

# Contemporary Orthodox Views of Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence in Online Resources

**Efthymios Nicolaidis and Doru Costache**

**Abstract:** The article explores online resources for the purpose of identifying Orthodox Christian attitudes to information technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI) before 2024. It fills a gap in the literature, as a synopsis of these attitudes is so far unavailable. Online resources have been chosen given their wide availability and impact. After surveying independent views—of which some, of the “apocalyptic” sort, cause confusion and panic, while others are moderate and even well-informed—the article engages official and hierarchical stances on science and technology in general and on IT and AI in particular. It then considers reports on relevant conferences and workshops, as a worthwhile resource for the orientation of both official and grassroots views. The article, finally, summarises the mainstream Orthodox view of official stances and specialised conferences, which are characterised by balance and discernment, and briefly discusses the future of the Orthodox Church in the digital age.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence; ethical concerns; information technology; Orthodox Christianity; pastoral concerns

---

Efthymios Nicolaidis is Emeritus Research Director of the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation in Athens, Greece. He directed the project *Science and Orthodoxy around the World (SOW)*, funded by the Templeton World Charity Foundation. Doru Costache is a Protospesbyter of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Australia and New Zealand, Professor of Theology and Spirituality, as well as Principal of Nisibis Assyrian Theological College, a member institution of the Australian University College of Divinity. He is also Research Director at ISCAST.

Orthodox Christians' contradictory responses to recent developments in information technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI) require study. A synopsis of their relevant attitudes and of the factors that condition them is not yet available, but specialised studies of IT and AI from an ethical and theological perspective are at hand.<sup>1</sup> Hence our interest in this topic. This study focuses only on Eastern Orthodox attitudes recorded before 2024, leaving out the views of Oriental Orthodox Christians and developments after 2023.

We tackle recent Orthodox responses to AI and technology more generally, but there are limitations to our study. First, we do not discuss monographs and research papers. Instead, our study focuses on internet materials, from official ecclesiastical documents to reports on conferences, seminars, and workshops to independent digital contributions. This choice of sources is motivated by our interest in determining what kind of information is available for average

- 
- 1 Here are the most recent publications: Marius Dorobantu, “*Imago Dei* in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Challenges and Opportunities for a Science-Engaged Theology,” *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, NS, 1 (2022): 175–96, <https://doi.org/10.58913/KWUU3009>; Marius Dorobantu, “Artificial Intelligence as a testing Ground for Key Theological Questions,” *Zygon* 57, no. 4 (2022): 984–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12831>; Marius Dorobantu, “Cognitive Vulnerability, Artificial Intelligence, and the Image of God in Humans,” *Journal of Disability & Religion* 25, no. 1 (2021): 27–40, DOI: 10.1080/23312521.2020.1867025; Marius Dorobantu, “Human-Level, but Non-Humanlike: Artificial Intelligence and a Multi-Level Relational Interpretation of the *Imago Dei*,” *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2021): 81–107, DOI: 10.1628/ptsc-2021-0006; Marius Dorobantu and Yorick Wilks, “Moral Orthoses: A New Approach to Human and Machine Ethics,” *Zygon* 54, no. 4 (2019): 1004–1021, <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12560>; Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή νοημοσύνη και Ανθρώπος: Ορθόδοξη θεολογική προσέγγιση* (Artificial Intelligence and the Human Being: An Orthodox Theological Approach; Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 2022); Aleksandar Petrović, “Middle Ages and Artificial Intelligence,” in *Orthodoxy and Artificial Intelligence: Dictionary of Technology and a Double Logos: A Contribution to the Dialogue of Science and Religion*, ed. Aleksandar Petrović and Aleksandra Stevanović (Athens: Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2019), 37–60; Sandy Sakorrafou, “Greek Orthodox Perceptions of Communication Technology: Past and Present,” *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, NS, 3 (2024): 27–60, <https://doi.org/10.58913/IXKG8073>; Stavros Yangazoglou, “Θεολογία και Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη” (Theology and Artificial Intelligence), *Theologia* 91, vol. 3 (2020): 95–124.

Orthodox believers (by which we understand people not engaged in a formal study of the Orthodox tradition, e.g., theological studies), which, we hope, will clarify the causes of their reactions to technology. Second, we address only tangentially the broader context of their attitudes to IT and AI, namely, the way they perceive faith and science or spirituality and technology within the context of misunderstandings about the meaning of tradition in the contemporary world. The study of this broader context is well underway,<sup>2</sup> with the recently concluded project

- 2 See, for example, David Bradshaw and Richard Swinburne (eds), *Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (St Paul, MN: IOTA Publications, 2021); Doru Costache and Geraint F. Lewis, *A New Copernican Turn: Contemporary Cosmology, the Self, and Orthodox Science-Engaged Theology*, Routledge Focus on Religion (London and New York: Routledge, 2024); Doru Costache, “Strange Bedfellows? Orthodox Perspectives on Theology, Spirituality, Science, and Technology,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa* 65, no. 2 (2020): 5–25; Doru Costache, “The Orthodox Doctrine of Creation in the Age of Science,” *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2019): 43–64, <https://doi.org/10.1353/joc.2019.0003>; Bruce V. Foltz, *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Christopher C. Knight, *Eastern Orthodoxy and the Science-Theology Dialogue* (Cambridge University Press, 2022); Christopher C. Knight, “‘Analytic’ Natural Theology: Orthodox or Otherwise?” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 65, nos. 1–2 (2021): 57–85; Christopher C. Knight, *Science and the Christian Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2021); Christopher C. Knight, “Natural Theology and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Oxford University Press, 2013), 213–26; Peter Harrison, “Science, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism,” *Isis* 107, no. 3 (2011): 587–591, <https://doi.org/10.1086/688414>; Vasilios N. Makrides, “The Natural Sciences in the Framework of a European History of Religion,” in *Religion in Culture-Culture in Religion*, ed. Christoph Auffarth, Alexandra Grieser, and Anne Koch (Tübingen University Press, 2021), 271–94; Vasilios N. Makrides, “Orthodox Anti-Westernism Today: A Hindrance to European Integration?” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 9, no. 3 (2009): 209–24; Alexei V. Nesteruk, *The Universe in the Image of Imago Dei: The Dialogue between Theology and Science as a Hermeneutics of the Human Condition* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022); Alexei V. Nesteruk, *The Sense of the Universe: Philosophical Explication of Theological Commitment in Modern Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Alexei V. Nesteruk, *The Universe as Communion: Toward a Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Theology and Science* (London: T&T Clark, 2008); Alexei V. Nesteruk, *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Efthymios Nicolaidis et al., “Science and Orthodox Christianity: An Overview,” *Isis*, 107, no. 3 (2011), 542–66, <https://doi.org/10.1086/688704>; Stoyan Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics: From Controversy to Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017); Elizabeth Theokritoff,

“Science and Orthodoxy around the World” both generating and cataloguing relevant information.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, since IT and AI cannot be dissociated from this context, we will refer to such matters when the need arises. Third, we focus on materials published in English, Greek, and Romanian. For the original materials in Greek and Romanian, we provide our own translation.

We begin by surveying independent Orthodox materials available online that address IT and AI, aiming to identify the kind of ideas that are communicated in that space. This step is essential for identifying the factors that contribute to the confusion currently experienced by Orthodox believers, especially given the accessibility of these media and the misinformation spread by some of them. Second, we examine official Orthodox views of science and technology in the documents of the Holy and Great Council (2016) and relevant hierarchical stances. We endeavour to determine whether these official views, also available online—and which are characterised by nuanced judgment, prudence, and pastoral concerns—allow for the articulation of an Orthodox position on IT and AI, albeit by extrapolation. The fact that a recent document of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, *For the Life of the World* (2020), mentions IT and AI explicitly is an auspicious development. Third, we consider reports on conferences, seminars, and workshops, most of which seem to align with the official line. Throughout this analysis,

---

“Creator and creation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 63–77; Gayle E. Woloschak, “Science and Theology: Perspectives for the Future,” *Θεολογία* 95, no. 3 (2024): 343–355.

3 Many sources, including in languages of limited circulation, can be found in the repository of data of the project “Science and Orthodoxy around the World,” which ran at the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens, Greece (2016–2023): <http://k2.altsol.gr/archive/search>. See also the edited volumes that resulted from the project: *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Kostas Tampakis and Haralampos Ventis (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2022); *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Sciences: Theological, Philosophical, Scientific and Historical Aspects of the Dialogue*, ed. Christopher C. Knight and Alexei V. Nesteruk (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021); *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Tensions, Ambiguities, Potential*, ed. Vasilios N. Makrides and Gayle Woloschak (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019).

we pay particular attention to differences between official ecclesiastical resources, hierarchical pronouncements, professional media, and independent opinions.

Our goal is to map the complex Orthodox Christian attitudes to AI and IT available online, and to understand the factors that cause confusion among the Orthodox in regard to recent technological advancements—such as conspiracist misinformation, digital addiction, the transhumanist agenda, dystopian narratives, and the lack of catechesis. It is in this light that we conclude with several remarks on the future of the Orthodox Church in the digital age.

## Independent Orthodox Resources

We begin by considering independent internet resources of the last few years, whose widespread impact on the Orthodox cannot be underestimated. The opinions vary from “apocalyptic” conspiracies to rigorous analyses. We survey, first, conspiracist misinformation and then informed positions, presenting each category in chronological fashion and pointing out, where details are available, the nature of the platforms used for dissemination.

Cristina Roman’s article is representative of the opinionated inexpert.<sup>4</sup> It takes issue with Dan Brown’s statement, on launching *Origin*, that AI will render obsolete traditional religions. Roman lists assertions from a range of (unreferenced) authorities that supposedly draw attention to the dangers of AI research. She claims that “the Apocalypse comes,” with “all the antichrists paving the way for the implementation of artificial intelligence and aiming to replace human consciousness.” The same goes for Dan Tănăsescu’s “apologetic” manifesto.<sup>5</sup> His article summarises various conspiracy theories, from the

---

4 Cristina Roman, “Va supraviețui Dumnezeu științei!?” (Will God survive science!?!), *Porunca Iubirii: Revistă ortodoxă de misiune și informare* (18 October 2017), <https://porunca iubirii.agaton.ro/articol/1909/va-supraviețui-dumnezeu-științei> (accessed 10 December 2024).

5 Dan Tănăsescu, “V-ați gândit totuși, de ce inteligența artificială este satanică?! Pentru că este o inteligență separată de spirit: nu este morală, nu are empatie,

5G networks to neuronal implants to cryptocurrency. Supposedly, these make it possible for AI to take over the world and to replace humans, with the latter ending up being sacrificed for the “neoliberal” agenda. And so on.

An article by Ananias Sorem jumbles religious ideas and conspiracy theories (abortion, clerical celibacy, technological age, papal primacy, sexual deviations, transhumanism, etc.), together with thoughts about modern anthropocentrism, for the purpose of offering an “Orthodox” refutation of technological progress.<sup>6</sup> More coherent, though no less conspiracist, is a report on Slobodan Stojicevic’s talk given in Moscow, “Serbia: A Hybrid War Against Orthodoxy and ‘Color’ Schisms.”<sup>7</sup> According to this report, the speaker accused USA NGOs, embassies, and tech companies of undermining the wholesome life of the Orthodox, inflicting upon them “the feminist and LGBT agenda” and causing schisms in the churches. Somehow unexpectedly, the report concludes that IT and AI research should be held in check.

Recently, Eleftherios Kosmidis took to criticising a symposium sponsored by the Archdiocese of Athens, on the healthcare benefits of AI (to which we shall return). His article<sup>8</sup> characterises AI research as hellbent on having human beings “left behind” by advanced learning machines. But human wellbeing is not the author’s concern. Rather,

---

sentimente, umanitate” (Have you thought of why the artificial intelligence is satanic?! It’s because it is an intelligence separated from the spirit: it has no morals, empathy, feelings, humanity), *Apărătorul Ortodox: Portal alternativ de gândire și atitudine creștin-ortodoxă* (13 August 2021), <https://www.aparatorul.md/v-ati-gandit-totusi-de-ce-inteligenta-artificiala-este-satanica/> (accessed 10 December 2024).

- 6 Ananias Sorem, “An Eastern Orthodox Understanding of the Dangers of Modernity and Technology,” *Patristic Faith* (21 December 2021), <https://www.patristicfaith.com/orthodox-christianity/an-eastern-orthodox-understanding-of-the-dangers-of-modernity-and-technology/> (accessed 20 October 2024).
- 7 “Hybrid War Technologies against World Orthodoxy,” *Orthodox Christianity* (2 April 2022), <https://orthochristian.com/144268.html> (accessed 20 October 2024).
- 8 “Ημερίδα υπό την αιγίδα της Ιεράς Αρχιεπισκοπής Αθηνών, με θέμα «Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη και Αυτισμός»” (Workshop under the auspices of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens on “Artificial Intelligence and Autism”), *Katanixi* (21 March 2023), <https://katanixi.gr/imerida-y-po-tin-aigida-tis-ieras-archiepiskopis-athinon-me-thema-techniti-noimosyni-kai-aytismos/> (accessed 15 May 2024).

he is interested in the possibility of new religions emerging from Silicon Valley. The article ends by observing that, “judging from the attitude of the Archbishop of Athens, we are preparing for an unconditional surrender to the scientific and philosophical authorities of the New Age.” This conclusion does not follow from the article’s discourse. The alarmist trend gains momentum. An undated anonymous entry on AI summarises the views of a technologist who, allegedly, unmasks the real motivation behind AI research, namely, to undermine Christianity on a global scale.<sup>9</sup> The article supplies no supporting references. The same goes for other online materials, but we shall end this part of our survey by considering a media report on an unnamed “Orthodox priest” who conversed with ChatGPT.<sup>10</sup> The priest, allegedly, checked AI’s awareness of Orthodox Christianity, aiming to have the machine proclaim the Orthodox as the only true church. Completely unrelated to the content, the anonymous article concludes as follows: “Artificial Intelligence could be described as the Apocalyptic Beast that in the near future will possibly rule over humankind.” It is reasonable to expect that, after the recently adopted European laws on AI,<sup>11</sup> more of the same will follow.

In all of the above, IT and AI are represented as the church’s purposeful enemy. Another common denominator to this kind of discourse is the inability of the authors to formulate cogent views about

- 
- 9 “Chatbots-ii: Inteligența Artificială pregătită să desființeze Creștinismul” (Chatbots: Artificial Intelligence paves the way for Christianity’s downfall), *Lăcașuri Ortodoxe* (no date), <https://lacasuriortodoxe.ro/articole/17780-chatbots-ii-inteligena-artificiala-pregatita-sa-desfiinteze-crestinismul.html> (accessed 20 March 2024).
- 10 “ChatGPT prefigurează Fiara Apocaliptică: Iată dialogul unui preot ortodox cu Inteligența Artificială Globală” (ChatGPT foreshadows the Apocalyptic Beast: Here is the dialogue of an Orthodox priest with the Global Artificial Intelligence), *Ziua News* (6 February 2023), <https://m.ziuanews.ro/stiri/chatgpt-prefigureaz-fiara-apocaliptic-iat-dialogul-unui-preot-ortodox-cu-inteligena-artificial-global-1574909> (accessed 20 March 2024).
- 11 See Lisa O’Carroll, “EU moves closer to passing one of world’s first laws governing AI,” *The Guardian* (15 June 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jun/14/eu-moves-closer-to-passing-one-of-worlds-first-laws-governing-ai> (accessed 14 June 2024).

technological innovation and to draw logically consistent conclusions. At best, this type of discourse confuses technology with its misuse. At worst, it causes panic to the average Orthodox reader who has neither theological nor technological training. A similar happening occurred recently, during the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>12</sup>

Other independent materials bear the semblance of balance, but are still problematic. For example, Eugen Tănăsescu wrote an article on the great strides taken toward building a machine that matches human intelligence.<sup>13</sup> Tănăsescu is theologically trained and does not engage technical matters. Nevertheless, he tries hard to prove the Turing test as inaccurate and discusses at length the supposed reasons that prevent AI from ever attaining consciousness. This pseudoscientific discourse was republished by an official ecclesiastical outlet (undated),<sup>14</sup> contributing to the confusion. The same goes for the conviction of Răzvan Ionescu that, irrespective of how much adaptive learning systems will progress, machines will never reach intelligence because they do not have consciousness.<sup>15</sup> This conviction contradicts the speaker's—correct—point that the Orthodox do not rush to assess hypotheticals.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, if hypothetical thinking is not favored by the Orthodox, how can he tell that machines cannot develop consciousness? Ionescu's argument echoes the creationist drivel that evolution

- 
- 12 See Vasilios N. Makrides and Eleni Sotiriou, “Conspiracies, Anxieties, and Ritual Arrhythmia: Exploring Orthodox Discourses and Practices in Greece and Cyprus during the Coronavirus Pandemic,” in *Orthodox Christianity and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, ed. Tornike Metreveli, Routledge Religion, Society and Government in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet States (Abington and New York: Routledge, 2024), 65–101, DOI: 10.4324/9781003372776-4.
- 13 Eugen Tănăsescu, “Sfânta ... inteligență artificială?!” (Holy ... artificial intelligence?!), *adevarul.ro* (16 June 2014), <https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/sfantainteligenta-artificiala-1542688.html> (accessed 10 October 2024).
- 14 <https://doxologia.ro/sfanta-inteligenta-artificiala> (accessed 10 October 2024).
- 15 “Science and Orthodoxy around the World: A Documentary Film,” directed by Christos Panagos; Project “Science and Orthodoxy around the World,” of the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation & IndigoFlicks, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHg5azXTxjg>, min. 37 (accessed 10 July 2025).
- 16 “Science and Orthodoxy around the World,” min. 34.

could never engender consciousness and intelligence. The view that “it’ll never happen” transpires also through the assertions of “Father Teologos,” who warns his followers against AI, while he uses a sophisticated platform for entrapping customers.<sup>17</sup> The speaker must be possessing technical training. He makes valid points about theological anthropology and the need to use addictive technologies in moderation. Nevertheless, that human intelligence is “the Holy Spirit’s gift” which cannot be replicated algorithmically is neither theologically sound nor a competent guide on AI matters. And, as the recent calls of AI creators to stymie research show, “never” does not seem to be so far away.

Orthodox materials also include sound contributions based either on technological expertise or theological training or both. We begin with the article of Stavros Yangazoglou, originally published in a journal but then shared via a popular website.<sup>18</sup> The author calls on Orthodox theologians to engage technological progress, including AI, *theologically*, not ethically and legalistically. But they must do so based on sound information,<sup>19</sup> free of the technophobia promoted by dystopian popular culture and social media. For example, AI showed much promise during the coronavirus pandemic, predicting the spread of the disease and devising means for counteracting it. The benefits outweigh any reason for fearing AI, the author continues, but the possibility for this technology to be misused requires proactive measures. However, being proactive does not mean “imposing barriers and prohibitions on science,” Professor Yangazoglou concludes. Rather, it is about

---

17 “Părintele Teologos: Inteligența Artificială: Implicațiile duhovnicești în cotidian” (Father Teologos: Artificial Intelligence and its daily impact), *O chilie athonita: Bucurii din Sfântul Munte* (17 August 2021), <https://www.chilieathonita.ro/2021/08/17/parintele-teologos-inteligena-artificiala-implicatiile-duhovnicesti-in-cotidian/> (accessed 20 July 2024).

18 See Stavros Yangazoglou, “Θεολογία και Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη” (Theology and Artificial Intelligence), Ορθόδοξη Ομάδα Δογματικής Έρευνας (1 January 2021), [https://www.oodegr.com/oode/epistimi/bioh8ikh/t\\_n\\_1.htm](https://www.oodegr.com/oode/epistimi/bioh8ikh/t_n_1.htm) (accessed 10 May 2025).

19 For the necessity of sound information, see also “AIOCS Conversations: Eftymios Nicolaidis on Orthodoxy and AI” (24 March 2023), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Ugv8VppwSo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ugv8VppwSo) (accessed 25 April 2024).

strengthening the human character of contemporary culture. It is the task of theological anthropology—which focuses on the person’s capacity for love and freedom—to inspire values able to ensure that AI works for humanity’s benefit.

Significant information was available on the Greek platform *Trapeza Ideon* (Bank of Ideas; as we prepare the article for publication, this website is no longer accessible).<sup>20</sup> Most contributors were technologists and philosophers, with some believers among them. For example, in an interview on intelligent machines, Nikos Abouris concluded as follows: “human beings will not stop experimenting and enquiring. But God also gave us critical thinking in order to assess and decide, to be responsible for the choices that will affect our future and the future of our children.”<sup>21</sup> Not overtly Orthodox, this statement reflects the balanced views of Orthodox officialdom, discussed below. In turn, the recent article by Georgios Hatzivasileiou refers to ChatGPT as reminding us of the centrality of the *logos* (“cause, reason, and speech”) within contemporary culture.<sup>22</sup> The author quotes John 1:1, taken to suggest that the human experience boils down to communicating meaning. The author’s valid analysis is not relevant here, but his conclusions are noteworthy: “AI ... will generate new ideologies, new theologies, new quasi-religions. These new religions will not originate in the temples of ancient Athens or Jerusalem, but in laboratories such as those of Silicon Valley or MIT.” The statement, free of conspiracist overtones,

---

20 <https://www.tideon.org/koinonia-thesmoi-dikaio/artificial-intelligence> (accessed 10 November 2023).

21 “Οι «ευφυείς» μηχανές χωρίς τον άνθρωπο είναι επικίνδυνες” (“Intelligent machines without humans are dangerous), *Trapeza ideon* (27 September 2022), <https://www.tideon.org/koinonia-thesmoi-dikaio/414-artificial-intelligence/17865-oi-effyais-mixanes-xoris-ton-anthro-p-einai-epikindynes> (accessed 10 November 2023).

22 “«Εν αρχή ην ο Λόγος» του ChatGPT: Οι θεοί της τεχνητής νοημοσύνης” (ChatGPT’s “In the beginning was the Word”: The gods of artificial intelligence), *Trapeza ideon* (10 April 2023), <https://www.tideon.org/koinonia-thesmoi-dikaio/414-artificial-intelligence/19500-oi-theoi-tis-texnitis-noimosynis> (accessed 15 May 2023).

is not unwarranted. The new “logos” is appealing—at least if we think of the Romanian innovation of the alternative “ChatGPT Church.”<sup>23</sup>

In an important interview,<sup>24</sup> Marius Dorobantu states that progress toward the “human-level” AI is real, but what delays its achievement are, among other factors, problems with modelling human consciousness. Filling the informational gap that leads many Orthodox to confusion, Dorobantu provides technical details, which are of no consequence here, however. He also engages ethical issues. He refers to algorithms that “inherit our biases,” and the need to ensure that “people have the last word in decisions that strongly affect human lives,” so that technological advancements diminish, not increase, “economic inequalities.”<sup>25</sup> Similar concerns were expressed during a conversation of Vasile Bănescu and Kenan Dionisie Wang, hosted by the official broadcaster of the Romanian Patriarchate, Trinitas TV.<sup>26</sup> Both speakers mentioned the usefulness of technology, which eases life, while also pointing to the significance of a holistic development of societies, where digital and nondigital instruments complement each other.

These views—from the balanced and informed to the inexperienced and conspiracist—bring to light the inherent diversity pertaining to Orthodox Christianity in our time. Indeed, without exception and regardless of how wide apart they are, these views claim commitment

23 *Biserica GPT* (the GPT Church), <https://chatgpt.com/g/g-XcODqdQao-biserica-gpt> (accessed 25 April 2025). See also the report of Ana Maria Barbu, at PROTV (25 April 2023), <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/zbiserica-gpt-ofera-online-servicii-religioase-de-la-rugaciune-pentru-o-calatorie-pana-la-demiterea-sefului-reactia-bor.html> (accessed 25 April 2025).

24 “Marius Dorobantu: AI is currently the most exciting phenomenon for someone who is deeply curious about existential or spiritual questions,” *IQuads* (12 August 2022), <https://www.iqads.ro/articol/60834/marius-dorobantu-ai-is-currently-the-most-exciting-phenomenon-for-someone-who-is> (accessed 25 April 2024).

25 See also “AIOCS Conversations: Marius Dorobantu on AI and Christian Anthropology” (21 December 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVHJ-n4b1CA&t=815s> (accessed 25 April 2024).

26 “Credință și Cultură: Inteligența Artificială, beneficii și riscuri reale” (Faith and Culture: Artificial Intelligence, usefulness and real dangers), *Trinitas TV* (4 December 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLbKRJ6ISfg> (accessed 20 July 2024).

to the Orthodox tradition. This amounts to a confirmation of the point, often repeated, that Orthodoxy is not as monolithic and homogenous as outsiders consider it to be. What matters here, however, is the high impact the independent voices have in the age of the internet; hence, the great responsibility of the contributors. While the “apocalyptic” rhetoric of conspiracists is the main source of confusion and panic for uninformed Orthodox, clergy and laity alike, the expert voices represent an important counterpoint that helps both the public and—when considered seriously—official Orthodox stances. We shall discover below that a series of recent ecclesiastical decisions are based on sound information.

## Official and Hierarchical Stances on Science and Technology

The ecclesiastical positions on science and technology are, in the main, positive and ethically oriented, usually maintaining silence in regard to AI and IT. Alternatively, when these topics are addressed, more or less tangentially, the approach taken is pastoral,<sup>27</sup> creating a framework for the experts to have their say.

We begin by surveying the statements of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, June 2016). The main relevant document is “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World,”<sup>28</sup>

---

27 Exception from this attitude makes “The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church” (2000), <https://incommunion.org/tag/the-basis-of-the-social-concept-of-the-russian-orthodox-church/> (accessed 20 March 2025). This document denotes a degree of technophobia and is extremely prescriptive in regard to scientific research. For the contextual reasons that conditioned this document’s position, see Regina Elsner, “Different Voices, Same Challenges,” 127–129, reproduced in Carrie Frederick Frost and Nadieszda Kizenko, “For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church,” *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 5:1 (2022): 119–139.

28 <https://www.holycouncil.org/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world> (accessed 15 May 2025). For a relevant analysis of the conciliar documents, see Doru Costache, “Orthodoxy and Science: Insights from the Holy and Great Council,” *The Ecumenical Review* 72:3 (2020): 396–408. See also, for a broader array of studies, Vasilios N. Makrides and Sebastian Rimestad (eds), *The Pan-Orthodox Council of 2016: A New Era for the Orthodox Church? Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021).

which considers mission as integral to the church's life. According to this document, being anchored in the ecclesial experience, mission must consider the impact of science and technology upon believers, with science and technology being the hallmarks of "today's world." The document recommends the adoption of a "positive attitude" toward research as "a gift from God to humanity," and affirms the autonomy of the scientific method (see F.11). That said, there are "dangers latent in the use of certain scientific achievements," and sometimes researchers "violate basic Christian and humanitarian values" (F.12). A nuanced attitude to science and technology transpires: The autonomy of research is unquestionable, but ethical criteria must be observed. The document does not specify in what ways Orthodox mission would make use of scientific knowledge and technological innovation, but its conclusions allow for constructive approaches.

The second relevant document is the "Encyclical."<sup>29</sup> Echoing "Mission," the document highlights the church's appreciation for science and technology, and warns about the unethical misuse of certain innovations (5.11; 5.12; 5.14; 6.15). Thus, left unchecked, biotechnological experimentation can affect the integrity of life, human and otherwise. Orthodox education, in turn, encourages the holistic development of the human person within a complex web of relations—with God, society, culture, and the environment (4.9). To that end, it draws on both its own tradition and contemporary culture, as the Orthodox have contributed to humankind's general progress throughout history. As such, the "identification of the church with conservatism, incompatible with the advancement of civilisation, is arbitrary and improper" (5.10; see also 6.17). The last point redresses the imbalance caused during the meetings that preceded the Council by church leaders who, in the name of the "tradition" or rather conservatism, opposed the Ecumenical Patriarchate's proposal to align our outdated ecclesiastical calendar, "Julian," to the current scientific calculations.<sup>30</sup>

29 <https://www.holycouncil.org/encyclical-holy-council> (accessed 15 May 2025).

30 See brief notes on this matter in John Chryssavgis, *Toward the Holy and Great Council: Retrieving a Culture of Conciliarity and Communion*, Faith Matters

The third relevant document is “Message.”<sup>31</sup> It shows that the Orthodox Church helps contemporary people to maintain a moral compass and that it contributes to healing the wounds of the world, socially, culturally, and environmentally. It confirms that the church respects the autonomy of research and does not oppose progress. Nevertheless, the church must withstand inventions that entail “the manipulation of freedom, the gradual loss of precious traditions, the destruction of the natural environment, and the questioning of moral values” (2; 7; 8). These guidelines might be taken as merely tentative advice, but are the source of the overall positive and nuanced attitude of the Orthodox officialdom to technology, discussed in what follows.

More recently, the Ecumenical Patriarchate released an important document, *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*.<sup>32</sup> This document was written by experts commissioned in 2017 by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. In an *Orthodox Times* report, we read that it makes no “pronouncements on social challenges,” instead proposing guidelines for “difficult questions.”<sup>33</sup> There are no explicit references to AI within it, but *For the Life of the World* spells out with clarity the conciliar insights on research and technology, discussed just above. It reaffirms that the church opposes anachronism, anti-scientific attitudes, and technophobia, and that it encourages research that contributes to the wellbeing of human beings and the environment (71). For example, the document shows that the church does not object to “reproductive technologies,” while it “cannot approve of methods that result in the destruction of ... ova” (24). Its resistance to the latter relates to “the inalienable dignity and incom-

---

(New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2016), 21–22, 24.

31 <https://www.holycouncil.org/message> (accessed 15 May 2025).

32 Available at <https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos> (accessed 23 May 2025). For a symposium on the document, including the text of the papers presented, see Frederick Frost and Kizenko, “For the Life of the World,” esp. 121–139.

33 “*For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church Is Now Available Online*,” *Orthodox Times* (March 27, 2020), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/for-the-life-of-the-word-toward-a-social-ethos-of-the-orthodox-church-is-now-available-online/> (accessed 10 June 2025).

parable value of every human life” (24; for other technological applications to healthcare, see 69).<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the church does not approve of war technologies that increase the capacity of global annihilation (42, 46). More relevant to our purposes is the fact that the document highlights the importance of digital tools that make possible new pastoral and outreach strategies (72).<sup>35</sup> As we read, the church appreciates the usefulness of these new means of communication, but warns against their negative impact on people’s wellbeing, such as by causing addiction, isolation, anxiety, and violence (70). However, the church’s care is not only about humankind; it encompasses the environment as well, encouraging technologies that protect life on earth (68, 71, and 76).

Distinct echoes of the conciliar documents are audible in all these points. The references to IT are precious for pastoral guidance, marking progress from the conciliar statements. Their applicability to AI is patent, namely, research in this area is encouraged, for the purpose of doing good, but ethical criteria should be observed. We shall see in the next section how this stance has already generated a robust and balanced mainstream opinion.

We now turn to relevant views of Orthodox hierarchs. Thus, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew developed the conciliar stance on technology in the address “Dilemma of the Century: Technology vs Politics,” delivered during the twenty-first Eurasian Economic Summit in Istanbul (12 April 2018).<sup>36</sup> The speech highlights the role of

34 Echoes of these nuanced stances can be found in Woloschak, “Science and Theology,” 344–350.

35 Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia echoed this stance a year later. In his words, “today [the church] uses electronic technologies for preaching the word of God” via websites and blogs. See “His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill gives an interview to Forbes France,” Moscow Patriarchate (26 October 2021), <http://www.patriarchia.ru/en/db/print/5856104.html> (accessed 10 November 2023). Similar stances multiplied in the wake of ChatGPT. See, for instance, Vlad-Mihai Agache, “Exemplu de rugăciune generată de Inteligența Artificială” (An example of prayer generated by the Artificial Intelligence), theodosie.ro (3 January 2023), <https://theodosie.ro/2023/01/03/exemplu-de-rugaciune-generata-de-inteligenta-artificiala/> (accessed 20 March 2024).

36 <https://www.ecupatria.org/2018/04/16/ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-at-the-21st-eurasian-economic-summit/> (accessed 20 November 2024). The quoted passages are slightly altered by us. For a summary in Romanian, see

technology today, with its positives and negatives. When it comes to contributions, we read, “technology is the ‘great power’ of our time. It effectively serves the human being, the prevention and treatment of diseases, it prolongs our lifespan, it facilitates our daily life, the outpouring of knowledge and information, and it promotes communication.” This positive contribution is accompanied, however, by unsettling developments: “Technology has become independent from humanity’s basic needs ... Instead of being humanity’s servant, it has become an ‘all-powerful goddess,’ which demands that we completely submit to her will.” Moreover, the IT means of communication “do not simply transmit information; they shape our views regarding life and its meaning, they steer our desires and needs and influence the ranking of our values.” What the conciliar documents put forward about contemporary biotechnologies, the Patriarch reiterates in terms of IT, doing so more clearly than *For the Life of the World*. But, he continues, the dangers posed by technological advancements are not the cause of contemporary existential problems. In his words:

Our greatest problems are not of a technical nature and do not derive from lack of information. Violence, crime, starvation, social injustice, fanaticism, and the clash of civilizations are not caused by lack of information or technology, nor can they be addressed through computer science. It is also evident that scientific progress and the development of technology do not answer the deep existential questions of humanity, and they most certainly do not eliminate these problems either.

The speaker warns against the vain hopes of contemporary technocracy that innovation could bring solutions to existential issues. But technocratic naivety does not justify technophobia. When it comes to seeking ways of overcoming contemporary issues, the Patriarch goes beyond the tentative advice of the Holy and Great Council.

---

Aurelian Ifimiu, “Patriarhul Ecumenic oferă soluții ‘Dilemei secolului: Tehnologie vs. Politică’” (19 April 2018), <https://basilica.ro/patriarhul-ecumenic-ofera-solutii-dilemei-secolului-tehnologie-vs-politica/> (accessed 20 November 2024).

The current dilemmas and impasses, he posits, cannot be overcome without the cooperation of “technology, politics, economics, and religion.”<sup>37</sup> This nuanced appraisal of the situation and the interdisciplinary search for solutions is typical of the Orthodox mindset; it surely echoes patristic wisdom.<sup>38</sup> No wonder that it is reiterated by mainstream ecclesiastical voices, as we shall discover further down.

In the same vein, as *Orthodox Times* reports, during a more recent meeting with parents, youth, and children, the Ecumenical Patriarch advised them on making proper use of technology.<sup>39</sup> On that occasion, he described innovation as a “technological miracle” of human ingenuity. Amounting to a “parallel school,” technological means such as “television and the internet are sources of values.” But, echoing his 2018 statements, the Patriarch also mentioned the need for young people to be aware of the downsides of overusing and misusing devices. People have “to make right use of them. Technological advancement requires freedom and responsibility.” He concluded that only the responsible use of technology can secure the balanced development of human personality—a stance that found an echo in the 2022 conclusions of Bănescu and Wang, mentioned earlier.

- 
- 37 This interdisciplinary worldview of the Patriarch was recently discussed by John I. Jenkins in “Foreword” to *Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: Peace, Reconciliation, and Care for Creation*, ed. John Chryssavgis (University of Notre Dame Press, 2023), vii–ix, esp. viii.
- 38 See John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers, “Science, Eastern Orthodoxy, and World Religions,” *Isis* 107, no. 3 (2016): 592–596, <https://doi.org/10.1086/688464>; Doru Costache, “One Description, Multiple Interpretations: Suggesting a Way Out of the Current Impasse,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Sciences: Theological, Philosophical, Scientific and Historical Aspects of the Dialogue*, ed. Christopher C. Knight and Alexei V. Nesteruk (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 33–49; Doru Costache, “A Theology of the World: Dumitru Stăniloae, the Traditional Worldview, and Contemporary Cosmology,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Tensions, Ambiguities, Potential*, ed. Vasilios N. Makrides and Gayle Woloschak (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019), 205–222; Eftymios Nicolaidis, *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Greek Fathers to the Age of Globalization*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).
- 39 “Ecumenical Patriarch to youth: Make proper use of technology” (4 January 2020), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/ecumenical-patriarch-to-youth-make-proper-use-of-technology/> (accessed 10 October 2024). Quotations slightly altered by us.

More statements have been issued by Orthodox hierarchs in recent years. Their messages seem to incline toward cautioning about the negative impacts of technology, without also asserting its benefits. This approach is surprising, especially given the wide popularity of IT during the covid crisis, where most churches reached out to believers by way of such means. We shall illustrate this category of statements by examples from the Romanian Orthodox Church.

During the covid lockdowns, the Patriarchal news agency *Basilica* reported that Bishop Iustin of Maramureş and Sătmar had preached in the diocesan chapel, deploring the absence of fellowship, with interaction between people being mediated by technological aids. In his words, “We enjoy the use of technology, but no longer live in fellowship.”<sup>40</sup> The Bishop further mentioned the need of balancing real life and virtual interaction. His message suggests reluctance in regard to technology, but must be understood within its historical context, namely, the known existential impact of isolation during lockdowns. It does not amount to a wholesale rejection of IT, therefore. As the sermon was streamed live from the diocesan Facebook page, it encouraged the listeners to seek balance, not to suppress technology. Nevertheless, the message did focus on technology’s incapacity to replace our need for socialisation.

In turn, Bishop Ignatie of Huşi repeatedly affirmed the importance of “digital fasting” as an antidote for social media addiction.<sup>41</sup> According to an *Orthodox Times* report,<sup>42</sup> he declared that “the purpose

40 Iulian Dumitraşcu, “Ne bucurăm de tehnologie, dar nu mai trăim în comuniune” (13 May 2020), <https://basilica.ro/ne-bucuram-de-tehnologie-dar-nu-mai-traim-in-comuniune-comuniunea-o-dau-doar-familia-si-biserica-ps-iustin/> (accessed 10 October 2024).

41 The concept of “digital fasting” was already used in Greece. See Christos Aigidis, “Η Νηστεία των Social Media!” (26 February 2020), available at <https://www.romfea.gr/katigories/10-apopseis/35478-h-nisteia-ton-social-media> (accessed 10 March 2026).

42 “Bishop of Huşi recommends digital fasting: We will realize how “drugged” we are using technology” (17 March 2021), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/bishop-of-husi-recommends-digital-fasting-we-will-realize-how-drugged-we-are-using-technology/> (accessed 10 October 2024). The quoted passages are slightly altered by us.

of fasting is not exclusively to give up, but to change some habits that turn us into slaves.” Fasting is as important in regard to “addiction to digital media” as it is about other dangerous habits. Thus, the speaker continued, “digital media fasting will help us realise how addicted we are, how ‘drugged’ we are by using technology. Technology is a blessing, but it matters how we use it.” Here, the Bishop echoes the Ecumenical Patriarch’s nuanced approach. The same goes for his statement that “technology changes our thinking” and weakens people’s capacity to focus. Technology is good, he continued, but its indiscriminate use has negative consequences. A couple of years later, Bishop Ignatie returned to the topic with a similar message.<sup>43</sup> The report does not include any positive references this time around, emphasising the negative impact of digital addiction: “We become the tools of our own tools.” The report also includes the Bishop’s admission of being addicted to social media, which seems to be the main reason for returning to the topic in pastoral but uncompromising terms—for the benefit of his audiences.

These warnings indicate a change of perception among Orthodox officials—perhaps denoting their awareness of the specialised and popular literature on digital addiction published in recent years<sup>44</sup>—but

43 “Bishop of Huși urged to observe digital fast during Lenten season” (28 February 2023), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/bishop-of-husi-urged-to-observe-digital-fast-during-lenten-season/> (accessed 10 March 2024). See also the original Romanian report of Iulian Dumitrașcu, “Episcopul Ignatie: Suntem dependenți de tehnologie. Să postim mediatic!” (27 February 2023), <https://basilica.ro/episcopul-ignatie-suntem-dependenți-de-tehnologie-sa-postim-mediatic/> (accessed 10 March 2024).

44 See, for example, projects such as “Technology Addiction—Understanding the Connection: Technology, Addictions, and Mental Health,” of the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney, <https://tinyurl.com/hw45sz84> (accessed 10 September 2024), or the expert contributions gathered in *Technological Addictions*, ed. Petros Levounis and James Sherer (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2022), or standalone studies such as Hilarie Cash et al.’s “Internet Addiction: A Brief Summary of Research and Practice,” *Curr Psychiatry Review* 8, no. 4 (2012): 292–298, doi: 10.2174/157340012803520513, and Amarjit Kumar Singh’s “Digital Addiction: A Conceptual Overview,” *UNL Digital Commons* (2019), <https://tinyurl.com/nhes8kv2> (accessed 10 September 2024), the popular-level work of Johann Hari, *Stolen Focus: Why You Can’t Pay Attention and How to Think Deeply Again* (New York, NY: Crown Trade, 2023), and the pastoral approach to the topic of Armand Babakhanian, “Church Responses and Theological Resources for Technological Addiction,” *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, NS, 2 (2023): 58–79.

they do not amount to a wholesale rejection of technology. To prove this conclusion, we turn to the nuanced declarations of Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durres, and All Albania. After being released from an Athens hospital, in 2020, Archbishop Anastasios thanked the medical personnel profusely.<sup>45</sup> On that occasion, he referred to scientific discoveries and technological innovations as expanding our horizons, securing our wellbeing, and enriching our existence. His paean to research includes a tribute to resourcefulness: “Today’s technology has eased our everyday life; it has contributed to tackling dangerous diseases; it has enhanced communication; it has advanced the exploration of the universe and so on.” No wonder the Archbishop’s enthusiastic endorsement of research and progress. In his words,

Orthodoxy approaches science and technology with doxology and thanksgiving to God who has granted to humans the possibility to look for truth and discover unknown aspects of the creation. It is worth underscoring that the Orthodox Church avoids treating condescendingly scientific research and does not pass judgment on every scientific achievement whenever it occurs.

One hears echoes from the Holy and Great Council’s reference to research as “a gift from God to humanity,” including its acknowledgment of scientific autonomy. But, the Archbishop continued, people should neither become arrogant because of science and technology nor trust them to solve all of humankind’s issues. In his words, “true wisdom goes together with genuine humility. We do not know everything.” Then, “science and technology alone cannot face and cure all human problems—moral, emotional, and existential.” Again, that

---

45 “Orthodox Views about the Development of Science and Technology” (15 November 2020), <https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/en/2020/11/15/orthodox-views-about-the-development-of-science-and-technology/> (accessed 15 March 2025). The quoted passages are slightly altered by us. The original Greek version is found on the same website, “Ορθόδοξες απόψεις σχετικά με την ανάπτυξη των θετικών επιστημών και της τεχνολογίας” (<https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/el/2020/11/15/ορθόδοξες-απόψεις-σχετικά-με-την-ανάπτυξη/>; accessed 15 March 2025).

science and technology have limitations does not mean that they must be abandoned.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, the Archbishop continues, “the scientific research that aims at exploring the secrets of the universe and the spiritual endeavour of the church to approach and communicate with the creator are different ways of seeking the truth.” By highlighting faith and the scientific research as valid and complementary pursuits of the truth, Archbishop Anastasios echoes the Ecumenical Patriarch’s point about the cooperation of “technology, politics, economics, and religion,” expressed earlier that year. As with the Patriarch’s views, his thoughts draw upon the wisdom of the Holy and Great Council, confirming the balanced and nuanced attitude of Orthodox Christianity to science and technology.

In short, these official and hierarchical stances acknowledge the autonomy of research and the benefits of science and technology as a complementary way of seeking the truth and of working towards human betterment, different from the church’s own pursuit of the same goals. Nevertheless, affirming complementarity goes hand in hand with a critical spirit deployed for the purpose of securing the ethical aspect of research and the safe application of its technological outcomes. While all this is fine and justified from the viewpoint of the church tradition, we must point out that most of these documents and statements amount to pastoral advice, not being met with general approval. Their lack of authoritative status is one of the factors that eventually made possible the rise of confusing views on science and technology—including, recently, IT and AI—with the dominant factor being a negative appraisal of technological applications.<sup>47</sup> It is against this backdrop that we now turn to official statements on IT and AI.

---

46 The report of *Orthodox Times* focuses on the limitations of science, which is only one point among the many the Archbishop made in his speech. See “Archdiocese of Tirana: Science Cannot Cure All Human Problems” (15 November 2020), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/archdiocese-of-tirana-science-cannot-cure-all-human-problems/> (accessed 15 March 2024).

47 This pessimistic pitch was inaugurated by the Russian Orthodox “Basis,” 14.1, <https://incommunion.org/2004/10/14/xiv/> (accessed 20 March 2025).

## Official and Hierarchical Stances on IT and AI

The above points on science and technology illustrate a dual approach, namely, positive assessment of the benefits of research in general and recourse to discernment in regard to its applications, when the latter prove to be detrimental to human (and environmental) wellbeing. This balanced approach tends to be replaced by a more reductionist treatment, however. Pastoral concerns about the negative impact of various technologies (especially digital) on human life have recently become more apparent. Because of this and the rise of technophobia, the Greek Orthodox Church, on which we primarily focus below, has been consistently engaging these issues. We could not find corresponding levels of interest elsewhere.

We begin by summarising the position of the Office of the Representation of the Church of Greece to the European Union, led until 2022 by Metropolitan Athanasios of Achaia. The relevant document, lodged by Georgios Lekkas, a member of that office until the end of 2019, includes comments on the draft of the European Commission's European Code of Conduct on AI, prepared by experts. Here are selections from this important statement:

The proposed European project of ethical deontology for artificial intelligence presupposes an understanding of human beings as autonomous, rational, and free entities, compelled to cooperate with their kind only in order to serve their own complex social needs. Moreover, the proposed project ... extends and applies to the field of artificial intelligence—indeed to artificial intelligence that will become autonomous in a very short time—the individualistic understanding of human nature whose dominance on a global scale has disastrous outcomes for people, who already face the prospect of isolation from one another and the destruction of the planet. Does it suffice to approach artificial intelligence in “anthropocentric” fashion, after the idolatrous idea of an “autonomous” human being, to which the project ... often returns? As an Orthodox Christian, my answer is “no.” ... human beings are not merely autonomous rational entities connected to others by expe-

riential necessity; they are free, intelligent, and loving hearts that by design need others in order to be free ... We must immediately criminalise research into the intersection of human and machine capabilities as crimes against humanity ... We consider it equally urgent to take legislative initiatives within the EU to prevent the anthropomorphic simulation of artificial intelligence systems to such an extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish humans and machines, as well as the establishment of a social belief in the equality of human and machine ... These systems must ALWAYS serve ... the ontological need for deep coexistence between all human beings within the single body of humanity. Otherwise, any such systems must be rejected, since every time the referential value of the human being is compromised, humanity is in danger ... of being transformed into something inferior.<sup>48</sup>

The position expressed in this passage is grounded in Orthodox theological anthropology and ethics, along the lines of the conciliar stances reviewed in the previous section. The same concept of human integrity and dignity appears here as it does there, together with its corollary, the need of preventing technology from compromising human nature. But a growing worry about AI transpires through the passage quoted just above, given the obvious progress of intelligent machines. “Never” is already here. This awareness led the author and the office he represented to sideline the nuanced and usually irenic stances of the conciliar documents and of the hierarchs mentioned above. Addressing the topic of AI, here, is no longer a case of deploring technology addiction and its impact on human fellowship and wellbeing. AI is taken to be a present and clear danger to humankind. We shall soon discover that this position currently tends to supplant the moderate official stance.

One month later, *Orthodox Times* reported a conference of representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commis-

---

48 “Τεχνητή νοημοσύνη και εφαρμοσμένη ηθική. Αλλά ποια ηθική;” (Artificial intelligence and applied ethics. But what ethics?), *Romfaia News Agency* (4 February 2019), <https://www.romfea.gr/ekklisia-ellados/26881-texniti-noimosuni-kai-efarmosmeni-ithiki-alla-poia-ithiki> (accessed 20 September 2024).

sion, and churches, religious, and humanitarian organisations, held in Brussels.<sup>49</sup> The discussion focused on the European Code of Ethics on Artificial Intelligence.<sup>50</sup> On that occasion, Georgios Lekkas, representing the Orthodox Church of Greece, intervened twice. First, he pointed out the need to discuss AI within the broader “debate on European social and ethical values”; second, he demanded “the criminalisation of the attempts to aggregate human and mechanical elements, in order to protect not only human dignity, but the human species overall.” Lekkas’ interventions, voicing the position of his church (see the phrase “we consider” in his previous statement), illustrate the growing apprehension of the Orthodox in regard to technological progress, reviewed in the first section of this article, as well as his own February statements, discussed just above. This is an appropriate response to the news of unethical experiments in terms of human-machine hybridisation, but it also echoes the pessimism of the Russian Orthodox “Basis” about technology, together with its desire to control research activities.

When the European Commission made its AI guidelines public, yet another month later, on the occasion of Digital Day 2019, it acknowledged the contribution of the Church of Greece and its representatives. The guidelines, it was announced, include provisions for the protection of “social and environmental wellbeing.”<sup>51</sup> This resolution did not bring the discussion to an end, however, Lekkas posting another statement

---

49 “Ethical concerns about AI in the European Parliament” (20 March 2019), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/ethical-concerns-about-a-i-in-the-european-parliament/> (accessed 20 September 2024). This news item was translated into Romanian by Iulian Dumitraşcu and published a few days later by the ecclesiastical media. See “Probleme de ordin etic privitoare la Inteligența Artificială, analizate în Parlamentul European” (27 March 2019), <https://basilica.ro/probleme-de-ordin-etic-privitoare-la-inteligența-artificială-analizate-in-parlamentul-european/> (accessed 20 September 2024).

50 European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, “Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI,” Publications Office, 2019, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2759/346720> (accessed 25 September 2024).

51 “Vindication of the Office of the Church of Greece in the EU for Artificial Intelligence” (11 April 2019), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/vindication-of-the-office-of-the-church-of-greece-in-the-eu-for-artificial-intelligence/> (accessed 15 July 2024).

to the website of the European AI Alliance, a couple of months later.<sup>52</sup> This statement outlines criteria meant to secure the development of trustworthy AI systems. In summary, these are: Societal control should be exercised so that AI development does not give power to the few over the many; AI should be conditioned to respect local features, in tune with the European principle of unity in diversity; the European Commission should establish a legally binding framework able to protect human dignity against irresponsible AI development; consideration should be given to stopping the development of AI systems interfaced with humans, or “human-machine” hybrids; the exclusion of machines from the protection of any European bill of individual rights and of any possible confusion between people and AI; a principle of “self-restraint” should guide research and application of AI technologies, so that a safe and equitable future is secured for humankind.

These criteria—seasoned with scriptural references—are valid, of course, but they do not represent a specifically Orthodox position. Only “self-restraint” might allude to the Orthodox ethos, namely, its ascetic side, though not exclusively, as it can be found in other spiritual traditions too. In making reference to it, Lekkas meant to illustrate a holistic worldview that parts ways with the nineteenth-century utopia of unbridled progress and the twentieth-century secular dogma of individualist autonomy. But his approach echoes the criticisms levelled by many modern thinkers, including of the secular kind, at positivism, scientism, and the economic rationale that dominate Western culture, from the end of WWII to date.

Moreover, his criteria diverge from the official ecclesiastical narrative regarding the autonomy of scientific progress and technological innovation. True, the Holy and Great Council pointed out

---

52 “The Principle of Self-Restraint as a Precondition of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence” (21 June 2019), <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/european-ai-alliance/principle-self-restraint-precondition-trustworthy-artificial-intelligence.html> (accessed 15 July 2024). See also “Statement of the Office of the Church of Greece to the EU for Artificial Intelligence” (21 June 2019), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/statement-of-the-office-of-the-church-of-greece-to-the-eu-for-artificial-intelligence/> (accessed 15 July 2024).

the need of ethical oversight for certain areas of research, but what Lekkas demands is a stringent ethical, legal, and political control that does not allow for nuances, nor does it match the church's pastoral approach. Once again, his statements echo the Russian Orthodox attitude to technology, together with the "apocalyptic" fears discussed earlier. He supports this stance, deftly, by evoking the scriptural test of the Tree of Knowledge as a warning that unrestrained development of AI can lead to ruin.<sup>53</sup> It can lead, he clarifies, to the discrimination of the "sophisticated human-machines" against natural humans, with the latter undoubtedly having to face the possibility of sharing in "the fate of the native peoples of Australia and America" subjugated by white colonialism. This wisdom lesson is undoubtedly useful, but the criteria and the demands of Lekkas contradict the moderate nature of the conciliar position. Furthermore, they convey nothing specifically Orthodox about AI.

The interest of the Church of Greece in IT and AI has increased. According to a media report, the announced agenda for the third ordinary meeting of its Holy Synod for 2019 (8–11 October) included relevant items.<sup>54</sup> Thus,

The topic of digital technology will ... be at the forefront, and its implications for the role and mission of the Church will be discussed by Metropolitan Maximos of Ioannina, while Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki will refer to artificial intelligence and its challenges.

---

53 For a similar approach, more recently, see the response of Marius Dorobantu to a talk of Ted Peters: "Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, & Transhumanism: Can Technology Enhance the *Imago Dei*?" (26 May 2023), the Sydney College of Divinity's Theology Research Network and ISCAST's seminar series "Religiously Human in a Techno-Scientific World: Theological, Missional, and Pastoral Perspectives," available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfjQuYtAgFk&t=4440s> (accessed 28 May 2025).

54 "The Agenda of the Holy Synod of the Hierarchy of the Greek Church," *Orthodox Times* (4 October 2019), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/the-agenda-of-the-holy-synod-of-the-hierarchy-of-the-greek-church-meets-on-tuesday/> (accessed 20 March 2024).

At that meeting, as another report of *Orthodox Times* informs us, the two hierarchs did address the announced items.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Metropolitan Maximos pointed out that Orthodox Christianity is not an archaic and phobic religion that rejects enquiry, research, and progress. On the contrary, its wisdom, accumulated through the ages, shows the importance of being attuned to the times—including technological advancements—for developing an effective mission. The church itself was often at the forefront of innovation and progress. Clear echoes of the conciliar statements are discernible here. The report further mentions the debate that ensued, with Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the right use and the misuse of technology. The report continues with a very brief reference to Metropolitan Nikolaos' address on AI, and concludes by mentioning the discussion that followed, with many voices pointing out that Orthodox theology must address the implications of AI and technological advancements more broadly. The church, the report affirms, “assesses, accepts, and implements all modern scientific achievements in the interest of the people.”

Details about the intervention of Metropolitan Nikolaos are available elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> The report shows that the speaker referred to the “challenges posed by artificial intelligence,” decrying the use of technology for self-aggrandisement within our culture. More specifically, he alerted the audience of the fact that, sometimes, contemporary technological advancements serve an atheistic agenda, namely, replacing God by human ingenuity. The same goes for AI research. In harmony with the official documents discussed in the foregoing, the Metropolitan pointed out that the issue for Orthodox Christians is not

---

55 “Digital technology and artificial intelligence on the Agenda of today’s Hierarchy meeting,” *Orthodox Times* (10 October 2019), <https://orthodoxtimes.com/digital-technology-and-artificial-intelligence-on-the-agenda-of-todays-hierarchy-meeting/> (accessed 20 March 2024).

56 “Ο κόσμος δεν διψά για Τεχνητή Ευφυΐα, αλλά για κατά Θεόν σοφία” (The world is not hungry for Artificial Intelligence, but for divine wisdom), *Orthodoxia News Agency* (10 October 2019), <https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/epikairota/o-kosmos-den-dipsa-gia-texniti-eyfyia-alla-gia-kata-theon-sofia/> (accessed 20 March 2024).

the development of AI systems; it is the ideological claim that people can attain omniscience through scientific research and omnipotence through technology. He further mentioned that AI has wide applicability, sometimes of a vital nature, but with the public having to be vigilant about its use for human enhancement—from gene-editing to technologies that alter nature and gender. Regardless, the Metropolitan ended, the church neither fears nor rejects science and technology; instead, it values the contribution of scientific and technological advancements to increasing the quality of life.

We bring this section to a close by returning to the statement of Archbishop Anastasios, mentioned in the previous section.<sup>57</sup> The statement mentions the fact that “artificial intelligence augments the possibilities of the intellect,” taken to be a worthy contribution. However, it continues, “the human being is not only an intellectual entity. Artificial intelligence will never replace love.” As the report quoted here summarises the Archbishop’s words, it is difficult to infer what prompted the last point. However, his nuanced stance is important, emphasising the significance of technological advancements as well as the need to draw a line between human and machine.

In summary, the above ecclesiastical positions on AI and IT take stock of the recent emergence of systems that, presumably, threaten human integrity and ethical values. While the circumstantial character of these positions is understandable—especially the worries that transpire at times—they also highlight, once more, the precariousness of the Orthodox conciliar framework, with the stances considered just above largely ignoring the Holy and Great Council’s moderate views. In part, they also betray lack of sound information and, for that reason, a tendency to surrender to the tides of popular opinion.

## Conferences, Seminars, and Workshops

The above conclusions bring to light the importance of robust discussion among Orthodox scholars, as a prerequisite for informed official

---

57 “Orthodox Views” (15 November 2020).

and hierarchical positions. Fortunately, grounded and lucid opinions are not absent; the same goes for open debates. It is to these opinions that we now turn.

One of the earliest academic approaches to AI in the wake of recent developments is a paper by Marius Dorobantu. Delivered for the first conference of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA; Iași, Romania; 9–12 January 2019),<sup>58</sup> the paper provides an expert update on AI research and shows realistically that, in time, the difference between human consciousness and machine intelligence will decrease. Dorobantu asks whether Orthodox theological anthropology is prepared to tackle the possibility of machine intelligence comparable to human consciousness. He believes that the current ontological interpretation of *imago Dei* makes the Orthodox approach to AI difficult. He proposes that the “image of God” should be rendered in functional or vocational terms, not ontological. Such an interpretation would tell us more about human nature and, at the same time, would give theologians the opportunity of perceiving “strong AI” as an ally, not as humanity’s foe.<sup>59</sup> The implication is, we assume, that a functional definition of the “image of God” might be applied, down the track of technological evolution, to human creations, especially AI. This trailblazing paper was soon followed by other undertakings.

Of note is the initiative of the “Evangelistria” parish of Piraeus, Greece, which, in 2020, and in cooperation with the Piraeus Association of Scientists, organised a series of seminars on AI. Thus, a workshop took place in February, “Artificial Intelligence and Governance,” with

---

58 Marius Dorobantu, “Strong Artificial Intelligence and Orthodox Theological Anthropology: Challenging the Concept of *Imago Dei*,” audio recording published on 22 April 2019, [https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/iota/44\\_strong\\_artificial\\_intelligence\\_and\\_orthodox\\_theological\\_anthropology](https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/iota/44_strong_artificial_intelligence_and_orthodox_theological_anthropology) (accessed 20 October 2023). Unfortunately, as we were preparing the article for publication, we noticed that this page does no longer exist.

59 See also Dorobantu, “*Imago Dei* in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,” 179–193, as well as his recent article, “A for Artificial, but Also Alien: Why AI’s Virtues Will Be Different from Ours,” *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, NS, 3, Special Issue: “Artificial and Spiritual Intelligence” (2024): 160–182.

Sergios Theodoridis as presenter. According to a report,<sup>60</sup> the speaker refuted the myth of machine intelligence able to surpass and supplant its creators. He pointed out that, at this stage, AI systems make predictions based on acquired knowledge that they process due to algorithms written by programmers. In short, machine intelligence is statistical, not creative, drawing on the available data that it accesses at a super-human speed. The closest analogue to machine intelligence is animal intelligence, which also works by association and cannot “generate concepts and ideas.” What is problematic, therefore, is not machine intelligence; it is the tendency of certain milieus to reduce human complexity—with its aptitude for “creativity and imagination”—to statistical thinking and algorithms. After asserting that the current panic in regard to AI is unwarranted, Professor Theodoridis ended by expressing confidence in the capacity of “open and free societies to learn from their mistakes, discuss, redefine their goals, and create their future.” The seminar series ended in June, with contributions from Michalis Bletsas, Isidoros Pahoundakis, Efstratios Spyrou, and Athena Tokatlidou. Professor Bletsas, for example, emphasised “the need for current and correct information about this important technological tool [that is, AI] and its multifaceted potential.”<sup>61</sup>

The “Evangelistria” parish returned to the topic of AI by organising a conversation between Elias Liamis and Sergios Theodoridis (11 October 2021).<sup>62</sup> The report mentions Professor Theodoridis’ reiteration that, currently, AI does not match human cognition, regard-

---

60 See “Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη: Το Τέλος της Εποχής του Ανθρώπου” (“Artificial Intelligence: the End of the Age of Man?”) *Orthodoxia News Agency* (11 February 2020), <https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/enories/tehniti-noimosyni-to-telos-tis-epoxis-tou-anthropou/> (accessed 20 September 2024).

61 “Ο Καθηγητής Μιχάλης Μπλέτσας (MIT) για την Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη” (Professor Michalis Bletsas (MIT) on Artificial Intelligence, *Orthodoxia News Agency* (18 June 2020), <https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/enories/o-kathigitis-mixalis-mpletsas-mit-gia-tin-tehniti-noimosyni/> (accessed 20 September 2024).

62 “Τεχνητή νοημοσύνη: Ένα εργαλείο στην υπηρεσία του ανθρώπου και των αναγκών του” (Artificial Intelligence: A Tool in the Service of Humankind and Its Needs), *Orthodoxia News Agency* (13 October 2021), <https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/enories/tehniti-noimosyni-ena-ergaleio-stin-ypiresia-tou-anthropou-kai-ton-anagkon-tou/> (accessed 20 September 2024).

less of how proficient it is at gathering data. So far, machine intelligence falls short of the creative and emotional capabilities pertaining to the human psyche. A human being is capable of “social feelings, solidarity, and love,” while AI is a “useful tool,” and a morally neutral one at that, which should not be feared. People should be mindful, however, of the possibility of misusing AI for destructive purposes and the push to reduce human complexity to machine algorithms.

Another noteworthy event, held on 14 February 2020, was the ninth youth conference of the Metropolis of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, Greece, which addressed “Artificial Intelligence and Intelligent Teenagers.” The speakers at this full day event were Metropolitan Nikolaos and three experts, George Giannakopoulos, Evangelos Gongolidis, and Emmanuel Laskaridis, who debated the *status quaestionis* in AI and related ethical issues.<sup>63</sup>

Then, in June that year the webinar “Artificial Intelligence and Orthodox Theology: First Investigations” was held,<sup>64</sup> being organised by the Facebook group “Cosmology and Theology—Science and Religion.”<sup>65</sup> On that occasion, George Giannakopoulos and Stavros Yangazoglou introduced AI and Orthodox anthropology, respectively, whereas Alexandros Batalias undertook to bridge the two fields. The speakers discussed the possibility of deepening our understanding of human nature by examining AI, as well as nuancing the current perception of AI from the viewpoint of theological anthropology. However, as

---

63 “9ο Νεανικό Συνέδριο: Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη και Νοήμονες Έφηβοι,” *Orthodoxia News Agency* (4 February 2020), <https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/νέοι-και-εκκλησία/9ο-neaniko-synedrio-texniti-noimosymi-kai-noimones-efivoi/> (accessed 20 July 2025).

64 The video recorded talks are available on YouTube at the following addresses: G. Gaiannakopoulos’s intervention at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkoj3toywqQ>; Stavros Yangazoglou’s intervention at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AftNo12BzUc>; the round table at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnKACLMvVJM> (accessed 20 July 2025).

65 “Διαδικτυακή Ημερίδα: Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη και Ορθόδοξη Θεολογία: Πρώτες Διερευνήσεις” (Online Workshop: Artificial Intelligence and Orthodox Theology: First Investigations; 15 June 2020), <https://www.pemptousia.gr/2020/06/diadiktiaki-imerida-techniti-noimosini-ke-orthodoxi-theologia-protedierevnisis/> (accessed 20 July 2025).

Professor Yangazoglou stated, despite any similarities that might be traced between human and artificial intelligence, human experiences are characterised by a free and loving relationship with God, while AI is conditioned by humans, its creators.

The nuanced positions of the expert speakers that contributed to these events—of which some have been ecclesiastically approved—contrast with the alarmist views discussed in the previous section and the conspiracist voices presented earlier. The only ecclesiastically sanctioned academic event that expressed unequivocal pessimism, that we know of, was the roundtable on AI and Christian ethics held in August 2021, in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky (Russia).<sup>66</sup> There, Moscow Patriarchate’s representative Alexander Volkov restated the opposition of his church to a “science that seeks to be completely devoid of moral principles.” He also put forward that “every human development must include a religious dimension.” What would motivate this ecclesiastical rejection of scientific autonomy is the fact that “the church is not indifferent to the future of humanity”; in the name of that future, the church is entitled to oppose research that contradicts religion, he continued. No wonder his conclusion that the church must make sure that AI research does not lead to humanity’s downfall. The speaker’s views are not new; they originate in the Russian Orthodox Church’s “Basis.”<sup>67</sup>

Apart from this exception, Orthodox symposia and workshops on AI continued to display a nuanced attitude. Thus, on 28 January 2023, the Orthodox Academy of Crete organised an online event in honour of the Holy Three Hierarchs, saintly protectors of education.<sup>68</sup>

66 “Ορθοδοξία—Επιστήμη—Ηθική—Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη” (Orthodoxy, Science, Ethics, and Artificial Intelligence), *Orthodoxia News Agency* (26 August 2021), [https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/patriarxeia/patriarxio\\_mosxas/orthodoksia-epistimi-ithiki-texniti-noimosyni/](https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/patriarxeia/patriarxio_mosxas/orthodoksia-epistimi-ithiki-texniti-noimosyni/) (accessed 20 July 2025).

67 The same ideas are attributed to the Russian Orthodox thinking by Teresa Obolevitch, *The Eastern Christian Tradition in Modern Russian Thought and Beyond*, Contemporary Russian Philosophy 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 125.

68 “Ορθόδοξη Ακαδημία Κρήτης τίμησε τη μνήμη των Τριών Ιεραρχών” (The Orthodox Academy of Crete honoured the memory of the Three Hierarchs), Orthodox Academy of Crete (31 January 2022), <https://www.oac.gr/el/epikaira/enimerwtika-deltia/i-orthodoxos-akadimia-kritis-timise-ti-mnimitwn-triwn-ierarxwn-p635.html> (accessed 20 July 2025).

The webinar explored the significance of AI systems for education and research. The speakers mentioned the benefits of technological development, including IT and AI, which contribute to the improvement of life and study. They also highlighted the importance of balance between technological advancement and spiritual criteria in education and everyday life. For example, Professor Vassilis Digalakis encouraged the audience not to fear AI, but to train for using it both safely and creatively. The same holds true for the conference “Artificial Intelligence and Autism” organised by the Greek Ministries for Digital Governance and Health and the Archdiocese of Athens.<sup>69</sup> The conference took place on 24 February 2023, and acknowledged “the key role of artificial intelligence in the digital transformation of society, including the use of innovative methods in different areas of application, such as diffuse developmental spectrum—autism.” The speakers provided details regarding the successful use of AI for diagnosing autism and for monitoring the wellbeing of persons with autism. This enthusiastic endorsement of AI was reiterated during a meeting of Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and the two keynote speakers, Professor Konstantinos Daskalakis and Archimandrite Apostolos Kavaliotis, which stirred the conspiracist reaction mentioned earlier in this study.

Should the sound information presented at these events be received by the higher ecclesiastical echelons as well as the grassroots believers, the continuous Orthodox engagement of IT and AI could maintain and further nuance the balanced attitude intimated by the conciliar documents and *For the Life of the World*.

---

69 “Συνάντηση Αρχιεπισκόπου Αθηνών με τον καθηγητή του MIT Κωνσταντίνο Δασκαλάκη” (Meeting between Archbishop of Athens and MIT Professor Konstantinos Daskalakis), *Orthodoxia Info* (24 February 2023), <https://orthodoxia.info/news/synantisi-archiepiskopoy-athinon-to-2-4/> (accessed 20 July 2025). See also “Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη και Αυτισμός: Από την έρευνα στην εφαρμογή” (Artificial Intelligence and Autism: from research to application), *Athens-Macedonian News Agency* (February 24, 2023), <https://www.amna.gr/health/article/711113/Techniti-Noimosuni-kai-Autismos-Apo-tin-ereuna-stin-efarmogi> (accessed 20 July 2025).

## Conclusions

In the light of the above and at face value, the official and the expert stances of the Orthodox on IT and AI are not homogenous. But the contrast—between voices urging tougher regulation in the field, voices praising the beneficial implementation of AI in the area of health and wellbeing, and other views in between—is not of a fundamental nature. There is a common denominator to most of these informed positions, that is, they encourage research and promote scientific literacy, while they discourage the unethical use of technology. Indeed, their proponents highlight the importance of solid information—not garbled by the transhumanist agenda and dystopian narratives—together with discernment and moderation in the use of technological devices. Notwithstanding the genuine worry of certain hierarchs about digital addiction and the alienation caused by the indiscriminate use of technology, this common denominator is already present in the documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church and in *For the Life of the World*. The framework is in place, therefore, and, as we have briefly seen, is consistent with the historical wisdom of the Orthodox experience, foremost with the patristic tradition and its innumerable examples of scientific engagement, mentioned in the introduction to this study.

What this framework is lacking is practical implementation across the Orthodox churches, especially through catechetical instruction. Without determination to implement this framework, untrained believers and the broader uninformed public will continue to fall victim to the “apocalyptic” narrative and conspiracy theories. And, it seems, not all Orthodox churches are interested in organising relevant catechetical programs for believers—to match the Church of Greece’s initiatives and, to give another example, the national springtime youth camp held at Găbud *skete*, Romania, in May 2022.<sup>70</sup> The reasons behind

---

70 Ștefana Totorcea, “Tabăra de primăvară de la Găbud: Tinerii vor dezbate împreună cu invitații lor tema tehnologiei”(Springtime camp at Găbud: Youth will debate the topic of technology with their guests), *Basilica* (March 31, 2022), <https://basilica.ro/tabara-de-primavara-de-la-gabud-tinerii-vor-dezbate->

this reluctance to implement the framework have not been addressed here. It is our opinion, however—based on the sources referenced in the introduction—that these reasons have to do with certain anachronistic drives, of which the best expression is the “Julian” calendar still in use in the Orthodox churches, itself the product of a bygone scientific age. Either way, the proliferation of conspiracist and “apocalyptic” ideas is directly proportional to the lack of interest in scientific literacy within many churches, and to catechetical programmes that ignore the realities of our time.

But the proliferation of conspiracist views can be stymied through implicit forms of catechisation, as well. For example, *Orthodox Times* published in September 2021 the following announcement: “Archdiocese of America: Over \$100,000 worth of technology devices was distributed to the parishes.”<sup>71</sup> According to the report, the items were donated in order to support teaching and learning activities in schools affiliated with the church. Apart from the intrinsic value of this donation, it also constitutes a clear sign that technology can be used well and that the church does not fear it. The same effect can be achieved by other means. Very recently, for instance, the young Orthodox scholar Christopher Howell proved to his university students the limitations of AI through an ingenious exercise, namely, asking them to mark “assignments” produced by ChatGPT.<sup>72</sup> The results were overwhelming, with students’ confidence being restored upon the realisation that the machine is not infallible. Coming from an Orthodox academic, this lesson is significant and, together with the other worthwhile contributions surveyed above, could contribute—after the fashion of the snowball effect—to the formation of a nuanced Orthodox

---

impreuna-cu-invitatii-lor-tema-tehnologiei/ (accessed November 25, 2022). The purpose of this camp was to familiarise the youth with the spiritual life, and to provide them with opportunities for discussing the impact of technology on life.

71 <https://orthodoxtimes.com/archdiocese-of-america-over-100000-worth-of-technology-devices-was-distributed-to-the-parishes/> (accessed November 25, 2022).

72 See C. W. Howell, “Don’t Want Students to Rely on ChatGPT? Have Them Use It,” *Wired* (June 6, 2023), available at <https://www.wired.com/story/dont-want-students-to-rely-on-chatgpt-have-them-use-it/> (accessed June 9, 2023).

attitude, informed, confident, and discerning—a positive counterpoint to the damaging conspiracist voices that litter the internet.

The findings of the survey undertaken here corroborate Vassilis Adrahtas' conviction that, in principle, the Orthodox church is equipped for surviving and flourishing in the digital age.<sup>73</sup> What can dispel the current confusion and make Orthodoxy's survival and flourishing possible is the integration of the factors discussed above: The rich history of patristic engagement of science and technology, recent conciliar and related documents, up-to-date expert information on science and technology, including IT and AI, theological reflection, and catechetical and pastoral initiatives that include elements of science and faith in the form of science-engaged theology.

## Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the INSBS International Collaboration Grant Scheme (2022–2023), the research being undertaken at the Institute of Historical Research (Athens) and the Australian University College of Divinity, formerly Sydney College of Divinity (Sydney). The authors are grateful to the CPOSAT reviewers for their insightful comments, as well as to Ruth Redpath for her excellent stylistic suggestions.

*The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.*

Received: 20/11/25 Accepted: 24/03/26 Published: 21/04/26

---

73 Vassilis Adrahtas, "Orthodox Theology Enters the Virtual Age..." *Greek City Times* (February 19, 2023), [https://greekcitytimes.com/2023/02/19/orthodox-theology\\_virtual\\_age/](https://greekcitytimes.com/2023/02/19/orthodox-theology_virtual_age/) (accessed March 15, 2023).