

The Meaning of Simplicity in the GMIM Efrata Kanonang Congregation

Makna Kesederhanaan dalam Jemaat Gmim Efrata Kanonang

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the praxis of simplicity among Minahasan affiliates of the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) as a spirituality that opposes consumeristic religion. A qualitative case study design was employed to gather data in the form of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of documents using purposely chosen congregants who always engage in simple living in family, ministry, and everyday life. Data were interpreted using thematic analysis, which was informed by the theological-hermeneutical framework. The results indicate that simplicity is not considered an absence but a planned, religious lifestyle of sufficiency, gratitude, humility, and reliance on God's providence. In practical terms, the concept of simplicity is reflected in judicious handling of finances, low-profile consumption, non-competitive involvement in worship, and judicious use of social media. Congregants define this way of life as a protest against consumerist ideas such as extravagance, flaunting, and spiritual arrogance, which are becoming more pronounced in church activities and general society. This opposition is anchored in the merging of Minahasan cultural norms, particularly *mapalus* (mutual help) and the GMIM ethos of love, service, and modesty. This study concludes that the praxis of simplicity among GMIM congregants is a situational spirituality of resistance that protects and revitalizes the church's theological identity. It provides pastoral implications for faith formation, leadership, and ecclesial practices that are useful in enabling congregants to resist religious consumerism while being involved in modern social life in the plural context of Indonesia.

BACKGROUND

During the processes of modern church life, especially in the environment of globalization and active sociocultural transformation, dilemmas of complex existentialism have appeared. Among these is the increase in consumerism, not just in the economic world but also in religious practice (Meruntu & Palembang, 2025). As a form of market logic applied to the spiritual dimension, religious consumerism gradually, but inevitably, turns the face of faith into something that can be consumed, sold, and shown (Saumantri et al., 2023). Within this framework, faith practices that should be based on transcendent relationships and ethical commitments are at risk of being converted to lifestyle preferences or superficial social affiliations.

The Eastern Indonesia Evangelical Christian Church (Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa, GMIM), one of the oldest Protestant Christian denominations in Eastern Indonesia with a firm theological and cultural foundation, is not an exception to this challenge (Nendissa et al., 2025).

Despite these pressures, the congregations involved in GMIM through all types of simplicity praxis in their daily lives have responded in ways that represent unique spiritual and theological aspects (Nendissa et al., 2025).

The study is scientifically novel in its method of analysis, which does not simply perceive the praxis of simplicity, as practiced by GMIM congregants, as an ethical decision, an ascetic practice, or an economic adaptation, but as a spirituality of resistance to religious consumerism (Sarimbangun, 2020). Such a way of thinking alters the logic of positivism, in which simplicity is usually viewed as a virtue or passive way of life, and has been turned into an active practice full of theological and social connotations (Cholili, 2025). Simplicity in this context is perceived to be an act of faith to the extent that it implicitly and expressly denies the logic of consumption, commodification, and individualism that has become prevalent in consumerism. This simple praxis is regarded as an attempt to preserve the theological identity of the GMIM in the modern social environment in which values are falsely distributed.

It should be mentioned that the notion of the spirituality of resistance is not completely new in the theological context (Mawikere & Hura, 2024). Within the traditions of liberation, such as in the case of spirituality, struggles against structural oppression are commonly linked to spirituality (Liku, 2024). Nevertheless, the spirituality of resistance is applied in the context of the present study to resistance against more insidious, less tangible oppressions that do not affect them any less devastatingly, which is the subjection of market logic to the spiritual realm. This is the novelty of the study: the nature of the connections between local spirituality (grounded in Minahasan culture and GMIM theology) and social commentary on consumerism, and the place in which the connections are made in a consistent theological framework (Arulangi, 2023).

The methodological framework used in the given study also brings a degree of novelty (Haqqi, 2023). This study works interdisciplinarily, combining practical theology, cultural anthropology, sociology of religion, and consumerism research approaches instead of merely depending on a normative theological approach (Litera, 2021). This makes the analysis of congregational praxis more holistic, not simply through the lens of the doctrines or ethics of a congregation, but through the lens of the practice of such a congregation as it is carried out in specific cultural, economic, and social-relational settings (Bouway & Mbelanggedo, 2025). For example, using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and narrative analysis, this study finds how the congregants of GMIM make sense of simplicity in family life, church ministry, and even how they dress, eat, and worship (Yani, 2024). This is followed by empirical data from a critical theological perspective, especially the theology of culture and contextual theology (Stevanus, 2020).

This is particularly topical given that GMIM is a special church that has developed as a result of the contact of the Gospel with Minahasan culture (Stevanus, 2020). The theological identity of the GMI is not based on Calvinism alone, but is influenced by local values of openness, togetherness, mutual respect, and simplicity of life (Pinontoan & Sulu, 2024). Here, simplicity is not only a virtue taught by the Gospel, but it has already been integrated into the Minahasan cultural ethos, as confirmed by the existence of the congregation. Nevertheless, in the wake of modernity and globalization, these principles are in most cases defeated by the needs of a consumptive type of life that has become an indicator of achievement and social positioning, even in churches (Pinontoan & Sulu, 2024). There has come up competition in praise, lavishness in church affairs, and social pressure to seem spiritual by material symbols (such as branded clothing, large offerings, or belonging to high-society church organizations). The simplicity practiced by certain members of that congregation, in such a case, is not a personal decision but a way of protesting against the homogenization of spirituality under consumerist logic (Simanjuntak, 2023).

Another unique aspect of the findings presented in this study is that it shows that lay congregants had agency (agenticity) in developing their lived theology (Patulak, 2024). Instead of being passive receivers of church teaching or cultural pressures, the congregants of GMIM, in the praxis of simplicity, recreate the meaning of their faith in a difficult environment. This pushes against widespread beliefs in the analysis of religion, which tend to think about congregations as

homogenous groups that passively accept the instructions of spiritual leaders. In contrast, this study illustrates that congregational spirituality is shifting, receptive, and innovative and can even be a source of theological creativity (Widjaja & Boiliu, 2019).

Moreover, this work also contributes significantly to the world discourse concerning the concept of the simple church, which in Western societies tends to be related to alternative ecclesial movements or the criticism of the institutionalization of the church. Simplicity, in the case of GMIM, however, does not imply rejection of church structures but instead a reorientation of values within the existing structures (Widjaja & Boiliu, 2019). This signifies that the spirituality of resistance may come from the institutional church itself and not only from outside it. In this regard, the study contributes to the global discourse by including the views of the Global South, especially Eastern Indonesia, which are frequently overlooked in theological discussions at the international level (Bandur, 2025).

This study has modern implications for the modern church. On the one hand, all the churches of the world have the same problem: how to be spiritually uncompromising in the face of the culture of consumerism (Sulistyo et al., 2024). Conversely, many churches continue to fail to devise pastoral and faith-education strategies that are critically attentive to consumerism without lapsing into hard-core moralism or superficial binary thinking between secular and spiritual (Sulistyo et al., 2024). The results of the present research provide a different approach: perceiving simplicity as not a ban and denial of the world, but a different manifestation of loyalty to Gospel values, which does not allow being absorbed in the logic of the market economy (Yunita & Syarat, 2020). This creates a room in which churches have the opportunity to align their pastoral strategies, which are more contextual, participatory, and based on local wisdom (Yunita & Syarat, 2020).

Moreover, this study is part of the decolonizing theology work (Tampilang, 2025). This study questions the hegemony of Western theology, which has tended to inadequately determine the terms of truth in faith by reflecting on local conditions using the experiences of GMIM congregants as a valid source of theological reflection. The spirituality of resistance created by GMIM congregations proves that theology is not created exclusively in seminar rooms or textbooks, but also in kitchens, fields, and basic places of worship where ordinary believers live (Oematan, 2023).

The plurality of Indonesia also makes the study useful in reinforcing the narratives of spirituality grounded in local wisdom as an alternative to cultural homogenization across the globe (Lapian et al., 2025). Simplicity is not the same as poverty or backwardness to GMIM congregants, but a deliberate decision that they make in the service of their faith and social justice dedication (Tengor, 2023). This demonstrates that Christian spirituality does not have to be antagonistic to local values, as long as it is constantly reviewed and revitalized in the light of the Gospel (Silitonga, 2025).

Overall, the scientific novelty of this study is not only in the discoveries but also in the manner in which it addresses theological questions that are topical in our time (Lontoh, 2025). Through an interdisciplinary approach, which unites local experience, social critique, and theological reflection, this study will not only inform scholarship on GMIM, but also the theological conversation on the topic of spirituality, consumerism, and church identity in the twenty-first century (MANUSAMA, 2025). Congregations that prefer simplicity as a kind of spiritual resistance should be heard in an increasingly commodified world, not as a kind of nostalgia for the past, but as a possible way to build a more authentic, inclusive, and calling-true church in the future.

METHOD

This qualitative proposal with a case study design investigates the praxis of simplicity in the lives of the congregants of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) as a form of resistance to religious consumerism. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is necessary to comprehend in-depth and holistically the meanings, experiences, and sociocultural situations that encircle these practices. The case study design was selected as it enables the researcher to explore the intricate social realities in their natural environment, in this case, a GMIM congregational community in a particular part of North Sulawesi, and how they comprehend and practice simplicity in their daily faith.

This study has a methodological framework that lies in interdisciplinary studies that combine the insights of practical theology, cultural anthropology, sociology of religion, and consumerism analysis. Such an interdisciplinary approach may allow for the analysis of the praxis of simplicity according to not only Christian doctrine or ethics, but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon shaped by the local background, economic relations, and globalization trends. By doing so, this study does not rely on theological reductionism or cultural determinism but rather attempts to understand the intricacies of the relationships between faith, culture, and social orders.

This was done through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The sample size of the 20 key informants based on purposive sampling comprised congregants who have embraced simplicity in their personal lives, family relations, and ministry in the church. The informants were pastors, members of the church council, members of the service commissions, and lay congregants of various age groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

Semi structured interviews were employed to enable personal stories that are abundant in theological connotations and life experiences to emerge. The participation observation involved worship services, small-group meetings (*komsel*, *komunitas sel*), religious-cultural occasions, and normal communal life to provide the practical and symbolic aspects of simplicity that could be underrepresented in interviews. Institutional representations of the value of simplicity in the form of church documents, such as ministry manuals, sermon archives, and internal GMIM publications, were also examined.

The analysis was conducted thematically through a theological-hermeneutical approach to data analysis. The first stage of coding was inductive in the qualitative data analysis, where patterns, themes, and dominant narratives were identified. The themes were then discussed using the theoretical models of resistance, religious consumerism, and contextual theological identity. The analysis process was both reflective and iterative to gain descriptive, critical, and constructive interpretations.

The research validity was preserved by the principles of data triangulation (interviews, observations, documents), researcher reflexivity, and member checking, that is, the process of confirming the interpretations and meanings with the informants. Ethics in research were also followed, such as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, as well as respect for the cultural and faith beliefs of the congregants. This methodology would enable the research to come up with findings that are not only scholarly but also pastoral and transformational to the life of the modern church.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

According to the interviewee testimonies of GMIM members, the following section highlights the results of the empirical research on the meaning of the understanding and practice of simplicity among the members of the congregation, its connection to religious consumerism, the spiritual and theological meanings that come with it, and its clarification of the ecclesial self and pastoral ministry. The description is also written in thematic form based on the research questions and does not engage in theoretical discussion.

1. The Meaning of Simplicity: Adequacy, Moderation, and Non-Excess.

The informants constantly interpret simplicity as a lifestyle that does not indulge itself and instead, is channeled towards doing what is really significant. Simplicity has been defined as the state of having a narrow approach towards needs that are not necessary, living within the capacity of what one can afford, and facing value to what one has. Several informants stated the inner aspect of simplicity with highlights of sincerity, humility, feeling of sufficiency, and gratitude. Simple living is not seen as a life of deprivation but as a lifestyle that allows one to live life and not feel the need to compare oneself with other people. Simplicity is also linked to the attitude of not flaunting oneself, not seeking luxuriousness, and not having an unnecessarily luxurious life. Generally speaking,

simplicity is a blend of both a way of thinking (mindset) of sufficiency as well as an action that limits people to consumptive ways of acting.

2. The Praxis of Simplicity in Family Life, Worship, and Lifestyle.

Simplicity is defined by the informants primarily in the financial management and need prioritization in the realm of personal and family life. They referred to the fact that they lived within their financial means, did not purchase unnecessary things, and paid attention to family unity and appreciation. Spending time with family, being thankful for what one has, and not imposing an impossible standard of living are often cited as tangible manifestations of happiness.

When applied to the area of worship and church ministry, simplicity manifests in the spirit of servitude without the desire to be praised. The informants also stressed that ministry must be devoted to the glorification of God, rather than the looks of the servants and materialistic luxury of church affairs. Examples of such praxis are praying for the sick, assisting the needy in trivial ways, and being in active ministry without the connection to prestige. Simplicity in terms of culture is also displayed in the way of dressing, food habits, and media usage. Informants stated that they wear something modest and comfortable and do not necessarily follow fashion, eat enough and healthily, and have a frugal attitude. Filtering healthy information and not transforming it into a self-disclosure space is also used to regulate social media use. Overall, such practices reflect a high level of needs, but not wants.

3. Teaching GMIM and Foundations of Culture.

GMIM teaching and Minahasan cultural values emerge with high force as the two pillars of the praxis of simplicity. Some informants directly refer to the idea of *mapalus* as a way of cooperating with each other and assisting others without expecting any payback. To them, the lesson of *mapalus* is that life is neither about individualism but rather about sharing and brotherhood. Conversely, GMIM instruction is claimed to focus on love, service, humility, and responsibility. These values are perceived to coexist with simple living. The informants emphasized that congregants are taught the lesson of not being arrogant, even if they have material wealth, and to thank and serve others with love. Therefore, simplicity is not a standalone element but an element of the cultural ethos and spirituality of the church.

4. Cousiness in the Face of a Progressively Modern Church and the Risk of Overindulgence.

Expressing the current state of religion and church life, the informants pointed out the shifts towards a more modern manifestation, but with the possibility of excess. They can see a tendency to worship and engage in religious practices with an emphasis on outward appearance, that is, the luxury of events, competition in appearance, and self-promotion on social media. According to some informants, in some cases, the activities of churches may be used to emphasize outer elements, such as clothing, decoration, or intergroup rivalry, instead of the spiritual character of the activity. However, they acknowledge and confirm the importance of church teaching in instilling love, peace, and justice. Sensations of pressure to adhere to trends also arise, although not all informants experience them. Some said that they have been pressured about the norms of clothing in worship or volume of offering, while some said they are not affected much. This shows that there is a variance in the reaction of the congregant to the social norms formed within the church setting.

The informants simply associated the sense of faith and spirituality with the decision to live simply. Simplicity is perceived as a demonstration of thanksgiving, trust in the providence of God, and imitation of the way that Jesus experienced. Relationships with God and other people are more about life than material possessions and wealth. Cases of simplicity have been related to inner peace, feelings of sufficiency, and attempts to shun arrogance. To many members of the congregation, leading a simple life is not just an ethical decision and way of life, but a living faith. Therefore, it is not simplicity as a social practice that is followed, but simplicity is perceived as part of their daily spiritual practice. The majority of informants specifically perceive the concept of simplicity as a kind of opposition to their lifestyles. According to them, the culture around tends to give too much attention to materialistic objects and issues regarded as insignificant. Simplicity is perceived as a criticism of the consumptive world, excessive luxury, spiritual pride, and the need of always wanting to be seen

as better than the rest. The informants reject the notion that happiness and personal value are quantified by material things by opting to live a simple life. In their stories, simplicity serves as a screen against secular values, which they perceive to be incompatible with the vocation of faith, although they may not have the theoretical formulation of this.

Simplicity is also associated with a wider Christian calling. According to the informants, God calls them to abandon what is superfluous and live according to the Gospel. Plainness is seen as an expression of the Christian desire to live a faithful life, in a humble manner, and to imitate Jesus. According to some informants, simple living is a visible mark of a living faith—that they are true to the Gospel of Christ and that they are trying to do their vocation as His disciples earnestly and humbly. It leads to simplicity as a basis for concentrating life on Christ instead of acquiring status in society. The congregational reactions to the simple lifestyle of the informants were diverse. Others embrace and use it as a model, particularly where such impoverished lives are also found among church leaders. Some of the informants state that the congregation is very responsive, whereas others state that there are individuals who do not grasp it completely or who do not easily accept it.

Speaking of ecclesial identity, the informants tended to think that GMIM is still struggling to maintain biblical teaching and its theological identity, where simplicity is among the significant qualities. The teaching, liturgy, and other aspects of the church's ministry are deemed to be focused on the fundamental values of the Gospel, which are love, service, hard work, and simplicity. Simplicity plays an extremely significant role in this respect. This is a reminder that the church cannot get stuck in image-making or luxurious living, but must be focused on its original task, which is to proclaim the good news, serve with love, and live in the way Christ did.

The informants concede that there are challenges to simple living when making the decision to live simply in an environment that has a propensity for consumerism. Among these challenges is the ability to sacrifice things that, according to the usual forms of evaluation, are deemed valuable, such as lifestyle patterns that have become cultural. In addition, we receive judgments from others who regard plain living as an indication of being less competent, not keeping in touch with the times, or even not ambitious. This kind of social pressure may make one feel like an outsider or forgotten. Other informants also mentioned more macro problems, such as social and economic inequality and the adverse effects of globalization, which may support the stigmatizing attitudes towards simplicity. The informants, however, say that they still stick to the principle of living simply as an act of faith, even when it might end up clashing with mainstream values in society.

In their thoughts, the informants relay messages and expectations to the church, especially GMIM, regarding the significance of simplicity in the modern day. Simplicity is perceived to require an initial response from the individual and family change, which is then taken up in church life. They ask the Church to take a more deliberate step towards imitating Christ in his simplicity to make the ministry purer and closer to the small and marginalized. The simplicity message is deemed necessary to be preached constantly using sermons, devotions, and official church appeals. In relation to the attempts to avoid the congregants getting stuck in religious consumerism, the informants suggested some measures: from an early age, through Sunday school, teaching the principles of sufficiency and thankfulness, stewardship of resources, and practical examples by church leaders. The church will also not make the mistake of being overly consumed with luxury and material gratification in its worship forms and redefine biblical principles of simplicity, service, and love.

Discussion

The results shed light on how GMIM congregants create and incarnate the concept of simplicity as a practiced spirituality in a socio-religious environment that is relentlessly impacted by consumerist values. The results in this section are discussed within the context of a wider theological, sociological, and cultural discussion of consumerism in religion, contextual theology, and the spirituality of resistance.

1. Reimagining Simplicity as a Spiritual Resistance Lived.

As the interviews indicate, congregants do not perceive simplicity as an economic technique or even a virtue of morality, but as a whole life based on faith. Their focus on living according to the means one can afford, not living lavishly, and being satisfied with the things one has is always associated with thankfulness, humility, and confidence that God will provide. This implies that simplicity can be described as embodied spirituality: not only does it have to be confessed, but also practiced in day-to-day activities, habits, and choices.

Meanwhile, some of the informants directly referred to simplicity as a kind of perlawanan (resistance) to materialistic excess, wastefulness, and a rivalry-based way of life. In this case, simplicity transcends individual piety; it obtains a critique advantage targeted at the values that prevail in their social surroundings, including church domains. This echoes the concept of the spirituality of resistance in liberationist and contextual theologies, where spirituality is not the devotion of the interior but instead a protest against oppression and the perverted system of values.

Of interest within this context, however, is the change in the direction of opposing overt structural forms of oppression (i.e., political or economic domination) to the opposing less obvious forms of oppression, which is the internalized logic of consumerism in the religious life. The members of the congregation are not allowed to speak in academic terms, such as the commodification of faith; however, their stories of not associating happiness and value with material things show a critical understanding of how market values can creep into spiritual identity.

In this way, the simplicity introduced by the informants can be seen as an everyday counter-cultural practice. This disputes the script that identifies spiritual maturity with noticeable prosperity, opulent religious occasions, or conspicuous religion. Rather, it shifts the focus of faith back to the depth of relationships, inner peace, and loyalty to the Gospel.

2. Cultural and Theological Resources: The Ethos of Mapalus and GMIM's Simplicity

Another important discovery is how cultural and ecclesial resources converge to enhance the spirituality of simplicity. A cultural frame in which simplicity is not understood as deprivation but as a natural manifestation of comradeship is the Minahasan notion of mapalus, a collective ethic of mutual assistance, collective responsibility, and non-competitive solidarity. This implies that local culture does not affect the practice of religion in a neutral manner; it actually provides symbolic and practical resources to oppose consumerist individualism.

In addition to mapalus, the theological ethos of GMIM (with its Reformed origins but fallen into the culture of Minahasan society) is characterized by love, service, hard work, and modesty. Congregants keep attributing simplicity to the essence of these values, particularly the call to service without desiring approval and avoiding pride despite enjoying material wealth. GMIM theology, in this respect, does not exist in opposition to culture; on the contrary, it is in active interaction with the values of culture, confirming and redefining the latter through the prism of the Gospel.

This interplay is particularly significant from a decolonial theological perspective. This demonstrates that the means of opposing religious consumerism and cultural homogenization in the world do not necessarily have to be imported within Western theological paradigms. Alternatively, they may arise from the local cultural memory and experience of local communities. When the spirituality of resistance is anchored in the mapalus and GMIM's theological tradition, the congregants are effectively re-appropriating their tradition in a critical way to locate and challenge consumerist tendencies in the Church and society.

3. Creating Lay Agency and Negotiating Social Pressures.

The information also shows that simplicity does not exist in an empty space. Several types of social pressure need to be negotiated among congregants and outside the church. Other informants say that they are pressured to meet some of these standards, whether in terms of dress, giving, or mode of engaging in worship. Someone else describes how simple people can be considered lesser, out of fashion, or not ambitious.

These experiences indicate that religious consumerism is not merely an issue of institutional activity (i.e., extravagant events or performance-driven worship); it is also subtle social expectations

and symbolic boundaries. Branded clothing, giant offerings, or very noticeable religious attendance can also be used as signifiers of religious or social status. When members of the congregation decide not to engage in these markers, they may find themselves marginalized or even misunderstood.

However, the interviews also indicate that many lay members exercised agency in this negotiation. They choose to make a conscious decision not to go with the current of competition or spectacle and repeat what the real meaning of worship is. By doing so, they are not merely falling out of the church institution; they are trying to occupy it in a different way, to restructure their involvement around interiority, sincerity, and relational richness.

This lay agency is essential for at least two reasons. First, it questions the belief often held about some sociological and theological explanations that church members are passive receivers of doctrine or culture. The informants actively read, accept, reaffirm, or oppose dominant values based on their faith. Second, theological innovation occurs through their agency. Their daily choices concerning finance, fashion, media, and services express a kind of lived theology of simplicity that sometimes cannot be properly described by official stipulated dogma.

4. Ecclesial Identity, Simple Church, and Decolonial View.

The results show that congregants see GMIM as one that is still trying to cling to its theological identity despite social change, with one of its distinguishing characteristics being simplicity. They cite the liturgical patterns, preaching, and service at GMIM as places where the values of love, service, and simplicity are still stressed despite modern and even consumerist circumstances.

This is a ground that offers fertile soil for rethinking ecclesial identity. On the one hand, members of the congregation notice the trends of spectacle, contestation, and image preservation in some of the church events as well as online manifestations of religiosity. Yet, they never forget or appreciate the GMIM tradition of humility, its focus on the little people, and its practice of day-to-day devotion.

Within the wider discussion of simple church movements (which are usually influenced by Western experiences of responding to bureaucratic or consumerist mega-church patterns), these GMIM experiences provide a different Global South contribution to the discussion. With GMIM, it does not need to necessarily do away with church structures and give up institutional forms. Instead, it focuses on re-establishing values in those structures: maintaining the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and following love as central to it, and avoiding the temptation to transform church life into a show and a competitive arena.

This is important in terms of the decolonial position. This shows that critical reflection on consumerism, ecclesial identity, and spirituality does not have to be perceived as the simple adoption of Western theological categories. Rather, GMIM congregants create their own critical discourse based on the experience available locally as to what it means to be a church in the commodification era. By their testimonies as it were formed in kitchens, fields, and bare worship spaces, they challenge the hegemony of theological production, which affirms the admissibility of academic or Western-based voices as the only legitimate representatives of theology.

5. Troubles, Stigma, and the Price of Simple.

Although both stories are full of hope and belief, they also reveal the price of living an uncomplicated life. Informants reported the necessity of giving up some goods or lifestyle patterns that are considered valuable in the culture. They relate how they have been judged as poor, backward, or unambitious and how deep consumerist ideology has penetrated social judgment at the everyday level.

Moreover, certain responses refer to larger social issues—social and economic inequality, corruption, and the adverse effects of globalization - against which simplicity is construed. Within such a setup, the decision to be less might be easily construed as a resignation to poverty or the absence of ambitions, as opposed to a conscious and faith-informed attitude.

These contradictions emphasize that the spirituality of simplicity cannot be romantic. It involves being susceptible to misunderstanding and conflict, especially when confronted with

symbols of status that are so established. Meanwhile, the fact that congregants remain faithful to their beliefs indicates that simplicity can be viewed as a reliable ethical-spiritual guide that enables congregants to cope in a morally hazardous world.

6. Pastoral and Educational Implications: Raising Generational Simplicity.

The informants also provided realistic recommendations on how the church can help congregants fight religious consumerism. They emphasize the necessity of early development, starting with Sunday school, to help children understand what is good and not be confused with values that are misleading. They discuss the necessity of preaching and teaching that restores biblical themes of simplicity, stewardship, and sacrificial love, and not material success as an unspoken spiritual goal.

In addition, they emphasize the importance of examples, particularly by church leaders. When the pastors and elders themselves live simple lifestyles, not displaying luxuries, engaging in generosity, and being close to common people, the life of the pastor and elder becomes a living text, an interpretation of the Gospel in a counter-consumerist key. This is consistent with the ancient wisdom of practical theology: that faithful witness requires not only orthodox dogma but also visible observable practices that render the dogma credible. With regards to pastoral practice, the results indicate that GMIM and similar churches may: Revise liturgical and programmatic practices to identify whether they unwillingly perpetuate competition, spectacle, or market-style branding. The concept of small-group or household-based discipleship, making money, consumption, media use, and social comparison is at the heart of Christian formation. Providing opportunities for congregants to share their experiences of simple living, thereby making simplicity a normal practice and refuting the stigma against simple living as a state of failure or ineptitude. Through this kind of work, simplicity may not be a denial of the world, but a good, optimistic manner of living in the world, one that creates space in which justice, solidarity, and a happy reliance on God may be experienced.

7. Towards a Contextual Theology of Simplicity in the Twenty-First Century Church.

In general, this study opines that the praxis of simplicity among GMIM congregants has considerable value in the current theology. In a world experiencing the strains of religious consumerism, the GMIM experience demonstrates that local culture, ecclesial tradition, and lay agency can come together to explain a contextual theology of simplicity as a spirituality of resistance. Instead of simplicity being perceived nostalgically or anti-modern, the congregants re-construe it as dynamic, promising, and trying to preserve the purity of faith against co-optation by market values. Their narratives warn churches in other parts of the world to rethink the way spiritual identity is being formed, that is, by the silent work of grace in everyday life or the loud clamor of visibility, performance, and competition. In this respect, the voices of GMIM are not simply accounts of a local phenomenon; they provide an alternative imagining of the future of the church: a community that has the courage to be modest in the culture of exhibition, to be satisfied in the culture of insatiable desire, and to be locally learned in a world of homogenizing globalization. This kind of church is a testament to another economy, the economy of grace, where the worth of people is not determined by what they possess or display, but by their involvement in the self-giving love of Christ.

CONCLUSION

This study endeavored to examine how GMIM congregants interpret and practice simplicity as a spirituality of resistance in the face of increasing religious consumerism. The results demonstrate that simplicity is not viewed as an indication of lack, but an intentional, religiously oriented lifestyle characterized by sufficiency, gratitude, humility, and confidence in the providence of God. Congregants create simplicity as an embodied practice of discipleship through the daily affairs of life in the family, worship, and lifestyle decisions that redirect the focus of status and display to the relationship with God and neighbor. Simultaneously, the study indicates that simplicity is a silent yet unmistakable resistance to the culture of excess, competition, and commodification that increasingly defines church life. By denying that spiritual value can be equated with material things (branded clothes, fancy events, or conspicuous gifts), congregants challenge the penetration of

market logic into the world of religion. This convergence of Minahasan cultural values, particularly mapalus, and the GMIM theological ethos of love, service, and modesty support their position, offering local means to a contextual spirituality of resistance.

The research also highlights the proactive role of lay members who bargain with the social pressures, misconceptions, and stigma surrounding living simply. On the contrary, as passive consumers of doctrine or culture, they read, confirm, and at times dispute common expectations in the presence of the Gospel. This would create an embodied theology of simplicity that maintains and brings new life to the identity of GMIM in a constantly evolving social world. Finally, the implications of the findings on pastoral importance are significant. This is an appeal to GMIM and other churches to recover simplicity as a fundamental aspect of Christian formation and ecclesial identity, not only in family life, but also in worship, leadership, and their witness to the world. The church can assist congregants in avoiding religious consumerism by re-evaluating their liturgical practices, enhancing formative teaching, and exemplifying simple lifestyles without retreating from the world. In an era of widespread commodification, the pragmatic simplicity of congregations that have arisen through GMIM suggests a powerful view of a church that is more authentic, inclusive, and true to the way of Christ. According to such a witness, even small and local congregations have a role to play in global theological discussions.

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