AI and the Network Generation:

Theological Discussions with ChatGPT on Historical Theology

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Introduction

As an older member of the "network generation"[1], growing up in Silicon Valley in the 80s and 90s helped ingrain the nuance with which technology, specifically the wide adoption of the internet in the early 2000s, impacted every sphere of society. Personally, the early 2000s coincided with my own faith journey from a non-believing college student at UCLA studying technology, to a saving faith in Jesus Christ on that same campus. Upon reflection, a core component of my early faith journey was a passionate belief that God would use "network generation" to change the world for Jesus Christ and God's Kingdom. Decades later, after mobile phones and social media, the concept of the "network generation" continues to hold significance. AI has gained wide media attention, prompting even the White House to say that AI may "have a substantial impact on the economy with respect to productivity, growth, inequality, market power, innovation, and employment."[2] I believe that this potential for transformative change also includes missions and ministry for God's Kingdom. Innovative ways to harness AI tools is a key area on the cutting edge of ministry for God's Kingdom.

This paper will analyze how the "network generation" utilizes AI Chatbot ChatGPT in biblical-theological discussions, by observing student conversations with the AI during a historical theology course at an institution for biblical higher education. The analysis includes the benefits and limitations associated with the use of AI in theological conversation for young people, providing valuable insight for those seeking to use this tool for missions, ministry, and education. The practical research portion of this paper was limited to observations and analysis of a small group of thirteen students at Olivet University, an institution of biblical higher education. In short, this paper aims to contribute to understanding how AI technology can be harnessed to enrich theological discussions, while also shedding light on potential challenges that may arise in its adoption.

An Overview of AI and ChatGPT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to technology that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as recognizing speech and decision-making.[3] For years, experts have seen AI as the next transformative technology impacting a multitude of industries.[4] Recently, AI gained wide media attention due to ChatGPT, a "language model trained to produce text" that is "optimized for dialogue" and is form of generative AI.[5]

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[1] Olivet University, *Mission Statement*, 2024.

[2] The White House, "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Future of Workforces in the European Union and the United States of America," Issues Briefs, December 5, 2022.

[3] Stuart J. Russell and Peter Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Fourth Edition, Global Edition (London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2021), 45-48.

[4] Darrell M. West and John R. Allen, "How artificial intelligence is transforming the world," The Brookings Institute, April 24, 2018.

[5] OpenAI (2023), "What is ChatGPT," https://help.openai.com/en/articles/6783457-what-is-chatgpt, Accessed May 10, 2023.

Generative AI and large language models (LLMs) represent a groundbreaking frontier. Generative AI is a broad class of AI designed to create new content by learning patterns from existing data. It can generate text, images, and music with remarkable realism and diversity, doing so by mimicking input data.[6] LLMs are "large-scale, pre-trained, statistical language models based on neural network."[7] The key innovation the led to ChatGPT, with the GPT meaning Generative Pre-Trained Transformer, was transformers. Transformers use a self-attention mechanism that allow LLMs to weigh different words in a sentence relative to each other, creating attention scores to determine how much focus each word should have concerning others in the sequence.[8] This mechanism revolutionized natural language processing by enhancing the model's ability to introduce complexity, ultimately improving its understanding and generation of language. This process is foundational to predicting missing words or generating the next word in a sequence, effectively learning the structure and nuances of the language through pre-training.

Pre-training uses a self-supervised learning approach using vast amounts of text data, helping the model fill in missing words and generates the next word in a sequence. For filling in the missing words, often called "masked language modeling", models like BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) are trained to predict masked tokens in a sentence.[9] This helps the AI understand the full context of a sentence, since people often mean more than they say. For example, if a person requests an AI to generate a sermon on Matthew 4:18-22, this does not mean the user wishes for a sermon about a person named Matthew followed by a bunch of number, but they wish for the AI to search into the verses of Matthew 4:18-22, providing biblical context, and real-life application from Jesus' calling of his first disciples. Pre-training the model also allows it to predict the next word in a sequence given the previous words by predictive analytics.[10] This prediction is usually autoregressive, meaning the model is generating text one at a time based on previous outputs.[11] This is done using a probability distribution over the model's entire vocabulary to select the next most likely word.[12] Once trained on large datasets, the LLM

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[6] Gaurav Raut and Apoorv Singh, "Generative AI in Vision: A Survey on Models, Metrics and Applications," arXiv:2402.16369v1, February 26, 2024, https://ar5iv.labs.arxiv.org/html/2402.16369.

[7] Shervin Minaee, Tomas Mikolov, Narjes Nikzad, Meysam Chenaghlu Richard Socher, Xavier Amatriain, and Jianfeng Gao, "Large Language Models: A Survey," arXiv:2402.06196, February 9, 2024, https://ar5iv.labs.arxiv.org/html/2402.06196.

[8] Ashish Vaswani, Noam Shazeer, Niki Parmar, Jakob Uszkoreit, Llion Jones, Aidan N. Gomez, Lukasz Kaiser, and Illia Polosukhin, "Attention Is All You Need," arXiv:2310.15213, June 12, 2017, https://arxiv.org/abs/1706.03762.

[9] Jacob Devlin, Ming-Wei Chang, Kenton Lee, Kristina Toutanova, "BERT: Pre-training of Deep Bidirectional Transformers for Language Understanding," arXiv:1810.04805, May 24, 2019, https://ar5iv.labs.arxiv.org/html/1810.04805.

[10] Alec Radford, Kartik Narasimhan, Tim Salimans, Ilya Sutskever, "Improving Language Understanding by Generative Pre-Training," Open AI, July 11, 2018, https://cdn.openai.com/research-covers/language-unsupervised/language_understanding_paper.pdf.

[11] Tom B. Brown, et. al., "Language Models are Few-Shot Learners," arXiv:1810.04805, July 22, 2020, https://ar5iv.labs.arxiv.org/html/2005.14165.

[12] Ibid.

is capable of producing human-like text for things like creative writing, technical documentation, and conversational responses.

Personally, I find it fascinating that the pre-trained transformer model of predicting missing words or generating the next word in a sequence is the AI model that "won" against other models. One would assume that any number of other AI models being researched, and still are, that more closely mimics human cognitive thought processes of thinking and saying, would be better.[13] For example, symbolic AI dominated for decades, attempting to mirror human problem-solving techniques using predefined rules and structures but failed to handle the nuance of language. Also, various models often required significant computing power and could not produce coherent results. GPT technology does not think and say, the same way humans do, but it ended up being able to produce coherent text within a reasonable amount of computing power. That is why ChatGPT isn't the AI of movies, where it learns and grows like humans, also known as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI).[14]

According to OpenAI, ChatGPT 4.0 "can now browse the internet," so it perpetually uses current information from the internet to generate responses.[15] It has various applications including translation, summarization, Q&A, analysis, and more. If a user asks ChatGPT to write a 500-word essay on the Reformation, it will do so with extraordinary efficiency. ChatGPT 4.0 received a 1410 on the SATs and a score of 5 out of 5 on multiple AP tests.[16] It has passed multiple different college-level exams and is constantly improving with each upgrade.[17] A survey in January 2023 reported that 89% students surveyed had used ChatGPT for homework, while 72% of college professors surveyed were "concerned about its impact on cheating."[18]

Despite its impressive capabilities, ChatGPT has significant limitations. OpenAI admits that "ChatGPT sometimes writes plausible-sounding but incorrect or nonsensical answers."[19] ChatGPT will sometimes sound convincing, but generates completely inaccurate information, otherwise known as "hallucinations". A study published at the National Institutes of Health, said that ChatGPT generates "a mix of true and completely fabricated" and has "the potential of creating false experts" in scientific writing.[20] OpenAI also admits that ChatGPT is "often

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[13] Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon, *Human Problem Solving* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 1.

[14] Ben Goertzel, "Artificial General Intelligence: Concept, State of the Art, and Future Prospects," Journal of Artificial General Intelligence, 5(1), 1-46, 2014.

[15] OpenAI, September 27, 2023, https://twitter.com/openai/status/1707077710047216095.

[16] OpenAI (2023), "GPT-4 Technical Report," March 27, 2023, 5.

[17] Jonathan H. Choi, Kristin E. Hickman, Amy B. Monahan, Daniel Schwarcz, "ChatGPT Goes to Law School," Minnesota Legal Studies Research Paper No. 23-03, January 23, 2023, 5.

[18] Survey.com, "Productive Teaching Tool or Innovative Cheating?," https://study.com/resources/perceptions-of-chatgpt-in-schools, January 2023, Accessed May 10, 2023.

[19] OpenAI, "Introducing ChatGPT," https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt, Accessed May 10, 2023.

[20] Alkaissi H, McFarlane S I, "Artificial Hallucinations in ChatGPT: Implications in Scientific Writing," Cureus 15(2): e35179. DOI 10.7759/cureus.35179, February 19, 2023.

excessively verbose and overuses certain phrases."[21] Indeed, plagiarism software designed to detect AI texts, attempts to spot these hallmarks of ChatGPT style writing. Another issue with ChatGPT is its tendency to steer users towards mainstream perspectives, a bias inherent in the data set it was trained on.[22] This has the benefit of steering users away from extreme viewpoints, but it has the drawback of overlooking minority opinions.

Considering the Network Generation

For this paper, I am using the term "network generation" to encompass Millennials and GenZ, since both generations share a constantly changing technological landscape.[23] The hallmark of the network generation has been the internet, which has created a globalized society with readily available information and instant communication. This is a generation of digital natives with a heightened sense of interconnectedness, more aware of diverse cultures and perspectives than ever before due to social media.[24] The information overload has also created challenges for this generation, like echo chambers, which reinforce pre-existing beliefs.[25] The network generation are early adopters to all technology, including AI, outpacing previous generations in usage.[26] The network generation is integrating AI more swiftly into their everyday lives than older generations can anticipate or react to.

Beyond technological influences that the network generation can see, are hidden influences of postmodernism from past generation. Stanley Grenz identified it as a generation that is post-individualistic, post-rationalistic, post-dualistic, and post-noeticentric of modernist ideals.[27] For this generation, Ronald Michener sees the need for an approach that is "whole-person, relationally centered, dialogue-based apologetic which appeals to reason, human sensibility, emotion, and imagination."[28] Grenz' framework and Michener's analysis teach us to factor in the influence postmodernism for this generation by considering the nuanced relationship between the individual and the meta-narrative. The modernist view emphasized the objective, rational self,

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Emilio Ferrara, "Should ChatGPT be Biased? Challenges and Risks of Bias in Large Language Models," arXiv preprint arXiv:2304.03738, April 18, 2023, 4.

[23] Michael Dimock, "Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins," *Pew Research Center*, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/, January 17, 2019, Accessed May 10, 2023.

[24] Kelly-Ann Allen, Tracii Ryan, DeLeon Gray, D. McInereney, Lea Waters, "Social Media Use and Social Connectedness in Adolescents: The Positives and the Potential Pitfalls," Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology, Volume 31, Issue 1, April 2014, 18-31.

[25] Matteo Cinelli, Gianmarco De Francisci Morales, Alessandro Galeazzi, and Michele Starnini, "The echo chamber effect on social media," PNAS, Volume 118, Number 9, February 23, 2021.

[26] Louis NeJame, Ria Bharadwag, Catherine Shaw, Kristen Fox, "Generative AI in Higher Education: From Fear to Experimentation, Embracing AI's Potential," *Tyton Partners*, https://tytonpartners.com/generative-ai-in-higher-education-from-fear-to-experimentation-embracing-ais-potential/, April 25, 2023, Accessed May 10, 2023.

[27] Stanley J. Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 167-174.

[28] Ronald T. Michener, *Engaging Deconstructive Theology* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 162.

which conclusively meant individuals finding themselves within the meta-narrative of society and the world. The postmodern attitude rejects the meta-narrative, encouraging individual self-discovery, with the meta-narratives following the individual. That being said, believers cannot ignore the overarching biblical-historical framework as a meta-narrative. This leaves a much more nuanced relationship between the individual and the grand narrative. For the network generation, it is not one or the other. Faith is not simply a journey of self-discovery nor blind adherence towards a meta-narrative. Ministry in the network generation is about developing one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ, together with the community of believers in the Church, and directed towards the grand story of God's Kingdom. The postmodern influence requires an acknowledgment individualism within the grand story of the Kingdom, recognizing that God is so great that He embraces the individual as a part of the larger story of His Kingdom.

These considerations of the network generation are fascinating in examining how ChatGPT inherently addresses these characteristics for theological discussion. As digital natives, ChatGPT seamlessly integrates into the lives of the network generation. ChatGPT enables individualized and nuanced discussions, but also draws from the existing body of knowledge. In terms of theological discussion, it draws from the information available on the history and tradition of Christianity, providing well-informed responses to converse with individual believers. This allows for personal engagement within the broader context of faith tradition, the Church, and God's Kingdom. Therefore, ChatGPT may serve as an intuitive bridge connecting the unique characteristics of the network generation to theological discussions.

Background on Student Conversations with ChatGPT

In Spring 2024, I taught a historical theology course to thirteen students at Olivet University, an institution of biblical higher education. The historical theology course covered the time period from the beginnings to the Reformation, and I tasked the students with having four one-hour conversations with ChatGPT. The subject matter was ideal for AI since there was ample information available on the internet. Student were instructed to have their conversations after listening to my lectures and doing required readings. Afterwards, I provided the students with suggestions for conversations with ChatGPT. I also told students to take conversations in whatever direction they wanted.
The following are a sampling of suggested guidelines I gave to students:

1. Ask ChatGPT to give a comprehensive summary of key topics from the lecture 1 (Hellenistic philosophy, Gnosticism, the Apostolic Fathers, and the Logos Doctrine). Use ChatGPT to seek further clarity for anything that is unclear.

2. Why was Gnosticism considered a threat to early Christian doctrine? How did the Apostolic Fathers respond to Gnosticism, and what measures did they take to protect the integrity of Christian teachings?

3. Can you provide for biblical substantiation to support Augustine's theology in response to Pelagius? Please use the Bible to ensure theological accuracy and analyze how these Bible verses relate to the analysis.

4. Ask ChatGPT to provide a list of questions for personal self-reflection on the Trinitarian debates that impacts your own faith and theological understanding. Then, reflect on these questions and get feedback from ChatGPT.

5. Ask ChatGPT to provide a list of questions to ascertain whether you are more closely aligned with Bonaventure's or Aquinas approach to knowledge. Answer those questions and ask ChatGPT to analyze who it feels you are mostly closely theologically aligned with a why.

6. Ministry Application: Provide ChatGPT with background information on your current or future ministry work and ask for advice on how to incorporate the insights from Lecture 4 into improving your ministry, keeping in mind the historical challenges and developments in Christian thought.

7. Sermon ideas: Ask ChatGPT for sermon ideas, including Bible passages for preaching, based on concepts and ideas that resonated with you during the lecture.

Following their ChatGPT conversation, students wrote reflections and engaged in a one-hour discussion with me on the benefits, limitations, opportunities, and risks of using ChatGPT in theological discussion.

Reflections from the Network Generation

Students reported several significant strengths of ChatGPT in their conversations. First was ChatGPT's ability to convey complex information in a simple way. Summaries of course topics were accurate and easy to understand, especially the most difficult topics. In some cases, where English was a second language, students said that ChatGPT's written response were easier to understand than my own lectures and helpful for further personal study after the class. This was likely due to the foreign students' increased capabilities in reading English versus hearing English. Also, some students also found ChatGPT to be more helpful than the required reading, such as Paul Tillich's "A History of Christian Thought."[29] Given that Tillich's book can be challenging to understand and navigate, students found the clarity of ChatGPT to be incredibly helpful.

Another strength was ChatGPT's capacity to handle the diversity of students. Students hailed from America, China, Korea, and India, and ChatGPT was able to accurately and comprehensively reference the Chinese house church movement, theology in Korea, or religious movements in India. ChatGPT also handled ministry application questions such as evangelizing in contemporary college culture or using music to present the Gospel. When students asked for questions on self-reflections, questions were different for every student, adjusted based on previous individual interactions. For example, a Chinese student was asked questions related to traditional Chinese values, familial ties, and persecution. ChatGPT was able to accurately analyze responses and match the individual students' views to the appropriate theological position, even highlighting differing nuances in their views. ChatGPT could even integrate topics

[29] Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, Edited by Carl E. Braaten (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1968).

together, such as a philosophical concept like Plato's realism and Medieval Church. Students also stated that ChatGPT was competent in presenting biblically rooted support. I believe that ChatGPT was able to handle such diverse topics due to the wealth of information available on the internet on topics like the Bible, theology, culture, ministry, and philosophy. Essentially, ChatGPT's excels in any topic that has a substantial body of information available on the internet and excels at personalizing that information for individual needs and preferences.

Nonetheless, students also observed limitations to ChatGPT. As previously discussed, "hallucinations" by ChatGPT led to occasional inaccuracies on specific facts. For example, when discussing Tillich's book, ChatGPT consistently attributed material that was not in Tillich's historical theology book, but did align with his systematic theology. This is likely due to the fact that there is significantly less information available on the internet about Tillich's historical theology, as compared to his systematic theology. Compounding this weakness is the fact that ChatGPT did not readily acknowledge inaccurate information. Instead of simply saying it does not know, ChatGPT constructed persuasive responses that students could not tell were inaccurate. Students believed Tillich wrote things ChatGPT said he did and did not realize he did not until I told students to re-read those sections in Tillich's book. In some other cases of "hallucinations", traditional internet searches were helpful for quickly distinguishing fact from fiction.

Looking forward, the student consensus was that AI will play an important role in theology. ChatGPT is a highly accessible tool for having substantive discussion in a constantly changing world. One student said they are often hesitant to burden others with their theological inquiries, since it is embarrassing or time consuming, but ChatGPT can provide a desired conversational experience in a readily available fashion. Another student praised the AI's ability to synthesize complex theological topics in simple, easy to understands ways, giving them a sense of confidence on topics they would otherwise not want to readily admit ignorance. This is especially true for individuals where English is a second language, that they may understand the topic, but not in English, alleviating such social anxiety. Finally, the student consensus was that ChatGPT can help promote critical thinking and deeper theological reflection. Having ChatGPT ask them introspective questions and then answering them, was particularly helpful. It was a reflective process that provided insight into diverse perspective, as well as a catalyst for refining their own beliefs and theological convictions.

At the same time, students were quick to recognize ChatGPT's limits going forward. The AI is not substitute for genuine human interaction, especially in theology. ChatGPT does not possess empathy, personal beliefs, or a moral compass, which are fundamental to theological discussions. One student remarked on a recent discussion with a professor, who spoke about their own theological journey, shifting perspectives as they became older. Even if ChatGPT could mimic such experience, it would not be genuine and could not replicate human interaction. Finally, students felt that ChatGPT's factual inaccuracies are worrisome. They had believed everything written by the AI since it appeared persuasive and informed, but upon realizing some of it was factually inaccurate, students saw the need to view ChatGPT with a critical eye, verifying facts with external sources.

Analysis

In general, AI appears to be a positive technological development for the network generation, especially for theological discussion. As digital natives, the network generation does not have any issue integrating AI into their lives and theological growth. It embraces AI as being able to help them learn amidst a vast sea of information available on the internet on theological subjects. Mark Graves commented, "These technologies can provide new tools for scholars to access and analyze vast amounts of theological literature."[30] AI allows scholars to concentrate on the most important aspects of their research, serving as a companion. "Treat AI as a research assistant not a supervisor," Mushtaq Bilal, a researcher using AI commented.[31] Professors from the University of Pennsylvania are approaching AI in the same way, studying how to "enhance learning outcomes while ensuring that AI serves as a supportive tool rather than a replacement."[32] The same is true in theological education, where the network generation can use AI in an assistive way to enhance their learning.

AI also appears to match the underlying postmodern influence that underpins the network generation, especially in addressing the nuance of the individual and the meta-narrative. James Hutson explored the latest use of AI in artistic creativity and concluded that "AI algorithms, with their ability to ideate, scrutinize data, and discern patterns, can streamline the creative process, particularly enhancing exploratory and transformational creativity."[33] In the theological realm, it is means helping diverse and individualized believers to find themselves within the grand meta-narrative of the Bible and God's Kingdom. Tools like ChatGPT enable individuals to develop their ability to articulate, defend, and substantiating their theological viewpoints, while also discerning the strengths and limitations of counter-arguments. This facilitates a process of self-discovery that can contribute to a more well-rounded theological understanding.

Conversely, the network generation appears either naïve or justifiably unconcerned about the dangers of AI, depending on one's perspective. With many are sounding the alarm about AI's false information, the European Union called for transparency requirements in a first ever EU AI Act.[34] These concerns are justified for the network generation, since they seemed unable to discern accuracy in theological conversation with ChatGPT. While these concerns are warranted, perhaps they are justifiably limited in their overall impact. Throughout history, false information has flowed throughout society, sometimes causing temporary disruptions, but often failing, since

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[30] Mark Graves, "ChatGPT's Significance for Theology," *Theology and Science*, 21:2, 201-204, DOI: 10.1080/14746700.2023.2188366, May 11, 2023.

[31] Mushtaq Bilal, "Best Practices for Using AI for Academic Purposes," *LinkedIn Pulse*, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/best-practices-using-ai-academic-purposes-mushtaq-bilal-phd/, August 21, 2023, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[32] Ethan Mollick and Lilach Mollick, "Assigning AI: Seven Approaches for Students with Prompts," *Wharton School of School of the University of Pennsylvania & Wharton Interactive*, September 23, 2023.

[33] James Hutson, "AI and the Creative Process: Part One," *JSTOR Daily*, https://daily.jstor.org/ai-and-the-creative-process-part-one/, October 24, 2023, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[34] European Union, "EU AI Act: first regulation on artificial intelligence," https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20230601STO93804/eu-ai-act-first-regulation-on-artificial-intelligence, August 6, 2023.

accurate information often follows. James McGrath remarked that for error-prone AI, "Those companies and organizations will pay the price."[35] This speaks to the biblical truth that whatever is false will be judged, and whatever is true will remain eternally.[36] The network generation appear to accept when inaccurate information is pointed out and have a desire to find accurate information, especially in theology. The same sentiment is true for cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty. While the potential for misuse is there, the network generation appears to understand the value of genuine learning. Instead, educators should consider responsible guidelines for using AI in education, as the KU Leuven promotes.[37]

The more significant limitation is AI's ability to replace genuine human interaction. In its current form, AI cannot offer genuinely original ideas as humans do. Ted Peters explored asking ChatGPT existential questions and remarked, "Existential questions are so personal they beleaguer us with puzzlement, dread, and fear."[38] This lack of genuine creativity limits the depth of discussions with AI. Future AI may better mimic humans, but it will always artificial and devoid of a genuine human experience. This is especially true for complex and nuanced theological subjects which require a cultural, historical, or deeply personal understanding. ChatGPT may be adequate as a theological discussion tool, but there is no one who believes it is genuinely, an actual human.

Finally, ethical concerns surrounding AI are complex, with a key issue being the tendency to "play god," as people increasingly rely on AI rather than turning to God.[39] AI's autonomous decision-making raises significant theological questions about the boundaries between human creativity and divine authority. Jason Thacker warns that AI could become "our new golden calf," highlighting the risk of idolatry as AI mimics human behaviors and capabilities.[40] The ethical framework guiding AI should align with our Creator's values, as Dennis Hollinger emphasizes the need for AI to respect human dignity and biblical teachings.[41] However, John Lennox questions how an ethical dimension can be built into algorithms lacking heart and soul, raising

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[35] James F. McGrath, "The Biblical Story of John the Baptist and Yoko," *Patheos*, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/religionprof/2023/10/the-biblical-story-of-john-the-baptist-and-yoko.html, October 4, 2023, Updated November 24, 2023, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[36] Ecclesiastes 12:14, 2 Corinthians 5:10.

[37] KU Leuven, "Responsible use of generative Artificial Intelligence," https://www.kuleuven.be/english/genai, Updated December 14, 2023, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[38] Ted Peters, "Asking Google Existential Questions," *Patheos*, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/publictheology/2023/09/asking-google-existential-questions/, September 22, 2023, Updated January 3, 2024, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[39] John C. Lennox, *2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 208.

[40] Jason Thacker, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Fourth Edition, Global Edition (London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2021), 8.60, Calibre

[41] Dennis P. Hollinger, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Fourth Edition, Global Edition (London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2021), 32.

concerns about AI dehumanizing individuals.[42] Society at large must consider the importance of trustworthiness in AI, as Beena Ammanath notes that trust will be crucial in our future with AI.[43] The danger exists that over-reliance on AI could reduce humans to mere machines, risking humanity's well-being, as Jason Thacker cautions against viewing AI as a savior.[44]

Conclusion

AI has made a tremendous impact on society, education, and theology, yet it remains a tool limited as we humans are. As Dorian Scott Cole notes, "Artificial intelligence knows nothing more than what humans have given it."[45] Therefore, it's crucial to view AI from a God-centered perspective, rather than a human-centered one, recognizing that it can be used for both good and evil. For example, Jonathan Robie highlights how AI enhances Bible translation. [46] While misuse of AI in such things as deepfake technology, can harm and deceive.[47] AI may evolve to mimic or surpass human intelligence, as Brenden Lake suggests.[48] But it will never know God who is beyond us, since the Bible teaches us that God is love, fully incarnated in Jesus Christ, and only humans, created in God's image, can truly know and form a relationship with Him.[49] Thus, while AI is a powerful tool, it will never replace the unique spiritual connection humans have with God.

This paper explored the intersection of AI and theology, focusing on how the network generation can use ChatGPT for theological discussions. It highlighted ChatGPT's strengths in facilitating meaningful conversations but also acknowledged its weaknesses, such as factual inaccuracies and the lack of a human touch. The study faced limitations, including a small sample size and a focus on less controversial theological topics, which did not fully test ChatGPT's capabilities. Furthermore, the paper did not assess learning outcomes, suggesting that future research could compare traditional and AI-assisted discussions. As ChatGPT continues to impact higher education, its potential to shift pedagogy towards a more discussion-centric model is evident, but it also brings challenges, including bias, privacy concerns, and the risk of overshadowing

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[42] Lennox, *2084*, 24.

[43] Beena Ammanath, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Fourth Edition, Global Edition (London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2021), 73.

[44] Jason Thacker, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Fourth Edition, Global Edition (London, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2021), 15.64, Calibre.

[45] Dorian Scott Cole, "Are AI Companions Bad?," *Patheos*, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/newgenerationsexplorefaith/2023/10/are-ai-companions-bad/, October 18, 2023, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[46] Jonathan Robie, "Artificial Intelligence and Bible Translation," *Bible History Daily*, https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/artificial-intelligence-and-bible-translation/, January 3, 2024, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[47] Keumars Afifi-Sabet, "3 scary breakthroughs AI will make in 2024" *Live Science*, https://www.livescience.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/3-scary-breakthroughs-ai-will-make-in-2024, December 31, 2023, Accessed January 15, 2024.

[48] Brendan M. Lake and Marco Baroni, "Human-like systematic generalization through a meta-learning neural network," *Nature*, 623, 115–121 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06668-3.

[49] Isaiah 55:8-9, John 1:14, Genesis 1:27.

minority theological opinions. These issues require further exploration and scrutiny, particularly in the context of theological education.

Looking ahead, ChatGPT will likely play a transformative role in theological discussions for the network generation. To fully harness its potential, it's essential to balance AI's capabilities with the need to protect individual perspectives, privacy, and theological diversity. The impact of tools like ChatGPT goes beyond academia, promoting meaningful dialogue and thoughtful inquiry within God's Kingdom. However, it's important to remember that while AI can enhance our conversations, it is our shared faith in God through Jesus Christ that ultimately makes these discussions fruitful and meaningful.

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