EJT (2019) 28:1, 66–77 0960–2720

Technologising of Word and Sacrament: Deuteronomy 14:24-26 and Intermediation in Worship

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SUMMARY

This paper explores the effects of introducing intermediating technologies into worship, through the lens of media ecology. Just like 'writing is a technology that restructures thought' (Walter Ong), so other human technologies restructure the meaning of worship. The codex permitted a defined scriptural canon to be promulgated and accepted in the early church. The ancient Israelites were required to offer both raw materials (live animals) and offerings that were transformed through human labour and technology (grain cakes, wine). Deuteronomy 14:24-26 introduces the intermediating technology of trade into the sacrificial process. The invention of unfermented grape juice in the nineteenth century and its use in the Eucharist necessitated the use of individual cups. These intermediations transform the worshippers' understanding of communion with God in both positive and negative ways. Scripture and church history offer contemporary churches resources to wrestle with the transformative effects of electronic technologies on worship and engagement with Scripture.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine les effets de l'utilisation des moyens techniques modernes dans le culte du point de vue de l'écologie des media. De même que « l'écriture est une technique qui restructure la pensée » (selon Walter Ong), d'autres moyens techniques humains restructurent la signification du culte. Les Israélites de l'ancienne alliance avaient l'obligation d'offrir aussi bien des animaux pris tels quels que des produits transformés par l'activité et les techniques humaines comme les offrandes de céréales ou les libations de vin. Le texte de Deutéronome 14.24-26 montre que des pratiques commerciales pouvaient intervenir pour faciliter les célébrations cultuelles. L'invention du procédé de fabrication du jus de raisin non fermenté au XIX^{e} siècle a rendu l'usage de gobelets individuels nécessaire. Ces intermédiations transforment de manière tantôt positive, tantôt négative, la compréhension de la communion avec Dieu qu'ont les participants au culte. L'Écriture et l'histoire de l'Église offrent aux Églises contemporaines matière à réflexion pour considérer les effets des techniques électroniques sur le culte et la manière d'aborder la Bible.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Auswirkungen von Vermittlungstechnologien auf den Gottesdienst, durch die Brille der Medienökologie betrachtet. Ebenso wie „Schreiben eine Technologie ist, welche die Gedanken neu strukturiert" (Walter Ong), so können auch andere, vom Menschen geschaffene Technologien dem Gottesdienst und seiner Bedeutung eine neue Struktur verleihen. Der Buchkodex gestattete die Verbreitung und Annahme eines definierten Schriftkanons in der frühen Kirche. Die Israeliten in der Antike mussten sowohl Rohmaterialien (lebende Tiere) als auch durch menschliche Arbeit und Technologie umgewandelte Opfergaben darbieten (Getreidekuchen, Wein). Deuteronomium 14:24-26 führt die vermittelnde Technologie von Handel in den Opferprozess ein. Die Erfindung von unvergorenem Traubensaft im 19. Jahrhundert und dessen Verwendung in der Eucharistie verlangte den

Gebrauch von Einzelkelchen. Diese Vermittlungen verändern sowohl auf positive als auch negative Weise das Verständnis, das Gemeindeglieder von der geistlichen Gemeinschaft mit Gott haben. Heilige Schrift und Kirchengeschichte bieten den Gemeinden heute Quellen bei der Auseinandersetzung mit den verändernden Auswirkungen, welche elektronische Technologien auf Gottesdienst und Schriftgebrauch haben.

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1. Introduction

God is spirit, but he has revealed himself both by immaterial means – words, and the indwelling Holy Spirit – and by material means such as miraculous acts, and the incarnation. God permits human beings to access him by both immaterial and material means: words (prayer, song, Bible verses) and tangible signs (the Israelite cultus and the sacraments).[1]

Certain means of divine revelation and sanctioned human access to the divine are dependent in part upon human activity, ingenuity and design. We read the words of Scripture from human inventions such as scrolls, books or e-readers. Human technology affects these means by which we access the divine. It is not proper for us to say that God *requires* human activity in order to reveal himself, but it is imprudent for us to ignore the role that humans (by God's *design*) play in accessing him.

Marshall McLuhan's famous provocation, 'The medium is the message', conveys a crucial point: no medium is content-neutral – the medium affects and becomes part of the message.[2] This paper explores a handful of ways in which the introduction of different kinds of technological intermediation has restructured the worship of YHWH in Israelite, Jewish and Christian communities. I will show that intermediations are capable of producing significant developments in the theology of the worshipping community, including both gains and losses.

It is useful, then, to examine intermediations that are introduced *within the Scriptures* by God's design and *within the inscripturation process* with God's consent. Principles derived from these moments in Scripture and church history may then be used to assess contemporary technologies through which we experience God's self-disclosure.

Walter Ong, a student of McLuhan, argued that 'writing is a technology that restructures thought'.[3] Scholars have long been attuned to the role that human technologies, such as writing and the printing press, have played in restructuring our experience of *verbal* revelation; we will briefly examine the case of the introduction of the codex. Yet technology also restructures material means of revelation: the Israelite cultus, with its twin successors in Christian worship, tithes and the Eucharist. Deuteronomy 12 and 14 introduce several changes which restructure the Israelite system of offerings. In this essay, I suggest that Deuteronomy 14:24-26, which introduces the intermediation of trade, may be used as a resource to assess other intermediations in revelation, both material and non-material. A test case from the nineteenth century will be considered in light of principles derived from the cases of Deuteronomy 14 and the Christian adoption of the codex.

2. Human technology mediating verbal revelation

2.1 Writing restructures thought

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates contends that writing – words conveyed by intermediation of symbols on a page, tablet or scroll – has the ability to restructure thought.[4] His concern is that writing, rather than enhancing human capacity for knowledge, will destroy memory through overreliance.

Words in an oral world have two key properties that differ from words in a literate world. First, oral utterances are person-to-person, and therefore responsive. Second, words are events, not objects; a word, once uttered, is gone, and the only way to retrieve it is to speak it again.

In order to overcome the 'evanescence' or impermanence of words, oral societies develop strategies to preserve knowledge. First, oral cultures are apt to use 'formulaic structures and procedures', including proverbs, epithets, numerical sets, balance, rhythms – 'anything to make it easy to call back what Homer recognised were "winged words"'.[5] Second, knowledge is stored in narratives rather than in categories, which are 'unstable'.[6] Third, oral sensibility is fundamentally 'conservative' and 'agglomerative', not 'analytical' – at least, not analytical to the same degree that

written sensibility can be.[7] Analysis and exploration are a 'luxury [that] orality can little afford, for energies must be husbanded to keep on constant call the evanescent knowledge that the ages have so laboriously accumulated'.[8]

Initially, writing serves merely to aid the spoken word. But the 'intrusion' of writing into the fundamentally oral human mind eventually begins to structure the thoughts and even the oral utterances of literates ('with the use of letters'). Writing establishes 'inhuman' words outside of human utterance – they are artificial, independent objects. Written texts are unresponsive: when interrogated, they offer no further defence or explanation, only the same words back to the reader. Writing has the potential to undermine human memory, which can become reliant on this external object.[9] Yet writing brings tremendous opportunities for human thought. First of all, it offers a permanence that orality cannot provide, meaning that ideas can be captured and extended across time and space.[10] Second, it offers the capacity for developing complex arguments based on multiple ideas that are difficult or impossible to hold simultaneously in the human mind. Ong, building on the work of Eric Havelock, observes the irony that Socrates's critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* is dependent upon a process of linear analysis that is informed by writing.[11]

Together, these properties of writing influence the thoughts and utterances of literate minds in ways that we take for granted:

> The fact that we do not commonly feel the influence of writing on our thoughts shows that we have interiorised the technology of writing so deeply that without tremendous effort we cannot separate it from ourselves or even recognise its presence and influence.[12]

Our knowledge and experience of writing restructures our thoughts and utterances, regardless of whether those thoughts and utterances are ever written down. I originally delivered this essay as a public speech – a format we commonly call a 'paper', though it is oral communication – but I agonised over each paragraph, chose words carefully, re-wrote, and footnoted my sources, with an eye to eventually publishing it as an article.

2.2 The mouth of God, human memory, and writing

As post-Gutenberg Christians, we have interiorised the written quality of the Scriptures to such a degree that we have a difficult time understanding what it meant (or means) for revelation to be mediated to human beings in pre-print (i.e., scribal) cultures, let alone 'primary oral cultures'[13] with no experience of written word. Moreover, we do not always reflect on the fact that God has accommodated his verbal revelation to the level of technology available at the time. Oral revelation preceded the invention of writing; God evidently did not think it necessary to teach the technology of writing immediately in order to preserve revelation.[14] He apparently intended to use human inventions to mediate his word and his presence to humanity – verbally and materially.

Yet not all forms of intermediation are equal. From tablets, to scrolls, to codices, to printed books, to electronic media – each technology has an effect on human reception. It is the task of the Church to examine particularly the technological mediations that God himself provides/allows, to assess what is gained and lost at each transition, and to critically evaluate the intermediating technologies that are part of our lives and our worship today.

2.3 Multiple scrolls to single codex: closure of text and canon

While a great deal can and should be said about the significance of the printing press for the function and perception of biblical text in Christian communities, the codex should also be considered significant for the notions of 'canon' and fixed text. None of the books of the Hebrew Bible was originally a 'book' nor was the Hebrew Bible a physical book. Rather, biblical texts were written and copied on scrolls, which were unrolled and read sequentially. Each scroll could contain several shorter books, but longer books such as Chronicles each required a scroll of their own.[15] Whether one is a 'maximalist' or a 'minimalist' with regard to the moment of closure of the Hebrew canon that Christianity inherited from Judaism,[16] it must be acknowledged that such a 'canon' was of necessity a list of scrolls,[17] the extent and order of which were subject to debate.[18]

The codex – a bound stack of sheets of papyrus or parchment – gradually replaced the scroll over the course of three centuries, simultaneous with the rise of Christianity. This new technology permitted several sacred texts to be fixed together in portable and easily-referenced form. Beal argues that the codex came to be preferred by Christians because it enabled new ways of using Scripture

which were amenable to Christian readings:

> So striking is the contrast between Christianity's apparent preference for the codex and its larger literary-culture's preference for the scroll during this time that some historians believe that the codex was essentially a Christian innovation.[19]
>
> Whatever led to the unique rise of the codex among early Christians, the new medium was profoundly influential on the scriptural culture that developed around and by means of it. Above all, it facilitated new practices of reading. A scroll prescribes a linear reading experience. You start in one place and continue to scroll along in one direction. You don't easily jump back and forth in the text. Cross-referencing is not practical. Nor is reading short passages from different parts of the text (*testimonia* may have originally emerged as a remedy to this problem). Codices, by contrast, readily accommodate random access. A reader can easily jump backward or forward in the text, or between two different texts in the same codex, without losing her place. She can even bookmark related passages to read together, one after another. In this way, the codex encourages readers and hearers to discover intertextual connections. This particular feature of the codex probably appealed especially to Christian communities interested in relating different passages to one another by means of cross-referencing.[20]

Beal contrasts this way of reading with the way that Jesus read the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue in Luke 4:16-21: the next passage in the lectionary (Isa 61), from a single scroll of about seven meters which contained only the book of Isaiah.[21] By contrast, a reader using Codex Vaticanus (fourth century CE[22]) would have been able to read the Luke 4 narrative and then turn back to Isaiah 61, which was preserved (in Greek) within the same physical object.[23]

Along with ease of reference comes opportunity for canonical closure. It is easier to exclude texts from use (and to promulgate lesser-known texts) when the accepted texts are bound together. The Bible's own adjurations that nothing be added to or subtracted from 'this book' (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19; cf. Prov 30:5-6) take on a different significance when read from a codex rather than from a scroll taken off a crowded shelf.[24]

The strength of the codex's ability to affect canonical closure can be seen in the commitment of the medieval church to Jerome's Vulgate. Jerome himself made a strong case for the inspiration of the Hebrew text and canon over the larger Greek canon. However, the fact that he nonetheless included the Greek books in his translation ironically solidified the canonical status of those books in the Western Church for a millennium.[25] Protestants who resisted apocryphal books for theological reasons appealed to the smaller Hebrew canon, which had itself been solidified through the use of the codex.[26] The Protestant Reformers then took full advantage of the even greater opportunity for closure that became available by the invention of print.

It would be a mistake to argue that the fixture of text and canon is *merely* a historical consequence of the introduction of the codex. Nevertheless, it is critical to recognise the role that technology has played in the reception of the biblical texts. Protestant communities, with their renewed appeal to 'Scripture alone' as authoritative, maintained the theological significance of fixture and closure that had been enhanced by the technology, but appealed to the Hebrew codices as the actual content of the fixed, closed canon.

3 Intermediation restructures material encounter with the divine

The 'technologising of the sacraments', like the 'technologising of the word', offers gains and losses. An example from Scripture itself may be deployed to assist communities of faith in evaluating, embracing, nuancing, or resisting intermediating technologies.

3.1 Offerings in the Hebrew Bible: manufacture and intermediation by trade

Food offerings in ancient Israel served several purposes. The tangible loss of a portion[27] served to remind the worshipper and his family that all they had came from YHWH. Some offerings were said to atone for or cover (*kipper*) a moral or ceremonial transgression, rendering the offeror fit for sacred space once again. Offerings also served the pragmatic function of providing for the priests, the Levites and the poor (Deut 14:29; 16:11, 14).

The more overt New Testament appropriation of Israelite ritual slaughter imagery – the propitiatory function of Christ's sacrifice that we (rightly) commemorate in the Eucharist – has overshadowed another important aspect of the Israelite offerings (and the Eucharist): table fellowship

with the deity.[28] In ancient Israelite life, a significant number of sacrifices would have been rituals in which the deity, the priest and the worshipper with his family shared a meal of meat and bread.[29] The *šelem* or 'well-being offering' as described in Leviticus 7:12-36 sometimes involved meat, as well as cakes baked with flour and oil. When read alongside Leviticus 17:1-7, we can see that this ritual also involved the worshipper and his family consuming part of the sacrifice, while the priest consumed a designated portion (7:31-36). The fat was turned to smoke on the altar for YHWH to 'consume' as an aroma (7:31a; cf. 3:16). We can also look to narratives to see that the ancient Israelite ritual of the *šelem* involved the deity, the priest and the worshipper eating together (e.g., Ex 24:9-11) joyfully (1 Kgs 8:62-66; 2 Chr 30:21-27).[30] Deuteronomy 12:5-21 desacralizes slaughter of herd animals, but the procedure and significance of the *šelem* for pilgrimages remained the same.[31]

Two aspects of this ritual pattern are relevant for this study. First, we find that the prescribed worship of YHWH involved at least two products manufactured by humans: flour cakes (Ex 29:23, Lev 7:12-13) and wine (Ex 29:40-41; Lev 23:13, 18, 37; Num 28; Deut 12:17; 14:23, 26; etc.). The offerings not merely entailed restricting the use of a raw portion of the fruits of an Israelite's labour to burn (though there are some 'dead-weight losses') nor did they strictly serve the practical purpose of sustaining the priests and Levites. Rather, offerings to YHWH required human beings to apply time and labour to transform raw produce into a form that was then consumed by the three participants as they encountered one another in the ritual.[32]

Tithing and celebration of the Lord's Supper as we practise them today are the sacramental 'descendants' of the *šelem*. In the early church, the in-kind food offerings of the people were shared as part of the Eucharistic meal and then distributed to the poor.[33] Those of us who are not farmers or pastoralists are not used to giving our offerings to God 'in-kind', i.e., from the sort of good or service that we actually do for our jobs. We are compensated for our work by money – and then we give a portion of that money to support the work of God and to care for the poor. Sacrifice of one's own produce (animals, grain, oil, wine) was common in the ancient world, with the worshipper acknowledging the deity as creator and sustainer. Indeed, the first instance of sacrifice in the Bible involves Cain and Abel offering the direct fruits of their own labour (Gen 4).[34]

In addition to manufacture, Deuteronomy 14:23-29 introduces the intermediation of currency, a technology, into the worship of YHWH. Once Israel enters the land, even though ritual sacrifice will still be centralised, it will no longer be focused on the Tent of Meeting, but rather in 'the place in which YHWH will choose out of all the tribes to set his name to dwell there' (Deut 12:5, 11, 21, 26). When the time comes for ritual sacrifice[35] the Israelites are permitted to sell their produce in their hometowns, take the money with them to 'the place where YHWH's name will dwell' and purchase the sacrificial offerings there:

> But if the journey is too great for you that you are not able to bring it – because the place which YHWH your God will choose to set his name there is too far from you – when YHWH your God blesses you, you may exchange it for silver, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which YHWH your God will choose; and you will exchange the silver for anything which your soul desires: for cattle, for sheep, for wine, for strong drink – or whatever your soul requests of you; and you shall eat there before YHWH your God and you will rejoice, you and your household. (Deut 14:24-26, my translation)

Implementation of this command may be seen in Ezra 7:17[36] and in the Gospels' 'temple-cleansing' narratives (Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; Lk 19:45-46; Jn 2:14-16).

Deuteronomy 14:24-26 could be viewed negatively as severing the connection between the worshipper and YHWH; Merrill describes this as 'practical and perfectly legitimate' but also as a 'concession'.[37] But it is also possible to see such a connection as strengthened through mediation:

> …The close connection between tithe and sanctuary is maintained by means of the device of pecuniary transactions, first in the locality, then at the sanctuary (26). This device does not relax the cultic requirement, since its effect is to enable the worshipper and his household to participate in the feast at the chosen place.[38]

Joyous fellowship between the worshipping family and YHWH is the primary focus.[39] It does not matter as much whether the sheep that the worshipper actually raised from birth is offered (cf. 2 Sam 12:3-4) or whether it is traded for money in his hometown and another lamb is purchased at the central sanctuary using that money. This pat-

tern of offerings is closer to that of our churches in specialised economies. Yet perhaps something has been lost; we all know inherently – as well as from Aristotle – that value in exchange differs from value in use, i.e., it is nicer and more personal to receive a handmade gift or a home-cooked meal than a store-bought one.

4. Evaluation and deployment

From the cases of the Israelite offerings and the codex (and others that we could not discuss here), we can derive some principles for evaluating technologies that affect the verbal and material mediation of divine presence.

The introduction of the codex exhibits the following values of the early Christian communities:

1. the Old and New Testaments together constitute God's written revelation and should be received together;
2. written revelation is intertextual; texts produced by the same divine Author may be read alongside and compared to one another (this was difficult to do with scrolls);
3. God's authoritative revelation is limited to certain written texts; other texts must not be regarded as possessing the same authority.

The closure of the canon had other implications that the Church needed to address. The Protestant Reformation, while retaining the idea of canonical closure, rejected the so-called apocryphal books that had been included in the earliest Christian codices. Moreover, the Church may embrace various orderings of the canonical books and the emphases these orderings can produce.[40]

The laws concerning the offerings exhibit these values:

1. humans should regard all that they have as coming from YHWH;
2. humans should offer their labour in preparation for worship, not simply a percentage of their regular vocational labour;
3. YHWH desires joyous table fellowship with humans;
4. some human beings may live off the offerings of others in order to devote themselves to priest-like service;[41]
5. care for the widow, orphan and stranger lies at the heart of the worship of YHWH;[42]
6. outward human behaviour should reflect inward devotion and gratitude to YHWH.

We also see pragmatic concerns balanced with these values. The introduction of trade into the offering process (Deut 14) is an accommodation to the difficulties of pilgrimage travel, a compromise of value in service of the other values: Israelite pilgrims would exchange 'silver' (14:25) for products manufactured by someone else ('wine or strong drink', 14:26). The silver may be used to purchase 'whatever the worshipper's heart desires' for the purpose of enjoyment before YHWH – the worshipper is not required to mimic precisely an offering from his own unique set of resources.[43] Yet the parameters for sacrifices and prohibitions of unclean animals or substances presumably still apply; and the wages of immoral professions may not be brought (Deut 23:18).

5. Test case: the invention of grape juice

I will now apply the above to evaluate the introduction of grape juice for use in the Eucharist in the nineteenth century.

Fermented wine, as we have seen, was part of the worship of ancient Israel (e.g., Gen 35:14; Lev 23:13; Deut 14:26; 18:4) and has been part of Christian celebrations of the Eucharist since the earliest days of the Church. Wine, like the leavened and unleavened bread used in various offerings prescribed in Leviticus, is a manufactured product, involving steps such as harvesting, crushing, pressing and fermentation.

Until the nineteenth century in the industrialising nations, and in many nations and regions even today, beverages with some alcohol content were and are among the safer ones to drink.[44] Water from streams or rivers might carry disease.[45] Fruit juice might be expensive and difficult to obtain without refrigeration and sealed containers. Milk does not last long without refrigeration, and therefore human beings have employed various means of transforming milk through biological processes (cheese, butter, yogurt, kefir, etc.) for millennia – but such dairy products often involve salt and the loss of water, and are therefore not a source of hydration.[46]

Because alcohol has been a regular part of life for most of Christian history, the use of wine (in contrast to a non-alcoholic alternative) in the celebration of the Eucharist was not questioned in any Christian tradition for many centuries.[47] As a consequence of the alcohol content, the use of a common cup[48] for the Eucharist presented few hygienic problems.[49]

The invention of non-alcoholic grape juice may be attributed to American Methodists in the mid-nineteenth century. For pastoral reasons, Methodists and other evangelicals sought an alternative to wine for use in the Eucharist. One response to the social problems caused by excessive use of alcohol is to discourage its use altogether, even in Holy Communion. However, Woodruff Tait argues that the Methodists' concerns were not merely pastoral, but theological and epistemological, reflecting a 'common-sense realist' understanding of the relationship between body and spirit.[50]

Technologies such as pasteurisation and refrigeration made it possible to produce and transport grape juice without spoilage.[51] Once grape juice was available for use in the Eucharist, however, concerns about sanitation in the service would need to be addressed. The common cup, which represented the life-giving blood of Jesus for the communicants, could now bring sickness and even death. Individual communion cups were invented to avoid the spread of illness.[52] Intinction (dipping the bread or wafer into the common cup) is also a way of receiving the Eucharist that avoids oral contact with a common cup.[53]

The purpose of this study is not to evaluate the morality of using alcohol in the Eucharist, but rather to consider the transformative effect of these new intermediations on the theology and practice of the Church. A doctrinal and pastoral conviction about abstinence became feasible through technological development, including more complex forms of manufacture. This intervention, coupled with the growing understanding of germs and sanitation, necessitated additional intermediation in worship: either the use of individual cups, and often the involvement of additional participants in the service to pass them around; or, in the case of intinction, the use of absorbent bread or wafer to convey the juice into the mouth.

I would argue that these intermediations affect the motions of Eucharistic celebrations, in which are embedded various understandings of the Eucharist, and of church authority. The choice of an intermediating technology – non-alcoholic juice, individual cups, absorbent bread (for intinction) – both *reflects* and *shapes* the Eucharistic theology and ecclesiology of denominations. The transition from the common cup to individual cups shapes the understanding of the purpose and effect of the Eucharistic celebration: personal experience of Christ is foregrounded, whereas the corporate nature of the Church might become less prominent.[54] Views on church hierarchy and the nature of the Eucharist[55] may also be shaped by these motions or found to be incompatible with certain sets of motions. In some churches the worshippers file up to the 'altar', kneel at a short fence and wait for a clergyman (and trained acolyte, or another ordained officer) to serve (from the other side of the fence) a wafer and offer a drink from a common cup. In other traditions, parishioners stay in their seats while elders or lay people pass around trays of pre-filled cups and pre-broken crackers. Or participants may self-serve at stations. Each of these models is more easily correlated with one set of views concerning the Eucharist. If the bread and wine are in substance the body and blood of Christ, it is risky to be passing them around in trays – far better to entrust them to a sure-handed priest who stands behind a fence and who knows when each communicant has last come to confession.[56] Conversely, someone for whom the Eucharist is a private experience might balk at marching to the front to receive from an ordained authority.

Each Christian tradition must ensure that its Eucharistic practice mirrors its Eucharistic theology and ecclesiology. When technological innovation threatens to shift theology, the community might choose to exclude the technology or to take conscious steps to mirror the earlier practice in the implementation of technology.

6. Conclusions

'Writing is a technology that restructures thought' and the codex restructured the concept of a fixed canon and engagement with revelation. Similarly, intermediations in the sacramental systems of ancient Israel and the Church – the manufacture of cakes and wine, trade in Deuteronomy 14:23-29, and the invention of grape juice – inevitably restructure meaning in human encounter with the divine.

Technology creates new options and requires us to think carefully about what is gained, what is lost and how practices both *reflect* and *shape* beliefs. Most churches no longer celebrate the Eucharist with a full meal, sharing instead only a token piece of bread and drink of wine – and therefore more sorts of ritual motions are available. Yet some intermediations, when used thoughtfully, can serve to underscore the core values embedded in the ritual as originally practised. Like the introduction of trade in Deuteronomy 14:23-29, grape

juice and individual cups may be used to mimic the communal experience of sharing a cup by allowing all participants to drink simultaneously. Ideals and pragmatism must also be balanced based on biblical principles. For example: rather than each family bringing prepared food to share each Sunday, with extra food being distributed to the poor as in the early church, the Eucharist and the tithing celebration (intermediated by currency, or even electronic transfer on a smartphone app) can be paired in the service so that the worshippers can see the organic connection between the two rituals of fellowship.[57]

Ong's work on 'secondary orality' in the age of computers and mass media may be commended to church communities wrestling with the introduction of electronic media, including Bible versions, projected song lyrics, prayers and responsive readings. Like 'primary orality', secondary orality is characterised by the instability of a living, personal word. But secondary orality makes permanent use of an intermediating technology (which itself is made possible by writing!) to achieve something like direct oral utterance. Secondary orality can approximate primary orality but cannot escape the effects of literacy.[58] One may legitimately ask whether we have even entered an age of 'tertiary orality' since Ong's death in 2003, with the development of responsive (social) media.

It is the task of the Church to discern, using Scripture and church history, whether the gains outweigh the losses, and how losses may be mitigated or overcome when technology is introduced. In excluding the apocrypha, the Protestant tradition (rightly) 'corrected' the *content* of the biblical canon that had been 'closed' by the codex in the early church – but successfully retained the *notion* of a closed canon. Individuals and communities may choose to reject certain forms of intermediation, despite practical gains, because of what is lost or obscured. The Roman Catholic theologian Thomas O'Laughlin expresses this caution in response to practical arguments against a shared cup:

> If practicalities, speed, convenience, spillages when handling a cup of liquid, were concerns in Jesus's mind, he would have opted for standard practice at meals: individual cups with the meal's presider saying a blessing over his own cup and thereby a blessing over each. However, in choosing this format we must assume that he deliberately wished the use of one cup, with all the shock and bother, to be impressed on us in our meal. Therefore, not only must the cup be used, but all practices less than that of a single cup (e.g. many cups to speed things up or the use of a flagon from which multiple cups are filled) must be seen as a confusion arising from the notion of the eucharist [sic] as a commodity. Equally, those 'work-arounds' intended to avoid the cultural distaste and inconvenience of one cup (e.g. intinction, spoons, tubes, or thimbles) all miss the point. Drinking from one cup is culturally bizarre and practically difficult, but in doing it we are in continuity with the meal practice of Jesus, which is our fundamental reason for gathering as a community for this meal.[59]

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Endnotes

1 I rely with gratitude on the library resources of Stellenbosch University, and on travel funds from the Department of Higher Education and Training (South Africa). Matthew Kaemingk, Michael Finch and Samuel Matlack provided input on this article at various stages. I am also grateful to the participants in the Old Testament discipline group at the August 2018 FEET conference in Prague, and to the anonymous *EJT* reviewers.

2 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964).

3 Walter S. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. 30th Anniversary Edition: With Additional Chapters by John Hartley* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012 [1982]); Ong, 'Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought' in Gerd Baumann (ed.), *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Wolfson College Lectures, 1985; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 23-50.

4 Ong refers to this in both the book and the essay discussed below.

5 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 25.

6 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 25.

7 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 25.

8 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 25.

9 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 27.

10 J.M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship*

(Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 41.

11 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 29. Havelock suggests that Plato's suspicion of poetry is rooted in its ability to preserve tradition orally, thus circumventing intellectual education:

> ...Just as poetry itself, as long as it reigned supreme, constituted the chief obstacle to the achievement of effective prose, so there was a state of mind which we shall conveniently label the 'poetic' or 'Homeric' or 'oral' state of mind, which constituted the chief obstacle to scientific rationalism, to the use of analysis, to the classification of experience, to its rearrangement in sequence of cause and effect. That is why the poetic state of mind is for Plato the arch-enemy and it is easy to see why he considered this enemy so formidable.

Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963) 46-47.

12 Ong, 'Writing is a Technology', 24.

13 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 6 uses the term 'primary orality' to refer to cultures and persons 'totally unfamiliar with writing'.

14 The first instance in Scripture of transcribed revelation is the promise that YHWH would blot out Amalek (Ex 17:14). Beyond this brief command, in the Pentateuch only the Covenant Code (Ex 20–23) and the "Book of the Law" (i.e., portions of Deuteronomy) are actually commanded to be written down as revelation (Ex 24:4, 12; 32:15-16; Deut 10:2; 17:18; 27:3).

15 Gary N. Knoppers notes that Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, each of similar length in Hebrew by word count, came to be divided into two scrolls each when they were translated into Greek, which is written with a full system of vowels and thus requires more space on a scroll; see *1 Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004) 51.

16 See Stephen Dempster, 'Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left: Finding a Resolution in the Canon Debate', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52 (2009) 48-49, 48n8.

17 It is of course possible to impose an order on a set of scrolls, but not with the same definiteness as when multiple works are bound into a codex or book. A codex forces the choice of some order, regardless of how firmly that order is established. Gregory Goswell points to the contrast between the canonical order given in the Talmud and the orderings of the books found in the Leningrad and Aleppo Codices: 'Should the Church Be Committed to a Particular Order of the Old Testament Canon?', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 40 (2018) 29. Evidently, a written list of books was not sufficient to establish a single canonical order: 'The very use of canon lists by Christian writers in the first four centuries, however, demonstrates that Christians were still debating the status of a number of books.' Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) 122.

18 'The invention of the codex forced decisions to be made about the set order of the biblical books within the codex.' William Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 196.

19 Timothy Beal, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011) 114.

20 Beal, *Rise and Fall of the Bible*, 115-116.

21 Beal, *Rise and Fall of the Bible*, 91, 94.

22 Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (4th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 68.

23 'The codex was better suited than scrolls for use in preaching, teaching, and liturgical reading. When the writings of early religious communities were gathered into a defined canon, a single large codex offered physical representation to the concept of a scriptural canon.' Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 17.

24 The idea of a fixed, preferred (even inspired!) *order* of a canon also becomes a reality, as the production of a codex requires the choice of some order. For a thoughtful, cautious discussion of the role that canonical order should play in the Church's understanding of Scripture, see Goswell, 'Should the Church Be Committed', 17-40.

25 J. Daniel Hays, 'Jeremiah, the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Inerrancy: Just What Exactly Do We Mean by the "Original Autographs"?' in Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguelez, and Dennis L. Okholm (eds), *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004) 143.

26 'When Luther was challenged to abide by his principle of "scripture alone" and concede that scriptural authority for praying for the dead was found in 2 Macc. 12:45f. (where praying for the dead, "that they might be delivered from their sin", is said to be "a holy and pious thought"), he found a ready reply in Jerome's ruling that 2 Maccabees did not belong to the books to be used "for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas". ... Luther had little regard for the Apocrypha in general, but his guidance in matters of the canon was derived not from tradition but from the gospel. In both Testaments "what preaches Christ" was for him the dominant

principle; in the Old Testament Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah preached Christ with special clarity, he found.' F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988) 101, 102.

27 Sometimes the first portion (Ex 13:2, 12-13; 23:16) and elsewhere, a tenth portion (Gen 28:22; Lev 27:30-31; Num 18:21-28; Deut 14:22-28; 26:12).

28 Jane Lancaster Patterson's recent work highlights the fuller OT sacrificial backdrop of two Pauline letters: *Keeping the Feast: Metaphors of Sacrifice in 1 Corinthians and Philippians* (SBLECL 16; Atlanta: SBL, 2015).

29 The imagery of Ex 24:4-11 is instructive here. Lest we balk at the anthropomorphic language of the deity 'sharing a meal', it is useful to remember the language of 'fellowship at Christ's table' in 1 Cor 10–11 and the imagery of the Last Supper in which God Incarnate shared a covenant meal with his disciples and ordered them to reenact that meal.

30 See Patterson, *Keeping the Feast*, 50-62, for a helpful description of the *šəlāmîm* and other shared-meal offerings.

31 In the narrative of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 12 'revises' Levitical law by desacralising domestic slaughter and requiring that ritual slaughter be conducted in 'the place which YHWH will choose to set his name to dwell there'. For further discussion of this narrative phenomenon, see Benjamin D. Giffone, 'According to Which "Law of Moses"? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles', *Vetus Testamentum* 67 (2017) 434-435.

32 I am grateful to Matthew Kaemingk for bringing this to my attention in personal discussions.

33 See Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014) 30-33:

> When the table of the Lord was shared at Corinth, other questions and problems from the wider world of dining were brought along. Those who could afford to bring food were clearly eating a substantial meal (1 Cor. 11:21). Paul uses the story of the Last Supper (vv. 23-25) not to give instructions for proper ritual or prayer, or to suggest consumption of mere crumbs and sips, but to shame a divided community at Corinth with the example of Jesus' humility and self-offering (vv. 27-30). We do not know what resulted in this case but should not assume that Paul's intention was to separate out a token form of eating or have such replace the communal meal. The bread and wine to be shared in his ideal banquet are still staple foods, shared fairly – not odd, merely "sacramental," additions to the meal (31).

34 Interpreters, both modern and premodern, have wondered why Cain's offering was not acceptable to YHWH (Gen 4:5). One suggestion has been that Cain should have traded with his brother and offered a blood sacrifice, rather than an offering of the 'fruit of the ground' (4:3) – the earliest example of division of labour; see James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was At the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) 149, 158-160. While the passage seems intentionally vague, given the acceptability of fruit/grain offerings elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, other explanations for Cain's rejection should be preferred.

35 For a festival, or perhaps for one of the unscheduled offerings described in Lev 1–7.

36 Peter Altmann, *Economics in Persian-Period Biblical Texts: Their Interactions with Economic Developments in the Persian Period and Earlier Biblical Traditions* (FAT 109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) 239-240.

37 Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (NAC 4; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) 241.

38 J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Apollos OTC; Downers Grove: IVP, 2002) 252; emphasis added.

39 Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 233.

40 See Goswell, 'Should the Church Be Committed.'

41 In the New Testament, see for example Paul's explanation of his right to live off the support of the Corinthians (1 Cor 9) – a right that he foregoes for the sake of the gospel. While Paul is not a priest, the apostles and prophets in the early church (and elders, overseers, ministers, pastors subsequently) can be described as serving a priest-like function in relation to the people.

42 At a recent conference (International SBL/EABS Meeting, Helsinki 2018), Christian Frevel observed that in Numbers 1–3 the Levites make up only a 1/26 portion of the Israelites, so that if the Levites received a 'tenth-portion' (*ma'ăśēr*) of the Israelites' produce and animals (Num 18), they would have been more than two-and-a-half times as wealthy as the rest of the Israelites. While this is a useful observation, it must be integrated with the Deuteronomic intention (and possible historical reality) that the priests and Levites distributed portions of lay Israelites' tithes to the poor (Deut 14:29).

43 Thereby opening the door for Israelites in non-agrarian, non-pastoralist trades (like carpentry) to participate in the worship of YHWH.

44 See John Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999) 10, 113.

45 'Beer served as a substitute for water, providing calories and vitamins that supplemented or even made up a large portion of the regular diet of the lower classes. Indeed, evidence that water was

often unfit for human consumption goes back to Biblical [sic] times, if not earlier. It is well known that beer and wine were free of pathogens and were therefore superior sources of both liquid and basic caloric intake.' John V.C. Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes: The Political Economy of Anglo-French Trade, 1689–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 61.

46 Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures*, 34 observes that as transport and refrigeration techniques improved in Britain, the proportion of milk that was turned into cheese and butter went from 'about 70 per cent in the 1860s' to 'less than 30 per cent in 1900'.

47 Due to fears about the laity spilling a drop of the transubstantiated blood of Christ, medieval theologians debated whether the Host (bread) alone was sufficient to transmit the benefits of communion; see William H. Freestone, *The Sacrament Reserved: A Survey of the Practice of Reserving the Eucharist, with Special Reference to the Communion of the Sick, During the First Twelve Centuries* (London: Mowbray, 1917) 157. This practice, along with reserving the elements for private masses celebrated by priests, was a source of great concern to the Protestant Reformers. These debates were not rooted in concerns about temperance or sanitation, however.

48 And in some Eastern Churches a common spoon to administer the elements: Robert F. Taft, 'Byzantine Communion Spoons: A Review of the Evidence', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996) 209-238.

49 Alcohol does not eliminate all health risk, however. A controlled study of communion with (alcoholic) wine suggests that health risks may be further reduced by the practice of intinction; see Anne LaGrange Loving, 'A Controlled Study on Intinction: A Safer Alternative Method for Receiving Holy Communion', *Journal of Environmental Health* 58.1 (1995) 23-28.

50 'Accepting science as a legitimate source of moral data, Methodists accepted its conclusions regarding the poisonous, stimulating nature of alcohol and the purity and clarity of unfermented wine. They connected alcohol to other stimulating substances and habits (rich food, dangerous literature, tobacco, parties, theatergoing) that created illusion and fostered improper mental and emotional responses to reality. They expanded this concern to the economic realm, criticizing any economic habits not based on clear moral perceptions. Believing that only a sober mind operating with accurate sense data could produce logical arguments, they dismissed Biblical [sic] interpretations favoring moderate drinking as immoral, and equated proof of the two-wine theory with proof of the Bible's divine nature. Finally, they emphasized the sacrament's celebration itself as a proof of Christianity's validity on common-sense principles—requiring grape juice in order to present an accurate testimony.' Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011) 121-122.

51 'Thomas Welch, a Methodist minister turned dentist, was convinced that alcohol was unacceptable in the Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Having learned of Louis Pasteur's identification of the chemical process whereby yeast and grape juice interact to form wine, Welch perfected a process whereby wine juice could be boiled and filtered in a manner that removed the alcohol-producing yeast. By 1869 he produced his first bottles of "Dr. Welch's Unfermented Wine", which he believed would serve God by providing Christians with a nonalcoholic substitute for sacramental wine.' Robert C. Fuller, *Religion and Wine: A Cultural History of Wine Drinking in the United States* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996) 88.
Ian R. Tyrrell notes that while only seven percent of congregations in New York State used unfermented wine in 1840 due to the absence of refrigeration, by 1880 the Methodist Church was able to outlaw the use of fermented wine in the communion service; *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800–1860* (Contributions in American History 82; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979) 146-147.

52 See the recommendation of medical doctor Howard S. Anders, 'Prophylaxis in Churches Needed By the Adoption of Individual Communion Chalices or Cups' in Lewis H. Adler, Jr. (ed.), *Proceedings of the Philadelphia County Medical Society, Volume XV: Session of 1894* (Philadelphia, 1894). The avoidance of temptation for recovering alcoholics was part of Anders's recommendation that grape juice be preferred: 'I think that unfermented wine should be used. I have heard of a case where a man who was a reformed drunkard had an old passion for alcohol aroused by the fermented wine of a communion – and landed in the gutter' (352). Woodruff Tait, *Poisoned Chalice*, 113 notes that Anders was a Baptist layman.

53 Freestone, *The Sacrament Reserved*, provides a helpful study of the ways in which both reservation (setting aside elements for later use or keeping them from the laity) and intinction (dipping the host in the wine/juice) have been used to commune the sick.

54 Woodruff Tait, *Poisoned Chalice*, 122: 'Many of the same presuppositions regarding the moral nature of physical acts characterized the subsequent move [by Methodists] to individual cups as well.'

55 This includes the spectrum of views of the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, as well as who may participate in the Eucharist (open or closed communion) and the role of elders and ministers in

enforcing church discipline.

56 It is difficult to imagine a Catholic understanding of the Eucharist accommodating the practice of individual cups; thus the sanitary suggestion offered by Loving is intinction ('A Controlled Study on Intinction', 27) rather than the 'individually wrapped, sterile, disposable packs that contain a wafer and a small cup of wine' that were observed in some churches: Anne LaGrange Loving and Lisa F. Wolf, 'The Effects of Receiving Holy Communion on Health', *Journal of Environmental Health* 60.1 (1997) 6-7.

57 'Tithing today is basically support for clergy and facilities. This is a legitimate use … yet tithing's quality of celebration has receded. The Church's first task and sacrifice is to rejoice together in the Lord Jesus. The spirit of the joyful pilgrimage survives in Paul's far-flung churches, in which believers relay their monetised joy to their brothers and sisters in Zion (1 Cor 16:2-4). Such offerings allow today's worldwide Church of billions to celebrate as one, for God's household includes all of Christ's coheirs "by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others" (2 Cor 9:13 NRSV).' Telford Work, *Deuteronomy* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009) 154-155.

58 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 133-135.

59 Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Eucharistic Celebrations: The Chasm between Idea and Action', *New Blackfriars* 91 (July 2010) 437-438, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2009.01322.x>.