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Perspectives on spiritual life during the smartphone age

Perspektywy życia duchowego w erze smartfonów

Introduction

Smartphones have transformed the public and private lives of modern people in dozens of different ways. Among the benefits they have brought to everyday life are mobile Internet access (thus, constant and immediate access to information, books, films, music, and interactive new media), enhanced interpersonal communication, ease of movement thanks to navigation, online shopping and services, payment processing, as well as the ability to use a smartphone almost anywhere and anytime.

However, this long list of gains is accompanied by a short but sufficiently worrying list of losses resulting from smartphone use: the constant engagement of attention and time by the device, smartphone addiction, and finally, the tendency to compulsively stay in the virtual world (Buksa, 2022; Buksa, 2023a).

One of the few remaining spaces where the use of a smartphone in the real-world causes consternation is the sphere of the sacrum – both space and time

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– where a person experiences their spiritual life (Kustra, 2021, p. 122). It is not difficult to envision that, over time, smartphone use will further transcend these boundaries: it will gradually penetrate the sacred space, the time of liturgy, and the spirit of prayer. In fact, it has already crossed the threshold of the church – it is already there. This process is happening, slowly but surely.

Although the use of this gadget may still seem inappropriate, quietly, and innocently, the smartphone is already serving in the temple – for both clergy and faithful – as a device to read prayers aloud or to amplify the faintly heard word of God during Mass. This raises the question of whether we should calmly consider what prospects for the development of spiritual life are created by attempts to 'smartphonize' the sphere of holiness and the relationship with God.

Recognizing the limitations of this process is crucial, as awareness enables us to respond effectively before habits become too ingrained to change. Speaking about the protection of spiritual life in the era of smartphones, it is also worth reflecting on the realization of religious acts via smartphones in private life – in other words, on the spiritual life of *homo sapiens digitalis* (Fritzsche, Bengler, & Spitzhirn, 2022).

From Religious to Spiritual

The phenomenon of human religiosity has not been given a clear scientific explanation. Both the belief that religiosity is a natural and spontaneous attribute of human beings and the view that religion is a contingent trait, a result of upbringing, environment, or tradition, have their supporters and opponents. The author assumes at the outset that although there is no consensus on the origins of religiosity and the factors that shape it, religiosity as such or its manifestations are not disputed. The history of humankind is rich in material evidence of the practice of religion since the earliest days of human existence. However, the concepts of religion, religiosity, and spiritual life need to be clarified.

Contrary to common belief, it is difficult to provide a universal definition of religion. This difficulty arises, among other things, from the multiplicity of religions, different interpretations of the sacred, and the subjectivity of religious experiences (Zdybicka, 1992, p. 355). It is also influenced by what sociologist Günter Kehrer has called the "ideologization of religious issues" (Kehrer, 1997, pp. 20–21). As he noted, completely different meanings are

attributed to the same religion by believers (positive definition), non-believers, or those with an indifferent attitude (usually a negative definition). Bearing this objection in mind, it may be noted that, in recent scholarship, religion has been broadly understood as "any form of humanity's relation to Absolute Reality" (Kłoczowski, 2010) or as a belief "in the existence of something beyond the reality of everyday experience and the conviction that this reality is of great importance for human life" (Mariański, 2016, p. 3). For St. Thomas Aquinas, religion was humanity's response to the revelation of God – "an act of justice to which man is obliged in relation to his Creator" (Kłoczowski, 2010). Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford, Harvey Whitehouse, emphasizes the significance of reference to the supernatural, stating that "religion consists of any set of shared beliefs and actions appealing to supernatural agency" (Whitehouse, 2004, p. 2).

A widely accepted functional definition of religion was developed by the French philosopher and sociologist Émile Durkheim, who saw it as "a system of interrelated beliefs and practices referring to sacred things, that is, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices uniting all adherents into a single moral community, which he called 'church' in a sociological sense" (Durkheim, 1990, p. 41). Durkheim pointed out an important characteristic of religion. As he observed, religion "happens" in society when there is a distinction between the profane (ordinary life) and the sacred (1915). He illustrated this concept by explaining that a rock, for example, is neither sacred nor profane. However, if someone turns it into a headstone or if another person uses it for landscaping, it takes on different meanings – one sacred, the other profane.

It is also worth noting the definition proposed by American sociologist Rodney Stark and British sociologist Roger Finke in their book *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. They define religion as "a set of beliefs, practices, and social forms through which people seek meaning with reference to the sacred" (Stark & Finke, 2000). This definition highlights both the individual and social dimensions of religion, as well as its role in providing meaning to the lives of individuals and communities. Particular attention should be given to sociological definitions of religion, as they are worldview-neutral, allowing for an academic study of religion regardless of the researcher's personal beliefs. Moreover, and no less importantly, they enable the analysis of all religions by describing the phenomenon without assessing its truthfulness (Kurtz, 2011).

Of particular importance to our topic is the Christian view that religion has a personal character, influenced by three elements. Firstly, man – the subject of religiosity – is a personal being; secondly, God – the subject of religious experience – is a Person, a personal being; thirdly, the relationship between man and the personal God is personal in character (Jaworski, 1989, p. 12). The Latin root of the word religion is *religare* ('to bind, to bond'), thus signifies a bond – a relationship between humans and God as an interpersonal connection. Nothing happens automatically. As Romuald Jaworski rightly observes: "The magnitude of the personal charge in religiosity can vary from person to person: from the highest degree of intensification of the personal dimension (personal religiosity) to the absence of a personal connection between the subject and object of religiosity (apersonal religiosity)" (Jaworski, 1989, p. 12).

The components associated with religion are defined in different ways. Durkheim's definition of religion, mentioned above, allowed for the distinction of the following components: doctrine (truths of faith and moral principles), worship, sacred rituals, and organization: "the moral community called the church" (Durkheim, 1990, pp. 41–42). Sister Zofia J. Zdybicka, a scholar of religion, cites five elements of religion: "a holistic attitude toward faith, which encompasses cognition and acknowledgment of the Absolute, religious doctrine, religious worship, religious morality, and religious community" (Zdybicka, 1992, p. 355).

When it comes to religiosity, in a cursory judgment, it is often associated with "being religious" and practicing religion. In psychology, it is defined as "commitment to the beliefs and practices characteristic of a particular religious tradition" (Pettet, 1994, p. 237) or "the subjective, individual attitude of a person toward God and the supernatural, expressed in the sphere of concepts and beliefs, feelings, and behavior" (Golan, 2006, p. 71). Religiosity encompasses all forms of worship – both collective and private – "in which a person glorifies God, apologizes for their sins and failings, or asks for the grace of forgiveness" (Kłoczowski, 2010). In a broad sense, religiosity is understood as an attitude of adoration and reverence directed toward any reality, from the tangible to the abstract, including a homeland, a person, or an idea. Drawing on the insights of the German theologian Rudolf Otto and the American sociologist Peter Ludwig Berger, religiosity can be understood as a human and social phenomenon relating to the sacred – that is, to transcendence, to the "wholly

other", the "non-empirical" (Piwowarski, 1990, p. 32). The primordial role of the *sacrum* – that which is *sacrum* and distinct from the *profanum* – in religious acts was emphasized by Durkheim, who pointed out that religious ritual cannot exist without the *sacrum*. At the same time, he argued that the circle of sacred things is not a closed set and is dependent on the specific religious tradition (Durkheim, 1990, p. 42). Despite the ambiguity and evolving nature of the term, scholars generally agree that spirituality encompasses a broader scope than religion. It is not necessarily tied to a specific religious tradition but instead focuses on personal meaning, fulfilment, and transformation (Collins, 2000, p. 44–47).

In this context, the observation that the topos of *homo religiosus* is disappearing in the digital age may be concerning. Those who believe that this issue only affects the so-called iGen (iGeneration) – that is, generations from the Millennials (Generation Y) through Generation Z, Alpha, and likely beyond – would be mistaken (Twenge, 2022). As psychologist Jean M. Twenge points out, the root of the problem lies in the fact that the generations of Americans who preceded them "practiced faith less often in public" and abandoned prayer and spiritual life (Twenge, 2022, p. 145). By 2015, almost a quarter of second- and fourth-year high school students claimed that religion was "irrelevant" in their lives, and there is a growing number of total non-believers "who have no contact with religion at all: they do not go to services, pray, or believe in God" (Twenge, 2022, p. 147).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the concept of religiosity has been confronted with the term "spirituality." The latter, traditionally understood as religiosity – "an emotional involvement in the search for connection with God within ecclesiastical structures" – has taken on a new form in the so-called new spirituality, which "can mean feeling the presence of God even in situations devoid of any semantic reference to a formally functioning religious institution" (Mielicka-Pawłowska, 2017, p. 104). Although proponents of the new spirituality consider it a deepened form of religiosity, it is nevertheless limited to an "inner experience of the supernatural" in which the supernatural is reduced to "emotionality, sensitivity to beauty and the good, the everyday treated as extraordinary, and the search for the meaning of life and the reasons for the existence of order in the universe not only in the ideological dimension of religion but also in the experiential and consequential dimension" (Mielicka-Pawłowska, 2017, p. 113).

According to the insights of the German sociologist of religion Karl Gabriel, the transformation of religiosity into spirituality is accompanied by two processes – pluralization and individualization. The first implies a plurality of religions in society (inter-organizational pluralism) and religious differentiation within individual religions and churches (intra-organizational pluralism) (Gabriel, 2014, p. 15). The effect of religious pluralization, which he terms the "dynamization of world markets and lifestyles," is a process of individualization – the creation of one's own religion. As a result of both processes – religious pluralization and religious individualization – religion becomes deinstitutionalized, leading to the emergence of various religious movements and communities outside the institutional structures of churches. An extra-ecclesial, extra-institutional spirituality is emerging – an "own" or "homeless" spirituality (unbehauste Religion) – which arises from disenchantment with the Church, a questioning of the institutional dimension of religion, or a striving for autonomy (Mariański, 2016, p. 14; Schmidtchen, 1992, p. 165). This type of religiosity – individualized and extra-ecclesial – emphasizes "the autonomy and uniqueness of the contents and emotions experienced by a person in contact with the *sacrum*" (Jarosz, 2010, p. 9).

Park Soo Young Theodore SJ writes about how interest in religion has shifted from an institution to an autonomous "spirituality" of one's own. He notes that the declaration "I am spiritual but not religious" (which has even gained its own acronym – SBNR – from Spiritual but not Religious; Park, 2021, p. 75) has become a widespread phenomenon. It gained popularity at the beginning of the 21st century, particularly on dating sites, where it is often used in self-presentations to enhance one's image: "I am not some cold atheist, but I am not some moralistic, prudish person either. I am nice, friendly, and spiritual – but not religious." (Park, 2021, p. 75)

Digital Religion

Works by researchers analysing the so-called digital religion began to appear in 2004 and 2005 (Campbell, 2004, pp. 81–99; 2005, pp. 110–134; Lövheim, 2004, pp. 59–74; Cowan, 2005; Helland, 2005). The exploration of this phenomenon has continued with the work of Heidi Campbell, resulting, among other things, in her latest book, *Digital Religion: The Basics* (Campbell, 2023). As she writes in the introduction, the term digital religion was coined

to describe "the way in which religious individuals and groups engage with digital media and new technologies" (Campbell, 2023, p. 11). The term is also helpful in characterizing manifestations of religious worship and new forms of religious expression, making this issue relevant to the theme of this article.

As Heidi Campbell writes, sociologists, psychologists, and theologians have taken an interest in the fact that religious engagement on the Internet has begun to create new patterns of spiritual practices. As early as 2005, she observed: "When people use the Internet, religion changes. People combine different religious experiences. They create a personal religion online instead of belonging only to one church or religious association" (Campbell, 2023, p. 133). In her latest investigations, she states that digital religion has moved beyond the Internet. Indeed, it is practiced through online platforms, but it is also present in offline spaces due to the increasing interpenetration of the virtual and real worlds. It is evolving from an institutionalized form of religion to an individualized, living religion based on deep experiences. Digital religion focuses on praxis – the way religion is practiced and faith is expressed – rather than on doctrine imposed from above by the official Church.

This context leads us to the most important term – "spiritual life." It should be noted that there is no precise definition of this concept, and it is often used interchangeably with inner life. However, the latter is not an exclusively religious category, as it encompasses psychological experiences (feelings, cravings, desires, passions), the intellectual sphere (thoughts, ideas, concepts), and the volitional sphere (decisions, resolutions) and is not necessarily related to faith.

In Christianity, the foundation of the spiritual life, as proclaimed by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), is the recognition of man as the image of God, meaning that he has the capacity to open himself to the Creator and, at the same time, to desire Him, since "only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for" (CCC, 27). The Catechism reminds us of that man – imago Dei – is both body and soul. The spiritual life is born of a person's conscious relationship with the personal God; it is forged in union with Him through the sacraments and prayer, develops under the influence of acts of faith addressed to God and interior reflection, and, in short, is the fruit of the search for and encounter with the sacred.

"Digital" practice of spiritual life

Almost from the beginning of the Internet, after years of reticence on the part of faith communities toward the new medium, the Web has become the "place" of religion, the "modern areopagus" which – like other media – should be used to proclaim the Gospel and Christian doctrine, but also to "integrate the message itself into this 'new culture' created by the modern media" (RM, 37). The Internet is meant to evangelize and be evangelized because, as Heidi Campbell writes, "religion and religious thinking can co-shape the Internet" (2005, p. 111). This role is played by religious portals, YouTube channels, and countless websites of parishes, communities, and individuals.

As mentioned, smartphones – devices permanently connected to the Internet – are taking over ever wider aspects of modern human life. It is no different with religious life, which became even more apparent in 2020–2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the global quarantine, sanitary restrictions prevented churches from celebrating liturgies with the faithful, while traditional media and the Internet made it possible for them to attend mass remotely and to participate in the unforgettable – because different from every year – Paschal Triduum AD 2020 during the first pandemic Easter.

The coexistence of religion and the internet should not be underestimated, given the immense influence of the latter. It is essential to recognize that the internet is a medium, and media – especially digital media – have become the "religion" of modern humans, profoundly shaping his perception of reality (Buksa 2024, p. 165). At the same time, it is crucial to emphasize that religion, or rather religiosity, has an active presence on the web. The Word of God – once primarily transmitted through literature and art and now increasingly through digital platforms – reaches anyone who seeks it, sometimes even through an accidental "click." Without the pandemic prompting the Church to embrace new technologies, many Christians would have lost access to their faith in the online world, a space where they are daily "natives." The absence of religion in the digital sphere would ultimately relegate it to irrelevance in both private and public life beyond the Church.

It is difficult for active religious users of the web to question the gains that the Internet brings in terms of communicating spiritual content in textual, image, or multimedia form. It cannot be overstated that unlimited sources of reflection, inspiration for religious acts, new forms of worship, and spiritual

experiences can be accessed via the smartphone. However, the encounter between spiritual life and the digital world explored via the smartphone also raises questions. Among others, is it possible to fully realize religious practices – spiritual life mediated by the Internet, by technological processes, and by the device? Can participation in online liturgy, in the future even using one's own avatar placed in a virtual temple, be a sufficient "substitute" for offline liturgy?

According to the Christian faith, the source of grace – and of man's spiritual development – are the sacraments, which a simple catechism rule encapsulates in the expression "visible signs of invisible grace." The liturgy (from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning "public work") of their celebration is "the summit to which the Church's activity is directed, and at the same time the source from which all its power flows" (SC 10). The liturgy is a communal work between the priest and the faithful, who participate in it in different ways. The transmission of the celebration via smartphone changes the status of the faithful – from being participants in the offline liturgy, they become "observers" of the online liturgy.

One must not lose sight of the fact that matter and form play an important role in the sacraments. For example, the administration of baptism is accompanied by consecrated water, and its form is the words: "N (= nomen), I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"; in the case of the Eucharist, the matter is the host made of unleavened flour and natural wine pressed from grapes. It is not possible to administer the matter of the sacraments through a medium; in short, there can be no fully indirect reception of the sacrament. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the Church has for centuries known the formula for spiritual communion (EE 35).

Enthusiasts of so-called Internet religion base its meaning on the concept of "transference." Online religion has no extraordinary status – it simply represents one of the activities that man has "transferred" to virtual reality (Nowak, 2011).

It is not without reason that we recall the liturgy is, by definition, a "sacred convocation," a gathering of the Church – a common and communal celebration. The lack of physical presence in the sacred space makes it difficult for the "spectators" to feel connected to the sacred. Moreover, physical separation does not constitute a congregation. Liturgy is accomplished in a sacred space and time consecrated to encountering God – a quality that cannot be achieved in the private, unconsecrated world, that is, outside the temple or the "sacred ground" set aside for worship. Can sacramental liturgy "from a smartphone"

serve the spiritual life? This question should be addressed to the believers themselves.

What we see today on the small screens of smartphones during the broadcasting of Mass is a continuation of what was previously realized by traditional media: first on the radio, through which the bedridden were able to experience a tremendous gift and privilege not available to people before the invention of the radio. Television added video to the voice, and the Internet has increased the choice of transmissions in different languages. The miniaturization of devices has now made the Internet available on a smartphone. Will the phone screen allow the kind of liturgical experience that can be experienced in church during the Eucharist?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, an interpretation of doctrine, has for years reminded us that an unexcused absence from Sunday Mass celebrated in the real world "is to draw upon oneself a grave sin that breaks the bonds of friendship with God and is a serious evil in spiritual life." It is also important to bear in mind that people using new technologies and participating in online liturgy, in the way they know best, are trying to cultivate their relationship with God – their search for a path to God is also expressed in the fact that they attend Mass online rather than watching a series on Netflix at that time. Such a choice (of online streaming instead of attending liturgy in church) can be criticized, even by those far from the Church, who say of online Mass attendees that they are in church with one foot. This one foot should not be cut off by the Church, but should be given special care, seeking answers to the question of why people who "disappear from the churches" look for religious content online, want to participate in online services and Masses, and find on the Internet what they lack in a nearby church.

In the case of inspired prayer, the Internet seems to offer an opportunity to choose the most convenient time and source of transmission – one best suited to the recipient's discretion, serving personal piety more than the teaching of the pastor. One can imagine that reading the most profound prayer texts can stimulate spiritual life. A medium such as the smartphone opens up the possibility of accessing in-depth content relevant to personal religiosity through a hypertextual virtual world.

When the phone screen transmits real-time images from cameras in the Blessed Sacrament chapel, it can definitely facilitate a sense of connection, a "gazing" at the Sanctissimum. A smartphone equipped with applications

containing biblical texts and commentaries, a "word of life" for each day, or a compendium of prayer texts helps to meet religious needs. It also enables the establishment of interpersonal relationships, fostering bonds with communities and individuals who share similar spiritual aspirations – often difficult to achieve in parishes suffering from anonymity. However, what is particularly surprising is the use of the profane in the sacred relationship with God – namely, the phone. Will it be able to serve as a means of encountering a personal God, in mysticism or the realm of the sacrum? In the case of a faith that is mature and full of trust in God's guidance, the arrival of something new – like a divine surprise (Pope Francis, in one of his first homilies on Holy Saturday, spoke of not being afraid of surprises from God) – can lead toward something good.

Smartphone use can also be an exercise in developing a spiritual life by… unplugging, fasting from the smartphone. Isabelle Jonveaux observes a tendency to "reject" the Internet and the smartphone temporarily in order to focus on a relationship with God or spirituality. Catholics often undertake this kind of fast as an act of renunciation during Lent and Advent (Jonveaux 2020), declaring, for example, "I will not be on Facebook on Fridays during Lent."

The smartphone and the Internet can also do much good in the lives of the sick, people with disabilities, and the immobile, as they provide alternative access to religious services such as the liturgy or homily.

Religious experience is a separate matter. It is both cognitive and experiential in nature, involving a sense of contact with a transcendent reality – the Divine (Zimnica-Kuzioła, 2013, pp. 11–12). Heidi Campbell, quoted above, argues that "if people experience the same effects offline as they do online, then religious practice in the digital space must be seen as authentic" (Campbell & Bellar, 2023, p. 124). The author references the work of Wendi Bellar, who studied the responses of a group of evangelicals participating in religious practices through mobile Bible and prayer apps (Bellar, 2017). Bellar found that users often described feeling encouraged and close to God while using these apps. The former was an important indicator for users that their religious experience was authentic. When they did not feel encouraged by the apps, they assumed the problem lay in their own religious identity (Campbell & Bellar, 2023, p. 125). This supports the legitimacy of religious practices in the digital world – though not all of them a priori. It may attest to their authenticity and their potential to influence spiritual life.

However, the risks to spiritual life must also be considered, particularly its exposure to manipulation and deception, both of which are prevalent on the Internet. When exploring religious inspiration via a smartphone, one can easily be misled by what Fr. Grzegorz Strzelczyk describes as "a flood of things that verge on esotericism, sprinkled with holy water and dressed up in a Catholic narrative." This is even more concerning because, as he notes, "the main teacher for Polish Catholics is YouTube. Not any bishop" (Strzelczyk, 2018).

A separate issue is the inauthentic (performed for show) or entirely false religious self-presentations of bloggers or "witnesses to the faith," who craft elevated personal narratives. As Deborah Whitehead notes, when such figures are exposed as dishonest or their stories as exaggerated, audiences may experience a "sense of 'emotional deception'" and feel disillusioned by the spiritual world (Whitehead, 2015, p. 138). This sense of deception can significantly impact belief in the credibility and meaning of spiritual life.

Criticism, ridicule of religion, and the questioning of religious truths and authorities can be even more destructive. Mads Damgaard points out that computer-mediated communication – likely including smartphone use, which young people, in particular, rarely part with – creates new opportunities for challenging and contesting traditional, including religious, authorities. Moreover, religion itself, as a belief system, can be "re-done," and reality can be sacralised anew (Damgaard, 2014, p. 33).

Ultimately, everything depends on what kind of knowledge and experiences the smartphone user seeks on the mobile Internet. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that "more and more people see the Internet as a sacred space and Internet technology as having a spiritual quality" (Campbell & Bellar, 2023, p. 127). In other words, it can positively impact their spiritual life, offering interactions they might not otherwise have access to without a smartphone.

Conclusions

Canadian sociologist of religion Christopher Helland pointed out that religion directs actions and shapes the worldview of its adherents, entailing the "doing" of religion through ways of living, interacting, and participating in rituals (Helland, 2005, pp. 4–5). Religious, spiritual life is a manifestation of human religiosity both in collective religious activities (e.g., worship, rituals) and in the sphere of individual spirituality, such as prayer or mysticism.

After several decades of the popularization of smartphones equipped with mobile Internet, the ability to access network resources anytime, anywhere, and join various types of groups and social media activities, the Internet is increasingly influencing the formation of religious identity and spiritual life. It can serve as a tool in building piety and provide a sphere of spiritual support, contributing to the transformation of religious practice in the digital age. Forecasting the role of digital religion, the author states that online religious practice supplements traditional religious practices rather than replacing them, but this may change in the future (Buksa 2023b, p. 320). However, as research on digital religion shows, this process is not without consequences – smartphones shape new forms of spirituality, often outside traditional religious institutions, leading to a hybridization of faith and the growing phenomenon of "Spiritual but not Religious" (SBNR) believers.

Despite these positive aspects, this still-new phenomenon is accompanied by many questions and concerns. Among them is the question of whether practicing religion through a gadget like a smartphone, a device used for mundane activities such as buying a ticket or mindless scrolling, is a spiritual obstacle. Can mediated contact with the Word of God read "on screen" instead of from a holy book have the same religious overtones, be a comparable experience? This raises concerns about the mediation of religious experience – whether digital interaction with sacred texts can be equivalent to the embodied, communal experience of worship.

One could agree with these reservations if it were not for the fact that religion itself is a form of "mediation", as direct contact with God in the world is not possible. We encounter God and perform religious acts always indirectly, through sacraments, prayers, and religious symbols. Nevertheless, as scholars point out, digital sacraments cannot replace physical ones – while virtual participation in the liturgy can sustain faith, it does not fulfil the theological and sacramental requirements of religious life.

It seems that in an increasingly indifferent world, especially in areas where clergy do not undertake a new evangelization of today's "baptized pagans" – as envisioned by Fr. Franciszek Blachnicki (1921–1987) in his concept of the deuterocatechumenate – the use of smartphones should be embraced, much like the Internet once was. The increasing shift towards online religious engagement challenges the role of traditional religious institutions, and ignoring this trend could accelerate the deinstitutionalization of faith. The

possibilities offered by these widely available devices can be an effective tool for evangelization and revitalization of spiritual life if they are used wisely.

To return to the thoughts formulated in the introduction, the increasing expansion of smartphones into the sacred sphere is to be expected. There are many arguments to appreciate their role in sustaining and building personal religious life ad intra, in the individual experience of faith. However, as research suggests, the risks of religious digitalization must be considered, particularly the exposure to manipulation, misinformation, and emotional deception in online religious content. The fragmentation of religious authority, where clergy are replaced by digital influencers, is another challenge that must be addressed.

At the same time, the sacrum ad extra – the communal experience of faith in sacred space – must remain as free as possible from digital intrusions. While smartphones can facilitate religious engagement, they can also distract from authentic spiritual reflection. This principle must not be violated, especially by the clergy, who, in the name of pious practices, risk bringing smartphones before the altar through a side door. The role of digital tools should be supportive, not disruptive to the embodied, physical, and communal aspects of faith.

Ultimately, it is not about the device itself – the gadget, the phone connected to the Internet – but about the wise and conscious use of its content. The paradox of digital fasting, observed by scholars, suggests that while smartphones can be tools for spiritual growth, they also necessitate periodic disconnection to cultivate deeper contemplation. This balance between technological engagement and spiritual discipline is key to ensuring that digital religion enriches rather than undermines faith.

Undoubtedly, the spiritual life realized under the influence of the smartphone-connected world is complex. It has many forms and stages, and as sociologists of religion note, requires further research. At the same time, digital tools provide unprecedented access to religious resources, particularly for the sick, disabled, and geographically isolated believers, making faith more accessible than ever before. The future of faith in the digital age will likely be hybrid, balancing traditional religious practices with digital innovations. The key challenge remains finding equilibrium between digital engagement and preserving the depth and authenticity of religious life.

Abstract: This chapter explores how one can nurture, from the perspective of Christian faith, the development of a person's spiritual life in the modern era of behavioural transformations driven by smartphonisation – the frequent and often addictive use of smartphones. This issue is highly significant considering the widespread adoption of mobile phones and the exponential increase in time spent by almost all generations engaging with screens. The topic is particularly urgent as it highlights the intersection of two profoundly different realms. On the one hand, the inner spiritual world of human beings, which, since the advent of modernity, has often been marginalized or reduced to a pursuit of psycho-physical well-being. On the other hand, the virtual world, which increasingly dominates our time, particularly for younger generations, creating a "networked life" or "connected life." The pervasive influence of this second universe – the world of screens – demands both a commitment to safeguarding the spiritual life of the *digital human*, or *homo sapiens digitalis*, and an exploration of new opportunities for spiritual growth in the smartphone era.

Keywords: Christian faith, spiritual life, smartphonisation, smartphone addiction, digital habits, virtual world, digital human, connected life, networked life, screen culture.

Streszczenie: Niniejszy rozdział analiz, w jaki sposób można pielęgnować, z perspektywy wiary chrześcijańskiej, rozwój życia duchowego człowieka we współczesnej epoce przemian behawioralnych napędzanych smartfonizacją – częstym i często uzależniającym korzystaniem ze smartfonów. Kwestia ta jest niezwykle istotna, biorąc pod uwagę powszechne wykorzystanie telefonów komórkowych oraz wykładniczy wzrost czasu spędzanego przez niemal wszystkie pokolenia przed ekranami. Temat ten jest szczególnie pilny, ponieważ ukazuje przecięcie dwóch zasadniczo odmiennych rzeczywistości. Z jednej strony – wewnętrznego, duchowego świata człowieka, który od początku nowoczesności był często marginalizowany lub sprowadzany do dążenia do dobrostanu psychofizycznego. Z drugiej strony – świata wirtualnego, który coraz bardziej dominuje nad naszym czasem, zwłaszcza wśród młodszych pokoleń, tworząc „życie w sieci" lub „życie połączone". Wszechobecny wpływ tego drugiego uniwersum – świata ekranów – wymaga zarówno zaangażowania w ochronę życia duchowego *człowieka cyfrowego*, czyli *homo sapiens digitalis*, jak i poszukiwania nowych możliwości rozwoju duchowego w erze smartfonów.

Słowa kluczowe: Wiara chrześcijańska, życie duchowe, smartfonizacja, uzależnienie od smartfonów, cyfrowe nawyki, wirtualny świat, *homo sapiens digitalis*, connected life, networked life, kultura ekranu.

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