Imago Dei and Artificial Creation: An Old Testament Theology of Humanity from Genesis 1: 26–27 and Psalm 8 for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) and biotechnological systems increasingly reshape human experience, social relationships, and institutional structures, faith communities are called to articulate robust theological frameworks that affirm human dignity and guide ethical innovation. While contemporary AI ethics often prioritize efficiency, autonomy, and technological advancement, they frequently overlook the deeper insights of theological anthropology, particularly the Old Testament's vision of personhood grounded in covenant, vocation, and divine image-bearing. This study addressed that gap by examining how the biblical concept of imago Dei can inform ethical discernment and theological reflection in the age of machine intelligence. The research focused on Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8, employing historical-critical and canonical approaches to trace their original meaning and ongoing theological trajectory. Genesis 1 was interpreted as a foundational theological text that defines human identity through divine image-bearing, relational stewardship, and moral vocation under God's sovereignty. Psalm 8 was analyzed as a poetic and liturgical affirmation of humanity's covenantal dignity and delegated authority within creation. Together, these texts construct a biblical anthropology emphasizing relational dependence on God and moral responsibility toward creation. Engaging these biblical perspectives with contemporary debates on AI and biotechnology, the study explored their ethical relevance to justice, equity, and sustainability, particularly in light of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3, 9, 10, and 16). The research argues that the Old Testament offers a distinct theological vision of humanity defined not by technological capacity but by divine calling and relational accountability. This vision provides practical ethical tools, stewardship, justice, and communal responsibility that can guide churches, scholars, and policymakers in assessing the use and moral boundaries of AI and biotechnology. Incorporating African contextual theology, the study applies biblical anthropology to concerns of technological inequality, cultural autonomy, and sustainable human flourishing. Ultimately, it proposes a faith-rooted ethical framework for navigating the theological and moral implications of artificial creation.

Keywords: **Imago Dei, Theological Anthropology, AI Ethics, Sustainable Development Goals, African Theology, Human Dignity**

Introduction

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and biotechnology is reshaping global realities and prompting urgent ethical questions about what it means to be human. While these technologies offer potential benefits, such as advancing healthcare, improving food security, and fostering industrial innovation, they also challenge foundational concepts of personhood, identity, and moral responsibility. In response to these developments, the biblical doctrine of *imago Dei* offers a

timeless framework for affirming human dignity, vocation, and relational stewardship within creation. Much of the current ethical discourse around AI and biotechnology is dominated by utilitarian and market-driven logic, often sidelining theological perspectives on relational ontology, vocation, and justice (Miller, 2021: 45; Coeckelbergh, 2020: 111).

This study examines Genesis 1–3 and Psalm 8 as foundational texts for constructing a theological anthropology that affirms both human dignity and responsibility. Genesis introduces humanity as created in God's image (1:26–27), charged with dominion and care for creation. Genesis 2:15 reinforces this through the call to "work and keep" the garden, combining productivity with protection. Genesis 3 adds complexity by narrating the Fall, in which humanity's quest for autonomy disrupts divine order, a cautionary lens through which we can assess contemporary attempts to transcend biological and moral limits through technology (Gunton, 2002: 182). Psalm 8, meanwhile, poetically affirms human worth and vocation: though humans are "a little lower than the heavenly beings," they are crowned with "glory and honor" and entrusted with care over creation.

In today's context, AI is revolutionizing industries such as healthcare, finance, and defense, while biotechnology is reshaping agriculture, genetics, and even human reproduction (Floridi et al., 2018: 692; Peters, 2020: 53–55). These advancements intersect with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 3 (Good Health), SDG 9 (Industry and Innovation), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality), and SDG 16 (Peace and Justice) (UNDP, 2023: 12–18). However, without grounding in ethics that prioritizes human dignity and justice, these technologies risk reinforcing inequality and eroding moral boundaries.

The biblical concept of *imago Dei*, when integrated with the themes of covenant and stewardship, offers a compelling alternative to reductionist paradigms of human enhancement. Rather than viewing humans as data points or programmable systems, this theological framework centers moral agency, relational accountability, and a sacred vocation. In African contexts, where technological access is often uneven and where theological and cultural frameworks are frequently marginalized, neglecting these insights can reinforce colonial patterns of epistemic exclusion and technological domination (Schaefer, 2018: 203; Mbiti, 1990: 52).

This study therefore proposes a theologically grounded ethical framework for evaluating AI and biotechnology. Drawing on Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8, it aims to articulate a theology of personhood rooted in divine calling, communal responsibility, and justice. The research engages in both historical-critical and canonical exegesis to recover the theological intent of these texts (Waltke, 2001: 127; Köhler, 2015: 88). It also integrates African contextual theology, particularly concepts such as *Ubuntu* and communal ethics, to develop a justice-oriented, relational approach that honors indigenous wisdom and addresses socio-economic disparities (Mbiti, 1990: 52; Bediako, 2004: 148–149).

The core research questions guiding this inquiry are: How does Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8 inform a theological vision of personhood that critiques contemporary definitions within AI and biotechnology? In what ways can the doctrine of *imago Dei* provide ethical grounding for faith-based responses to technological development? How can African contextual theology enrich the global discourse on technological ethics and sustainable development?

This study contributes to the expanding dialogue between theology and technology by offering a faith-based vision of personhood that responds to the ethical dilemmas of artificial creation. Grounded in *imago Dei* and covenantal stewardship, it frames human dignity not as an abstract principle but as a theological imperative shaping the development and governance of technology. It critiques narratives that reduce human identity to cognitive function, genetic code, or algorithmic output, reaffirming the spiritual and moral dimensions of personhood (Clines, 1997: 213–215; Waltke, 2001: 127).

Finally, this research amplifies African theological voices such as Mbiti (1990) and Ukpong (2014), who stress the significance of community, cultural autonomy, and relational responsibility. These perspectives challenge Western techno-ethics by advocating for inclusive, participatory, and justice-driven frameworks. By aligning biblical theology with SDG priorities, this study promotes ethical visions that are both globally responsible and theologically grounded.

Literature Review

Contemporary debates on artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and sustainable development are largely shaped by technocratic and market-driven frameworks emphasizing efficiency, utility,

and innovation. While these paradigms offer pragmatic tools for technological advancement, they often overlook deeper theological and ethical concerns, particularly those concerning human dignity, vocation, and moral agency. This literature review explores how the Old Testament doctrine of *imago Dei*, when coupled with African contextual theology, offers a robust ethical vision for assessing AI and biotechnology within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the heart of this theological vision lies Genesis 1:26–27, which presents human beings as created in the image of God, an affirmation of intrinsic dignity and a mandate for stewardship. Waltke (2001: 127) interprets the *imago Dei* as a call to covenantal responsibility and relational stewardship, countering reductionist accounts of personhood that define human worth by productivity, intelligence, or data utility. Clines (1997: 213–215) similarly underscores the human role as mediators between God and creation, emphasizing ethical responsibility and justice. These insights challenge prevailing models in AI and biotechnology that tend to prioritize functionality over personhood and efficiency over ethics.

Genesis 2:15 deepens this mandate, portraying humanity's vocation as both "working" and "keeping" the garden, terms that imply productivity balanced with care and protection. This dual responsibility frames the ethical evaluation of technologies that may enhance capacity while risking exploitation. Genesis 3, with its account of the Fall, introduces theological insight into the consequences of human overreach. Gunton (2002: 182) draws parallels between the desire for autonomy depicted in the Fall and the unchecked ambition often evident in AI and biotech innovation.

Psalm 8 complements Genesis by celebrating humanity's place in creation, "a little lower than the heavenly beings," yet crowned with "glory and honor" (Ps 8:5–6). Köhler (2015: 88) reads this passage as affirming humanity's delegated dominion, not for domination but for relational care. Middleton (2005: 26–29) advances this view, rejecting static notions of *imago Dei* and presenting it as a dynamic vocation rooted in relationship and justice. This biblical anthropology insists that technology be evaluated not only for what it can do but for whom it serves and what kind of society it cultivates.

The relevance of these insights becomes particularly acute in the realm of AI and biotechnology. Floridi et al. (2018: 692) detail how AI now shapes health care, security, agriculture, and even human reproduction. While such advances are tied to SDGs like SDG 3 (Good Health), SDG 9 (Innovation), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace and Justice), dominant ethical models often emphasize progress at the expense of equity and moral reflection. Schaefer (2018: 203) argues that theological anthropology must be central to ethical AI discourse, ensuring that human dignity remains paramount. Behrens (2020: 56) proposes a stewardship model for innovation, one grounded in theological vocation and ethical discernment.

Yet, much of theological engagement with technology remains skewed toward New Testament sources or abstract speculation. Goswami (2019: 112) critiques this imbalance and calls for deeper engagement with Old Testament texts, particularly for their focus on human responsibility and divine order. Wisdom literature, such as Ecclesiastes 3:11–12 and Job 7:17–18*,* reinforces the idea of human finitude, urging humility in the face of technological power (Köhler, 2015: 90). These texts serve as theological correctives to technocratic narratives that presume unlimited control and knowledge.

African contextual theology further enriches this ethical framework by foregrounding relationality, community, and justice. Mbiti (1990: 52) emphasizes the centrality of communal ontology in African worldviews, "I am because we are", a concept closely aligned with biblical covenant theology. Bediako (2004: 148–149), and Ukpong (2014: 143), advocate for the integration of indigenous wisdom and spiritual values into global technology ethics. They critique Western technological paradigms for perpetuating epistemic exclusion and cultural alienation, calling instead for models that reflect African priorities such as solidarity, equity, and justice.

The African principle of *Ubuntu*, which centers on communal well-being and interdependence, offers a vital ethical counterbalance to individualistic and algorithm-driven models of AI ethics. Gathogo (2008: 44) and Tutu (1999: 35) interpret *Ubuntu* as a moral vision grounded in dignity and restorative justice. These values not only align with biblical ethics but also provide essential guidance for AI applications in healthcare (SDG 3) and infrastructure (SDG 9). *Ubuntu* thus invites a reimagining of technological ethics in terms of communal flourishing rather than technological supremacy.

Despite growing recognition of faith-based perspectives in ethical discourse, two significant gaps persist. First, the concept of *imago Dei* is frequently invoked without being sufficiently developed into a comprehensive framework for specific technologies (Schaefer, 2018: 207). Second, African theological voices remain underrepresented in global AI policy discussions, limiting the ethical reach and cultural sensitivity of dominant frameworks (Mbiti, 1990; Ukpong, 2014). This study aimed to address these gaps by constructing a theological-ethical paradigm that integrates biblical anthropology with African relational ethics to reframe sustainable development.

This theological vision also reframes SDG engagement. For instance, while SDG 10 targets inequality reduction, African theology adds a layer of cultural and epistemic justice that critiques structural power dynamics in global technology policy. Likewise, SDG 16's emphasis on justice and strong institutions gains theological depth when viewed through the lens of covenantal ethics and prophetic critique, as found in Amos and Isaiah. Ultimately, this literature points to an urgent theological question: What does it mean to bear God's image in an age where human tasks and identities are increasingly replicated by machines? Can *Ubuntu* and covenantal responsibility offer ethical correctives to algorithmic bias, surveillance capitalism, or genetic manipulation? The authors surveyed, from Waltke and Clines to Mbiti, Bediako, and Tutu, respond with a common vision: human dignity is not an abstract principle but a divine vocation expressed in relational responsibility and moral accountability.

By aligning biblical theology with African ethics, this literature affirms a theological anthropology that is both ancient and urgently contemporary. It challenges the technocratic impulse to value efficiency above equity, and it advocates instead for technological progress that reflects humanity's calling as stewards of creation. Such a framework critiques not only the direction of innovation but also the assumptions underlying it, particularly those that ignore moral limits, relational bonds, and cultural pluralism.

In conclusion, theological anthropology, rooted in the Old Testament doctrine of *imago Dei* and enriched by African contextual theology, provides an indispensable foundation for evaluating AI and biotechnology within the broader pursuit of sustainable development. Biblical scholars such as Waltke (2001), Clines (1997), Köhler (2015), and Middleton (2005) underscore human dignity and responsibility as theologically grounded and ethically binding. African theologians like Mbiti

(1990), Bediako (2004), and Ukpong (2014) extend this vision by advocating for epistemic justice and communal integrity. Together, these voices offer a powerful, integrated ethical framework, one that can reimagine the SDGs as tools not only for progress, but for relational justice, inclusive stewardship, and the flourishing of all humanity.

Methodology

This study employed a multidisciplinary qualitative approach to investigate how the Old Testament doctrine of imago Dei, particularly as expressed in Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8, could inform contemporary ethical discussions concerning artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and their contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By integrating historical-critical and canonical biblical methods with African contextual theology, the research developed a framework that aligned faith-based perspectives with pressing ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies.

The historical-critical method was applied to analyze Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8 within their ancient Near Eastern contexts. This involved linguistic, literary, and cultural examination to highlight the distinctiveness of the Old Testament's anthropology relative to contemporary technological conceptions of personhood. Unlike Ancient Near Eastern texts such as the *Enuma Elish* and the Atrahasis Epic, which depicted humans as servants created for the gods' labor, Genesis affirmed humans as *tselem* (image-bearers of God) entrusted with *radah* (stewardship) over creation ((Brueggemann, 1982: 99-100; Waltke, 2001: 127). This theological divergence established humans as bearers of divine vocation characterized by honor and ethical responsibility within a divinely ordered cosmos. Middleton (2005: 26–29) emphasized the relational and ethical dimensions of this vocation as foundational for framing human agency amidst technological advancements. Psalm 8 complemented this by portraying humanity as "a little lower than the heavenly beings," crowned with glory and charged with dominion (Ps 8:5–6). Köhler (2015: 88) interpreted this as affirming covenantal responsibility, underscoring stewardship rather than exploitation. These texts collectively articulated an Old Testament theological anthropology focused on divine calling and ethical accountability, which was crucial for reimagining SDG 16 (Peace and Justice) beyond technocratic governance.

The canonical approach situated these foundational texts within Israel's broader covenantal narrative. Drawing on Childs (1985: 41), imago Dei was understood as a dynamic theological concept unfolding across the Old Testament. Tracing its development from Genesis 9:6 through Exodus 19:6 and Isaiah 43:1–7 revealed a consistent emphasis on human vocation, justice, and relational responsibility. This canonical perspective articulated a coherent ethical trajectory, enabling imago Dei to serve as a theological foundation for human dignity and stewardship. Consequently, sustainable development was reframed not as mere economic growth but as the cultivation of justice and community care, thereby directly engaging SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

To ensure cultural and geographic relevance, African contextual theology was integrated, emphasizing communal identity and relational ontology. African theological perspectives resonated with biblical covenant theology through their focus on community and interdependence. Mbiti (1990: 53) highlighted that African thought structures, grounded in relational being, closely echoed biblical concepts of covenant and responsibility. Bediako (2004: 149) and Ukpong (2014: 143) argue for theological frameworks that bridges indigenous African epistemologies with global technological ethics, thereby amplifying Global South voices often marginalized in dominant discourses. This inclusion was critical given the disproportionate technological inequalities affecting African societies, where innovations frequently advanced without adequate ethical or cultural consideration. African contextual theology thus challenged epistemic injustice and supported SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by offering alternative ethical paradigms that enriches global technology governance debates.

Ubuntu philosophy, a central African ethical concept articulated as "I am because we are," further informed this study. Gathogo (2008: 44) described *Ubuntu* as an ethic of care, dignity, and collective responsibility aligned with the biblical vision of humanity's relational role in creation. This relational ontology countered the individualistic, data-driven logic prevalent in AI and biotechnology development. Ubuntu framed human dignity as inseparable from community well-being, offering a corrective ethical lens for technological evaluation. Practically, *Ubuntu* ethics contribute specifically to AI ethics in public health and innovation, underpinning theological justifications for SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

The study also engaged with contemporary literature on AI ethics, biotechnology, and the SDGs to ensure theological insights responded to current ethical debates and policymaking. Schaefer (2018: 209) emphasized that theological ethics, must actively participate in public discourse and the design of ethical frameworks, governing technology. Miller (2021: 47) similarly stressed theology's role in shaping normative guidelines that steer sustainable innovation toward prioritizing human dignity and environmental stewardship.

A comprehensive review was conducted of biblical commentaries, African theological texts, and scholarly works on AI and biotechnology ethics. Key Hebrew terms; *tselem* (image), *radah* (rule), and *kavod* (glory), were closely examined to grasp their original theological nuances. Historical-critical findings were integrated with theological reflections on relational ethics and justice to develop a normative framework for assessing the ethical implications of emerging technologies. This interdisciplinary methodology ensured a holistic understanding of imago Dei's role in contemporary technology ethics and its potential to advance sustainable development goals.

In summary, the study combined rigorous biblical analysis, African theological perspectives, and contemporary ethical discourse to construct a robust theological framework for evaluating AI and biotechnology within the sustainable development context. By reimagining the SDGs through the lens of imago Dei and relational ethics, the research articulated a vision grounded in human dignity, communal well-being, and ethical responsibility, core values in both biblical and African theological traditions. The integration of these insights offered a powerful ethical compass to navigate the complexities of today's technological landscape, guiding efforts toward a just and sustainable future.

Findings

This study highlights the relevance of the Old Testament doctrine of *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8) in re-conceptualizing humanity's relationship with technology, particularly in the contexts of AI and biotechnology, while advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drawing from the historical-critical method, the analysis affirms that human dignity is intrinsic, grounded in a relational and vocational identity that emphasizes stewardship and moral responsibility rather than mere functional utility (Waltke, 2001: 129; Middleton, 2005: 29). The canonical approach demonstrates that this dignity persists post-fall, underscoring ethical resilience

in the human vocation (Clines, 1997: 213–215). African contextual theology, particularly the principle of *Ubuntu*, provides an ethical counterpoint to technocratic individualism by emphasizing communal identity and justice (Mbiti, 1990: 53; Gathogo, 2008: 44). These theological insights align with key SDGs, particularly SDGs 3, 9, 10, and 16, as they promote human flourishing, equitable innovation, and peace-building. Contemporary literature on AI ethics (Schaefer, 2018; Miller, 2021) supports these frameworks, affirming the need for theological contributions to public policy and ethical discourse.

The table below summarizes the key theological insights from the study and aligns them with relevant Sustainable Development Goals. It illustrates how biblical anthropology and African relational ethics can offer concrete, normative guidance for addressing the ethical challenges of AI, biotechnology, and sustainable development.

Key Concept	Description	Connection to SDGs
Imago Dei (Image of God)	Humanity created in God's image with intrinsic dignity and moral responsibility.	**SDG 10**: Reduced Inequalities, **SDG 16**: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
Human Dignity Post-Fall	Human dignity persists even after moral failure.	**SDG 3**: Good Health and Well-Being, **SDG 10**: Reduced Inequalities
Covenantal Responsibility	Humans are stewards with ethical responsibility toward creation.	**SDG 3**: Good Health and Well-Being, **SDG 10**: Reduced Inequalities, **SDG 16**: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
Ubuntu (Community and Justice)	African philosophy emphasizing communal identity, care, and justice.	**SDG 10**: Reduced Inequalities, **SDG 16**: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
Ethical Technology	AI and biotechnology should enhance human flourishing and equity.	**SDG 9**: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, **SDG 3**: Good Health and Well-Being
Application to SDGs	Biblical ethics support SDGs, focusing on health, innovation, and justice.	**SDG 3**: Good Health and Well-Being, **SDG 9**: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Table 1.1 Key theological concepts

Discussion

This section reflects on the theological and ethical implications arising from the study's findings on artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drawing on historical-critical, canonical, and African contextual theological methods, it demonstrates how a vocation-centered understanding of humanity, rooted in the Old Testament

doctrine of *imago Dei*, provides a powerful corrective to the reductionist and technocratic paradigms that dominate contemporary technology ethics.

Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8 reveal a theological anthropology in which humans are created not merely as functional or cognitive beings but as relational entities entrusted with moral responsibility and covenantal stewardship. The historical-critical method highlights this distinctiveness, particularly against Ancient Near Eastern texts like the *Enuma Elish*, where humans are subordinate laborers serving gods. In contrast, Genesis presents humanity as bearing God's image (*tselem*) and tasked with responsible dominion (*radah*) over creation, constituting a relational vocation. This foundational insight challenges modern, mechanistic views of humanity and reframes SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) beyond legalistic governance toward a justice rooted in covenant and human dignity (Brueggemann, 1982; Waltke, 2001; Middleton, 2005).

The canonical approach enriches this vision by situating *imago Dei* within the broader biblical narrative. Tracing this concept from Genesis 9:6 through Exodus 19:6 to Isaiah 43 reveal a continuous biblical emphasis on human vocation framed by justice, communal flourishing, and relational stewardship. This trajectory offers a holistic ethical framework, reframing sustainable development as fostering just, interconnected communities rather than mere technological or economic advancement. Such a perspective is crucial for advancing SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

African contextual theology further deepens and localizes this framework by emphasizing communal identity and relational ethics. The African principle of *Ubuntu*, “I am because we are”, resonates with biblical covenantal themes of community and shared responsibility. Scholars such as Mbiti (1990), Gathogo (2008), and Tutu (1999) stress that African personhood is fundamentally relational, opposing the hyper-individualism and utilitarianism prevalent in Western technological discourse, especially in AI frameworks. African theology thus challenges epistemic injustice within global AI ethics by centering dignity, solidarity, and collective well-being. This aligns closely with SDG 10 and SDG 16, calling for ethical frameworks grounded in context and justice rather than abstract universalism.

Prophetic and wisdom literature such as Amos 5:24 and Isaiah 44:9–20 provide crucial theological critiques of misplaced trust in human-made power, whether idols or algorithms. These texts warn against the idolatry of technology, urging that AI and biotechnology be subjected to moral scrutiny informed by covenantal justice, rather than uncritical enthusiasm or fear (Childs, 1985; Schaefer, 2018). This prophetic critique reinforces the imperative for ethical discernment rooted in biblical wisdom.

The findings further emphasize that ethical innovation must be framed within a theology affirming human dignity even amid the post-fall brokenness of the world. Scholars like Clines (1997) and Middleton (2005) demonstrate that human vocation endure despite human fallibility, an insight especially pertinent to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), as emerging technologies increasingly shape healthcare access, bioethics, and human enhancement. Rather than reducing human value to data or productivity, this theological ethic upholds dignity as inviolable and communal well-being as the ultimate goal of innovation.

Moreover, this study's integration of theology and sustainable development implies that the SDGs themselves require theological reinterpretation. Though often framed as secular policy tools, the SDGs can also be viewed through biblical and African ethical lenses as calls to pursue justice, care for creation, and uphold human dignity. For instance, SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) benefit not only from technological solutions but from renewed theological commitments to creation care and intergenerational justice.

While this study offers a robust theological foundation, further empirical research is necessary to explore how African faith communities engage these ethical challenges practically. Important questions remain about how *imago Dei*-centered ethics influence grassroots innovation, medical decision-making, education, and public policy in African contexts. Collaborative interdisciplinary efforts involving theologians, ethicists, technologists, and policymakers are essential to realize this theological vision in concrete ways.

Conclusion

The accelerating influence of artificial intelligence (AI) and biotechnology has made the question of what it means to be human one of the most pressing theological and ethical issues of our time.

This study has demonstrated that the Old Testament doctrine of *imago Dei* grounded in Genesis 1:26–27 and illuminated by Psalm 8, offers a timeless and contextually relevant framework for reimagining human identity, dignity, and vocation in an age of artificial creation. The biblical vision of humanity as created in the divine image affirms intrinsic worth, moral agency, and relational accountability before God, all of which stand in sharp contrast to reductionist and utilitarian conceptions of personhood that dominate technological and economic discourse. Far from viewing humans as programmable entities or data systems, Scripture locates human dignity in covenantal relationship and ethical vocation, reminding contemporary society that innovation must never outpace moral discernment or spiritual integrity (Waltke, 2001; Middleton, 2005; Köhler, 2015).

This theological anthropology insists that human creativity is derivative, not autonomous. The *imago Dei* affirms the divine gift of innovation, but also the divine boundaries that safeguard creation from exploitation. Genesis 1–3 and Psalm 8 together articulate a delicate balance between authority and humility: humanity is entrusted with stewardship (*radah*) but warned against self-deification (Gen 3:5). In an era when AI and biotechnology increasingly blur the line between creation and manipulation, this theological balance reclaims the sacredness of creaturely limitation as an ethical resource. The Fall narrative serves as an enduring critique of human hubris, the desire to transcend divine boundaries through knowledge and control, offering a theological counter-narrative to the myth of technological omnipotence (Gunton, 2002; Floridi, 2013).

African contextual theology enriches this vision by reclaiming the communal and relational dimensions of human identity that Western techno-ethics often neglect. Concepts such as *Ubuntu* ("I am because we are") and covenantal solidarity resonate deeply with the biblical portrayal of humanity as relationally constituted and communally responsible (Mbiti, 1990; Gathogo, 2008; Tutu, 1999). These African insights challenge the hyper-individualism and epistemic exclusion often embedded in global technological systems, offering instead a theology of shared dignity, interdependence, and justice. By aligning *imago Dei* with *Ubuntu*, the study bridges Scripture and African ontology, constructing an inclusive theological ethic that emphasizes communal flourishing, equitable access to innovation, and the moral duty to protect the vulnerable. This synthesis ensures that theology not only interprets technological realities but also transforms them, guiding innovation toward social healing and sustainability.

The research also revealed that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide fertile ground for this integration of theology and ethics. SDG 3 (Health), SDG 9 (Innovation), SDG 10 (Inequality Reduction), and SDG 16 (Justice) were shown to align naturally with biblical and African ethical imperatives. The Old Testament's emphasis on justice (*mishpat*), righteousness (*tsedaqah*), and stewardship (*shamar*) transforms these goals from secular policy aspirations into expressions of covenantal obedience and communal care. A theology of *imago Dei* thus reinterprets sustainable development as not merely economic advancement but moral participation in God's ongoing work of creation and restoration. By situating human innovation within divine purpose, this study provides a moral compass that directs scientific progress toward life, justice, and peace, ensuring that technological power remains accountable to divine and human community alike.

In practical terms, the findings underscore the need for interdisciplinary collaboration among theologians, scientists, policymakers, and ethicists. Faith-based institutions must play an active role in shaping public discourse on AI and biotechnology, not as opponents of science but as moral co-narrators in humanity's technological story. Theological education should integrate ethics of technology into its curricula, training ministers and scholars to engage with the moral dimensions of innovation in healthcare, environmental management, and digital governance. Churches, universities, and civil society can form collaborative networks to develop contextual guidelines for ethical technology, ensuring that African theological wisdom informs global policy and practice. Such initiatives would not only amplify African voices in global ethical debates but also embody the prophetic call to justice and stewardship articulated in Scripture.

Furthermore, the study highlights that *imago Dei* theology is not merely descriptive but transformative, it demands praxis. The church's prophetic task in the twenty-first century includes shaping narratives of innovation that honor human dignity and protect creation from domination. This entails challenging exploitative systems, advocating for equitable access to technological benefits, and developing frameworks that prioritize justice over profit. Within African contexts, where digital and biotechnological inequalities persist, *imago Dei* theology calls for empowerment through education, capacity building, and policy advocacy rooted in moral responsibility. The theological conviction that all people reflect God's image mandates a vision of sustainable development that resists both technological imperialism and moral relativism.

Finally, the study opens new directions for future research. There is an urgent need for empirical exploration of how African faith communities engage emerging technologies at the grassroots level, how pastors, educators, and local innovators interpret AI ethics through the lens of Scripture. Comparative studies could also investigate how *imago Dei* theology interacts with other faith traditions in shaping cross-cultural responses to biotechnology, robotics, and data governance. Such interdisciplinary and intercultural scholarship would deepen theological engagement with real-world technological dynamics, bridging biblical ethics and global sustainability in practical ways.

In conclusion, this study affirms that humanity's identity as the *imago Dei* remains the most profound theological answer to the moral anxieties of artificial creation. The Old Testament's vision of human dignity, vocation, and stewardship, enriched by African relational ethics, offers a compelling theological anthropology for an age of machines. It calls for a faith-rooted ethic of innovation that upholds human worth, safeguards creation, and reorients technological progress toward God's purposes of justice, peace, and flourishing. In reclaiming this vision, the church and academy together bear witness to the truth that true development, technological or otherwise, can only be sustainable when it reflects the Creator's image in wisdom, love, and righteousness.

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