Theological Axioms for Evaluating Postmodern Idols in Business Technologies

By

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Abstract

As computing devices in our society started to communicate with one another without much human intervention, we ask whether technological advances may become postmodern idols and how we should use technologies in a responsible and profitable way to promote the well-being of humanity and honor God's cultural mandate. Business enterprises play an important role in transforming how we live in the midst of unprecedented technological advances. This paper proposes a few theological axioms to help Christians evaluate the impact of technologies on society, and especially the marketplace, from a biblical perspective. Digital relationships (DR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are used as two examples of potential postmodern idols to illustrate how the theological axioms can be used to help guide the process. The concept of corporate digital responsibility (CDR) is discussed along with the importance of having safeguards co-developed by a broad spectrum of affected entities including governments, corporations, professional bodies, religious institutions, and the general public.

Introduction

This paper proposes seven theological axioms to assess the impact of two potential postmodern idols: digital relationships (DR) and artificial intelligence (AI). An idol is a being, an object, an image, a thought, a value, i.e., any tangible or intangible thing that people admire and revere. The reverence toward an idol can entice humans to further ascribe divinity to it, offer sacrifices to it, worship it, and expect blessings from it in exchange for sacrifices. The Bible strictly prohibits the creation of idols in any form as well as their worships (Exod. 20:4–5). We have an idol in our life when one or more of the following conditions apply.

First, we devote our energy and resources to pleasing an idol, believing that is the highest purpose or meaning of our life. Second, we mentally or spiritually receive pleasure from praising or imitating an idol. Third, idols may occupy our minds to the point of addiction so that we cannot help but continue to need more of it. Fourth, idols change from time to time. While the Trinity God always remains the same, idols are changing fads. Fifth, since idols represent some kind of transcendent or surreal experience desired by humans, worshiping idols is a sinful expression that stems from our desires for owning or reaching something which is beyond our reach or harmful to us.

One example in the Bible regarding idols is in Genesis 11:1-9. People of the earth at that time tried to build a city with a tower (The Tower of Babel) to the heavens so that they could make a name for themselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth. The purpose of making a name for themselves was to worship themselves instead of God. Moreover, the desire of not being scattered over the face of the whole earth was against God's will as God desired the people to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28, 9:1). Eventually God destroyed the human scheme by confusing people's language. The idolizing project stopped because of God's intervention.

The technologies of digital relationships (DR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are two potential postmodern idols because they fulfill the above conditions of being idols. For DR, most people are awakened each day to the intoxicating habit of turning on their cell phones and checking for messages, news, or updates on social media. To many, it has become an addiction in that they rely on social media to satisfy communication and emotional needs. In any single day, people may feel something is amiss or a sense of insecurity if they cannot access their social media. We willfully replace our face-to-face relationships with digital relationships for reasons of convenience or a desire to attain a higher level of satisfaction or happiness.

For AI, employers routinely ask their job applicants whether they know how to use AI to enhance their productivity. Big techs are competing to make their AI products more powerful, human-like, and adaptable to individual needs. Will AI replace or control humans one day? Will AI make humans so dependent that humans cannot solve problems without AI support? How should Christians evaluate these new technologies while staying truthful to the teachings of Scripture?

Business is a value-added process of converting raw materials and labor into desirable goods and services for human consumption. It is a profit-making process that supports all relevant stakeholders. While profit making may carry a secular tone, it is not necessarily incompatible with biblical principles. A good example is Chik-fil-A being a profit-making business. The corporate mission of Chick-fil-A is "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A." The principle of being a faithful steward is applicable to any entity because there is nothing we receive that does not belong to God. Similarly, businesses need principles by which to evaluate technology's impact so as to ensure that it is being used in ways that glorify God. It is responsible stewardship.

Per Britannica.com, technology is the application of scientific knowledge to delivering the practical goals of human life. Technology is highly correlated with innovation in business. Bennick suggested a list of criteria for responsibly managing innovations.[1] The four essential criteria are: (1) a strategic fit between the technology and the business unit, (2) a reasonable probability of technical feasibility, (3) being compliant with legal prescriptions, and (4) an expected positive payoff versus possible risks. Moreover, the innovative product or service should meet the following criteria. In terms of product advantage, it has to be unique, desired by customers, and cost less for the equivalent quality. In terms of market attractiveness, it should contribute to market share, market growth, and competitiveness. In terms of leveraging function with competency, it should have market, technological, and manufacturing synergies. In terms of technological feasibility, there is no technical hiatus, complexity, or uncertainty. In terms of risks, it expects reasonable returns and quick workability.

In January 2025, the release of DeepSeek into the AI market illustrated how uncertain and risky technological advances can be in business. DeepSeek claimed that it used only a fraction of the investment required by OpenAI to achieve roughly equivalent results. In one day, Nvidia's stock plummeted by more than 15%. The volatility of technology driven business can be too much for most investors. While the business aspect of technology consideration is complex, for Christian business owners, adhering to biblical principles in the fluid world of technology seems to be even more challenging.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a set of theological axioms on which Christian leaders can develop some biblically informed framework for evaluating the impact of technology on business. Against this framework the technology of digital relationships (DR) and artificial intelligence (AI) will be discussed and analyzed. The discussion is meant to invite further discussions from Christian scholars on this rapidly evolving and critically important topic.

Theological Axioms for Technology

We present seven theological axioms in this section to serve as a foundation for evaluating new, especially digital, technologies. Axioms are the underlying basic truth propositions upon which we build conceptual models, explain phenomena, prescribe solutions, evaluate arguments, or predict the future. We derive the theological axioms from the teachings of the Bible, Christian creeds, or spiritual principles derived from the narratives in the Scriptures.

Imago Dei

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Since God created humans in His image, humans have the potential of growing into the likeness of God through obedience to God's commands and relying on Him for provision. In reality, however, humans have imperfections as evidenced by sinful thoughts and behaviors. Graham discussed the concept of transhumanism, a form of hybrid-embodiment for humans in a virtual space to carry out activities that only a real human in real time can accomplish.[2] The virtual worship and meetings many churches conduct since the COVID-19 pandemic represents a form of transhumanism as the technology of virtual reality advances. The scientific and medical enhancements of humans' physical and intellectual capabilities also contribute to the possibility of cybernetic implants or genetic modification. While human inventiveness demonstrates a creativity gifted by God, the development of intelligent robots, who can function as superhumans, can create a form of idolatry which Christians must reject. Humanity's hope rests on our resurrection and entering into the joy of God in eternity, not technologies from a fallen world.

The Great Commission

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19). Also, in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Believers are to witness for Jesus Christ unto the end of the earth, which means all places, including virtual spaces, in whatever shapes and forms. Therefore, Christians need to be in the digital culture to understand the virtual environments in which people operate. Where non-believers go (especially the new generations), God's people need to be there in the community in order to advance the gospel. As Paul said, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1Co. 9:22b). Just as Jesus Christ became flesh to dwell amongst sinful humans, so believers must dwell within digital cultures to save souls without being compromised.

God's Wisdom

The Scriptures proclaim that God endows us with talents so we can invent. Consider the following Bible verses:

> "Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest" (Exo 28:3).
>
> "Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you…" (Exo 31:6).
>
> "He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers - all of them master craftsmen and designers. So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded. Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work" (Exo 35:30-36:2).

At the time when God commanded the Israelites to build the tabernacle, they were not so skilled as to be able to build to the standard of sophistication and elegance required for the construction project. But God enabled men at that time to perform those tasks to accomplish His purposes. If one day a human, no matter his or her age, culture, ethnicity, social status, education level, occupation, gender, etc., can have a personal assistant in the form of a robot who is intelligent, powerful, and affectionate, the question that should be asked is not how but why God allows it to happen. We can apply God's Word to examine every aspect of humanity because He created everything, including the wisdom and intelligence pertaining to novel technology, which can be used for His glory.

God's Communication

God communicates with people at all times and in all places. In a broad sense, God uses nature, history, and the inner being of humans to manifest Himself. To the elected, God uses miraculous events (Gen. 12, Gen. 21, Exod. 12), divine speech (Deut. 18:15–18, 1 Sam. 3:4, 2 Tim. 3:16), prophets, and visible signs (Gen. 16:7–14, Exod. 3:2–4, John 1:14, Heb. 1:1–2) to communicate. As information and communication technologies advance, God continues to use different media to manifest Himself. God in His sovereignty certainly may enable humans to create powerful communication technologies that never before existed or imagined. Before the age of social media, people got their news and opinions from newspapers, broadcast networks, and the corporate media. Centralized authorities controlled what people consumed and influenced their opinions. Social media in the Internet age has changed the communication landscape. As we assess the impact of technologies on humankind, especially in the business realm, the role of communication via new information channels and God's purposes behind it has to be carefully assessed.

God's Sovereignty

A fifth theological axiom relates to God's sovereignty over all things created, including technologies. In Isaiah 54:16–17, God said, "See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc; no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me." While God enables technology, God also can destroy it if it is against His purposes. There should be no fear of technology as long as we seek God's guidance in understanding the pros and cons of the inventions. One concern about artificial intelligence is that it may become so powerful that it rules humans one day. A reminder of God's sovereignty gives the comfort that God is always in control, even in the technology domain. The Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 illustrates how God may thwart human ventures when they are against His will.

God's Strategies

The sixth theological axiom is the strategic application of new technologies for God's plans. The book of Acts describes the multiple missionary trips of Paul and his associates. As Paul moved from place to place, how did Paul maintain contact with and provide pastoral care to local churches? He wrote public letters to local churches, which leaders read before congregations for the edification of all. Writing letters for one-to-many communication is hardly a new technology in the modern world, but it was at Paul's time. Through letters, Paul could reach many people in multiple locations at the same time. It strategically applied a new technology in that era. Surprisingly, Paul's letter writing has benefited many generations of believers even to this date. That is a timeless example of the miraculous effect of new technology!

Form vs. Function

Lastly, in Hebrews 10:24–25, God gives us a mandate on believers' assembly: "… let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." As long as the form through which new technologies can serve the function, they fulfill this mandate. Decoupling the form from the function allows us to evaluate new technologies from a functional perspective.

Digital Relationships

Bingaman called social media a double-edged digital technology.[4] Whether digital technology benefits religion depends on how we use it. The younger generations who grew up using social media are digital natives, as social media is second nature to them. On the other hand, the older generations who adapted to social media are digital migrants. Harris reported that social media developed algorithms to keep the attention of audiences, both young and old, on the screen because the longer people stay on the platform, the more revenue may be generated.[5] A meta-analysis of fourteen thousand college students over thirty years by Konrath et al. investigated the correlation between social media usage and the decline in human empathy as well as the rise in mental health disorders.[6] The research team noted the precipitous drop in empathy that coincided with the meteoric rise in social media usage in the later period of the study. Is there a causal relationship between digital media and social illness? If yes, what characteristics of digital media may be the culprits? In this section we examine the literature to seek an understanding of the nature and impacts of digital media.

Digital Abundance

The number of emails sent and received each day has been predicted to increase from 347 billion in 2023 to 408 billion by 2027.[7] About 500 hours of video are being uploaded to YouTube every minute,[8] and the data volume of the Internet doubles about every two years.[9] In 2025, the amount of data to be generated worldwide is projected to reach 181 zettabytes (21 zeros after 181).[10] An average user of the Internet spends about six hours each day surfing the Web for business and entertainment, which occupies a significant amount of our daily wake time.[11] We live in the era of an explosion of interaction using digital channels. Schlag believes that the digital abundance phenomenon could present a few challenges for practical theology.[12]

With the free exercise of opinion and speech, anyone who has a cell phone and access to the Internet can function as a publisher. Individual users need to distinguish the essentials from the trivial, facts from fiction, and good from bad. In the religious context, when a distorted argument or fake image bombards our human senses, our mind could be corrupted and our innocence stolen. The communication process in the absence of reasoning, negotiation, filtering, guidance, and debate can destroy the logical thinking of those who lack discernment. It is also difficult for us to search persistently for truth and meaning in the presence of digital abundance.

Despite increasingly sophisticated algorithms, our human processing limitations seldom allow us to go past the first ten results from a search query. Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Tech determine what we can see through their pre-determined rank ordering system. The reality is, the more technologies we have, the more we rely on technologies. This makes us dependent, passive, and ignorant. Finally, searching is the first step of resolving an issue without a clear path. In the book of Job, the fervent search for answers from different life perspectives resulted in nothing till God intervened. In the digital culture, we need strategies to search and find our identity in the maze of digital relationships.

Multiple Formats and Impact Levels

Williams-Smith and McMillan investigated the relationship between different formats of media and levels of spiritual growth in a survey of 288 university students.[13] The diversified student sample included 54.2% White, 22.9% Asian, 21.9% Hispanic, 7.3% Black, and 4.9% multi-racial. The study covered mediated communication tools such as apps, social media, streaming videos, websites, podcasts, movies, blogs, and video games. The four levels of spirituality regarding beliefs and practices include the Individual level, the Micro level for organized religion, the Meso level for community, and the Macro level for meaning and experience of life. The study categorized expected spiritual growth as having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, believing in church doctrines, regularly attending corporate worship, and abstaining from sinful lifestyles. The survey showed that respondents rarely used social media influencers for supporting spiritual growth. When it comes to social media, it is used more for entertainment than spiritual development. This finding rejects the claim that social media are great tools for spiritual development.

Distributed Fragmentation and Decentralized Authority

Online digital communication through social media and apps is fast-moving, never-ending, fluid, non-linear, noisy, asynchronous, and uncertain, which all contribute to its nature of distributed fragmentation and decentralized authority. A study by Rauf described the negative impact of social media on the Islamic religious community.[14] The study investigated how WhatsApp was utilized to support the *Tablighi Jamaat* movement at the beginning of the COVID-19 period. Tablighi Jamaat is an Islamic revivalist movement focusing on preaching through the methods of oral and written communication, seclusion from everyday environments, mythologizing, egalitarianism, and inculcating

etiquettes and values. Most activities were conducted in participants' local mosques on a variety of intervals. The Tablighi Jamaat movement has more than 80 million adherents.[15] When COVID-19 prevented Tablighi Jamaat adherents from physically gathering in mosques, they turned to WhatsApp for communication to continue the movement practices. The study identified the following communication attributes: purpose, pace, frequency, mode of interactions, attention during interactions, rules of conduct, effects on identity, and relations between members. The study has the following conclusions:

- The communication among participants evolved from a hierarchical to a horizontal structure. While the hierarchical communication in the traditional community has a unidirectional flow of information and ideas, the social media platform allows a voice from each participant regardless of authority and status. When participants jumped in and out of the conversation behind their obscure screen names, the validity, sequence, and urgency of messages were conveniently disregarded. People did not know who was in control and whose instruction to follow.
- Participants tended to deflect to discussing unrelated or unconfirmed issues, which caused confusion, mistrust, impatience, abuses, or passivity. While face-to-face conversation can have synchronized clarification and explanation, asynchronized communication in social media platforms easily leads to unfocused debates that are detrimental to group cohesion and individual spirituality.
- Social media platforms can be chaotic or combative. Since participants differ in terms of their response speed and communication styles, the waiting for or demand for responses can cause emotional stress or pressure. Since online digital communication lacks the visual and verbal cues for a holistic interpretation of messages, words on the screen may distort the original meaning or intent.

Collaborative Generation and Consumption

The collaborative generation of content in the digital culture is based on the concept of trust between strangers. Electronic reputation in the digital space is the new currency.[16] Consumers' feedback on products they purchase from online vendors is a good example of mutual trust amongst strangers. Though we never met those people behind the online feedback and have no idea whether they tell the truth, we tend to review the feedback before we place an online order. We may also rely on the number of reviews a product receives, the number of postings a reviewer has, or the online badges awarded to reviewers by host websites to distinguish trustworthy reviews from fictitious reviews. Those methods identify some reviewers as more legitimate, powerful, reliable, or prestigious than other reviewers.

In the computing world, we have open-sourcing websites that post programs and codes for amateurs, practitioners, or organizations for free adoption. The open-sourcing process supports collective intelligence and problem-solving. The current phenomenon of converging folk intelligence in both the generation and consumption of knowledge leads necessarily to the question of who is to assume the liability if the utilization of collective intelligence induces damages. The simple answer is no one. The digital space of collective intelligence has the motto of "*proceed at your own risk*." Similarly, in the religious domain, the potential damage from religious knowledge or advice from spiritual leaders would point to the lack of accountability.

Artificial Intelligence

Jensen Huang, Founder and CEO of Nvidia, in his keynote speech at the COMPUTEX conference in Taiwan on June 2, 2024, mentioned that the current phenomenon of digital-divide will be replaced by AI-divide in the near future. There will be those countries that have access to top-level AI technology and benefit from it versus those countries that have no access. The utilization of AI technology will be in all aspects of human society, from healthcare, law

enforcement, finance, to space exploration, and others. AI tools such as ChatGPT have self-generative learning abilities and can advance rapidly. There is already evidence that people are addicted to AI for competitive advantages.

Peters defines intelligence using seven characteristics: interiority, intentionality, communication, adaptation, reasoning, self-refection, and judgment.[17] Interiority refers to the internal abilities affecting the external environment. Intentionality is the desire to use those abilities for a purpose. Communication refers to information exchange with the environment using language or other media. Adaptation means adjusting one's behavior to achieve goals. Reasoning is the ability to analyze and make inferences based on stimuli and information from the environment to solve problems. Self-reflection refers to how one interacts with others in the environment, which indicates self-awareness and self-consciousness. Judgment pertains to the ability in selecting an option out of many based on reasoning and information processing.

Goecke and Pütten provide the following definition for AI:

> "An entity exhibits artificial intelligence if and only if its existence is not the direct result of an undisturbed cosmic or biological evolution, but of intentional human construction or engineering. This enables the entity to interact with its environment in a rational and not completely causally determined way through the use of deductive, indictive, or abductive reasoning based on the evaluation of the situation it is in. It evaluates the probability that choosing a particular action out of the set of available actions will realize the goal which the entity is set to achieve in such way that it is able to change its behavior based on new information and based on the evaluation of the success and failure of its past actions."[18]

The above definition of artificial intelligence resembles human intelligence in terms of intentionality, reasoning, adaptation, and judgment. The key difference is in interiority. While human intelligence originates from the internal reasoning of humans, AI is an intentional engineering creation. The current technology distinguishes strong AI from weak AI. Strong AI can determine goals based on its own desire, whereas weak AI only executes pre-installed instructions. When ChatGPT was asked the question in 2024 whether it is a strong AI or weak AI, ChatGPT responded that it is a weak AI because it specializes in narrow tasks in response to prompts. As AI continues to improve, it is widely expected that future versions of AI will advance to the point where it can perform many tasks only humans can do nowadays.

Prevalence and Impact of AI

Forbes.com published the following statistics demonstrating the prevalence and impact of AI: [19]

- AI market size will reach $407 billion by 2027.
- AI can add an estimated 21% net increase on the United States GDP by 2030.
- Half of US mobile users use voice search every day.
- ChatGPT had 1 million users within the first five days of its launch.
- AI is expected to have an annual growth of 37.3% by 2030.
- A quarter of companies are adopting AI because of manpower shortages.
- AI could displace 400 million workers.
- AI may create 97 million jobs; 97% of business owners believe ChatGPT will help their business.
- 65% of consumers say they will still trust businesses that use AI.

A Pew Research study in 2023 revealed that about half of all Americans are concerned about the use of AI in daily lives, which was 14% higher than in 2022. Thirty-three percent of the respondents heard a lot about AI, which was 7% higher than in 2022.[20] As the comfort level with AI improves, AI will become the go-to-authority and solution for many human problems in the future.

Morality of AI

As humans delegate more work to AI, it will become the authority humans depend on. Inevitably, AI ethics is emerging as a social and academic concern. MIT created the Moral Machine project (MoralMachine.net) to research how AI should behave when autonomous vehicles (AV) are suddenly out of control. That project created many different scenarios of ethical dilemmas such as the AI-controlled AV having the options of killing the driver or one pedestrian, killing the driver or old people, killing the driver or animals, and killing the driver or people with high net worth or are valued contributors to society. Surveys were sent out to over three million people to collect their opinions about what AI should do. The survey outcome indicates that people tend to choose saving more people as the ethical option. However, many also preferred that their own AV will save the driver rather than somebody else. If humans cannot determine what options are the most ethical, how can AI, being a creation of humans, choose amongst "ethical" options in a dilemma? It is highly questionable whether AI can be relied upon as a substitute authority in making ethical decisions when facing complex issues.

Giroux *et al.* conducted an experimental study to understand how AI affects human morality.[21] The experiment set up three different checkout counters in a supermarket scenario: real human cashier counter (human), AI-facilitated counter (semi-human), and self-checkout counter (full machine). The checkout process was manipulated for customers to underpay the total due to an error—an item priced at $16.90 being billed at only $1.69, for example. The experiment recorded the honesty level of each checkout counter customers voluntarily reported the billing error using a scale of 1–7: the higher on the scale, the more honest. The honesty score of the human counter is 5.6, the semi-human counter is 5.03, and the machine counter is 4.48. All differences of honesty levels are statistically significant. The experimental results reveal that real-human face-to-face interactions encourage people to behave morally whereas the non-human counterparts retard people's guilty feeling. It indicates that the more non-human the process, the less the sense of guilt. It seems that human-to-human interactions carry spiritual influence that is absent in non-human interactions. When AI machines and robots become the main agents interacting with humans in the future, the impact on human morality will be a grave concern.

Legal Personhood of AI

According to Goltz *et al*., there are four options regarding the legal personhood of AI.[22] First, we can consider AI as a 100% legal person, who has legal rights and responsibilities. This consideration is based on the fact that strong AI can generate its own desire, will, and goals, thus resembling a real person. However, if AI as a legal person commits a crime, how is it held accountable? What forms of punishment (e.g., fines, incarceration, probation, restitution, etc.) can be applied? A host of issues and problems become obvious in this scenario.

A different option is to consider AI as a "minor" who needs supervision from a guardian. The identity of the guardian, whether it is the AI developer or the company that produces the application, then becomes the issue. Furthermore, do we allow AI to become an adult as it learns and grows, and how should we determine its age? Resolving these issues still does not remove the difficulties of the previous option where the debate of legal personhood continues.

A third option is to confer on AI the same status as a corporation that has rights and responsibilities with respect to contracts, legal responsibilities, and taxes. An important issue here revolves around financial liability associated with contract breaches, bankruptcy, and lawsuits. A final option is to allow certain contractual rights and responsibilities to AI but not to the same extent as a legal person. However, some of the same issues remain, such as who is going to bear the legal liabilities if AI cannot fulfill its contractual obligations or causes harm to legal parties.

Application of Theological Axioms

Table 1 lists some questions we need to ask when evaluating the impact of digital innovations on business through the lens of the theological axioms discussed in this paper. As new technology emerges and evolves, the nature of some of these questions might change and further inquiries are needed. Table 1 offers nothing more than a basic framework for a biblically informed way of thinking through these issues.

Table 1
A Theological Framework for
Evaluating Digital Relationships and Artificial Intelligence

	Digital Relationships	*Artificial Intelligence*
Imago Dei	• Do digital relationships bring out the goodness of Imago Dei or degrade it? • If digital relationships are unavoidable, what can corporations do to protect the Imago Dei of humanity?	• Can transhumanism be a responsible business opportunity? • Is a digital superhuman enabled by AI an infringement on the Imago Dei?
The Great Commission	• What are the characteristics of the population segments that corporations can access only through the virtual space? • How do Christian corporations achieve the Great Commission in the virtual marketplace?	• Can commercialized AI advance and fulfill the mandates of evangelism and discipleship? • What does AI-enhanced Christian education look like in the future?
God's Wisdom	• Do decentralized authority and distributed fragmentation of knowledge creation go against God's wisdom? • How do AI developers capture God's wisdom into AI?	• Can and will AI's wisdom replace God's wisdom? • Who is responsible for AI's damages when generalized AI becomes a prevalent tool in the marketplace?
God's Communication	• Do digital relationships enhance or retard humans' relationships with God and with one another? • How do we know that digital relationships in the marketplace advance God's kingdom?	• Will people mistaken AI's communication for God's communication when AI becomes prevalent and almost omnipotent in the future?
God's Sovereignty	• What evidence do we have now that might indicate whether God is pleased or displeased with digital relationships?	• How do we ensure that AI developers will not try to create AI that determines what only God can decide, such as life and death?

God's Strategies	• Are digital relationships a strategy from God or the devil? • Do humans generate more or less spiritual fruits by engaging in digital relationships?	• Can we create AI that can fully explain its strategies so that humans can evaluate whether they are godly?
Form vs. Function	• Are digital relationships just a new form to fulfil the same function of human activities or do they change the function?	• Will AI make people lazy and stupid when they need not exercise their brain and reasoning power—a deterioration in function as a result of the new AI form?

Concluding Thoughts

Elliott *et. al*. suggested the concept of corporate digital responsibility (CDR) for an equitable digital society.[23] CDR is a concept that takes into consideration the digital divide, poverty, and premiums at the micro level in communities, the financial inclusion at the meso level for corporations, and the puppet masters of AI at the macro level in the form of monopolies. A draft of EU's AI Regulation (DEAR), published in 2021, proposed a risk-based approach to regulating AI. On March 13, 2024, the European Parliament adopted the landmark law Artificial Intelligence Act, which mandates transparency and safeguards for the general purpose of AI, and bans applications that exploit human vulnerabilities.[24] The safeguards for the future of AI and digital technology must take multi-dimensional form, with inputs from governments, corporations, professional bodies, religious institutions, and the general public. Given how these new technologies can uproot the adopted ways of life and the significant risks they pose as idols for Christians, believers need much wisdom in responding to their evolution and rapid adoption in society. The theological axioms introduced in this article are meant to provide a basic framework for this utterly critical task of evaluation. More importantly their presentation serves to invite further thinking on this topic so that God's cultural mandate for humanity can be enabled instead of being disabled by the advance of new technologies.

About the Author

Monica Lam is Professor of Management Information Systems at the University of Central Oklahoma. She is the author or co-author of three books: *Integrated Systems: The Accountant in the 21st Century, Accounting Information System Cases* and the most recent (2024)*, Postmodern Idols: How PM Idols but Not God Occupy Us and What to Do about It?* She has published over 20 academic papers covering corporate social responsibilities, digital transformation, social media, online education, machine learning, and application development. Her expertise in information technology and educational ministry provides a rich set of knowledge and ideas on how Christians can effectively fulfill the Great Commission in the postmodern era. She is also a lay minister who diligently serves in her local church in Edmond, Oklahoma, as well as other congregations. During her leisure time, she enjoys hiking and volunteering in the local community. Monica holds a Ph.D. in Management Information Systems from the University of Wisconsin (Madison) and a Master of Divinity from Western Seminary. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Educational Ministry at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Endnotes

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