

Antonio Eduardo Alonso. *Commodified Communion: Eucharist, Consumer Culture, and the Practice of Everyday Life*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2021. 188 pages. \$28.00.

Commodified Communion: Eucharist, Consumer Culture, and the Practice of Everyday Life addresses the complex and unavoidable commodification of the sacrament. Antonio Eduardo Alonso's book argues resistance is not the only approach to religious consumerism. He notes the inherent materiality of the Eucharist and sees hope in God's continued work through the sacrament despite its commodification.

Alonso places his work in conversation with various approaches to culture and consumerism in the church. He includes helpful interludes that illustrate concrete examples of commodification. After introducing his approach, the first interlude describes his abuela's home altar. A collection of mass-produced prayer booklets, religious art, and mass distributed authentic bottles of Lourdes water appear to clutter abuela's altar. Yet, these commodified objects were essential parts of her faith.

Chapter 1 focuses on the liturgical theology of Geoffrey Wainwright, William T. Cavanaugh, and Vincent Miller. These authors share an ethical need to resist consumer culture, but they differ in their liturgical response. Alonso identifies the logical limits of resisting commodification in liturgy that exists in a material world, let alone a consumer culture.

The second interlude illustrates these limits through the historical commodification of hymnals and song books. Liturgical renewal after Vatican II required new genres and languages, new songs, and new collections for a variety of audiences. Alonso described the personal connection he has with some of these commodified hymnals. Despite the consumer culture that created them, God was still present and active within the songs of his youth.

Chapter 2 draws on the work of Michel de Certeau and Walter Benjamin to look for God's active presence in everyday consumer practices. Alonso uses Certeau's understanding of tactics as practices that exist within the structural strategies of the culture around them. A tactical resistance to commercialism does not change the culture or create a new one, but instead, resistance exists within the culture. This is where hope exists as a theological aspect of everyday lives in a commercialized world.

A third interlude follows chapter 2 with a focus on everyday consumerism and the commodification of technology. This is, perhaps, the most familiar commodity of the twenty-first century. Alonso uses Apple's advertising campaigns to illustrate the culture of "thinking differently" in which resistance itself becomes a commodity (84). Still, God is actively present in and through the products of resistance.

Chapter 3 brings contemporary liturgical theology into the conversation with a specific focus on the formative nature of liturgy. Alonso argues that liturgical theologians often rely on the social sciences to prove their theories. As a result, they lack empirical evidence of formative change. Alonso points to historical evidence of Eucharistic practices that were reflected, and even formed by, the culture of the time.

The fourth interlude illustrates the historical evidence of commodified Eucharist in the production of communion bread. Once a liturgical ritual practiced in religious communities, the baking of Eucharistic bread became a commercial business after Vatican II. The Cavanaugh Company quickly became the bread of choice for many congregations, while still responding to the theological needs of their consumers. The bread shared at Christ's table became a commodity in a consumer world, yet we do not doubt the efficacy of the bread.

The final chapter of Alonso's work brings together his previous arguments and illustrations to consider "what it means to celebrate the Eucharist in a commodified world" (7). The material nature of the elements requires each celebration of the Eucharist to be realized through the bread and wine on a specific table, at a specific time and place, with specific people. In this sense, the Eucharist can never fully exist outside a commodified world. Ethical sourcing, labor, transportation, and sharing the meal should be everyday practice, yet even in the absence of resistance, the Eucharist still conveys the grace of God.

While Alonso writes from a Roman Catholic perspective, scholars and religious professionals from many Christian traditions will identify with the challenges raised in *Commodified Communion*. The book raises important questions at the intersection of contemporary culture and the liturgical practice. According to Alonso, liturgy cannot escape the commodified world in which it exists, but God's actions in and through imperfect commodities and imperfect people offer the promise of Eucharistic hope.

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