Catholicism, one of the world’s largest religious traditions, has seen a significant decline in recent decades, to a following of 1.3 billion adherents in 2023. Like other religions, it has grappled with challenges from secularization, exacerbated by its traditional structure and well-publicized scandals. Particularly in the Latin world, the Catholic Church has contracted significantly since the 1960s, with only 69 percent of the population now identifying as Catholic, down from 90 percent half a century ago. This represents a loss of seventy-five million adherents to alternative religious and spiritual movements.

The collaborative work titled *Sacred Cyberspaces: Catholicism, New Media, and the Religious Experience*, by Oren Golan, Michele Martini, and their dedicated research team, distinguishes itself through insightful analysis of the Catholic Church’s engagement with contemporary media technologies. It addresses the aforementioned challenges and underscores how the church adapts to rival narratives that attract and even convert former religious devotees. According to the authors, the church and its affiliated institutions have fully immersed themselves in current social media platforms, actively producing content with four pivotal objectives. These objectives encompass: skillfully tailoring content to resonate with its followers; redefining sacred spaces to bolster its legitimacy, authority, and influence; elevating the Holy See and its esteemed representative, the pope, as the ultimate figures of authority; and earnestly infusing the content with a deeper sense of authenticity and intimacy.

Through this strategic approach, the Catholic Church seeks to confront the challenges posed by alternative and less conventional Christian movements, as well as emerging spiritual trends. In this endeavor, the church endeavors to uphold its relevance and secure its place as the enduring source of Christian faith for its devoted followers in the competitive religious market, particularly in the face of increasing individualization and the growth of online community building. The recognition within even one of the most traditional religious institutions, such as Catholicism, is that com-
community building, knowledge transfer, and authority submission now extend to social media platforms, alongside in-person ceremonies.

The book performs admirably by spotlighting and analyzing the actions of a novel cadre of contributors in the domain of religious media production—webmasters. Despite their absence of formal theological training, this emerging group is characterized by their unwavering dedication to furthering the church's mission and vision. Thanks to their affinity for technology and dexterity in crafting media, these individuals have harnessed significant influence over the religious experience, effectively surpassing middle- and lower-ranking clerics in terms of outreach and evolving into the unseen faces of church media.

However, Catholic media production is not solely reliant on these passionate and self-motivated individuals. The church maintains its own professional staff dedicated to producing official content, which includes carefully managed Instagram pages, closely monitored YouTube channels, and meticulously maintained websites. When we consider these various contributors in Catholic media production, it becomes evident that the Catholic Church has adopted a less hierarchical approach, embracing a more inclusive ethos that actively involves its adherents in the creation of religious media content. This approach serves the dual purpose of remaining relevant and fostering a more intimate and personalized religious experience for its devoted subscribers.

The book left me deeply impressed with its comprehensive structure and its multifaceted exploration of the subject matter. It is evident that the authors and their research team invested considerable time and effort in crafting this exceptionally refined and sophisticated research. To thoroughly examine the topic, the book employs a diverse array of methodologies, ranging from semiotic analyses of the content produced to in-person interviews with clerics, webmasters, and church media staff, among others.

That being said, there are certain aspects I had hoped would have received more direct coverage within the confines of the book. My intention is for these observations to provide ample food for thought for future research in this field. First and foremost, the book delves into half of the narrative, focusing on the church and its related institutional media productions, but leaves the reader wondering how these media outlets resonated with consumers of this media in terms of their religious engagement and spirituality. While delving into such analysis would be inherently challenging in historical contexts, given that the book addresses contemporary subjects, it would be reasonable to explore how people react to and internalize the content they encounter. Conducting an analysis of website analytics, including website traffic, demographics, page views, bounce rates, and more, could provide a clearer understanding of how these online productions achieve their intended objectives. On a related note, it would be valuable to examine how younger generations interact with this online material, which has been highlighted as one of the central goals of video productions. Such an examination could enhance our comprehension of how religious content is perceived and embraced by younger individuals.

Another aspect I had hoped to see explored pertains to the responses of middle- and lower-ranking clerics to these online productions. This is of paramount significance because the book delves into how the media content generated by these institutions fortifies the authority and prominence of the pope, while also amplifying the influence of webmasters who, in contrast to the traditionally educated clergy, lack formal training from the church's educational system. This dynamic results in both sides gaining influence, often at the expense of conventionally powerful middle- and lower-ranking priests. Furthermore, individuals who consume this media may not necessarily seek guidance or a sense of community from their local priests, and they can readily challenge the author-
ity of the clergy with the newfound educational materials and direct teachings of the pope himself. Considering that social media functions not only as a battleground for opposing religious worldviews but also as a platform for in-group authority struggles, a comprehensive exploration of the experiences of these priests in the face of this evolving power structure could yield invaluable insights.

Furthermore, I am particularly intrigued by the potential roles played by state officials and secular investors in promoting and financing these religious content producers. Given that the use of social media has ramifications for promoting tourism in traditionally sacred locations, conducting a financial analysis of these media institutions and their sponsors would have enriched the overarching narrative that *Sacred Cyberspaces* seeks to convey. This is actually a question the book briefly poses but leaves unanswered.

Despite the reservations I have articulated, it is essential to acknowledge the book's resounding success in illuminating the diverse ways the Catholic world continues to adapt to technology and confront its challenges. It sheds light on how emerging media platforms have empowered economically disadvantaged nations, providing them with a voice in religious discourse and encouraging attempts to re-evangelize regions of formerly Catholic Europe that had once propagated Catholicism in the New World.

While the book may not be tailored for a general readership with its jargon-laden style, it significantly contributes to multiple academic discussions in the realms of digital religion, Christianity studies, and the anthropology of religion. *Sacred Cyberspaces* undeniably enriches our comprehension of the Catholic world and technology's role in the religious sphere.

In conclusion, I wish to highlight a vital aspect. While the authors may not have overtly framed this as their primary conclusion, a noteworthy implication arising from this book is the capacity of religions, even within one of the most deeply entrenched religious institutions worldwide, to continually evolve and remain relevant in the modern era by integrating information and communication technologies. This underscores the enduring and adaptable nature of religions, defying the long-anticipated decline predicted by proponents of secularization theory.
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