RETHINKING CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY. EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND THE GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH BINARY

Petrus SIMARMATA
Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology
St. Bonaventura Pastoral Academy
Jl. Besar Sibiru biru No. 111 Delitua, Medan, Indonesia, 20358.
simarmatapietro@gmail.com

Milda Longgeita PINEM
Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada
Jalan Sosio Yustisia No 1, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 55281
mildapinem@ugm.ac.id

Armada RIYANTO
Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology
Jl. Terusan Rajabasa No.2, Pisang Candi, Malang, Jawa Timur 65146
fxarmadacm@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines Christian spirituality in a global context, moving beyond the typical North-South binary. Informed by a comprehensive literature review, the study offers an in-depth examination of the domain, addressing key issues such as the commercialization, individualization, and secularization of spirituality. It delves into the transformative potential that lies in embracing global interconnectedness, alongside the significant influences of the post-Vatican II era, and the vibrant and critical perspectives brought forth by the younger generation. These elements are pivotal in redefining and shaping the contemporary spiritual landscape. Proposing a synthesized spiritual landscape that champions a more inclusive spirituality, open to dialogue and prioritizing solidarity, the article underscores the necessity for an evolved Christian spirituality in tune with the varied and interconnected global context of today. It advocates for enhanced adaptability and a stronger sense of unity among Christian

communities worldwide, aiming to more effectively navigate and leverage present challenges and opportunities, thereby fostering a more robust and responsive spiritual practice.

Keywords: Spirituality, Christian, Global North, Global South, Interconnectedness

Introduction

The landscape of Christian spirituality has transformed significantly in response to the complex and interconnected world.[1] As diverse cultures, ideologies, and technologies continue to intertwine and shape reality, Christian spirituality is adapting to these changes. Often, discussions on contemporary Christian religion, including spirituality, focus on the unique characteristics of communities in Europe, Asia, and Africa, reflecting the traditional North-South divide.[2] The emphasis on uniqueness facilitates comprehension of the many dimensions of Christian spirituality as it is experienced and seen in different global contexts.

However, it is essential to analyze a more inclusive framework that transcends this binary perspective, taking into account the worldwide forces that are redefining spirituality in nuanced and significant ways. This comprehensive viewpoint acknowledges the interdependence of the contemporary world, whereby concepts, methodologies, and ideologies are constantly shared and modified regardless of national boundaries. The statement recognizes that global events – including migration, digital communication, and international cooperation – are engendering new manifestations of spirituality while also modifying conventional ones.[3] From this perspective, it may be argued that Christian spirituality is influenced by not only local cultures but also global

---

[1] Cf. Katharina C. HUSEMANN – Giana M. ECKHARDT, Consumer Spirituality, in: *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35 (2019) 5–6, 391–406; Anna FEDELE – Kim E KNIBBE, *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves?: The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, London & New York, 2020; Samuelson APPAU -Ye (Nicole) YANG, Church Advertising and the Marketization of Religious Hegemony, in: *Marketing Theory*, (2023); Karol JASINSKI, Postsecularism and Contemporary Spirituality, in: *Nova Prisutnost*, XVIII (2020) 1, 5–17.

[2] For examples of literature that emphasize uniqueness based on location, see: Kenneth R. ROSS – Daniel JEYARAJ – Todd M. JOHNSON, *Christianity in South and Central Asia*, Edinburgh, 2019; Patricia Snell HERZOG, Global Studies of Religiosity and Spirituality: A Systematic Review for Geographic and Topic Scopes, in: *Religions*, 11 (2020) 8, 399.

[3] Cf. Victor CARMONA, Theologizing Immigration, in: Orlando O. ESPIN, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latinoax Theology*, New Jersey and West Sussex, 2023, 365–390; Laddawan KAEWKITIPONG – Elisabeth BEAUNOYER – Peter RACTHAM – Matthieu J. GUITTON, Augmented Spirituality: Renewing Human Spirituality in a Technology-Driven World?, in: *Computers in Human Behavior*, 148 (2023).

trends, resulting in a more fluid and progressive religious environment. This methodology facilitates a more profound understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith, emphasizing its multifaceted nature and coherence in response to present-day obstacles and transformations.

This article presents a forward-looking analysis of Christian spirituality, advocating a borderless and inclusive understanding that transcends traditional regional and cultural divisions. It emphasizes the evolving nature of Christian practices and beliefs in the context of rapid global transformation. This in-depth analysis delves into the changing characteristics of Christian spirituality as well as explores various opportunities and challenges experienced globally, aiming to strengthen and broaden the impact of Christian spirituality. By promoting flexibility, openness, and an international perspective, this article suggests that Christian spirituality can more effectively connect with diverse communities worldwide, moving beyond the outdated North and South dichotomy and addressing contemporary global dynamics.

Starting with an explanation of Christian spirituality and its development, the article goes on to provide an understanding of the division between North and South. In this framework, the opportunities and challenges of re-examining Christian spirituality are discussed in a way that is relevant to the changing world. The article then delves into contemporary issues in Christian spirituality, which have been extensively discussed in academic literature. This includes an analysis of Christian spirituality in both Global North and South contexts, with reconsideration of these concepts for a more inclusive study beyond traditional geographic divisions. The conclusion provides a brief overview of potential future research directions.

1. Christian spirituality in brief

In contemporary society, the concept of spirituality has undergone a significant evolution, transcending traditional religious boundaries to encompass a universally relevant lifestyle.[4] This shift has led to a secular interpretation of

---

[4] Recent research highlighting the expanding meaning of spirituality in the contemporary era includes: Tobias Anker STRIPP, Religion and Spirituality in Contemporary Health Systems, in: *Theology*, 126 (2023) 5, 343–349; Boaz HUSS, Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and Its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular, in: *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 29 (2014) 1, 47–60; Tebaber Chanie WORKNEH, Rethinking Cultural and Spiritual Values in Biodiversity Conservation among the Konso People of South-Western Ethiopia, in: *Ethiopian Renaissance Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 10 (2023) 1: 1–19.

spirituality that emphasizes personal well-being, heightened consciousness, and individual growth. The trend towards secular spiritual practices reflects changes in societal values, adapting to the complexities and rapid pace of modern life. Interestingly, this phenomenon is not confined to any specific geographic region; it is a global trend, with individuals in various parts of both the Global North and South increasingly turning to spiritual practices to achieve balance, tranquility, and guidance.[5] However, some studies have noted that in the Global South, this trend is predominantly observed in urban areas.[6]

Originating within Christian traditions, the term 'spirituality' has historically emphasized the cultivation of a personal, direct, and active relationship with God – a cornerstone of Christian spirituality.[7] Such a concept focuses on individuals' profound experiences and their continuous transformative communication with the divine. This dialogue, fostered through personal prayer, contemplation, and reflection, enables individuals to understand and integrate divine teaching into their lives, leading to a richer spiritual experience. In further development, the term spirituality has evolved to no longer be associated exclusively with Christianity but also with other religious traditions, and has come to be related to secular practices that prioritize overall well-being and happiness, thus becoming a more universal concept.

Schneiders defined spirituality as a conscious engagement in the process of integrating one's life by aspiring towards the highest perceived value.[8] In the Christian context, this ultimate value is manifested in the Triune God, who is revealed through Jesus, connected through the mystery of Easter and the Church community, and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Schneiders argued that the human spirit has a profound ability to connect with God's spirit. She emphasized the important role of scripture in conveying core revelations and establishing an essential symbolic framework that unites individual and communal Christian narratives. Schneiders proposed that this interaction with the Divine Spirit is not passive but active and dynamic, in

---

[5]   Cf. Hubert KNOBLAUCH, Popular Spirituality, in: *Present-Day Spiritualities* (2014), 81–10; C KOURIE, The 'Turn' to Spirituality, in: *Acta Theologica*, 27 (2010) 2.

[6]   Mary HANCOCK – Smriti SRIVINAS, Spaces of Modernity: Religion and the Urban in Asia and Africa, in : *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32 (2008) 3, 617–630.

[7]   Sandra M. SCHNEIDERS, Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?, in: *Horizons*, 13 (1986) 2, 253–274.

[8]   Cf. Sandra M. SCHNEIDERS, Spirituality as an Academic Discipline: Reflections from Experience, in: *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, Fall (1993), 10–15.

which each individual is invited to not only understand but also apply divine principles in their daily life. This reflects the view that Christian spirituality extends beyond mere participation in religious rituals, yet involves ongoing personal transformation and growth in character, reflecting Christian values.

Further, Sheldrake categorized Christian spirituality into four types: ascetical, mystical, practical, and prophetic.[9] The ascetical and mystical types, rooted in discipline and communal spiritual living, have been pivotal in enhancing religious experience and deepening one's connection with God, particularly within the Christian tradition. Practices derived from Desert Fathers and Mothers, with their emphasis on solitude and simplicity, have profoundly influenced Christian spirituality, notably through their focus on prayer and contemplation.

The practical dimension of Christian spirituality is about embodying faith and values in everyday actions, demonstrating principles such as love, charity, and humility in family settings, the workplace, or within social environments. On the other hand, the prophetic aspect emphasizes advocacy and action against societal injustices, aligning with the Christian ethos of supporting the marginalized and challenging oppression. Spirituality actively seeks human engagement in transforming the world for the better. These varied facets highlight the rich and complex nature of Christian spirituality, offering diverse paths for spiritual growth and fulfillment, all centered on deepening the relationship with the divine and actualizing faith in impactful ways.

Christian spirituality has undergone significant changes in response to contemporary issues such as discrimination, environmental concerns, technological advances, and interreligious dialogue. This shift reflects a broader understanding of spirituality and incorporates a wider range of perspectives. Central to this transformation is addressing the challenges related to gender, race, and socioeconomic disparities.[10] The rise of eco-theology in Christian doctrine highlights the importance of environmental stewardship as an aspect of faith.[11] Technological advances have introduced new forms of spiritual involvement and communal participation through digital platforms.[12] Additionally, the practice of interreligious dialogue in an increasingly diverse world

---

[9] Cf. Philip SHELDRAKE, *Spirituality: A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 2014, 14-18.

[10] Cf. Scott SCHIEMAN, Socioeconomic Status and Beliefs about God's Influence in Everyday Life, in: *Sociology of Religion*, 71 (2010) 1, 25–51.

[11] Cf. Newton Millan CLOETE, Retrieving a Christian Ecological Spirituality in Response to Our Contemporary Ecological Crisis, in: *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 104 (2023) 4.

[12] Cf. Antje JACKELÉN, Technology, Theology, and Spirituality in the Digital Age, in: *Zygon®*, 56 (2021) 1, 6–18.

fosters mutual understanding and respect among different religious traditions, recognizing the potential for spiritual development.[13] These developments illustrate the evolving nature of Christian spirituality in contemporary times, as it adapt to global changes and challenges while maintaining the core purpose of strengthening the divine connection.

2. Understanding the North-South

In this section, the binary relationship between the Global North and Global South is examined as a context for rethinking Christian spirituality. The distinction between the North and South on a global scale, particularly regarding economic and political divisions, originated in the post-World War II era. The 1980 Brandt Report – named after Willy Brandt, the former Chancellor of West Germany and leader of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues – highlighted the economic and developmental disparities between the industrialized, wealthier nations of the Global North and the generally poorer, developing nations of the Global South.[14]

Understanding the North-South binary is crucial, as it underscores significant global disparities in wealth, resources, and opportunities.[15] This highlights the historical and structural factors contributing to these imbalances, including colonization, economic exploitation, and unequal access to global markets. Moreover, the dichotomy serves as a framework for discussing global trade, developmental aid, and climate change. It helps to identify power dynamics in international relations, highlighting how countries in the Global North often wield more influence and possess greater resources than those in the Global South.

Interestingly, the North-South binary has influenced the understanding of global religious ideologies, including Christian spirituality.[16] This categori-

---

[13] Cf. Michael BARNES, *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination*, Cambridge, 2012.

[14] Cf. Willy BRANDT, Independent Commission on International Development Issues, in: *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, 1980.

[15] Cf. Annette TREFZER – Jeffrey T. JACKSON – Kathryn MCKEE – Kirsten DELLINGER, Introduction: The Global South and/in the Global North: Interdisciplinary Investigations, in *The Global South* 8 (2014) 2; and Andrés F. Castro TORRES – Diego ALBUREZ-GUTTIERREZ, North and South: and Naming Practices and the Hidden Dimension of Global Disparities in Knowledge Production, in: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119 (2022) 10.

[16] Cf. Afe ADOGAME – Shobana SHANKAR, *Religion on the Move!: New Dynamics of Religious Expansion in a Globalizing World,* Leiden, 2012.

zation divides the world into two sections: the Global North, characterized by technological and economic advancement as well as the strong influence of Western culture and Christianity, and the Global South, known for its developing economies, diverse religious practices, and a significant Christian community. Each region presents a distinct form of Christian spirituality shaped by diverse religious practices, theological viewpoints, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Christian institutions in the Global North primarily engage in theological debates and intellectual discussions, while the Global South foregrounds more vibrant and experiential Christianity with deep-rooted expressions of faith and a focus on community-oriented worship.

However, the North-South binary system has been scrutinized and analyzed. Critics contend that it oversimplifies the complexities of Christian spirituality, unknowingly perpetuating stereotypes and ignoring essential aspects that determine spiritual practices and experiences.[17] Furthermore, this dichotomy ignores intricate regional connections and exchanges and fails to accurately portray the mobility of ideas, practices, and influences in the increasingly globalized and linked world. The North-South divide is often considered simplistic and insufficient to express the real experiences of people who participate in a dynamic interaction of local and global, traditional and contemporary, and private and communal activities.[18] Critics call for a more nuanced understanding and depiction of Christian spirituality, which includes respecting the deep, diverse, and ever-changing character of religious experiences in many worldwide settings.

To move beyond the simplistic North-South dichotomy, embracing a sophisticated and all-encompassing perspective that acknowledges the various factors that influence Christian spirituality today is crucial. These include cross-border movements, advancements in digital communication, political shifts, and interreligious interactions, all of which have significantly contrib-

---

[17] Some literature that shows the importance of viewing spirituality beyond regional boundaries, see: Celia KOURIE – Tom RUTHENBERG, Contemporary Christian Spirituality: An 'Encompassing Field, in: *Acta Theologica*, 2008, 76–93; and Rossano Zas Friz DE COL, Christian Spirituality and Spiritual Theology in a Globalized World, in: *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 16 (2016) 2A, 118–135.

[18] Examples of literature that show how global and local, including North and South, are increasingly interconnected include: Martin W. LEWIS – Kären E. WIGEN, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, Berkeley, 1997; and Milda Longgeita PINEM – Tauchid Komara YUDA – Anqi CHEN, Re-understanding Well-being in the Global South: a Literature Review and Conceptual Synthesis, in: *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 44 (2024) 1/ 2: 114–129.

uted to the evolving nature of Christian theology.[19] Migration, for example, leads to the fusion of diverse Christian thoughts, giving rise to hybrid forms of worship that blend cultural and theological elements.[20] Similarly, the widespread use of the internet and social networks has accelerated the sharing of religious ideas and practices among Christians, fostering unprecedented levels of worldwide interaction and exposure to a variety of spiritual viewpoints.[21]

This global interconnectivity creates unique local interpretations of Christianity that align with and diverge from characteristics typically associated with the North or the South. For instance, the rise of prosperity theology in some Global South communities mirrors materialistic tendencies often linked to the Global North, while there is a growing interest in contemplative lifestyles in the North influenced by practices more common to the South.[22] These trends highlight the fluid and interconnected nature of religion and challenge the traditional binary view of Christian spirituality.

Universal challenges such as environmental crises and the COVID-19 pandemic also underscore the interconnectedness of regions globally.[23] These issues have deeply impacted Christian spirituality, driving communities to adapt to ways that transcend geographical borders. Environmental concerns have heightened the focus on stewardship and responsibility within Christian theology[24], while the pandemic has led to the rethinking of worship methods, community interactions, and the use of technology in religious life.[25] Such

---

[19] Cf. Lewis AYRES – Medi Ann VOLPE (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*, Oxford, 2019.

[20] Cf. Gemma Tulud CRUZ, *Christianity across Borders: Theology and Contemporary Issues in Global Migration*, Oxford, 2021.

[21] Studies showing the sharing of religious ideas based on social networks can be found in: Pauline Hope CHEONG, The Vitality of New Media and Religion: Communicative Perspectives, Practices, and Changing Authority in Spiritual Organization, in: *New Media & Society*, 19 (2017) 1, 25–33; Paul K. MCLURE, Faith and Facebook in a Pluralistic Age, in: *Sociological Perspectives*, 59 (2016) 4, 818–834.

[22] Cf. Dodeye U. WILLIAMS, Prosperity Theology: Poverty and Implications for Socio-Economic Development in Africa, in: *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 78 (2022) 1.

[23] Cf. Marlene F. WATSON – Gonzalo BACIGALUPE – Manijeh DANESHPOUR – Wen-Jui HAN – Rubén PARRA-CARDONA, COVID-19 Interconnectedness: Health Inequity, the Climate Crisis, and Collective Trauma, in: *Family Process*, 59 (2020) 3, 832–846.

[24] Cf. Johannes M. LUETZ – Richard G. LEO, Christianity, Creation, and the Climate Crisis: Ecotheological Paradigms and Perspectives, in: Johannes M. LUETZ – and Patrick D. NUNN, *Beyond Belief: Opportunities for Faith-Engaged Approaches to Climate-Change Adaptation in the Pacific Islands*, Switzerland, 345–375; Christopher William HRYNKOW, Greening God? Christian Ecotheology, Environmental Justice, and Socio-Ecological Flourishing, in: *Environmental Justice*, 10 (2017) 3, 81–87.

[25] Cf. N. Barney PITYANA, A Theological Statement on the Coronavirus Pandemic, in: *Religion and Theology*, 27 (2020) 3-4, 329–358; Sharon SHORT – Dale L. LEMKE, Technol-

global challenges reveal shared experiences and concerns among Christian communities worldwide, irrespective of regional differences. This scenario necessitates a more comprehensive and globally informed approach to Christian spirituality, one that appreciates the distinct expressions found in individual communities and the global contexts that influence these religious experiences.

3. Challenges confronting Christian spirituality

In an era where the traditional North-South divide is becoming increasingly irrelevant, Christian spirituality faces a range of challenges that are gaining significance on a global scale. This analysis delves into the principal issues confronting both the practice and understanding of Christian spirituality as identified in various academic studies. The key themes presented here are commercialization, individualization, and the secularization of spirituality. However, this overview is not exhaustive, as it serves as an initial exploration of the intricate complexities of Christian spiritual traditions and beliefs. The challenges presented here reflect broader global trends that influence spirituality practices in general.

3.1. Commercialization

Spirituality is currently grappling with the challenge of commercialization, prevalent in both the Global North and South.[26] This issue manifests itself in various forms, including the proliferation of religious merchandise primarily for profit, the promotion of high-priced retreats as transformative experiences, and the sale of workshops promising enlightenment. Moreover, spiritual tourism is transforming sacred sites into tourist destinations for people seeking spiritual experiences.[27] In today's market-driven culture, spiritual themes are often exploited as marketing strategies, frequently at the expense of the deeper transformative essence of spirituality.

---

ogy and Ministry During a Time of Pandemic, in: *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 18 (2021) 3, 441–443.

[26] Cf. Katharina C. HUSEMANN – Giana M. ECKHARDT, Consumer Spirituality, in: *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35 (2019) 5–6: 391–406; Joerg STOLZ – Jean-Claude USUNIER, Religions as Brands? Religion and Spirituality in Consumer Society, in: *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 16 (2019) 1, 6–31.

[27] One of the studies showing the relationship between spirituality and tourism is documented in: Daniel H OLSEN – Dallen J TIMOTHY (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Religious and Spiritual Tourism*, London, 2021.

This commercialization is further evident in how businesses and influencers use religious symbols and spiritual motifs in advertising to appeal to specific demographics.[28] This strategy often leads to trivialization of sacred concepts, diminishing their depth and transformative potential. The widespread exploitation for commercial purposes dilutes the profound nature of spirituality, turning spiritual practices and sacred sites into commodities catering to consumer demands and expectations. It has permeated religious communities worldwide, thus challenging them to preserve the integrity and depth of their spiritual traditions.

The interplay between spirituality and market dynamics raises significant ethical and theological questions since it stands sharply in contrast with the core principles of Christian spirituality. These principles traditionally prioritize intrinsic values over material possessions, as exemplified by asceticism. The market's dominance in various aspects of spirituality also weakens the transformative aspect of Christian spirituality, which includes addressing societal injustices often caused by market forces. This shift challenges the Christian community to critically evaluate and respond to the influence of commercialization, ensuring that the essence and transformative power of their spiritual traditions are not overshadowed by market interests.

This challenge is not confined to any particular area or demographic but is a widespread issue faced by Christian communities worldwide. Understanding that this is not a localized problem but one that crosses national borders, cultural contexts, and sociopolitical landscapes is crucial, as this issue necessitate a collective response from the global Christian community. This calls for a unified effort to address and counteract the commercial influence within spiritual practices, ensuring that the essence of Christian spirituality remains untainted by market dynamics.

3.2. Individualization

Another topic closely linked to the commercialization of spirituality is the rise of individual spirituality.[29] This growing trend embraces personal and subjective expressions of spirituality, characterized by a self-centered perspective

---

[28] Cf. Sarah DODDS – David A. JAUD – Valentyna MELNYK, Enhancing Consumer Well-Being and Behavior with Spiritual and Fantasy Advertising, in: *Journal of Advertising*, 50 (2021) 4: 354–371.

[29] Cf. Swati CHAKRABORTY – Kenu AGARWAL, Spiritual Individualism in Digital Society, in: Swati CHAKRABORTY, *Investigating the Impact of AI on Ethics and Spirituality*, Pennsylvania, 2023, 137–147.

and relativistic views. The transition from communal spiritual traditions to prioritizing individual experiences has paved the way for the emergence of neoliberal spiritual subjects.[30] In this construct, spirituality is transformed into a commodity that is marketed and consumed much like other products, leading to an increase in offerings such as self-help literature, personal growth workshops, and spiritual retreats – all promising individual enlightenment. Consequently, the focus of spirituality has shifted from seeking deeper connections with others and the divine towards pursuing personal fulfillment and happiness.

The rise of individualistic spirituality, which is increasingly intertwined with the role of technology, presents a multifaceted picture of contemporary spiritual practices.[31] Digital platforms have revolutionized access to spiritual resources. Mobile applications for guided prayers, online spiritual coaches, and virtual religious communities are only a few examples of how technology has reshaped the landscape of spirituality. These tools offer a wealth of resources for personal spiritual growth and exploration, accommodating a modern individual's busy lifestyle and preference for on-demand content. However, by providing tools that cater to personal spiritual journeys, these platforms inadvertently reinforce the individualized spirituality trend, stimulating a subtle shift from collective experiences that are central to many traditional religious practices. This transition reflects a broader cultural move towards individualism, especially in the context of Christian spirituality.

Moreover, the transformation of spirituality is further influenced by cultural and demographic shifts, particularly among the younger generations in the Global North.[32] They are increasingly identifying themselves as 'spiritual but not religious,' signaling a departure from traditional religious structures and rituals.[33] This trend highlights the desire for a more personal, less institutionally bound approach to spirituality, which aligns with their values and worldviews.

---

[30] Cf. Melissa CARR – Elisabeth K KELAN, Between Consumption, Accumulation and Precarity: The Psychic and Affective Practices of the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject, in: *Human Relations*, 76 (2023) 2: 258–285.

[31] Cf. Swati CHAKRABORTY – Kenu AGARWAL, Spiritual Individualism in Digital Society, 137–147.

[32] Cf. Sarah WILKINS- LAFLAMME, *Religion, Spirituality and Secularity among Millennials: The Generation Shaping American and Canadian Trends*, Oxford & New York, 2023.

[33] Cf. Maria WIXWAT – Gerard SAUCIER, Being Spiritual but Not Religious, in: *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 40 (2021), 121–125.

While the context and expression of this shift may vary between regions, the underlying movement towards a more personal, individualistic approach to spirituality is a shared phenomenon. This indicates a global trend in the evolution of spiritual practices, where traditional, communal forms of worship and belief are being reexamined and reinterpreted in light of modern individual-centric values and lifestyles.

Amid these regional differences, there are striking similarities in the ways in which the Global North and South experience the transformation of spirituality. In both regions, the rise of technology and individualism in spirituality are common threats. The proliferation of digital platforms offering spiritual guidance and resources has led to a growing preference for personalized and autonomous spiritual practices worldwide. This trend reflects a broader cultural shift towards self-directed and flexible approaches to faith and spiritual exploration.

3.3. Secularization

Secularization presents a universal challenge, manifesting both in the Global North and South, marking an era where the societal role of religion undergoes significant transformation. While often understood as the separation from religious affiliations, secularization also encompasses the broader acceptance of diversity within increasingly open and secular societies.[34] This nuanced view acknowledges the complexity of secularization, beyond mere detachment from religious practices to include how societies adapt to and respect varying beliefs amidst their secular evolution.

In developed regions of the Global North, a significant cultural shift is taking place due to the influence of science, rational thought, and modernism, leading to the marginalization of conventional religious bodies.[35] This change indicates a move towards secular norms, diminishing the influence of established religious doctrines. In response, people are investigating a range of belief systems or forming more individualized spiritual practices.[36] This change

---

[34] Cf. Yael KESHET – Ido LIBERMAN, Seeking Empowerment and Spirituality in the Secular Age: Secular and Traditionalist Israelis Consulting Rabbis, in: *Sociology*, 48 (2014) 1, 92–110; Arik SEGEV, Secularism and the Right to Spirituality: Work, Leisure, and Contemplation, in: *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*, 13 (2023) 1, 99–115.

[35] Cf. Phil ZUCKERMAN – John R. SHOOK, Introduction: The Study of Secularism, in: Phil ZUCKERMAN – John R. SHOOK , *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, Oxford, 2017.

[36] Cf. Peter VERSTEEG – Johan ROELAND, Contemporary Spirituality and the Making of Religious Experience, in: *Fieldwork in Religion*, 6 (2012) 2, 120–133.

has resulted in a noticeable drop in participation in organized religious functions, pushing religious organizations to revisit and redefine their relevance and role in a society increasingly leaning towards secular principles.

Meanwhile, the Global South, or less developed countries, face the interplay of secularization with the complexity of religious diversity.[37] This region is characterized by a rich tapestry of faiths, each with its own history and beliefs, living side by side. Although this diversity has the potential to enhance mutual respect and understanding, it can also cause friction, especially when different religions assert their dominance. Addressing these issues requires a balanced approach that fosters tolerance, acknowledges individual beliefs, and resolves arising conflicts due to religious differences. It is essential for societies in the Global South to promote dialogue and set up forums for interfaith discussions to achieve harmony and peaceful coexistence among diverse religious groups.

The dynamics of secularization are apparent in both the North and South, bringing specific challenges to Christian spirituality worldwide. In the Global North, the challenge lies in navigating a society where secular ideologies often overshadow religious traditions, prompting Christian organizations to find creative ways to connect with a community that is drifting away from structured religion. In the Global South, the focus shifts towards addressing the complex challenges posed by religious diversity and socio-political conflicts. [38]

4. Opportunities for rethinking Christian spirituality

In addition to the challenges discussed in the previous section, an examination of literature pertaining to spiritual changes in this modern age reveals opportunities for reevaluating Christian spirituality. This suggests the possibility of a progressive comprehension of Christian spirituality that involves wider viewpoints and welcomes vibrant societal change. Such opportunities enable broader investigation that can provide a more profound understanding and implementation of Christian spirituality today. This section analyzes the principal themes in the literature that serve as potential catalysts for rethinking Christian spirituality, moving beyond the North-South binary.

---

[37] Cf. Chad V. MEISTER (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, Oxford & New York, 2011.
[38] Cf. Dennis HOOVER, *Exploring Religious Diversity and Covenantal Pluralism in Asia: Volume I, East & Southeast Asia*, Oxford, 2022.

4.1. The global interconnectedness

The global interconnectedness offers numerous perspectives on the growth and reassessment of Christian spirituality, particularly in the context of increased understanding, discourse, global citizenship, and cross-cultural encounters.[39] This development requires an insightful examination of the interrelationship between local distinctiveness and global generalization in religious encounters. It is crucial to analyze the function of local church bodies in the context of globalization, justice, and diverse expressions of Christian spirituality worldwide.

The diffusion and integration of Christian beliefs, rituals, and principles across different cultural groups greatly enriches Christian theological concepts. For example, the integration of meditative practices from Eastern traditions into Christian prayer rituals enriches and promotes a more introspective and contemplative dimension within Christian faith.[40] In addition, the Christian ethos of love and service manifests itself differently in different cultural settings, from the communal welfare approaches of African communities to the social justice-oriented practices prevalent in Latin American church contexts.[41] These diverse interpretations not only enhance the relevance of Christianity in a culturally diverse society but also deepen the understanding of spirituality as it manifests itself in different cultural settings, thereby adding complexity and depth to Christian doctrine.

In the era of global interconnectedness, there is a noticeable tendency towards increased participation and cooperative efforts among global communities.[42] This phenomenon is particularly beneficial for Christian communities as it promotes dialogue, exchanges of spiritual experiences, as well as community growth and development. These foster a heightened sense of responsibility among Christians and motivate them to address key global challenges, including socioeconomic disparities, environmental sustainability, and poverty. These efforts exemplify the fundamental Christian principles of compassion, altruism, and stewardship of the environment and humanity. For example, the growing emphasis on ecological stewardship in Christian

---

[39] Cf. Boaz HUSS, Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and Its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular, 47–60.

[40] Cf. Taehoon KIM, Christian and Zen Contemplative Practices: The 'Mysticism' of Evelyn Underhill and D. T. Suzuki, in: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 58 (2023) 1, 99–122.

[41] Cf. Arthur HOLDER (ed.) *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality,* New Jersey, 2011.

[42] Cf. Akira IRIYE, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*, Berkeley, 2022.

theology has illustrated the dynamic evolution of faith in response to modern global needs.[43]

In addition, acceptance of global interconnectedness creates opportunities to enhance cross-cultural interactions, thereby deepening Christian spirituality. Incorporating elements from other religious traditions and cultures that align with core Christian values promotes a more comprehensive and inclusive spiritual journey. Based on the fundamental Christian virtues of love, unity, respectful engagement, and respect for others, this strategy emphasizes an inclusive approach.

4.2. The post-Vatican II era

Another opportunity to reflect on Christian spirituality emerges in the context of going beyond the North-South binary in the post-Vatican II era. Since the convening of the Second Vatican Council, Christian spirituality has undergone significant evolution, characterized by an enhanced focus on addressing contemporary global issues and a deeper understanding of faith's role in the modern world.[44] This period, notably influenced by Pope Francis' teachings, has brought renewed attention to environmental conservation, social equity, and an open, inclusive approach to faith and worship.[45] Moreover, the era has been marked by increased dialogue between faith and science, particularly in addressing ecological challenges and advocating sustainable practices.[46] The concept of a »church for the poor« has also gained prominence, emphasizing a preference for the marginalized, irrespective of their location.[47] Furthermore, growing recognition of the importance of interreligious dialogue and understanding in fostering global peace and collaboration is notable.[48]

The Vatican II reforms initiated a transition towards a more open and dialogical Church, encouraging engagement with the modern world and a re-evaluation of traditional practices. This shift has given rise to a more flexible

---

[43] Cf. Christopher William HRYNKOW, Greening God? Christian Ecotheology, Environmental Justice, and Socio-Ecological Flourishing, in: *Environmental Justice*, 10 (2017) 3, 81–87.

[44] Cf. Glen G. SCORGIE, Patterns of the Wind: Reflections on Christian Spirituality Over the Past Century, in: *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 22 (2022) 1, 23–40.

[45] Cf. Charles E. CURRAN, Pope Francis's Social Encyclicals and the Social Teaching of the Church, in: *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 19 (2022) 2, 181–203.

[46] Cf. Christopher William HRYNKOW, Greening God? Christian Ecotheology, Environmental Justice, and Socio-Ecological Flourishing, in: *Environmental Justice*, 81–87.

[47] Cf. Jon SOBRINO, *The True Church and The Poor*, Oregon, 1985.

[48] Cf. Catherine CORNILLE (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, New York, 2013.

and adaptable form of Christian spirituality, aptly responding to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Issues such as ecological responsibility – underscored in Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si – and the pursuit of greater social equity are central to this transformation, reflecting an expanded understanding of living a Christian life in the contemporary context.[49]

Spirituality emerging post-Vatican II embraces a holistic outlook, recognizing the interconnectedness of all life aspects. It underscores the importance of faith, which is deeply personal yet actively engaged in the world. Characterized by a move from insular religious practices to open-minded, inclusive spirituality, this era adapts to the needs of a diverse and rapidly evolving global community. It represents a paradigm shift in Christian spirituality, bridging the gap between traditional religious practices and the evolving demands of a globalized world, thus offering a more inclusive, empathetic, and socially conscious approach to practicing faith.

In the post-Vatican II era, the increasing prominence of laypeople in the Church underscored the inclusive nature of Christian spirituality.[50] This period saw the elevation of lay Christians' roles in various aspects of Church life and mission, challenging the traditional clergy-centric model. The growing involvement of laypeople in ministries, decision-making processes, and evangelization highlights a more participatory and democratic faith approach. This transition recognizes that every Christian, irrespective of their ordained status, plays a vital role in the Church and the world, democratizing spirituality and making it more relevant to believers' daily lives.

This inclusivity extends to the Church's interactions with the broader world. The post-Vatican II Church actively engages with contemporary cultural, social, and political issues, acknowledging the need for faith that resonates with modern reality. This engagement is characterized by readiness to listen to and learn from diverse voices in society, including those that are often marginalized. Thus, the Church demonstrates its commitment to a spirituality rooted in tradition and dynamically engaged with the present, positioning Christian spirituality as a living, evolving practice responsive to contemporary needs and challenges.

---

[49] One of the studies on 'Laudato Si' illustrating its substantial impact in the contemporary era can be found in: M. Carmen MOLINA – Magui PÉREZ-GARRIDO, LAUDATO SI' and Its Influence on Sustainable Development Five Years Later: A First Look at the Academic Productivity Associated to This Encyclical, in: *Environmental Development* 43 (2022).

[50] Cf. Catherine E. CLIFFORD – Massimo FAGGIOLI (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Vatican II*, Oxford, 2023.

4.3. The role of the younger generation

The younger generation is pivotal in transforming the spiritual landscape, moving beyond the traditional North-South divide without abandoning their Christian faith. By leveraging technology and global connectivity, they introduce fresh perspectives and innovative methods that reshape age-old spiritual frameworks. [51] Their engagement with a variety of spiritual practices showcases their capacity to transcend geographic and cultural boundaries, embodying a global approach in their spiritual quest. Importantly, they maintain their Christian beliefs while being open to spiritual views from other traditions, demonstrating a harmonious blend of faithfulness and inclusivity in their spiritual exploration.

It is vital for the younger generation to embrace diversity and partake in intercultural dialogue, breaking down the spiritual barriers traditionally associated with the North-South divide. Their inclusive stance not only celebrates diverse spiritual expressions from various cultures but also enriches their spiritual journey, contributing to a more varied and cohesive global spiritual community. This perspective highlights a forward-thinking and inclusive mindset, surpassing geographical constraints and valuing different spiritual traditions deeply.

Characterized by a fluency in technology, a dedication to addressing global challenges, and a deep respect for cultural diversity, this approach signals a shift towards a more interconnected and comprehensive understanding of spirituality, crucial in our globalized era.[52] The contributions of the youth are essential in crafting a spiritual landscape that exceeds conventional geographic limits, mirroring the diverse and evolving nature of the 21st century. As a result, the younger generation plays a key role in ensuring spirituality remains a relevant and influential force in addressing the complexities and challenges of our times, moving beyond the North-South division's limitations.

---

[51] Cf. Peter NYNÄS – Ariela KEYSAR – Janne KONTALA – Ben-Willie KWAKU GOLO – Mika T. LASSANDER – Marat SHTERIN – Sofia SJÖ – Paul STENNER (eds.), *The Diversity Of Worldviews Among Young Adults*, Switzerland, 2022.

[52] Cf. Antje JACKELÉN, Technology, Theology, and Spirituality in the Digital Age, 6–18; Laddawan KAEWKITIPONG – Elisabeth BEAUNOYER – Peter RACTHAM – Matthieu J. GUITTON, Augmented Spirituality: Renewing Human Spirituality in a Technology-Driven World, 2023.

5. Future prospects in a a Christian-enriched spiritual landscape

Within the broad scope of our worldwide spiritual environment, acknowledging the growing ties between the Global North and South is critical. Embracing a spirituality informed by Christian principles that unifies these varied regions is crucial in a world deeply influenced by globalization. This necessitates a variety of approaches to achieve a deep understanding of spirituality from a holistic Christian perspective.

Firstly, inclusivity must be at the heart of future Christian spiritual practices. This entails welcoming individuals from all cultures and backgrounds, moving beyond the historical divides of North and South, and cherishing the wide range of experiences and beliefs across the globe. A Christian perspective on inclusivity facilitates the free exploration of one's spiritual path, devoid of discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or cultural heritage. This approach dismantles traditional barriers, fosters global unity and interdependence, and proclaims that spiritual renewal is boundless, transcending geographical or cultural confines.

Secondly, dialogue should be foundational in the Christian spiritual journey ahead. This commitment to dialogue seeks to cultivate unity and understanding through conversations among varied religious traditions, while holding a deep respect for the vast spectrum of religious beliefs and practices. This Christian ethos of openness and respect for different views not only widens our understanding of diverse faiths but also helps dissolve stereotypes, building mutual respect and a collaborative spirit. Through sharing and reflecting upon diverse ideas and personal experiences, Christian dialogue enriches personal development and nurtures a sense of unity and connection across various faith communities.

Thirdly, the core of future Christian spirituality should embody solidarity, emphasizing communal empathy, collective action, and a commitment to social justice and community well-being. This vision recognizes the interconnectedness of all individuals, advocating for a spirituality that is deeply woven into community life. Christian spirituality of solidarity closely aligns with social justice efforts, viewing spiritual growth as inherently connected to combating inequality, oppression, and injustice. It calls for profound empathy and compassion, inspiring actions to alleviate suffering and support those in need. This approach to Christian spirituality champions ethical actions that serve the wider community and environment and strives to bridge divides among different religious and cultural groups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of Christian spirituality within the modern global framework underscores the necessity for approaches that are inclusive, engage in dialogue, and promote solidarity, moving beyond outdated North-South distinctions. This exploration shows how closely global connectivity and individual spiritual paths are linked, suggesting a spirituality that stays true to Christian values while being flexible enough to fit modern realities. By using new technologies, welcoming different cultures, and tackling present-day issues, Christian spirituality can offer meaningful and life-changing insights. The Church's role and the active participation of young people are key in building a worldwide spiritual community that reflects Christ's teachings of love, justice, and peace.

Looking ahead, research on reshaping Christian spirituality should focus on the interaction between faith and today's global movements, technological growth, and major social issues. Such studies are vital for showing how spirituality can promote a stronger commitment to worldwide responsibility, in line with Jesus' teachings in this diverse and fast-changing world. Focusing on inclusiveness, dialogue, and solidarity, future research will not only advance academic discussions but also help spiritual communities navigate the complexities of the 21st century with hope and love. This process involves continually rethinking Christian spirituality to bridge gaps and illuminate a way forward to a more compassionate and connected world.

Sažetak

PREISPITIVANJE KRŠĆANSKE DUHOVNOSTI. ISTRAŽIVANJE IZAZOVA I MOGUĆNOSTI IZVAN GLOBALNE BINARNOSTI SJEVER – JUG

Petrus SIMARMATA

Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology
St. Bonaventura Pastoral Academy
Jl. Besar Sibiru biru No. 111 Delitua, Medan, Indonesia, 20358.
simarmatapietro@gmail.com

Milda Longgeita PINEM

Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada
Jalan Sosio Yustisia No 1, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 55281
mildapinem@ugm.ac.id

Armada RIYANTO

Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology
Jl. Terusan Rajabasa No.2, Pisang Candi, Kec. Sukun, Kota Malang, Jawa Timur 65146
fxarmadacm@gmail.com

Ovaj članak ispituje kršćansku duhovnost u globalnom kontekstu, prelazeći tipičnu binarnost Sjever-Jug. Oslonjen na sveobuhvatni pregled literature, studija nudi dubinsko ispitivanje područja, adresirajući ključna pitanja poput komercijalizacije, individualizacije i sekularizacije duhovnosti. Zaranja u transformativni potencijal koji leži u prihvaćanju globalne međusobne povezanosti, uz značajne utjecaje ere nakon Drugog vatikanskog koncila i živahne i kritičke perspektive koje donosi mlađa generacija. Ti elementi su ključni u redefiniranju i oblikovanju suvremenog duhovnog krajolika. Predlažući sintetizirani duhovni krajolik koji zagovara inkluzivniju duhovnost, otvorenu za dijalog i koja daje prednost solidarnosti, članak ističe potrebu za evoluiranom kršćanskom duhovnošću u skladu s raznolikim i međusobno povezanim globalnim kontekstom današnjice. Također, zagovara poboljšanu prilagodljivost i jači osjećaj jedinstva među kršćanskim zajednicama širom svijeta, teži efikasnijem navigiranju i iskorištavanju trenutnih izazova i mogućnosti, time potičući robusniju i odzivniju duhovnu praksu.

Ključne riječi: duhovnost, kršćanin, globalni sjever, globalni jug, međusobna povezanost