**Concerning the celebration of the Holy Eucharist via the Internet**

A summary of the arguments of

the Revd Canon Professor Richard A Burridge

& the Rt Rev. Andy Doyle[[1]](#footnote-1)

By Bishop Pierre Whalon

With the appearance of the COVID-19 virus beginning in China in late 2019, various nations have taken steps to contain the pandemic, in particular, confining most of the population at home for several weeks — or months. This required among other things the suspension of church services. For people used to the regular celebration of the Holy Eucharist, this was painful, and many began to inquire about the possibility of celebrating Communion via online methods, especially livestreaming on YouTube and Facebook, as well as other online providers, and providing prerecorded liturgies. Others began to experiment with “drive-by” communion, pre-packaged Elements, and “drive-in” services.

I have had the privilege of being alongside two friends, Canon Richard Burridge and Bishop Andy Doyle, as they have wrestled with the theological issues raised by such practices. Both are writing lengthy books for publication in the near future. As chair of the Episcopal Church’s Ecclesiology Committee, I was drawn into conversations and readings of both friends’ work, as both had read an initial paper I wrote in March 2020 as a first response.

As our House of Bishops continues to consider how to “set a table in the wilderness”, I propose to summarize both arguments as an aid to discern norms for the Church, since both authors make compelling, but opposed cases. Of further interest is the fact that both men have been in conversation and refer to each other’s drafts. I attach at the end a few questions to start discussions.

Richard Burridge is perhaps best known to Episcopalians as the author of the Bible study on the Gospel of John for the 2008 Lambeth Conference. A biography is [here](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/principal/dean/thedean/former-dean/index). He became very interested in the questions of online celebrations as a result of a South African friend’s query as to why online celebrations were proscribed (she is Roman Catholic, incidentally). At the same time, Canon Burridge reacted strongly to the complete closing of all churches of the Church of England, agreeing with Bishop Peter Selby that this was a serious mistake.[[2]](#footnote-2) Furthermore, he was unimpressed with Archbishop Justin Welby’s celebration of the Eucharist on Easter Sunday livestreamed but prerecorded from his kitchen at Lambeth Palace, complete with a toaster in the background. This led him to start work on a book he has titled *Holy Communion in Contagious Times. [[3]](#footnote-3)*

The Rt. Rev. Charles Andrew “Andy” Doyle is the ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Texas. His biography is [here](https://www.epicenter.org/bishop-diocesan-candrew-doyle/). He is a prolific author on the mission of the church, in both popular and academic styles (he is a doctoral candidate in systematic theology). As online services proliferated, Bishop Doyle began pondering a pastoral letter (found [here](https://tinyurl.com/y3ctpar6)), which has grown into a book-length manuscript. Unlike Canon Burridge, whose book is based more on practice than theory (though theology is hardly absent!), Bishop Doyle presents a frankly epistemological and metaphysical argument against virtual Eucharistic celebrations.

In making this summary, I am grateful for both men’s permission to do so.

One important point is missing in both books. As the Bishop of Colorado, Kim Lucas, pointed out in a discussion I was a part of, no one seems to be mentioning that poor people cannot as a rule participate online. Owning a computer and renting an online connection from a provider are not within everyone’s reach. It does seem that arguments for and against virtual communion are limited to those First World churches, members of the worldwide Anglican Communion and others.

***Holy Communion in Contagious Times***

***By***

***The Revd Canon Professor Richard A Burridge***

What follows is an extremely slender digest of a fulsome and learned discussion spanning some 100.000 words. Presently in sixteen chapters, HCCT (for convenience) begins with rehearsing the several canonical issues pertinent to the Church of England, and then plunges into considering the many responses to locking down churches.

The first is the proposal of a “eucharistic fast.” Canon Burridge quotes at length several clergy commending this practice, often in deeply moving terms. “If my people can’t have it, neither should I” would seem to be the gist of these arguments. He himself has a different take:

Normally fasting is a spiritual discipline in its own right, freely chosen by a believer, to go without particular foodstuffs or drink, or certain habits or pleasures (even sexual

intimacy in 1 Cor 7:5, and probably Dan 6:18) for a particular period, such as Lent (or Ramadhan for Muslims), in order to promote self-control over the needs and passions of our human nature and to allow us to give more time to prayer, study, and seeking God. For those for whom the eucharist is at the heart of their spiritual life and personal discipline and who believe that regular, even daily, reception of it is necessary for growth in prayer and holiness, it is hard to see how a compulsory withdrawal of the eucharist because of unfortunate circumstances, including terrible suffering, economic disaster, and tens of thousands of deaths around the world can be considered as comparable to a ‘fast’ voluntarily chosen by a disciple. [In an email quoted by permission] the Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave, made a similar point concerning “a Eucharistic fast, for which I can think of little precedent (at least, when entered into voluntarily rather than of necessity).” [HCCT II.2]

“Spiritual communion”[[4]](#footnote-4) has become the rule in The Episcopal Church for online liturgies, in which Antecommunion is celebrated by a priest alone in a sanctuary followed by a prayer to receive the spiritual benefits of Holy Communion without receiving the Body and Blood. This is an ancient practice designed for those who physically cannot receive orally because of infirmity or other “weighty cause”. Canon Burridge thinks that it is a diversion from its original intent, not to mention certain canonical issues (Church of England), and contrary to traditional guidelines. “Solo” communion is the priest celebrating the full eucharistic liturgy alone (as was required of Roman Catholic priests daily before Vatican II) — and Burridge considers it inadequate then and so inadequate now, livestreamed or not. “Simultaneous” celebration by a few priests is then considered, such as may occur during the blessing of oils in Holy Week in a diocese, the laity not participating at all. For this reason, it is defective as a norm (rather than exception) since the *laos* are specifically not participating. Lay presidency (perhaps the future focus of division in the Anglican Communion) is raised and dismissed as contrary to catholic and high reformed tradition.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Canon Burridge considers drive-in communion a possibility because people congregate in their cars, thus meeting (minimal) viral barrier requirements, but does not accept “drive-thru” communicants getting the Body and Blood (“McEucharist”), referring to among others, Bishop Doyle’s pastoral letter. [HCCT II.7] Finally, he considers the practice of “extended communion” or distribution of the reserved Sacrament by licensed laypeople or deacons, finding that it rests its justification upon the ancient practice of sending communion to the homebound, as witnessed by Justin Martyr, and been strongly disputed over the years. But sending out eucharistic visitors with the Sacrament consecrated during a full service by the parish priest to visit sick and shut-ins is deeply pastoral practice, an extension physically of the parish’s Eucharist, which would not be complete without them. This is not the same as the disputable practice sometimes referred to as a “deacon’s mass”, and so these provide no justification for online services.

Burridge then moves to consider various online church strategies, beginning with a very helpful and lengthy discussion of the rise of the Internet and World Wide Web — a revolution in communication akin to the invention of the printing press — and the church’s hesitant embrace of these technologies. He concludes, “The enormous use [for fellowship and teaching] of the internet and social media by individual Christians and churches worldwide, both denominations as a whole as well as particular congregations, does form the important *background* to the pressure for forms of online worship, including holy communion, at a time when churches are shut and clergy are locked down.” [HCCT II.5]

There follows a very detailed history of online churches such the early “Church of Fools” (developed by the Ship of Fools), St. Pixels, and the Second Life Anglican Cathedral. This latter has an entire chapter consecrated to it, including Burridge’s own extensive exploration and membership in it as he writes HCCT. A main question of that community is at the heart of the issue: “One of the key challenges with online worship is how to incorporate the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a physical experience from witnessing the act to receiving bread and wine. But it is also a spiritual experience in that the key action is invisible, caused by God who acts within the liturgy. So would it be possible to have a digital communion, a digital sacrament?”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Burridge considers the contrasting replies of two theologians, [Paul Fiddes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Fiddes) and [Bosco Peters](https://liturgy.co.nz/about/site.html). He settles on reflections on Second Life by Christopher Hill, sometime Bishop of Guildford, who to put it crudely, splits the difference between “sacraments” and “sacramentals”; Second Life Anglican avatars cannotcelebrate Holy Communion but could receive it “spiritually” if a priest In Real Life is celebrating. Baptism cannot be celebrated online, but the renewal of baptismal vows (or those of marriage or ordination) may.[[7]](#footnote-7) Two other “affirming” theologians’ conclusions are discussed, Kate Lord and Simon Rundel, and then Burridge returns to agree with Paul Fiddes.

On the one hand [doing digital theology] clarifies the very nature of sacraments by asking what qualifies as “material” or created “stuff” that can be the media for God’s presence, and how God uses it as an instrument of grace. On the other hand, it takes seriously our situation today, in which “virtual reality” needs to be understood theologically, rather than leaving it simply to the realms of technology and sociology. Moreover, by practising the two sacraments—or sacramentals—of eucharist and baptismal renewal in a virtual world, we may come to experience more profoundly the created universe itself as not only eucharistic but baptismal, where created beings, by immersion into the waters of death, come to a new creation.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Key to Burridge’s theology is *intention*. What does the celebrant intend to consecrate? It is clear that the priest makes a difference between which bread and wine on the altar are consecrated and which is not.

I was always taught that consecration was primarily about the priest's intention: thus traditionally, one fills up the cup(s) and the paten(s) and places them on the corporal (a clean white square of linen on the altar) and one’s sacramental intention is to consecrate everything on the corporal, as a kind of ‘zone of intention’. […] The 1662 Book of Common Prayer's instructions in italics/rubrics provide for a “fair white linen cloth upon the Table” – the corporal; then, when the Priest “hath so ordered the Bread and Wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the people and take the Cup into his hands, he shall say the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth”. The BCP also makes provision for consecrating more if “the consecrated Bread or Wine be all spent before all have communicated”. In other words, one does not just pour more wine out of the flagon or take unconsecrated wafers from the box, or more bread from the loaf, without repeating part of the Prayer of Consecration over the new elements. Afterwards, the rubric is clear that “if any of the Bread and Wine remain unconsecrated, the Curate shall have it to his own use”: thus, what was not put on the corporal, or that which was not consecrated by the president’s intention, they can take home and eat there for their meals. In contrast, “if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church, but the Priest and such other of the Communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the Blessing, reverently eat and drink the same”. There is therefore a clear distinction between items of bread and wine, and those elements chosen and set aside to be consecrated by the celebrant’s deliberate intention.

He then points out that large celebrations in cathedrals have been using the tactic of eucharistic ministers standing around the altar (and celebrant) without all these elements being physically touched by the presider. Even a greater “zone of intention” exists at the annual Greenbelt Festival.[[9]](#footnote-9)

the Greenbelt festival has always included a communion service on the Sunday of the August Bank Holiday. With numbers attending often in excess of 20,000, not only is there no table large enough for sufficient chalices and patens to be placed upon it within range of the celebrant’s ‘consecrating touch’, but also any attempt to distribute communion by a relatively small group of eucharistic ministers would take all day! The pattern which has evolved is not unlike that at large services and ordinations, in that festival goers are encouraged to sit on the grass in small groups (a bit like the Feeding of the 5,000 in John 6!), and each group is given a bag containing some bread and a small bottle of wine. During the eucharistic prayer, someone in each group is encouraged to hold up their bread or wine at the appropriate point in a manner similar to the large services while the celebrant stretches out their hands towards the field with the intention to consecrate all the various breads and wines before them.

So this leads us, finally at last, to our key question: why can the ‘zone of intention’ not be extended through digital space to physical spaces on the other side of the planet? After, even if 10,000 miles seem a long way to us, mere grasshoppers on the surface of the globe, it is as nothing to the One who can traverse the entire universe in the blink of an eye. [HCCT III.13]

Burridge finds a fundamental difference exists between liturgies celebrated and broadcast on platforms like Facebook and YouTube, and those that can be “narrowcast” on participative software such as Microsoft Team or Zoom.

Whether bishops and church authorities like it or not, it must be recognized that such online services of holy communion are being widely adopted in contagious times as an alternative to fasting from communion or solitary eucharistic celebrations. There can be no doubt that they have become important and precious to many living alone and those locked down at home. They can provide real nourishment from physical elements of bread and wine which those from a ‘lower’ Zwinglian tradition appreciate as a true memorial of Christ’s passion and death. Catholics and those from a ‘higher’ tradition of priesthood and the ‘real presence’ will have serious concerns about whether such bread and wine can really become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, not least because of the need for a priest’s consecration for people gathered together in the same place and time. As with the old TV debates, this is made even worse by pre-recording such services for later broadcast. [HCCT III.14][[10]](#footnote-10)

Broadcasting means that an impenetrable barrier exists between the priest and the people, whatever their intention. There is a need for personal interaction in “real” time (the moment shared by participants, wherever their geographical location) that prerecorded or livestreamed broadcasts simply cannot provide. Intentionality requires some minimal presence. This has led Burridge to experiment with creating a eucharistic community that uses Zoom.

The community he has created includes members from the UK, the US, South Africa, Estonia, and France (this writer[[11]](#footnote-11)), including not only Anglican/Episcopalians, but also a Estonian Lutheran pastor, an American Lutheran, Roman Catholics, Baptists, and the Quaker who hosts the services through his personal Zoom account. This community follows Kate Lord’s prescription that the communicants have their own bread and wine that is visible to the celebrant on the computer screen, and that each receives separately by name using those elements.

From this very thorough consideration of practices and theologies, including his own, Burridge concludes that a valid Eucharist can be celebrated with the aid of a direct online resource such as Zoom, with certain very clear strictures:

* 􏰍  It was a *mid-week service*, in order to allow everyone to attend their own churches (even if via a live-stream or whatever) on Sundays; it also took place at *midday UK time*, in order to allow those in the far east or ‘down under’ to participate in their late evening, while those in America were able to have communion at the start of their day.
* 􏰍  We were therefore sharing communion *at the same real time*, regardless of what our clocks or watches said about the time zone, and *in the same space*, which may have been ‘digital’ in cyber space, but was *physically real* in what we could see on the screens before us.
* 􏰍  How quickly the group formed into a *real ecclesial community* (a house-church, or cell-group?), sharing not just the communion of their own bread and wine, but also the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears of everyone else – and learning to care for and pray for each other.
* 􏰍  This sense of community was further deepened by setting up a ‘WhatsApp’ group on our mobile phones where *news, messages, or prayer requests* could be posted during the week in between each service.
* 􏰍  The importance of using a *full liturgical service*, with confession, prayer and praise, singing hymns or listening to music, watching videos or pictures and illustrations, readings from the scriptures with a sermon, homily or reflections based upon them.
* 􏰍  While different members took it in turn to celebrate or preside over the service each week, they were all *ordained and recognized by their different churches for this sacramental ministry*; however, many of the sermons or homilies were delivered by lay members, most of whom were licensed or experienced in preaching and teaching in real life.
* 􏰍  The other *clergy or ordained ministers present and participating could also perform any customary manual acts, elevate the elements, or extend their hands* over their own elements or over all of those visible on the screen if they wished to share in the (con-?)celebration.
* 􏰍  Since each communicant provided their own elements, those whose traditions or even Canon Law required *particular preparation (wheat or alcohol)* could do so.
* 􏰍  Similarly, those whose traditions required *any particular form of ablutions* could do so after the communion.
* 􏰍  Because we were all locked down in our own homes around the world, there were no *concerns about health and safety, or about contagion or infection*, while the only *virus* which might be transmitted would come from, and affect, only our computers – and of course everyone had their own anti-viral software to prevent that spread!

In this way, we believe that such *participatory, simultaneous, online communion services* using webinar platforms like Zoom, met all the *criteria and requirements* which emerged in our real-world considerations in Part II, but without any of their problems, as well as avoiding the problems in Chapter 12 about *avatars, anonymity, and digital communion* elements in ‘second life’ as well as the concerns about *broadcasts and live-streams* in Chapter 14 where neither the celebrant nor the communicants can communicate fully with each other at the same time and same virtual space.

***Beginning a Conversation on Liturgy and Virtual Eucharist amid the Challenges of Today’s Missional Context***

***&***

***The Eucharist In Today’s Missional Context***

***By C. Andrew Doyle***

Bishop Doyle begins *The Eucharist In Today’s Missional Context*, an abridged version of a much longer manuscript, *Beginning a Conversation on Liturgy and Virtual Eucharist amid the Challenges of Today’s Missional Context,*[[12]](#footnote-12) with these words:

“The past months have been a time of profound grief. While we mourn friends and family and anxiously await an end to the pandemic, we are bereft of the familiar comfort of “the gifts of God for the people of God.” As Bishop of the Diocese of Texas, I grieve along with the clergy and baptized faithful in our churches. Grief engenders sorrow, but it can also manifest as anger, frustration, and the urge “to do something” to fix the situation. Grief is, however, not usually a constructive catalyst for well-reasoned innovation.

Both *Beginning a Conversation on Liturgy and Virtual Eucharist amid the Challenges of Today’s Missional Context* [BCLVE]and *The Eucharist In Today’s Missional Context* [ETMC] intend such reasoned discussion. In contrast to Canon Burridge, Bishop Doyle presents a purely philosophical theological argument against celebrating Eucharist in the virtual world. One of his perennial concerns in his writing (and ministry overall) has been how the Church should engage its context: as an instrument of God’s mission in creation. It is the Church of the present as well as the past, battling “ethnic prejudice, loneliness, sickness, sin and death” whether in the world of “self-centered Roman paganism” or self-absorbed contemporary Western culture, what Charles Taylor calls “the imminent frame”. This is the flat materialist reality that only science reveals, to the exclusion of any other perspective, especially a supernatural one. The frame engenders a solipsistic “buffered self” to whom only our conscious reality is valued as real:[[13]](#footnote-13) all others are like movie characters on a screen, without claim on us except as how they serve my needs.

Doyle quotes David Chalmers[[14]](#footnote-14) to the effect that in this light, there is little difference between physical and online reality: “virtual reality is a sort of genuine reality, virtual objects are real objects, and what goes on in virtual reality is truly real.”[[15]](#footnote-15). For him, “virtual reality and the world share the same foundation: they are both impressions of an independent mind. Since all human knowledge derives from the perspective of independent minds, there is ultimately no qualitative difference between the two,” Doyle writes. Chalmers’ thought is a thorough-going example of the buffered self.[[16]](#footnote-16)

He challenges Chalmers by spelling out what actually transpires technically when a liturgy is livestreamed. The person being filmed is not the same as the representation of that priest on someone’s remote screen, even less so when there is no opportunity for interaction with the cleric, and even less when the liturgy is not livestreamed. Referring to Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacres et simulations* and his concern that technology allows us to reproduce *ad infinitum* copies (simulacras) that progressively degrade. As humans are symbol-bearing and symbol-making creatures, we are now awash in symbols and metaphors coming at us from all (virtual) directions. “Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: A hyperreal.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

In order to address the epistemological crisis that confuses physical and virtual, Doyle turns to Michael Arbib and Mary Hesse’s *The Construction of Reality*. Modernity identifies the source of human knowing with the natural sciences and social sciences.[[18]](#footnote-18) “Reality is intrinsically ‘verificationist’ in that it assumes that what is in space-time is all there is, because that is what we appear to have direct access to, and it is reinforced in everyday interactions and in the success of science.”[[19]](#footnote-19) However, presenting a complex theory of “schemas” that make up human consciousness, Arbib and Hesse deny such a stunted view. Based on their research, [Doyle argues] that liturgy (not unlike reality itself) is a mix of language as metaphor, symbol systems, ideology, religion plus human mental states, and social constructions.

Quoting Rowan Williams’ account of language in *The Edge of Words*, Doyle expands on liturgical language: “our talk about God in the context of what we think we are doing when we communicate at all, when we aim to ‘represent’ our environment, when we press our words and images to breaking point in the strange conviction that we shall end up seeing and understanding more as a result.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

“Our present-day environment”, Doyle writes, “pushes us to an account of language that ‘reduces it to determined material transactions.’” These “lose touch with materiality, embodiment, including the embodiment of the knowing subject.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Here we might think of our immediate question about virtual eucharist or even virtual liturgies.

To see virtual eucharist as a kind of hub with virtual spokes is to miss the fact that the references built into community, communion, and eucharistic celebration are also about how the multiple individuals participate in the communion or eucharist making of the other people.[[22]](#footnote-22) […] The nature of language suggests that if we control it, constrict it, manipulate it, as it passes through virtual worlds, we begin to remove its capacity for recreation. In fact, we begin to remove its remaking potential for ourselves.[[23]](#footnote-23)

He refers to an interview with Diana Butler Bass and Burridge’s HCCT as examples of thinking in the immanent frame. “A virtual eucharist assumes that human experience is a function of an individual’s consciousness while the experience of one’s body and the body’s experience of other bodies are diminished.” [ETMC]

Linking Phoebe Caldwell’s work with the autistic and Wayne Morris with communities of the deaf, Doyle presses the case that “we are constantly receiving, adopting, rejecting, adapting and reflecting the physical behavior of those whom we are in conversation with such that language and meaning-making are tied to the inhabited physical world.” Nowhere is this more evident than in the Incarnation: “Jesus bids us to know him with our bodies. ‘Get up and walk.’ ‘Take and eat.’ ‘Touch my hands, my side.’” He sent disciples out to rent a large room, and the same room served as the locus of the sending of the Spirit upon 120 disciples as well, including Mary the God-bearer. This narrative is part of the greater narrative expressed by liturgy.

Liturgy is “the language of the church.” [BCLVE] It takes place not only at a certain moment in time, but it is always part of a larger narrative always in the making, that brings in both past and tradition but also making the future present. It creates and re-enacts community within the communion of saints, and “helps us navigate our narrative in the present context.” Furthermore, it shapes us who move from the gathered community out toward the work and place of mission.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Here is where Doyle moves to point out the unsuitability of the virtual space offered by various platforms. He refers to Shoshana Zuboff’s *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.[[25]](#footnote-25) She makes the very pertinent point that using a digital space like Facebook, Twitter, or Google is private, not public space — it belongs to them and they provide it only apparently “for free”. These and many others provide their “space” in order to mine the information usually provided unwittingly by their customers, and then sell the data to other corporations who then target those customers with products and services. Not only personal information but habits of uses are made into commodities to be traded. Thus human beings become objects to be surveilled and scrutinized, and their personalities to be analyzed into commodified data.[[26]](#footnote-26) Should churches use the platforms without the wisdom of understanding just what they are underwriting by their presence online? These corporations operate in an undefined “space” and have developed immense power and wealth, as Zuboff and many others have pointed out.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Doyle concludes both essays on a hopeful note. The church needs to be present as an effective missional presence in the virtual world, for it is where increasing numbers of people spend time and live their lives. But we must be wise. Virtual eucharist may address a short-term pastoral need, but it comes at too-high a price, undoing much of the miracle of the Incarnation.

The celebration of a virtual eucharist risks human nature and jeopardizes human dignity by endorsing a modern drift to privilege the buffered and independent mind. Conversely, the eucharist calls us to the fullness of our humanity. The human being, body and soul, was made to live, gather, eat and drink in the ambiance of community. Yet, the eucharist calls us too to transformation. This is not a transformation of our nature as human persons, but an elevation toward newness of life and a vision of life restored.

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

**Two Movements of the Past That Inform the Future**

**By the Right Rev. R. William Franklin[[28]](#footnote-28)**

[Pierre Whalon: A summary of this Introduction to Bishop Doyle’s book][[29]](#footnote-29)

This is not the first time the Church has confronted the challenge of liturgical revival and the act and meaning of the Eucharist.

My contribution is a review of two key 19th-century movements in liturgical revival: the Puseyites, who were part of the Oxford Movement; and the Liturgical Movement that was part of the Benedictine revival in the Roman Catholic Church. These are parallel movements that responded to the great social issues of their own age: industrialization and mechanization and the corresponding threats to health and safety, the depersonalization of work, isolation of individuals, emphasis on materialism and financial gain, lives lived under brutal conditions without the nourishment of ritual, beauty, and meaning.

*The Oxford Movement (1833-1845), the start of a Catholic revival within the Church of England.*

It arose at a time when the Church was battered by challenges from Evangelicals, whose desire for a robust spiritual life was not satisfied by the historic English Church; by science, which some used to discredit religion; by anticlerical movements that saw the burning of a bishop’s palace and the abolition of 10 dioceses of the Anglican Church of Ireland by the British government; and by the Church’s own neglect of the sacraments. All this was set against the ugliness, pollution, and poverty of the industrial age; the brutal social conditions of the mill towns; and the isolation, exhaustion, and misery of workers — adults and children — who crowded the cities. The literature of the times brims over with “willpower,” “the gospel of work,” “self-help,” and “self-reliance.” It was a time of individualism and materialism, of unrestrained capitalism.

[Along with influential clerics like John Keble and John Henry Newman] Edward Bouverie Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, sought to recover the communal dimension of Anglicanism through a revival of eucharistic worship linked to the construction of a church every day of the year in the gritty, soul-crushing mill towns.

For Pusey and his followers — “Puseyites” — the Eucharist gave new significance to earth as well as eternity, to matter as well as to spirit, and this belief manifested itself in social-service efforts: workers’ compensation, burial funds, distribution centers for food, clothing, and other necessities, creating the safety net where none existed and where individuals were expected to fend for themselves. Pusey remarked that we “know full often the very clothes we wear are, while they are made, moistened by the tears of the poor”[[30]](#footnote-30)  — a comment we might remember when we buy “fast fashion” cheap clothes manufactured in sweatshops in Asia in our own time. The church historian Augustus Neander [reminded Pusey] of the patristic Church: solidarity, fellowship, sharing, corporate worship, opposition to the dominant pagan power. Neander’s teaching on the humanization of the divine and the deification of the human led Pusey to build churches in factory districts and slums to remind the laboring masses that they were surrounded and embraced by God in creation, filled with holy potential.

The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the active participation of the people, the inspiration of beauty in place and ritual, and the acknowledgment of each person as a fellow member of the Body of Christ were the hallmarks of the movement. After the 19th century [decline of it,] revived Anglican religious orders that kept alive the old balance of ritual and social protest. The Society of St. John the Evangelist (1863) and the Society of the Sacred Mission (1894) transformed the experiences of the Puseyite parishes into a new monastic tradition that was to have influence throughout the Anglican Communion into the 20th century.

Pusey, standing in this line, holds up a heritage that we have yet to realize.

*The 19th-century Liturgical Movement (1833-1933)*

Dom Prosper Guéranger [abbot of Solesmes, France] first used the phrase “Liturgical Movement,” and for him it was monastic, pastoral, and cultural efforts that led the way for the restoration of worship, which had fallen into almost universal neglect. Guéranger maintained that the divine office, chanted in choir in its entirety with the solemn celebration of the Eucharist at its center, must be at the heart of Benedictine monasticism.

In 1840 Guéranger initiated the pastoral phase of the Solesmes liturgical renewal directed against episcopal indifference, the slovenly practice of the parishes, and the ignorance of the laity. Throughout France the laity had no idea what transpired at a high mass, did not sing at mass, and avoided the divine office.

Opposition came in 1845 from Bishop Jean-Jacques Fayet of Orleans, who asserted that religion is moral virtue, private, and individualistic — not communal; and liturgy at best is the preserve of the clergy. Guéranger responded by making the monasteries the models of rites and intellectual formation, offering examples to the laity of liturgical celebration, and fostering theological reflection and historical research. [He pioneered the revival of Gregorian chant, and architecture suited to liturgy (unlike the pagan inspirations of French churches since the 16th century)].

The prayer of a liturgical parish was expected to be the prayer of a lay community — a democratic notion that found its full expression in the reforms of Vatican II. [Guéranger saw] worship as a means to solve one of the great problems of the 19th century: the reintegration of matter and spirit. The background from the mid-1800s onward was a predominantly materialistic civilization that divided society into a secular sphere and an increasingly unimportant otherworldly, spiritual sphere. It was a time of industrialization, mass production, movement from rural areas to cities, exploitation of workers, and a huge wealth divide. For the Church, the challenge was to address this society with liturgies that lifted up everyday objects — candles, flowers, fruit — as well as processions that carried religion into places of work in a century that underestimated the value of labor. The liturgical year symbolically hallows time when employment schedules and technology created nightless days and seasonless years, a descriptor we might well apply to our own day.

[With Benedictine developments in Germany and Belgium, the 20th-century Liturgical Movement set down two principles which became enshrined in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. The first is “… the active participation [of the laity] in the shared mysteries and the public and solemn prayer of the Church.”[[31]](#footnote-31) The second is “By living the liturgy wholeheartedly Christians become more and more conscious of their supernatural fraternity. … This is the most powerful antidote against individualism.”[[32]](#footnote-32)]

Today throughout The Episcopal Church the cry has gone up that people desire once more to receive the Eucharist. There is a sacramental famine in the land.

But until 40 years ago The Episcopal Church was not a eucharistically-centered Church at all. Morning Prayer was the norm for Sunday morning worship. This eucharistic focus in The Episcopal Church has been shaped above all by the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. And the link between the 19th-century movements introduced here and the 1979 revision of our prayer book was William Palmer Ladd, Dean of the Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven from 1918-1941.[[33]](#footnote-33) He combined his commitment to the eucharistic focus of the Puseyites with the liturgical scholarship and theology of the Benedictine Liturgical Movement.

Through the widespread influence of his *Prayer Book Interleaves*, Ladd nurtured the Parish Communion Movement and helped lay the foundations of the Associated Parishes and the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, and he shaped the writing and teaching of such figures as Massey H. Shepherd, H. Boone Porter, and Frank Griswold, among many others who produced the 1979 Prayer Book.

Ladd never separated his striving for a Church centered on the Eucharist from the major dehumanizing forces of the 1930s and ’40s: The Great Depression, the rise of fascism, and the coming of world war.

[Dean Ladd] was one of the few churchmen who foresaw from the beginning the tragedy [of World Ware II] that would engulf mankind. Yet he was serene and confident that a book on worship was not out of place at the time. He knew that the world would undergo revolutionary social changes that would make the aims of the Liturgical Movement all the more needful for its healing and reconciliation.

But if he had lived to our present hour, he would doubtless have been astonished to behold how rapidly his prophecies would begin to be fulfilled.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**A Note on Sources**

This introduction is based on two of my previous books: R. W. Franklin, *Nineteenth-Century Churches: The History of a New Catholicism in Württemberg, England, and France* ( Garland Publishing, New York and London: 1987) and R. William Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1987), and three previous articles: R. W. Franklin, “Pusey and Worship in Industrial Society,”

*Worship* (vol. 57, no. 5, September 1983, 386-412; R. W. Franklin, “The Nineteenth-Century Liturgical Movement,” *Worship* (vol. 53, no.1, January 1979) 12-40; and R. W. Franklin, “Guéranger and Pastoral Liturgy: a Nineteenth Century Context,” *Worship (*vol. 50, no. 2, March 1976).

**A few possible questions for discussion**

* 1. Can you locate where both authors might agree?
  2. How would you summarize the heart of their disagreement in one or two sentences?
  3. What questions are being answered by each author? What questions are each author not asking?
  4. Where should this conversation go next?

1. **I have appended a summary of Bishop R. William Franklin’s Introduction to Bishop Doyle’s book as well.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/17973/is-anglicanism-going-private- [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “*Holy Communion in Contagious Times*is under contract and in process for publication by Wipf & Stock, autumn 2020, © Richard A. Burridge; gladly shared with permission for advance discussion among Episcopal bishops, for seminar use only, but not to be quoted or further distributed without prior and explicit written permission from the author and publisher.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. He quotes the 1549 Prayer Book at the end of the service for “The Order for Visitation of the Sick and the Communion of the Same”: but if any man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the Curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood: then the Curate shall instruct him . . . that if he truly repents and believes, he can nonetheless receive the benefits of communion *although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth*. (emphasis added) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “… nearly all, of the mainline Christian churches and denominations insist that communion should, or can, only be presided over by a duly and properly *trained and authorized* priest, minister, leader, or representative. Because the eucharist is in some form or other—whatever particular theology or understanding of it is held—seen as the both the pinnacle and the staple diet of the church, equally suitable for birth or death, joy or sorrow, it is felt that it is somehow important that the properly accredited person should lead it.” HCCT II.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Quoted from https://slangcath.wordpress.com/2009/06/23/virtual-holy-communion/ Note that this dates from eleven years ago. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://slangcath.wordpress.com/the-vision/sacraments-on-epiphany-island/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Canon Burridge does not himself use the “virtual” preferring “digital”. “Virtual” is after all a synonym for “unreal”; as one wag put it, “virtual reality” is a contradiction in terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.greenbelt.org.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The ascendency of the Low Church party in the Church of England is part of the context of this issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. I participate regularly in the mid-week service, and have preached once, and received communion once, but have declined to celebrate the eucharist. I would need my successor Bishop Mark Edington’s permission to do so, I think, but this may also cover some ambivalence. Communion is digitally celebrated across time zones — in “zoom time” for all participants, but I am physically located still in mainland France. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “Beginning a Conversation on Liturgy and Virtual Eucharist amid the Challenges of Today’s Missional Context” [BCLVE] is the precursor to the emerging book. When the abridged version moves away from this text I will refer to it. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Summarizing from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 544. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. David Chalmers, *The Virtual and the Real*, (2017) *Disputatio* 9 (46):309-352; 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In BCLVE. Chalmers’ paper may be found here: <http://consc.net/papers/virtual.pdf> Chalmers begins his discourse by reminding us that the topic is connected to William Gibson’s 1984 book *Neuromancer*, who suggested that cyberspace might be thought of as “consensual hallucination”. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This writer’s own view is that Chalmers’ recovery of consciousness among so much skepticism is valuable. However, like so many, he equates what is real with what is represented. It is what is “out-there-seen-now-real”, the ancient “ocular error.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994),1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Michael A. Arbib, and Mary B. Hesse, *The Construction of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987) 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). Williams begins with a brief exploration of the work of Cornelius Ernst’s idea of a universal interpretive approach to language that holds together history. Ernst defines *meaning* as “the process or praxis by which the world to which man belongs becomes the world which belongs to man”. See Cornelius Ernst, *Multiple* *Echo: Explorations in Theology*, eds Fergus Kerr OP and Timothy Radcliffe (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979) 74-75. Williams then writes, “The challenge in speaking about God is the challenge of referring appropriately to what is not an object among others or a definable substance that can be ‘isolated’ and examined. Part of my argument in these chapters will be that the labour involved in scrutinizing and using language about God with integrity is bound up with the scrutiny of language itself, the recognition of the ways in which it puts questions to itself and destabilized our expectation that we can settle or complete our thinking of the world we inhabit. Looking at the actual variety of and stresses in our speech may give us some insight into how we honestly negotiate the territory beyond ‘ordinary; description, the grammar; of the various sorts of incompleteness we have to confront.” Williams, *Edge*, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Williams, *Edge*, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Williams writes, “To stake a position, to articulate a perception, is to acknowledge that my judgement of my perception is not self-contained and self-justifying: it is to be exposed to contradiction, to the verbal challenge and probing of partners in the language world, and thus to the ‘speculative’ development that returns us finally to where we started but with a completely different kind of awareness.” Williams, *Edge*, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Williams writes, “That the encountered environment is ‘real’ for us as and only as it insists on establishing itself in our language and stirring that language to constant readjustment and new kinds of representation.” Williams, *Edge*, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This is a very abbreviated précis of a lengthy and sophisticated argument returning to Taylor and referencing several other authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Shoshana Zuboff is Charles Edward Wilson Professor emerita at the Harvard Business School and author of *In the Age of the Smart Machine*, and *The Support Economy*. Quoting from her *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. At first, digital advertising was simply buying ad space on online sites, like ads in newspapers. With the rise of *programmatic display advertising*, this traditional process is now fully automated and even further depersonalized, allowing hate speech or conspiracy theories, for instance, to be monetized. See [here](https://www.wired.com/story/how-digital-ads-subsidize-worst-web/?bxid=5bd66da42ddf9c61943815bb&cndid=13640828&esrc=Wired_etl_load&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_SPECIAL_EDITION_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_072920_Special_Omidyar&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=WIR_Daily_EXCLUDE_PaywallSubs) for a Wired article, “Follow the Money: How Digital Ads Subsidize the Worst of the Web” by Gilad Edelman. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Zuboff, *Age*, 303. See James Grimmelmann, “Law and Ethics of Experiments on Social Media Users,” *Colorado Technology Law Journal*, 13, (January 1, 2015), 255; Adrienne La France, “Even the Editor of Facebook’s Mood Study Through tit was Creepy,” *Atlantic*, June 28, 2014; Adam D. I. Kramer, Jamie E. Guillory, and Jeffrey T. Hancock, “Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion Through Social Networks,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* 111, no. 24, (2014), 8788-8790. Jonathan Zittrain, “Facebook Could Decide an Election Without Anyone Ever Finding Out, “ *New Republic*, June 1, 2014. Jonathan Zittrain, “Engineering an Election,” *Harvard Law Review*, 127, (June 20, 2014), 355. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. XI Bishop of Western New York, now Assisting Bishop of Long Island and faculty member at Episcopal Divinity School @Union Theological Seminary [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Created at Bishop Franklin’s request for inclusion in the “Setting a Table in the Wilderness”. All text is his unless bracketed; much more is omitted. I have chosen to place it at the end of this seriously abridged compilation, of which it is a part. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. E. B. Pusey in H. P. Liddon, *Life of E. B. Pusey* 2 (London 1894) 474-475. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Pope Pius X, in C. J. McNaspy, *The Motu Proprio of Church Music of Pope Pius X* ( Toledo 1950). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Lambert Beauduin, *Mélanges liturgique* (Louvain 1954) 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Bishop Franklin served as Dean from 1998 to 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Massey H. Shepherd, “Foreword,” in William Palmer Ladd, *Prayer Book Interleaves* (Greenwich, Ct., 1957) iv. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)