

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Theological Research (Full Statement)

Theological research is a sacred vocation carried out before the face of God and within the community of believers. It is the careful, reverent pursuit of understanding God’s self-revelation through any and all means, undertaken not merely for academic achievement but for the edification of the church and the glorification of God. Within this context, artificial intelligence (AI) *may serve* as a valuable tool, but it must never replace the personal, formational, and prayerful labor that is integral to the theological task. DTS affirms that AI, when used appropriately, *may aid* in areas such as textual analysis, language parsing, historical comparison, and the organization of scholarly sources. These functions *may enhance* research efficiency and broaden access to theological materials, particularly for those in under-resourced contexts.

However, the use of AI must be governed by a commitment to academic integrity, intellectual humility, and theological discernment. Researchers must never present AI-generated content as original work without clear attribution. Use of AI for drafting, summarization, or translation must be acknowledged where it contributes substantively to one’s writing. Furthermore, theological conclusions must always result from careful human judgment informed by the witness of Scripture, the wisdom of the church, the truthfulness of the creation, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. AI lacks spiritual discernment, moral consciousness, and the capacity to engage in the interpretive and confessional dimensions of theology. Its outputs are probabilistic, not prophetic.

DTS cautions against the uncritical embrace of technological convenience. Theological inquiry is not a mechanized production of content but a formational process that cultivates virtues such as patience, attentiveness, charity, and fidelity to truth. As such, tools that promise speed or simplicity must be used with restraint and evaluated according to their formative effect on the student’s character and voice. The use of AI should never obscure the theological imagination, flatten the nuance of tradition, or dilute the confessional distinctives of Christian doctrine.

In all cases, the use of AI must be accountable to a theological community—subject to peer review, faculty oversight, and ecclesial responsibility. It must reflect a posture of stewardship, not substitution; of service, not sovereignty. Above all, theological research must remain ordered toward the glory of God alone. While AI *may assist* the mind, it cannot shape the heart. For this reason, DTS upholds the principle that AI is a tertiary aid to human inquiry, not a substitute for theological reflection. Your assignments at DTS are created to cultivate the pedagogical process. Completing the assignment is not the goal in itself. The process through which you complete the assignment matters significantly to your learning and formation.

Elevator Pitch Version of AI:

DTS affirms that AI, when used appropriately, *may aid* in areas such as textual analysis, language parsing, historical comparison, and the organization of scholarly sources. However, the use of AI must be governed by a commitment to academic integrity, intellectual humility, and theological discernment. Researchers must never present AI-generated content as original work without clear attribution. DTS cautions against the uncritical embrace of technological convenience. While AI *may assist* the mind, it cannot shape the heart. For this reason, DTS upholds the principle that AI is a tertiary aid to human inquiry, not a substitute for theological reflection. Completing the assignment is not the goal in itself. The *process* through which you complete the assignment matters significantly to your learning and formation. Our philosophy of AI can be summarized as follows:

1. *You are the output, not just your assignment. Ministry demands wisdom no algorithm can replicate.*
2. *AI can serve as a tutor, but not a substitute for diligence, reflection, and critical thinking.*
3. *AI may assist the mind, but it cannot replace the heart and soul of theological work done in the context of community.*

Guidelines for the Ethical Use of AI in Seminary Education

Red Light: Prohibited Uses of AI

These uses of AI are strictly prohibited in all seminary coursework unless *explicitly authorized by a professor*. They constitute a violation of academic integrity and compromise the learning outcomes central to ministerial formation.

- **Text Generation:** Using AI to generate original responses, essays, sermon drafts, discussion posts, or exam answers.
- **Outline Generation:** Using AI to draft the structural framework for any assignment (e.g., paper, sermon, theological reflection).
- **Idea Generation:** Using AI to suggest key ideas, theses, or theological arguments intended to be presented as your own.
- **Unattributed Content:** Using any AI output—textual, conceptual, or visual—without full and transparent citation.
- **Bypassing Personal Formation:** Relying on AI to perform cognitive or theological work intended to build habits of reflection, discernment, or interpretive rigor.

Why: These tasks are formative, not merely productive. They shape how you think theologically, reason pastorally, and serve faithfully. Outsourcing them to AI undermines the very skills your seminary education seeks to cultivate.

Principle: *You are the output, not just your assignment. Ministry demands wisdom no algorithm can replicate.*

Yellow Light: Caution & Contextual Use (Requires Approval)

These uses of AI fall into a grey area. They may be appropriate in limited, supervised contexts but must be used **only with instructor permission** and **with complete transparency**. Students are encouraged to approach these tools as **aids to learning**, rather than as **shortcuts to completion**.

- **AI-Assisted Brainstorming:** Asking AI for general questions about a topic or clarifying theological concepts for the sake of understanding. Brainstorming with AI should be limited to presenting your original ideas, asking AI to find patterns and connections that can further your thoughts and research. As stated in the “red light” section, AI should not be used on its own to generate ideas for you to use as your own.
- **Summarization or Comparison Tools:** Using AI to summarize complex texts (e.g., church fathers, systematic theologies) for comprehension, *not citation*.
- **Translation Assistance:** Using AI to assist with Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or modern language translations, while cross-referencing with original sources and lexica. AI translation tools have become quite effective and accurate. With proper attribution, their use can be beneficial (this is a “yellow light” issue due to the nature of some assignments. Speak to your professor before using translation tools).
- **Research Aid:** Employing AI tools (e.g., Logos, Perlego AI, Elicit) to locate potential sources for formal research, provided all material used is appropriately cited.
- **Feedback Tools:** Submitting original writing to AI for suggestions on clarity, structure, or tone (e.g., Grammarly, Microsoft Editor), while retaining final editorial control.

Why: These uses, if unmonitored, can erode original thought. However, when used with discernment, they *may enhance* understanding, particularly for non-native English speakers or those navigating

complex texts.

Principle: *AI can serve as a tutor, but not a substitute.*















Green Light: Permissible Uses of AI

These are uses of AI that are considered ethically sound, academically appropriate, and pedagogically beneficial. They require no special permission but must still be exercised with wisdom and humility.

- **Spellcheck and Grammar Suggestions:** Built-in tools in word processors or platforms like Grammarly (excluding generative functions).
- **Accessibility Tools:** Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, or language-level adjustments for learning support or disability accommodation.
- **Citation Management:** Tools like Zotero, EndNote, or RefWorks that organize and format citations.
- **AI in Logos Bible Software:** Using Logos' AI features to surface cross-references, summaries of commentaries, and search results—provided you read the primary sources.
- **Editing for Clarity:** AI tools that enhance the readability or tone of text you have already written.

Why: These uses are consistent with the spirit of academic formation. They do not replace theological labor but assist with clarity, organization, or accessibility.

Principle: *AI may assist the mind, but it cannot replace the heart and soul of theological work.*

	Prohibited Uses of AI (Not Approved)	Caution & Contextual Use (Requires Approval)	Permissible Uses of AI (Approved)
Accessibility Tools (e.g., text-to-speech, speech-to-text, etc.)			
AI-Assisted Brainstorming			
AI in Logos Bible Software			
Citation Management			
Editing for Clarity and Readability of Original Work			
Feedback on clarity, structure, or tone (e.g., Grammarly, Microsoft Editor, etc.)			
Idea Generation (idea, thesis, argument) to be presented as original work			
Outline Generation			
Relying on AI to Critique or Construct (Bypassing Formation)			
Research Aid			
Spellcheck and Grammar Suggestions			
Summarizing Concepts or Comparing Texts			
Text Generation – essays, sermon drafts, discussion posts, or exam answers			
Translation Assistance (Latin, Greek, Hebrew)			
Unattributed Content (using AI text, concepts, or images without citation)	