

Dictating the Divine: Revisiting Authorship, Intention, and Authority from Sacred Texts to Generative AI

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Abstract: This article interrogates the historical practice of mediated authorship in religious texts to draw critical parallels with contemporary debates surrounding generative artificial intelligence (AI), specifically large language models (LLMs). By juxtaposing the mediated authorship of sacred texts, such as the Hebrew Bible and New Testament—where figures like the Apostle Paul dictated theological concepts to scribes who infused these directives with their interpretive insights—with the generative processes of LLMs, this research underscores the shared dynamics of co-constructed authorship across historical and technological contexts. Employing interdisciplinary methodologies from art history, textual studies, and reception theory, as well as theological and biblical studies, the study highlights that the primary contribution lies not in novel historical insights but rather in recognizing significant parallels in knowledge creation and dissemination across eras. Both scribal and AI-driven authorship challenge traditional conceptions of originality, intention, and authority, illustrating that mediated authorship has long been intrinsic to the production of significant cultural texts. By situating LLMs within this lineage, we recognize authorship as inherently mediated—whether through divine-human collaboration or human-algorithm interplay. These analogies provoke a reassessment of authorship as a collaborative and iterative construct, enriching contemporary discussions surrounding intellectual property, creative ownership, and ethical accountability in the digital age. This analysis contributes to broader discourses on the evolving intersections between human creativity, algorithmic agency, and cultural meaning-making in sacred and secular domains.

Keywords: Mediated authorship, Generative AI, Originality, Reception theory, Authorship ethics.

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I. Introduction

The historical practice of mediated authorship has profoundly shaped the creation and interpretation of many sacred and authoritative texts across cultures. In religious contexts, dictation served as a means of transmitting divine inspiration through human intermediaries, such as scribes or disciples, who recorded the words of prophets or apostles^[1]. Thus, contrary to popular perception, these were not regularly handwritten by the authors themselves. Instead, as with Egyptian viziers and Roman senators, the "author" would dictate what was to be written to a scribe, who would then record and elaborate on the ideas^[2]. These scribes were individuals tasked with writing or transcribing documents, often serving as an intermediary to record, interpret, or expand upon the words of an authoritative figure or institution (**Figure 1**). In fact, mediated authorship was a common practice across the ancient Mediterranean, where figures of authority—such as political

leaders, religious prophets, and philosophers—relied on these transcribers to record their spoken words, often allowing for interpretive additions or stylistic refinements that reflected the cultural, theological, or rhetorical norms of the time^[3]. For instance, the Apostle Paul (5-64/67 CE), a central figure in early Christianity, frequently dictated letters to his scribes, blending his intent with their interpretative contributions to shape and articulate his theological positions^[4]. Similarly, in ancient cultures like Egypt and Rome, scribes played pivotal roles in shaping state doctrines and religious ideologies by interpreting and expanding on directives from leaders^[5]. These practices reveal that authorship, particularly in sacred texts, was seldom a solitary endeavor but rather a collaborative and mediated process. The modern emergence of generative AI (GAI) tools like ChatGPT echoes these dynamics, where machines, guided by human prompts, produce outputs that blend original directives with computational creativity.

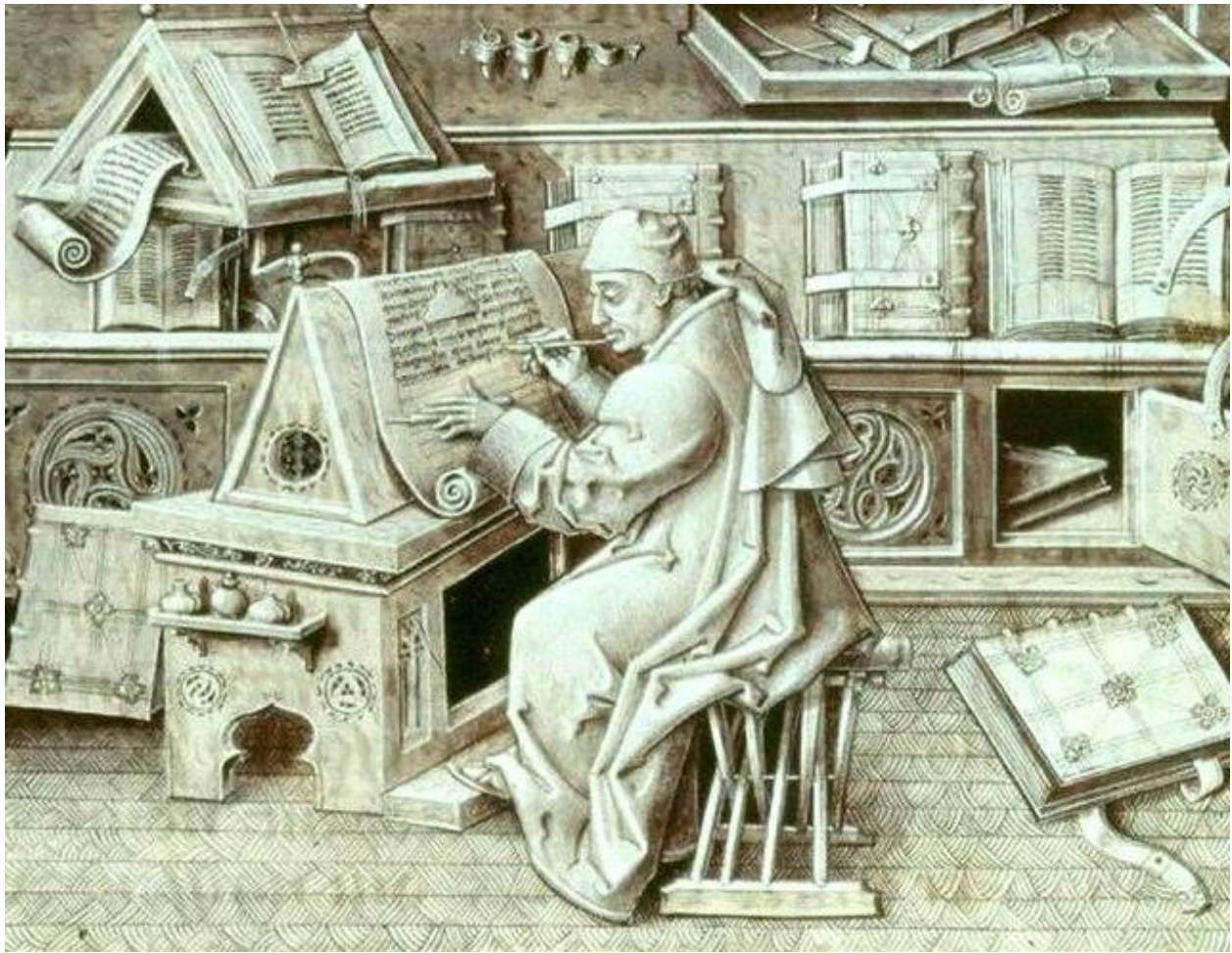


Figure 1. Jean Le Tavernier, *Scribe*, after 1456. (CC 0)

Revisiting the concept of mediated authorship is especially relevant in this context, as it offers valuable parallels that help contextualize and deepen our understanding of these new tools for textual production, framing them as part of a longstanding tradition of collaborative and mediated content creation. The reconsideration is especially relevant given the challenges that large language models (LLMs) have posted to traditional notions of originality, intent, and authorship in text creation ^[6]. In the case of sacred texts like the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, layers of meaning were added by scribes who expanded on dictated instructions to address specific theological or cultural concerns—to say nothing of the contributions of those who carried the texts from place to place, providing extemporaneous vocal interpretations of the texts as well as elaborating on their meaning and discussion questions posted by the text's audience ^[7]. This interplay between singular authorship, which has also been closely associated with commitments regarding divine inspiration, and the mediation of other collaborators finds parallel the operation of natural language processing (NLP) in generative LLMs, where algorithms reinterpret and augment human-provided prompts ^[8].

Both contexts raise significant questions about the role of intention in authorship and how meaning is co-created by originators, intermediaries, and audiences. These parallels invite a reevaluation of how societies understand and value collaborative forms of authorship, particularly considering the controversies surrounding AI-generated text. Critics of generative writing argue that the ability of these systems to produce sophisticated content challenges

traditional notions of originality, as its outputs often draw from vast datasets of preexisting human work without direct attribution, blurring the lines between innovation and replication ^[9]. This raises ethical and philosophical debates about whether such content should be considered truly "authored" or merely a derivative amalgamation of prior inputs ^[10]. Additionally, questions about meaning emerge, as AI-generated texts often lack a singular creative intent, prompting uncertainty over whose vision the work ultimately represents: the programmer, the prompt creator, or the AI system itself ^[11]. These controversies highlight the need to rethink established frameworks for authorship, moving towards models that embrace collaborative and layered creation while addressing the implications for intellectual property, creative ownership, and cultural production. By comparing these emergent challenges to historical practices like mediated authorship, societies can better understand and navigate the shifting dynamics of creativity and intent in the digital age.

The article investigates the intersections of intention, collaboration, and authorship through the analogy of sacred texts and generative artificial intelligence, emphasizing their shared model of mediated authorship. Sacred texts, such as those in Christianity, embody the dynamic between divine inspiration, human scribes, and interpretive communities, exemplified in theological debates on intention—whether it resides with the divine, human agents, or audiences ^[12]. This discourse parallels ethical and philosophical discussions in generative writing, where questions arise about whether machine-generated outputs serve as tools, meaningless

products, or co-creators reshaping authorship boundaries ^[13]. Using sacred texts as a framework, the article contextualizes AI-generated content within historical practices, illustrating the evolving roles of human originators as collaborators guiding intelligent systems. Reception theory, which posits that meaning emerges through co-creation between authors and audiences, highlights parallels between the interpretive dynamics in sacred texts and AI outputs, where communities refine divine dictation, and users adapt machine-generated content ^[14-16]. Foucault's Author Function further reframes authorship as shaped by cultural and institutional discourse rather than solitary creativity, demonstrating how sacred scribes and AI users function as intermediaries blurring individual and collective boundaries ^[17-18]. Through this comparative lens, the study reveals the iterative and collaborative dimensions of authorship, advancing discussions on originality, ownership, and meaning in digital and theological contexts.

The concept of mediated authorship, examined through the dual lenses of reception theory and the Author Function, provides a compelling framework for understanding generative content. Just as scribes used their cultural and historical knowledge to expand upon authorial dictation, humans prompting LLMs draw on their expertise and intent to direct and refine their outputs. Reception theory highlights the interpretive role of both ancient and modern audiences, while the Author Function reframes authorship as a shared and dynamic construct rather than a solitary achievement. These frameworks challenge traditional notions of originality and intent, emphasizing instead the collaborative and mediated nature of creation. Through bridging the historical practices of sacred texts and the contemporary realities of evolving intelligent systems, this article contributes to a broader interdisciplinary dialogue on creativity, authorship, and the evolving relationship between originator, intermediary, and audience.

II. Historical Context of Mediated Authorship in Religious Texts

The concept of divine dictation has undergone significant transformations across various religious traditions, evolving from strict interpretations of direct divine transcription to more nuanced understandings of mediated inspiration. In ancient religious practices, such as early Judaism and Islam, scriptures were often viewed as the literal, verbatim words of God communicated directly to prophets and transcribed exactly as received ^[19]. Over time, however, theological developments and historical-critical scholarship introduced perspectives acknowledging human interpretive and editorial roles in the composition of sacred texts ^[20]. For example, within Christianity, early strict views of divine dictation gradually gave way to concepts of divine inspiration, where human authors contributed their linguistic styles, cultural contexts, and theological reflections while still guided by divine influence ^[21]. Similarly, modern Islamic scholarship includes interpretations that consider the historical context and human participation in transmitting and preserving the Qur'an ^[22]. This evolution reflects broader shifts towards recognizing the dynamic interaction between divine revelation and human authorship across religious contexts.

In fact, the practice of mediated authorship was widespread in ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern societies, where collaborative processes were integral to the creation of both sacred and secular texts ^[23]. In Egypt, viziers worked closely with pharaohs and priests to draft religious texts and state doctrines,

ensuring that messages were carefully articulated to reflect divine authority and reinforce political stability ^[24]. These scribes were not passive recorders but active participants who interpreted and expanded upon the directives given to them, aligning their work with the theological and ideological priorities of their rulers. Such texts, often inscribed in monumental forms like stelae or temple walls, served to solidify the divine mandate of leadership and the cultural coherence of Egyptian society. Later, in Roman society, scribes and public orators were equally vital in the process of mediated authorship, collaborating with senators and political leaders to draft speeches, laws, and other official communications. Roman senators often relied on scribes to refine and formalize their rhetoric, ensuring that their public pronouncements were persuasive and aligned with political objectives ^[25]. These scribes often employed sophisticated rhetorical techniques, blending classical traditions with the specific intent of the orators they served. Public communications, such as decrees or proclamations, were disseminated widely, reflecting not just the words of the senator but the interpretive input of scribes who shaped their presentation. This collaboration highlights the shared nature of authorship in Rome, where the intellectual labor of scribes was essential to the creation and transmission of politically and culturally significant texts ^[26].

These examples from Egypt and Rome illustrate that scribes across cultures were not merely instruments of transcription but co-creators who influenced the content, tone, and reception of the texts they produced. The collaborative nature of these relationships reveals a broader pattern of mediated authorship in ancient societies, wherein the interplay between authority figures and their scribes resulted in texts that reflected a blend of original intent and interpretive expansion. Such practices challenge the traditional notion of singular authorship, underscoring the role of intermediaries in shaping messages that aligned with the social, theological, or political objectives of the time. These historical precedents provide valuable context for understanding the collaborative processes evident in early Christian authorship, where scribes played a similarly dynamic role in shaping sacred texts ^[27]. In all, the collaborative nature of mediated authorship in cultures such as ancient Egypt and Rome offers critical insights into the processes of text creation in early Christianity. These parallels demonstrate that scribes were not merely passive agents but active participants whose contributions were essential in shaping texts that carried cultural, religious, and political significance. By examining these comparative examples, we can better appreciate the shared practices that defined textual production in the ancient world and the enduring legacy of mediated authorship in shaping influential narratives and doctrines.

The role of enslaved scribes in sacred text creation also raises important questions about the ethics of authorship and the recognition of collaborative efforts. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, subordinate scribes frequently assisted in recording prophetic visions and legal codes, blending their interpretive insights with the directives of authoritative figures to craft texts that would become central to Jewish identity and tradition ^[25]. Similarly, in early Christianity, the collaborative and hierarchical nature of text production reflects a broader pattern of co-authorship that challenges traditional notions of singular authorship. By acknowledging the intellectual contributions of these marginalized figures, we gain a deeper understanding of the shared processes that shaped sacred texts and their enduring significance.

Recognizing these dynamics not only enriches our historical understanding but also prompts a reevaluation of how we conceptualize authorship in both ancient and modern contexts ^[28].

The practice of mediated authorship in early Christianity, this approach allowed for the dissemination of religious instruction while accommodating the cultural, linguistic, and rhetorical needs of diverse audiences. Among the most notable examples is that of the Apostle Paul, whose letters exemplify the interplay between divine inspiration and human mediation. By dictating his epistles to scribes, Paul not only preserved his theological vision but also ensured its adaptability to the communities he sought to influence ^[4]. This collaboration underscores how mediated authorship was a dynamic and iterative process, pivotal to the formation of foundational Christian doctrines ^[29].

The letters of Paul, including those to the Corinthians and Galatians, highlight how mediated authorship facilitated theological elaboration and contextual adaptation. These letters often responded to specific challenges or controversies within early Christian communities, requiring nuanced arguments that combined the theological intent of the apostle with the interpretive input of his scribes ^[28]. For instance, in his letters to the Corinthians, Paul addressed issues such as divisions within the church, moral conduct, and the role of spiritual gifts, topics that required careful articulation to resonate with and effectively intervene in the local context ^[30]. The scribes, drawing on their understanding of cultural and rhetorical conventions, played an essential role in framing these messages to ensure clarity and impact. This process was not merely mechanical transcription but an intellectual partnership, wherein scribes contributed to the rhetorical style and structural coherence of the letters, shaping their reception and enduring significance ^[26].

The method of dictation also reflects the broader oral culture of the time, where spoken words carried authority and written texts often emerged as collaborative products ^[31]. In this context, amanuenses—scribes or assistants responsible for transcribing dictated texts—acted as crucial intermediaries, facilitating the transition from the divine inspiration asserted by figures such as Paul to the practical demands of textual dissemination. These individuals not only recorded spoken words but also adapted and refined them to ensure the resulting documents met the cultural, linguistic, and rhetorical needs of their intended audiences. These intermediaries were not passive participants but active contributors who expanded and contextualized the dictated material to align with local traditions and nuances ^[27]. This approach ensured that letters, such as those to the Corinthians, resonated with a wide audience, enabling the growth of early Christian theology and its adaptation to diverse cultural contexts ^[32]. Mediated authorship thus represents a significant model of collaborative creation, demonstrating how the integration of multiple voices can enrich the transmission and interpretation of sacred teachings. By acknowledging the contributions of scribes, we gain a deeper appreciation for the dynamic processes that shaped the early Christian textual tradition and its enduring legacy ^[25].

Moreover, it is significant that many of the scribes at work in this period were enslaved persons. This illustrates the dynamic interplay of power, creativity, and collaboration in ancient authorship and the creation of sacred texts. In many cases, enslaved or subordinate individuals were tasked with transcribing the words of authoritative figures, including prophets, apostles, and other

religious leaders, contributing significantly to the production and dissemination of sacred texts ^[33]. However, far from being mere passive participants, these scribes brought contextual knowledge, interpretive skills, and cultural awareness to their work, ensuring that the messages they recorded resonated with diverse audiences and addressed relevant theological concerns. This process highlights how the production of sacred texts was a collaborative effort that depended on the expertise and agency of contributors who have not only been rendered invisible in popular consciousness today but were also often marginalized and exploited ^[30]. The interplay between authoritative figures and their scribes demonstrates a nuanced relationship wherein intellectual labor was shared, albeit unequally, reflecting the systematic inequities and injustices as well as the collaborative processes of the time.

In the New Testament, enslaved individuals were instrumental in the transmission and expansion of Pauline theology, playing a significant role in shaping Christian doctrine. Early Christian missionaries, many of whom were enslaved, undertook the arduous task of disseminating letters across the Mediterranean, often traveling through hostile territories to deliver messages to fledgling communities ^[27]. These scribes not only transcribed the letters dictated by figures like Apostle Paul but also engaged in elaboration and contextualization, making adjustments to their performance and elaboration of Paul's texts to ensure their relevance to its intended audience. For example, the careful phrasing of the teachings of the apostle on community unity and morality in his letters to the Corinthians required not just transcription but also sensitivity to the cultural norms of the communities addressed. These contributions were vital to the success and influence of early Christian writings, yet their intellectual labor often goes unrecognized ^[34].

Furthermore, it should be noted that the early Church Fathers played a critical role in shaping the understanding of divine authorship, significantly influencing the theological framework through which sacred texts were interpreted. Figures such as Augustine, Jerome, and Origen were instrumental in articulating doctrines that emphasized divine inspiration while simultaneously acknowledging the agency of human authors ^[35]. Augustine, for instance, advanced the idea that scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit but expressed through human language and experiences, reflecting a synthesis of divine revelation and human authorship ^[36]. Jerome's work on biblical translation and textual criticism reinforced the understanding that scripture, though divinely inspired, underwent textual transmission and human mediation ^[37]. Origen further contributed by developing allegorical interpretations, suggesting layers of meaning in scripture that surpassed a purely literal reading, thereby highlighting the interpretive role humans play in deriving theological insights ^[38]. Collectively, the writings and teachings of these early theologians established foundational perspectives on divine authorship, shaping the doctrinal and hermeneutical approaches still prevalent in various Christian traditions today.

III. The Role of Interpretation and Expansion in Textual Meaning

The meaning of sacred texts is rarely static. It evolves through processes of interpretation and expansion that reflect the interplay between authorial intent and the perspectives of audiences over time. For example, generations of scribes, theologians, and

interpretive communities have shaped the biblical texts, adding layers of meaning to address the cultural, historical, and theological concerns of their own ages. This dynamic process of textual evolution underscores the collaborative nature of sacred authorship and highlights how interpretation plays a crucial role in preserving the relevance and adaptability of these texts. Reception theory and critical concepts like Barthes's "Death of the Author" provide valuable frameworks for analyzing these processes, emphasizing that meaning is co-created by both originators and interpreters^[39]. By exploring these theories and their application to biblical texts, we gain deeper insight into how sacred writings remain meaningful and influential across diverse contexts and time periods.

Reception theory provides a robust model for understanding how audiences shape the meaning of texts, demonstrating that interpretation is as significant as the original intent of the author. Biblical texts, written in specific historical and cultural contexts, have been reinterpreted across centuries to align with the evolving needs of faith communities. For instance, early Christian scribes frequently elaborated on divine messages to ensure their applicability to the diverse audiences of the Mediterranean world^[40]. This iterative process parallels the assertion by Barthes that the role of the author diminishes once a text is disseminated, leaving its meaning to be actively constructed by its readers^[39]. In biblical hermeneutics, this co-construction of meaning becomes particularly evident in the varied interpretations of key passages, such as the covenant promises in the Hebrew Bible, which have been expanded and reinterpreted by both Jewish and Christian communities to reflect their theological frameworks. Virkler and Ayayo^[16] characterize hermeneutics as both an art and a science, emphasizing its dual nature in interpreting biblical passages. While it adheres to systematic rules and classifications to ensure interpretative rigor, these very rules can sometimes obscure the intended meaning, given the inherent flexibility and nuance of language.

Historical examples further illustrate how interpretation and expansion have shaped biblical texts. In early Christianity, decisions about which books to include in the New Testament canon often reflected not only theological considerations but also the interpretive practices of early church leaders. Texts associated with apostolic authority, such as the Pauline letters, were deemed "orthodox" and included, while other writings were excluded or recontextualized^[40]. Similarly, interpretations of God's anatomy in Hebrew scripture demonstrate how scribes used symbolic descriptions, such as references to the hand or face of God, to make abstract theological concepts accessible to human understanding^[25]. These expansions highlight the role of interpreters in making sacred texts relevant to their communities. Modern parallels with generative platforms further underscore this dynamic, as such systems reinterpret prompts to create outputs that blend original inputs with new layers of meaning, reflecting the iterative processes of both ancient and contemporary textual creation.

The role of interpretation and expansion is foundational to the enduring significance of sacred texts. Reception theory and related critical approaches illustrate how biblical texts are living documents, reshaped by the interactions between authors, interpreters, and audiences. Whether through the elaboration of early Christian scribes, the theological debates surrounding the New Testament canon, or modern applications in generated content, these processes demonstrate the fluid and collaborative

nature of meaning-making. At the same time, through an examination of the historical and theoretical frameworks of textual interpretation, we can better understand how sacred writings continue to adapt and resonate with diverse communities across time and space.

Furthermore, the depiction of God in biblical texts has long been a subject of theological interpretation and elaboration, reflecting the interplay between divine transcendence and human comprehension^[41]. Anthropomorphic descriptions of God, such as references to His hand, face, or voice, appear frequently in Hebrew scripture, yet these were rarely intended as literal representations^[42]. Instead, they served as symbolic tools to bridge the gap between divine abstraction and human understanding^[25]. Archaeological findings and art historical studies have shown that these descriptions often aligned with the cultural and theological contexts of their time, providing communities with relatable imagery to express complex theological concepts^[43]. This interpretative approach highlights the adaptability of sacred texts, where scribes played a key role in shaping how divine characteristics were perceived and conveyed.

Ancient scribes also acted as intermediaries, adapting descriptions of God to align with evolving theological priorities and the needs of their communities. For example, the symbolic reference to God's hand in Exodus 33:22 ("I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by") illustrates a metaphorical depiction that emphasizes divine protection and presence rather than physical form^[44]. These elaborations reflect the perspectives of specific historical and cultural contexts as scribes sought to reconcile abstract theological truths with tangible imagery familiar to their audiences^[45]. Scribes shaped the theological narrative in important and enduring ways, ensuring that divine messages resonated across generations and cultural divides.

The intellectual contributions of scribes in shaping interpretations of divine anatomy exemplify the collaborative nature of produce sacred texts, including those in the Jewish and Christian traditions. By framing anthropomorphic descriptions within symbolic and metaphorical terms, scribes not only preserved the theological integrity of the texts but also expanded their accessibility. Modern applications of hermeneutics continue this legacy, helping scholars trace the evolution of these depictions and their influence. The interpretive practices of ancient scribes have parallels in contemporary settings, such as the use of generative AI tools to adapt complex prompts into accessible outputs. Just as scribes ensured the comprehensibility of divine messages, AI systems expand on human input to produce interpretations that balance original intent with contextual nuance.

Modern generative writing tools, such as LLMs, provide compelling parallels to the role of ancient scribes in interpreting and expanding textual meaning. Whereas scribes in biblical times adapted divine messages to reflect the cultural and theological contexts of their communities, LLMs process prompts and generate outputs that integrate user inputs with interpretive algorithms. Both processes involve models of mediated authorship, wherein the creation of meaning involves both the intent of the originator and the interpretative contributions of intermediaries. For instance, ancient scribes expanded on dictated texts to make them more relevant to their audiences, much as LLMs elaborate on user prompts to provide contextually rich and adaptive responses. This parallel underscores the iterative nature of text creation, bridging the historical and technological practices of co-authorship.

In the context of biblical texts, the dynamic of interpretative expansion is evident in the process of canonization, where the inclusion of certain books in the New Testament was influenced by their perceived apostolic authorship. Early Christian communities often adapted and elaborated on the texts associated with apostles, ensuring they aligned with the doctrinal and cultural needs of their time^[40]. Similarly, LLMs expand on prompts by drawing from vast datasets, reflecting the iterative interaction between human inputs and machine-generated content. Both processes raise questions about the boundaries of authorship, as they involve blending original directives with interpretive contributions. Recognizing these dynamics challenges traditional notions of textual creation, highlighting the collaborative interplay between originators, interpreters, and the broader context in which meaning is generated^[39].

The parallels between ancient scribes and AI systems also highlight significant ethical and philosophical questions about originality, intent, and attribution. Just as scribes shaped the theological narratives of sacred texts through their interpretative roles, LLMs influence the final output by introducing layers of meaning that may diverge from the initial prompt of the user. This process reflects the complexity of mediated authorship, where the co-creation of meaning involves both the constraints and creative potential of the intermediary. Furthermore, traditional conceptions of authorship have historically rendered invisible the contributions of collaborating intermediaries. Similarly, these same conceptions drive contemporary resistance to the use of GAI tools in text composition, often framing it as a form of plagiarism^[46-47]. Through an examination of these parallels between collaborative authorship in the ancient world and generative collaboration today, we can better understand the shared processes that underpin text creation across different contexts and eras. Whether in the adaptation of sacred writings by ancient scribes or the dynamic outputs of intelligent systems, these practices demonstrate the enduring relevance of interpretation and expansion in shaping meaning.

IV. Methodology: Authorial Intention in Sacred and AI-Generated Texts

The historical-comparative methodology used in this study illuminates the shared reliance on collaborative production models in the creation of sacred texts and generative outputs. Sacred texts, such as the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, were the result of an interplay between divine inspiration, human authorship, and scribal interpretation. Similarly, modern AI-generated texts reflect a comparable process, where human prompts guide algorithmic outputs that synthesize user intent with vast repositories of textual data^[40]. This comparison reveals that both ancient and modern text creation systems operate on iterative models that depend on intermediaries—scribes in the ancient world and AI systems today—to adapt and refine the original message for diverse contexts and audiences. Such parallels highlight the enduring nature of collaborative authorship in shaping cultural and intellectual narratives^[48].

In the ancient Mediterranean, scribes expanded on dictated texts to meet the evolving needs of their communities, much like how modern AI systems generate outputs that balance fidelity to user input with contextual relevance. For example, early scribes often reinterpreted texts during the canonization process, ensuring that theological doctrines resonated with contemporary cultural and

ethical frameworks^[25]. Similarly, generative systems rely on algorithmic methods to expand human prompts, producing results that often exceed the original scope envisioned by the user. Both processes underscore the fluidity of authorship, where intermediaries—whether scribes or algorithms—play critical roles in co-creating meaning and shaping the reception of texts over time^[49]. This comparative framework also challenges traditional notions of singular authorship, emphasizing the collaborative nature of textual production across time. In medieval scribal culture, texts were often adapted and transformed through multiple layers of interpretation, reflecting the communal aspects of manuscript production^[50]. Similarly, generated texts are dynamic products shaped by interactions between users and algorithms, blending computational creativity with human intent.

The concept of the "Author Function," as proposed by Michel Foucault, challenges traditional notions of authorship by redefining it as a construct shaped by cultural and institutional forces rather than solely by individual intent. Foucault posits that the author is not the sole arbiter of a text's meaning but instead serves as a node within a broader discursive system that influences how texts are categorized, interpreted, and valued^[17]. This framework highlights the collaborative nature of textual production, where intermediaries—such as scribes or modern algorithms—play significant roles in shaping meaning. The "Author Function" is particularly evident in sacred texts, where scribes expanded upon and adapted divine revelations to align with the cultural and theological contexts of their time. Similarly, in AI-generated outputs, algorithms interpret user prompts to generate content that reflects not just the input but also the interpretive structure of the model, blurring the lines of authorship^[51].

Reception theory and the work of Roland Barthes further highlights the fluidity of authorship. It was Barthes who declared the "Death of the Author," arguing that a text's meaning resides in its interaction with readers rather than in its creator's intent. This perspective resonates with the practices of early Christian scribes, who not only transcribed but also interpreted and expanded upon canonical texts, often embedding their theological perspectives into the final product^[32]. The parallel to GAI is striking: machine-generated texts depend on both the input provided by users and the interpretive frameworks encoded within the algorithms, creating outputs that extend beyond the user's original intention. This interplay between originators, intermediaries, and audiences exemplifies the shared authorship that defines both historical and contemporary textual practices^[52].

The ethical implications of the Author Function extend into questions of originality, intent, and intellectual ownership in both sacred and machine-generated texts. Just as early scribes—who were often enslaved persons—navigated the tension between authoritative authors and their interpretive contributions, modern algorithms mediate between user input and computational creativity. The institutionalization of intellectual property rights, for example, underscores the contested boundaries of authorship and ownership^[53]. This tension reinforces Foucault's assertion that authorship is not fixed but rather a dynamic construct influenced by cultural and institutional contexts. Applying the Author Function to both historical and modern contexts provides a nuanced understanding of how texts are shaped through collaborative and iterative processes, challenging traditional conceptions of the solitary author.

The comparison between human scribes and smart systems as mediators in textual creation reveals significant parallels in their roles as interpreters and amplifiers of original inputs. In sacred traditions, scribes expanded upon dictated messages by incorporating cultural and theological knowledge, thus tailoring divine messages to broader audiences ^[25]. Similarly, generative systems utilize algorithmic learning to process user prompts and produce outputs that blend original input with contextual enrichment. These parallels highlight the shared responsibility of human and machine intermediaries in enhancing textual relevance and accessibility across contexts. The integration of human judgment in ancient mediation and the computational processes of intelligent systems underscores the iterative nature of meaning-making, transcending the boundaries of singular authorship ^[54]. It also reinforces the importance of the role played by skilled human judgment in textual production enhanced by these intelligent systems.

Just as recognition that many of the scribes involved in the creation of sacred texts were enslaved persons rightfully foregrounds ethical questions for contemporary religious practitioners, the mediation processes of generative platforms introduce important ethical and philosophical concerns about the concept of intent in machine-generated texts. While scribes operated with subjective agency, often reflecting personal or institutional motives in their expansions, these new systems lack independent intent, operating solely within the parameters of their programming and training datasets. This raises fundamental questions about whether machine outputs can be considered autonomous creations or extensions of their human programmers. Studies highlight that while AI-generated content demonstrates sophistication, it lacks the intentionality that defines human-mediated authorship ^[55]. This distinction challenges traditional concepts of authorship, requiring frameworks that account for the collaborative and automated dimensions of modern textual production ^[56]. It also underscores, once again, the enduring importance of the human authorial collaborator, as well as the human interpretive audience, in meaningful textual production.

The ethical implications of these differences necessitate careful consideration, particularly as generative writing tools become increasingly integrated into creative and academic domains. Just as scribes navigated ethical dilemmas tied to their interpretative liberties, AI developers and users must address the risks of bias, misuse, and the erosion of originality in AI-mediated content. Ethical guidelines for generative content emphasize transparency and accountability, drawing parallels to historical principles of scribal fidelity to source material ^[54]. These overlaps and divergences in this analysis stress the evolving nature of mediation in textual creation, bridging ancient and contemporary practices to offer insights into the complexities of authorship in the digital age.

V. Conclusion

This analysis has demonstrated that sacred texts and AI-generated content share a foundational model of collaborative creation, highlighting the interplay between originators, intermediaries, and interpretive audiences in shaping meaning. In the context of sacred texts, authoritative authorship was mediated by human scribes who expanded, interpreted, and contextualized messages to suit the theological and cultural needs of their communities. Similarly, modern generative systems act as intermediaries, processing human prompts to produce outputs that integrate algorithmic data

production with user intent. These parallels underscore the dynamic and iterative nature of textual creation, revealing that meaning is not fixed but evolves through collaboration across time and technologies. Through an examination of these connections, we gain deeper insight into how sacred and contemporary texts alike reflect shared processes of authorship and interpretation, challenging traditional notions of singular authorship.

The parallels between sacred and AI-mediated texts invite a reevaluation of authorship as a collaborative and evolving construct. In theological studies, this perspective can deepen our understanding of how sacred texts were shaped not only by the intent of authoritative authors but also by human contributions, fostering a more nuanced appreciation of the role of scribes in the preservation and dissemination of religious doctrine. In critical theory, concepts such as Foucault's Author Function and Barthes' Reception Theory offer valuable frameworks for exploring how meaning is co-constructed by creators, intermediaries, and audiences. These insights also have practical implications for understanding authorship in a digital age, where these tools are increasingly integrated into creative and academic processes. Through bridging historical and technological perspectives, this study contributes to ongoing dialogues about the evolving boundaries of originality, intent, and collaboration in textual production.

Future research into authorship as a shared and iterative process across both historical and modern contexts could explore a broader range of theological texts to uncover additional examples of collaborative authorship and interpretative expansion. Similarly, computational models of textual creation, such as those employed by generative writing systems, warrant further examination to understand their potential to replicate or diverge from human-mediated processes. Ethical considerations, such as the recognition of agency and intent in machine-generated outputs, also merit deeper exploration, particularly given their implications for intellectual property and creative authenticity. These questions will allow scholars to continue to unravel the complex and interconnected dynamics of authorship, shedding light on its shared dimensions across time, culture, and technology. The intersections between sacred texts and AI-generated content reveal profound continuities in the processes of authorship and meaning-making. As we navigate an increasingly digital world, these insights provide valuable perspectives for reimagining authorship not as a solitary act but as a collaborative and iterative endeavor that transcends temporal and technological boundaries.

Data Availability

Data available upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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