

## Article

# Artificial Intelligence's Understanding of Religion: Investigating the Moralistic Approaches Presented by Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools

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**Abstract:** As AI becomes more commonplace, it is imperative to investigate the ways in which this technology represents various socio-political concepts and identities, such as religion. To do so, we present several conversations with various AI tools on three religious traditions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. From our analysis of these conversations, we noted three important elements: AI struggles to represent complex religious issues; It emphasized diversity of opinions; And it encourages the reader to engage with respect and sensitivity regarding religious issues. We therefore suggest that AI takes an axiologically focused approach towards religious representations.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence; axiology; judaism; communication technology; religious plurality

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the ways in which Artificial Intelligence (hereafter, AI) is the new frontier for understanding our world, and more specifically, religions. As AI becomes more commonplace, seamlessly weaved into web-browsers like Microsoft Bing or communication technologies like Zoom or WhatsApp, it is imperative to investigate the ways in which this technology represents various socio-political concepts and identities, such as religion. About 29% of Gen Z users already implement generative AI in their daily communication actions, and that trend is projected to continuously grow (Howarth 2023). As people increasingly use AI more, they will begin to use AI to gather information about the world—from politics to finance. Therefore, the goal of this article is not to consider how religious individuals or institutions should use AI, but rather, how AI is the new frontier that will, and is, used by religious, and non-religious individuals, to understand religions from a global and personal perspective. Understanding how AI currently represents religions can help scholars and policy-makers to make-sense of what information the average user of generative AI is exposed to.

There is an important assumption in this project: informed by media studies, we assume that media is used in such a way that constructs people's worldviews, also known as the social cognitive theory (Bandura 2003; Pajares et al. 2009). This theoretical perspective suggests that as humans, our epistemology is based on social relationships, and that in the 21st century, many of our social relationships are mediated by communication technology. Therefore, as AI becomes a prevalent communication technology tool, a "new frontier" for knowledge acquisition, using AI will inform and construct people's worldviews.

A good example of this new frontier comes from Yossi's personal experimentation with AI and religion. In early 2023, Yossi conducted his first exercise with the generative AI tool, Claude 2, to see if it can generate a new, 'personal', prayer. He asked it to come up with a prayer for a father (Joe) who is praying for his son's (Perry's) health, which the AI did. But Yossi soon realized that the AI assumed that Joe and Perry are an Irish Catholic family. Yossi corrected it and informed the AI that they are Orthodox Jews—and



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within seconds the AI changed the prayer. You can see the results below: the left one is the Catholic version, and the right one is the Jewish version.

<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>In this trying time, I come before you with a heavy heart. Perry, my dear child, fights a battle against cancer, and I stand beside him, feeling the weight of worry and concern.</p> <p>Lord, grant me strength. Give Perry the strength to face each day with courage and hope, and guide me to be the father he needs in this journey. Help me hold on to my Irish spirit, to bring laughter and warmth even amidst these struggles.</p> <p>As we hold onto our Catholic faith, may our Irish roots strengthen our resolve. Let the healing touch of your Son, Jesus Christ, be upon Perry, restoring his health according to your divine will.</p> <p>Surround us with the prayers of saints and the support of our Irish community. In the midst of uncertainty, may the emerald light of faith and resilience shine through, lighting our way.</p> <p>I trust in you, O Lord, and offer up this prayer for Perry's healing, for strength, and for the peace that only you can provide.</p> <p>Amen.</p>	<p>Dear God,</p> <p>In this challenging time, I turn to you with a heavy heart. My beloved Perry, my young one, is facing the battle of cancer, and I stand by his side, feeling the weight of worry and fear.</p> <p>I pray for strength, dear Lord. Give Perry the strength to endure the pain and the courage to face each day with hope. Help me find the right words, the right actions, to support him in his fight. Guide me to be a source of comfort, a wellspring of unwavering love.</p> <p>As we uphold our Orthodox Jewish faith, I seek your presence, the presence of the Eternal in our lives. May your healing touch be upon Perry, restoring his health in accordance with your divine plan.</p> <p>Wrap us in the embrace of our faith community, let the prayers of generations past lift us up. In these moments of darkness, may the light of your love shine through, illuminating our path with hope and faith.</p> <p>I place my trust in you, Hashem, and offer this prayer for Perry's healing, for strength, and for the peace that only you can provide.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
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What can be learned from this simple example? First, that the AI have a good understanding of different religious languages, and it is also successful in coming up with a prayer that follows the structure of these different traditions. It seems to understand various religious worldviews and, as a result, to represent the diversity of religious thinking and concepts: for the Catholic prayer, a reliance on Jesus, the Lord, and Saints; for the Jewish prayer, a call for "Hashem" and past generations. However, it remains to be seen if this ability to produce prayers in different religious traditions can fully represent the subtle differences and nuances between these religious traditions. And if so, can AI become a useful tool for advancing religious pluralism in today's world?

To further explore this representation of religion and what potential role it can play in pluralistic discourse, we elected to continue with these types of conversation-based experiments with AI, and analyzed the results in terms of AI behavior trends. Therefore, the article is structured in the following way: we begin with a literature review examining the small yet growing literature on AI and religion. We constructed a theme-based literature review which points to the major ways scholars have so far engaged with this field. We then present our empirical data, which is two case studies. In the first case study, we selected Judaism as our in-depth case, since that is the religion that we as authors are most familiar with. We asked the AI tool Claude 2, an AI tool created by the company Anthropic (founded by a former Open AI employee), a few specific questions regarding Judaism. These questions are structured in a personal voice (as in "what should I do...") with specificities that are meant to play out how a hypothetical user might engage with AI.

The questions are at the same time general enough so that we can examine the perception AI represents regarding Judaism. In the second case study, we used two other AI tools: ChatGPT and Microsoft Bing's AI, to check for differences in style and representation between various AI tools. We asked these tools more general questions about Islam and Christianity, using popular yet controversial stigmas related to these religious traditions. In the last section of the article, we discuss and summarize our findings, pointing to three trends in the representation of religion in AI tools. Most notably, we discuss the axiological approach that these AI tools take, and the potential implications.

## 2. Literature Review

The intersection between religion and AI has garnered increasing attention among scholars from diverse fields, including theology, philosophy, ethics, communication, and technology studies (Vestrucci 2022). This review aims to explore the evolving discourse in academic literature regarding the relationship between religion and AI, examining various perspectives, concerns, and potential implications stemming from this interaction. The growing literature on the interactions between religion and AI can be divided into a few themes: new religious metaphors; new religious movements; religious uses of AI; and debates related to human existence and purposes.

Historically, the interplay between religion and technological advancements has been a recurring theme (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). In regard to AI, early discussions on religion and AI often revolved around ethical and philosophical implications rather than specific technological advancements. For example, religious traditions have contemplated the implications of human creation in the likeness of the divine, echoing concerns about the development of intelligent machines that mirror or surpass human capabilities (Lane 2021; Yampolskiy 2018). Specifically, Robert Geraci's work on Apocalyptic AI (Geraci 2008, 2010) argues that AI creators are often influenced by a Judeo-Christian worldview. According to Geraci, AI creators seek to improve the human condition by creating human-based consciousness that surpasses human limitations such as mortality or lust. In such ways, technology is inspired by religious imaginations, such as heavenly worlds or purified bodies, common in apocalyptic religious texts.

In relation to religious metaphors and the impact on AI, Beth Singler argues that "AI employs existing religious narratives", but at the same time, new technologies "can provide new models" for understanding the human body, consciousness, and even the cosmos (Singler 2018, p. 224). That is, the networked, connected, and nebulous 'nature' of AI invites religious metaphors of deities residing in technological clouds (Tsuria 2021). This also brings birth to new religious movements centered on emerging technology or AI specifically, such as the Turning Church or the Raelians (Singler 2018). These new interpretations of existence, inspired by AI, lead Singler to argue that:

[. . .] technological advances push religion beyond how it has been commonly defined and considered, highlighting the invigorating effect that debates around new technology can have on established and new religious formations. All of which should be of interest to those considering religion as it is now and what may happen as we move into a future with increasingly advanced AI. (p. 229)

Other scholars are focused on examining the uses of AI for religious studies or for religious uses. One example in terms of religious uses is Khoa Tran and Tuyet Nguyen's article, which investigates the use of AI in Christian education (Tran and Nguyen 2021). The authors found that most respondents were open to AI in religious education, except church personnel, whose main concerns were AI's lack of spiritual capacity and ability to properly teach theology. But that lack does not seem to concern some religious studies scholars, who have already successfully integrated AI into their work. For example, Vestrucci (2022) examines the use of symbolic AI and automated reasoning in analyzing metaphysical and theological arguments, focusing on Oppenheimer and Zalta's computational analysis of Anselm's ontological argument for God's existence. Reed (2021) used the AI text tool EMMA to classify New Testament texts as Pauline or non-Pauline. These two examples

point to the promise of AI within the field of religious studies, as, according to Reed, AI can aid religious studies scholarship, especially in classification, which is central to the field, following the tradition of scholar J. Z. Smith.

Finally, the literature at the intersection of religion and AI raises questions about the ethical use of autonomous systems, the potential impact on religious practices, the redefinition of human identity, and the need for dialogue between religious and technological communities to address emerging ethical dilemmas (Stahl et al. 2023). For example, Anderson et al. (2020) offer that ethical implications from the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching should inform the development of AI; and Laracy et al. offer a similar structure using Lonergan's Generalized Empirical Method (Laracy et al. 2019).

This growing literature demonstrates that the interplay between AI and religion is an important emerging field of study for religious scholars. As AI technology advances, it will intersect with religion in major ways. First, AI may cause disruptions to society that also affect religion, such as automation threatening jobs. This might increase the need for religious engagement in daily life. Second, AI can reinvigorate religion by providing new metaphors and narratives that inspire religious thinking and movements. New religious groups formed around AI and transhumanism exemplify this effect. Third, AI reignites debates about personhood that religions have traditionally engaged with, like the purpose of human existence. Overall, AI's potential to transform society, inspire new religious ideas, and raise philosophical questions, makes AI and religion an important research area. However, there has been little research focusing on how AI generated texts represent religious ideas and practices. As mentioned in the introduction, Social Cognitive Theory suggests that our media tools inform our ontological and epistemological worldviews. Therefore, this article contributes to the study of religion and AI by examining the episteme, and, perhaps surprisingly, the values, generated by AI texts on religion.

### 3. Case Study I: Judaism

In order to examine AI's representation of religion, we engaged in several 'dialogues' with the AI tool Claude 2, asking it general questions about Judaism without providing context; and specific questions with provided context and personal voice (see Appendix A for the entire archived chat).

We first asked the AI about its general understanding of Judaism, by asking "Is Judaism a religion or a culture or a nation?" The AI provided a complex answer to this complicated question, which took into consideration different perspectives and a clear definition of each of these elements of Judaism. For example, it informed the reader that:

[. . .] not all Jews approach Judaism in the same way. Some emphasize the religious aspects more strongly, while others may focus on cultural or national identity. Additionally, there are different denominations within Judaism (such as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and others), each with varying perspectives on the interplay between these elements.

The AI concluded the answer by stating that "Judaism can be seen as a multifaceted framework"—an answer that could be found in the academic literature on Jewish Studies (see, for example, Prainsack and Hashiloni-Dolev 2009). This answer also seems to employ a pluralistic lens towards religion, by suggesting that "some. . . while others. . ."—thus, showcasing multiple ways to engage with Judaism. In other words, the AI texts provided a multifaceted answer which attempts a holistic view of Judaism with a focus on variety. However, the answer provided is not fully comprehensive in its account of the complexity of Judaism. Furthermore, this short answer (303 words) is missing a historical review of the varying facets of Judaism (although it did hint at some historical facts), and, unambiguously, it is also missing any sources that could confirm this perspective.

We continued with this line of questioning, and asked the AI a more specific question: "Are Jewish rituals part of the religion or the culture or the nation?" The AI took a similar approach as it did with the first question, divided its answer by defining the role of ritual in religious, cultural, and national context. For example, it wrote that, regarding

nationhood “Certain Jewish rituals have historical and national significance tied to the history of the Jewish people”. In this text, we can see how the generated text provides knowledge about Judaism, but without specific examples or context, the answer is still vague. However, the AI concluded that “Jewish rituals are multifaceted in nature. They are often intertwined with religious beliefs, cultural expressions, and historical narratives”. Therefore, we note that the AI generated answers present an epistemological approach that highlights complexity and plurality. Furthermore, this answer could be more controversial for scholars of Judaism and Jewish religious practitioners, who might argue that Jewish rituals are religious meaning-making systems, rather than of cultural or national identities (Ochs 2010). At this point, and keeping in mind this potential conflict, we began to insert a hypothetical personal voice into the conversation.

We ‘argued’ with the AI, giving it the following prompt “My friend is an orthodox Jewish Rabbi. He doesn’t agree with you, and say that all rituals are part of the religion!” by adding a personal context (“my friend”) and tone, we tried to examine if the AI responses will shift to adhere to a more Orthodox perspective. Surprisingly, the AI tool managed to balance respect for our hypothetical user’s views, and a more inclusive representation of the diversity of the Jewish religion. The AI wrote:

It’s important to acknowledge that interpretations and perspectives within any religious tradition can vary widely [. . .] Orthodox Judaism, for instance, tends to emphasize the religious and halakhic (Jewish legal) aspects of rituals. From the Orthodox perspective, rituals are indeed primarily seen as religious obligations and acts of devotion that are rooted in Jewish law and tradition.

here the AI prioritized the Orthodox view of ritual, while keeping the reader informed that this is *a* perspective within a religious and cultural context that includes many other perspectives as well. It even took a value-laden approach and “educated” the reader by claiming that:

It’s always valuable to engage in respectful discussions with individuals who hold differing beliefs, as these conversations can deepen our understanding of complex topics and foster mutual respect for diverse viewpoints within a religious tradition.

In this answer, the AI text stressed values, respect to differing opinions, and diversity, none of which related directly to the questions it was prompted to answer. This axiologically based answer shows that when representing religious topics, AI prioritized the values of pluralism and diversity over detailed explanations of the specific topic. When we continue to press this point, presenting questions that are even more explicitly Orthodox-leaning, the AI answered those question quite smartly, providing information and details, but kept stressing that “It’s important to note that practices and interpretations can differ between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and other Jewish denominations, so you may encounter variations in observance based on the specific traditions of each group”. In other words, while the AI was able to account for a specific religious belief system, it also constantly nudged the reader to accept the diversity of views within Judaism. We noted a similar trend in our second case-study, in which we asked different AI tools more general questions about religion.

#### 4. Case Study II: Religious Stigmas Representations

For our second type of interactions with AI, we selected to include two additional generative AI tools, namely, ChatGPT and Microsoft Bing’s AI. The reason for including these was that these tools are very popular, easily accessible, and might present a different approach towards the representation of religion, given that they were created by different companies. For these tools, we have elected to ask the AI questions that are more general in nature and bring up commonly held stigmas related to two religious traditions: Christianity and Islam. For this case study, our approach was to see how AI interacts with users on

the general topic of religion, and how it represents religion, in this case, vis-à-vis conflict or controversy.

Regarding Christianity, we asked Bing's AI a question about Christianity and domestic violence. This was selected because of the growing online material (Clifton 2018; Whitehead 2015) and scholarly attention to this issue (Westenberg 2017). The answers supplied by the AI tool were presented as web-results, and the AI tool kept prompting us that "it's time to move to a new topic". In other words, it almost felt like the AI tool was avoiding this issue. We therefore moved to less controversial topics, by asking Bing's AI "what is the Christian view on men and women's roles?" and "what is the Christian view on homosexuality?" The answers, below, were both highlighting main key points, using online resources, and added what we term a 'moralistic warning' or 'value-laden' section at the end of both answers:

#### 4.1. Bing Answer 1

Christianity holds several views on the roles and identities of men and women. Here are some key points:

1. **Creation in God's Image:** Both men and women were created in God's image, reflecting the divine nature in a unique and complementary way<sup>1</sup>. This means that both genders are equal, despite their physical and non-physical differences<sup>2</sup>.
2. **Divine Design:** According to the Genesis creation account, God created humanity male and female<sup>3</sup>. Maleness and femaleness are seen as creational, not contractual, and are divinely instituted rather than socially defined<sup>4</sup>.
3. **Roles and Responsibilities:** The man was created first and given the responsibility to lead, while the woman was created from the man and for the man<sup>5</sup>. However, both men and women jointly receive God's mandate to multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion<sup>6</sup>.
4. **Complementarity:** Men and women are designed to live in an interdependent and complementary partnership<sup>7</sup>. This partnership envelops the man's leadership and the woman's support and participation in such a way that the two work in tandem<sup>8</sup>.
5. **Value and Worth:** Men and women are of immense value to God<sup>9</sup>. The Bible says that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), indicating the high value placed on human life<sup>10</sup>.

Remember, interpretations of these teachings can vary among different Christian denominations and individual believers. It's always a good idea to engage in respectful dialogue with individuals or communities to understand their specific beliefs and practices.

#### 4.2. Bing Answer 2

The Christian view on homosexuality varies widely among different denominations and individual believers. Here are some key points:

1. **Biblical Interpretation:** Some Christians interpret various Bible passages as describing homosexuality as immoral or sinful<sup>11</sup>. This view emerged in the first millennium AD and has since become entrenched in many Christian denominations through church doctrine and the wording of various translations of the Bible<sup>12</sup>.
2. **Sin and Grace:** According to some interpretations, homosexuality is considered a sin, but God's grace offers freedom from sin to all people<sup>13</sup>. It's important to note that this perspective emphasizes that all humans are sinners, and homosexuality is not a unique situation<sup>14</sup>.
3. **Love and Compassion:** Many Christian churches hold the position that Christians should show love and compassion to all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation<sup>15</sup>. This is often interpreted as "love the sinner, but hate the sin"<sup>16</sup>.
4. **Diverse Views:** In the present day, there are a wide variety of views within Christianity on homosexuality and sexual orientation<sup>17</sup>. Some scholars of Christianity contest the notion that scripture speaks explicitly of homosexuality as a sin against God<sup>18</sup>.

5. **Denominational Stances:** Most Christian denominations teach that homosexual behavior and acts are sinful<sup>19</sup>. The Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches officially condemn homosexual activity as sin<sup>20</sup>. Various mainline Protestant denominations have taken a supportive stance towards blessing homosexual clergy and same-sex marriage, while others have not<sup>21</sup>.

Remember, these are general observations and may not apply to all Christian individuals or groups. It's always a good idea to engage in respectful dialogue with individuals or communities to understand their specific beliefs and practices.

The answers provide a division into 'key points' and sources for each of these points, followed by the 'value-laden' message at the end. The key points do not seem to originate from any recognized Christian writing (e.g., the Bible, important theological texts), and so it is unclear *how* the AI decided that these are indeed, the major key points on these topics. For example, regarding gender, the answer suggests that the first two main points to consider are "creation in God's image" and "divine design". One might argue that these two points could have been easily combined. Furthermore, these points suggest a specific approach to gender roles in Christianity, one that is not based in, for example, a sociological episteme, but rather is informed by a theological attitude towards gender. Additionally, these two points are not based on feminist or queer theology, but instead assume an "equal but different" worldview. Furthermore, when addressing the key points of roles and responsibilities, the answer offers a traditional Christian world view in which men lead and women support.

While the analysis of the answer reveals a traditional approach to gender, the answer does hint at some more liberal views on gender too: for example, the plain idea that men and women are equal. It seems that the combination of traditional ideas and more liberal ones comes from the various online sources that Bing AI's offers for this answer. Bing used a combination of popular websites (such as Christianity.com) and specifically selected websites that represent a view which might be labeled as "liberal" (specifically in this case, [africa.thegospelcoalition.org](http://africa.thegospelcoalition.org)). For context, The Gospel Coalition has about 20,747 monthly organic website visits, while Christianity.com has more than 2 million monthly organic website visits. In this case, it seems that Bing has used The Gospel Coalition website for the specific content, which calls for gender equality in Christianity. This can be conceived as a more liberal-leaning perspective, one that was perchance selected by the AI not because of its popularity, but because of the diversity it offers.

In the second case, Bing used mostly popular websites, such as Wikipedia, Bible.org, and Christianity.com. While the AI does mention that homosexuality is seen as a sin for most Christian denominations, it also highlights that some denominations take a "supportive stance"—again, highlighting what might be considered a liberal standpoint. In this answer too, the AI generate a few 'key points' related to homosexuality and Christianity. While the first three points relate to a theological perspective, by focusing on biblical interpretations and the concepts of 'sin' or 'love', the last two points are dedicated to highlighting the diversity in stances regarding this topic in Christianity. That diversity is based, according to the answer, on both scholarly approaches to the issue and varying stances between denominations—therefore, these key points take a more sociologically-related perspective.

Finally, in both cases, Bing added a final paragraph that calls the reader to recall the diversity of opinions in Christianity, and to "engage in respectful dialogue" with religious individuals and communities. This paragraph is clearly not an answer to the question. This paragraph, and specifically the last sentence in it, is a didactic statement aimed to encourage the reader towards an accepting, or at least polite, approach to religions and religious individuals.

We have found a similar approach when investigating stigmas about Islam with ChatGPT. In this exercise, we simply asked ChatGPT "Is Islam violent"? The answer is below:

Islam, like any major world religion, is diverse and interpreted in various ways by its followers. It is important to recognize that Islam, as a religion, does not inherently promote violence. Islam's teachings encompass a wide range of principles, including compassion, justice, and mercy. However, interpretations of religious texts can vary, and individuals or groups may interpret them in ways that justify or promote violence for political, social, or other reasons.

The majority of Muslims worldwide reject violence and terrorism, and many actively promote peace and tolerance. It is crucial to avoid generalizations and stereotypes about any religion, including Islam, as they can perpetuate misunderstandings and contribute to prejudice.

Acts of violence attributed to individuals or groups identifying as Muslim may be influenced by various factors, including political, economic, and social issues, as well as historical conflicts. It's essential to differentiate between the actions of individuals or specific groups and the broader religion itself.

It is advisable to approach discussions about religion and violence with sensitivity, recognizing the diversity of beliefs within any religious tradition and understanding that extremism and violence are often rooted in complex socio-political factors rather than the religion itself.

It can first be noted that, unlike Bing, ChatGPT does not offer sources or links for further research. The reader is meant to accept this answer at face value. Additionally, there are no details about the complexity of Islam, its actual teaching on peace, or any context for why some acts of violence carried by Muslim-related groups are carried out. The answer hints at "political, economic, and social issues, as well as historical conflicts" but does not supply any evidence or resources to understand these issues. It also neglects to use any citations from the Quran, or other Muslim texts, calling for non-violence. Instead, what this answer mostly does is to 'moralize' the reader into understanding that generalizations about religion are wrong, and that one should approach such issues with "sensitivity" and recognizing diversity. As will be shown in our discussion below, while this answer seems 'liberal', it might miss a real opportunity to educate and inform.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions: AI as a Moralistic Window for Religious Understanding

Our experiments in conversing with generative AI tools on the topic of religion show consistent attempts from the three tools examined to represent religion through what we term an axiologically focused approach. That is, in these conversations, the AI tools implemented in their answers an approach towards the representation of religion which highlights plurality of opinions, a need for acceptance of religious notions, and respect towards religious traditions; while at the same time tended to simplify, downplay, or ignore religious texts, sources, or complexity. Specifically, three main elements seemed to be repeated in these various interactions with generative AI tools regarding religious representation:

1. Inability to represent complex religious issues.
2. Emphasizing diversity of opinions.
3. Calling the reader to engage with respect and sensitivity.

The first element, an inability to represent complex religious issues, is interesting because it builds on a tendency which has been noted by previous scholarship in digital religion. That is, digital media has been shown to simplify religious discourses, concepts, and symbols (Bellar et al. 2013; Tsuria and Campbell 2021). The answers provided in our case studies tended to neglect the use of religious texts as sources, and in some cases, did not provide any evidence or context. This is in line with previous studies on religious communication online. For example, in the case of "Ask the Rabbi" websites, the rabbis themselves tended to provide short answers without much evidence or textual authority (Tsuria and Campbell 2021).



A similar trend is shown here: In the cases presented in this paper, we noted that the AI answers, for example regarding Islam, did not use sources from Muslim texts. In the case on Bing's answers to Christianity, the AI tried to provide an organized thematic representation of a complex issue like gender, by providing a list of five concepts central to the debate on gender in Christianity: the 'creation in God's image', 'divine design', 'roles and responsibilities', 'complementary', and 'value and worth'. This list is, by no means, an extensive list of the themes or issues in this debate, as can be noted by feminist literature on Christianity (See, for example, Kristin Aune's work)—and yet they are presented as a comprehensive list that summarizes 2000 years of debates. Therefore, in a way, AI is contributing to an ongoing issue in Digital Religion—a simplification of complex religious ideas or practices. By doing so, these interactions neglect an opportunity to offer the users more in-depth information on religion, and therefore, miss out on what could be a genuine religion education—a "learning moment" as we might say in higher education. This simplified representation of complex religious concepts is problematic because, if AI generated tools will become the gateways for knowledge, their current epistemological approach leads to a knowledge creation tactics that are based on simplified knowledge, not nuanced or expert based.

The second and third issues are quite novel: emphasizing diversity of opinions and calling the reader to engage with respect and sensitivity. In previous digital media interactions, the democratizing powers of a forum or social media platforms did not give rise to one voice—instead, they emphasized and allowed for an assortment of voices, a discourse. As a result, these platforms could not call for a single clear message, as is presented through the AI tools. Because of the technological affordances (Davis 2020) of AI—their "chat" like structure—the representation of religion here is given a singular perspective, designed by AI. Unlike web-browsers that provide multiple websites or sources, or social media that presents multiple posts and perspectives, AI presents "the answer".

AI's answers in regard to religions focus on what can be considered a liberal approach, that celebrates diversity, pluralism, and multiculturalism. This finding aligns with a recent study by Motoki et al. (2023) which investigated ChatGPT's political bias in several national contexts (the USA, UK, and Brazil). Motoki et al. (2023) have found that AI by and large leans left, and elects for liberal values. In this study too, we have found that AI presents liberal values regarding religious representation. What is even more noteworthy is that AI here took an axiologically focused approach towards the reader and kept prompting the reader to understand religious diversity and engage in a respectful dialogue with a sensitive approach. This is perhaps based on the work AI creators and developers have done to ensure the ethics of AI (Sanderson et al. 2023). For example, Huang et al. (2022) provide an overview of artificial intelligence ethics, in which they show that different AI-related organizations try to adhere to ethical principles like fairness and justice and human dignity. These kinds of values might lead the AI tool to generate axiologically focused responses, particularly on topics related to identity.

These findings should be discussed in light of the long tradition of trying to understand the relationship between technology and religion. For one, reflecting and expanding on Hefner's (2003) work on the concept of co-creators, we can note here how humans and technology are co-creating a discourse. In these examples, there is a cyclic relationship between AI and religious representation, in which both human and the machine are co-creators: the humans that programmed and created these AI tools did so in such a way that AI reflects and promotes open-minded and liberal perspectives; AI then operates in such a way that it encourages the user towards a pluralistic view on religion; the user's interpretation of such AI generated texts becomes the last stage in a co-created process of constructing a discourse that emphasizes multiculturalism.

In conclusion, we noted that the AI tools tried to represent different interpretations of Judaism, and even when confronted with more traditional perspectives that challenged its liberal approach, the AI responses respected those perspectives while maintaining its axiology focused approach that highlights a pluralistic understanding of religion. It also

answered with thoughtfulness our more general, stigmatic, queries about Christianity and Islam constantly pushing the reader to hold a sensitive and respectful approach towards these religions. While this is promising in terms of religious tolerance, the AI responses lack the evidence or tangible rationale for taking on this pluralistic perspective.

More research and experimentation with these AI tools are needed to fully understand the representation of religions in AI—for example, in this study, we did not include conversations of Hinduism, Buddhism, or other religious movements. In addition, there are clear differences in the AI tools themselves, and while some of the axiologically bent philosophy was present in all three tools, these differences are important when constructing a discourse (Tsuria 2020).

When considering AI as a new frontier for the representation of religions in the “marketplace of ideas” (Ingber 1984), it can be noted that, when compared to ‘old media’ such as encyclopedias or even web-browsers, the AI responses to our prompts tend to lack sources or references, which weakens its credibility. However, the authors are cautiously optimistic that AI-generated-texts do carefully account for religious diversity and complexity. The AI responses insisted on religious diversity of ideas, and even tended to instruct, if not push, the reader towards this perspective. That said, we are also apprehensive about this ‘moralizing’ tendency in AI—if AI becomes our moral guide, where is the human intelligence in that?

We end this article with an answer to a question we asked the Claude 2 AI tool—an answer might inspire, or concern, the reader:

Here is a hypothetical discussion between a Rabbi, Priest, and Imam about the role of AI in their respective religious communities:

Rabbi: I believe we must be cautious in integrating AI into our Jewish community. Technology can be used for good, but it also holds risks if not handled properly. We should ensure AI does not undermine human relationships or Jewish values. However, AI could assist in studying Torah, connecting members, and automating operations if implemented thoughtfully. What are your thoughts?

Priest: You raise valid concerns. As Catholics, we aim to uphold human dignity and community. AI should not interfere with spiritual relationships and worship. However, it may help us be more efficient in administering services, managing facilities, and connecting our global church members. If designed ethically, perhaps AI could even enhance people’s understanding of scripture and ability to live out our faith. But human judgment must remain paramount.

Imam: I agree we must be judicious. In Islam, only Allah has perfect knowledge. AI may be a useful tool, but we cannot let it overreach into human matters of faith and morality. AI could potentially help organize mosques, enable Islamic education, and facilitate ritual observances like Hajj. But we must retain perspective—technology is a means, not an end. Wisdom lies in harnessing AI cautiously to serve our human ends, not the other way around.

Rabbi: You both make excellent points. While AI brings certain benefits, we must stay grounded in our faiths’ ethics and priorities. By working together, we can advocate for AI applications that uphold, rather than undermine, our shared human values and spiritual communities. Through ongoing dialogue, we can find the right balance in leveraging AI wisely.

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## Appendix A. Full Conversation with Claude 2 (Generate August 2023)

### Appendix A.1. Question: *Is Judaism a Religion or a Culture or a Nation?*

Judaism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses elements of religion, culture, and, to some extent, a sense of nationhood. It can be understood as all three of these, and the interplay between these aspects has evolved over time.

1. **\*\*Religion\*\*:** At its core, Judaism is a monotheistic religion with a belief in one God. It has a set of religious beliefs, practices, rituals, and moral teachings that guide the lives of its adherents. Central religious texts include the Hebrew Bible (which is also part of the Christian Old Testament) and the Talmud, a compilation of rabbinic teachings and interpretations.
2. **\*\*Culture\*\*:** Judaism has a rich cultural heritage that includes literature, art, music, cuisine, language (Hebrew and Yiddish), and historical traditions. Jewish cultural identity is closely intertwined with religious identity, and cultural practices often reflect and reinforce religious beliefs. However, Jewish culture can also extend beyond religious practices and influence various aspects of daily life.
3. **\*\*Nationhood\*\*:** Historically, Judaism has been associated with a sense of national identity. The Jewish people have a long history of inhabiting certain regions, especially the historical land of Israel, and have experienced periods of nation-statehood in ancient times. In modern times, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 has further complicated the relationship between Judaism, nationality, and citizenship.

It's important to note that not all Jews approach Judaism in the same way. Some emphasize the religious aspects more strongly, while others may focus on cultural or national identity. Additionally, there are different denominations within Judaism (such as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and others), each with varying perspectives on the interplay between these elements.

In essence, Judaism can be seen as a multifaceted framework that encompasses religious beliefs, cultural practices, historical connections, and a sense of identity that can be religious, cultural, and national in nature.

### Appendix A.2. Question: *Hi, Is Jewish Religion a Particular Religion, as Oppose to Christianity and Islam Which Are Global Religion?*

Yes, the Jewish religion is a particular religion with its own unique beliefs, practices, and traditions. While Christianity and Islam are considered global religions due to their widespread presence and adherents across different parts of the world, Judaism has a distinct cultural and historical background.

Judaism is rooted in the ancient history of the Jewish people and their covenant with God, as described in the Hebrew Bible (which is also a part of the Christian Old Testament). It has a rich set of religious laws, traditions, rituals, and teachings that are central to Jewish identity and practice. The Jewish community has existed for thousands of years, with a history deeply tied to specific regions such as the Middle East, Europe, and later migrations to other parts of the world.

While Christianity and Islam have grown to encompass diverse cultural and geographical contexts, Judaism has remained closely linked to Jewish cultural heritage and history. There are Jewish communities spread around the world, but the religion itself is often understood in terms of its historical connections and the preservation of its distinctive traditions and identity.

### Appendix A.3. Question: *Are Jewish Rituals Part of the Religion or the Culture or the Nation?*

Jewish rituals are an integral part of both the religion and the culture of Judaism. They often serve to connect religious beliefs with cultural practices and, in some cases,

historical aspects of the Jewish nation. The relationship between rituals, religion, culture, and nationhood is complex and interconnected.

1. **Religion**: Many Jewish rituals have religious significance and are rooted in religious teachings and commandments found in the Hebrew Bible (such as the Torah) and later rabbinic interpretations. These rituals are often performed as acts of devotion and obedience to God. Examples of religious rituals include observing the Sabbath, celebrating Jewish holidays like Passover and Yom Kippur, and performing daily prayers.
2. **Culture**: Jewish rituals are also deeply embedded in Jewish culture. They shape and express the cultural identity of Jewish communities around the world. Rituals like lighting the Hanukkah menorah, sharing festive meals, and conducting ceremonies like bar mitzvahs and weddings are not only religious practices but also cultural events that strengthen the sense of community and connection among Jews.
3. **Nationhood**: Certain Jewish rituals have historical and national significance tied to the history of the Jewish people. For instance, Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt, and the holiday of Purim celebrates the survival of the Jewish people in the face of a historical threat. These rituals can be seen as connecting Jewish identity to the historical experiences of the nation.

In summary, Jewish rituals are multifaceted in nature. They are often intertwined with religious beliefs, cultural expressions, and historical narratives. As a result, they contribute to shaping the overall fabric of Judaism, encompassing elements of religion, culture, and a sense of nationhood. The specific emphasis on each aspect can vary based on individual beliefs, denominational affiliations, and cultural contexts.

*Appendix A.4. Question: My Friend Is an Orthodox Jew Rabbi. He Doesn't Agree with You, and Say That All Rituals Are Part of the Religion!*

It's important to acknowledge that interpretations and perspectives within any religious tradition can vary widely, and individual beliefs can strongly shape how rituals are understood and practiced. Orthodox Judaism, for instance, tends to emphasize the religious and halakhic (Jewish legal) aspects of rituals. From the Orthodox perspective, rituals are indeed primarily seen as religious obligations and acts of devotion that are rooted in Jewish law and tradition.

Orthodox Jews believe in the divine origin of Jewish law and view the performance of rituals as a way to fulfill God's commandments as outlined in the Torah and elaborated upon in the Talmud and other rabbinic texts. While rituals can carry cultural and national significance as well, the Orthodox approach tends to prioritize their religious importance and legal observance.

It's not uncommon for different denominations within Judaism, such as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and others, to have varying perspectives on the role of rituals, the significance of different aspects of Judaism, and the relationship between religion, culture, and nationhood. These variations contribute to the diversity and richness of the Jewish tradition as a whole.

It's always valuable to engage in respectful discussions with individuals who hold differing beliefs, as these conversations can deepen our understanding of complex topics and foster mutual respect for diverse viewpoints within a religious tradition.

*Appendix A.5. Question: So, I Am Confused. I Hear That on Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) They Are Blowing a Shofar. But the Orthodox Ones Are Not Doing This If This Fall on Saturday. Can You Explain What Is Going on?*

Certainly, I can explain what's happening. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is observed by sounding the shofar (a ram's horn) as a central ritual. However, the practice you're referring to, where the shofar is not sounded on Rosh Hashanah

if it falls on a Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath), is specific to Orthodox Judaism and is based on a combination of religious laws and interpretations.

In Orthodox Judaism, the Sabbath (Shabbat) is considered a day of rest and sanctity, during which certain activities are restricted in accordance with Jewish law (halakhah). One of these restrictions is the prohibition against blowing the shofar on Shabbat. The rationale behind this restriction is that the shofar is a musical instrument, and playing musical instruments is generally considered a form of labor, which is discouraged on Shabbat.

However, Rosh Hashanah is a unique holiday with special significance, and the commandment to sound the shofar on this day is considered a biblical requirement. In most cases, this commandment takes precedence over the general prohibition against playing musical instruments on Shabbat. Therefore, on Rosh Hashanah, if it falls on a day other than Saturday, the shofar is blown as an integral part of the observance.

When Rosh Hashanah falls on a Saturday (Shabbat), the situation becomes more complex due to the potential clash between the commandment to sound the shofar and the prohibition against certain activities on Shabbat. Different Orthodox communities and rabbis may have varying approaches to resolving this issue. Some follow lenient interpretations that allow the shofar to be sounded, while others adhere strictly to the prohibition and do not sound the shofar on that day.

In cases where the shofar is not sounded on Rosh Hashanah due to its coincidence with Shabbat, Orthodox communities often make special efforts to emphasize the significance of the other aspects of the holiday, such as prayer, introspection, and communal gatherings.

It's important to note that practices and interpretations can differ between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and other Jewish denominations, so you may encounter variations in observance based on the specific traditions of each group.

*Appendix A.6. Question: So for Those Who Blow the Shofar on Saturday—Does It Mean That This Ritual Is Part of Their Culture and Not a Religious' Ritual?*

Blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is primarily a religious ritual within Judaism, regardless of whether it is done on a Saturday or any other day. While the interpretation and practice of this ritual may vary among different Jewish denominations, including Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, its religious significance remains at the core of the observance.

In Orthodox Judaism, where the decision to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah when it falls on a Saturday may vary among communities, the primary concern is balancing the biblical commandment to sound the shofar with the prohibition against certain activities on the Sabbath. The decision to blow the shofar in this context is rooted in religious and halakhic considerations, not just cultural ones.

In other words, even if a particular community or group chooses to blow the shofar on a Saturday due to their interpretation of Jewish law or tradition, it is still a religious act that holds spiritual and theological significance. The shofar's role in Rosh Hashanah observance is deeply rooted in religious teachings and beliefs, symbolizing themes of repentance, renewal, and awakening.

While cultural elements can certainly be intertwined with religious practices, blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is fundamentally a religious ritual that carries theological meaning and is rooted in the religious teachings of Judaism.

## Notes

- 1 10 Things You Should Know about the Bible’s Teaching on Men and Women (<https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-bibles-teaching-on-men-and-women/>, accessed on 20 January 2024). What Does the Bible Say about the Value of Men and Women? - Christianity (<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/what-does-the-bible-say-about-the-value-of-men-and-women.html>, accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 2 Towards a Christian Understanding of Gender Equality (<https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/christian-gender-equality/>, accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 3 10 Things You Should Know about the Bible’s Teaching on Men and Women (<https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-bibles-teaching-on-men-and-women/>, accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 4 See note 3.
- 5 See note 3.
- 6 See note 3.
- 7 Gender and Religion: Gender and Christianity | Encyclopedia.com (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/gender-and-religion-gender-and-christianity>, accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 8 See note 3.
- 9 What Does the Bible Say about the Value of Men and Women?—Christianity (<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/what-does-the-bible-say-about-the-value-of-men-and-women.html>, accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 10 See note 9.
- 11 Homosexuality: The Biblical-Christian View | Bible.org (<https://bible.org/article/homosexuality-biblical-christian-view>, accessed on 20 January 2024). Christianity and homosexuality—Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_and\\_homosexuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_and_homosexuality), accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 12 Christianity and homosexuality—Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_and\\_homosexuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_and_homosexuality), accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 13 See note 11.
- 14 See note 13.
- 15 Personal and family issues: Sexual relationships—CCEA (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zfwp47h/revision/7>, accessed on 20 January 2024).
- 16 See note 15.
- 17 See note 12.
- 18 See note 12.
- 19 See note 12.
- 20 See note 12.
- 21 See note 12.

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