

Teresa Berger. *@ Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds*. New York: Routledge, 2018. 146 pages. \$126.99.

In *@Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds*, Teresa Berger provides a theoretical framework for understanding online religious practices. She combines liturgical studies, theological reflection, digital media studies, and cognate disciplines, such as gender theory, to inform our understanding of virtual liturgical practices, and she reflects on her personal experience as a *digital immigrant* entering the world of online devotional activities.

Berger contends that online worship is an embodied activity as it cannot take place without a physical body to access a website or mobile application. She also deconstructs the notion of a pure binary between people and technology. For instance, technological enhancements like contact lenses and artificial joints have become a natural part of an individual's body. I found Berger's logic to be cleverly disarming to the common rebuttals against technology and digital worship, which can be seen in Franz and Frederick Foltz' book, *Faith, Hope, and Love in the Technological Society* (Cascade, 2018).

By offering historical examples, Berger illustrates that non-conventional understandings of presence and participation are not exclusive ideas to the technological world. She writes that Peter Damian, a hermit during the Middle Ages, developed his own notion that the whole church is *virtually* present during the reciting of the liturgy, even if an individual is alone (24). Berger also notes that while not being physically present due to illness, Claire of Assisi had a vivid vision of a Mass, whereby she was able to recall who was present in the service (25). I believe that the strength of Berger's research is the history that she brings to her readers, who may not be aware or realize the correlation of these historic accounts.

The author tackles the question of what makes an online gathering a faith community. She considers media theorists' criteria for digital communities, such as interactivity, signals of personal concern, and openness. For example, Berger mentions how for thinkers such as Nathan Jurgenson, human connection is more than physical proximity and "breathing the same air" (38). Likewise, for Berger, liturgical communities have not been bound by the notion of physical co-presence, but a broader belief in the communion of saints.

Drawing upon her Catholic identity as a point of comparison, Berger indicates that online religious spaces look remarkably traditional in order to provide participants a semblance of the familiar. Virtual flowers, virtual candles, and typed confessions mirror brick-and-mortar practices. Praise and worship through online videos add sound to the visual resemblances.

Berger also provides some guidance for thinking about online sacraments. She cautions against quick answers which do not consider the careful nuance and complexity of questions regarding digitally mediated sacraments. Provisionally, Berger offers that medieval theologians expanded their understanding that baptism could be received by water, by blood, or by desire, suggesting that desire could provide a possible framework for digital sacraments.

Students and scholars with an interest in digital religion will benefit from Berger's thorough multimethodological examination of digital worship. While media platforms are constantly evolving (even since the book's publication), Berger's framework still has purchase for emerging platforms, such as using Zoom for worship services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consider for example her consistent line of argumentation that "in digitally mediated worship, 'perceived co-presence' rather than 'physical co-location' becomes a defining feature" (106).

The author describes the tension between what people allow in digital liturgical practices and what God can do. As she indicates, God does not have any difficulties venturing through the cosmos and cyberspace. In fact, God can operate with ease in such virtual spaces. The difficulty is reconciling the human and physical aspects of such divine encounters. While this tension is true, it is more pronounced in some religious traditions than in others, depending on their theological and sacramental beliefs.

Amid the religious and technological genre, this present book is similar to Deanne Thompson's *The Virtual Body of Christ In A Suffering World* (Abingdon, 2016), which makes a theological case for virtual presence and meaningful digital connection. However, *@ Worship* provides additional historical and theological framework for such a perspective. As online worship has become a common practice, this book is a valuable volume for understanding worship among pixels.

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