



Investigating the Changes in the Meaning of Pilgrimage in Modern Theology (Based on the Concept of Holiness)

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Abstract

Pilgrimage is one of the concepts that has found new instances in the modern era. Tombs of artistic figures, war memorials, and distinctive media scenes are among the pilgrimage sites of the new age. In this article, using a descriptive-analytical method, the semantic evolution of the concept of pilgrimage in the modern era has been examined with regard to the concept of holiness and the theological foundations of this period. According to the findings of this research, regarding the concept of pilgrimage in the modern era compared to the pre-modern, what has occurred is not specification or expansion, but a semantic change. Accordingly, in traditional theology, holiness was an intra-religious matter formed solely through a relationship with God. However, in the modern era, holiness has become not a discoverable concept, but rather a constructive and extra-religious concept that requires no type of religious affiliation. This conceptual evolution of pilgrimage stems from some of the foundations of modern theology, including the emphasis on the interiority of God, extreme rationalism, individualism, religious experience, and humanism.

Keywords: Holy place, pilgrimage, tourism, Modernism, religious experience, Revelation

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1. Introduction

Pilgrimage is one of the oldest and greatest human activities in the world, common to most cultures. The word "zīyārah" comes from the root "zur" (Ibn Manẓūr 2006, 1: 340). Lexicographers have listed several meanings for it, all of which mean "to turn towards" and "intention". In fact, this word is applied to a pilgrim because when he goes on a pilgrimage someone, he has turned away from others towards him (Muṣṭafawī 2006, 4: 384). The equivalent of "zīyārah" in English is the word "pilgrimage", which is derived from the Latin term "peregrimage", meaning "foreigner", and the word "per ager", meaning "to pass through lands". This word encompasses the concepts of travel, journey, leaving home, and being a stranger in the lands where a person goes. Pilgrimage consists of three basic elements: (1) travel and movement; (2) a form of respect and special actions; as well as (3) the holiness of a place with a deep meaning that distinguishes it from its surroundings (Reader 2015, 68); therefore, it can be said that a pilgrim is someone who travels to specific places and there, or along the way, she/he performs meaningful acts such as prayer. These places may be man-made, such as temples, tombs, and mausoleums, or they may be natural phenomena, such as mountains and caves (Reader 2015, 69).

Although there are differences in the form and manner of performing pilgrimage in different parts of the world, this practice has historically followed a single pattern, according to which the rituals of pilgrimage were performed with a belief in an unseen origin, in the form of a religion, and with the intention of repentance or worship. With the advent of the modern era and the facilitation of travel, the world is faced with travelers whose numbers are increasing on the one hand, and whose motivations for traveling are different from before; in such a way that believing in a framework of faith is not considered as a condition for entering holy places. They enter specific places not for worship but simply for tourism, and may even deny the existence of God. In the theoretical confrontation with this challenge, two different approaches are observed. The first approach, emphasizing the traditional concept of pilgrimage and defining it in a purely religious and ritual framework, believes that religious tourism is a separate category from pilgrimage. The pilgrim has a specific and limited motivation for the pilgrimage, but the tourist attends the holy place with more diverse motivations such as curiosity and recreation, and is often even outside of that religion (Vukonić 1996, 75). However, this conceptual difference does not mean that tourists should be prohibited from entering the places of pilgrimage, but rather that this matter should be managed in a way that minimizes possible problems and apparent contradictions. In contrast, there is a new approach that believes by

changing the concept of pilgrimage, it can be generalized and tourism can also be considered a type of pilgrimage. In this approach, instead of distinguishing between the sacred and the non-sacred, tourism itself is considered a sacred act, and tourist places, regardless of their place in religions and written traditions, are considered sacred simply by the will and desire of visitors. In other words, we do not need to wait for God or His representative to lay hands on a place and declare it holy and worthy of pilgrimage, as in the past, but rather we ourselves, humans, have come up with a new plan and can define a specific place as holy while intending it, and consider it as full of spirituality that does not require any prior and conventional religious beliefs to achieve. According to MacCannell, tourism is the pilgrimage of modern man in which the tourist is separated from his usual and daily life in order to achieve authentic and unique experiences (MacCannell 1976, 593). Some contemporary writers, including Ian Reader, Professor of Religious Studies at Lancaster University, while paying attention to the category of pilgrimage and its examples in different religions, believe that modern period is witnessing a semantic shift in the concept of pilgrimage. People like Phil Cousineau, in his book *The Art of Pilgrimage* (1998), consider the modern era to be a kind of pilgrimage, while giving advice on how to transform ordinary travel into sacred journeys. Paulo Coelho and Shirley MacLaine have also taken steps in this direction by looking at pilgrimage to certain places such as Santiago through the lens of contemporary spiritual self-knowledge that is self-sufficient and individual in nature. It seems that the fundamental developments in theology of the modern era, just as they have affected the meaning of religion itself, have also brought about changes in other concepts such as holiness and, consequently, in the concept of pilgrimage.

In this article, we seek to explore the second approach with a descriptive-analytical method. Accordingly, the main question in this article is what changes have occurred in the concept of holiness in modern theology and what are its foundations? In this regard, we will first mention famous examples of modern pilgrimage; that is, newly created and man-made places of modern humanity that, without having any known religious history, are officially called pilgrimages and are introduced as holy. In the following, while explaining the components of the holiness of place in pre-modern theology, we will refer to the changes that have occurred in modern theology in order to show this difference in a tangible way. In the struggle of this confrontation, the form of pilgrimage may not be much different from before, and movement and travel as well as a kind of respect may be evident in it, but with the difference in values in the new intellectual system, it will have a completely different meaning and content than

before. Accordingly, in the traditional sense, human pilgrimages do not interfere with the holiness of a place and only remind people of the transcendent and God by visiting it, but in the modern era, it is humans who determine whether a place is holy or not. This noticeable difference in the concept of pilgrimage stems from specific theological foundations in the modern era, such as individualism and humanism, which we will refer to in the final part of the article.

It is worth mentioning that what has been written or translated in Persian about religious tourism so far has actually separated the concept of pilgrimage from tourism, and has sought to organize the practical presence of tourists in religious places. Works such as the *Theology of Tourism* [*Elāhiyāt-e Gardešgarī*] (2024) by Ḥamīdah Amīryazdānī and the book *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* (2006) edited by Dallen Timothy and Daniel Olsen and with a translation into Persian by Muḥammad Qulīpūr and Iḥsān Mağīdīfar are of this type. Also, although works with titles such as “The History of Modern Philosophy” or “New Theology” have dealt with the foundations of modern theology, they have not specifically addressed its examples, including the conceptual developments of pilgrimage from the perspective of modern theology. Of course, *The Sacred and the Profane* (1957) by Mircea Eliade, translated by Naṣrallāh Zangoui, is one of the few that has briefly addressed the meaning and requirements of holiness in the traditional era; however, this work hasn’t addressed conceptual changes in the modern era and its related terms such as pilgrimage.

2. Modern pilgrimages

In modern theology, pilgrimage is a dynamic and fluid practice influenced by changing contexts, conditions, and technology, and is by no means static in nature; therefore, in academic circles, as well as in the mass media, the term pilgrimage is used for activities that occur outside of formal religious contexts and at the same time include behavioral states and phenomena similar to traditional forms of pilgrimage (Reader 2015, 151). In modern theology, conventional and secular places are considered holy in a special way and in another framework, because they are a source of inspiration and reason for pilgrimage, and these places can be defined as part of contemporary culture (Shackley 2001, 30). Some of the most important examples of pilgrimage in the modern era can be mentioned in the following cases:

2.1. Homes and Tombs of Famous Individuals

The untimely death of talented and charismatic figures is a particular focus in the modern era. Individuals who are thought to have had more to offer have, through their deaths, become sources of inspiration and spirituality. Consequently, their

graves or places of death may be commemorated and visited. It should be noted that we are referring to individuals whose fame is unrelated to religion and faith, and who may even have denied or rejected such a connection during their lifetimes. Today, the special attention travelers pay to the graves, homes, and workplaces of certain artists has led to them being officially referred to as pilgrims and their journeys being called pilgrimages. The tomb of Elvis Presley, the famous rock music singer, in Memphis, USA, is one such example. When Presley died suddenly in 1977 at the age of 42, people gathered outside his home, many crying, praying, lighting candles, and leaving messages and gifts there. Since then, people have visited Graceland, often behaving like those who gathered there immediately after Elvis's death. They consider him a holy figure capable of miraculous intercession. Some visit annually, referring to their visits as yearly pilgrimages. During the week of his memorial, his fans hold a celebration in memory of his life and music, and also hold official vigils involving candle lighting and prayers, even asking Elvis to intercede for them. Many also take items such as stones and soil from various parts of Graceland, just as pilgrims in different cultures bring something home from the places they have visited (Reader 2015, 149).

2.2. Sites of Wars and Military Memorials

The sites of horrific battles, mass killings, and memorials for the fallen of modern wars receive particular attention. Visitors to these places, while paying their respects, often resolve to avoid such calamities themselves. These areas become sanctified through rituals performed by military personnel, veterans, and generally those involved in reconstructing the war scene (Eade & Katić 2019, 53). Memorials and war zones related to World War I and II represent the peak of this function. The site of Lourdes in France is today referred to as an international military pilgrimage site. John Eade and Mario Katić, in their book *Military Pilgrimage and Battlefield Tourism* (2017), mention places like Letinca in Kosovo, Monte Cassino in Italy, and Arnhem in the Netherlands as sacred military zones (Eade & Katić 2019, 60-150).

Pilgrimage to military sites is always accompanied by rituals and specific actions. In Washington D.C., many visitors fall silent before the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, search for specific names, pray, leave notes, and sometimes even take a copy of the names home. In this context, another event occurs, to which Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelman dedicate the seventh chapter of their book, titled "Pilgrimage: Vietnam Veterans on their Motorcycles." An annual desert motorcycle race is held in the region for veterans of the Vietnam War, and this act is also referred to as a pilgrimage. Participants pray before the start of the race, and gifts are presented at the end. In this

event, the motorcycle plays an important emotional and symbolic role in the pilgrimage, representing, in a sense, inherent American values related to individualism, the road, travel, and the freedom to choose one's journey (Dubisch & Winkelman 2005, 150).

2.3. Places Related to Political Leaders

For example, Robben Island in South Africa, where Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) was imprisoned for eighteen years, has now become a museum and a place of pilgrimage for those who seek to honor Mandela and learn about his struggle against apartheid. Some media outlets have referred to the visits of state officials to the island as a pilgrimage to Mandela, with Mandela's cell being the most exciting and moving part of any pilgrim's pilgrimage. The tomb of Sukarno (1901-1970), the first president of Indonesia and leader of the country's independence struggle, is another example (Reader 2015, 160). It is strange that the tombs and mausoleums of communist politicians such as Lenin (1870-1924) in Moscow and Mao Zedong (1893-1976) in Beijing, despite years of efforts to eradicate religion, are still practiced by their comrades with rituals and are considered holy in an atheist society (Vukonić 2006, 245). John Eade and Mario Katić, describing the relationship between pilgrimage and politics in Eastern Europe, state that in Albania during the communist era, although some religious pilgrimage sites were weakened, new pilgrimage sites were created that commemorated national figures (Eade & Katić 2014, 155).

2.4. Places Related to Ancestral Roots and Identity

Travel to places associated with ancestral roots is often seen as a modern form of pilgrimage, associated with themes of exploration, self-discovery, and identity. These identity-seeking pilgrimages are often important for those who know that their ancestors were immigrants and that their ancestral roots go back to other countries. For example, in North America, many people of European descent travel to Europe to get to know their ancestral homeland, and black Americans often consider Africa to be their spiritual birthplace. In this regard, the Gambia hosts the Roots Homecoming Festival, and at the same time, places such as the forts on the coast of Ghana where slaves were held before being sent to the Americas have become important sites for such journeys, i.e., roots-seeking pilgrimages. Those who travel to Africa to find their roots sometimes refer to their journeys as pilgrimages and returns to their spiritual homeland. These pilgrimages often involve themes such as returning to one's roots, finding one's identity, remembering one's ancestors, and attempting to confront emotional pain and seek healing (Reader 2015, 164). However, for those like Cohen,

this type of sacredness is not limited to migrants; rather, all leisure- and entertainment-oriented tourists remain loyal to the central core of home, with the diversity of the open circulation (Cohen 1979, 185).

2.5. Media Places

Some media works are so highly regarded by their fans that the places associated with them become holy. Media fan culture is an area where the idea of pilgrimage is widely used. For example, in Japan, the term pilgrimage is widely used to refer to places associated with popular entertainment. Fans are keen to visit real-life locations depicted in popular anime films or manga cartoons, resulting in what is referred to in advertising as manga pilgrimages (manga junrei) or anime pilgrimages (anime junrei) (Rader 2015, 186).

2.6. Special Natural Areas

In modern culture, places are introduced as centers of positive energy in the world and are considered holy. Sedona in Arizona, USA, is one of these places. American tourist offices recommend visiting this region as a pilgrimage to the center of world power. Proponents of new spiritualities claim that Sedona is an enhancing source of spiritual energy; in a way that they use the term energy vortex for this area to show the intensity and density of this spirituality. Similar to what was said about Sedona is true about the Glastonbury area in Somerset, England. Travelers to the region are searching for a lost spiritual heritage that they claim existed there before Christianity (Reader 2015, 169). Lynn Ross-Bryant, describing new connections between religion and nature in the United States, claims that today, national parks, in addition to physical development and providing more services to customers, have become religious and national shrines (Bryant 2012, 200); Christopher A. Howard states that since the late twentieth century and early modern century, due to the extensive travel opportunities and the enthusiasm of individuals, travel to the Himalayas has grown to take the form of pilgrimage to enjoy the passion and spirituality of the East. Representations of Himalayas first originated from perplexed holy men who ventured out and announced places amidst the mountainous landscapes as holy. Himalayas today have emerged from the monopoly of Buddhist and Hindu spirituality and have become a pilgrimage destination for modern adventurers. (Howard 2016, 130)

2.7. Labyrinth

Labyrinths are winding paths consisting of four sections and eight loops leading to the center; in such a way that the person entering must pass through all the sections to reach the center. The original history of labyrinths dates back to ancient Greece. In the

11th century, this architecture was used to enter some churches, the most famous of which is the Cathedral of Chartres, France. In the Middle Ages, these labyrinths were known as the Road to Jerusalem because through them pilgrims could represent the difficult and long journey to Jerusalem on foot on a smaller scale. Over time, labyrinths were considered a kind of spiritual practice of meditation and symbolic pilgrimage for self-realization, and even international associations, such as The Labyrinth Society, emerged in 1990, which encouraged the construction of labyrinths. None of these associations have official religious ties. Today, labyrinths have moved beyond their dependence on Christianity or the church and have even been built in various universities, and are considered a type of modern pilgrimage (Reader 2015, 171-173).

2.8. Authentic Rural and Urban Areas

One of the most fundamental characteristics of modern tourism is the search for authenticity. Authentic places are areas where tourists, without the barrier of tourist tours, encounter the reality of the target society and gain a direct impression from it. They are more attracted to countries where they can understand the ordinary life of the inhabitants of that region. In fact, authenticity is one of the characteristics of pre-modern societies, and modern tourists are pilgrims who seek their lost innocence. According to MacCannel, the modernization of work relationships, history, and nature separates these people from their traditional roots and turns them into consumers of cultural products and experiences. Modern man loses his attachment to the workplace, neighborhood, and family that he once considered his own and shows interest in the real lives of others (MacCannell 19761, 91).

Authentic place encompasses a wide range of experiences, for example, experiences of being in nature, such as visiting farmers' land, sand dunes, and pastures. Authentic experiences can also be difficult experiences, such as visiting densely populated, dirty areas or slums in Rio de Janeiro, or visiting the homeless in Prague (Amiryazdāni 2023, 95).

2.9. Terrible Places and Memorials of Disasters

Visiting places where historical tragedies or horrific events have occurred is called "dark tourism." Some authors have examined this type of modern tourism from the perspective of pilgrimage. For example, Daniel H. Olsen, in his book entitled *Dark Tourism and Pilgrimage*, mentions places such as the deadly caves in Cambodia, the suicide forest in Japan called Aokigahara, the Beichuan earthquake memorial in China, and the island of Kantakinte in Gambia, where a large number of slaves were killed and tortured, which have become pilgrimage sites without any religious background.

Dark tourism is not limited to natural places. For example, Emmett Louis Till was a black boy who was killed without due process by a white murderer on a false charge in 1955. His mother placed his mutilated body in a soldier's coffin and asked people to come and share her experience (Olsen 2020, 189-150). It has been argued that the use of this type of pilgrimage may help communities begin a process of healing, but it also risks causing those same communities to forget the real causes of those tragic events (Olsen 2020, 126).

3. The Concept of Holiness in the Context of Traditional and Modern Theology

The concept of pilgrimage, and indeed the concept of religion, is closely related to the concept of holy place. Today, the phenomenological approach claims that it is possible to know the essence of objects as well as phenomena, including religion. Phenomenologists believe that religion cannot be explained in socio-economic and psychological dimensions because excessive attention to these dimensions makes us neglect the essential element of religion, namely holiness. Rudolf Otto, for example, states that the essence of religion is crystallized in the word "holy". This word has such a moral and religious connotation that although it can be spoken about, it cannot be fully defined (Otto 1923, 21).

From the perspective of some scholars in the field of religion, the concept of "holiness" is the most fundamental concept, even surpassing the concept of "God" (Eliade 1993, 152). In other words, religion is a wondrous experience in the presence of a divine or sacred force (Hamilton 2013, 82). Being sacred is an allusion to separation from the outside world or the present time and its customs and attachments. This deep and universal separation is institutionalized and established in many ways. Just as we have sacred rituals, holy days, sacred sanctuaries, and special religious lifestyles and clothing (King 1996, 82), in fact, what constitutes pilgrimage is the stopping or moving towards a holy place. Basically, the pilgrim sets out on a journey in search of holiness and with the intention of sharing and participating in it (Vukonić 1996, 20). From a historical perspective, myths and indigenous religions are also tied to place. For example, reports of a wise man who lived on a mountain here, a wild buffalo grazing here, or a mysterious cave here all indicate that various things in connection with a sacred place acquire holiness (Johnson 2007, 11: 142). Place in this application is more than just a location and position; it is a geophysical support of identity.

If we believe that the concept of pilgrimage also exists in modern theology, it

certainly depends on understanding the meaning of holiness in modern theology and also comparing it with the traditional understanding of holiness. Holiness in these two frameworks has its own specific requirements and consequences, which we will refer to.

3.1. Holiness in the Context of Pre-Modern Theology

Usually, theological methods and studies in each period establish a specific framework. Hans Küng uses several theological models for Christianity, including the model of apocalyptic Judeo-Christianity, the Greco-Roman model, the Roman Catholic model in the Middle Ages, the model of the Reformation movement, and the model of modernity (Küng 1999, 20).

The first four models can be called traditional and pre-modern. Unlike the modern era, faith in the pre-modern era did not encompass a wide range, and humans were divided into only two groups: believers and non-believers. At that time, the Reformation movement had not yet emerged, facilitating the manifestation of multiple and numerous faiths, each claiming to be the true heir of the Christian faith. In this era, divine revelation was considered the ultimate standard of truth, and the task of human reason was to seek the truth that was given to man by revelation (Grenz & Olson 2011, 43).

The key feature of pilgrimage in premodern theology is that the holiness of a place is a generative matter derived from its relationship with God and its metaphysical origin. In principle, in premodern theology, a place is not homogeneous, and a place may have a substantial and real difference from another place. From the perspective of such a person, some parts of the place are qualitatively different from other parts. In this theological framework, a holy place is not founded and forged by humans, but rather humans simply seek to discover it. A holy place is a place where God is present symbolically and in the light of signs, and builds a bridge between this world and the beyond. The pilgrim also travels there and makes a pilgrimage due to the sense of spirituality and holiness that he attributes to the place in question (Johnston 2018). The ways of discovering this holiness have not been the same for people. Sometimes a mere sign and symbol is sufficient, and sometimes it must reach the stage of manifestation or even be mentioned in the scriptures.

In primitive religions, the discovery of holy places was carried out in specific ways; for example, some peoples resorted to animals to escape the frustration of the sameness of places, so that a place where wild animals were hunted was considered a sacred place. In this example, the holiness of a place is revealed with animals (Eliade 1999, 25). Sometimes this function was assigned to high mountains, and they were

considered holy places and the navel of the earth. Sometimes a tree devoid of branches and leaves was the center of the world and holy; as happened in some African tribes (Eliade 1999, 41). Sometimes, like the Celts and Germans, stone pillars symbolized this holiness and were introduced as pillars of the sky (Eliade 1999, 41)

In the next stage, God, as the source of holiness, manifests in a place and that place becomes holy; in such a way that it can be said that the purpose of pilgrimage is to encounter God (Văcaru 2015, 62). Augustine states that Jerusalem was called the city of God when Solomon built the temple there. In fact, what made this place holy was the house of God. He also believes that the earthly Jerusalem is a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem; that is, it also refers figuratively to the city of God above and the children of that city who are pilgrims in this world (Augustin 2019, 736). Reports of God's manifestation to a specific person or group are often transmitted through scriptures, with the Abrahamic religions being a clear example of this. The criterion of holiness in these religions is the choice and preference that God has for a place or object. According to McGrath, in the Bible, holiness means someone or something that God has set apart. (McGrath 2021, 2: 746) For example, the Old Testament reports about the temple where Abraham worshiped God, which was called "Mamber" in the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic traditions, as follows:

And Abram wandered in the land from Shechem to the oaks of Mamre ... And the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "unto thy sons will I give this land: and there he built an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." And he also said, "when Jacob saw in his dream in Haran a ladder, the top of which reached unto heaven, and angels ascending and descending upon it, and he heard the Lord speaking from above, he awoke from his sleep, and was afraid, and said, this is the house of none other but the Lord; and this is in heaven. Then he set up a stone for a pillar, and poured oil upon it, and called the name of that place, the house of God (Bethel)." (Bereshit 28: 12-19)

In this regard, the Israelites used the word "Qaddosh" to refer to these places, which originally means separate and different. That is, a holy place is a place that is different and separate from other places; therefore, it has special and specific customs (Armstrong 2021, 12).

According to what has been said, in pre-modern thought, revelation plays a central role in the sanctification of a place; in such a way that humans realized the unusualness of a place through revelation. In addition to holiness, they also attributed other characteristics to it, which gradually established the first nuclei of pilgrimage. It can be said that the initial sparks of pilgrimage were formed from this idea that the holy place, from the perspective of traditional man, is considered the center of the

universe and also the highest place, and other spaces are considered as the formless expanse around it. The first lofty place where God manifested himself, according to the tradition of Abrahamic religions, was the Garden of Eden. Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions have considered this garden not only the center of the universe but also the highest place on earth.

In Genesis, it is said that “a river flows out of Eden and waters the four branches of the surrounding land” (Bereshit 22: 10). This statement indicates that Eden is located in a high place; just as the Qur'an uses the term "descent" for the exodus of Adam and Eve from Paradise (20: 123), and this indicates its exaltation (Masson 2006, 632). On the one hand, the centrality of the sacred place justifies the movement towards it, and on the other hand, its exaltation indicates its hardships in advance; in such a way that the pilgrim consciously endures these hardships and even enjoys them in order to reach the main destination. Even against the view of those like Turner who have introduced pilgrimage centers as places “out there”, it can be said that this peripherality does not contradict the centrality of the holy place, but rather means that these places are located on the other side of the desert or some uninhabited spot in the chaos and disorder adjacent to the social world, and actually emerge as “a center in that outside” (Turner 1973, 1101).

According to the principle of the contagion of holiness, humans would bring themselves to the most sublime center of the universe to be exposed to the direct manifestation of God and the unseen source. Despite the changes of the modern era, the traditional pilgrimage mindset is still clearly visible in the world and it cannot be denied. Catholic pilgrimage centers such as the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico and Lourdes in France attract millions of visitors every year. Thousands of pilgrims from different parts of Europe walk or cycle the Camino de Comino, which ends in the church of Santiago in northwestern Spain. The Western Wall in Jerusalem has always been of interest to Jews. Three walking festivals are held by pilgrims three times a year: the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), the Feast of Passover (Pesah) and the Feast of Pentecost (Shavuot). Also, more than two million Muslims perform the Hajj in Mecca and the Hijaz every year, and during the days of Arba'īn, at least twenty million Shiites visit the shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) in Karbala. In Japan, many pilgrims, dressed in white and carrying walking sticks, walk the 1,400-kilometer route around the island of Shikoku, following the tradition of the Kobo Daishi pilgrimage. Kobo Daishi, a Buddhist monk, visits a collection of 88 Buddhist temples. In India, millions of Hindus visit the holy city of Varanasi and take a ritual bath in the Ganges River. Every three years, tens of millions of people gather at the Kumbh Mela, the confluence

of the Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers, to bathe. Buddhists around the world visit Bodh Gaya, the place where Buddha attained enlightenment, and other sites associated with his life. Sikhism also has a collection of pilgrimage sites, such as the Golden Temple in Amritsar, which is the holiest place for them and considered their main pilgrimage center.

3.2. Holiness in the Context of Modern Theology

Movements such as humanism, the scientific movement, the Enlightenment, and the Reformation led to the formation of modern theology in Christianity. In the first step, these movements denied the existence of any holiness and distinction with a metaphysical origin. Modern theology believes in the homogeneity and equality of all places in terms of value. In the words of Le Corbusier, the famous contemporary architect, a house is a machine for living in (Eliade 1993, 39); just as a man can easily change his car, modern man can change the machine of his life without any attachment and without any attention to the social or climatic differences. Places have no generative or real holy dimension, and it is humans who, frustrated by the sameness of places or due to emotions and feelings, pay attention to and desire a place and do not pay attention to another place. Therefore, in the modern era, instead of dividing society into two sacred and non-sacred realms, society was defined into two public and private realms (Hoffmann 2007, 1040)

Many theologians, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, are considered secular theologians. Bonhoeffer proposed a theory called Christianity without religion, according to which he believed that Christ could not be confined to the holy community of the church. He believed that religion, in the first stage, divides the world into two parts: sacred and profane; in such a way that some people and some occupations, behaviors, actions, and books are considered sacred and others are considered impure. Basically, from the perspective of a religious person, life is a scene of struggle and conflict between sacred and profane matters. The more religious a person becomes, the more time and energy he spends on sacred matters and the less he pays attention to profane matters. The theory of Christianity without religion actually seeks to reject the division of the world into two parts: sacred and profane (Hordern 1989, 178). He believed that Christ should be served in the world in the sense of unholy and unclean things, not in the monastery in the sense of a holy place. He pointed out the consequence of dividing things into holy and unholy and believed: When the church thinks in this way, it is tempted to transform itself into a holy organization and thus become a religious association; whereas the church should be in the world and work to save the world and bring the message of God's love to the

world to the ears of the world (Hordern 1989, 179)

Harvey Cox also described the way of life of secular society in terms of concepts such as pragmatism and sacrilege. In other words, the orientation that governs the life of contemporary secular man is whether the action in question has a practical result or not? The secular attitude emphasizes temporal and non-eternal matters and its main attention is on worldly realities and not on the dimensions of the other world, and sees meaning in daily activities and not in traditional religious activities. Therefore, acting in the world and being responsible for it becomes the duty of man (Cox 1967, 10).

Although modern theology initially denied any sacredness, it later presented a new definition of sacredness while negating traditional sacred things that have a metaphysical origin; a definition which is considered the main origin of pilgrimage in the modern era.

Accordingly, although places and symbols are not considered manifestations of a priori meaning, they can themselves be meaning-makers. In other words, modern scholars have tried to remove spirituality from the monopoly of religious centers such as the church and to build new religious systems themselves. This is why Hegel considered reading the morning newspaper as a morning blessing, and Benedict stated that cinema and theater have become holy places of the new religion. In this new semantic system, advertising, music, tourism, sports, and the Internet have become sacred equivalents and substitutes for the religious elements of religions (Klepper 2007, 850). In this regard, Emile Durkheim has spoken of the boundary between sacred and profane experiences. In his view, religion is not belief in the supernatural, because in some world religions, belief in God and the supernatural does not exist. For example, Buddhism does not promote belief in God. The essence of religion, according to Durkheim, is the division of the world into two categories: sacred and profane. In his view, everything unusual is sacred, and tourism is also sacred because it is unusual and considered as separation from ordinary life. In this view, holiness is opposed to the everyday, and the tourist, with the justification that she/he escapes from her/his usual life and voluntarily abandons her/his habits, is a kind of pilgrim (Nilsson 2016, 109). Accordingly, the key difference is that in the past the sacred place was central as an objective truth, but in the modern era, the presence of pilgrims and their narratives of religious experience and pilgrimage are the main focus of pilgrimage. In other words, truth here is no longer objective but rather subjective (Amiryazdāni 2023, 50).

The reason for modern theology's view of the concept of holiness should be sought

in the following foundations:

3.2.1. Emphasis on God's Immanence as Opposed to its Transcendence

Christian theology has always sought to find a balance between the transcendence and immanence of God. In modern theology, a special meaning of the immanence of God has been emphasized. The transcendence of God means that God is a transcendent being who is self-sufficient, independent of and separate from the world, and who governs and directs the world from above the universe. According to the Bible, God is in heaven and you are on earth (Ecclesiastes 5: 2). In contrast, immanence means that God is present in the world of creation and is actively engaged in the world of the universe, which includes the events of this world and human history. According to Paul, "He is not far from any of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts of the Apostles 17: 27-28). It should be noted that the immanence discussed in Enlightenment theology is epistemological, and it doesn't indicate God being actively present in history through his actions (Hasani 2018, 127).

Liberal thinkers insisted that God is to be found in all of existence, not in some particular events. God's work manifests itself in evolutionary change in the laws of nature. They did not accept that some things were done by natural forces and some by supernatural forces. Accordingly, Jesus was merely a model human being, not a heavenly Messiah who stepped into the earthly realm of humanity from outside to bridge the gap and rupture between God and man (Granz 1992, 52). Also, the virgin birth of Christ was not important, but unnecessary and disturbing, because they saw God in the birth of every child. In other words, modern theology focused on the Kingdom of God as a historical and moral community based on love and on the continuity between God and man (Reid 1990, 805).

3.2.2. Individualism

The idea of individual autonomy was first formed in the economic sphere and then found its way into theology. Modern theology, by accepting individualism in the religious sphere, refused to accept anything that conflicted with this right, such as the church structure and the authority of the church, and insisted on the so-called church from below perspective (Axt-Piscalar 2010, 469-470). Also, by accepting individualism, it cast doubt on the superiority of tradition in any form and made religious claims earthly; in a way that they were subjected to public scrutiny, like any other subjects (Granz 1992, 53).

According to this view, the word of God and the opinion of other sources are not valid for humans, and a place cannot be considered sacred or superior to another

based on them. It is humans themselves who sanctify a place, regardless of any other source. Also, regardless of the views of others, each person's opinion has validity, and he can consider himself a pilgrim to a particular place. Therefore, the collective nature of pilgrimage and the empathy of travelers, or so-called *communitas*, are not considered intrinsic components of modern pilgrimage.

3.2.3. *Extreme Rationalism*

In the modern era, scholars have refused to accept religious beliefs based solely on the words of the past, and instead have emphasized that all beliefs must be tested by reason and experience. Liberal theologians, through embracing the Enlightenment, have emphasized that human reason is capable of understanding divine thoughts and understanding the divine essence. Therefore, we must keep our minds open to all truths, regardless of their origin. On this basis, it is possible to arrive at new truths that may contradict beliefs that have been sanctified by tradition and time, and as a result, these beliefs must be changed. (Hordern 1989, 64)

The Enlightenment's elevation of reason and its emphasis on nature and the God of nature were in fact a victory of the new imman over the transcendence that dominated medieval thought. The Enlightenment view operated in such a way that it placed God deeply within the framework of nature and human reason, connected and related to them; in such a way that the transcendence of God was dissolved in the organized sphere of the created world and reason. Instead of looking beyond the world, the Enlightenment view focused on the interiority of the world as a whole in order to seek God (Hasani 2018, 128).

3.2.4. *Religious Experience*

In the traditional view, the relationship between God and man is downward (i.e., God initiates this relationship and through a process of choosing prophets or other means, conveys this holiness to creatures), but in the modern view, this relationship is upward (i.e., it is initiated by man, who perhaps through austerities obtains religious experiences). In this view, the Bible is not direct revelation, but rather human testimony to the reflection of revelation in the mirror of human conditions and experiences (Barbour 1989, 68). Schleiermacher believed that religion is not based on any conscious metaphysical belief, but rather on a kind of pleasurable intuition that all humans potentially possess. He also believed that the impasse between rationalism and religious orthodoxy can be resolved if we consider the origin of theology to be human experience, especially the feeling of absolute dependence on God. He showed, in his opinion, that religion is rooted in an experience that is inherent in man and

perhaps is one with that experience. Religion is neither an idea nor a belief. Religion seeks to show the infinite, but its manifestations and effects in all beings are finite (Schleiermacher 1988, 101-102). In other words, once it is accepted that God works naturally in the world, there is no longer a definite need for a special divine revelation. Although in Schleiermacher's view the Bible still has its importance, it is no longer considered as a source of knowledge of the holy. In his view, Christian doctrines should not be extracted exclusively from the Bible, but all teachings should be extracted from Christian religious self-consciousness, that is, the inner experience of Christians. The Bible is simply a record of human religious experiences and not a revelation of God or a record of his actions in history (Schleiermacher 1988, 134-135)

3.2.5. Humanism

On the left wing of the liberals was a group called the Humanists. This group published a manifesto in 1933 on the basis of which the existence of God, eternal life, and supernatural things were completely rejected and replaced by faith in man and his talents. Instead of looking outside himself for help or dreaming of an afterlife, man should develop and perfect his own personality. The result of this belief is that we must rebuild society in a way that is beneficial to human growth. All issues should be evaluated by their impact on man and his happiness.

Humanists believed that God was the same as the world, and is nothing but man and his dreams. Their idea of religion was that religion and religious experience were one. Wherever the human personality is being perfected, religion is there. Religion and morality are not different from each other and are one. They considered the Bible to be a completely human book and Jesus was only a good man and a good teacher (Hordern 1989, 74-75).

4. Conclusion

Despite the diversity of religions and schools, humans were always familiar with pilgrimage. Although pilgrimage has been carried out for centuries in a specific structure and based on divine revelation, in the modern era there have been cases where, although the name of pilgrimage is given to it, it is far from the traditional meaning of pilgrimage. In the modern era, many themes related to pilgrimage may be seen in various contexts such as visiting the graves and homes of famous people, war memorials, places associated with influential political figures, and traveling to search for cultural roots. This has led some scholars to believe that the semantic transformation of the concept of pilgrimage in the modern era.

To understand the difference between the meanings of pilgrimage in the modern

and pre-modern eras, we must first find the difference in the concept of holiness in these two theological frameworks. In pre-modern theology, holiness is an intrinsic and generative thing that is determined based on revelation and in relation to the attributes and actions of God. Humans believe in the holiness of a place and are therefore encouraged to visit it based on what the sacred texts or the clergy order. This is while in the modern era, holiness is not something that needs to be discovered, but rather it is a fabrication of man and is based on his experience. In other words, in traditional theology, the main subject was God, but in modern theology, it is man and man's religion is his experience. In addition, traditional theology considers itself a defender of structure, while modern theology is focused on the life of this world and seeks to provide solutions to improve the worldly life. In short, it should be said that traditional theology claims to be realist, while modern theology is constructive and invents reality. Accordingly, the concept of holiness in the modern era, although common in some instances, has neither been appropriated nor expanded, but rather has changed its meaning. It is clear that if pilgrimage in its modern sense is to be criticized, its numerous theological foundations must be examined and rejected. It is worth mentioning that despite the theory of the semantic transformation of pilgrimage, the dominant theory in today's world still considers pilgrimage to be an extension of divine holiness and derived from religion and belief in an unseen origin.

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