# Artificial Intelligence as a Panacea to Propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Nigeria

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**Abstract**

From time immemorial, religion has been a practice or belief that controls the existence of mankind. AI and religion might seem to have nothing to do with one another, but there is more of a connection than meets the eye. As technology advances in our day-to-day lives, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming more prevalent in society. AI can potentially revolutionize many aspects of our lives, the areas of spreading religious education, practices, and beliefs to the extent of spreading the gospel of religion. By leveraging AI, religious affiliations can gain insights into their members' spiritual needs and provide better support. At the same time, there are ethical considerations that must be considered when using AI. This paper will, therefore, examine Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a panacea to propagate the religious gospel of Christ in Nigeria. We will also answer some of the most common questions about how AI can help with religious work. We will also address some questions about AI's compatibility with religious beliefs, ethical concerns, and responsible use. The most suitable theory for this study is computational learning theory. This study adopts it because it is the mathematical framework for quantifying learning tasks and algorithms pertinent to the programming of Artificial Intelligence and meta-theoretical considerations of the intelligence of the human brain.

**Keywords:** AI, Religion, Education, Gospel.

## Introduction

Technology in the area of artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to change many facets of society, including religion. Because it can alter the way we live and think, some see AI as a danger to Christianity or other religions. Yet it is crucial to remember that artificial intelligence is just a tool, and how you use it will determine how much of an influence it has. The Bible, for example, could be automatically translated into other languages using natural language processing, or religious content may be tailored for different people using machine learning to help spread the Christian message. Yet, by offering fresh perspectives on the natural world that contradict religious ideas, it could also be utilized to challenge religious beliefs or offer an alternative to religious experience. Copeland (2024) underscores that Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the capability of a machine to undertake tasks generally perceived to entail human rationality and intelligence. He stressed that general operations of AI include game playing, language translation, expert systems, and robotics. Copeland enlightens that while the notion of machines imitating intelligence dates to ancient past, the advent of authentic intelligence in machines was only possible with the evolution of digital computers in the 1940s. The author streamlines that AI has evolved to the point that the initial AI projects via playing chess and solving mathematical problems, are now considered quite plain compared to the more complex tasks of AI in recent times like visual pattern recognition, complex decision-making, and the use of natural language. According to Google, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the branch of computer science, that makes computers mimic human behavior to assist humans for better performance in the field of science and technology. Replicating human intelligence, solving knowledge-intensive tasks, building machines that can perform tasks, that require human intelligence, and creating some system that can learn by itself are the few specific goals of AI.

Sequel to Copeland's elucidations, Anyoha (2017) and Roser (2022) remark that humankind now lives in the age of complex and cumbersome data available for analysis. They posit that mankind is faced on a steady basis with huge sums of information too ponderous for people and even groups to process. The application of Artificial Intelligence in this regard has already proved efficient in several corporate institutions and facilities like technology, banking, marketing, and the entertainment world. Artificial Intelligence thus is everywhere. It has come to stay with multidimensional prospects. E. I Ozor and T.O. Okonta (personal communication, January 12th, 2024) assert that if Jesus Christ were to come to save mankind in this age, He might not ride into Jerusalem in an Ass again. He will have to make use of the cheapest means of available means of transportation to still signify humility and prudence. The truth remains that mankind ought to make use of scientific innovations of which God is the one that endows humankind with such creative capacity and inspiration. The Holy Spirit always ministers to humankind from the known to the unknown. He utilizes things available to man while instructing him. It would be good that church missionary enterprises in contemporary times especially in Nigeria, should integrate the capabilities and services of Artificial Intelligence in evangelization. Although Lynch (2013) cautions that human contact which is exemplified in one-to-one encounters is extremely important and irreplaceable in the church missions. He stresses that even Jesus Christ maintained more of person-to-person contact in his ministry. Jesus trained his 12 Apostles via personal contact; none was operating from afar. Lynch insists that dependence on new technologies can strip that from the church missions. He emphasizes that the question of how the church can integrate new technologies in the furtherance of her mission ought to be a secondary one. Thus, there is a need for setting up new technologies to retain and prioritize good innovations. The author advises that no technical progress can replace nor outdate the level of relationship built by Jesus' kind of communication that hinged on singular, specific, and

personal love for His disciples. Lynch further exposits that church missionaries must embrace man's limitation in their endeavors to avert the quest to reach out to a wider audience or congregation thereby dispersing in activity and bearing little fruit in the process. It is actually within the limitations of nature that church missionaries can experience the fulfillment and beauty of their vocation. Capturing Lynch's (2013) concluding remarks, it states. The church exists because people are wounded. Her goal is not just to proclaim the Good News efficiently, and then move on to do something else, but physically to be the Body of Christ. All of Christian life rests within the experience of the sacraments, the liturgy, the communion of the church, and the mystery of God's time. Wounds take time to heal, and often a doctor cannot speed up their healing. He must be willing to wait, to consider each person as unique, completely worthy of his entire attention. He must not rush from patient to patient, in an attempt to care for great numbers, to the detriment of the quality of the care itself. In his desire to do more good, he must not end up considering his patients simply as problems and not as people. (p. 2).

Be that as it may, Lynch's advice should be put in perspective. However, it is not enough to discourage the use of AI for evangelism, especially in Nigeria since the world's system is geared towards that direction. Besides, there is nothing sinister regarding AI. AI has equally proved its value in other human institutions as will be portrayed in this study. Scientific cum technological advancement facilitated the evolution of AI. In the face of Lunch's advice, some authors had lent their voice to technological and scientific gadgets associated with the integration of AI in the church's evangelical missions. Tithely (2018) insists that technology enables the mission of the church to expand reach; intelligent decision-making; radical collaboration; and mobilized and equipped congregation. Ugboh (2023) adds that the church should embrace technological innovation since it is open-ended; it is ubiquitous; it is not limited to a single aspect of any system; there is no limit to its

occurrence; it is not an end by itself; it is a means to an end; it cannot stand in isolation from other factors that supports it; and for the fact that it wields an alchemic mode of competing with some external factors which can sustain it or obstruct it. He streamlines that what the church requires are creative leaders; creative agents of change; enabling environment along with other human entities who are creative enough to respond appropriately to it and foster sound change. Hendriks et al (2022) note that digital science and technology have become an effective method in attaining the church's mission despite the contemporary situation of the world since the Covid-19 pandemic of 2019 and 2020. Diaz (2021) and Opade (2023) encourage the integration of digital technology in evangelization since it has made a series of improvements to conventional religious practices whenever employed in an ethically sound mode. They equally reflect that the integration of digital technology in Christian religious education can serve evangelization once it incorporates the meditative practice of prophetic dialogue.

**Theoretical Framework**

The most suitable theory for this study is computational learning theory. This study adopts it because it is the mathematical framework for quantifying learning tasks and algorithms pertinent to the programming of Artificial Intelligence. It encapsulates a profound essence, constituting a cornerstone in the domain of AI. Brownlee (2020) attests that computational learning theory, or statistical learning theory or COLT for short, is a field of study concerned with the use of formal mathematical methods applied to learning systems and a theory propounded by Pei Wang which encompassed both meta-theoretical considerations and the human brain. Brownlee and Pei intimate that it seeks to use the tools of theoretical computer science to quantify learning problems. This includes characterizing the difficulty of learning specific tasks. The author posits that computational learning theory is like the analytical extension or relation of statistical learning

theory (SLT). It employs formal techniques to measure and assess the effectiveness of learning algorithms. Angluin (1992) and Brownlee (2020) stress that in computational learning theory, the emphasis often lies on supervised learning, particularly binary classification tasks, and simple rule-based systems. However, applying theoretical findings to real-world algorithms and problems can be challenging due to the complexity involved; thereby limiting the practical application and interpretation of the theorems. Lark Editorial Team (2023) elucidates that computational learning theory is the foundational framework within AI that explores how machines learn from data, develop algorithms, and make decisions. They establish that it is crucial for enhancing knowledge acquisition and decision-making abilities in AI systems, thus serving as the bedrock for various advanced technologies. Lark Editorial Team (2023) delineates that computational learning theory originated alongside early AI research, coinciding with the development of neural networks and pattern recognition theories. The history of this concept is entwined with pioneering figures such as Ray Solomon, Emile Borel, and Andrey Kolomogoro, who laid down the fundamental principles governing the acquisition of knowledge by machines as the authors aver.

They equally declare that computational learning theory has evolved with computing power, algorithms, and data accessibility, making it highly relevant in contemporary AI specifics. Lark Editorial Team streamlines that computational learning theory is a fundamental aspect of AI, empowering learning algorithms, predictive modeling, and autonomous decision-making. They sum up that the pivotal significance of this theory within the AI domain is underscored by its crucial role in various applications like recommendation systems, natural language processing, and computer vision, thereby revolutionizing technological capabilities. Computational learning theory applies to this study because it can support the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in evangelization within the Nigerian church mission by providing insights into how AI

algorithms can be trained to understand and interpret religious texts, cultural nuances, and local languages. This understanding can aid in developing AI-powered tools such as chat-bots or recommendation systems tailored to effectively communicate religious teachings and messages to diverse Nigerian communities. Additionally, computational learning theory can assist in optimizing the performance of these AI systems through continuous learning and adaptation based on user interactions and feedback, enhancing their effectiveness in spreading the message of the church. The paramount task should be that the church in Nigeria should seek and employ the services of specialists in scientific and technological algorithms and Robotics specifics to pilot the affairs in these ventures. If human capacity is lacking in that area, willing individuals should be trained in AI specifics for church missions in Nigeria. Every element of bias and idiosyncrasies must be eschewed. The focus should be on actualizing down-to-earth evangelization championed with the concerted efforts of both human and Artificial Intelligence.

## Empirical Analysis

### The usefulness of Artificial Intelligence to human society

From the works of Oza (2021), Maheshwari (2023), the Marvelous World of OGI (2023), and Duggai (2024), the positive impacts of AI in human society are as follows:

• AI in healthcare facilities: AI has revolutionized the healthcare sector in recent times pertinent to the great utilization of AI-powered diagnostic tools, like machine learning algorithms; has demonstrated the ability to analyze vast data sets; and enabled faster and more accurate disease detection. AI for instance has proven instrumental in early cancer detection, analyzing images, and even predicting patient outcomes based on historical data. Furthermore, AI-driven surgeries and telemedicine platforms powered by AI technologies are revolutionizing healthcare by enabling precise, minimally

invasive surgeries and expanding access to healthcare services for remote and underserved populations. This democratization of healthcare has the potential to reduce disparities and enhance global health outcomes.

• AI in academic discipline: AI has ushered in a new age of personalized learning in education. Intelligent tutoring systems can adapt coursework to most individuals' learning capacity and ability; considering their weaknesses and discovering the easiest way to enhance and improve their conception. Additionally, AI streamlines administrative tasks in education, enabling educators to focus more on teaching. In utilizing machine learning algorithms, AI can pinpoint at-risk students for timely interventions; ultimately decreasing dropout rates. Moreover, AI-powered content creation tools automate the production of educational materials, enhancing the accessibility of quality education. Various AI platforms assist students in summarizing articles for faster and easier conception. AI in the labor market: AI has facilitated a profound transformation in the labor market as perceived in the AI-driven recruitment platforms that delineate hiring processes, matching applicants and candidates with roles that are more efficient and suitable for them. Chatbots handle routine HR inquiries, freeing human resources professionals to focus on strategic tasks. Automation creates new opportunities in AI development, data science, and robotics. AI-powered data analytics drive informed decision-making in business, leading to increased productivity and competitiveness.

• AI in arts and creativity: The creative capabilities of AI are blooming on borderlines. AI-generated art, music, and literature are furthering the horizons of human creativity. Algorithms can compose music, generate visual art, and even write new articles.

• AI in church missions and evangelism: Well-programmed AI in church missionary enterprise can easily prepare sermons of any length both audio and written. Al

can easily detect potential threats at mission target locations. Al can also easily detect and ascertain within the mission focus zone, areas with people that are susceptible to the gospel message to first prioritize evangelization therein. This will allow missioners to train leaders that will help them in evangelization to other areas within the zone yet unreached with the gospel. AI can equally be programmed to easily detect aspects of a given mission target area culture that can serve as a window to chip in gospel messages.

**The disadvantage of Artificial Intelligence in the propagation of the Gospel of Christ**

Some possible reasons why the Christian Faith may have concerns about Artificial Intelligence include

- Fear of the unknown: AI is a rapidly advancing field, and many people may not fully understand its capabilities or implications. This can lead to fear and uncertainty about how it might impact society, including religious beliefs and practices.
- Impact on humanity: It has been mooted in some quarters that AI could lead to a loss of human agency, autonomy, and moral responsibility.
- Ethical concerns: As AI becomes more advanced, it may raise ethical questions about the nature of consciousness, the value of human life, and the role of technology in society. These questions may challenge traditional religious teachings or beliefs.
- Threat to Job: AI will automate many jobs, and this may lead to a loss of jobs for people, particularly for those who are unskilled. This could lead to economic insecurity and social dislocation, which could be a threat to traditional religious beliefs and practices

Fear of AI taking over: The idea of AI becoming more intelligent than humans and potentially taking over the world is a common fear seen in movies and science fiction, but this fear has been expressed in some circles. It's worth noting that the views on AI are diverse and not all of them may have negative perceptions of AI. Some may see AI as a tool that can be used to spread the message of Christianity and improve people's lives.

**Socio-Religious Evaluation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a means for the propagation of the Gospel in the Contemporary Church**

Various scholars around the globe had lent their voices to religious or ethical cum socially sound modes of integrating AI into evangelism. This study will attempt to patronize the works of a few scholars whose suggestions are pertinent to the Nigerian situation before drawing a final analysis on that issue at hand. Asola (2023) reckons that there are six healthy ways to use AI for evangelism and they include, using chat GPT to repurpose sermons; using AI to generate images to capture an audience during sermons; using AI to create captivating social media posts; using AI to write newsletters for church members; using AI in writing blog articles for church website; along with using AI to create contents in multiple languages thereby cutting across races and reaching a wider audience. Asola sums up by exposing that to ensure that AI is used ethically, it is essential to respect the privacy and autonomy of those being evangelized and to avoid any strategies that could be perceived as invasive or manipulative in a country like Nigeria with multifaceted tribes, languages, cultures in addition to diverse religious groups. He adds that once AI is programmed, trained, designed, and tested adequately, it can never be biased or flawed. Hence there is a need to ensure that the data and algorithms used are accurate and unbiased: This equally facilitates the smooth, trustworthy, and reliable operation of AI. Asola expresses that there is no inherent reason for a Christian not to utilize AI. He declares that AI can be a highly effective medium for reaching people with the gospel message, especially

in the contemporary digital age. Any Christian church that has used YouTube, Google, Facebook, and other social media platforms has used AI. AI should simply be used in ways that align with biblical values and principles. Adequate caution should be taken to avoid using it in ways that could harm others or violate their privacy.

Asola (2023) avers that AI can potentially revolutionize many aspects of man's life including the propagation of the gospel and church missionary work since AI is becoming more and more prevalent in human society. He insists that AI-powered chatbots can assist in answering questions about Christianity, providing biblical references as well as engaging in conversations about faith. Asola analyzes that AI makes it easy to evangelize localities of significant populations. This is realized by analyzing data from social media platforms and surveys to understand the audience's struggles and challenges. Armed with such information, AI can aid in crafting relevant messages tailored to the audience's needs. Nothing captures an average Nigerian audience as ministering directly to their needs, passions, and areas of weakness. He still emphasizes that while AI can assist in providing

information and resources, it cannot replace inspiration that comes from God. God Kulture Team (2023) adds that AI can assist in evangelism via the repurposition of sermons. They maintain that in the contemporary fast-paced world, not everyone engages with the church's YouTube sermons. Mankind's attention spans have shortened, making it challenging for people to invest time in lengthy content. They reflect that leveraging AI allows the church to effectively condense and repurpose sermons for various platforms. The church can convert them into text for blogs or create bite-sized social media posts, thereby opening up numerous possibilities. This is quite relevant in the Nigerian situation where everyone is agog with social media content creation cum news blogging. La Cruz et al (2024) finalize that evangelical and Pentecostal cum Charismatic Churches (EPCCS) employ advanced AI tools

to improve the sanctification process for believers; in translating the Bible, distributing and fostering its reading around the world; and the spreading of spiritual revival among EPCCS through mediated algorithms. They express that there are clear future positive prospects pertinent to the integration of AI in the church missionary enterprise.

**Socio-Religious Acceptance of Incorporating Artificial Intelligence into the Church Evangelism**

In the light of the deliberations of this study hitherto, the social and religious considerations to be taken into account in incorporating artificial intelligence for effective evangelization in the Nigerian church missions because of the peculiarity of the Nigerian state are as follows:

• Cultural Awareness cum competency: It is crucial to guarantee that the adoption of AI in evangelism regards the cultural norms, principles, and customs of the Nigerian people. Messages delivered through AI should be culturally sensitive and respectful to avoid causing chaos, offense, or misunderstanding. Bearing in mind that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, tribal, cultural, and language nation.

• Religious tolerance and inclusivity: In using AI for evangelism in Nigeria, it is important to ensure that the messages are aligned with Christian teachings and beliefs to effectively reach and engage with the target audience. This should equally be appropriated to devoid of any abusive or insolent remarks to other religious groups' faith. More so, the acceptance of AI in evangelism may vary among different Christian denominations; hence, there should be an ecumenical public enlightenment campaign on the values and importance of AI for effective evangelization in the Nigerian church mission to facilitate general acceptance.

• Ethical/moral considerations: Churches must ensure that while using AI for evangelism, the AI content being shared

should be truthful, accurate, respectful, and culturally sensitive. Data privacy ought to be maintained. Individuals or groups should not be potentially manipulated through targeted messaging. Churches should establish ethical guidelines and ensure transparency in their use of AI for evangelism to maintain trust and credibility.

• Community engagement and civic participation: Churches must ensure that AI messages are tailored to promote peace, unity, and solidarity in the Nigerian state. Messages spread via AI evangelical expertise should encourage and spur citizens of Nigeria to be deeply involved in the art of nation-building. It should equally enlighten citizens on civic responsibilities. It is equally essential to involve local communities in the design and implementation of AI-driven evangelism initiatives to ensure relevance and effectiveness. On no account should AI message be directed towards sponsoring a parallel government or insubordination to the ruling class and the government.

• Humanity and empathic touch: Care should be taken to ensure that the work of evangelism is not left entirely at the hands of machines. Mankind should always lead in evangelical work to maintain the tactical and systematic touch involved in counseling. AI has no soul and thus is without feelings, sensations, or emotions. The gospel message should not be reduced to empty stereotypes.

**Conclusion**

Emergent technologies including in construction, communication, and transportation have allowed the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to reach out to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Artificial intelligence (AI) is the latest tool to help the message of Christ spread throughout the earth. Knowing that the proper use of AI will help the Church accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation, the Church has issued the following guiding principles for using AI. The world has evolved. Artificial intelligence and its specifics have

equally evolved. The contemporary world and its inhabitants are AI natives. Any institution, facility, or individual that abhors AI will lose out. Christians should endeavor to remark that the brain behind AI is human intelligence. The creator of mankind is God. Human intelligence is equally reinforced and evoked by God Himself. There is no evil in integrating the services of AI in church missionary work. It will only facilitate evangelical expertise. Everything created by God wields its various weaknesses resulting or originating from the created order, not to mention Artificial intelligence which is Robotics and man's brainchild. Care should be taken that the gospel message should not be bereft of human cum spiritual touch in the process of incorporating AI in missionary strides. Moreover, the work of evangelism should not be championed by AI. Mankind should always be at the helm of affairs; maintaining a steady connection to God as well as exerting empathy towards the target mission audience.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations given for the remuneration of this study are hereby proffered.

1. Nigerian youngsters should rise to the challenge of understudying courses pertinent to Artificial Intelligence Robotics and Algorithms. This should create enough personnel to program Artificial Intelligence and its specifics in the country.

2. Every church that integrates Artificial Intelligence in their church missionary work should be accountable for its shortcomings. This should make those churches leave no stone unturned in the programming of their AI Robotics perfectly.

3. The Nigerian government should capitalize on furnishing the federal universities in the country with the necessary equipment and tools for Artificial Intelligence Robotics and Algorithms studies.

4. Workshops and seminars to create awareness and educate church leaders about the potential of AI in enhancing church missions along with reaching a wider audience should be organized by those at the helm of authorities of the Christian Association of Nigeria.

5. Churches in Nigeria should foster partnerships with AI organizations to develop tailored ideas for spreading the gospel, such as AI-powered chatbots for answering spiritual questions or AI-driven content recommendation systems for personalized outreach.

6. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) should establish ethical guidelines for the use of AI in religious contexts to ensure that its deployment aligns with the values and principles of the church.

7. Church denominations in Nigeria should offer training programs for clergy and volunteers on how to effectively utilize AI tools in their outreach efforts.

8. The Nigerian government as a matter of urgency should make education free to at least the high secondary school level. This will improve the literacy level in Nigeria so that a greater percentage of the citizens can cope with the AI specifics.

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