



## **Businesses Anticipate Conscientious Objection to AI**

*The Wired Word for the Week of July 26, 2026*

### **In the News**

Over the centuries, Christians have made conscientious objections when asked to perform certain actions. They have refused to bear arms or participate in particular medical procedures, based on deeply held moral or religious beliefs. Such stances often prioritize the teachings of Jesus over state requirements or professional obligations.

Now, some individuals are objecting to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the workplace, based on the potential for AI to harm the environment or undermine human dignity. According to *Baptist News Global*, human resource (HR) professionals in a number of businesses are preparing for the possibility that employees will ask for religious accommodations to avoid using AI tools in their jobs. These employees do not want their work to hurt humans or nature (the environmental impact of AI comes mainly through its massive resource demands).

Erin Maus was recently granted a religious exemption based on her opposition to the use of AI in her software-engineering job. *Business Insider* reports that Maus, a Unitarian Universalist, requested special treatment in April, citing environmental and ethical objections to AI based on her religious beliefs. After consulting with a minister and an employment lawyer, she made her case and was granted accommodation in mid-May.

Pope Leo XIV's recent letter [\*Magnifica Humanitas\*](#) (Magnificent Humanity) is concerned with safeguarding the human person in the age of AI. (See *The Wired Word* for the week of June 7, 2026, "Pope Leo Issues Encyclical in Support of Humanity.") According to the pope, the church has always been committed to protecting the dignity of work and workers, and he recognizes that "persons have a fundamental value that takes precedence over capital and profit."

In response, the HR field is anticipating an influx of religious objections to workplace AI use. For Ema Sol, a manager who bridges the gap between company leadership and the workforce, this possibility has sparked the question: "What is the role of human resources as workplaces navigate the increasing cultural, ethical and religious impacts of AI?"

According to a 2026 study from the HR software company Cornerstone, nearly a third of workers harbor negative feelings -- including anxiety, uncertainty and resistance -- toward AI. To gain a religious exemption, however, a person must base their request on their faith instead of their feelings. One "possible outcome of the AI mandate era is about to be HR departments discovering that 'sincerely held religious belief' under Title VII has a much lower bar than they assumed, and Pope Leo handed every Catholic employee a written excuse," wrote Corey Quinn, a software-startup founder in San Francisco, on X.

Sol believes that HR leaders and other managers must understand the resistance of their employees to AI, in order to ensure that its adoption does not jeopardize the rights and needs of workers. The pope's letter challenges businesses to affirm the intrinsic value of humans in the workplace, and to understand that AI expansion is driven by a technocratic mindset which prioritizes efficiency and profit.

In response, says Sol, HR leaders "have the power, responsibility and experience to balance that mindset with more human-centered mandates." Such a balance can be expressed in employee handbook policies, codes of ethics, and standard operating procedures. She says that as leaders steer organizational policies and procedures, they are laying the foundation for a workplace culture which protects the company's interests while also ensuring fair treatment of employees. "In the age of AI," she concludes, a thriving workplace culture is based on organizations pairing "their effectiveness goals with the well-being and satisfaction of every worker, whether blue collar or white collar."

Unless companies listen to employees who have faith-based objections to AI, they may find themselves in court. Ashley Herd, an attorney who advises managers and employers on workplace issues, says that "telling employees their request isn't legitimate, does not tend to bode well for companies. A jury doesn't like it when employees get made fun of by managers or HR."

Software engineer Maus, who was granted a religious exemption in May, is not convinced that AI is needed for her to perform at a high level. She recently completed a coding task and said that she did it at the same speed as a colleague who used AI on a nearly identical assignment. "AI doesn't really seem to be this game changer," she said, reflecting on her experience and beliefs. "Your principles matter."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[She Won a Religious Exemption From Using AI at Work. The Pope's Remarks Could Fuel Similar Appeals. \*Business Insider\*](#)

[Conscientious AI Objectors: HR's Role in Keeping Workplaces Human. \*Baptist News Global\*](#)

**Applying the News Story**

Use this story on religious exemptions as an opportunity to discuss AI, conscientious objection, business goals and the dignity of work and workers.

### **The Big Questions**

1. What is your experience with AI? Where do you see benefits and dangers in its use in the workplace? In the church?
2. How would you respond if you were told that you had to use AI in the performance of your job? What effect might AI have on the quality, originality or creativity of your work?
3. To what requests, either inside or outside the workplace, might you make a conscientious objection? How would this be connected to your religious or moral beliefs?
4. When do business goals such as efficiency and profit align with the welfare of workers? In what situations do they diverge?
5. Where do you find dignity in work and in workers? How and when should the church take action to preserve this dignity?

### **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

#### **Genesis 11:4**

*Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."* (For context, read

[Genesis 11:1-9.](#))

The story of the Tower of Babel begins with the people of the earth, with "one language and the same words" (v. 1), migrating from the Garden of Eden in the east. They settle in the land of Shinar and begin to build "a

tower with its top in the heavens." The desire of the people to "make a name for themselves" indicates that they want to acquire status similar to kings -- leaders who represent the gods. This may indicate that the people want to become godlike.

When God comes down to see the city and the tower, God laments, "this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (v. 6). The potential for human wrongdoing prompts God to act -- he decides to confuse their language and scatter them abroad, across the face of the earth. The place is called Babel, a play on the verb meaning "to confuse," because "there the LORD confused the language of all the earth" (v. 9).

**Questions:** How might AI be an example of human beings wanting to become godlike? Where do you see connections between the building of the Tower of Babel and the spread of AI? What steps can the church take to maintain the proper relationship between humans and God?

### **Exodus 1:15-17**

*The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. (For context, read [Exodus 1:15-21](#).)*

When Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, commands two Hebrew midwives to kill all Israelite boys, they defy his directive because of their fear of (or respect for) God. The midwives Shiphrah and Puah make a conscientious objection to this royal decree, based on their deeply held religious beliefs.

When questioned by Pharaoh, the midwives lie, saying that "the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them" (v. 19). God favors the midwives, gives them families, and the people of Israel multiply and become "very strong" (v. 20).

**Questions:** How does the conscientious objection of the Hebrew midwives support the well-being of people? What was dignified about their work? Why does God deal well with the midwives, instead of condemning them for telling a lie? What would it mean for you to put the dignity and well-being of people first in your workplace, your church, and your community?

### **Luke 4:18-19**

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* (For context, read [Luke 4:16-21](#).)

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus stands and reads from the scroll of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah. Luke does not tell us whether Jesus chose this text on his own, or if he was following a synagogue schedule. What he reads is a paraphrase of Isaiah 61 with the insertion of a line from Isaiah 58 -- Jesus feels free to combine different scriptural texts, as preachers continue to do today.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," says Jesus, reading from Isaiah 61, "because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor," along with "release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind." Then he inserts the line from Isaiah 58:6, "to set free those who are oppressed," before returning to Isaiah 61 for the words, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then Jesus rolls up the scroll, gives it back to the synagogue attendant, and sits down. The eyes of all in the synagogue are fixed on him, because they know he is going to speak. Notice that Jesus is sitting down to do his teaching. That's the way it was in those days: Teachers would sit, and students would stand. It's the opposite of what we do today.

"Today," says Jesus, "this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21). Jesus identifies himself as the one anointed by the Spirit of the Lord. Reading the words of Isaiah, he talks about the direction his anointed ministry will take, making it clear that his ministry will be all about release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.

**Questions:** What does this passage say about the moral imperative of caring for the poor, the blind and the oppressed? How does a focus on profit and efficiency in business impact this imperative? How might AI be developed in a way that supports the mission of Jesus and the dignity of work?

### **Revelation 22:1-2**

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (For context, read [Revelation 22:1-5](#).)*

The book of Revelation speaks of an Eden-like garden, restored in the center of the new Jerusalem. This is a powerful message about God's desire for the human world to exist in harmony with nature, and it serves as biblical support for the church's commitment to the stewardship of the earth.

In this urban garden, we hear an echo of the creation story from Genesis, in which a "river flows out of Eden to water the garden" (Genesis 2:10). In

Revelation, an angel shows John "the river of the water of life, [flowing] through the middle of the street of the city." On the banks of the river is the tree of life, "and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

Best of all, "the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face" (vv. 3-4). Faithful people will finally encounter God and Christ directly, as the apostle Paul dreamed when he wrote, "For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). The light of God will shine directly on those who worship God, and together the Lord and his servants will reign forever and ever. The dignity of people will be respected, in their relationships with God and with each other.

**Questions:** What impact does the spread of AI have on the environment, and how does it affect the relationship between humans, nature and God? How can we join God in the work of bringing healing to the world? What can the church do to help people to see the face of God?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. "AI might be a tool that is useful in certain circumstances, but if we use it as a substitute for our God-given gifts, then it seems to me we are doing an injustice to the Image of God which we all bear," writes TWW Team Member Frank Ramirez. "In astronomy, AI has been able to digest unimaginably large chunks of data that it would take us humans decades or even centuries to go through -- but when I download and read a scientific article about planets orbiting other suns, I notice that regardless of what part AI had in evaluating data, it is the humans whose names are printed as authors of the paper. Just as we all need to learn how to do basic math like memorizing the multiplication tables and only then rely on calculators and computers, so too we may let AI help us sort through Scriptures, but we get to hem and haw and discuss these Scriptures." How might AI end up doing injustice to

humans who are made in the Image of God? How can AI be used as a tool to help humans accomplish great things? Be specific.

2. "I have been using AI to prepare for a trial, and it is at least as good as a young lawyer in assisting," writes TWW Team Member Mark Rouleau, an attorney. "We created AI, and God created us. WE stand in a superior position to AI." What steps should we take to remain in a position superior to AI? How will we know when AI has become like the archangel Lucifer, who is often identified as the tyrant who says, "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14)? Where do you think the danger signs will appear?

3. TWW Team Member Mary Sells tells her story: "I am a volunteer mentor for entrepreneurs of small and emerging businesses. Those people are finding it beneficial to use AI to compose or clean up written marketing materials, make cash flow plans, design their logos, write and schedule social posts. Could that work go to a paid vendor? Sure, but most entrepreneurs have little or no money to spend and wouldn't likely outsource; rather they try to do the tasks for which they have no training or expertise and -- therefore -- AI is a great help." Respond.

4. "AI is a tool and not the final answer," says TWW Team Member John Coulson. "Personally, I use AI to help me when planning a trip. To make suggestions that I may have overlooked, etc. I also use it for the work that I do for my church. I create the PowerPoint slideshow for our worship service and I have AI make suggestions for background images behind lyrics, Scripture, etc. Sometimes it is helpful, other times not so much. The important part is that I have the final decision on if I am going to use its suggestions. At the company that I work at, we use AI as part of the setup of our machines. We develop semi-automatic inspection machines for the pharmaceutical industry. The model created by the AI is based on human processes and techniques. Optimally, using AI should produce a cheaper,

higher-quality pharmaceutical product." Where do you draw the line between AI as a tool and AI as the final answer? When have you found it to be helpful, and when has it not been beneficial?

### **Responding to the News**

In the age of AI, allow your beliefs and morals to shape your relationship with technology. Stand up for your principles when asked to take an action that you believe will hurt humans or the environment. Look for opportunities in church to affirm the dignity of work, workers and the world that God has created.

### **Prayer**

We praise you, God, for creating us in your image. Help us to join you in work that advances the mission and ministry of your Son Jesus, and that supports your goal of a human world in harmony with the natural world. May we use technology as a tool to accomplish great things, never letting it corrupt our relationship with you or our neighbors. In Jesus' name. Amen.