

INTRODUCTION TO  
THE THEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE  
FOR FORMING CHRISTIAN VOCATIONAL SPIRITUALITY:  
A PRACTICAL METHOD FOR THE WHOLE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE  
IN THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

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## Introduction

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now” (Romans 8:22).

### 1. The Purpose and Rationale of the Study

This dissertation aims to build a theological structure for forming Christian vocational spirituality in order to help church communities educate, raise and train congregations in forming Christian spirituality as the whole of the Christian life for overcoming the human predicaments of existential conditions, self-contradictoriness and conflicts with the world.

This study was prompted by some questions arising from an awareness of the serious and urgent crises that the world confronts today. At least two global crises are considered emergencies: climate and health.<sup>1</sup> Churches also confront declining membership and loss of religious influence in American society today.<sup>2</sup> As Christians, church communities and Christian leaders how can we understand and respond to these crises? What should we do to overcome the crises? These questions push Christian spiritual leaders to find the answer not only for today’s Christians but also for non-Christians today. This dissertation would like to answer these questions through building a theological structure for forming Christian vocational spirituality as the whole of the Christian life. Christian vocational spirituality can show a way to overcome both global and church crises.

#### 1) Global Crisis and the Loss of Humanity

We, irrespective of being Christian or non-Christian, live with fearful feelings from the overflowing news of global crises today—climate change, exhaustion of natural resources, localized warfare and refugees, food and health system failures. WHO issued its annual report on

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<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the 75th anniversary of the United Nations about four threats that endanger our common future, identifying them as the “four horsemen” in Revelation 6:1-8 (January 22, 2020). One of the threats is “Climate Change.” <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-01-22/remarks-general-assembly-priorities-for-2020>. When Guterres spoke at the Opening of the General Debate of the 75th Session of the General Assembly in New York on September 20, 2020. He added one more horseman, the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statemhttps://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-09-22/secretary-generals-address-the-opening-of-the-general-debate-of-the-75th-session-of-the-general-assemblyent/2020-09-22/secretary-generals-address-the-opening-of-the-general-debate-of-the-75th-session-of-the-general-assembly>, <https://unsceb.org/topics/global-crises> (accessed July 15, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Martin Hauerwas, a theological professor at Duke University, uses the apocalyptic language of “end” to describe the serious crisis of the American church: “The end that the church is approaching, or at least some churches may be approaching, is quite literally death.” Stanley Martin Hauerwas, *Approaching the End* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing, 2013) x.

the global health crisis in 2019, *A World at Risk*, before the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>3</sup> and in 2020, *A World in Disorder*, in the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> The titles alone are enough to imply the magnitude of today's global health crisis. *A World in Disorder* urgently asks today's human beings to begin radically changing patterns of life that have developed in modernization.<sup>5</sup> It points out that modern humanity must radically change to overcome the global health crisis. In 2020, 11,258 scientists from 153 countries around the world published a statement about the global climate crisis, "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency": "Scientists have a moral obligation to clearly warn humanity of any catastrophic threat and to 'tell it like it is.' ... planet Earth is facing a climate emergency."<sup>6</sup> They suggest to radically change modern culture and patterns of life in governments, businesses, and the rest of humanity.<sup>7</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate emergency are interconnected among people, nature and climate.<sup>8</sup> In fact, these global crises, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate emergency, came from the problems of human life, not earth itself.<sup>9</sup> At this point, we need to understand that global crises come from the crisis of humanity.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, we cannot avoid asking the question: What has happened to modern humanity?

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<sup>3</sup> Global Preparedness Monitoring Board. *A World at Risk: Annual Report on Global Preparedness for Health Emergencies*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, [https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual\\_report/GPMB\\_Annual\\_Report\\_English.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB_Annual_Report_English.pdf) (accessed July 16, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, *A World in Disorder: Global Preparedness Monitoring Board Annual Report 2020*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, [https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual\\_report/GPMB\\_AR\\_2020\\_EN.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB_AR_2020_EN.pdf) (accessed January 14, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> *A World in Disorder*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> William J. Ripple and more, "World Warning of a Climate Emergency," *BioScience*, Vol. 70, (January 2020) 8, <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806> (accessed January 14, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Also, United Nations Environment Programme, *Emissions Gap Report 2020* (Nairobi, Kenya: UNEP and UDP, 2020) 62, <https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2020> (accessed August 1, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> "Climate Change & Covid-19," *United Nations Climate Change Annual Report 2020* (UNFCCC, 2021) 12, [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UNFCCC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UNFCCC_Annual_Report_2020.pdf). "As the United Nations Environment Programme reminds us, COVID-19 and climate change are interconnected. ... The recovery from the pandemic needs to include a new, planet-friendly economic model. Investments in low-emission development, clean energy production, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable production and consumption need to benefit people, nature and climate" (accessed January 14, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> The Global Commons Alliance released a survey-report about the climate emergency, "Global Commons Survey" August 16, 2021. This report shows global crisis came from human wrong actions: "Among G20 countries, 73% of people believe Earth is close to 'tipping points' because of human action." "Global Commons Survey: Attitudes to planetary stewardship and transformation among G20 countries," Global Commons Alliance (2021), <https://globalcommonsalliance.org/news/global-commons-alliance/global-commons-g20-survey/>; <https://globalcommonsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Global-Commons-G20-Survey-full-report.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency," 8. Scientists diagnose, "The climate crisis is closely linked to excessive consumption of the wealthy lifestyle." This statement focuses on human responsibility with the reports of UNFCCC 2021, UNEP 2020, Global Commons Survey 2021. This viewpoint concentrates on the moral problems of attitude and value of human life. At this point, the climate crisis can be considered the problem of humanity.

In the global crises, the modern belief that scientific and technological progress brings human universal happiness and maturity of humanity is fundamentally questioned. Modernization and industrial revolution have brought the extreme contradiction of civilization and humanity in the twentieth century. Hans Küng, a Catholic theologian in Germany, speaks to the global crises: “‘Humanity through technological evolution?’ ... ‘It will at once develop and destroy true humanity.’”<sup>11</sup> He understands that modernization by technology has destroyed humanity, and modern humanism has produced inhumanity.<sup>12</sup> This is the extreme contradiction of civilization that we experience today. His point helps us to see today’s global crises as the crisis of humanity. Albert Schweitzer, a German theologian and physician, said when he accepted the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1952, “Man has become a superman. ... We become all the more inhuman the more we grow into supermen.”<sup>13</sup> Schweitzer affirmed that modern human beings have lost true humanity while becoming powerful supermen with the technology of the modern world. Erich Fromm, a German-American sociologist and psychoanalyst, described the problems of modern human beings in his book *To Have or To Be* (1976): “With industrial progress, ... we were on our way to becoming gods, supreme beings who could create a second world.”<sup>14</sup> Fromm points out that human beings have lost true humanity since the Industrial Revolution. Herbert Marcuse, a German-American philosopher and sociologist, analyzed the American lifestyle as “One-Dimensional Man” (1964).<sup>15</sup> The one-dimensional man, a man without deep thinking, needs “to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, [and] to love and hate what others love and hate.”<sup>16</sup> Their lives have lost the deep dimension of humanity. Instead, they have focused on the superficial and on physical senses, depending on laughing, fun entertainments and exciting sports games. Alexandre Kojève, a Russian-born French philosopher, defined the American type of life as “animal” for its loss of humanity and the Japanese type as “snobbery” (1969).<sup>17</sup> In the United States, he found the disappearance of human Discourse (Logos) as considered in Hegel’s history of philosophy. In Japan, he found snobocracy lost all human content in the historical sense. Kojève judged that both American and Japanese societies show the disappearance of humanity and humans return to animality. It is not “a possibility that was yet to come, but as a certainty that was already

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<sup>11</sup> Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, tr. Edward Quinn (Garden, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1976) 38-40.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be* (New York: Continuum, 2008) 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, tr. James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980). 159-162. The original book was published in 1947. Kojève first added this analysis of the cultures of the USA (1948) and Japan (1959) as a footnote when this book published in 1969.

present.”<sup>18</sup> Christopher Lasch, an American historian, analyzed American culture as “narcissism” (1979): “The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety.”<sup>19</sup> Lasch diagnosed American modern culture as a state of narcissism by anxiety instead of religious guilt. The new narcissists seek superficial relaxation. They do not think or confront their existential problems. Finally, they live according to inhumanity, the false self rather than their true self. From Schweitzer to Lasch, they commonly prophesied today’s global crises and the corruption, pollution or loss of essential humanity. Jesus diagnoses these problems as coming from the human heart (Mark 7:21-23). In these meanings, it is still right for today’s world that Fromm as a social psychologist demanded radical change of our social systems for radical human change.<sup>20</sup>

These problems in American cultural trends have appeared in the church communities and Christian lives as well. Therefore, we cannot avoid having questions arise: What should we do for radical human change? What is true and Christian humanity? How can we recover true humanity? How can we rebuild Christian faith, Christian spirituality and Christian community? This dissertation would like to answer these questions.

## 2) The Crisis of the Church and Declining Numbers

Confronting the global crises arising from the loss of humanity, we as Christians, churches or Christian leaders, cannot avoid asking these questions: Can the church help people so that they can recover their lost humanity? Can the church overcome the worldly trend of “animality” or “snobbery”? Can we have hope that today’s church will transform the people and world confronting serious crises? The future of today’s church is not bright because the church also

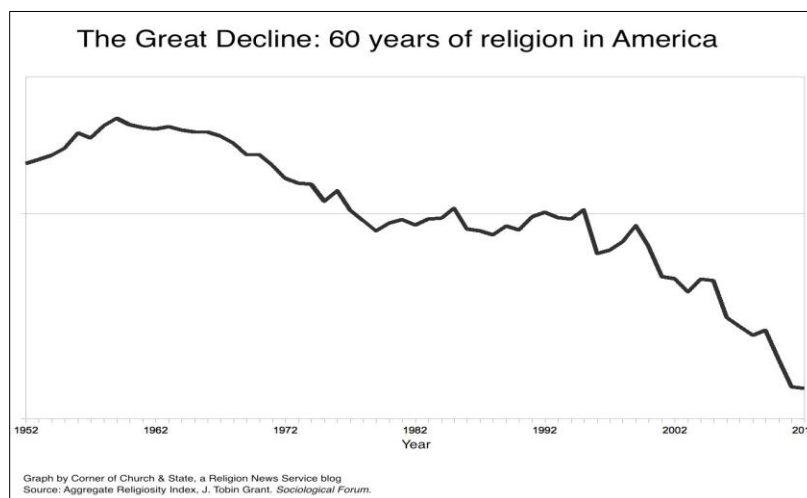


Figure 1

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991) xvi.

<sup>20</sup> *To Have or To Be*, 8.

confronts a serious crisis. American churches have confronted a crisis of declining membership for about 60 years (Figure 1).<sup>21</sup> In the American economic boom of the 1950s, Christian church membership boomed as well.<sup>22</sup> With the economic and religious booms, modern Americans seemed to have wealth, be spiritually vital and be satisfied. There was a cultural optimism in the country.<sup>23</sup> But the religious boom of the 1950s shifted to a decline in the early 1960s. Even through the 1990s and 2000s, when the population increase was the largest in U.S. history,<sup>24</sup> the decline of the church remained fast.<sup>25</sup> St. Mark's United Methodist Church, where I have served the last four years, has also declined since 1960 (Figure 2).

St. Mark's United Methodist Church was established with forty members in 1950. In 1950-1960s, population in Midland quickly increased because oil companies' employees and their families were rushing into Midland.<sup>26</sup> St. Mark's reached a thousand members in January 1956. But St Mark's trend followed the general pattern of American religion.<sup>27</sup> In this we can presume

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<sup>21</sup> J. Tobin Grant, "The Decline: 60 Years of Religion in One Graph." "We start with information from rigorous, scientific surveys on worship service attendance, membership in congregations, prayer, and feelings toward religion. We then use a computer algorithm to track over 400 survey results over the past 60 years." <https://religionnews.com/2014/01/27/great-decline-religion-united-states-one-graph/> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> In this period, going to church every Sunday was the typical American trend. According to a Gallup report, the highest historical level of church attendance was about 47 percent of the U. S. population on an average Sunday in 1955 and 1958. The church became a town community center where families spent the weekend, community people made friendships and community culture was shared and produced. Robert S. Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> Peter J. J Gomes, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, described the American cultural trend of the 1950s in the introduction of Tillich's book *The Courage to Be*. "The postwar recovery was well under way, and with it the rise of a cultural optimism in a country which had both won the war and defeated the depression; material prosperity was an ambition and a fact of life. America was now the defender of the free world, and with that fact came a sense of self-satisfaction and security. Religion participated in this boom culture with a marked increase in church attendance and an epidemic of church building programs across the country, which Time magazine called America's religious 'edifice complex.'" Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) xiii.

<sup>24</sup> The U.S. population double from 150.7 million in 1950 to 281.4 million in 2000. Hobbs, Frank and Nicole Stoops, "U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Reports, series CENSR4, Demographic Trends in the 20th Century," U.S. Government Printing Office (Washington, DC, 2002) 11-12, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>25</sup> In Pew Research Center surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/> (accessed July 23, 2021). The report of 2021 shows 63% of American adults described themselves as Christians. It is down 3 percentage points over the past two years. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/> (accessed May 2, 2022).

<sup>26</sup> In 1910, Midland's population stood at 2,192. The 1920s saw an increase of over 200%, 70% in the 1930s-40s, 132% in the 1950s, and 188% in the 1960s. Population decreased 5% in the 1970s under the global oil shock and increased 18%-26% in the 1980s-90s. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/midland-tx-population> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Membership in the Northwest Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, to which St. Mark's belongs, has declined from 1994 to 2018. Membership of 97,775 in 1974 became 52,708 in 2018. Attendance of

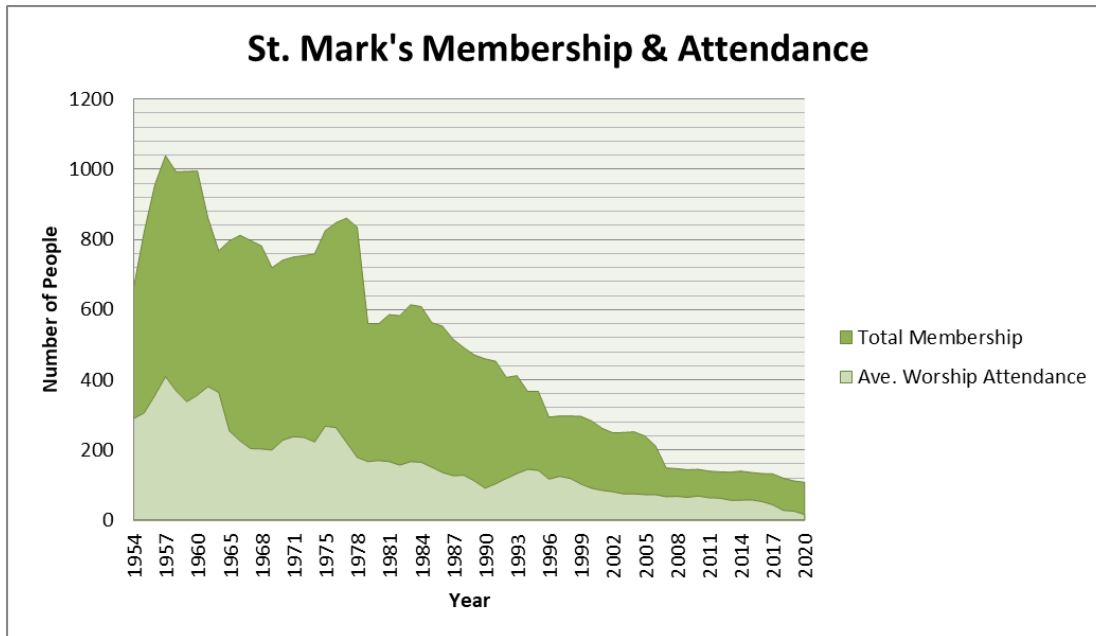


Figure 2.

a local church's decline and the general American religious decline have a common background of history and social culture. The American economy has continued increasing since the 1950s, but the American church has generally declined since the 1960s. We can form a contradictory understanding about the American religious trend: the church that increased with economic boom declines with economic wealth. At this point, we have questions: What has happened in the church and American society? What is the real crisis of the church?

Declining membership is not the original cause of the crisis of the church, but it is an actual phenomenon which reveals the real crisis of the church. Generally, clergy, church leaders and congregations tend to feel the crisis of the church through declining membership and its result, declining financial sources. Because of this general and superficial understanding of the church decline, Wim Dreyer, a professor of theology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, asks a question in his article studying the global crisis of the church: "What is the real crisis of the church?" He diagnoses the global crisis of the church: "The real crisis of the church is not only to be found in external circumstance and influence, but is primarily a question of the church not being able to 'be church'"<sup>28</sup> Therefore, to understand today's crisis of the church, we first need to seriously analyze the boom of American churches in the 1950s. What caused the church to grow? This question can give us another question: What made the church decline? At the peak of the

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31,759 in 1974 became 16,683 in 2018. Membership declined 54% while attendance declined 52.5%. The attendance rate of members is 32%. This analysis used statistics from the United Methodist Church's Ezra database.

<sup>28</sup> Wim Dreyer, "The Real Crisis of the Church," [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0259-94222015000100016](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222015000100016) (accessed July 16, 2021).

boom of American churches in the 1950s, Paul Tillich, a German-American theologian, wrote an article called “The Lost Dimension in Religion” in the June 14, 1958, edition of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the most popular magazine in America. “If we define religion as the state of being grasped by an infinite concern, we must say: man in our time has lost such infinite concern. And the resurgence of religion is nothing but a desperate and mostly futile attempt to regain what has been lost.”<sup>29</sup> Tillich knew that the Christian religious trend of the 1950s had lost a deep dimension of Christian spirituality and humanity even though American churches were growing fast and appeared vital. In his theology, Tillich seemed not to agree with the church boom in the 1950s as a spiritual resurgence. According to Tillich, American churches boomed without the deep dimension of Christian faith and humanity. It was a superficial trend of American society. People were still anxious even though they had economic growth, material prosperity and vital religious activity. How are today’s churches and Christians? Peter J. J Gomes describes today’s American Christian situation in the introduction of Tillich’s book *The Courage to Be* (2000).<sup>30</sup>

At the end of the twentieth century, ... in an era of unprecedented economic growth and material prosperity, ... there remains at the heart of the culture a grave and disquieting anxiety. We work hard and play hard not because we are more industrious or more playful than our ancestors but because we dare not stop lest in the stillness we are overwhelmed by the sound of our own anxieties and fears. Standing on the edge of a new century and millennium, seemingly “masters of the universe,” in Tom Wolfe’s sardonic phrase, we live more in a world ... as described by George Orwell in his essay “Pleasure Spots.”<sup>31</sup>

Gomes’ analysis shows the existential state of American people that live in the modern or post-modern age. At this point, questions arise: What have we lost with the church decline? How can we recover it? This dissertation would like to answer these questions.

### 3) The Crisis of the Church and the Loss of Christian Spirituality

This dissertation understands that the church and Christians have lost a deep dimension of Christian spirituality and true humanity. The crisis of the church fundamentally comes from the loss of the deep dimension of Christian faith and humanity. In other words, the real crisis of the church is the crisis of Christian spirituality. The loss of the deep dimension of Christian faith and humanity has prompted the appearance of various types and trends of secular religions or substitute religions in the United States, and these trends have further caused the church to lose the deep dimension of Christian faith and humanity.

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) xiv. Hereafter abbreviated as *CB*.

<sup>30</sup> *CB*, xi-xxxii.

<sup>31</sup> *CB*, xvii. “Pleasure Spots”: “The lights must never go out/ the music must always play/ Lest we should see where we are—/ Lost in a haunted wood;/ Children afraid of the dark/ Who have never been happy or good.”



(1) The religiously-unaffiliated American: Along with the decline of the church, the number of religiously unaffiliated Americans has rapidly increased since 2000 (Figure 3). According to a Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) report in 2019, the religiously unaffiliated are the largest religious group in America. In 1991, only six percent of Americans identified their religious affiliation as “none.” During the late 2000s and early 2010s, 20%. By 2016, 25%. Nearly four in ten (39%) of young adults (ages 18-29) are religiously unaffiliated (2016).<sup>32</sup> PRRI’s report of 2020 (issued July 8, 2021) shows that the number of Americans with a Christian identity continues declining, and the religiously unaffiliated has also slightly declined from 25% to 23% (2018-2020).<sup>33</sup> Among young adults (ages 18-29), the number of religiously unaffiliated has also slightly declined from 38% to 36% (2016-2020).<sup>34</sup>

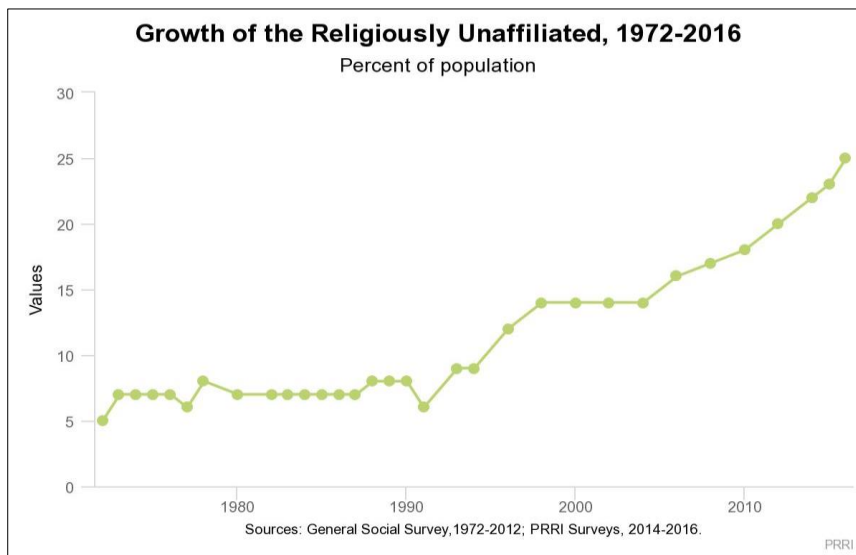


Figure 3

Religiously unaffiliated Americans tend to be less religious than Americans who belong to a religious tradition. They have a religious sense and are not wholly secular. In Pew Research Center surveys, unaffiliated Americans are those who describe their religion as “nothing in particular.” They believe in God or a universal spirit but describe themselves as neither a

<sup>32</sup> Robert P. Jones, Daniel Cox, Betsy Cooper, and Rachel Lienesch, *Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion— And Why They’re Unlikely to Come Back* (Washington D.C.: PRRI, 2016) 2, <https://www.prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/PRRI-RNS-Unaffiliated-Report.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2021).

<sup>33</sup> PRRI, *The 2020 Census of American Religion* (Washington D.C., 2021) 9-10. “The American Religious Landscape in 2020,” <https://www.prri.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/> (accessed August 5, 2021).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 10..

religious nor a spiritual person. Their types are called “spiritual but not religious.”<sup>35</sup> Robert C. Fuller, professor of Religious Studies at Bradley University, analyzed this American identity in his book *Spiritual, but Not Religious* (2001). He wrote that American people tend to prefer ‘private’ spirituality rather than ‘public’ spirituality. Their identity is “spiritual, but not religious.” A majority of Americans believe that “churches and synagogues have lost the real spiritual part of religion.”<sup>36</sup>

The religiously unaffiliated are still spiritually thirsty. They feel spiritual sense, but they do not join the church community. Therefore, the church needs to understand and approach them with Christian spirituality. In this point, we need to have a question: How can the church respond to those who seek spirituality? This dissertation would like to answer this question.

(2) The trend of secularization: Sociologists have responded to the decline of the church with the theory of secularization. Steve Bruce, a British sociologist, defined secularization: “the secularization paradigm aims to explain one of the greatest changes in social structure and culture: the displacement of religion from the center of human life.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, the importance and social function of religion for human life decreased in the process of modernization.<sup>38</sup> Religion became a preference, not a necessity.<sup>39</sup> The growth of technology increases the general sense of human power or human omnipotence.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, the supernatural realm declines among people,<sup>41</sup> and religious authority declines in society. Mark Chaves, a professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at Duke University, defines secularization as the declining scope of religious authority: “Secularization is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority.”<sup>42</sup> Karel Dobbelaere, a Belgian sociologist of religion, identifies three dimensions of secularization: laicization, internal secularization, and religious disinvolvement.<sup>43</sup> Laicization is the process by which

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<sup>35</sup> “Religion and the Unaffiliated,” <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise-religion/> (accessed July 12, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but Not Religious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 5.

<sup>37</sup> Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 1.

<sup>38</sup> Steve Bruce, ed., *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Volkan Ertit (Department of Sociology, Aksaray University, Turkey) understands secularization as “the decline of the supernatural realm.” Volkan Ertit, “Secularization: The Decline of the Supernatural Realm,” *Religions* 2018, 9(4), 92, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/4/92/htm> (accessed July 23, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Mark Chaves, “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority,” *Social Forces*, March 1994, Vol. 72, No. 3, pages 749-774 (Oxford University Press, March 1994) 750, [https://www-jstor-org.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/stable/2579779?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www-jstor-org.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/stable/2579779?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents) (accessed July 23, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 757.

political, educational, scientific and other institutions gain autonomy from the society's religious institutions. The result of this process is that religion becomes a private institution rather than publicly influential. Internal secularization is the process by which religious organizations internally adjust towards the secular trends of the world. Religious disinvolvement means the decline of religious beliefs and practices among individuals.

In the points of Chaves and Dobbelaere, we need to consider that the church has not only failed to resist the trends of secularization outside of the church but also voluntarily followed the secular trends in the world. Consequently, the church has lost the deep spiritual dimension, spiritual authority and social influence in the world. At this point, we have a question: How can the church recover and keep the original source of the Christian spirituality in this secular world? This dissertation would like to answer this question as well.

(3) The trend of religious pluralism: In the process of secularization, the Christian God becomes a god, and Christianity becomes a religion in the religious market of religious pluralism in America.<sup>44</sup> Various substitute religions have also appeared and made the Christian identity vague. "Civil religion," a political religion based on "secular religion,"<sup>45</sup> has deeply and widely spread in the church.<sup>46</sup> Because American civil religion uses Christian terms, not only non-Christians but also Christians understand American civil religion as American Christianity or modern Christianity. Glenn Moots, Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at Northwood University, asserts that American civil religion is rooted in Protestant Christianity, but it is not Christianity: "Americans are fish swimming in a civil religion that is not the same as

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<sup>44</sup> "American Christianity is astonishingly diverse: hundreds of different Christian denominations coexist, and no one person or group can rightly claim to represent all Christians. Moreover, religious diversity extends well beyond Christianity: Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, ... making the United States one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world." Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, "Religious Pluralism in the United States," vol. 1 of *the Boisi Center Papers on Religion in the United States* (Boston college, 2007) 2, [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/bc\\_papers/BCP-Pluralism.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/bc_papers/BCP-Pluralism.pdf) (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Emilio Gentile, Professor of Contemporary History at La Sapienza University in Rome, defines secular religion: "Civil and political religions belong to a more general phenomenon, secular religion. ... Politics is not alone in this: any human activity from science to history or from entertainment to sport can be invested with 'secular sacredness' and become the object of a secular cult, thus constituting a secular religion. In politics, however, the term 'secular religion' is often adopted as a synonym for civil religion or political religion." Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006) 1, Chapter I: "A Never-Never Religion, A Substitute for Religion, or A New Religion?" <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8195.pdf> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> Former President Donald Trump successfully used "American civil religion" in the American Presidential elections of 2016 and 2020. Brennan Breed, Professor of Columbia Theological Seminary, wrote an article "Trump and the Transformations of Civil Religion," <https://www.ctsnet.edu/at-this-point/shifting-cultures/> (accessed July 13, 2021). He wrote, "White Evangelicalism is now unquestionably tied to the Republican party." In the New York Times of January 20, 2021, Bradley Onishi, a professor of religious studies at Skidmore College, wrote an article "Trump's New Civil Religion." Marcia Pally, a Professor at New York University in Multilingual Multicultural Studies and a permanent Fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities, wrote an article "Donald Trump: Apostle of America's Civil Religion," <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/donald-trump-apostle-of-americas-civil-religion/10096340> (accessed July 13, 2021).

Christianity. And most fish don't know they are wet." Rather, civil religion becomes a false religion, a kind of heresy for the state, "providing an ersatz theological justification for imprudent centralized power or imperial ambitions."<sup>47</sup> American popular psychology boosted "psychological spirituality" as a substitute religion in the twentieth century. This trend made Christians turn away from traditional religious concerns.<sup>48</sup> In 1952, Norman Vincent Peale's book *The Power of Positive Thinking* became one of the most influential books in America's religious history.<sup>49</sup> Televangelist Robert Schuller, founder of the Crystal Cathedral, made this Christian spirituality with a television show in the name of *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1950s-1980s).<sup>50</sup> "Positive thinking" was a mixing of religious terms, psychological satisfaction and mental development according to the needs of contemporary, middle class people.<sup>51</sup> This trend stimulated "the prosperity gospel" movement in the 1970s-1980s. Now, Joel Osteen, Lakewood Church in Houston, spreads the prosperity and mental-wellbeing gospel.<sup>52</sup> The sports industry also became a powerful substitute religion in America. Enthusiastic spectators in stadiums worship other human beings or their sports teams.<sup>53</sup> Many Christians left church activities for their favorite sports stadiums. Capitalistic market power became "the religion of the Market." The Market god creates human value, beliefs, culture, lifestyle and meaning of life.<sup>54</sup> The Market religion cultivates Americans as consumers of capitalism and market worshipers.

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<sup>47</sup> Glenn A. Moots, "The Protestant Roots of American Civil Religion" *Humanitas*, Vol. XXIII Nos, 1 and 2 (2010) 78-80, <https://css.cua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/moots-Protestant-Roots.pdf> (accessed July 23, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but Not Religious*, 124.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

<sup>50</sup> Crystal Cathedral, which since 1953 was the symbol of the modernized church, the TV studio church, was closed by bankruptcy in 2010. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/07/17/crystal-cathedral-was-monument-televangelism-its-about-become-catholic-church/> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>51</sup> "Positive thinking was synthetic, mixing the categories of religion, psychology, medicine, and self-help." Catherine Bowler, "Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation of the Graduate School of Duke University, 2010) 52, [https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/2297/D\\_Bowler\\_Catherine\\_a\\_201005.pdf?sequence=1](https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/2297/D_Bowler_Catherine_a_201005.pdf?sequence=1) (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>52</sup> Cathleen Falsani, "The prosperity gospel: One of the Worst Ideas of the Decade?" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/opinions/outlook/worst-ideas/prosperity-gospel.html> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>53</sup> Various scholars discuss sports in terms of "natural religion, humanistic religion, and primitive polytheism. Enthusiastic spectators in stadiums worship other human beings, sports heroes, their achievements, and the groups to which they belong. Sports stadiums and arenas resemble "cathedrals where followers gather to worship their heroes and pray for their successes." Danial L. Wann, *Sport fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 200; from Nigel Barber, "Is Sport a Religion?" <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-human-beast/200911/is-sport-religion> (accessed July 24, 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Harvey Cox, Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, use these terms to expose the market as god: "the religion of The Market," "the chapel of The Market," "The Market God," "the liturgy of The Market" "the market theology," "the benevolence of the Market God" in his book *The Market as God*. Harvey Cox, *The Market as God* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 2016).

They go to the marketplace to worship the market god and accept market values, beliefs and trends.<sup>55</sup> These capital trends focus not on consuming to live, but on living to consume. It creates slavish beings.<sup>56</sup> In these many ways, we can say that today's American Christians are undergoing self-disorder in the trend of religious pluralism. As the answer to these problems, this dissertation would like to show the original source of Christian spirituality.

Through analyzing contemporary trends of America's religious culture—religiously-unaffiliated, secularization, and religious pluralism and substitute religions—we find that Christian spirituality confronts a serious crisis. For overcoming the crisis, this dissertation would like to show how to recover and keep the original Christian spirituality through forming Christian vocational spirituality.

## 2. The Significance of the Study

1) An Appropriate Topic for Today's Christians: The terms spirituality and vocation are of popular interest and used in most fields of human life, not only religious but also psychological, cultural and even scientific fields. This trend causes Christians to be confused in their understanding of faith, spiritual identity and Christian life. In this context, this dissertation on Christian vocational spirituality is appropriate for today's Christians and for the church that confronts various questions on spirituality because this dissertation clearly shows what Christian spirituality is and its original, unique and constant source.

2) An Integrated Understanding: Heinz Kohut, a post-Freudian psychoanalyst, defines "narcissistic personality disorder" as coming from the state of fragmentation or disharmony of self.<sup>57</sup> We can also understand that defective Christian spirituality comes from fragmentation or disharmony of faith, spiritual humanity or spirituality. In this meaning, we need an integrated understanding of the meanings of the terms *Christian*, *vocation* and *spirituality*. This dissertation offers an integrated understanding of *Christian*, *vocation* and *spirituality* as the wholeness of the

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<sup>55</sup> Grady Clay, editor of Landscape Architecture magazine and the author of *Close-Up: How to Read the American City*, wrote an article titled "Cathedrals of Consumption" in *The New York Times*, February 17, 1985. In this article, he introduced a book, *The Malling of America: An Inside Look at the Great Consumer Paradise* by William Severini Kowinski (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1985). Kowinski wrote about the cultural trend of American consumption: "customers became worshippers," sharing shopping dates and the thrills of buying in malls. Malls and television reinforced each other by preprogramming the Baby Boom generation to get on with the great American pastime. <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/02/17/books/cathedrals-of-consumption.html> (accessed July 23, 2021).

<sup>56</sup> Rodney Clapp, "Why the Devil Takes VISA," *Christianity Today*, October 7, 1996, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1996/october7/6tb018.html> (accessed July 23, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1984) 70.

Christian life. This can effectively help the church correct spiritual confusion arising from secularized Christian faith and cure the fragmentation or disharmony in spiritual humanity.<sup>58</sup>

3) Multiple Approaches: This dissertation consistently uses multiple approaches—philosophy, theology, psychology, the Bible and sociology—to understand questions and give answers. Each chapter integrates the above approaches because Christian spirituality as the wholeness of the Christian life is integrated across multiple aspects of life. Without understanding the existential multiplicity of human beings, it is difficult to understand and explain Christian spirituality as the wholeness of the Christian life in the world. Therefore, multiple approaches in this dissertation show an integrated structure of practical theology for the local church community and individual Christian life. With a multiplicity of approaches, each church community can begin in each situation to reform the spirituality of the church community and individual Christian spirituality.

4) A Practical Method: Practical spirituality means not only a program to actualize a theory but also the using of practical, contemporary language to express spiritual activities. For this reason, this dissertation tries to express Christian terms with contemporary language. This also overcomes the limitation and exclusiveness that dogmatic doctrine has. These are also reasons that this dissertation uses multiple approaches. As a result, this dissertation can discuss human spirituality and spiritual humanity with contemporary people who are confused by the religiously-unaffiliated trend, cultures of secularization and the spiritual environment of religious pluralism.

### 3. The Proceedings of the Study

This dissertation starts with the awareness that the global crises come from the loss of humanity and the crisis of the church comes from the loss of the deep dimension of Christian spirituality. Both commonly signify the loss of the essence of humanity and spirituality. For this reason, this dissertation focuses on finding and recovering what was lost. Therefore, building a theological structure for forming Christian vocational spirituality is a way to find and recover the lost in Christian life and the church community.

For this project, this dissertation organizes into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the universal essence of humanity as spiritual potential and humanity's existential predicament. This is the groundwork for finding and understanding the possibility of Christian vocational

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<sup>58</sup> Christian, vocation and spirituality—researching these terms shows they are mostly limited to topics in which only one term appears or two terms are combined. For example, “vocation and Christian faith,” “vocation and spirituality,” or “Christian spirituality.” This dissertation integrates the three terms—Christian, vocation and spirituality—because these three concepts cannot be separated from each other in the wholeness of the Christian life. They are the core elements which compose the wholeness of the Christian life.

spirituality. For this purpose, this chapter uses as sources Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*; Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology* I, II and *The Courage To Be*; Heinz Kohut's self-psychology<sup>59</sup> and the third chapter of Genesis. The second chapter focuses on understanding Jesus as the answer to the human existential predicament. This chapter also aims to show Jesus as the divine revelation for human spiritual potential and salvation. For this purpose, Tillich's *Systematic Theology* II and the four books of the Gospel are used as the main sources. The third chapter discusses a practical way to get the spiritual relationship with Jesus for salvation from the human predicament. It offers three dimensions of the relationship: walking with, working with and following Jesus. This chapter also uses Tillich's theological sources and the four books of the Gospel as the main sources. Kohut's self-psychology is used to explain the growth of the spiritual relationship. The fourth chapter explains Christian vocational spirituality according to Jesus's call and vocation. Jesus is the example of Christian humanity and Christian vocation. Christian spirituality is explained as an integration of a Christian's whole life—the sanctified life as following Jesus. The four books of the Gospel, Tillich's *Systematic Theology* III and Moltmann's *The Spirit of Life* are used as the main sources. The fifth chapter, as the conclusion of this study, suggests a structure of the church community based on Christian vocational spirituality, discusses leadership of the vocational church community and offers a structure for a spiritual academy in order to educate and train a congregation in a local church community for forming Christian vocational spirituality.

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<sup>59</sup> Kohut's books are these: *The Restoration of the Self*, *The Analysis of the Self*, *The Restoration of Self*, and *How Does Analysis Cure?*

