

Editor's Note

Marcel Barnard

The COVID-19 crisis forced churches and religious communities to go online *en masse*, which included their ritual-liturgical activities. The suddenly ubiquitous e-worship practices evoked all kinds of responses and reflections – popular, professional, and also academic.¹ Much has been said and published about the countless types of online liturgical ritual that have arisen. We didn't want to do that again in the *Yearbook of Ritual and Liturgical Studies*, but rather we invited a number of authors to reflect on different liturgical configurations or 'liturgical arrangements', especially on the sacramental aspects of them.

We invited liturgical scholars from different denominations to reflect on the developments as they perceive them and asked them to focus mainly on Sacrament and sacramentality, more particularly on the Eucharist/the Holy Supper. We publish five answers to our invitation in this volume of the *Yearbook*. Of course we do not in any way pretend to present completed research in the midst of the crisis. We would rather present an interim review that offers a first academic liturgiological reflection on the coronavirus crisis in the Netherlands.

It is clear that the response to the crisis leads to various liturgical and sacramental online-offline configurations, as Goyvaerts and Wouda explain: what they call sacramental abstinence, spectator liturgy, private domestic liturgies, and embedded domestic liturgy (where people participate in online liturgy by performing different ritual activities at home). Moreover, the theme of online-offline worship is not new; what is new are the notions associated with it that are suddenly brought to the fore by the crisis, as Magielse and Ploeger emphasize. The meaning of core liturgical concepts such as participation, body/(dis)embodiment, real presence, and spirituality with regard to the dynamics of online and offline have been investigated before.² After all, even before the coronavirus crisis online and offline were increasingly interconnected in daily life and consequently also in religious and liturgical-ritual life.

1) Publications about e-worship in the COVID-19 crisis include Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online*, <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/187891> (free download); Hans-Jürgen Feulner and Elias Haslwanter, eds., *Gottesdienst auf eigene Gefahr? Worship at Your Own Risk? Die Feier der Liturgie in der Zeit von Covid-19* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2020).

2) Publications about e-worship from before the COVID-19 crisis include Teresa Berger, *@Worship: Liturgical Practices in a Digital World* (London: Routledge, 2018); Martin Hoondert and Suzanne van der Beek, eds., *Ritual in a Digital Society*, *Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy* 21 (Amsterdam/Groningen: IRiLiS, 2019); Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community, and New Media* (London: Routledge, 2019); Paul Post and Suzanne van der Beek, *Doing Ritual Criticism in a Network Society: Online and Offline Explorations into Pilgrimage and Sacred Place*, *Liturgia Condenda* 29 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016).

The articles in this volume make clear that liturgical history can help to answer questions that arise from the practical responses that are given – often impromptu – to the crisis (Cornet, Magielse, Ploeger). The distinction between the sacrament and the substance of the sacrament, as well as the possibility of a spiritual communion, possibly even without sacramental communion, is important in this respect, as Magielse and Cornet show.

As ever in liturgical discussions and approaches, denomination also plays a role, as for example the appreciation of a spiritual Communion shows: Roman Catholic and Old Catholic theologians in particular show appreciation for this phenomenon, although it is also in keeping with a classical Reformed sacramental theology (Cornet, Magielse, Ploeger, Wisse). At the same time it is also critiqued, sometimes from the same denominational angle. From a symbolic-sacramental understanding of the Eucharist – in line with Chauvet and Van der Leeuw, for example – and a more Lutheran-oriented theology (Barnard and Klomp), sacramental abstinence is pleaded for.

Lastly, the discussion about online/offline liturgy and sacramentality sometimes also showed sharp contrasts and evoked fierce discussions. This eventually led Barnard, Klomp, and Wisse to question the role of the liturgical scholar in this. Can and should they speak normatively, and if so, how? The named authors do not shy away from normative speaking, but propose to distinguish situational and more fundamental types of normativity.