Call For Papers

God, Human, Machine: Images and Imaginations of Religion in the Age of AI
International Conference
28-30 September 2026, University of Erfurt

This conference is convened by **Prof Christoph Günther** and **Dr Fouad Gehad Marei**. We invite scholars and researchers to submit paper proposals that critically examine how AI technologies are reshaping religious images and imaginations across traditions, cultures, and social contexts.

We welcome contributions that explore theoretical perspectives and/or empirical contexts, and which lie at the intersections of Religious Studies, Anthropology, Art History, and Science and Technology Studies. Papers may address any religious tradition and/or interfaith/intrafaith perspectives.

Current research shows that Large Language Models (LLMs) – sometimes conceived of as an "all-knowing voice of truth" (Tsuria 2023) or a "Special Thing" (Reed and Trothen 2026) – are redefining how religious communities engage with AI (Singler 2024) and how AI represents religion (Tsuria and Tsuria 2024), and thus how these technologies may contribute to a re-enchantment of the world (Singler 2020). The conference shifts attention to the hitherto largely neglected aesthetic, ethical, and intellectual implications of AI-generated imagery in religious contexts. We seek contributions, which explore the ways in which socio-technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computer-generated imagery (CGI) both inform and are shaped by religious images and imaginations across traditions, cultures, and social contexts. We invite theoretical and empirical research papers that examine how AI-generated imagery offers new avenues to render the Unseen tangible and enact the expressive dimension of religious texts, as well the ways in which these technologies are employed by religious practitioners to inform their ideas about human relations to the world and the Sacred. Contributions should examine applications and appropriations of digital imagery technologies by religious scholars, entrepreneurs, content creators, and practitioners. Research papers examining or engaging with critical debates about the (im)permissibility and (in)appropriateness of these technologies and their implications for religious knowledge and meaning-making in the 21st century are also welcome.

Paper presentations are typically 15-20 minutes long, and should be based on a written but unpublished research paper, or on ongoing research. Selected research papers will be published in a peer-reviewed anthology or special issue.

We invite contributions addressing any aspect of AI and religious images and imaginations, including but not limited to any one or more of the following interrelated themes, around which the conference will be structured:
- Imagination, Revelation, and the Machine
- Ritual, Practice, and Lived Religion in the Age of AI
- Futures, Speculations, and Critical Imaginaries
- Global and Comparative Perspectives

Submission Guidelines

Please submit abstracts (300 words) and a short biography (200 words), detailing your academic background, research interests and relevant publications. Submissions should be made to aiimagery[at]uni-erfurt.de by or on Sunday, February 22, 2026. Submissions must be original. Published research and research under consideration for publication will not be accepted.

We encourage submissions from junior and senior scholars, advanced-stage graduate students, and independent researchers. The organizers are committed to diversity and will give special consideration to scholars from historically under-represented demographies and geographies.

Review Process

Abstracts will undergo a review process based on specific criteria, including but not limited to the following:
- Relevance to the themes and remit of the conference.
- Clearly defined research questions, theoretical and methodological rigour, and, where relevant, clearly defined empirical case studies, data sets, and other empirical considerations.
- Good grasp of the state-of-the-art in research on AI and religion, and critical engagement with existing scholarly debates.
- Originality and potential to advance the field and push the boundaries of current research on AI and religious images and imaginations.

Financial Support

Authors of accepted papers will be offered travel and accommodation costs as well as all meals during the conference.