Reconfiguring Sacred Nature: A Historical-Cultural Interpretation of the Christian Church's Shifting Authority

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Abstract: This research makes the historical and socio-cultural development of the Christian Church a key unit of analysis, focusing on how its sacred nature was formed, reinterpreted, and negotiated throughout various historical periods. The purpose of this research is to examine the shift in the role of the Church—from an early persecuted community to a dominant institution in the Middle Ages, to a divided institution during the Reformation era, and to facing the challenges of secularization, globalization, and digital religiosity in the contemporary era. Using historical-critical qualitative methods and interpretive-cultural approaches, this study analyzes primary texts, ecclesiastical documents, theological writings, and cutting-edge scholarly works to trace patterns of continuity, change, and symbolic negotiation in the Church's journey. The study's findings indicate that, although the Church's institutional authority is declining in many Western societies, it continues to exert a significant cultural influence through social justice advocacy, ecological engagement, and digital forms of worship. The sacred nature of the Church shifts from institutional centers to symbolic and aesthetic representations, in line with the reconfiguration of sacred meaning in a secular and pluralistic context. The contribution of this research lies in presenting an integrated framework that connects sacred representations, historical transformations, and cultural adaptations, and in illustrating how the Church reinterprets its sacred vocation amid changing global dynamics.

Keywords: Church History, Sacredness and Religious-Cultural Representation, Socio-Cultural Transformation, Contemporary Ecclesiology, Secularization and Digitalization of Religion

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the world has witnessed a significant shift in socio-religious attitudes regarding the Church's position in modern society. On the one hand, the Church remains recognized as the oldest religious institution that has formed the foundations of Western ethics, culture, education, and social structure for nearly two millennia. But on the other hand, the moral and religious authority of the Church has declined drastically, especially in increasingly secular and post-industrial areas. This phenomenon is reflected in declining attendance rates, reduced public trust, and increased criticism of ecclesiastical institutions stemming from internal scandals, a lack of financial transparency, and tensions over contemporary issues such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ acceptance, and the accountability of religious leaders (Wilkins, 2020; Miller, 2020). In many major

European cities, church buildings that were once centers of communal life are now being transformed into museums, cafes, or art spaces, marking the Church's shift from sacred spaces to cultural artifacts. This shift creates what some scholars call a *sacred dislocation*, in which sacred symbols and architecture persist but spiritual energy and social vitality no longer sustain them. The complexity of this social reality demands in-depth research to understand how the Church negotiates with an increasingly pluralistic, digital, and morally fragmented modern world.

Academic studies of the transformation of the Church have been ongoing for a long time, but they have tended to focus on different aspects in each period. Bauckham (2006) emphasizes how the testimony of eyewitnesses shaped early church communities, while Keener (2009) examines how the church interacted with Greco-Roman culture through a socio-rhetorical approach. A study of church history by Gonzalez (2010) and MacCulloch (2003) highlights the dynamics of power, reform, and doctrinal fragmentation from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Wilkins (2020) and Miller (2020) expand our understanding of the multilingual and multicultural dimensions in the formation of early Christian traditions, while Zacharias et al. (2024) demonstrate how sacred texts continue to play a crucial role in shaping social cohesion in pluralistic societies. However, most of the literature emphasizes the Church's historical, theological, or sociological aspects separately. Relatively few studies see the Church as a representation of the "*cultural sacredness*" that continues to be negotiated throughout the trajectory of history. In addition, attention to how the Church negotiates its sacredness in the digital age, globalization, and contemporary moral crises remains fragmented. Therefore, there is an academic need to synthesize the Church's historical trajectory while analyzing how the sacred is reproduced in modern culture.

Drawing on social developments and literary findings, this study seeks to fill a gap in the study of the Church by comprehensively linking the history of the Church's institutional evolution, changes in sacred representation, and cultural dynamics in the modern era. Most previous studies have focused on linear theological or historical aspects, whereas the relationship between social transformation, sacred negotiation, and the Church's symbolic change cannot be understood without interdisciplinary analysis. This emptiness is what this research seeks to address, specifically by examining the Church not only as a religious institution but also as a cultural symbol that continues to evolve in an increasingly digital, ecological, and pluralistic social landscape. This research specifically places the Church within the framework *of historical-cultural sacredness*, i.e., how the sacredness is not only constructed through theological authority, but also through cultural practices, architecture, liturgical art, and its response to contemporary issues such as social justice and ecological crises (Santmire, 2000; Deane-Drummond, 2008). Thus, the primary objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the evolution of the Church and the transformation of the sacred across different historical periods and modern contexts.

The study's main argument is that the Church continues to function as a sacred space in the global cultural imagination, despite its declining institutional authority. This research hypothesizes that the shift in the sacredness of the Church does not indicate a loss of religious roles but rather a transformation in how the sacred is represented and practiced in contemporary society. The sacredness no longer depends solely on institutional dominance, but rather on the Church's ability to adapt to social change through participation in social justice advocacy, ecological engagement, interfaith dialogue, and digital liturgical innovation (Taylor, 2007; Campbell, 2021; Bentzen, 2021).

Using historical-critical and interpretive-cultural approaches to historical texts, ecclesiastical documents, and academic literature, this study argues that the Church consistently reconstructs itself through symbolic negotiations between tradition and the demands of the times. Therefore, the main hypothesis is that the sacredness of the Church in the modern era is more symbolic than institutional, more aesthetic than dogmatic, and more reflective than hegemonic. This transformation reflects a shift from centralized religiosity to decentralized spirituality, in line with the dynamics of globalization and the development of digital technologies..

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sacred Nature and the Construction of Religious Meaning

The study of *sacred nature* draws on a phenomenological approach to religion, which views nature as a medium of divine manifestation. Eliade (1959) asserts that mountains, trees, or water sources are not merely physical objects but hierophanous markers that reveal a transcendent presence. In the Christian tradition, the sacred interpretation of nature is rooted in the creation narrative (Genesis 1), in which the cosmos is declared "very good," thus providing the theological basis for the sacredness of creation. Santmire (2000) and Deane-Drummond (2008) expand on this idea through ecological theology, emphasizing human moral responsibility as guardians of the earth. Recent developments have highlighted an increased focus on the relationship between ecology and spirituality, particularly following the emergence of the climate crisis as a global issue. Conradie (2021) emphasized that ecological theology is a new framework for understanding the sacredness distributed throughout creation. This literature shows that the sacred is not static but is reproduced through a hermeneutical interaction among tradition, sacred texts, and ecological contexts.

The academic debate about the sacredness of nature also shifts towards relational meaning, i.e., how communities of faith connect ecological experiences to their religious identity. Kearns (2022) highlights that the global environmental crisis is driving a theological transformation toward a more inclusive cosmic spirituality, while Abel (2000) emphasizes the importance of reading the Bible from an Earth-centered *perspective*, treating the earth as a moral subject. This perspective is increasingly strong in the contemporary Christian tradition, including in ecclesiastical documents such as *Laudato Si'* that interpret nature as a theological and ethical space. This approach shifts the sacred from institutional symbols to ecological relationships that connect humans, creation, and God. The literature provides an important basis for this study, which aims to view the Church not only as a theological actor but also as an institution that must navigate the sacred in the context of ecological crises and global cosmological shifts.

2.2. The Church as a Social, Cultural, and Historical Institution

Since its inception, the Church has played a significant role in shaping social and cultural identity. Durkheim (1915) viewed the Church as a mechanism for fostering social solidarity, in which rites and doctrines contribute to collective cohesion. Bauckham (2006) and Keener (2009) argue that early Christian communities developed through communal practices, collective witness, and cross-cultural interactions in the Mediterranean region. Historical literature reveals that the Church later became a center of knowledge and power, particularly in the Middle Ages, when ecclesiastical institutions oversaw education, law, and even politics (Southern, 1961; Lindberg, 2009). Gonzalez

(2010) demonstrates how the Church evolved into a hegemonic institution that shaped Western cosmology while establishing a social structure that endured until the modern era. This transformation proves that the Church cannot be understood solely as a religious entity, but as a dynamic cultural institution.

In the modern era, the literature on the Church shows a shift in function from a hegemonic institution to a more plural and dialogical moral actor. Casanova (1994) argues that the Church is undergoing "deprivatization," that is, returning to the public sphere to advocate for democracy, human rights, and peace. Davie (2015) describes the phenomenon of *believing without belonging*, in which religious meanings continue to persist despite a drastic decline in church membership. In the Global South, liberation theology (Boff, 1987) and African ecclesial movements exemplify the Church as an agent of social transformation, focusing on justice, solidarity, and the liberation of oppressed societies. This literature affirms that the Church continues to build her sacredness through social work, public discourse, and the formation of collective morality. Thus, the meaning of the Church's sacredness must be understood through the historical interaction between religious authority, social dynamics, and the ethical demands of society.

2.3. Religious Representation in the Digital, Secular, and Post-Pandemic Era

The transformation of religious representation in the modern era is influenced by digitalization, secularization, and changes in global spirituality patterns. Campbell (2021) introduces the concept *of digital ecclesiology, which is the Church's approach to* building the sacred through virtual spaces, online liturgy, and digital communities. Research indicates a notable rise in social media-based religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bentzen (2021) found that online searches for prayer increased by 30–50% at the beginning of the pandemic, signaling a shift in how humans interact with sacred meaning. On the other hand, Taylor (2007) argues that modernity gives rise to a "secular condition," a world in which spirituality is personal, decentralized, and no longer dependent on institutions. This transformation of representation shifts the Church's authority from a physical structure to a more fluid and digital symbolic space.

The pandemic has also accelerated changes in sacred representations by expanding the concept of religious presence. Campbell and Tsuria (2021) show that the Church is developing a new model of digital pastoral through online worship, tele-pastoral care, and virtual communities. In the context of pluralism, Zacharias et al. (2024) emphasize that religious symbols and narratives continue to play a significant role in fostering social cohesion, even in increasingly diverse and secular societies. Bruce (2011) emphasized that secularization does not remove religion, but rather moves it to a more individual and aesthetic realm. In this context, the sacredness is no longer attached to institutions, but to personal experiences and symbolic representations mediated by digital culture. This literature supports the argument that the Church is undergoing a sacred reorientation of institutional authority toward cultural symbolism that is better adapted to global dynamics.

3. Methods

3.1. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the historical and socio-religious development of the Christian Church from the first century to the contemporary era. The selection of this unit of analysis is based on the consideration that the Church is one of the religious institutions that plays a multidimensional role—spiritual, social, political, and cultural—and that it changes constantly in response to societal dynamics. The analysis focuses on four main periods: the early Church, the medieval Church, the Reformation era, and the modern Church. By examining these historical trajectories, research can identify patterns of continuity, change, and long-term reconstruction of sacred meaning. This approach aligns with the research objectives of highlighting the relationship among the institutional transformation of the Church, the representation of the sacred, and the socio-cultural context surrounding it.

3.2. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative design with a historical-critical and interpretive-cultural approach. A historical-critical approach is employed to examine the Church's events, theological ideas, and institutional developments within their chronological context, as suggested by the study of Church history by Lindberg (2009) and McGrath (2020). Meanwhile, an interpretive-cultural approach was chosen to examine how the Church represents the sacred through symbols, architecture, liturgy, and social practices across historical periods. This design enables researchers to integrate textual analysis with an understanding of cultural meanings shaped through the interaction between religious institutions and society.

3.3. Data Sources

Research data sources can be categorized into two types: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include religious texts (e.g., patristic literature), council documents, writings of theologians and reformers (e.g., Luther and Calvin), and Church historical archives. Secondary sources include reputable academic works on Church history, theology, the sociology of religion, and cultural studies, such as Bauckham (2006), Gonzalez (2010), Davie (2015), and Zacharias et al. (2024). The selection of sources is carried out through the following criteria: (1) thematic relevance, (2) academic credibility, and (3) diversity of denominational perspectives. These sources provide a comprehensive basis for understanding the Church's transformation from various perspectives.

3.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is conducted through documentary research, a systematic review of historical, theological, and academic texts. This process involves identifying themes, categorizing content, and grouping materials into predetermined historical periods. The research also leverages scientific databases such as JSTOR, EBSCOhost, and Scopus to obtain up-to-date literature. To maintain the credibility of the data, the study employed source triangulation by comparing documents from the

Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions to ensure consistency in historical narratives and theological interpretations.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic content analysis approach within a historical-theological framework. Measures of analysis include: (1) identification of central themes such as ecclesiastical authority, sacredness, reform, and symbolic negotiation; (2) comparative analysis between historical periods to see patterns of continuity and change; and (3) cultural interpretations of the representation of the sacred through architecture, liturgical art, social action, and responses to modern issues such as secularization and digitalization. This approach aligns with the ideas of Casanova (1994) and Armstrong (2011), who emphasize the importance of reading religious institutions through their historical dynamics and cultural structures. This thematic-comparative analysis enables the study to conclude how the Church consistently reconstructs its sacredness in response to changing social conditions.

4.   Result

4.1. The Early Church and the Formation of Sacred Identity

The emergence of the Church in the first century played a crucial role in shaping a sacred identity that did not depend on physical space but rather on communal practices and spiritual experiences. The early Christian communities recorded in the Acts of the Apostles met in private homes (domus ecclesiae), which served as spaces of worship, learning, and social solidarity (Gray, 2021). In this context, the sacredness is not determined by religious architecture, but by the presence of a community that lives in the memory and teachings of Jesus. Historical research indicates that these early communities faced political pressure from the Roman Empire, which ironically reinforced their religious identity as a group called to an alternative life centered on love, justice, and loyalty to Christ (Schaff, 1867). Persecution made informal spaces—such as caves, households, and basements—sacred *havens* that formed an early understanding of the Church's sacredness.

The early Church's existence was also greatly influenced by its ability to adapt and expand its teachings across regions with diverse languages and cultures. Wilkins (2020) and Miller (2020) show that Jesus and the disciples interacted in a multilingual context, especially in the cosmopolitan region of Galilee. This explains why Paul, as the primary figure of the Christian mission, was able to establish Christian communities in large cities such as Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome, employing different rhetorical approaches tailored to the characteristics of each audience (Keener, 2009). The rapid growth of the Church in the first three centuries is evident from Rodney Stark's data, which estimates the increase in Christians from approximately 1,000 people in 40 AD to six million in 300 AD (Stark, 1996). This data confirms that sacredness is understood not only as a theological value but also as a social-transformative force that attracts people from diverse ethnic groups and social statuses.

In addition, the early Church built the sacred through an egalitarian community structure and a revolutionary ethical system. The practice of sharing wealth, a banquet of love, and solidarity with the poor distinguishes the Church from hierarchical, cult-oriented Roman religious institutions (Bauckham, 2006). Even in ecological contexts, early Christian communities viewed nature as a

sacred space not tied to temples or altars, as reflected in practices such as baptism in rivers, prayer in open spaces, and the use of natural symbols, such as fish and wine, as part of their faith identity. This view aligns with the concept of sacred nature, which posits that creation is part of the narrative of salvation (Eliade, 1959). All of these dynamics show that from the beginning, the Church shaped her sacredness through living practices, not just physical buildings, a paradigm that continued to influence the development of the Church in the next era.

4.2. Medieval Consolidation and the Expansion of Institutional Sacred Power

In the Middle Ages, the Church underwent a major transformation from a spiritual community to an institution that governed various aspects of public life. After the Edict of Milan (313 AD) and the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Church gained significant political legitimacy (MacCulloch, 2011). This legitimacy enabled the Church to construct magnificent cathedrals, diocesan systems, and educational institutions, such as universities in Paris, Oxford, and Bologna, all of which strengthened the Church's position as a center of social and sacred authority (Southern, 1961). The sacredness of this era was conveyed through architectural symbolism— cathedrals with towering minarets, stained glass windows, and the shape of the Latin cross — served not only as places of worship but also as visual representations of God's presence in the social world. Politically, the pope holds authority equal to or even higher than that of a temporal ruler. For example, the 11th-century Investiture Controversy demonstrated the full integration between institutional sacredness and power structures.

However, this great power brings consequences in the form of moral deviations and corruption, which further undermine the Church's legitimacy. The practice of simony, the sale of indulgences, and nepotism within the papal body eroded public trust and fueled internal criticism (Gonzalez, 2010). One of the key pieces of data often cited is the abuse of indulgences, which reached its peak in the early 16th century, sparking Martin Luther's protests through *the Ninety-Five Theses* (Luther, 1957). The challenge to the authority of the Church is not only theological but also socio-political, with the growing strength of the nation-state diminishing the influence of the papacy. At the same time, the Church also plays an ecological and cultural role through the maintenance of monastic lands, agricultural development, and public education on Christian cosmology, which strengthens the relationship between religious sacredness and social life.

Despite many irregularities, the Church remained the center of moral and intellectual power in the Middle Ages. Monasteries became centers for the production of literature, the translation of classical texts, and the preservation of scientific knowledge (Leff, 1999). The theological thought of Thomas Aquinas and other scholastic figures helped form the foundation of Christian ethics that remains in use to this day. The sacredness of this period was centralized and hierarchical, supported by a strong institutional structure. However, rapid social change, authority crises, and theological fragmentation in the late Middle Ages paved the way for the Reformation. This transition demonstrates that the sacredness of the Church has always been contingent upon social dynamics, moral legitimacy, and the ability of institutions to redefine their role in society.

4.3. Modern Transformations: Secularization, Digital Worship, and Cultural Reinterpretation

Entering the 19th and 20th centuries, the Church faced a drastic transformation due to secularization, modernization, and changes in social patterns. Pew Research Center data (2019) indicate a significant decline in church attendance in Western Europe of 20–40% over the last two decades. The phenomenon of "believing without belonging" (Davie, 2015) suggests that spirituality persists, albeit no longer tied to formal ecclesiastical structures. Taylor (2007) refers to this condition as the secular age, an era in which religion is no longer the center of public life, but rather one of many choices for meaning. In the midst of this social change, many church buildings in Europe were converted into museums, art galleries, or commercial spaces—a sign that institutional sacredness was shifting into symbolic or aesthetic sacredness.

The development of digital technology has given rise to a new form of sacredness mediated by virtual space. Campbell (2021) refers to this phenomenon as digital ecclesiology, in which worship, liturgy, and spiritual formation occur through online platforms such as Zoom, YouTube, or church apps. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online searches for prayer increased by 50% (Bentzen, 2021), suggesting that the global crisis can trigger spiritual intensification. Adaptive churches design *hybrid worship* models that combine physical and digital spaces, allowing for participation across geographic boundaries. This transformation reveals that the sacred is no longer tied to buildings, but rather to religious experiences that can occur in digital spaces.

In addition to digitalization, issues such as social justice, climate change, and religious pluralism are also forcing the Church to reinterpret its role in a global context. The Catholic Church, for example, through its encyclical *Laudato Si',* calls for moral attention to the ecological crisis. In Latin America, the Church was involved in liberation movements that fought for the rights of the poor (Boff, 1987). In a multireligious society like Indonesia, Zacharias et al. (2024) found that religious texts and symbols continue to play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion. These dynamics demonstrate that the sacredness of the Church has not been lost but has undergone a transformation, becoming more dialogical, ecological, and culturally relevant. The modern church is shifting from institutional authority to moral and symbolic authority, grounded in social relevance and digital connectivity.

5. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the sacredness of the Church undergoes a significant transformation over time, evolving from an organic, communal form in the early Church era to an institutionalized sacredness in the Middle Ages, and then shifting back to a symbolic and cultural sacredness in the modern era. In the early period, the sacredness was built through small communities meeting in private homes, with solidarity and cross-cultural missions as the main drivers of the Church's development (Gray, 2021; Stark, 1996). Entering the Middle Ages, the sacred was articulated through hierarchical structures, monumental architecture, and papal authority that penetrated the political and social realms (Southern, 1961; Gonzalez, 2010). But this legitimacy was later shaken by the moral aberrations that fueled the Reformation and doctrinal fragmentation. In the modern era, secularization, digitalization, and pluralism have given rise to new forms of sacredness that are more fluid, decentralized, and grounded in personal spiritual experiences (Taylor, 2007; Campbell, 2021). These findings affirm that the sacredness of the Church has always

been dynamic, adapting to changing historical contexts while reflecting how society interprets space, symbols, and spirituality in different social conditions.

The results of this study reveal that sacredness is not a fixed quality inherent in the Church, but a reflective process that continues to be formed through relationships among people, institutions, and socio-cultural contexts. This reflection reveals that each phase of the Church's history is marked by an internal tension between fidelity to tradition and the demands for change. For example, the communal practices of the early Church were born of political and social coercion, but behind these pressures, an intense sacred identity emerged from the deep solidarity of the faithful. In the Middle Ages, reflection on the sacred was formalized through dogma, liturgy, and cathedral structures, but it also created a distance between institutions and the people. The modern era presents a new challenge: how to understand the sacred when institutional authority is in decline and society tends to interpret spirituality on a personal level? This question is particularly relevant when the digital space becomes a new venue for religious encounters and when the Church is required to respond to ecological and social crises. Overall, reflection shows that the Church not only maintains its sacredness through tradition, but also through its ability to read the times and articulate moral relevance in global dynamics.

An interpretation of the study's findings suggests that the shift in the Church's sacredness is a strategic response to external changes, not merely an internal theological consequence. The sacredness of the early Church can be understood as an alternative form of spirituality that offered a counterculture to the Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages, the interpretation of the sacred was closely tied to a cosmic order: the Church was viewed as a mediator between God and humanity through an established hierarchy. Modern interpretations, however, demonstrate that the sacredness is now more closely tied to universal values—justice, human dignity, and ecological sustainability—which are theologically aligned with the creation narrative but expressed in a different social context. Digital transformation has also given rise to a new reinterpretation that divine presence can be experienced in a virtual space through online liturgy or a digital faith community (Campbell, 2021). This interpretation signifies that the sacredness no longer focuses on the physical sacred space, but on the spiritual experience mediated by technology and symbolic meaning reinterpreted by the people. Thus, the change in the Church's sacredness can be understood as a form of theological adaptation to the evolution of culture and societal structures.

Comparisons with previous studies demonstrate that this study enhances and expands our understanding of the dynamics surrounding the sacredness of the Church. Classical research by Eliade (1959) emphasized that the sacred is present in space, symbols, and rites, whereas this study shows how sacredness can shift from physical to relational and digital spaces. A study by Davie (2015) on the phenomenon of *believing without belonging* supports the finding that the Church's institutional presence does not always parallel the growth of spirituality. Similarly, Casanova (1994) argues that religion has re-entered the public sphere on moral issues, as evidenced by the Church's involvement in global ecological and humanitarian advocacy. Digital religion research by Campbell (2021) confirms that digital space has become a new locus of sacredness, consistent with this research's findings. However, this study makes a unique contribution by integrating the three phases of the sacred—communal, institutional, and digital—into a single historical narrative that demonstrates how the Church negotiates its sacredness through continuity and change. Thus, this

study not only verifies previous literature but also provides a comprehensive model of the evolution of the Church's sacredness.

The findings of this study have important implications for theology, religious studies, and the practice of ecclesiastical life. First, the Church needs to understand that the sacredness of the modern era can no longer depend solely on institutional structures, but on its capacity to respond to the moral and spiritual needs of contemporary society, including issues of social justice, ecology, and cultural diversity. Second, the academic world needs to develop *a multidimensional model of sacredness* that combines historical, social, ecological, and digital aspects to understand the sustainability of religion in a pluralistic era. Third, at the practical level, these results affirm the importance of liturgical innovation, strengthening digital communities, and creating spaces for dialogue between faith and modern society. As a follow-up to the research, comparative interdenominational and interregional studies are needed to examine how sacredness is negotiated in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In addition, interdisciplinary research that combines theology, digital sociology, and ecology can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the future of the Church's sacredness in an ever-changing world.

6. Conclusion

This research reveals that the sacredness of the Church is not a static entity, but a historical construct that evolves in response to social, cultural, and technological dynamics. In the early Church, sacredness was built through communal practice and faith solidarity that grew amid political pressure. In the Middle Ages, the sacredness shifted toward greater institutionalization, sustained by ecclesiastical authority, hierarchical structures, and monumental architecture. Meanwhile, the modern era exhibits significant changes, as secularization, digitalization, and pluralism shift the sacred from physical space to a more fluid, personal symbolic experience. All of these findings confirm that the Church is consistently negotiating its sacred form to remain relevant in the ever-changing historical landscape. Thus, the sacredness of the Church can be understood as the result of the dynamic interaction between religious traditions and the social context in which they are embedded.

The primary contribution of this research is the development of an analytical framework that integrates historical, cultural, and theological perspectives in examining the sacred transformation of the Church. Rather than viewing the Church as merely a spiritual entity or social institution, this research shows that the sacredness is formed through multi-layered negotiations—including theological, symbolic, political, ecological, and digital relationships. This approach enriches contemporary ecclesiology studies by demonstrating how the Church maintains relevance through its practices across the ages. Theoretically, this research also expands understanding of the concept of sacred nature, namely that sacredness is not only present in ritual or dogmatic spaces, but also in social experiences, ecological practices, and digital interactions among people. This model is designed to help understand the rapidly changing religious dynamics in a global, multicultural society.

Further research is needed to develop a more specific analysis of various local contexts, denominations, and liturgical practices to understand how sacredness is negotiated differently. A comparative study of the Church in the Global North and the Global South will provide a more comprehensive picture of the influence of political, economic, and cultural factors in the formation of

the sacred. Furthermore, the development of digital spirituality necessitates in-depth research into how online worship, virtual communities, and social media algorithms are influencing the religious experiences of a new generation. An interdisciplinary approach that combines theology, digital sociology, anthropology, and environmental studies is also crucial for examining how the Church responds to significant issues, such as ecological crises, global migration, social inequality, and shifts in public ethics. Thus, further research can broaden our understanding of the future of the sacredness of the Church in an increasingly complex and connected world.

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