REPOSITIONING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AN ONTOLOGICAL-EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISCERNMENT FRAMEWORK

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Abstract
Christian religious education must consider the philosophical and theological implications of the penetration of artificial intelligence into learning practices. This study uses a meta-synthesis approach to identify how AI transforms ontology and epistemology in the context of Christian education. The literature review includes studies on the philosophical foundations of Christian education, the impact of AI on education in general, ontological-epistemological frameworks, and Christian discernment theory. Key findings indicate that AI can enhance personalized learning and enrich Christian content, but requires integration that aligns with Christian values of love, truth, and justice. Therefore, an ontological-epistemological discernment framework is needed that emphasizes reflection on human nature as the image of God and knowledge based on divine revelation. This framework is outlined in curriculum recommendations and educational practices, such as teacher training on faith-guided AI literacy and adaptation of AI-Christian teaching materials. Limitations of this study include reliance on literature studies without empirical field data.
Keyword: Christian Education; Artificial Intelligence; Philosophy, Ontology; Epistemology; Digital Disruption.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Artificial intelegance technology has not only revolutionized industry and the economy but has also significantly changed the global educational landscape. In the last decade, the integration of AI into the learning process has resulted in increasingly sophisticated, efficient, and personalized educational models. However, this progress has also created epistemological and ontological disruption, especially in the context of Christian education, which is rooted in the values of faith, personal relationships, and the authority of divine revelation. (Napitupulu and Gulo 2024) Christian education does not merely aim to impart knowledge, but also to shape character, spirituality, and a sense of God. Therefore, AI disruption raises a profound question: how should Christian education position itself amidst the onslaught of automated, rational, and sometimes impersonal technology?

This discussion is motivated by the phenomenon of accelerated digitalization in Christian education, which tends to neglect comprehensive philosophical reflection. A number of Christian educational institutions have begun adopting AI-based systems such as automated learning assistants, big data-driven assessments, and biblical chatbots without questioning the ontological and epistemological implications of their use. Can human-created AI replace the relational role of educators in shaping students' faith and character? Can the truth of faith be conveyed and mediated by algorithms? These two questions are central to the background of the problem, requiring scientific and philosophical study.

Ontologically, AI disruption challenges the very nature of human existence. In Christian theology, humans are viewed as *imago Dei*, moral and spiritual beings in a relationship with the Creator. Humans are not merely

information processors, but individuals with free will, conscience, and spiritual potential. AI, on the other hand, is an artificial entity that operates based on data and logic, without self-awareness or a spiritual dimension. (Chen 2025) However, in practice, AI is now capable of imitating human behavior, responding to questions, and even providing moral or theological advice based on its database. (Paelongan et al. 2024) This raises confusion in the realm of education: if machines can “teach” and rationally answer questions of faith, will humans’ role as spiritual educators be threatened? This is where ontological understanding is crucial to avoid reducing humans to mere cognitive entities that can be replaced by machines. (Sutarman and Wahyu 2024)

Meanwhile, epistemologically, the presence of AI shifts the way students acquire and verify truth. In Christian education, knowledge is not merely information, but is rooted in God's revelation, faith experiences, and relationships with the community. AI, while capable of providing biblical data and information, remains mechanistic and lacks the capacity to understand revelation spiritually. When students begin to trust AI's search results more than they wrestle with God's Word personally and communally, a fundamental epistemic shift occurs. (Ton 2025) Truth is no longer seen as something relational and transcendent, but rather functional and technical. This demands serious reflection from Christian educators: can AI be a legitimate epistemic partner, or does it actually weaken the spiritualization process in faith learning? Furthermore, there is a lack of a philosophical framework to respond to this development. Many Christian educational institutions emphasize technical adaptations to AI (such as the use of smart learning platforms) without building a solid theological and philosophical foundation. (Hana and Lie 2024) This risks creating a fragmentation of values, where students' spirituality is marginalized by the speed and practicality of technology. In fact, Christian education should foster integrity of faith, a comprehensive self-understanding, and a right relationship with God and others. (Nenomataus 2024) Without mature ontological and epistemological thinking, Christian education can become trapped in digital pragmatism, unconsciously shifting its theological foundations.

Several previous studies, such as Frederick Ray's "Christ Incarnate in Algorithms: A Contextual Critique of Christology at the Dawn of Artificial Intelligence," argue that the digitalization of Jesus' "face" and "teachings" through AI has the potential to create a shallow and misleading Christology if not subjected to a deep theological critique. (Popo 2026) Furthermore, Koesoema, Doni. "Humanist Education in the Era of Disruption, that education must not lose its humanist "spirit". The biggest challenge in the world of education today is not how quickly we adopt technology, but rather how we ensure that the technology is used within an educational framework that continues to prioritize human dignity, freedom, and character as the main subject. (Koesoema 2023) Furthermore, Mahendrayudha, Romandito, and Vinus Zai on Education is Never Neutral: Foundations, Narratives, and Implications for Christian Worldview concluded that, Christian educational institutions do not realize that education is full of ideological content, then they will unconsciously fall into the world narrative that distorts the faith of students. (Mahendrayudha and Zai. 2026)

Previous research has successfully mapped the dangers of Christological reductionism in AI Frederick, emphasizing the urgency of humanism in technological disruption meanwhile Doni, criticizing the myth of ideological neutrality in education, even Mahendrayudha & Zai, this research offers crucial novelty through the development of a pedagogical evaluation model based on contextual critical awareness . In contrast to previous studies that tend to be reflective-theoretical, the

novelty of this research lies in its transformation into a systematic evaluation instrument capable of empirically dissecting and mitigating algorithmic distortions in Christian educational practices. Thus, this research does not only stop at criticism, but operationally formulates a *discernment framework* for educators to ensure that the adoption of AI technology remains within the theological mandate to humanize humans, as well as being a shield from world narratives that obscure the nature of faith in today's Christian educational ecosystem.

However, studies specifically integrating Christian ontological and epistemological perspectives in responding to the development of AI are still relatively limited. Previous research generally discusses how AI is used in education, but has not deeply examined how the existence of AI challenges Christian understandings of human nature (ontology) as the Imago Dei and the nature of knowledge (epistemology), which is rooted in God's revelation, wisdom, and the process of discernment. Consequently, there remains a conceptual gap regarding a theological framework that Christian educators can use to critically evaluate and position AI in educational practice. Based on this gap, the novelty of this research lies in the development of an Ontological-Epistemological Discernment Framework as a conceptual foundation for repositioning Christian Education in the era of Artificial Intelligence. Unlike previous research that has focused on the use of technology or the ethics of AI, this study offers a discernment framework that integrates Christian ontology specifically the concepts of the Imago Dei, relationality, and incarnation with Christian epistemology centered on revelation, wisdom, truth, and character formation.

Through this approach, AI is not understood solely as a technological tool, but rather as a phenomenon that demands deeper theological reflection on the goals of Christian education. The contributions of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research expands the discourse on contemporary Christian education by presenting ontological and epistemological perspectives as a basis for evaluating the development of AI. Practically, this research provides a discernment framework that can be used by Christian educators, theological educational institutions, churches, and Christian Religious Education institutions to integrate AI critically, reflectively, and responsibly without losing focus on faith formation, Christian character formation, and respect for human dignity as the image of God.

METHOD

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review method adapted from the PRISMA guidelines to identify, select, evaluate, and synthesize literature on Artificial Intelligence, Christian Education, theology, and philosophy of education. Data were obtained from academic databases Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ATLA Religion Database, and ProQuest through searches using keywords such as Artificial Intelligence and Christian Education, AI and Theology, Imago Dei and Artificial Intelligence, Epistemology and Artificial Intelligence, and Discernment and Technology. (Sugyono 2015) Inclusion criteria included reputable journal articles, academic books, and scientific proceedings in Indonesian or English published in the last five years and relevant to the issues of artificial intelligence, Christian Education, ontology, epistemology, and faith formation. While non-academic publications, duplicate articles, sources without full-text access, and studies that only focus on the technical aspects of AI were excluded from the analysis. The selection process was carried out through the stages of identification, screening of titles and abstracts, assessment of full-text eligibility, and determination of final sources that met the research criteria. Next, the data was analyzed using thematic synthesis by grouping the findings into

main themes: Christian ontology, Christian epistemology, the impact of AI on education, theological discernment, and its implications for the repositioning of Christian education. (Arikunto 2013) The results of this synthesis were used to construct an Ontological-Epistemological Discernment Framework as a conceptual foundation for responding to the development of Artificial Intelligence theologically, critically, and constructively in the context of Christian education.

RESULTS AND DISCCUSION

Artificial Intelligence has shifted the educational paradigm from traditional models to data-driven learning, automation, and personalization. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel assert that AI enables educational systems to adapt to individual student needs through more precise learning analytics. (Holmes, Wayne and Fadel. 2019) Similarly, Zawacki-Richter et al., in a systematic review, found that AI is widely used in higher education for automation, learning analytics, and academic decision-making. (Zawacki-Richter and Al 2019) However, Selwyn criticized the dominance of this technological approach, arguing that it could reduce education to merely a system of efficiency, rather than a holistic human development process. (Anton Napitupulu and Gulo 2024) This literature demonstrates a tendency toward a technocratic paradigm in the study of AI and education. Education tends to be understood as a data optimization system, rather than a holistic human development process.

In terms of epistemology, Holmes et al. and Luckin et al. shows that AI produces knowledge through data analysis and probabilistic models. However, Selwyn emphasizes that AI-based knowledge is operational and does not always produce reflective and meaningful understanding. (Holmes, Wayne and Fadel. 2019) In Christian epistemology, knowledge is rooted in God's revelation, wisdom, and the discernment of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16). Wolterstorff emphasizes that truth from a Christian perspective is not only propositional, but relational and centered on God as the source of truth. (Wolterstorff 2004) Thus, there is an epistemological tension between AI as a data-based predictive system and Christian epistemology which is revelational. AI can provide information, but cannot replace spiritual wisdom and discernment. This discussion views technology not as a neutral entity, but as an ideological paradox that demands theological discernment for Christian educational institutions. To systematically dissect this complexity, this study introduces an evaluative framework that maps the crucial points between the challenges of AI disruption and the principles of Christian pedagogy. Table 1 below presents the conceptual parameters used in this analysis to evaluate the extent to which technology adoption has the potential to obscure the essence of faith or, conversely, can be integrated as a means of character formation.

Table 1. Conceptual framework

Evaluation Dimensions	The Challenge of AI Disruption	Theological and pedagogical principles	*Discernment* Focus (Evaluative)
Ontological	Reduction of humans into data objects (*data-points*).	Man as *Imago Dei* (image of God).	Ensuring personal dignity remains above algorithmic efficiency.
Epistemological	The validity of the truth of faith is substituted by statistical data/chatbots.	The truth of faith as a personal encounter (*encounter*).	Positioning AI as a tool, not an authoritative source of truth.

Moral/Ethical	Algorithmic determinism in decision making.	Moral freedom and autonomy of Christian character.	Keeping AI from replacing the relational role of educators.

The Nature of Christian Education from an Ontological Perspective, Christian education from an ontological perspective is not simply a process of transferring knowledge or technical skills, but rather a form of faith practice rooted in a deep understanding of the reality of human existence in the light of divine revelation. Within this framework, Christian education is not merely understood as a formal learning tool, but as a transformative field where humans are formed holistically in relation to God, others, and creation. The ontological perspective emphasizes an understanding of the essence of humankind, namely as creatures created in the image and likeness of God (*imago Dei)* as recorded in Genesis (Genesis 1:26-27). This concept serves as the philosophical and theological foundation for the entire process of Christian education. (Jones 2020) Ontology in Christian philosophy emphasizes that humans are not merely biological or social beings, but spiritual entities with intrinsic dignity derived from the will of the Creator. This understanding has fundamental implications for the educational approach: students are not merely objects of learning, but subjects with ontologically inherent existence, purpose, and potential. This means that Christian education does not start from a neutral assumption about humans, but from the belief that every individual has invaluable divine value. (SC Gulo 2025)

In light of *the imago Dei*, humans are understood as relational beings called to live in communion with God and with others. Therefore, Christian education is not enough to simply equip students with academic skills or conceptual knowledge, but must also touch the deepest dimensions of human existence: spirituality, morality, emotions, and relationality. (Sulistyo and Waruwu 2023) This kind of education is not merely the transmission of information, but rather a personal transformation that leads students to grow into Christlikeness. The relationship between educators and students in Christian education is crucial in this ontological approach. (Nenomataus 2024) . Teachers are not merely facilitators of knowledge, but also role models who instill the values of faith, truth, love, and integrity through an authentic personal presence. This relationship is transformative because it is based on respect for human dignity and the encouragement to build each other up in the light of Christ's love. In this context, Christian education cannot be replaced by mechanistic or impersonal systems, such as algorithms or artificial intelligence *(AI) systems*. (Smith 2009)

Although technological developments, including AI, have significantly contributed to the efficiency of the learning process, Christian education must still maintain intimacy and personalization in the teacher-student relationship. AI, ontologically, is an entity that lacks consciousness, free will, or even a soul. It operates based on human data and commands without the capacity to experience spiritual relationships. Therefore, AI can only function as an instrument, not a substitute for human relationships filled with love, understanding, and faith. Christian education requires the presence of whole human beings capable of responding with empathy, forgiving with love, and guiding with conscience. Within an ontological framework, spirituality is not viewed as an optional additional element in Christian education, but as the essence that animates the entire educational process. True Christian education occurs when every element of learning is oriented toward an encounter with God, reflection on the meaning of life, and recognition of God's calling in each individual's life. Spirituality is not merely a routine of worship such as

morning prayer, or daily devotions, but rather an awareness and appreciation of God's presence in every process of learning and personal growth. (Vinsen 2020). Faith communities play a crucial role in Christian education, as humans, as relational beings, thrive on interaction and fellowship. Faith communities, such as churches or small groups, are not merely places for theological study but existential spaces where Christian values are contextually realized. Within these communities, students can experience faith transformation through exemplary living, spiritual formation, and collective experiences of love and service. (A. Doni 2024); 240

Christian education is also eschatological, because it not only prepares humans for life in this world, but also leads to eternal life. This dimension distinguishes Christian education from secular educational approaches that tend to be pragmatic and oriented towards worldly achievements. (Postman 1998):149 Thus, Christian education contains an element of hope, where every learning process is understood as part of a pilgrimage of faith towards the fullness of life in Christ. The ultimate goal of Christian education is not merely academic or professional success, but a life in harmony with God's will and His eternal calling. In the context of the digital era marked by technological disruption and the rapid advancement of AI, the philosophy of ontology is a crucial pillar for Christian education to remain true to its identity. Without a solid ontological foundation, Christian education risks becoming disoriented, trapped in technological euphoria, and losing its essence as a means of forming divine human beings. (Russell 2019) Therefore, continuous reflection on the ontological foundations of Christian education is a necessity. This reflection is not only philosophical, but also theological and pastoral, leading to educational practices rooted in faith in Christ and a true understanding of humans as spiritual beings. Christian education grounded in Christian ontology rejects the reduction of humans to mere economic agents or consumers of technology. Humans are spiritual beings called to love, serve, and live in a right relationship with God. Therefore, all aspects of education, from curriculum and methodology to relational dynamics, must be directed toward the development of a complete and authentic human existence. Christian education is not only about making humans know, but also about knowing; it is not only about developing competence, but also about character; it is not just about creating a workforce, but about creating disciples of Christ. (Aritonang 2017)

Thus, from an ontological perspective, the essence of Christian education is to humanize humans in the light of God's truth centered on Christ as a living example. This education forms students not only to have knowledge, but also to have wisdom; not only to be able to work, but also to live righteously. In a world constantly changing by technological advances and digitalization, Christian education is called to be a sacred space of encounter between faith and reason, between love and truth, between humanity and God. Through this approach, Christian education is not only relevant in facing the challenges of the times, but also remains faithful to its identity and mission: to form humanity as a living, whole, and complete image of God. Christian Religious Education from an Epistemological Perspective When viewed from an epistemological perspective, knowledge in Christian Religious Education (PAK) is not monolithic, but rather arises from the interaction of various complementary sources of knowledge. The primary source is divine revelation, understood as *the self-disclosure of God,* culminating in the person of Jesus Christ (incarnational revelation) and manifested normatively in the Holy Scriptures (written revelation). (Arifianto, Sumual, and Rahayu 2025) This revelation is theocentric and axiomatic,

serving as the basis of Christian faith, which is received through faith, not merely empirical observation. (Arifianto, Sumual, and Rahayu 2025)However, revelation cannot be understood passively; reason *plays* an active role in interpreting, analyzing, systematizing, and defending the truth of faith. In addition, religious experience *also* enriches faith, both personally through prayer and devotion, and communally through worship and church rites. *Church tradition* then functions as a secondary support that maintains the continuity of faith, provides an interpretive framework, and ensures the orthodoxy of Christian teaching. (RP Gulo and Zai 2025)

In the context of education, this epistemology has direct implications for teaching methods. Religious Education (PAK), grounded in Christian epistemology, does not adopt a passive educational model or *"banking concept,"* where students simply receive knowledge transferred by the teacher. Instead, a constructivist approach is more appropriate because it positions students as active subjects who reflectively construct their knowledge of faith. (Ton 2025) Teachers function as facilitators, guiding students to integrate Scripture as revelation, reason as interpreter, life experience as existential confirmation, and church tradition as historical support. The validity of the constructed knowledge of faith is then tested through four criteria: coherence with the Christian belief system, correspondence with lived reality, pragmatic transformative power, and recognition by the broader faith community. (Cornelius and Wilson 2021) With this epistemological framework, Religious Education (PAK) does not simply convey information but fosters a logical, reflective, and transformative understanding of faith in students' lives.

The relevance of this epistemological approach becomes increasingly apparent as Christian Religious Education (CSR) faces the challenges of the digital era, particularly the disruption of artificial intelligence. AI, which works with algorithms, big data, and *machine learning,* is capable of processing and presenting information quickly, even surpassing human technical capabilities. However, AI epistemology operates only at the information level, thus limiting its reach to fundamental aspects of Christian epistemology. (Sidabutar and Munthe 2022) AI can mimic the presentation of data related to written revelation or tradition, but it lacks the capacity to experience authentic religious relationships, process faith experiences, or use reason within an abstract and faith-based framework. (Sari and Putri 2024) Thus, Christian Religious Education (CSR) has an irreplaceable advantage: shaping students into individuals of wisdom, character, and rooted in a living faith. The challenge in the digital era is not how Christian Religious Education can compete with the speed of AI, but rather how to use it as a tool *without* losing the authority of faith. In this way, PAK finds its new mission in the algorithmic era: guiding humanity to become not only digitally intelligent, but also wise, critical, and steadfast in its faith in the Truth, Christ. (Prastyono, Gautama, and Zhafranianto 2023)

Discussion, In Christian Religious Education, the presence of AI offers various conveniences in finding learning resources, compiling materials, and assisting the learning process. However, this progress has also given rise to fundamental epistemological issues, namely the tendency to equate knowledge with information. In the digital paradigm, the more information obtained is often considered to increase a person's level of knowledge. However, philosophically and theologically, knowledge is not synonymous with the mere accumulation of data. In modern epistemology, information is understood as a collection of facts, data, or propositions that can be collected, stored, and transmitted. AI works optimally at this level because algorithms are designed to identify patterns, process data, and generate

responses based on statistical probabilities. However, this ability does not automatically produce wisdom. Nicholas Carr, in *The Shallows,* warns that the digital era has the potential to create a culture of shallow knowledge because humans are accustomed to receiving information quickly without a process of deep reflection. (Carr 2020) As a result, individuals may know a lot, but not understand the deeper meaning of what they know. James KA Smith asserts that humans are fundamentally not just *thinking beings* but also *loving beings* shaped by relationships, practices, and heart orientation. Therefore, the truth of faith cannot be reduced to digital information available in an AI database. (Smith 2009) The truth of faith is the result of a relational experience between humans and God, working through the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and the community of faith.

Coherence with Divine Revelation: The first filter in validating faith knowledge is its coherence with God's revelation as revealed in the Bible. In Christian theology, the Bible is the primary norm (*norma-normans*) against which all truth claims are tested. Any information obtained through AI must be tested for its conformity with God's revelation. AI can generate various theological interpretations based on data available on the internet, but it lacks the ability to spiritually distinguish between theological truth and doctrinal error. *Second,* Confirmation through the Faith Community: Christian knowledge has never developed in an isolated individual space. Since the early church, truth has been understood, tested, and passed on through the community of believers. Stanley Grenz explains that the process of knowing in the Christian faith has always been communal because the Holy Spirit works in the body of Christ to guide the church to truth. (Grenz 2000) *Third,* Praxis of Living as Verification of Truth In the Christian tradition, truth is not only known but also lived. True knowledge must result in life transformation. This idea is in line with Paulo Freire's view of *praxis*, namely the unity between reflection and action. (Fraire 2008) In the Christian context, a person does not truly understand the truth if the truth is not realized in concrete actions. *Fourth,* Christ-centered wisdom The Bible clearly distinguishes between knowledge *and* wisdom. Knowledge is related to knowing the facts, while wisdom is related to the ability to use that knowledge according to God's will. Proverbs 9:10 states that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Waruwu 2024) Thus, Artificial Intelligence is able to provide information quickly and widely, but it cannot produce wisdom that is born from a relationship with God. Knowledge of the Christian faith must go through four validation processes, namely coherence with God's revelation, confirmation in the community of faith, proof through life's praxis, and orientation to Christ-centered wisdom. In this case, Artificial Intelligence should be positioned as a *scaffolding tool* or pedagogical instrument that helps the learning process, not as an epistemological authority that determines truth. (Tonggembio and Al 2023) The highest authority remains in God's revelation that is received, interpreted, and lived in the fellowship of believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Implications of Ontological and Epistemological Analysis for Christian Education, The role of ontology and epistemology in Christian education is crucial because they serve as the foundation for understanding who humans are and how they can acquire true knowledge. From an ontological perspective, Christian education affirms that humans were created as the imago Dei, the image of God, possessing dignity, identity, and a purpose in life rooted in the Creator. This view affirms that humans are not merely biological beings or rational entities that can be reduced to technical functions, but rather whole persons: spiritual, moral, and relational. (Norsworthy 2024) This ontological awareness prevents Christian

education from becoming trapped in a purely utilitarian view, because its ultimate goal is not merely to produce skilled workers or worldly successful individuals, but rather to shape individuals who live in relationship with God, others, and creation. (Mukrimaa et al. 2021) Based on this foundation, the educational process is directed at helping students increasingly realize their existence as children of God and live lives according to their calling.

Meanwhile, from an epistemological perspective, Christian education emphasizes that knowledge is not singular or monolithic, but rather arises from the interaction of various sources of knowledge. The primary source is divine revelation, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ and recorded in Scripture, which serves as the normative basis for Christian faith. However, revelation is not received passively; human reason plays a crucial role in interpreting, critiquing, and connecting the truths of faith to real-life contexts. (Dwikoryanto et al. 2021)Furthermore, religious experience, both personal through prayer and communal through worship, provides existential confirmation of the faith. Church tradition then maintains continuity and provides an interpretive framework so that faith remains rooted in orthodoxy. (Sigalingging and Raranta 2022)Thus, Christian epistemology presents an integrative model of knowledge: revelation, faith, reason, experience, and tradition interact to guide humans to the true truth that originates from God.

The practical implications of these ontological and epistemological foundations for Christian education are vast. First, education should not be understood merely as the transfer of intellectual, cognitive information. Rather, it must be a transformative process that guides students toward growth in faith, spiritual maturity, and moral maturity. (Anjaya, Arifianto, and Fernando 2021)Christian teachers are called to act not merely as transmitters of material but as facilitators of faith, guiding students in integrating revelation with reason, life experiences, and faith traditions. Second, Christian educational institutions must design curricula that emphasize not only mastery of knowledge but also prioritize character formation, the appreciation of faith, and ethical awareness and social responsibility. (Anjaya, Arifianto, and Fernando 2021) Thus, Christian education functions to produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also wise, rooted in faith, and able to face the challenges of the times with integrity.

First, the role of teachers needs to be repositioned from merely conveying information to facilitators of faith formation, spiritual guides, and character mentors. The presence of AI allows students to independently obtain various theological information, so that the added value of teachers no longer lies in the ability to convey material, but rather in their ability to guide students in critical reflection, spiritual discernment, and integration between faith and the realities of life. (Priyanto 2017) Christian Religious Education teachers need to guide students not to passively accept every piece of information produced by AI, but to examine it based on biblical principles, Christian values, and responsible ethical considerations. (Ahmad 2020) *Second*, Christian Religious Education (PAK) learning design needs to be directed at developing critical thinking skills, theological reflection, and digital literacy based on Christian faith. In practice, teachers can utilize AI as a learning medium by inviting students to compare AI-generated answers with biblical texts, theological views of the church, and personal interpretations gained through Bible study. This approach not only enhances students' analytical skills but also trains them to critically evaluate various digital information sources. (Simanjuntak 2013) *Third*, the development of the Christian Religious Education curriculum needs to integrate digital competencies with

the goal of developing Christian character and spirituality. In addition to equipping students with the ability to utilize technology effectively, the curriculum also needs to provide space for discussions on digital ethics, responsible use of technology, academic honesty, integrity in the use of AI, and theological issues arising from the development of modern technology. (Go, Pandie, and Zega 2023) With this approach, students are not only prepared to become competent technology users, but also individuals who possess moral and spiritual awareness in utilizing technology for the common good and the glory of God.

CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence has shifted the educational paradigm toward data-driven, automated, and personalized systems, but it has also created fundamental tensions in Christian Education. Ontologically, AI cannot be equated with humans because it lacks the Imago Dei dimension, which encompasses relationships, morality, and spirituality. Epistemologically, AI produces knowledge based on algorithms and probabilities, while Christian Education is rooted in God's revelation, wisdom, and spiritual discernment. These findings indicate a gap in previous literature, which tends to be technocentric and has not adequately integrated theological perspectives in understanding the role of AI in education.

Based on these findings, this study makes a theoretical contribution by developing an Ontological-Epistemological Discernment Framework that integrates the dimensions of ontology, epistemology, and Christian pedagogy as a basis for critical evaluation of AI in education. Practically, this framework emphasizes that AI can only function as a learning tool, not as a source of truth or a substitute for humans in faith formation. For further research, empirical studies are recommended to test the implementation of this framework in Christian Education practices and the development of an AI-based curriculum model that maintains theological integrity, spirituality, and Christian character formation. This research has limitations due to its conceptual-theoretical nature and the lack of empirical testing in direct classroom learning practices. Therefore, recommendations for further research should include empirical studies or models of AI-based curriculum design integrated with Christian pedagogy in a concrete manner. An in-depth study of the psychological-spiritual impact of the use of theological *chatbots* on student character formation is also a crucial future research agenda. Thus, Christian education remains relevant not by trying to compete with the computing speed of AI, but by offering the integrity of human dignity and a deep relationship with the Truth, Jesus Christ, that transcends the limitations of any digital system.

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