



The Soul Beyond the Algorithm

Across traditions, AI ethics converge on a shared concern: technology must serve human beings, not replace them.

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I recently asked the latest version of Claude to provide statements from various religions on artificial intelligence.

Almost immediately, I received a 300-word paper outlining what various religions thought about AI. As someone with a background in interfaith work, I quickly realized that a few of the statements were not quite right, and others were actually wrong.

I then asked AI to give me the references for the statements it had made. Claude apologetically wrote back:

Good question—and I owe you an honest answer here. When I made those specific statements in my original response, I was drawing on general training knowledge rather than verified, cited sources. I should not have presented them as established facts without sourcing them first.

My experience illustrates how AI can, ironically, misrepresent faith perspectives about AI. As people of faith, we need to rely on good sources to understand different faith perspectives about artificial intelligence, rather than general, unverified sources (as Claude did).

Many faith and interfaith groups have been actively promoting ethical AI use that enhances, rather than inhibits, human flourishing and spiritual connection. As I wrote in a previous [article](#), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has played a significant role in these discussions.

As I read and study the statements of faith groups on AI, I am impressed by how similar they are. Recurring concerns include:

1. The effects of unethical use of AI on humanity and the environment, especially in warfare, and on the unfair advantages countries with access to AI have over countries without access to AI.
2. The effect AI use has and will continue to have on our youth, specifically in areas of relationship building, personal communication, and individual learning.
3. The effect AI will have on [personal privacy](#) and on restrictions on religious belief and practice.

I will highlight selected viewpoints on AI from a sampling of faith groups to provide a picture of the questions people of faith may want to consider as we think about how to use AI toward its highest ends. This overview is illustrative, not exhaustive, and omissions should not be read as a sign that those groups lack serious engagement with questions about AI.

Roman Catholics

In February 2020, the “[Rome Call for AI Ethics](#)” emerged from a conference hosted by the Pontifical Academy for Life and received Vatican support. It defined the ethics of AI development and use this way: “[AI systems](#) must be conceived, designed, and implemented to serve and protect human beings and the environment in which they live.” It [outlined six principles](#) to guide AI ethics at the national and international levels:

1. Transparency: AI systems must be explainable.
2. Inclusion: Everyone should benefit.
3. Responsibility: The design and deployment of AI should be done responsibly.
4. Impartiality: Bias should not be part of AI systems; fairness and human dignity should be safeguarded.
5. Reliability: AI systems should work reliably.
6. Security and privacy: AI systems should respect the privacy of the users.

Since the Rome Call in 2020, the Vatican has hosted regular summits of religious leaders and AI experts to discuss these principles in the ever-changing landscape of AI development. The purpose of these summits is to keep AI development focused on [what’s good for humanity](#).

In January 2025, the Vatican issued *Antiqua et Nova*, which discusses the relationship between artificial and human intelligence. It describes how the mind plays a central role in understanding what it means to be human and how human intelligence is relational. Humans self-reflect about what they are thinking, putting their thoughts into a moral and relational context. Humans have the capacity to know other people and to give others love and understanding. Accordingly, human intelligence is not an isolated faculty but is exercised in relationships, finding its fullest expression in dialogue, collaboration, and solidarity. We learn with others, and we learn through others. Authentic human intelligence requires embracing the full scope of one’s being: spiritual, cognitive, embodied, and relational.

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The document contrasts human intelligence with [artificial intelligence](#), which does not embody spiritual or relational intelligence. The statement asks this important question:

“Given these considerations, one can ask how AI can be understood within God’s plan. To answer this, it is important to recall that techno-scientific activity is not neutral in character but is a *human* endeavor that engages the humanistic and cultural dimensions of human creativity.”

The *Antiqua et Nova* ended with a specific standard for the development of AI applications:

[I]t is essential to emphasize the importance of moral responsibility grounded in the dignity and vocation of the human person. This guiding principle also applies to questions concerning AI. In this context, the ethical dimension takes on primary importance because it is people who design systems and determine the purposes for which they are used. Between a machine and a human being, only the latter is truly a moral agent—a subject of moral responsibility who exercises freedom in his or her decisions and accepts their consequences. ...The commitment to ensuring that AI always supports and promotes the supreme value of the dignity of every human being and the fullness of the human vocation serves as a criterion of discernment for developers, owners, operators, and regulators of AI, as well as to its users. It remains valid for every application of the technology at every level of its use.

The Vatican statement emphasizes the moral responsibility to view AI applications in the context of advancing human flourishing, rather than destroying the human, relational context of human intelligence.

Southern Baptists

In 2019, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) issued a document titled “[Artificial Intelligence: An Evangelical Statement of Principles](#).” It was one of the first major evangelical frameworks, asserting that AI is a tool created by human agency that must never supplant the *Imago Dei* (image of God) in humans. The Commission set forth 12 articles that reviewed the entire gamut of possible AI use and influence, from work to war. The basis of its principles is that “while AI excels in data-based computation, technology is incapable of possessing the capacity for moral agency or responsibility.”

In June 2023, the SBC adopted its first official ethics statement on AI, [“On Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies.”](#) The statement reiterated the ERLC’s earlier points and called for discernment in developing and using AI. The statement also acknowledged the importance of using AI in honest, transparent, and Christlike ways, ensuring human dignity and avoiding deception and unjust gain.

In September 2025, the ERLC released a 39-page guide, [“The Work of Our Hands: Christian Ministry in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,”](#) advising church leaders to use AI to complement, not replace, human ministry. It warns against AI shortcuts in sermon preparation, emphasizing that preaching God’s Word is a distinct calling requiring wisdom, maturity, and prayer.

Buddhists

Buddhist leaders and scholars have also expressed concerns about the use of AI in spiritual matters. The Dalai Lama, one of the world’s most recognized Tibetan Buddhist leaders, hosted a formal dialogue on AI in October 2025, with over 120 academics, scientists, and policymakers gathering under the theme “Minds, Artificial Intelligence, and Ethics” to examine AI’s potential to alleviate suffering and its risks. In the [Tibetan Review](#), Geshe Thupten Jinpa, chair of the Mind & Life board of directors, pointed out that His Holiness had two main objectives for this conference: (1) to bring the mind and contemplative study into AI and (2) to explore how science and compassion-driven motivation can serve humanity. Buddhist-framed AI ethics discussions often focus on how AI use must strive to decrease pain and suffering, [according to the MIT Technology Review](#).

Sikhs

The Sikh religion, like other religions without a hierarchical structure, does not have an official living leader to provide a definitive religious statement on AI. However, Sikh scholars are also actively thinking about AI’s spiritual implications. In February 2024, [AI and Faith](#) published an interview with Sikh scholar Jasjit Singh, who shared his thoughts on AI from his faith perspective. Singh points out that while there is no official Sikh statement about AI, he believes Sikh principles apply to individuals’ responsibility to use AI for good and positivity. He said:



Rather than talking about AI specifically, the Guru Granth Sahib talks about the importance of intention when using a tool. In the Sikh tradition, there's this real emphasis on the oneness of humanity, of recognizing that other human beings and creation itself is one thing. If the use of the tool is leading the individual to a positive outcome and as long as that tool is leading you towards this idea of oneness, then it's seen as being used for the right sort of reason.

Interfaith Efforts

Several interfaith groups are banding together to focus on the importance of keeping humans in control of AI and ensuring that it promotes rather than inhibits freedom of religion or belief, known as FoRB. They believe that AI should not become the master of humanity; instead, it should be a servant to humanity. The Article 18 Alliance and the Future of Life Institute are both organizations promoting AI governance frameworks that keep human rights, religious freedom, and human control central.

Article 18 Alliance Statement: Towards a FoRB-Sensitive AI Policy

The [Article 18 Alliance](#) is a network of like-minded countries committed to promoting worldwide freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), as articulated in Article 18 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Thirty-eight countries have joined the Alliance, including the United States.

In 2025, the Article 18 Alliance issued a statement highlighting the importance of using AI to promote FoRB and prevent its abuse to the [detriment of FoRB](#). The statement described how AI can support FoRB by improving education, preserving the heritage of religious minorities, and providing rapid translations of religious content into other languages. But it also noted that AI has inflicted harm on FoRB by exacerbating violence and conflict relating to FoRB. Early warning systems and real-time monitoring can identify potentially harmful AI outputs, and the Alliance recommends that technology

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companies adopt a human-rights-based approach during the design and assessment of AI systems.

The [final recommendations](#) were to protect the most vulnerable communities, to develop effective policies to prevent AI from being misused to mobilize violence, and to leverage cross-governmental collaborations to set up global frameworks for the future of AI. Of the 12 signatories, the United States was not among them. FoRB must evolve alongside AI technologies to ensure that digital innovation strengthens human dignity and rights rather than inhibits or restricts them.

Future of Life Institute: Keeping It Human

The [Future of Life Institute](#) focuses on securing a human future and promoting AI development that promotes human flourishing and benefits everyone worldwide. In March 2026, FLI announced [The Pro-Human AI Declaration](#) which focuses on keeping humans in charge, avoiding concentration of AI power in the hands of a few, protecting human agency and liberty, and ensuring AI companies are held accountable for what they are doing. FLI also places special emphasis on world religions and works with other faiths and interfaith groups to push its declaration.

Faith Directions with AI

Given the throughlines between different faith and interfaith groups' approaches to AI, there are significant opportunities for people of faith to work together to promote the use of AI in a way that contributes to human flourishing. Most religions believe that, if used ethically and equitably, AI can support societal improvements and increase human flourishing.

On the other hand, people of faith need to be very aware of their private use of AI and listen to religious leaders' [teachings and warnings](#) in order to decide how best to use AI at work and in their homes.

A [report](#) released yesterday from the Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University and the Institute for Family Studies illustrates why this discernment matters not only in public policy but in private life. The report found that a notable minority of partnered young adults are already using AI romantic companions, often secretly, and that this use

is associated with lower real-life relationship stability, poorer communication, and a desire for real partners to behave more like always-validating AI companions. These findings underscore a central concern repeated across faith traditions: AI may be useful as a tool, but it becomes spiritually and relationally dangerous when it imitates, replaces, or distorts the human relationships through which love, sacrifice, accountability, and moral growth occur.

People of faith have a vital role to play in insisting that AI remain ordered toward human dignity and moral responsibility. Used wisely, AI may support learning, creativity, accessibility, and connection. Used carelessly, it can counterfeit the goods it claims to enhance.

About the author



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