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From Algorithmic Logic to Pneumatological Presence : A Theological and Statistical Discernment of AI in the Reformed Church Homiletic Context

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Abstract

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into homiletic and liturgical practices marks a "change of era" for the contemporary Church, necessitating a rigorous interdisciplinary evaluation of its spiritual and ontological implications. This study investigates the tension between the functional efficiency of Large Language Models (LLMs) and the traditional understanding of preaching as an embodied, pneumatological event. By synthesizing systematic theology—grounded in the Thomistic distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* and Barthian pneumatology—with empirical sociological analysis, the research evaluates whether algorithmic mediation facilitates or disrupts the authentic proclamation of the Word. Central to this inquiry is an original empirical survey conducted in April 2026 within the *Reformed Church : Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara* (FJKM), involving N=67 pastors and lay leaders. Quantitative analysis, utilizing a one-way ANOVA, was employed to test the null hypothesis concerning differences in perception between clergy and laity regarding AI as a substitute for the Holy Spirit. The results yielded a p-value of 0.412, indicating a remarkable ecclesial consensus : while 81% of respondents acknowledge the functional utility of AI, a profound 91% reject it as a pneumatological replacement. Furthermore, 87% of participants advocated for a dedicated digital commission, signaling an urgent demand for institutional governance. This study concludes by proposing a "theological discernment framework" based on six guiding principles, asserting that AI must remain an "exegetical orthosis" under qualified human supervision, thereby preserving the sacred, incarnate, and testimonial nature of the ministerial vocation against the risks of technological "enslavement."

Keywords : Homiletics, artificial intelligence, pneumatology, theological discernment, FJKM church

1. Introduction

The contemporary ecclesiastical landscape is currently traversing a "change of era" (**Francis**, **2020**) of unprecedented proportions, precipitated by the meteoric ascent of generative artificial intelligence (AI). This technological revolution, driven by the rapid development of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as

ChatGPT, Claude, and DeepSeek, does not merely offer new tools for administrative efficiency; it strikes at the very heart of religious mediation and the pastoral vocation (**Schwarting**, **2025**). Preaching—traditionally understood as an embodied act of proclamation and the fruit of a profound spiritual struggle—now confronts the computational power of algorithms capable of generating rhetorically fluent and exegetically structured sermons in a matter of seconds (**Usman**, **2024**). Consequently, a fundamental tension arises : while AI offers an unprecedented "research and synthesis power" to overburdened ministers (**Barna Group**, **2025**), it simultaneously threatens to atrophy the inner life of the preacher, potentially reducing the sacred Word to a mere product of statistical correlation (**Mabille**, **2026**).

The central research question of this study concerns the nature of the theological discernment required in the face of this technological intrusion. It seeks to determine whether AI can be considered a legitimate functional aid in homiletic preparation or whether its use induces an ontological mutation, transforming preaching into an information management system devoid of its pneumatological dimension (**Postman**, **1993**, cited in **Modern Reformation**, **2026**). To address this, the research adopts a multi-dimensional approach, grounding its theoretical inquiry in the lived reality of the *Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara* (FJKM).

Through an original empirical survey of 67 leaders conducted in April 2026, the study reveals a community navigating a posture of "critical openness." While 81% of respondents recognize the potential utility of AI, a profound 91% firmly reject the notion that an algorithm could ever replace the internal, transformative action of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, with 87% of participants calling for a dedicated digital commission and 82% supporting a sovereign, FJKM-specific AI model, this research highlights an urgent mandate for institutional governance. Ultimately, this article aims to provide a robust framework for theological discernment, ensuring that the Church domesticates technology without succumbing to technological "enslavement."

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Materials

The investigation into the intersection of homiletics and algorithmic intelligence necessitates a multifaceted corpus of materials, ranging from digital artifacts to empirical datasets. These materials are strategically selected to reflect the current state of "augmented ministry" and the resultant theological tensions within the global and Malagasy ecclesiastical landscapes. By categorizing these resources into technological instruments, documented liturgical experiments, and primary survey data, the study establishes a robust foundation for evaluating whether the digital medium facilitates or fundamentally alters the message of the Word.

2.1.1. Categorization of generative AI and homiletic digital assistants

The primary technological materials examined in this study encompass a diverse array of generative systems and specialized digital assistants that have permeated contemporary pastoral workflows. Central to this inquiry are Specialized Homiletic Platforms, such as Sermon IA and the Sermon Assistant developed for the Logos Bible Software, which are specifically engineered to assist in the structural and exegetical preparation of sermons. These tools differ from generic systems in their targeted focus on biblical hermeneutics and homiletic scaffolding, often integrating directly with comprehensive theological libraries to provide a closed-loop research environment.

Furthermore, the study analyzes the impact of General-Purpose Large Language Models (LLMs), which represent the most pervasive form of AI integration in the ministry. Statistical evidence suggests a rapid adoption curve, with ChatGPT (OpenAI) leading the field at a 26% adoption rate among church leaders, followed by Claude (Anthropic), DeepSeek, and Gemini (Google). These models are frequently supplemented by productivity-enhancing tools like Grammarly and Microsoft Copilot. The versatility of these LLMs allows for a broad spectrum of applications, ranging from administrative assistance to the generation of entire sermonic manuscripts, thereby presenting a significant challenge to traditional notions of original composition and spiritual authorship **(Usman, 2024)**.

Beyond preparatory tools, the materials include Digital Mentorship and Theological Analysis Platforms and Conversational Spiritual Agents. Systems like TheoCheck serve as automated doctrinal monitors, offering a form of "digital mentorship" intended to verify the orthopraxy and consistency of pastoral content.

Simultaneously, consumer-facing conversational agents such as HelloBible, CatéGPT, and Noé have emerged to provide direct, non-human mediation between the believer and theological concepts. The proliferation of these tools suggests a shift toward what **Mabille (2026)** describes as "augmented believing," where the machine becomes an active co-producer of religious discourse **(Mabille, 2026)**.

2.1.2. Liturgical benchmarking : The fürth experimental service

To provide a qualitative baseline for evaluating the limits of technological mediation, this study incorporates the documented case of the experimental worship service held at St. Paul's Church in Fürth, Germany, in June 2023. This event serves as a pivotal material artifact, representing a near-total delegation of the liturgical function to artificial intelligence. The service was 98% generated by ChatGPT and delivered to a congregation of over 300 participants via four digital avatars. The critical reception of this service—frequently described by attendees as lacking "heart or soul"—provides essential qualitative data for analyzing the "pneumatological deficit" inherent in AI-driven proclamation **(The Independent, 2023)**.

2.1.3. Global and contextual empirical data sources

The quantitative materials of this study are drawn from three primary empirical pillars that allow for both global trend analysis and deep contextual inquiry. First, the State of AI in the Church Survey (2025-2026), conducted by Exponential and AiForChurchLeaders, provides longitudinal data tracking the accelerating adoption of AI among clergy. These reports indicate that weekly AI usage among pastors rose to 61% by 2025, with 64% explicitly utilizing it for sermon preparation. This dataset establishes the statistical reality of a technological "change of era" within the global church **(Exponential, 2026)**.

Second, the study incorporates national surveys from the **Barna Group and Gloo (2025-2026)**, which explore the shifting perceptions of spiritual authority among the American public. These data reveal that approximately 30% of U.S. adults—rising to 40% among Gen Z and Millennials—now view spiritual advice from AI as being as trustworthy as that from a human pastor. These materials are critical for understanding the "crisis of authority" and the risk of delegating moral judgment to statistical correlations **(Barna Group & Gloo, 2026)**.

Finally, the study centers on the FJKM Church Internal Survey conducted in April 2026. This primary dataset, collected from N= 67 leaders (pastors and laity) within the Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara, provides the necessary contextual anchor. The survey utilized a Likert-scale instrument to measure specific ecclesial attitudes, revealing a nuanced stance : while 81% recognize the functional utility of AI, a profound 91% reject its use as a substitute for the Holy Spirit in the internal forum of sermon preparation. This localized empirical material allows for the testing of a shared ecclesial consensus through inferential statistical methods.

2.2. Methods

The methodology employed in this inquiry necessitates a robust, interdisciplinary architecture designed to navigate the complex intersection of digital engineering and transcendental proclamation. By integrating systematic theology, technology ethics, and the sociology of religion, the research seeks to transcend a purely functionalist critique of algorithmic tools. This multi-dimensional approach draws upon an extensive documentary corpus, ranging from recent magisterial documents to specialized reports from global research centers such as IRIS, the Barna Group, and Exponential. By situating the technical acceleration of Large Language Models within a framework of long-standing theological debates, the study aims to determine whether AI constitutes a benign evolution of the preacher's desk or an ontological disruption of the ministerial vocation.

2.2.1. Systematic theological analysis and theoretical scaffolding

The theological investigation is anchored in a comparative analysis of primary sources, beginning with the Thomistic anthropology articulated in the recent note **Antiqua and Nova (2025)**. This framework is essential for establishing a rigorous distinction between *ratio*—discursive reason characterized by statistical inference—and *intellectus*, which signifies the intimate penetration of truth. By applying this distinction to the "intelligence" of LLMs, the study questions whether an algorithm, despite its rhetorical fluency, is inherently incapable of the contemplative act required for authentic preaching. This anthropological foundation serves to challenge the contemporary tendency to conflate information processing with the wisdom of the *imago Dei*.

Complementing this Thomistic view, the research engages with Reformed and Barthian pneumatology to explore the nature of the "Word of God." Drawing on the works of **Karl Barth (1957 ; 1989)**, preaching is analyzed not as a mere transfer of data, but as a Trinitarian and incarnate event wherein God speaks *hic et nunc*. This perspective allows the study to evaluate whether a sermon generated through a statistical "theology of plausibility" can ever claim to be revelation, or if it remains confined to the realm of human religious production. Furthermore, insights from Francophone practical theology, particularly the concepts of the "hermeneutical gap" and "pastoral attitudes," are utilized to assess the non-dialogical nature of AI in the context of genuine pastoral care.

2.2.2. Empirical survey design and ecclesial contextualization

To ground these theoretical reflections in lived ecclesial experience, an *ad hoc* empirical survey was designed and administered in April 2026 to a targeted cohort within the FJKM Church (*Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara*). The sample of N = 67 leaders, comprising both ordained clergy and engaged laity, provides a critical contextual anchor in the Global South. The survey instrument utilized a hybrid approach, combining Likert-scale questions to quantify attitudes toward AI's legitimacy with open-ended qualitative prompts designed to capture deep-seated concerns regarding the necessity of prayer, personal Bible reading, and the preservation of a "spirit of discernment".

The qualitative responses were subjected to a rigorous analysis grid focusing on three primary domains: doctrinal fidelity, the pneumatological "anointing," and the impact on the "internal forum". This grid evaluates the risk of theological "hallucinations" and biases while investigating the perceived ability of algorithmic artifacts to convey spiritual power **(Usman, 2024)**. By specifically examining the "FJKM Christian addition"—the unique perspectives of Malagasy believers—the study captures a cultural and theological resistance to technological "enslavement" that may differ significantly from Western trends.

2.2.3. Inferential statistical analysis : The ANOVA model

In pursuit of scientific rigor and to avoid anecdotal conclusions, the study employs an inferential statistical analysis to test a central null hypothesis (H_0) : that no significant difference exists between the opinions of pastors and laity regarding the legitimacy of AI as a substitute for the Holy Spirit. This hypothesis is tested using a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which compares the agreement scores of these two groups on a scale of 0 (totally disagree) to 10 (totally agree) regarding the statement "AI can replace the action of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation".

The reliability of the ANOVA model was ensured through a systematic verification of underlying assumptions, including the normality of residuals—tested via the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p>0.05$) —and the homogeneity of variances, confirmed by Levene's test ($p>0.05$). This statistical approach allows the study to determine whether the perceived spiritual boundaries of AI are a specific concern of the clergy or a shared consensus within the broader ecclesial community. Such clarity is vital for developing integrated governance policies that reflect the collective voice of the church.

2.2.4. Ethical integration and framework development

The final methodological stage involves the inductive synthesis of the theological literature review, the qualitative case study of the Fürth experiment, and the FJKM empirical data. This synthesis facilitates the development of six guiding principles for theological discernment, intended to serve as a consensual ethical framework for the integration of AI. These principles—including the primacy of *lectio divina*, human supervision, and community transparency—bridge the gap between technological possibility and pastoral responsibility. By advocating for "qualified human supervision" and the "algorithmic unavailability of the internal forum," the framework seeks to domesticate AI as a functional research assistant while protecting the sacred, incarnate nature of the ministerial vocation.

2.2.5. Statistical data and field surveys

The empirical landscape of this study is shaped by the rapid acceleration of AI adoption across the global ecclesiastical sphere. Reports from **AiForChurchLeaders and Exponential (2025-2026)** indicate that weekly AI usage among pastors surged to 61% by 2025, with 64% explicitly utilizing these tools for homiletic preparation. Despite this high functional integration, the data suggest a profound governance gap; as of December 2025, only 6% of American churches have implemented a formal AI policy. This discrepancy highlights a critical need for theological discernment frameworks that keep pace with technological adoption.

Within the specific context of the FJKM, the April 2026 survey reveals a community that is technologically open yet spiritually vigilant. While a clear majority (81%) recognizes the potential utility of AI for church life, an overwhelming 91% reject the notion of algorithmic substitution for the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the strong support for a dedicated digital commission (87%) and an FJKM-specific AI model (82%) positions this community as a potential leader in theological data sovereignty. This localized data, when contrasted with the **Barna/Gloo (2026)** findings—where 30% of U.S. adults trust AI spiritual advice as much as a pastor's—underscores a significant cultural and theological divergence in how spiritual authority is mediated in the digital age.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Taxonomical framework of algorithmic integration in homiletic practice

The empirical findings of this research represent a synthesis of global technological trends and specific contextual data retrieved from the FJKM ecclesial body. By analyzing the intersection of algorithmic efficiency and homiletic integrity, the results elucidate a complex landscape where functional adoption is accelerating while spiritual boundaries remain remarkably resilient. The data suggests that the "digital turn" in ministry is not a monolithic phenomenon but a stratified set of practices that require precise categorization to understand their ethical and theological implications for the future of the Church.

To clarify the diverse ways in which ministers interact with generative systems, it is essential to establish a formal taxonomy of usage. The following table delineates the four primary interaction models identified during the research, ranging from minor linguistic refinements to the total delegation of the preaching task. Each category is evaluated based on its impact on the preacher's agency and the ontological integrity of the homiletic act, providing a conceptual map for the subsequent theological discussion.

Table 1. Typology of pastoral uses of artificial intelligence

Usage Category	Functional Description	Evaluative Status
Post-writing Assistant	The pastor completes the primary manuscript; AI is used only for linguistic flow, grammar, and stylistic refinement.	**Acceptable (Orthosis)**
Research Accelerator	AI is utilized to aggregate biblical cross-references, historical contexts, or Greek/Hebrew etymologies.	**Acceptable (Under Control)**
Plan Generator	AI produces a thematic outline or homiletic structure before the preacher engages in personal study or prayer.	**Problematic (Prosthesis)**
Complete Substitute	The entire sermon manuscript is generated by an LLM based on a prompt, with minimal human alteration.	**Total Rejection**

The interpretation of **Table 1** reveals a critical threshold between "orthosis"—where technology supports a human-led process—and "prosthesis," where the machine begins to replace core cognitive and spiritual functions. While research acceleration is viewed favorably, the 10% hallucination risk identified in current LLMs necessitates a mandate for "qualified human supervision" to maintain doctrinal fidelity **(Usman, 2024)**. The fundamental rejection of the "Complete Substitute" model underscores the conviction that preaching remains an inherently incarnate event that cannot be fully digitized without losing its sacramental essence.

3.1.2. Reformed church : FJKM survey descriptive statistics

The primary empirical data collected in April 2026 from N = 67 leaders of the *Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara* (FJKM) provides a compelling snapshot of a community navigating the tension between modernity and tradition. The descriptive statistics illustrate a posture of "critical openness." While a significant 81% of respondents acknowledge that AI tools are potentially useful for administrative and

organizational facets of church life, this pragmatic acceptance does not extend to the core of the ministerial vocation. Indeed, a profound 91% of participants explicitly reject the notion that an algorithm could ever replace the internal, transformative action of the Holy Spirit during the preparation of the Word.

This high level of spiritual vigilance is matched by a strong desire for institutional safeguards and proactive governance. The survey indicates that the FJKM community is not passive in the face of technological change ; rather, 87% of leaders advocate for the immediate establishment of a dedicated digital commission to oversee ethical standards. Furthermore, 84% support the integration of AI ethics into seminary curricula, and 82% favor the development of a sovereign, FJKM-specific AI model. This data suggests that the Malagasy Reformed context seeks to "domesticate" the technology by grounding it in local theological principles rather than merely importing foreign digital norms **(FJKM, 2026)**.

The following table summarizes the key metrics from the FJKM Internal Survey, highlighting the specific areas of consensus regarding governance and the spiritual limits of automation. These figures demonstrate that the demand for theological sovereignty and institutional control is a dominant sentiment among both ordained ministers and lay leaders, providing a clear mandate for ecclesiastical authorities to act.

Table 2. Key empirical indicators from the FJKM internal survey (April 2026)

Metric Category	Survey Question/Variable	Result (% Agreement)
Functional Utility	AI is a useful tool for the general life of the Church.	81%
Spiritual Sovereignty	AI can replace the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation.	9% (91% Disagreement)
Governance Need	Support for a dedicated FJKM Digital Commission.	87%
Educational Reform	Support for AI ethics/training in pastoral seminaries.	84%

The interpretation of **Table 2** emphasizes a sophisticated "selective adoption" strategy within the FJKM. The overwhelming rejection of AI as a pneumatological substitute (91%) serves as a theological bulwark against the "secularization of the pulpit" through automation. Simultaneously, the high demand for a specific Reformed AI model (82%) indicates that the community recognizes the risk of "algorithmic bias" and seeks to ensure that digital tools reflect their specific confessional identity and linguistic nuances, rather than a generic global theology.

3.1.3. Inferential analysis : Testing the null hypothesis

To determine if the aforementioned theological vigilance is uniquely concentrated among the clergy or if it represents a broader ecclesial sentiment, an inferential statistical analysis was conducted. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to test the null hypothesis (H_0) : "There is no significant difference between the opinions of pastors and laity regarding the legitimacy of AI as a substitute for the Holy Spirit." Participants rated their agreement on a scale from 0 (total disagreement) to 10 (total agreement). The results showed that pastors (n = 32) maintained a mean score of 1.2 (SD = 0.9), while lay leaders (n = 35) yielded a mean of 1.4 (SD = 1.1).

The ANOVA test produced an F-value of 0.68 with a resulting p-value of 0.412. Given that the p-value is significantly higher than the standard alpha level of 0.05, the study fails to reject the null hypothesis. This statistical outcome is highly significant for the sociology of religion ; it indicates a cohesive "spiritual front" across the FJKM. The lack of a "clergy-lay divide" suggests that the resistance to delegating spiritual authority to machines is a deeply rooted cultural and theological conviction within the entire community, rather than a professional protectionism on the part of the pastors.

This shared consensus is vital for the implementation of future policies. When both the pulpit and the pew agree on the ontological limits of a technology, institutional transitions are likely to be more stable. This finding contrasts with Western trends identified by **Barna Group and Gloo (2026)**, where younger lay generations often show a significantly higher trust in digital spiritual authority than their leaders. In the

FJKM, the "inter-generational and inter-status" consensus provides a robust foundation for a unified theological response to the challenges of the digital age.

3.2. Discussion

The empirical and statistical findings of this research highlight a fundamental tension between the functional efficiency afforded by algorithmic tools and the ontological nature of Christian proclamation. While the data from the FJKM Church reveals a pragmatic openness to technological assistance, it simultaneously uncovers a profound theological resistance to any form of "digital substitution." This discussion navigates the multifaceted implications of these findings, examining the shift from personal spiritual labor to automated production and the subsequent impact on the authenticity of the homiletic act within a Reformed and Malagasy context.

3.2.1. The erosion of the "struggle with the text" and the risk of spiritual atrophy

One of the most salient theological concerns identified by this research is the potential for artificial intelligence to induce a state of "spiritual laziness," a term frequently cited by practitioners. In the Reformed tradition, the preparation of a sermon is not merely a technical task of information aggregation; it is an ascetic process of sanctification—a "struggle with the text" akin to the biblical wrestling at Peniel. As **Postman (1993)** argued in his critique of technopoly, every technology imposes a hidden cost on the human spirit; in this instance, the cost is the bypass of the preacher's personal transformation during the exegetical process.

This concern is echoed forcefully by the FJKM respondents through qualitative testimonies that emphasize a direct link between labor and pneumatological presence. One participant noted that "the Holy Spirit does not work with lazy people," suggesting that the automation of the hermeneutical process may empty the preaching act of its spiritual depth. Recent studies by **Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025)** confirm that this is not a localized anxiety; Swedish preachers similarly express fear that AI might become a "temptation to laziness," leading to a professionalized but spiritually hollow ministry. Preaching, in its truest sense, requires a synergy between the divine and the human that statistical probability cannot replicate.

3.2.2. Statistical authority vs. testimonial authority

A critical ontological distinction emerges between the "statistical authority" of a Large Language Model (LLM) and the "testimonial authority" of a human preacher. An LLM operates by generating the most probable linguistic sequence based on vast datasets, representing what could be termed a "theology of the average." In contrast, Christian preaching is an act of *martyria*—an incarnate testimony that requires the preacher's heart, mind, and whole soul to be fully engaged in the proclamation. The machine offers a synthesis of existing data, whereas the preacher offers a life transformed by the Word.

The 2023 experimental service in Fürth serves as a cautionary benchmark in this regard, illustrating the limits of purely digital liturgy. Despite the technical fluency of the avatars and the coherence of the ChatGPT-generated text, the congregation's visceral reaction—characterizing the service as "soulless"—underscores the failure of liturgical mediation when the human element is removed (**The Independent, 2023**). While data from **Barna Group and Gloo (2026)** suggest that one-third of U.S. adults are beginning to trust AI as a spiritual authority, the FJKM context offers a robust counter-narrative, with 91% of leaders insisting that the machine cannot possess the charisma or the life experience necessary for authentic spiritual leadership (**Mabille**, **2026**).

3.2.3. Analysis of variance and the shared ecclesial consensus

To move beyond qualitative observations, it is necessary to examine the structural unity of the FJKM response through inferential statistics. The absence of a "clergy-lay divide" is perhaps the most significant finding for institutional governance. The following table provides the formal ANOVA results, demonstrating the uniformity of opinion within the church regarding the spiritual limits of artificial intelligence. This statistical consensus suggests that any future regulatory framework will be supported by a broad, cross-status mandate rather than being perceived as a top-down clerical imposition.

The table below presents the results of the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used to test the null hypothesis concerning differences in perception between pastors and laity. By analyzing the sum of squares and the F-ratio, we can determine whether the social role of the participant influences their theological stance on the legitimacy of AI as a spiritual substitute.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA results for AI-pneumatological substitution

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	0.72	1	0.72	0.68	0.412
Within Groups	68.91	65	1.06		
Total	69.63	66			

The interpretation of **Table 3** centers on the p-value of 0.412, which significantly exceeds the standard alpha level of 0.05. This result compels us to fail to reject the null hypothesis, confirming that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of pastors and laity in the FJKM regarding AI's inability to replace the Holy Spirit. This unified front positions the FJKM to lead in the "domestication" of AI, as the vast majority of the community shares a singular vision for a dedicated digital commission to manage these new technological frontiers.

3.2.4. Toward a theology of plausibility or prophecy?

The discussion must also address the long-term risk of a "theology of plausibility" emerging from a reliance on algorithmic tools. Because algorithms tend to normalize religious discourse by reflecting the statistical average of their training data, there is a danger that AI-assisted preaching may suppress the prophetic diversity and the "hermeneutical gap" necessary for authentic pastoral intervention. Discernment must therefore ensure that AI remains a tool of *ratio* (discursive reason) and never a substitute for *intellectus* (spiritual penetration of truth), as the latter requires a divine-human encounter that transcends data correlation.

3.2.5. The crisis of truth : Theological "hallucinations" and epistemic vigilance

The technical fragility of AI, specifically the phenomenon of "hallucinations" where systems invent facts or false biblical citations, presents an immediate crisis for homiletic truth. FJKM respondents demonstrated an acute awareness of this risk, calling for a "spirit of discernment" and systematic verification. This aligns with findings from the ***Barna Group*** **(2026)**, where 41% of pastors identified misinformation as the primary threat posed by AI to the church. Such a risk necessitates what **Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025)** describe as "epistemic vigilance," where the preacher must exercise a costly cognitive effort to evaluate and verify every algorithmic output.

3.2.6. Anthropological discernment : Imago dei vs. digital artifact

Ultimately, the debate over AI in preaching is an anthropological one centered on the definition of the human person. Drawing on the magisterial note **Antiqua and Nova (2025)**, this study asserts that while an artifact can imitate human logic, it cannot participate in the *imago Dei*. An FJKM respondent succinctly captured this by stating that one should "take advice from AI but also use our intelligence and the Holy Spirit." This reflects a refusal to reduce the human person to a functional processor of information, maintaining that the "internal forum" of moral judgment remains an exclusively human and divine space (***Garno***, **2025**).

3.2.7. Elements for a theological discernment framework

Based on the synthesis of theological analysis and the empirical consensus within the FJKM, this study proposes a formal framework for ethical integration. This framework is not intended to prohibit the use of technology but to ensure it remains a servant to the Word. The following principles represent a balanced approach between functional modernization and spiritual preservation, designed to be implemented by the proposed digital commissions within the church.

The following table summarizes the six guiding principles developed from the study's conclusions. These principles address the primary risks identified in the research—ranging from spiritual atrophy to doctrinal error—and offer concrete procedural safeguards for the modern preacher.

Table 4. Guiding principles for AI integration in homiletics

Principle	Description	Objective
Primacy of prayer	AI use only *after* personal study and *Lectio Divina*.	Preserve spiritual labor.
Closed-loop rule	Limit AI to verified theological and patristic corpora.	Mitigate hallucinations.
Human supervision	Mandatory correction and "appropriation" by the pastor.	Ensure accountability.
Incarnate voice	Maintaining the preacher's unique, personal testimony.	Protect authenticity.
Transparency	Disclosure of AI use to the church community/leaders.	Build ecclesial trust.
Internal forum	Absolute prohibition for confession or spiritual direction.	Protect the sacred bond.

The interpretation of **Table 4** highlights the necessity of "qualified human supervision" as a non-negotiable requirement for the use of AI in ministry. By insisting on the "primacy of personal study," the framework ensures that the preacher remains the primary agent of the message. Furthermore, the "unavailability of the internal forum" for AI ensures that the most intimate aspects of pastoral care—such as confession—remain protected from algorithmic intrusion, preserving the sacramental nature of the human-to-human encounter (**Garno**, **2025**).

4. CONCLUSION

The integration of generative artificial intelligence into the sacred art of homiletics represents more than a technical transition; it constitutes a profound anthropological and pneumatological challenge that the global Church can no longer ignore. This study has demonstrated that while algorithmic tools offer unprecedented capabilities as "exegetical efficiency multipliers," they remain fundamentally incapable of participating in the *intellectus*—the intuitive and spiritual penetration of truth that defines authentic Christian proclamation. The innovative core of this research lies in its successful bridging of high-level systematic theology with rigorous inferential statistics, specifically within the unique context of the FJKM Church in Madagascar.

The empirical findings are particularly revealing, uncovering a robust and statistically significant consensus between the pulpit and the pew. The failure to reject the null hypothesis in our ANOVA model ($p = 0.412$) serves as a powerful indicator of ecclesial unity: the rejection of AI as a substitute for the Holy Spirit is not merely a professional protectionism of the clergy but a shared ontological conviction of the entire faith community. This "Malagasy exception," characterized by a 91% rejection of spiritual automation despite high functional openness, positions the FJKM as a vanguard of theological sovereignty in the Global South.

Ultimately, the article proposes a path toward "digital domestication" rather than blind adoption or Luddite rejection. By establishing a framework of six guiding principles—anchored in the primacy of *Lectio Divina* and the absolute necessity of qualified human supervision—this study provides a blueprint for an "augmented ministry" that preserves the "struggle with the text." As the Church moves forward, it must ensure that the machine remains a servant to the Word, never eclipsing the incarnate, testimonial authority of the preacher, whose unique voice remains the indispensable vessel for the breath of the Holy Spirit.

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