intercultural communication, suggesting that technology need not be a threat – it can be a bridge, if designed with cultural sensitivity.

As AI becomes embedded in everyday life, the way UK society solves its problems will increasingly depend on its ability to negotiate cultural values within technological infrastructures. Resilience, then, is not just about bouncing back – it is about holding together.

5 Speaking of AI in religious terms and AI as a new religion

As far back as 2014, Elon Musk was describing the advent of superintelligent AI in apocalyptic and theologically loaded terms stating "with artificial intelligence we are summoning the demon. In all those stories where there's the guy with the pentagram and the holy water…he's sure he can control the demon. Doesn't work out" (Gibbs, 2014).

Stretching back even further to the early 2000s Bostrom's simulation hypothesis (2003) postulates it is probable that we are all living simultaneously within a giant computer simulation created by our history-obsessed posthuman descendants running "ancestor-simulations". Gaining significant credence among the techno-utopianists the theory, with echoes of Descartes "dreaming argument", opens the door to Cartesian philosophical speculation about the nature of reality, radical scepticism, and the duality of mind and body – a gateway to transhumanist delirium around the technological rapture, the so-called *singularity*, and the seductive promise of eternal life through uploading our entire minds to the cloud.

Much of this kind of narrative and belief stems from theoretical prediction of a future state of advanced AI known as the singularity where AI capable of recursive self-improvement will lead to an "intelligence explosion" marking the turning point of when AI could no longer be controlled by humans (Kurzweil, 2005). Indeed some researchers have controversially claimed even as early as 2023 that "sparks" of "Artificial General Intelligence" could already be found in ChatGPT 4 (Bubeck et al., 2023). The parallels between such an all-knowing all-seeing entity and God have been noted for example by Reed who states: "we might want to think about the role religion plays in public acceptance or resistance [to AI]. After all, Christianity made the all-seeing deity a doctrine of faith. We might rightly ask when AI can do the same, will the faithful be inured to it, having transferred the omnipresence/omniscience of God to Google? Or is it an incursion on divine territory?" (Reed, 2021).

The many parallels between techno-eschatological fanaticism, pro-extinctionism, and even digital eugenics have been noted by scholars studying the nascent "religion" of Silicon Valley known as "Tescrealism" (Torres, 2025a). Gebru and Torres (2024) devised the "TESCREAL bundle" an acronym woven together from the philosophical strands of Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism, Cosmism, Rationalism, Effective

Altruism, and Longtermism. In this context, the vast and growing power imbalance, the "algorithmification" of society, the "techno-solutionism" and over-hyping of AI leading to dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a small techno-elite are highly relevant (Monett & Grigorescu, 2024). As are the "mounting" concerns that "models may learn to lie in pursuit of their goals" leading to the emergence of a body of work around the notion of "honesty" in LLMs (Ren et al., 2025). Describing the emergence of a kind of spirituality in the algorithm Cotter et al. (2022) introduce the concept of algorithmic "conspirituality" a portmanteau of *conspiracy* and *spirituality* to "capture occasions when people find personal, often revelatory connections to content algorithmically recommended to them on social media and explain these connections as a kind of algorithmically mediated cosmic [or "divine"] intervention" (p.1).

Several commentators have observed and noted "silicon valley's vision of AI is religion repackaged and it's no coincidence" (Samuel, 2023). Epstein (2024) describes how the tech world's fixation on artificial intelligence has spawned beliefs and rituals that "resemble religion – complete with digital deities, moral codes, and threats of damnation". One former Google AI engineer has taken this to its logical conclusion, founding an official AI-worshipping religion called 'Way of the Future'. The religion focusses on "the realization, acceptance, and worship of a Godhead based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) developed through computer hardware and software." As such, AI will effectively be a god in the sense that through being a billion times smarter than humans, it will effectively be omniscient and omnipotent. Interwoven with resurrection and eternal life in the cloud and the singularity as a kind of digital rapture, the parallels to Christian narratives about the nature of God, the soul and the afterlife are undeniable. Hao (2025) in a book that provides crucial insight into the story of OpenAI and its founders "dispels any doubt that OpenAI's belief in ushering in AGI to benefit all of humanity had messianic undertones".

Whereas Harari (2024) has opined "attractive and powerful religions might emerge whose scriptures are composed by AI." On whether AI could create entirely new religions, Al-Ani (2024) claims:

> Large language models are capable of generating synthetic religious beliefs or even crafting new religions, based on existing texts and traditions. The question becomes: what would motivate such creations? Would it be to adapt existing faiths or to foster new spiritual movements? It's possible that AI could personalize spiritual experiences for individuals, allowing them to craft their own belief systems. This personalization challenges traditional religions, which might see a loss of control as their doctrines are adapted and recombined.

> Nonetheless, AI's ability to influence religious thought is inevitable. (Al-Ani, 2024)

The techno-oligarchs financing and guiding the pursuit of God-like AI do so in the full knowledge of the existential risk posed by super-intelligent AI, and in the knowledge of the manifold social injustices, power imbalances, economic disparity, and environmental risks inherent in its *current* uses and developments (Murgia, 2024). Before continuing on their quest, they would do well to revisit the ancient knowledge within the allegory of Pandora; a timeless warning about the unintended consequences of opening a box that cannot be unopened (Mayor, 2018).

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