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BOOK REVIEW

Holy communion in contagious times: Celebrating the eucharist in the everyday and online worlds

Burridge R.A. (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022), pp. 398, Price: R648.50, ISBN: 978-1-7252-8578-1

Richard Burridge's volume could not have come at a better time. In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, his discourse is on the virtual church and the celebration of Holy Communion online. Some Christian churches have gladly embraced the concept of online meetings and still allow their members to attend services in this way. Other Christian churches do not support online Holy Communion. Instead, they support online church services only, without the Eucharist. Burridge's book provides a *raison d'être* for online forms of Christian worship.

Writing from a UK perspective, Burridge focuses on the impact that COVID-19 restrictions had on face-to-face meetings and on weekly church attendance. He draws from personal experience and how he, together with a small parish he ministered to on weekdays and Sundays, had to come to an abrupt stop and abandon physical church meetings. His small parish is located in the village in north Cheshire on the edge of Greater Manchester.

Interestingly, an online conversation with a friend led to a practice that is foregrounded in the second title of the book: *Celebrating the Eucharist*



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in the Everyday and Online Worlds. The friend is South African and a Roman Catholic priest, while Burrige is an Anglican priest. Two sides of the same coin? Perhaps.

Apart from the COVID-induced lockdown and the resultant impact it had on British churches, Burrige also follows the development of the online church. He traces its origins and tracks its development up to the post-COVID period. He provides a rich history that will be helpful for those pursuing studies in the digitisation of religion. He outlines the current developments of this emerging form of religious practice.

In addition, Burrige addresses significant elements of Eucharist theology. He explains in detail the functions preserved by the church for the ordained ministry. He also points out the principles of intention that validate the celebration of Holy Communion. In a very subtle way, he juxtaposes the validity of these principles in a face-to-face and online Holy Communion celebration. He succeeds in demonstrating that these principles achieve the same outcome, whether online or in person.

Burrige develops his argument and communicates his stance in a way similar to Osmer's four tasks of practical theology. He starts by communicating what is happening, then moves on to why it is happening, what ought to happen and concludes by suggesting what we should embrace, the online church as a solution to the current challenges we face.

In particular, Burrige suggests to the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Church that the practice of online church is a reality that is difficult to ignore. While he acknowledges the rich history and tradition that has shaped the eucharistic theology of these churches, he nevertheless encourages them to start considering the possibility of embracing online church practices. In fact, his suggestion is not only directed at ecumenical churches, but to all churches that are resistant to online forms of worship.

Surely a move away from the hustle and the bustle of London was a wise move, he contends. As the author of Ecclesiastes says, time and chance does happen to everyone under the sun. COVID-19 restrictions, the quietness of a Cheshire village and an online chat with a South African friend prompted the author to write this informative book on the digital church and the Anglican tradition and liturgy.

If you are interested in knowing more about eucharistic theology and the internet church, you should seriously consider adding this book to your collection. Burrige writes in a relaxed, engaging way, while tackling substantial issues on liturgy, dogma and the online church. He proposes solutions to the quagmire facing traditional church services in order to embrace the celebration of online Holy Communion. In a subtle yet assertive way, Burrige invites the dogmatists to log on and smell the digital coffee.