



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, EDUCATION, AND RELIGION IN THE LIGHT OF GENESIS 1:26-27: IS SCIENTIFIC GROWTH AN EXPRESSION OF DOMINION?

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Abstract

This article investigates whether scientific and technological advancement, particularly in Artificial Intelligence (AI), should be understood as an expression of human dominion, as outlined by Genesis 1:26-27. This paper aims, narrates and examines (AI) and Educational Reform in the 21st Century for Enhanced Academic Performance through a close reading of Genesis 1:26-27 within its literary context. The main objectives are: (1) to critically examine the theological and ethical implications of AI for traditional interpretations of dominion and imago Dei, and (2) to assess how AI shapes contemporary understandings of human responsibility and stewardship. The central research question is: Does the rise of AI and scientific growth represent a faithful expression of biblical dominion, or does it risk undermining the unique responsibilities ascribed to humanity by religious texts? Terje Stordalen's theory by Stordaelen that talks of a canonical ecology is considered in this study. Ultimately, the study argues that while AI opens new avenues for theological dialogue and societal transformation, scientific progress must not be conflated with the biblical concept of dominion. Religious texts emphasize humanity's irreplaceable ethical and spiritual responsibilities as bearers of the divine image, responsibilities that technological achievement alone cannot fulfill. Furthermore, the research uses biblical foundation to develop an ethical framework for artificial intelligence (AI) and biotechnology. It challenges mechanistic, technocratic views of humanity, asserting that artificial entities lack genuine personhood and spiritual subjectivity. The study recommends that the ongoing engagement between AI and theology thus requires discernment in interpreting scientific growth through faith and scripture.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, imago Dei, dominion, religion, theology.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a widely discussed phenomenon, often meaning different things in different contexts. In this study, AI is understood as the attempt to replicate or surpass human reasoning through artificial means. What is newly added in this work is a focused examination of how AI's rapid growth challenges and reshapes theological perspectives, especially through the lens of Genesis 1:26–27. Unlike previous studies, which have mostly explored AI from either a technical or abstract theological angle, this article integrates scriptural exegesis, contemporary ethical analysis, and educational implications to offer a more holistic and practical understanding. It introduces clear research objectives and a research question that interrogate whether advances in AI represent a faithful expression of biblical dominion or risk undermining humanity's unique responsibilities. By situating current debates on AI within the broader context



of theological anthropology, focusing on the *imago Dei*, this paper provides new insights into human distinctiveness, responsibility, and stewardship in an age of technological transformation. The introduction of these elements aims to bridge the gap between technological progress and scriptural mandates, guiding readers to a more nuanced engagement with both AI and faith.

Despite rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and its growing role in education and society, there remains significant ambiguity regarding the theological interpretation of scientific and technological progress in light of biblical texts such as Genesis 1:26–27. In particular, it is unclear whether such progress should be understood as a legitimate expression of human dominion or as a risk of overstepping the ethical and spiritual boundaries set by the doctrine of *imago Dei* (Image of God in Human being). This paper seeks to address this gap by critically examining how AI challenges and informs contemporary Christian understandings of dominion, stewardship, and human distinctiveness.

Conceptual Clarification

The relationship between artificial intelligence (AI), education, and religion has become a significant subject of interdisciplinary inquiry in the twenty-first century. Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, language processing, and decision-making (UNESCO, 2023). AI has transformed educational systems through intelligent tutoring systems, personalized learning, automated assessment, and administrative efficiency. However, its growing influence also raises ethical, theological, and philosophical questions concerning human dignity, creativity, and responsibility.

Education is understood as the intentional process of developing knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and competencies that enable individuals to contribute meaningfully to society. Contemporary educational scholarship emphasizes that AI should complement rather than replace human educators because education involves moral formation, empathy, and social interaction beyond technological capabilities (UNESCO, 2023). Consequently, AI in education should be guided by ethical principles that promote equity, inclusion, accountability, and human flourishing. From a religious perspective, Genesis 1:26–27 provides a theological foundation for understanding humanity's relationship with creation. The passage declares that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and are commissioned to exercise dominion over the earth. Biblical scholars argue that dominion should not be interpreted as exploitation but as responsible stewardship, reflecting God's justice, wisdom, and care for creation (John H. Walton, 2021). Thus, scientific advancement, including AI, may be viewed as an expression of humanity's God-given creativity when it serves the common good and respects human dignity.

Scientific growth can therefore be understood as an extension of humanity's intellectual capacity bestowed by the Creator. Nevertheless, Christian ethics cautions that technological progress must remain accountable to moral values. AI should never diminish the unique worth of persons created in God's image, nor should it replace human moral agency. Instead, scientific innovation should promote justice, compassion, truth, and sustainable development. This perspective aligns with contemporary ethical frameworks that advocate human-centered AI, emphasizing transparency, fairness, and accountability (OECD, 2024). Accordingly, AI, education, and religion should



function collaboratively to ensure that scientific growth becomes an authentic expression of biblical dominion through responsible stewardship rather than technological domination.

The Possibilities of Computational Theology

There is no explicit connection between contemporary AI and theology. The field of AI most often does not intentionally set out to explore anything that could be classified as theological. At best, AI is agnostic about theological issues, and at worst, it is atheistic, assuming a radical physicalism that excludes the existence of God, spirit, or even minds. This starkly contrasts with cybernetics, a precursor to AI, which was much more open to acknowledging mystery in the world. Cyberneticists such as Norbert Wiener and Stafford Beer believed that humans must be more than mechanisms and that some aspects of the world and ourselves will always remain unknowable due to the cascading complexity of reality and the limitations of our brains (Williams 1968, 44; Pickering 2004, 499–501). For them, the mystery of the divine did not come as something supplementary or superimposed, but was seen as in perfect continuity with the other unknowable aspects of the universe. Cybernetics was thus regarded as an exploration of this mystery. Such an explicit relation does not exist between religion and the successor of cybernetics, AI.

Employing AI programs to find hidden linguistic patterns in religious texts is perhaps the most straightforward and least speculative form of engagement between AI and theology. Computational methods have been used in biblical studies since at least the 1970s, but it was not until the advent of machine learning algorithms in the 2000s that the full potential of statistical AI was unlocked. Currently, computational methods are no longer an exotic approach in biblical studies but rather mainstream methodologies (Peursen 2017, 394). One example is how algorithms are helping biblical researchers distinguish among different authors in the same text (Dershowitz, Akiva, and Koppel 2015), a process known as author clustering. The upside of leveraging AI to study ancient texts is quite apparent: fresh insights, confirmation/disproval of hypotheses, and new connections. However, difficult black-box problems arise when the program produces surprising results that it cannot explain. Should the researchers simply trust the AI to be right, which is unsatisfactory and arguably a slippery slope, or should they discard the results as mistakes and try to repair the algorithm until it produces the expected results, an approach that would, in turn, be circular and redundant? (Peursen Forthcoming, 11–12).

Things only get more complicated from here on. What if we could do much more with AI in the future than analyze texts? What if we could build algorithms that simulated catechumens well enough that religious teachers could test various pedagogical strategies on machines before applying them to human students? This is what computer scientist Edmund Furse proposed in 1986 (Furse 1986, 383). Given the impressive progress of natural language processing algorithms over the last two decades, this possibility certainly seems plausible in the near future, opening exciting opportunities for missiology. However, Furse goes even further with his prediction. As our ability to computationally model human mental processes improves, we might be able to build a computational model of a saint. Such models could then be tested in various real-life situations to see how a saint would behave (Boluwatife, Ademusan, and Babatunde, O. O, 2026).

In addition to these “technical” obstacles, there might also be some theological problems with the dream of using AI to study perfect morality. As several authors point out (Weissenbacher 2018, 69; Samuelson 2020, 7), one relevant question is whether the fallen state of creation, in general,



and of humans, in particular, would not hopelessly deter any attempt to instill holiness in machines. If sin is all-pervasive in the current state of creation, then AI could never completely bypass it: not because it would become itself evil, but more in the sense of inevitably reflecting its creators' moral shortcomings. To a certain extent, that is already noticeable in how contemporary algorithms inherit their programmers' biases or those inherent in the training data.

Robots Doing Theology

Another enticing possibility is that advanced future AI could help us broaden our understanding of divine revelation by offering a completely fresh perspective on some of the core tenets of religious faith. If robots ever reach human-level intelligence, they might also become interested in religion. There are many caveats to this scenario. First, whether AI can, in principle, reach the human level is a hotly debated question without a clear answer thus far. Second, even if robots reach human-level intelligence, that does not necessarily mean they will also be humanlike on the inside. Robots might perfectly replicate humanlike behavior from an outsider's perspective, but their phenomenal experience of the world and themselves, if any, would be utterly different from our own experience of being a person in the world (Dorobantu 2021). Leaving these caveats aside, let us turn to a few hypothetical scenarios of religious robots and explore whether such thought experiments can shed some light on critical theological questions.

Philosopher Rajesh Sampath (Sampath 2018) imagines how the Christian faith might be reinterpreted through the eyes of a hypothetical intelligent robot. Such a robot might understandably explore whether it, too, could be said to embody the image of God. The AI would therefore search for ways to interpret the New Testament and the core dogmas of the Christian faith as if they were written for and about robots. One way could be to think of Christ, the divine Logos, as a software program, and of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection as akin to the program switching between ON and OFF. The pre-existence of the Logos would be understood simply as the eternal existence of the "Christ code" in God's mind. Could the Christ software program be born through an Immaculate Conception? Sure, if the latter is interpreted as meaning the code was revealed at a particular moment in history, when humans were culturally incapable of producing something like this. The point Sampath tries to make with these analogies is that an intelligent robot might be capable of developing its own original, though highly allegorical, theology, which would neither contradict the Bible nor breach the boundaries of Nicæan-Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Although humans and machines would agree on the why of the divine economy, they would see the how in markedly different terms. The critical question is why the robots' interpretation should be outright discarded in favor of the established human-centered account.

The study is sympathetic to the importance of the question above, though it has some reservations about the argument's structure. The study's main criticism is that Sampath's working definitions of doctrine and divine revelation look slightly rigid. If revelation is seen as a finite collection of text (example, the Bible) and if orthodox doctrine is a finite set of logical propositions that can be exhaustively codified in symbols, then it might be true that these sets could, in principle, be manipulated in such a way to generate an interpretation that does not technically contradict the rules of the game. However, this is an impoverished account of both revelation and doctrine. In a more apophatic view, the content of faith is not exhausted in its linguistic expression, which can only approximate, at most, our religious intuitions. Taking the linguistic approximation as the ultimate reference point is theologically wrong. It is no wonder that it can lead to such forced



interpretations as the one imagined by Sampath. His creative proposal might be technically correct in letter but arguably not in spirit.

However, the above criticism should not divert attention from the main point raised, namely, that it is, in principle, possible to imagine a radically different interpretation of the divine economy than the one that has thus far been dominant. History shows that Christian theology, for example, gradually extends to include the perspectives of formerly excluded categories such as Gentiles, women, people of color, and intelligent robots, which can be regarded as the next other to lay legitimate hermeneutical claims. Even if this scenario may still be technologically far in the future, Sampath rightly urges that it serve as a reminder to strive for a more inclusive, pluralistic theology.

Although there is indeed a historical trend of Christianity expanding to formerly excluded groups, the main drivers of this expansion are usually social and cultural rather than theological. Religious scholars Laura Ammon and Randall Reed compare the ecclesial debates over the inclusion of Native Americans in the sixteenth century and LGBT+ persons in our times. They aim to show that theological arguments play a surprisingly small role in determining who is entitled to be a legitimate faith practitioner. The same will likely happen when robots become sufficiently advanced to raise the issue (Ammon and Reed 2019). If this is true, then the perceived adequacy of robot hermeneutics imagined by Sampath might depend less on orthodoxy and more on how integrated and accepted robots are in society at large.

Religious scholar James McBride tackles the same question from a different direction (McBride 2017). As we head toward a future where the presence of humanoid robots among us becomes ubiquitous, the eminently organic dimension of Christian theology, meaning the one that refers specifically to flesh and the biological body, is likely to be increasingly questioned. Humanoid robots and their human partners/owners would find such an organic theology unappealing because of its insistence on God's incarnation, Christ's blood sacrifice, communion by eating and drinking, baptism by total immersion in water, and the Pauline soteriology of the body. Instead, these AI "progressives" will expect theologies that give "meaning to all intelligent creatures, whether divinely or man-made" (671). McBride suggests that a solution to this potential future problem is a shift in focus from the Pauline theology of the flesh (*sarx*) to the Johannine theology of the *logos*. The latter would likely be more palatable to androids because they would identify more with the doctrine of a rational and intelligible universe, given the rationality of their source code.

IMAGO DEI after Darwin

Palatability to robots should probably not be the main criterion for preferring one theology over the other, or at least not yet. Nevertheless, McBride's argument illustrates how AI might increasingly play an important role in how we think about old theological questions. In this respect, the *imago Dei* debate is perhaps the one where the influence of AI is most noticeable. The *Imago Dei* case is particularly interesting for its openness and high stakes. By openness, I mean that the jury is still out on what exactly renders humans in the image and likeness of God. By high stakes, I refer to the profound consequences of how we define *imago Dei* for our understanding of the dignity of the human person and our role in the world (Mathu, 2025).

The *Imago Dei* is declared at the very beginning of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 1:26 NRSV), but there is hardly any guidance on how to interpret it. For many centuries, it was assumed that what



makes humans like God and distinguishes them from animals is their intellect or some of its constitutive cognitive capacities, such as reason or language. Because of its emphasis on something, a capacity, or the structure of the human psyche that constitutes the image, this theology is known as the substantive or structural interpretation. As long as human superiority over the animals was self-evident, this interpretation went largely unchallenged. However, with Darwin and the advent of evolutionary theory, it became difficult to ground human distinctiveness in purely ontological terms. We were suddenly no longer as different from the animals as we had thought. Moreover, it became evident that most of the intellectual abilities that set us apart had emerged naturally through evolution rather than being supernaturally bestowed upon us by God. In the aftermath of this realization, theological anthropology has developed interpretations of the image that are arguably more nuanced and sophisticated.

Theological anthropology has undoubtedly benefited from swallowing the bitter pill of evolutionary theory, and the latter has turned out to be a blessing in disguise in the long term. As theologian Aubrey Moore aptly put it, under the guise of a foe, Darwinism did the work of a friend (Ayala 2007, 159). This might be true more generally about theological discourse: when it goes unchallenged for too long, it can cozy up to vague formulations and commonplaces. In the long term, this usually leads to the weakening of its transformative power. Challenges that might be external, such as the Darwinian shift in the scientific paradigm, or internal, such as the heresies of the first Christian centuries, can act as stressors in evolutionary parlance, shaking up the landscape of theological ideas and ultimately leading to better theological theory. Suppose this evolutionary view of theological epistemology is correct. In that case, future events, such as the emergence of human-level AI, could tremendously help our continual effort to refine our theological understanding of reality. McBride's hypothesis of a robot-determined future clash between Pauline and Johannine theologies is one example of how the story might unfold.

The impact of AI on Imago Dei theology is another example. Precisely because post-Darwinian theology engaged so creatively with the challenges posed by evolutionary science, we now have too many appealing imago Dei interpretations to choose from: relational-functional, eschatological, Christological, and so on (Herzfeld 2002, 10–32). Although an excellent problem to have for theologians, this is nevertheless a problem. Each of these proposals is convincing in its own way, capturing one or more aspects we intuitively associate with human distinctiveness and the divine image. Each is supported by biblical arguments and a cohort of brilliant theologians. On theological grounds alone, it is quasi-impossible to decisively turn the needle toward one interpretation or the other because we simply do not have enough constraint to prune out unlikely candidates: they all seem likely.

If theological arguments are inconclusive, perhaps comparing ourselves to our proximate relatives in the animal kingdom can help us understand what makes humans distinctive. However, this exercise also has strong limitations. Although evolutionary theory shows that we are not fundamentally different from nonhuman animals, in practice, we remain very different across multiple dimensions. This divide may be more related to quantitative/cumulative measures than to differences in quality or ontology. The fact remains, however, that, anyway one looks at it, humans still end up looking pretty distinctive due to the richness of their cognitive arsenal, their individual and collective cultural achievements, and all the dimensions of life that are available to them to an extent unparalleled thus far in other animals: self-reflective, artistic, moral, spiritual, and so on.



None of the major imago Dei interpretations is severely challenged by the comparison with the animals, so we are left with the same wide field of candidate proposals.

It is here, perhaps, that AI can make a difference (Dorobantu Forthcoming b). On the one hand, AI can be seen as challenging the final bastion of human distinctiveness by conquering precisely the cognitive capacities that we thought differentiated us from the animals.

What Can AI Teach Us About Ourselves?

Noreen Herzfeld and Anne Foerst, both of whom combine expertise in theology and computer science, believe that our attempt to build AI says something meaningful about the imago Dei in us. In her 2002 book on the topic, Herzfeld draws a remarkable analogy between the succession of paradigm shifts in AI and the evolution of interpretations of the imago Dei (Herzfeld 2002, 10–52).

One conclusion she draws from this similarity is the depth to which implicit theological assumptions influence our techno-logical endeavors. By trying to create AI in our own image, imago hominis, we unconsciously struggle to capture in machines what we think makes us distinctive and in the image of God (50). Ultimately, Herzfeld suggests, through AI, we attempt to create a distinct artificial other with whom we could relate. We are effectively trying to create a replacement for our lost relationship with God, the ultimate Other. This is why she thinks this attempt is doomed to fail, because AI will never be capable of engaging in authentic relationships. Our obsession with AI, however, reveals something important about ourselves: the centrality of relationality and relationships to what it means to be human. This, according to Herzfeld, can be taken as evidence in favor of the relational dimension of imago Dei (51).

Foerst has a much more optimistic take on the possibilities of AI and what they reveal about human nature. She develops this argument in a pioneering 1998 article (Foerst 1998). Whereas Herzfeld saw in AI a deep human longing for relationality being misguidedly and hopelessly turned toward machines, Foerst has more sympathy for our effort to build AI. She regards it as a manifestation of the creative imperative inherent in the divine image, and she is ready to drop any claim that imago Dei qualitatively distinguishes humans from either animals or machines (108). Instead, if we ever manage to create human-level AI, such a momentous event could finally heal us from any pretension of ontological distinctiveness. In Foerst's view, human ontology consists of the very same mechanisms that animate nonhuman animals and, one day, perhaps, intelligent robots too.

Such a mechanistic view of human beings may very well be at home among many of the transhumanists and AI gurus in Silicon Valley, but it sounds rather unusual coming from a Christian theologian. Nevertheless, Foerst manages to put a positive spin on this reductionistic anthropology. If what renders us in the image of God is not to do with anything in our nature but solely with the divine mandate for stewardship, then both humans and other sufficiently intelligent creatures, including robots, could consciously choose to perform the imago Dei. Theologian Karen O'Donnell (2018) picks up this point and argues, drawing on Alister McFadyen's theology, that advanced AI might lay legitimate claims to imago Dei, understood in such performative terms. For Foerst, thus, human nature is not something we are born with but a vocation, something we continuously create, never finished, and not exhaustively accounted for by either the Genesis narrative or the contemporary creation of AI. Instead, the two symbolic existential stories showcase the imago Dei and AI as complementary.



Although many theologians would hesitate to subscribe to such a mechanistic view of the human being, Foerst thinks of it as a liberating move. Realizing how much we share with nonhuman creatures, in her opinion, invites a more compassionate, responsible, and inclusive attitude toward nature, bringing us closer to the kind of stewardship mandated by the image of God we bear.

The performative view of *imago Dei* does have a certain appeal because of its potential to include nonhuman creatures. However, a question arises whether sufficiently intelligent robots could be labeled as *imago Dei* simply by virtue of their external performance. Theologian Jordan Wales thinks that AI built under the current paradigm could never aspire to authentic personhood, which requires consciousness and an interior life (Wales Forthcoming). The AI developed thus far has made significant progress toward intelligent behavior, but none, to our knowledge, toward subjectivity and sentience. Current algorithms arguably lack any form of interiority. In theologian Ted Peters' words, "nobody is at home" (Peters 2022, 5). Without such interiority, thus without an authentic personal self, AI would remain ontologically something, and that is hardly enough for imagining a personal God.

It is not clear whether artifacts could ever acquire consciousness, understood here in philosopher Thomas Nagel's phenomenal sense: "an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism that is something it is like for the organism" (Nagel 1974, 436, *emphases in original*). We currently do not understand why humans are conscious in the first place, and, more generally, we do not have any convincing theory to explain how conscious experience can emerge from inert matter, a problem philosopher David Chalmers famously dubbed "the hard problem of consciousness" (Chalmers 1995).

Until we develop such a theory, if ever, it is impossible to speculate on the theoretical possibility of artificial consciousness. However, even if that were possible, a scenario known as "strong AI" (Searle 2009), such an entity would still not very easily qualify as *imago Dei*, as I argue somewhere else (Dorobantu 2021), because it would likely be extremely nonhuman-like with respect to its feelings, thoughts, and perception of the world. Strong AI might behave in a humanlike manner to make itself understandable to us, but it would experience the world in a completely different way from biological organisms. With very different senses and needs, with complete access to its internal memory and states, and with the subjective passage of time slowed down by a couple of thousand, it is likely that an intelligent robot would think in categories we cannot even imagine.

Despite its consciousness and intelligence, I argue that it is unclear whether strong AI would also be a person because of its radical strangeness. Any discussion of AI becoming *imago Dei* is thus unwarranted, at least until we obtain a better understanding of the philosophical categories applicable to intelligent robots.

One thing Foerst did get entirely right about AI was the crucial link between intelligence and embodiment. Her study was conducted while working with the team of roboticists at MIT, which built the humanoid robot Cog. The Cog project was the apotheosis of behavior-based robotics, an approach pioneered by Rodney Brooks, and was enthusiastically welcomed as a potential solution to the problems that plagued symbolic AI. The need for embodiment was one of the fundamental paradigm shifts proposed by Brooks & Co., in strong opposition to the disembodied kind of



intelligence attempted in classical AI. Although some of the underlying assumptions in the Cog project were overly optimistic regarding how close Cog was to attaining human-level intelligence (Dorobantu Forth coming a), the turn toward more embodiment proved to be directionally correct. In the three decades since, it has become increasingly clear that the insistence on disembodied intelligence, held by many in AI, has been one of the factors hampering progress in the field. Computer scientist Melanie Mitchell places it among the four common fallacies in our thinking about AI (Mitchell 2021).

According to Mitchell, the idea of disembodied intelligence can be traced back to mid-twentieth-century psychology, but one could go even further to medieval mind/body dualism. From a philosophical and theological perspective, this dualistic anthropology starkly contrasts with the holistic, embodied, relational, and social biblical view of the human person. If anything, the history of AI and neuroscience thus far has proven that biblical holistic anthropology is a much more robust account than mind/body dualism (Barbour 1999). This is an emblematic example of how AI can serve as a testing ground for theological questions. Various competing approaches in AI are based on very different philosophical and, one could say, even theological assumptions. Their successes and failures relative to each other can, to a certain extent, serve as a measure of the truth of those assumptions.

AI and Some Wild Theological Speculations

This article ends with a short section that engages theology and AI more playfully. This approach is highly speculative and thus limited in ambition. The purpose is to tease out exciting possibilities for how paying attention to AI might yield unexpected insights into some of the most difficult theological questions.

The first such example is the notion of divine infinity. Monotheistic religions have always maintained that God must be infinite in all respects. However, as computer scientist Yorick Wilks argues, in a computational view of reality, that might not need to be the case (Wilks). Despite the vastness of the observable universe, spanning multiple orders of magnitude above and below the human scale, it is still possible to characterize it in finite, albeit massive, numbers. The argument goes that the universe might be big, but not so big to escape numerical characterization. If we can conceive of such large numbers, they are also computable on a colossal but finite computer. If God is creating and governing our world through some sort of computational process, Wilks boldly concludes, then God does not need to be infinite to do it. Just big enough would suffice.

From our perspective, it would make absolutely no difference because we would perceive God as unlimited for all purposes, but that does not preclude God from also having limits. This idea is also present in the popular secular theology proposed by philosopher Nick Bostrom as the “simulation hypothesis” (Bostrom 2003). As we start contemplating the possibility of acquiring so much computing power that one day we will be able to simulate entire worlds, together with the sentient beings populating them, the thought arises that we, too, could be inhabiting just such a simulation created by more advanced beings. We could be one of their countless simulations. Or, even more wildly, our simulators could, in turn, be simulated by others and so on, until following this potentially colossally long chain finally leads to the only actual reality supporting all this dream in a dream. Bostrom is right to ask rhetorically what the likelihood is that our world is precisely that one original world, as opposed to just one of the many simulated ones. However, his whole



argument hinges on the assumption that it is possible to simulate an entire universe, together with its fully sentient beings. It is the latter, the part about the sentient inhabitants, that raises the most significant question mark because we do not know whether artificial sentience is theoretically possible. Are humans someone else's simulated artificial intelligences? The future of AI will hopefully shed light on this question and, by extension, contribute to our understanding of divine infinity/finiteness.

The recurring idea in discussions about *imago Dei* and the simulation hypothesis is that, by trying to create AI, we are in a somewhat analogous position to God's work in our own creation. Humanity's ultimate dream is to build strong AI, robots endowed with consciousness, volition, and freedom, just like us. However, in attempting to create an entity that is simultaneously pre-programmed and free, we might glimpse God's dilemma when making us: how can you create an entity that is free when you are responsible for every ingredient, instruction, and process that goes into it? The similarity between the two stories goes further. It is unclear how we could even measure whether our creation is conscious. All the possible tests we can conceive for AI, including the Turing test, evaluate competence and external behavior. It might be impossible to know whether intelligent robots are also sentient. Puddefoot speculates that this might be one of the reasons for divine incarnation: there was no way for God to know what it is like to be a human without becoming one (Puddefoot 1996, 123). Looking at the incarnation as God's ultimate Turing-like test for human consciousness, a verification that we are not, in fact, soulless zombies, is a very provocative idea that might get much theological pushback. However, it is a brilliant example of how AI can offer fresh perspectives on core theological issues.

In the same book, Puddefoot offers another intriguing proposal. He suggests that reflecting on the possibilities of AI could bring us closer to a solution to the notoriously difficult problem of theodicy (89). One typical response to the question of why there is so much suffering in a world created by a good God, also known as the "only way" argument (Southgate 2008, 16), is that pain was the only possible way for God to bring about creatures endowed with high intelligence, such as ourselves. In other words, suffering at evolutionary scales is the price that needs to be paid for the emergence of intelligent creatures. However, if it becomes clear that computers can reach human-level intelligence and therefore do everything humans do, the above argument becomes problematic. If it is possible to bring intelligent, sentient beings into existence through sheer programming, why did God not choose this easier, more computational path to create a world imbued with intelligence?

There are various possible answers, but Puddefoot's choice is to discern from this an alleged necessity for pain as a condition for flourishing, a sort of underlying law of our universe. Suffering must be valuable in itself. Otherwise, God would not have allowed it to play such a prominent role in the evolution of life in the universe. The conclusion can be stretched even further. Suppose suffering is so crucial for intelligence and development. In that case, the implication for AI is that to breach the gap toward humanlike intelligence, a robot "would need to grow, feel pain, experience and react to finitude, and generally enter the same state of mixed joy and sorrow as a human being. In particular, it would need to be finite, aware of its finitude, and condemned one day to die" (Puddefoot 1996, 92). This would be yet another confirmation that embodiment and phenomenal consciousness are *sine qua non* conditions for the emergence of humanlike intelligence and personhood.



Conclusion

In summary, this article has contributed a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of artificial intelligence, education, and religion through the lens of Genesis 1:26–27. By integrating scriptural exegesis, contemporary ethical analysis, and educational implications, it addresses the central research question of whether scientific and technological advancement should be interpreted as an authentic expression of biblical dominion. The work critically evaluates the opportunities and limitations that AI presents to theology and society, emphasizing that while AI can foster new theological insights, it cannot substitute for the unique ethical and spiritual responsibilities entrusted to humanity as bearers of the divine image. Thus, the article underscores the need for discernment and ongoing dialogue between science and faith, ensuring that technological progress is always interpreted in light of scriptural mandates and human dignity. This synthesis advances the conversation by providing both practical and theoretical frameworks for engaging with AI in religious and educational contexts, and by highlighting the irreplaceable nature of human stewardship in an era of rapid technological change.

Recommendations

- i. Educational institutions should integrate AI literacy with ethical and theological education to promote responsible technology use.
- ii. Religious organizations should engage actively in discussions on AI ethics to provide moral guidance for technological development.
- iii. Policymakers should establish regulations that ensure AI respects human dignity, privacy, fairness, and accountability.
- iv. Researchers should encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among theologians, educators, computer scientists, and ethicists in AI studies.
- v. Christians should interpret Genesis 1:26–27 as a mandate for responsible stewardship, ensuring that scientific advancement serves humanity and glorifies God.

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