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Communicatio Socialis

Challenge of Theology and Ministry in the Church

Festschrift for Franz-Josef Eilers

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Franz-Josef Eilers SVD

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Introduction

The term “*Communicatio Socialis*“ was coined at the Second Vatican Council. It comes from the *Decretum de instrumentis communicationis socialis INTER MIRIFICA*, which was solemnly promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4th, 1963. In a short introduction to *Inter Mirifica* in a collection of basic documents concerning social communication which was edited by Franz-Josef Eilers, he draws his readers’ attention to the importance of this term:

With the council decree a new terminology was created in the expression of “Social Communications”. The preparatory commission felt that expressions like ‘diffusion techniques’ or ‘audio-visual media’ or even ‘mass media’ or ‘mass communications’ would not express sufficiently the concerns, needs and perspectives of the church. Communication should not be restricted to mere technical means of transmission but rather should be concerned about communication as a process between and among humans. Thus the expression proposed was: the ‘instruments of social communication’ which would point to the communication of and in human society. This definitely goes beyond the mass media as press, radio, TV or film. (*Church and Social Communication*, Manila 1993, 57 f.)

What Eilers states here about the special dimension of meaning of the term *Communicatio Socialis* has become part of his life’s program in his pastoral, missionary and scholarly work. According to the Council’s wishes, Franz-Josef Eilers understood Social Communication as a special challenge for both theology and ministry within the Church in our time.

Already in 1968, a scholarly quarterly with the title *Communicatio Socialis*, which still exists today and is the only international quarterly for communication in Church and society in the German-speaking countries, was published. Its founder and leading editor for decades is Franz-Josef Eilers. Looking through the first volumes of the magazine, one finds highly regarded scholars as contributors; mainly from the field of media science, but also theologians and pastoral ministry leaders, as well as others from various fields of science and profession. The second contribution for the initial issue with the theme “Church and Communication” was written by Franz Cardinal König of Vienna, who was an important Council Father and one of the most influential leaders within the Church in the second half of the 20th century.

The first article in the first issue was written by Franz-Josef Eilers himself and bears the title “Publizistik als Aufgabe” [The Science of the Media as a Task]. Eilers reminds his readers of the Second Vatican Council, then just finished, and of the task. And the task articulated in the council’s decree *Inter Mirifica* is that it had become indispensable for the church to deal with the modern world which was considerably influenced by social communication in a constructive way. Eilers asks his readers to acknowledge the variety of modern media as a cultural merit of

humanity since, according to Christian belief, man is called upon by God to complete His creation by his actions. Thus, in Eilers' convictions, the Church is confronted with the challenge to make the message of God's realm shine also through its use of the media.

In a remarkable manner, Eilers in his contributions for *Communicatio Socialis* strongly directs his readers' interest to the ecclesiastical needs especially of the comparably young Churches outside Europe. Already in the first numbers he writes about questions of social communication concerning Africa, India, or Papua-New-Guinea, to give just a few examples. By setting main emphasis in this field, he adopts a perspective to which he has remained faithful for all of his life. It corresponds to his vocation as a missionary of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and is already visible in his Diploma thesis with the title *Christliche Publizistik in Afrika. Eine erste Erkundung* [Christian Media Science in Africa. A First Investigation] (Steyl 1964), which he wrote in Missionary Sciences at the Theological Seminary of the University of Munster, and then, of course, in his dissertation, which was published in 1967 with the title *Zur Publizistik schriftloser Kulturen in Nordost-Neuguinea* [The Media Science of Cultures Without Writing in the Northeast of New-Guinea].

In addition, as one of the founding fathers, Eilers has remarkably contributed to the development of the well-known Catholic Media Council (CAMECO), which is singular within the Church. He also served as the Executive Director for several years. In many of the Church's global social communion projects presented to CAMECO, Eilers was able to gain insight into the practical media work of the Church all over the world. This experience enabled him to offer sound advice to media projects presented to CAMECO for funding. As a consulter to the Pontifical Council of Social Communications over many years, Eilers knows the challenges of social communication for the theology and ministry of the whole Church from the highest level. Eilers leadership as the Director of the Office for Social Communication of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (OSC/FABC) and as an organizer of many important conferences for the Asian Churches until today, has demonstrated his untiring commitment for the needs of the Churches in Asian Countries. He has dedicated his entire being to revealing an open, caring and vulnerable compassionate heart for the Church of Asia.

Finally, Eilers' many scholarly essays and books, which have been translated into many languages, demonstrate that he is a specialist in the wide field of social communications. He continues to be able to critically read the signs of the times in the unfolding contemporary social communications milieu. His collection *Church and Social Communication. Basic Documents*, which contains important doctrinal texts about social communication, is meant as a study guide and has been edited several times and has been translated into several languages, has made well scattered texts well available, and therefore, they are read. His textbook *Communicating in Community: An Introduction to Social Communication* (Manila 1994) has several editions. In this text Eilers reveals a pastoral-theological attempt to write a textbook on social communications to enable students to systematically understand social communications in light of the intention of the Second Vatican Council and other related texts that followed on social communication. *Communicating Between Cultures* (Manila 1992) emerged from a textbook Eilers

prepared for the Gregorian University in Rome. The book impressively reveals how Eilers, writing from a strong Catholic perspective, was able to unfold an understanding of intercultural communication. His approach respected not only the single cultures and those aspects of social communication that would be lost if communication was only seen as mass communication, or media perceived as only mass media. Eilers insights into intercultural communication remain justified and dignified.

Thus, a common thread can be found in Franz-Josef Eilers' publications concerning Social Communication: In every single consideration about social communication he tries to make clear that communication always is a process between and among humans and that the media as "instruments of social communication" (cf. *Inter Mirifica*) should point at the communication of and in human society. This exactly is the horizon in which the concerns, needs and perspectives of the Church, in which Eilers always is interested, come into effect.

This year, Franz-Josef Eilers celebrated his 75th birthday. Thus, we want to dedicate this *Festschrift* to him. Both the editors and the contributors are connected to him both scholarly and personally in many ways. With our title, *Communicatio Socialis: Challenge of Theology and Ministry in the Church*, we have tried to express what could programmatically be one (surely not the only one) headline for Eilers' ecclesiastical engagement.

Each contributor to this *Festschrift* presents their unique perspective to the theme. In his foreword, **Archbishop John Foley** acknowledged Eilers as one of the few extraordinary heads the Church has in the field of social communication who has done extraordinary work on a worldwide stage. The contributions by **Helmuth Rolfes** and **Willi Henkel** deal with ecclesiastical texts about social communication. Rolfes analyses the development of the doctrines about social communication with regard to the important ecclesiastical documents from the Second Vatican Council until today. Henkel reflects the connection between communication and evangelization by applying of the understanding of the medial world as the "new Areopagus of the modern world" which is taken from the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* by Pope John Paul II. **Giso Deussen** reminds his readers of the fact that many cultures are not present in the internet and, therefore, excluded from the worldwide social communication. He proves his statements by use of examples from Africa and relates them to hints which can already be found in Eilers' dissertation. The contributions by **Ineke de Feitjer**, **Frances Forde Plude** and **Henry D'Souza** deal with several different aspects for understanding social communication as embraced by Eilers by using the term "dialogue" as a keyword. De Feijter discusses a concept of dialogue including its inherent ontological and ethical implications. She has the intention to put a special ethical stress on the understanding of social communication urged by Eilers. In Plude's essay the category of dialogue also plays an important role. She decidedly claims the need for dialogue, so that both religious and social communication keep a humane dimension. D'Souza discusses how inter-religious dialogue is a special form of communication. Inter-religious dialogue, when understood as communication is essential for the missionary work of the Asian churches. Another aspect of understanding social communication is adopted by **Sebastian Periannan**. He is interested in alighting his readers to the spiritual dimension of communication and

contrasts them to modes of living which he describes by the keywords of Communism, Consumerism and Terrorism.

So far, the contributions had a major interest in the theory of social communication. The essays which follow, rather, deal with practical elements. **Daniela Frank** describes the development and work of the Catholic Media Council (CAMECO), Aachen, which supports and advises the medial work of the Church all over the world. **Angela Ann Zukowski** supports strongly the use of digital media and especially of the internet for evangelization and catechesis. Her ideas are based on her vast research and practical experience, especially of The Institute for Pastoral Initiatives of the University of Dayton where she is the Director. **Jacob Srampickal** explores various understandings of interdisciplinary studies and how this theme is developed at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He elaborates on interdisciplinary studies particularly in theology and communications. He highlights the strengths, weaknesses and more for what could be achieved from this perspective. **Pradip N. Thomas** calls for a “study of communication” in a twofold sense, like two sides of a coin, to be integrated into the theological education and formation; first, media as education and second, education in communication with a specific focus on theological and biblical understanding. He describes his own experience and the struggles that are necessary for integrating studies of communication into the traditional concepts of theological formation. The contribution by **Bobby Ebisa** reveals how important such a project can be for the missionary work of the Church. Ebisa is Eilers’ disciple and has worked, under his mentor’s guiding, intensively about social communication. After his ordination, he worked in Brazil as a missionary and parish priest for nine years and has started a radio-broadcasting programme in his parish. The description of this project exemplarily reveals the pastoral possibilities the use of the radio offers for evangelization and catechesis in the Amazon region. **Anthony G. Roman**, a close fellow worker of Eilers in Manila, shows by many different examples from the Asian continent how the use of modern techniques of communication can be important for evangelization and catechesis and is especially interesting in the context of reaching young people, who respond easily and readily.

The two last contributions are written by former colleagues and companions of Eilers from Germany and the Netherlands. With an aside to the Church as a communication institution *par excellence*, **Michael Schmolke** reflects the complex connections between the history of communication and the institutions of communication – and projects insight into the scholarly discussion of this topic in a German context. **Joan Hemels** describes illustratively how the topic of religion was rediscovered by journalists in the Netherlands because of some spectacular happenings in connection with Islamistic terrorism, which caused some remarkable social development in the recent past.

A Festschrift cannot be produced without the assistance of competent fellow workers. This is also so with our work. First of all, we, as editors, want to thank **Dr. Eva Oppermann** for her professional and excellent work supporting the edition of the texts. Oppermann has also translated the essays by Deussen, Rolfes and Schmolke, and also for this diligent and excellent work we owe her thanks. We owe thanks also to **Claudia Brandt** for the technical support of the project. Very

special thanks go to **Missio** (Aachen/Germany), especially to **Irmgard Icking** for the financial support of the project.

And now, finally, some personal remarks:

Dear Franz-Josef,

When you heard about this *Festschrift* being prepared for you, your comment, literally, was (in German): „Wenn denn schon so etwas gemacht wird, dann aber bitte ein Beitrag zur Sache - keine Lobhudelei [If you really want to make it, then be it in support of the matter, and not a *Lobhudelei*.]“ Well, how do we translate *Lobhudelei*? This word is typically German. If one says: “eulogy”, this does not contain the negative meaning inherent in the German; if one says “flattery”, this does not contain the meaning of praise which is earned indeed.

Well, we think that the contributions are about and in support of the matter, and not a *Lobhudelei* – as in “flattering eulogy”. When you are praised in some of the contributions, then just because this is in support of the matter. At least, we understand the *Festschrift* in this way.

Helmuth Rolfes and Angela Ann Zukowski

Foreword

Archbishop John Foley:

In the Church, whose name "Catholic" means "universal", there are too few persons with a universal vision of the Church founded by Christ to teach all nations.

One of that small band of brothers (and sisters) is Father Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, who has done extraordinary work on a worldwide stage.

First of all, together with the then Bishop (now Cardinal) Andrzej Deskur, then secretary of the then Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, Father Eilers was instrumental in establishing the Catholic Media Council (CAMECO) in Aachen, Germany, to examine, at the request of funding agencies, proposals arriving from all over the world for communications projects.

Special study desks were established at CAMECO for evaluating proposals from different geographic and media areas (press, radio, television) in the "lands of the missions", and during and after the time of Father Eilers as director, CAMECO has expanded its services, recommending projects to funding agencies and also reflecting on proposals for the Church in the countries of central and eastern Europe facing new opportunities after the collapse of Communism.

Second, Father Eilers has performed an invaluable service for the universal Church not only through the books of communications which he has written and/or edited, but especially by gathering together in one volume all the documents on or about social communications which have come from the Holy See – from the Holy Father himself, as, for example, the messages for World Communications Day or excerpts from encyclical letters, or documents prepared by the Pontifical Commission/Council for Social Communications or by other Vatican dicasteries on the subject of communications (e.g. the Congregation for Catholic Education). For this president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the books written or edited by Father Eilers have proven to be a ready reference for consultation and indeed for inspiration.

Third, Father Eilers has been an educator – literally forming generations of future priests, especially in Asia, to be effective and credible communicators of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This aspect of Father Eilers' work cannot be overestimated.

Finally, Father Eilers has been the tireless director of the Office for Social Communications of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (OSC/FABC). In this function, he has directed workshops for bishops from throughout Asia on how to use the media more effectively in the service of the Church and of the Gospel. He has made communications an integral part of the formation of bishops and of the service which bishops should offer to their people and to the universal Church.

Perhaps the role Father Eilers has played can be summed up as: consultation, documentation, education and organization.

As a consultor appointed on several occasions by two successive pontiffs to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Father Eilers has been an articulate and

effective spokesperson not only for the communications needs of those in what have been called missionary lands, but he has also been an exceptionally well-informed advocate for the communications needs of the universal Church.

As Father Eilers celebrates his seventy-fifth birthday, we can only pray that the past is merely prologue, and that the Catholic Church will benefit from his outstanding work for many years to come.

***Inter Mirifica*, and What Followed:
The Second Vatican Council as the Beginning of a New Era in the Relationship
between the Church and the Media**

Helmuth Rolfes

By now, there are a variety of world wide Catholic Institutions concerned with the ecclesial media engagement on all levels of church life. Some of these are the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and Catholic media institutions linked with the Bishop's Conferences, as well as individual dioceses that have established committees concerned with media and public relations. All these institutions are the fruits of the Second Vatican Council. They have been established to support and guide the media engagement of the church, as well as regulating the ongoing mission of the Church. In order to understand this engagement, one needs to study the doctrinal texts in which the Church since the Second Vatican Council has articulated important statements. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council was the first occasion when the Church officially introduced the technical term „Social Communication“ (*Communicatio Socialis*) into its doctrinal use of language. In later ecclesiastical texts this term has been adopted and reflected upon.

There may arise a question whether *Inter Mirifica (IM)* passed by the Council in 1963, critically reflected the professional standard of the conversation and use of media during that time. In his writings Franz-Josef Eilers responded:

It is the first time in the history of the church that an ecumenical council discussed the means of social communication, and came up with a respective document. The value of a council document is far beyond any individual pronouncement of a pope like an encyclical letter or speeches at certain occasions.¹

In this chapter, I would like to investigate if something like a constant doctrinal theme concerning social communication has developed in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. I understand *IM* as the first important step within this development. The next step is the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio (CeP)*, published in 1971, which is often referred to as the Church's *Magna Charta* of social communication, and which has remained the most important guiding document in many respects until today. Both texts, *IM* and *CeP*, have to be considered together. All later texts are based on these two documents although they, of course, have their own key aspects. The situation of the media has changed radically since the Second Vatican Council. New technological development and challenges call for a new response from the Church today. How the Church was

¹ Franz-Josef Eilers (ed. and intr.): *Church and Social Communication. Basic Documents*. (Manila, 1993 (²1997)); a *Supplement No. I*, which contains the Basic Documents 1998-2002 has been published in Manila in 2002. The quotation is taken from p. 57.

positioned in the past in the media needs to be different today. Thus, all the Church's texts about social communication have to be reconsidered constantly in correlation to the development of the media. This has been accomplished as can be seen in the documents which have been published after *IM* and *CeP*. In this context, especially *CeP* has set a generally positive attitude towards the media for the future. While the Church continues to maintain this attitude she is faced with evolving concerns of the negative impacts of the use and development of and within media as it impacts peoples and cultures.

In the following pages, I would like to comment on the foundation and development of the Church's teachings about social communication since the Second Vatican Council. I will begin with a short study of censorship and the *Index* flowing into the development and statements of *Inter Mirifica*. I will proceed to investigate the doctrinal and official texts that are fundamental statements in *Communio et Progressio*. In a short digression concerning the new Canon Law, I will return to explore Church communication documents grounded in *Communio et Progressio* that offer pastoral answers to new challenges. I believe that it is within this context the formulation of ethical standards gains more and more importance.

The Final Farewell to Censorship and the *Index*

The Christian Faith and the Church have been connected to the media from their beginning. Christianity is a book-religion; its important norms of faith and Episcopal actions are founded on the Holy Bible, which is a collection of texts. Thus, it is not surprising that the Church, in its area of influence, has always watched the production, distribution and reading of books with special care, especially when questions of ethics or religion were concerned. Indeed, the history about the Church's dealings with books is long and diverse.

Already in the earliest days of the Church, councils had met to discuss the acceptance and order of the scriptures declared canonical and to ban certain scriptures which were called heretical. In Acts 19;19, we even read about the burning of books:

Moreover, a large number of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in public. They calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand silver pieces.

This verse has continuously been abused to justify censorship and suppression by the church leadership. In various editions of the *Catholic Index* the explicit reference to this verse is given.² Even in 1904, Joseph Hilgers wrote in his important work about the *Index* and about St. Paul's enthusiasm, driven by which, according to the *Acts*, he had ordered to burn the superstitious books in front of his eyes in Ephesus.³

² Cf. Heinrich Reusch: *Der Index der Verbotenen Bücher* (Bonn , 1883-1885), Vol. 1, p. 8.

³ Cf. Joseph Hilgers: *Der Index der Verbotenen Bücher* (Freiburg, 1904), p. 3.

The bishops of the Old Church had, with regard to this example set by the Apostle, taken all efforts themselves to keep heathenish and heretical books away from the faithful by all means.

Obviously, Hilgers here projects into the Apostles' days a practice which was only possible after Christianity had become a State Religion. After this, the ownership and reading of heretical texts were punished by imperial orders. In the early Church, however, official ecclesiastical decrees about the protection from wrong teachings were implemented by instructions and warnings.⁴

When Christianity became a State Religion during the reign of Constantine, the Church's dealings with heretical scriptures gained a new quality. To the same degree in which its power increased, its monopoly concerning threats of legally executed punishment in the context of the control of books became established. Until the printing press was invented, the Church managed to keep this monopolist position and the resulting means of control over the production of books, which were produced in the *scriptoria* of the monasteries, and their distribution with hardly any opposition.

The invention of the printing press caused an entirely new situation. The church monopoly was broken on the level of production. Also, the production, distribution and reading of books could no longer be controlled because the confessional unity of the population had been broken by the Reformation.⁵ The Church leadership reacted with corresponding actions.⁶ Ecclesiastical laws, censorship, the adding of unwanted books to the *Index* and inquisitorial pursuit were the main methods by which the Church tried to regulate the production, distribution and consummation of books and scriptures under the new conditions. The old monopoly was to be kept upright at least in the sphere of its own confession. The practices of the Church can be easily perceived from the history of the *Index* until its abolition in the context of the Second Vatican Council.⁷ However, these were practices which became more and more anachronistic and lacked more and more of success under the influence of modern freedom movements. Concerning the field of media and communication, the Church moved itself into an untimely and fruitless position which was characterized by looking backward, mistrust and resistance. An important example for this is the encyclical *Christianae Republicae* (1766) by Pope Clemens XIII, in which the pope speaks about the immoral and reprehensible contents of books and remains the bishops of their duty to protect the single faithful and the whole community from such printings.

It was the Second Vatican Council which broke with this old heritage and, by a fundamentally new orientation of the relationship between the Church and the

⁴ Cf. Reusch, (1883-1885), p. 9.

⁵ Cf. Bernd Moeller: „Flugschriften der Reformationszeit“, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin/New York, 1983), Vol. XI, pp. 240-246.

⁶ One example of these is the constitution *Inter Multiplices* by Pope Innocence VIII, which was published on November 17th, 1487. It is reprinted in: Arthur Utz/Brigitta von Galen (eds.): *Die katholische Sozialdoktrin in ihrer geschichtlichen Entfaltung* (Aachen 1976), Vol. 2: pp. 1524-1529.

⁷ Cf. Georg May: „Die Aufhebung der kirchlichen Bücherverbote“, in: *Ecclesia et Ius*, Festschrift for A. Scheuermann (München, 1968), pp. 547-571.

World, opened a new era in the understanding of social communication and working with the media. Nevertheless, it shall be stated explicitly that before the Second Vatican Council, and especially under Pope Pius XII, important developments towards a free and democratic society concerning the Church's media work and understanding of the public, which also influenced the ideas of the council, had begun. The encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* (1936) by Pope Pius XI can be seen as a first attempt by the Church to deal with the new media of cinema. The text has a strong tendency to warn its readers of morally questionable films. However, it is not only a warning. The Pope encourages the foundation of a movement for the promotion of morally valuable movies after the example of the American Legion of Decency, a foundation both of priests and lay people. According to Eilers, this encyclical was the first to be addressed to the whole of the Church hierarchy, "and shows the value and challenges of this modern means of communication. Also the initiative for church-owned parish cinemas to promote the good film through (their) own movie-houses goes back to this encyclical."⁸ During his long pontificate, Pope Pius XII has often raised questions concerning social communication and the media in speeches, messages for the radio, greeting addresses and the like. Of special importance in this context is his encyclical *Miranda Prorsus*, published on September 8th, 1957, concerning film, radio broadcast and television. While the encyclical continues the teachings of *Vigilanti Cura*, it differs from the earlier text with a high regard of the importance of cinema, television and radio which was unknown until then. It set the stage for media topics to be treated on during the Second Vatican Council:

In the preparations for the Second Vatican Council document on social communication this encyclical together with Pius' XII teaching on the ideal film was a special source. In fact the first proposal for the Vatican II document reiterates in its first sentence of the proposal introduction the words "Miranda prorsus": "*Summo cum gaudio Catholicae Ecclesiae cunctas excipit mirandas prorsus technicae artis inventiones...*" the catholic Church accepts with great joy all the remarkable technical inventions..."⁹

***Inter Mirifica*: A Council Presents a Document of its Own about Social Communication for the First Time**

The Task

On December 4th, 1963, *Inter Mirifica (IM)*, the decree concerning the means of social communication, was adopted and immediately set to power by the Pope.¹⁰

⁸ Eilers (1993), pp. 8f.

⁹ Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁰ The importance of *Inter Mirifica* and the history of its development have been investigated thoroughly by Enrico Baragli, in: *L'Inter Mirifica – Introduzione, Discussione, Commento*,

Looking back, it is somewhat surprising indeed that a council adopted a decree of its own about the means of social communication.

Most certainly, the majority of Bishops, Superiors of Religious Orders and ecclesial universities did not rank the topic of the means of social communication high on their agenda of importance. This is made obvious by a survey organized by the *comissio antepreparatoria*, which the Pope had appointed for the council. Based on all 2150 responses, the commission created 9348 different petitions to be treated in the council. Only 18 of these were about the means of communication. Whereas 15 were supported by about 80 Bishops, three came from the Superiors of the Orders.¹¹ Despite this rather small amount of petitions, the *motu proprio*, *Superno dei nutu*, which was appointed on June 5th, 1960 and by which the commissions were to prepare the preliminary texts for the council, also planned an office which had to work out a scheme for dealing with the means of communication during the second preparatory phase of the council (June 1960-Autumn 1962).

The text to be prepared should – according to the task given¹² – offer a summary about the Church's teaching concerning the means of social communication, support the development of a clear conscience concerning the proper use of the media, clarify the connection between the media and the requirements of faith and ethics, and it should deal with the use of the media for spreading the Good News. This task reveals the conviction that there was something like a doctrinal teaching about social communication by the Church, and that this was, in its main guidelines, to be presented in the text of the council.

The Result

In August 1962, the fathers of the council received a preliminary text of 114 paragraphs, which was shortly discussed¹³ on November 23rd, 1962 and sent back to the commission with the following conditions: the new text should be considerably shortened, and only contain the fundamental teaching principles and the common pastoral guidelines. Practical questions should no longer be treated in the document

Documentazione (Rom, 1969). In addition, comp. also Karlheinz Schmidhüs: „Einleitung und Kommentar zum Dekret über die sozialen Kommunikationsmittel“, in *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 112-135 and Otto B. Roegele: „Das Konzilsdekret über die Werkzeuge der Sozialen Kommunikation“, in: *Publizistik* 9 (1964), pp. 305-347. Hans-Joachim Sander: „Inter Mirifica“, in: Peter Hünermann, Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Hg), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Vol. 2, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2004, 229-261, p. 8.

¹¹ Cf. Baragli (1969), pp. 94f.

¹² Cf. Schmidhüs (1966), p. 112.

¹³ Cf. Xavier Rynne: *Die zweite Reformation. Die erste Sitzungsperiode des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Entstehung und Verlauf* (Cologne/Berlin, 1964), pp. 201-215. (concerning the debate about the „means of communication“). Roegele (1964, p. 310) has calculated an amount of only 360 minutes of time for discussion. Obviously, many did not consider the topic as important as others discussed on the council.

itself but worked out by an especially organized commission installed after the council and presented in the form of a pastoral instruction.

On the foundation of these conditions a text of nine printed pages was written. It was given to the council fathers as a draft resolution on November 11th, 1963 and presented to the council by Archbishop Stourm of Sens in the role of a reporter on November 14th, 1963 already. In his report, Archbishop Stourm explained the way in which the conditions agreed on in the first session had been worked into the paper as conscientiously and exactly as possible. Afterwards the single paragraphs were voted without any further discussion. However, compared to the result of the first session, the number of critical voices had increased considerably.¹⁴

The voted text, which was finally adopted in a vote on November 25th, 1963, contains two chapters in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction begins with a definition of the media as the “means of social communication” (1) and indicates the opportunities of their use as well as the dangers of their misuse (2).

The first chapter is about doctrinal statements and orders concerning ethics. The chapter begins with a manifestation of the Church’s rights of using and owning means of social communication (3). This is followed by the statement that their proper use requires both the knowledge about and the respect of the foundations of a moral world order and insight into the functional laws of the media (4). A “correct conscience” is necessary for the use of the means of social communication (5). First, these principles are stated for the area of “information”: “It is, however, especially necessary that all parties concerned should adopt for themselves a proper moral outlook on the use of these media...” (5); second, the estimation that the moral order is set above the freedom of the arts (6); and, third, every representation of moral evil in the media is subordinated to ethical requirements (7). This is followed by a statement about the importance of “Public opinion” and the duty to support and spread the correct forms of public opinion (8). The next paragraph deals with the importance of reception at the proper use of the media (9), with the education, especially of the young, to “moderation and discipline” concerning the use of the media (10), and with the extraordinary responsibility of all those who are concerned with their production and distribution. The responsibility for the common good, the keeping of the moral guidelines and the special protection of the youth are explicitly mentioned (11). The first chapter is finished with remarks concerning the special duties of the public authorities to protect the freedom in general and especially the freedom of the press, to support valuable activities in the field of the media, to prevent the abuse of the means of communication and to take special care of the young (12).

The second chapter begins with a remark on the duty to use the means of social communication for preaching and mission (13). This is followed by an appeal to support the good press and a distribution of tasks to the Catholic press. It “would have for its manifest purpose to form, to consolidate and to promote a public opinion in conformity with the natural law and with Catholic doctrines and directives” (14). Then, the text highlights the necessity to produce and increase the number of qualified training centres for all who work with the media (15) and about the importance of the different educational opportunities for a proper understanding

¹⁴ Cf. Schmidhüs (1966), pp. 112ff.

and use of the media which are strongly influenced by a Christian spirit (16). In the text, a sufficient financial budget for the corresponding media institutions is requested, and the duty to financially support the Church's media work is brought back to the minds of the faithful (17). The last paragraphs of the second chapter are concerned with significant new developments to support social communications in the Church. A special day is to be set aside to recognize the role of social communications in the Church (18), a special office concerning the media should be placed at the Holy See for the Pope (19), the bishops are requested to coordinate the work and projects of in the field of social communication in their own dioceses (20), on national level the council orders national media centres under the guidance of a bishop or the Bishops' Conference (21). These should be in close contact with the Holy See and work together in regional international organizations (22).

In conclusion, the Council ordered that a Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication be published. This was to be worked out by a commission subordinated to the Holy See in cooperation with experts from different countries (23). The text is closed with an appeal to keep in mind and realize the basic statements and tasks set in the decree (24).

Harsh Criticism

Two initiatives with some impact on the public¹⁵ which revealed considerable weaknesses of the text and which were intended to have the text discussed and changed again at the last minute have to be mentioned. On November 16th, 1963 a group of journalists from the United States published a statement which was agreed upon by some theologians from the Council. One day later, 90 Council fathers, among them highly respected bishops and cardinals, presented a petition to have the scheme checked again by the Council commission. The petition was put down by Cardinal Cento, then chairman of the commission, with reference to the procedural rules.

Which were the main cases of criticism? The journalists criticized the abstract style of the text which had nothing to do with the reality of journalism. They stated that legitimate forms of expression, both cultural and of the fine arts, were pressed into moral schemes and thereby lost the recognition of their special value. They also criticized that the right for information was cut in half because only the distributors but neither the sources nor the administrators of the news were regarded. Both the idea that the Catholic Church could journalistically meet the requirements of the natural right of information without failure and the demand of authority the Church had towards publishers and their owners were doubted. Finally, the text-given distribution of tasks of the public force towards the media did not find agreement with the journalist critics either because the freedom of the press was no longer guaranteed. In the future the document would, according to the critics, stand as an example of a failed perception of reality. If the scheme was to correspond to the just expectations of the modern times, it had to be reshaped completely; so was the unspoken but fundamental opinion of the experts.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 113f.

The criticism which was presented by 90 bishops in a petition to the Council's commission was of another tone; however, it was not less radical. They finished with the remark that it was better to adopt no decree than proceed with the current document. The document was perceived as not satisfying for either the experts or for the just expectations of Christians. If it was adopted as it was, it would damage the respect of the Council. The five central statements were:

- 1) The scheme is founded on undoubted rights of the Church; however, it contains nothing about the foundation of every communication, namely the search for the truth and the wish to express the same.
- 2) The media are regarded only technically as means of addressing not as the means of a genuine human dialogue; thus, the essence of genuine communication is not satisfyingly taken into consideration.
- 3) The thought of forming a genuine Christian humanity cannot be found in the text. This humanity would enable mankind to strive for perceiving the truth in the right way instead of simply craving for sensations. It would also reduce the distance caused by mere abstract reasoning and make possible a genuine communication in which people share the fates of others.
- 4) It is regretted that the position of the laity are not really accepted by the Church; even when lay people are better qualified for a position, they still have a feeling of being overpowered by clerics.
- 5) Many questions touched by the scheme should be decided by local Bishops' Conferences rather than by a Council's decree because they cannot be answered in a commonly valid way.¹⁶

Although this criticism was correct and would indeed have caused the text to be reshaped entirely, it could not be taken into consideration any more. However, it was obviously echoed in the voting for the text; no other decree was passed with so many opposing votes than *Inter Mirifica*. On November 25th, 1963, only 1598 of the 2112 voters present voted "yes"; 503 voted with "no"; 11 votes were not valid. This was the weakest result ever for a council's decree. And even in the final vote on December 4th, 1963, which was guided by the Pope, 1960 votes were "yes", still 164 were "no", and 27 undecided.¹⁷

The Importance of *Inter Mirifica*: A Preconciliar Document?

IM does not belong to the important texts which were worked out and passed by the Council, and the reaction of the experts was corresponding.¹⁸ A look back on the

¹⁶ Cf. Roegele (1964), p. 313.

¹⁷ Schmidhüs (1964), pp. 114f.

¹⁸ According to Roegele (1964, p. 318), the text was neither scholarly nor theologically at the height of its time. It causes an old-fashioned and incompetent impression and consists of a dissatisfying mixture of pathetically expressed common truths and warnings which are certainly well-meaning but without any relation to reality.

Second Vatican Council shows that *IM* was justly classified as a preconciliar document.¹⁹

However, the historical importance of *IM* has not yet been met at this point. Despite all the text's undoubted weaknesses, the fact that a council has dealt with the media in a genuine council document cannot be esteemed too high with regard to the further respect the Church has had for the topic. Apart from a "World Communication Day"²⁰, the regulation and coordination of the media work on local, national and international levels was requested and a special office belonging to the Holy See was planned. All the resulting offices are a natural part of the ecclesial institutions; of course, they have to be – and are – adapted to the requirements of the time. This development, which was important for the development of the whole Church, was caused by *IM*.

The decree could, of course, not lay a theological foundation of the terms of content according to which the institutions founded in the aftermath of the Council worked. The most important reason for this is the fact that the most meaningful ecclesiological statements, especially those concerning with the revision of the relationship between the Church and the world, were worked out only after the early and somewhat hasty adoption of *IM*. Therefore, they could not influence the decree about the means of social communication – although this would have been essential. This is also the main reason for the preconciliar character criticized above.

A historically just review of *IM*, however, will take into consideration that one cannot expect something of a text which it was not able to achieve, according to its whole genesis. This deficit was repaired by the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*, (*CeP*), which had been announced in *IM*. The task of producing the Pastoral Instruction was placed with the Pontifical Commission for the Instruments of Social Communication by the Pope shortly after the Second Vatican Council. The Pontifical Commission was to work together with international media/communication experts as advisors. The prepared epistle should "ensure that all the principles and rules of the Council on the means of social communication be put into effect" (*IM* 23).²¹ Nevertheless, it took several years of diligent work until *Communio et Progressio: Pastoral Instruction for the Application of the Decree of the Second Vatican Council on The Means of Social Communication* was finally published on June 3rd, 1971. If one wants to understand the aims which the Council wanted to reach by publishing *IM*, one has to take *CeP* into consideration as well. It has to be seen as an addition and continuation of *IM*, which was intended by the Council itself. Both texts are interconnected, and it is not only legitimate but necessary to interpret *IM* by looking at *CeP* to substantiate the interpretation on the Council's intentions and not only on the literal text of the decree. This is also the only way to understand and interpret correctly the reception of *IM* after *CeP* had been published.

¹⁹ E. g. Schmidhüs (1964), p. 115.

²⁰ This World Communication Day has been celebrated in the whole Church ever since 1967. Every time, the Pope writes a special message about questions concerning the media.

²¹ The motu proprio *In fructibus multis*, which was ordered to set in a Pontifical commission for the means of social communication, refers decidedly to this task set by the council, in: *HerKorr* 18 (1964), p. 501.

***Communio et Progressio*: the Basic Concept for the Church's Medial Work**

The Relationship between *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio*

The authors of *CeP* have interpreted their task in *IM* rather liberally. The question raised was: "Is *IM* intended to present the 'ideas and orientations', *doctrina et disciplina*, (*IM* 1) concerning the means of social communication and the committee to make these precise in a pastoral instruction?" If so, *CeP* indeed realized this task by the intention to present again, like the decree, "basic doctrinal principles and general pastoral guidelines" (3). The Latin text (*principia doctrinae at consilia pastoralia*) reveals the strong pastoral direction.

The authors of *CeP* have diligently realized the task by using conciliar statements about the Church's self-understanding and its relationship to the modern world and by attempting to respect the laws and rules of the media. At the same time, they tried to connect the pastoral instruction to the tradition the Church had established before the Council and the Papal statements which followed. The result is a long text of 187 paragraphs which uses and extends all topics of *IM* but differs strongly from the decree with regard to both style and contents.

A widespread aversion and nearly constitutional mistrust against the media, which had been very common in the Church, strongly influenced its tradition over long periods, and was expressed in moralizing demands which sometimes did not meet the topic in question, could not be kept after the publication of *CeP*. Even the latently clerical-ecclesiological narrow look at the topic of the media, which was found and bemoaned in *IM*, can now be regarded as overcome indeed.²² This can be seen already in the first sentences of the document. Unlike *IM*, *CeP* does not begin with the manifestation of the Church's right to install ethical principles by employing the media. In contrast, *CeP* states within its first sentence that both the communion and the progress of the human society are the highest aims of social communication, which the media have to serve.

The themes covered in *CeP* reflect two key points: First, for the first time *CeP* developed a theological explanation of social communication. This is important because the term 'the means of social communication' vs. media was introduced into the educational language of the Church. This term was not satisfyingly defined in *IM*. However, now the term was established as a genuine technical term in the doctrinal and common language of the Church.²³

Second, *CeP* reflects on this theological foundation, apart from many other questions concerned with practice. It stresses the importance of social communications for the protection and development of a free and pluralistic society and it contains statements concerning the resulting consequences for communication within the Church.

²² Cf. Michael Schmolke: „Zehn ideengeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Pastoralinstruktion *Communio et Progressio*“, in: *ComSoc* 4 (1971), pp. 299-309.

²³ Cf. Franz-Josef Eilers: „Zum Begriff ‚Soziale Kommunikation‘“, in: *ComSoc* 20 (1987), pp. 1-9.

The General Outlines of a Theology of Social Communication

What, according to a Christian point of view, is to be understood as communication, is fixed in *CeP* by the theology of the Holy Trinity:

In the Christian faith, the unity and brotherhood of man are the chief aims of all communication and these find their source and model in the central mystery of the eternal communication between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who live a single divine life (8).

In a perspective which is influenced by both the theology of creation and the history of salvation, *CeP* further develops this thought with regard to the communication between humans. Humans, as the images of God are, according to the order of creation, created to communicate in this original form and are in need of community. This community also results from social communication: “Social communication tends to multiply contacts within society and to deepen social consciousness” (8).

Even if *CeP* challenges its readers to be aware of the dangers which could disturb, damage or even destroy human community from the abuse of the media because of man’s sinfulness (9), a generally optimistic, trusting attitude toward the media and the people who manage them is the stronger aspect because of our theological understanding of the power of Redemption by Christ.

Christ is presented as the Perfect Communicator, *perfectus communicator* (11). This characterization is not simply a pious decoration of the Christian understanding of communication. It is the attempt to present the communication model, which is the original form of all human communication, based on a theology of the Holy Trinity in a christological way, thus anchored with a strong biblical and theological foundation. Therefore, it contains both God’s communication with mankind and the communication between humans as that what it is most basically: “the giving of self in love” (11).

With this background in mind, the means of social communication become godly means to achieve unity among mankind. They even, as is stated in *CeP* almost enthusiastically, “provide some of the most effective means for the cultivation of that charity among men which is at once the cause and the expression of fellowship” (12). However, this destination can only be reached if the media are in service of the search for truth and the support of the progress of humanity (cf. 13) in a way that keeps the freedom of mankind to decide about the use of the media.

The Freedom to Communicate within Church and Society

According to *CeP*, the media are meant to make possible and support the public conversation within a society. Therefore, however, it is necessary to secure the ‘public opinion’ and the ‘right to be informed’. *IM* only suggested “a clear conscience” within this context. However, it perceives the functions the media have in a society in a somewhat dissatisfying manner. This caused the misunderstanding

of the importance of the media for a properly functioning free and pluralistic society. In contrast to this, *CeP* makes clear that the public opinion is “an essential expression of human nature organized in a society“ (25), partially by the use of positions Pope Pius XII had adopted earlier.²⁴

CeP emphasizes that public opinion is conditioned by every member’s own freedom of speech: “Freedom of speech is a normal factor in the growth of public opinion” (25). Clear consequences result from this position: Both communicators and recipients have to show responsibility in their effort to maintain the public opinion, every form of propaganda against the common good is despised, and the human right to decide freely has to be kept upright.

It is important that humans have a right to be informed. *IM* keeps a rather vague position towards this topic. It states in one place the ethical foundations for the right for information namely the duty to say the truth (cf. *IM* 5).

CeP uses another method: The focus is set here on the right to be informed as a right both of the single citizen and the whole community. This is connected explicitly with the tradition of the Church and the Council.

Clearly, *CeP* tries to gain a lasting connection to the gains and values of the modern pluralist society. This, compared to *IM*, is really new. In this context one statement is of special interest. According to it, societies do indeed know about the value of their citizens’ right to communicate and, therefore, protect this right with special laws: “Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has proclaimed this freedom to be fundamental. Thereby it implies that the same freedom is essential in the use of the means of social communication” (46).

The fact that such a strong confession towards the freedom to communicate has consequences also for the communication within the Church itself is a topic within *CeP* as well. *IM* had been silent in this respect, *CeP* is not. According to it, The Church also is in need of social communication with regard to both its interior and exterior relations. This is stated by a quotation from a speech by Pope Pius XII: “Something would be lacking in its [the Church’s] life if she had no public opinion. Both pastors of souls and lay people would be to blame for this” (115).

Within the Church, Catholics, too, have the “real freedom to speak their minds” (116). *CeP* manifests this theologically founded principle and asks the Bishops to “take care to ensure that there is responsible exchange of freely held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (116). *CeP* explicitly encourages the Catholics to converse freely within the Church. This would not endanger its unity but, in contrast, support it. “It is essential that charity is in command even when there are differing views” (cf. 117).

As within society, so within the Church, a public opinion can only develop while the right to be informed is kept. Therefore, *CeP* demands the Church to resign from its observance of secrecy, which had had a long tradition. “When ecclesiastical authorities are unwilling to give information or are unable to do so, then rumour is unloosed and rumour is not a bearer of the truth but carries dangerous half-truths” (121). Secrecy was permissible only when a publication would endanger the

²⁴ Cf. Giso Deussen: „Die Pastoralinstruktion auf dem Hintergrund der päpstlichen Lehrtradition“, in: *ComSoc* 4 (1971), pp. 310-322.

reputation or the rights of a single citizen or a group. No other Church document ever before or ever since has taken up such a clear position in this context.

The publication of *CeP* caused a reluctant and somewhat critical echo within the press.²⁵ After a while, however, *CeP* became the most fundamental document about the Church's media work. Correctly, Franz-Josef Eilers says about the later esteem of *CeP*:

“Communio et Progressio” has been regarded as one of the most positive church documents on social communication...Whereas former documents tended to give orders and to refer to the rights and obligations of the church, the Pastoral Instruction builds more on personal responsibility...“Communio et Progressio” has been considered as the ‘Magna Charta’ of Christian communication and a document with the most positive, professional and concrete approach to communication and church.²⁶

Digression: Social Communication and the New Canon Law

The old Canon Law (*Codex Iuris Canonici, CIC*) did not contain any rules about social communication; there were only some canons (1384-1405) concerning preventive censorship and the suppressive prohibition of books. A kind of Catholic ghetto, protected by a ‘wall’ of laws, was attempted in order to keep out of reach of the faithful all evil influence which could come from the printed media.²⁷ The legal norms of this context reveal an attitude of rejection. A typical result of this was the so-called *Index of the Forbidden Books*, which had characterized the attitude of the Church towards books and which was abolished only in 1966. If the directions which were given in *IM* and *CeP* about the means of social communication should be made legal norms, a simple adaptation of the canons 1384-1405 would not have been enough. A fundamental new order was necessary. This was realized in the new *CIC* (1983). This will be treated here shortly because the Canon Law has a normative meaning for the structures of the Church and its ways of acting. Apart from several single paragraphs in various parts of the *CIC* (1983), there is, now, in Book III, “a section about the means of social communication, especially about books (*de instrumentis communicationis socialis et in specie de libris*), which includes Canons 822-832.

Compared to the old *CIC* the manifestation of the freedom of speech for all faithful within the Church (Can. 212'3) is new.²⁸ There, it is said that the faithful, because of their position and extraordinary rank, have always the right and

²⁵ Cf. Franz-Josef Eilers: „Communio et Progressio im Spiegel der Presse“, in: *ComSoc* 5 (1972), pp. 108-117.

²⁶ Eilers (1993), p. 71.

²⁷ Cf. Heinz Musinghoff: „Neues Kirchenrecht und Kommunikation“, in: *ComSoc* 18 (1985), pp. 143-157.

²⁸ Cf. Heinrich Reinhard, *MKCIC* Can. 212.

sometimes even the duty to give their opinion about the concerns of the Church to one of its pastors and all other faithful as long as their faith, the respect towards the pastors and the customs are not damaged. This shows that there is no unrestricted freedom of speech within the Church. For all faithful, the freedom of speech is limited by their duty to obey both their faith and its laws.²⁹ Despite these limits, the *CIC* of 1983 has given up the hierarchic-one-dimensional top-down model of communication by proclaiming the acceptance of the freedom of speech within the Church. It is clear from the matter itself that the practical use of the means of social communication has to be guided by the common duties and rights of the faithful.

The declaration of the Church's right to control and, thus, to own all kinds of means of social communication is a clear connection of the new *CIC* (Can. 822'1) with *IM* 3. This right is founded in the Church's order to missionise. Everyone within the Church is ordered to use the media for their pastoral work in a manner guided by the Holy Spirit and respect for human beings.

New Challenges and Pastoral Answers

Formation

Following *IM*, *CeP* formulated a basic foundation of the Church's teachings about social communication. This basis was not questioned either by the later documents. However, new challenges require new reactions. As Franz-Josef Eilers shows with regard to *CeP*, this was known to the authors of the instruction:

The authors themselves however do not consider the instruction as the final word of the church on the subject, but they rather hope 'that this publication marks not so much the end of a phase as the start of a new one' (No.186). They 'look forward with confidence and even with enthusiasm to whatever the development of communications in a space age may have to offer' (No.187).³⁰

Within this sense of meaning, the later documents try to develop further the way of the relation between the Church and the media.

This e. g. includes the ability of future priests to recognize the ways and means of social communication and to use the same fruitfully in their own service. Following the so-called *ratio fundamentalis* of 1973, a basic plan for priestly formation followed the Second Vatican Council, the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education has published guides for the adaptation of the *ratio fundamentalis* in special fields. Among them is the *Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (1986). It contains many recommendations and advice for the formation of future priests in the field of social communications. However, Eilers remarks that the document is not of the

²⁹ Cf. Musinghoff (1972), p. 146.

³⁰ Eilers (1993), p. 71.

same calibre of *IM* and *CeP*. It narrows social communication to mass media; thus, it does not use sufficiently the opportunities for priestly formation which were intended by the Councils' wide choice of the meaning of the term social communication.

This broader view of communication would be important especially for the formation of seminarians from the so called Third World countries, where the different means of communications of local cultures are often more important and dominant than modern mass media. Unfortunately, this seems to be not sufficiently considered in the 'Guide' which is concerned 'in the first place' with 'those media of our day often referred to as the mass media'.³¹

Despite this criticism the recommendations of the Guide remain valid. How can a formation of priests in social communications with respect to the importance of the mass media and the new view of social communication as presented in *IM* and *CeP* be seen essential in the priests' scholarly and pastoral engagements as addresses by Franz-Josef Eilers? An example of this is his study *Communicating in Community. An Introduction to Social Communication* (Manila 2002). This study is exemplary because it researches the central texts of the Church thoroughly and aims to bring them to fruitful use in formation. But Eilers goes further; he adjusts the point of view to the actual needs and challenges of the pastoral contexts and tries to develop a complete concept of a theology of social communication. Thus, a handbook of social communications has developed directing the whole formation within the Church, not just for that of future priests.

Violence and Pornography in the Media

Supposedly because they were shocked by the explosion-like increase of representations of violence and pornography in the media the Pontifical Council for Social Communications published a document with the title *Pornography and Violence In the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response* on May 7th, 1987. The shock about the media reality in strong contrast to the overall well-meaning perception of *CeP* is perceptible especially within those parts of the document which deal with the supposed consequences of the representations of violence and pornography in the media.

The cause for the increase of pornography and violence in the media is, according to the Council, "the pervasive moral permissiveness" of the people, "rooted in the search for personal gratification at any cost. Associated with this is a kind of despairing moral emptiness, which makes sense pleasure the only happiness human beings can attain" (19). The Council finds a consumerist way of life focussed on sexuality as the breeding ground for the increase of pornography and

³¹ Ibid, p. 165.

violence in the media, which in some countries is additionally supported by an alliance with the organized crime (cf 20).

What does the council suggest to solve the problem recently recognized? Generally, the freedom of speech and the freedom to exchange information must not be touched. However, also the right of privacy, of public respect and the protection of all other basic values must be guaranteed. Before this background several responsible persons are addressed. Professional communicators are advised “to join in formulating and applying ethical codes for the communications media and for advertising which respect the common good and promote sound human development” (23). Parents are reminded of their educational task. With reference to *CeP* (64) they are told that “more is obtained by reasoned explanation than prohibition” (24). The young are told to act self-responsibly with regard to moral issues, the whole public are asked to state their opinion publicly, and the national authorities are reminded of their duties to protect the young and to care for the common good. “In an era of permissiveness” (29), the Church sees for itself the task to develop clear ethical statements, to search cooperation on a wide level and to support an ecclesiastic medial education.

Thus, the pastoral response consists of a reminder of basic customary duties and in the emphasis on tasks concerning media education. Therefore, this text is in line with the attitude the Council developed towards the media, although compared to *CeP*, there is a deeper realization to the reality of the situation. This new awareness, however, does not lead back to mistrust. Nor are the media, playing the role of a scapegoat, made responsible for the breakdown of moral values. The pathway the Church has taken through the insights of *IM* and *CeP* continues to unfold. Instead, the Church should be engaged in continued conversation with responsible communicators to encourage them in their work and to provide assistance where it is needed or requested (30). All educational texts concerning social communication of the last 15 years have been subsumed under this guideline.

A Pastoral Plan for Social Communication

Twenty years after *CeP*, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications published a new pastoral instruction entitled *Acetates Novae (AN)*. The rapid development of communications technology which occurred after *CeP* could be compared to a revolutionary turn of events evolving in breathtaking speed. The Eastern European and Soviet Communist system had change the world politically in a very drastic manner. Thus, the media began to play a very significant and powerful role in the development of peoples and culture. At the background of this development, *AN* is intended to continue the lines of *IM* and especially *CeP*. *AN* responded to the challenges of the new era of social communications. In *AN*, the theological opinion about social communication is quoted from *CeP*, and the service function the media have for the social life is emphasized. There is a special importance regarding the media found in the communication of the Church and the modern world. The new evangelization emphasized is the central focus of the new

media perspective. There is a particular consideration for the freedom to communicate inside the Church, however, it is discussed much more reluctantly.³²

An outstanding feature of *AN* is that the positive effects of the media development points out its immeasurable negative consequences. It is within this context that the Pastoral Instruction raises ethical and moral questions which are grounded in human and Christian values. These are validly connected with the concerns of social communications as presented in *IM* and *CeP*. *AN* strongly suggests that dioceses and bishop's conferences „include a communications component in every pastoral plan” (21). The urgency for this recommendation is emphasized by a hint to a critique by the Pope. He emphasised that the ones responsible within the Church for communications still held that the media play only a subordinate role in the mission of the Church. “This situation needs correcting” (21). *AN* does not only contain general appeals and requests. In a separate appendix to *AN*, “*Guidelines for Pastoral Plans for Social Communications*” we discover practical pastoral applications related to the document. These should serve for the work in the local churches. A thorough realization of these guidelines may not yet be completed. If the Church would take the recommendations of *AN* seriously, the result would be an increase of competence with those responsible inside the Church concerning the use of the media

There are more Church documents³³ written on different occasions which give positions concerning social communication and have to be understood as responses to actual challenges.³⁴ The document *Criteria for Ecumenical and Interreligious Cooperation*, published by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in 1989 needs to be mentioned within this context. However, it is not necessary here to analyze this and the other texts in detail since they practically take up the basic impulses of *IM* and especially *CeP*. However, it is necessary to comment on the fact that there have been attempts to interpret the freedom of communications with the Church which was emphasized in *CeP*.³⁵

³² Cf. Helmuth Rolfes: “Lehramt, Theologie und Öffentlichkeit. Überlegungen zum Öffentlichkeitsverhältnis der *Instruktionen über die kirchliche Berufung der Theologen*”, in: *ComSoc* 23 (1990), pp. 207-216 and Helmuth Rolfes: „Soziale Kommunikation und Wahrheitsverwaltung. Überlegungen zu *Aetatis Novae* Nr. 10 über die Medien im Dienste der kirchlichen Gemeinschaft“, in: *ComSoc* 25 (1992), pp. 269-275.

³³ Some of these documents, among them the Pontifical Messages for the annual World Communication Day since 1967, are reprinted and commented in Eilers (1993) and Eilers (2002).

³⁴ The last one of these is the Apostolic Letter *The Rapid Development to Those Responsible for Communication* by Pope John Paul II, published on January 25th, 2005. Within this letter, the Pope emphasizes the importance of the media for the missionary work of the Church. “In fact, the Church is not only called upon to use the mass media to spread the Gospel but, today more than ever, to integrate the message of salvation into the “new culture” that these powerful means of communication create and amplify. It tells us that the use of the techniques and the technologies of contemporary communications is an integral part of its mission in the third millennium.” (2). Cf. also the Pontifical Messages for the annual World Communication Days since 1967.

³⁵ Cf. Rolfes (1990) and Rolfes (1992).

Ethics in Social Communications

The evolution of media development in the past few years has raised ethical social communication questions. In this light, it comes as no surprise that the Church has published documents related to many of these media issues. The Church reminds their readers and faithful of the fundamental ethical principles of the Christian faith which provides an ethical orientation toward the media. It is assumed that the media “are called to serve human dignity by helping people live well and function as persons in community” (*Ethics in Communications* 6). The acting person and their decisions are in the centre of all thoughts about a media ethics. Before and in every situation, the reality that there are economical, technical, political and related forces in various fields of media (production, distribution, reception) can determine human actions and narrow the field for decisions, needs to be analyzed and seriously considered. However, this often causes the huge difficulties to reach a media-ethic understanding about sufficient solutions in actual cases. Nevertheless, the media are not instruments outside of human control: “The media do nothing by themselves; they are instruments, tools, used as people choose to use them” (*Ethics in Communications* 4). “Individuals have irreducible dignity and importance, and may never be sacrificed to collective interests” (*Ethics in Communications* 21).

How appropriate solutions can be found has to be decided in every single case by taking into consideration the individual given forces and competing interests. Theologians and Church leaders do not possess all the expertise needed for effective communication – on the contrary: They have to listen first! The special contribution of the Church for this discussion is a vision of human persons and their incomparable dignity and their inviolable rights, and a vision of human community whose members are joined by the virtue of solidarity in pursuit of the common good of all” (*Ethics in Communications* 30). Theology and the Church thereby associate with “all men of good will”, as a common formula of Church language will have it in this context. The believability of documents from a theological-ecclesiastical point gains its truth especially in cases where a clear identification with the victims of violence and injustice can be achieved.

When the media are formed and organized, and when solutions to problems are sought, the function of the media which serves human dignity has always to be taken into consideration from the Christian point of view. *Chancen und Risiken der Mediengesellschaft* [*Chances and Risks of the Media Society*], a common declaration of the Catholic and the Protestant Churches in Germany, gives some points of ethical orientation, which are oriented by the question of keeping human dignity within the process of medial communication.

There are many threats today focusing on the value of human dignity as represented in the media and demanding an ethical-oriented response. Issues that need to be addressed are: the disintegration or disorientation of people from foreign control, the dominance of single interests (cultures), the development of oligopolies of power, the ongoing reduction of acting self-responsibly as media is dramatically shifting, a concern for voyeurism and the interests of the industrialized world ignoring the needs of the remaining two thirds of the population.

The points for ethical orientation correspond with the threats given above. Apart from the support of media which are oriented towards the understanding among humanity and the strengthening of human identity, the work done by journalists gains special importance. This includes not only the careful obtaining and checking of news but also their choice, ranking and presentation. Since the forms of communication become more and more complex, independence and self-responsibility with the use of media needs strengthening. On the political level, it is necessary to reduce privileges, to limit the power of the media and to make their work transparent, and to guarantee the broadest access possible to the media. The networks of global communication should not develop in a way that they are situated out of control by the state and general ethical norms. Human intimacy and dignity is to be respected by the media, and on the global level an international just way of communication is to be achieved. The media should be used to increase international understanding. The statements of both Churches of Germany can be found basically in the most recent publications by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications which deal with questions of media ethics.

Despite all ethical demands, the highest destination is to secure the function of the media as a service to humankind in every way. Practically, the Church can neither dictate nor control the ways to reach this aim. What theologians and the Church can offer in the debate about media ethics will be measured by its use in taking over the cases of damage to the human dignity and the violation of human rights by criticizing the structures, developments, political decisions and single phenomena in the medial area. The documents mentioned and quoted above contain many such warnings and points of criticism. Among these are media contents which destroy the human community reflected in racist statements which damage human dignity, or, pornography and the idolization of violence. Among these are also profit-seeking and avarice, which are typical of the western economical system of New Liberalism, which was characterized by Pope John Paul II as follows:

Based on a purely economic conception of man, it considers profit and the law of the market as its only parameters, to the detriment and the dignity of and the respect due to individuals and peoples. (*Ethics in Communications* 14).

The worldwide lack of justice in communication with its international consequences especially for the people of the Third and Fourth World has to be addressed. Among these are incorrect political influence, propagandist and otherwise influenced reporting, indoctrination and the suppression of cultural requirements of minorities. Theology and the Church must not remain silent. They have to listen to and to speak with all sides to seek for solutions. It is their special task to take the case of human dignity and to blame forcefully the wrongs perceived.

Conclusion

Regarding all the Church texts about social communication which have been published since the Second Vatican Council, one can see that, indeed, the Council has begun a fundamental new orientation concerning the evaluation and regard of the use of the media by the Church. This new orientation was necessary: This was the only way by which the Church could enter a dialogue both critical and constructive with the modern world deeply influenced by the media.

The development from *IM* to *CeP* shows that such a reorientation cannot function at once and implies processes of theological learning. The fact that the term social communication has been opened towards a programmatic understanding of the media which was both of theological use and offered a chance to create answers for the challenges of the development of the modern media in a way relevant both ethically and anthropologically is of remaining importance. A mere instrumentalized or moralizing dealing with the media was overcome and replaced by an understanding of communication with a foundation on both theology and anthropology.³⁶ Above all detailed questions this reorientation is the reason why one can speak of *IM* and the Second Vatican Council as the beginning of a really new Era in the relationship between the Church and the media.

³⁶ According to my opinion, it is Franz-Josef Eilers' great merit that he again and again fertilizes and also demands this understanding of communication in Church discussions about the media. How important this understanding of social communication is for evangelization and mission, and also for the interreligious dialogue would require another contribution. Also in these areas Eilers has worked thoroughly. Cf. Franz-Josef Eilers: *Communicating in Ministry and Mission. An Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication* (Manila 2003) and Franz-Josef Eilers: *Communicating between Cultures. An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*. (Manila ²1992).

Areopagus of the Modern World

Willi Henkel

In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II dedicates the long paragraph 37 to modern social communication¹. According to his description of geographical areas, new social worlds and phenomena, he sees a great challenge for missionaries in the cultural areas of the modern world, and he calls these areas the new areopagus of the modern world. Although there has been a considerable growth of the Church in the emerging countries in recent years, there are many extended territories in Asia, Africa (and less in Latin America) which have not yet been evangelized. Important peoples and cultures have not yet received the Good News of Jesus Christ, which is proclaimed by Christian missionaries.

Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, in Athens

In Athens, St. Paul recognized the unique occasion for proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ within an official frame to representatives of the Greek language and culture. The areopagus was the meeting place of philosophers who came from different parts of the world and offered new insights and new currents of thinking². In *The Acts of the Apostles* it is mentioned that “a few Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him” (Acts 17:18). Some of them had already heard of Paul the preacher, and they were curious to listen to his discourse. “The one amusement the Athenians and foreigners living there seem to have, apart from discussing the latest ideas, is listening to lectures about them” (Acts 17:21)³. The Athenians enjoyed an entertainment full of witty thoughts. Religious questions were welcome as well; they should offer their hearers something new.

By calling them God-fearing Paul invites the hearers: “Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because I noticed, as I strolled around admiring your sacred monuments, that you had an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. Well, the God whom I proclaim is in fact the one whom you already worship without knowing it.” (Acts 17:23).

As Paul has done in Lystra, also in Athens he appeals to the religious experience of the hearers with the use of the classic title ‘Men of Athens’. From the beginning, Paul courts the favour of his listeners. He praises their search of God because he knows that such an attitude opens their minds for the message of Jesus Christ.

“Structure and division are determined by the speech (vv. 22-31), for which the scenario prepares (vv. 16-21 and from which the ending results”⁴. The key word of

¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990 (= RM).

² R. E. Brown - J. E. Fitzmyer – R. E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1990, 754-755.

³ *The Jerusalem Bible*, London 1967.

⁴ R. J. Dillon, *Acts of the apostles*, in: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 754.

Paul is “foreign” (vv. 18; 20), to which the preacher adds the words “unknowing” and “ignorance”. Paul proclaims to them the true God hitherto “unknown”, while he criticizes their pagan religiosity: “temples” (v. 24), “sacrifices” (v. 25), and “idols” (v. 29).

The speaker is interrupted, when he comes to the central point of his talk: God is now “telling everyone and everywhere, that they must repent, because he has fixed a day when the whole world will be judged, and judged in righteousness, and he has appointed a man to be the judge. And God has publicly proved this by raising this man from the dead” (Acts 17:31). At this point propaedeutic theodicy reaches out to Christian kerygma⁵. Perhaps they would have agreed with the coming of a judge, but the affirmation that God raised this man from the dead repelled many educated listeners. “At this mention of rising from the dead, some of them burst out laughing; others said, ‘We would like to hear you talk about this again’” (Acts 17:32-33). “This sermon, like others in the Acts, results in a divided audience. It can therefore not be classified as failure in order to harmonize with 1 Cor 1:18-2:5”⁶. Some names of converts are taken from the log of Paul’s travels⁷. Some “attached to him and became believers, among them Dionysius and a woman called Damaris, and others besides” (Acts 17:34).

Biblical and Hellenistic concepts flow together in the narration of the creation. Paul uses popular presentations of Zeus, who in a hymn is called ‘the living’ giving life to all and breath to all creatures. God guides the history of humanity. Paul’s formulation “since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist we all are his children” (v. 28) is close to Seneca: “God is near to you, he is with you and in you; therefore, you should venerate him in your interior.”⁸

The Social Context of Mission in the 20th Century

The social, political, and economic context of mission has undergone considerable changes⁹. The industrialization of the Western World has had deep consequences in the southern and eastern parts of the globe. In 1948, India obtained its independence. Since the conference of Bandung (Indonesia) in 1956, most of the mission countries have become politically independent. The encyclicals *Pacem in terris* of John XXIII and especially *Populorum Progressio* of Paul VI (1967) have called the attention to the social problems of the Third World. Many First World countries grant regular development aid to Third World countries. German Catholics and Protestants have taken the initiative of supporting the poor. Apart from *Missio* new institutions were founded: *Misereor*, *Adveniat*, *Renovabis*, and

⁵ R. J. Dillon, *Acts of the apostles*, in: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 754.

⁶ R. J. Dillon, *Acts of the apostles*, in: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 755.

⁷ R. J. Dillon, *Acts of the apostles*, in: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 755.

⁸ J. Kürzinger, *Die Apostelgeschichte*. 2. Teil (Geistliche Schriftlesung 5/2), Düsseldorf 1970, 93.

⁹ Cf. J. Baumgartner, SMB, *One and the same mission throughout changing times*, in: *Bibliographia Missionaria L* (1986), Rome 1987, XII-XXX.

Brot für die Welt. However, in spite of this aid the social problems of the Third World countries are still far from being solved.

A new social phenomenon is urbanization, the continuous growth of the big cities because people migrate there in order to find work. Work, however, is often hard to find. Thus, one can find hardly any city in the Third World without slums, and these slums bear different names in various countries. Housing in these places is more than precarious: electric light, clean water and sewerage systems are missing but urgently needed.

The CELAM Conferences¹⁰ of Latin America

The great Latin American conferences of CELAM in Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979) and Santo Domingo (1992) have analyzed the social, cultural and religious problems of the continent and given new impulses to evangelization. One of the leading ideas of the Puebla conference was that of the Church as a communion and as the participation in the life of God and as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. Such participation includes also social, economic, and material goods, which influence the social, economic and political lives of Christians. One of the points which were brought up for discussion was the “preferential option for the poor”. During Vatican II Council already, Pope John XXIII and some of the Fathers of the Council asked for a Church of the Poor. The Medellin conference of CELAM accepted this statement as a fundamental option of the Latin American Church. The bishops spoke about a subhuman misery of hundreds of millions of people. The conference of Puebla¹¹ followed this trend by making a “clear, prophetic and conjointly responsible” option for the poor¹² and the conference of Santo Domingo demanded a “renewed vigour” in this regard.

A further option of the bishops concerned young people, in whom the Church has high hopes for its rejuvenation and for the future. Puebla considers evangelization in words and deeds as *the* great service which the Church offers to the people. She brings the Good News of the Kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of justice and peace; it has come to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ¹³.

Medellin¹⁴ demands that the means of communication must be placed at the service of mankind. The communicator must know the human reality of life. Theologically speaking, the means of social communication, which play a providential role in the world of today, are considered as a sign of their time. Medellin presents the media as necessary vehicles for evangelization. They can contribute to the growth of faith in the people. They open new pastoral ways of

¹⁰ CELAM = Consejo Episcopal Latino-Americano

¹¹ Puebla. *L'Evangelizzazione nel presente e nel futuro dell'America Latina*. Editrice Missionaria Italiana, Bologna 1979.

¹² Puebla 1134.

¹³ Puebla 679.

¹⁴ Secretariado General del CELAM. *Medellin. Reflexiones en el CELAM* (B.A.C. 391) Madrid 1967. Cf. The chapter: Departamento de Comunicación Social, Medellín y los medios de Comunicación Social, 201-224.

establishing contacts between Church agents and the world. Reflecting on the principle of Christian faith, document number seven declares that faith comes from hearing (Rm 10:17). Like this, the bishops explain the incarnate aspects of the Word¹⁵. The Word is communicated in new ways such as pictures, colour, and sound. This offers a very appropriate way of communicating the mystery of Jesus Christ to the people of our time because the revelation of Jesus through his incarnation speaks to all senses; it is multi-sensorial. Medellin asks for a Christian interpretation of the events mentioned above. This interpretation needs to be communicated in the language of the people.

Medellin mentions the media in a developmental perspective and of a promotion for an integral liberation¹⁶, which, first of all, is a liberation offered by Jesus Christ. For Christians, justice must be realized by means which are taken from the Gospel.

Finally, Medellin makes several recommendations: the professional preparation of the personnel; the technical preparation of young people (including apostolic aspects); service to the community; the encouragement of autochthonous values, the formation of the clergy; the dialogue between the communicators and the hierarchy; and the freedom of the Church¹⁷.

As new criteria¹⁸ the right to information and a reduced margin of privacy are mentioned; this should be conformed to the norms of the civil society; the limit of privacy for religious authorities should be the good name of the person; all persons have the right to express their opinions freely; as disciples of Christ, Christians should cultivate friendly relations with people of different opinions and tendencies.

Puebla

The conference of Puebla dedicates the last section within the third chapter to social communication (1063-1095). This section bears the title "Means for communion and participation". The reflection begins with the principle expressed in the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (45) of Paul VI: evangelization, the proclamation of the reign of God, is communication. Therefore, this must be present in all aspects of the transmission of faith¹⁹. Puebla considers communication as "a vital social act born with mankind itself, which in modern times has become powerful through potential technical means"²⁰. Today, evangelization cannot be carried out without making use of the means of communication.

The following paragraphs describe the Latin American reality and the influence of the means of communication have there. At the present moment, when established, human and social relations are exposed to the influence of the

¹⁵ Medellin 218.

¹⁶ Medellin 219.

¹⁷ Medellin 220.

¹⁸ Medellin 222f.

¹⁹ Puebla 1063.

²⁰ Puebla 1064.

civilization of audio-visual means with the risk of a “vibrant contamination”²¹. Diverse means of social communication exercise an incisive influence on human life²². Social communication is conditioned by the socio-cultural reality of the Latin American countries, and they maintain it at the same time. In a positive way they contribute to the Latin American integration and also to democracy.

In spite of these positive aspects, there also exists a risk of an ideological manipulation by political and economic powers. Passions such as sentiments, violence, sex, and consumerism are exploited. Companies and multinationals are able to obtain a monopoly. An excessive foreign influence eliminates autochthonous values. The media make propaganda for a practical materialism and thereby cause attitudes of consumerism²³.

The document regrets that the occasions which are offered to the Church are not being used in a sufficient way. Also proper means are lacking. If they are available they are not linked with one another and not joined to a common pastoral project²⁴. The people of God have not yet been trained in a critical use of the mass media in order to answer an alienating and ideological publicity. The bishops also regret that too little money has been spent on social communication at the service of evangelization²⁵. The use of mini-media is encouraged as well as a growing application of them in the pastoral. The bishops recognize the great efforts which have been made for the internal communication, although these do not yet answer the real needs.

Finally, several options are proposed:

- Communication needs to be integrated into a joint pastoral (Pastoral de conjunto).
- Priority has to be given to the formation of the public and of operators in the field of social communication. Freedom of expression is to be respected and favoured. For a professional ethics Puebla makes reference to “Communio et Progressio”²⁶.
- The document invites the hierarchy and pastoral agents to acquire a deep knowledge and experience of social communication in order to be able to give better answers to the new reality and making this an integral part of the joint pastoral.
- National or diocesan offices which take care of all pastoral activities and areas²⁷ should be established.

²¹ Puebla 1065.

²² Puebla 1066.

²³ Puebla 1072.

²⁴ Puebla 1076.

²⁵ Puebla 1077.

²⁶ Puebla 1082

²⁷ Puebla 1084.

- Priority is given to education in social communication for religious, seminarians, priests and pastoral operators as part of their training program. There should be a program for a continuous formation²⁸.
- Liturgy, which by itself is communication, can facilitate a greater participation by making use of sound, pictures, and symbols.
- For a more efficient way of the transmission of the message the language should be contemporary, concrete, direct, and clear²⁹.

The continental organizations (UNDA, OCIC, UCLAP) are recommended³⁰.

The Gospel should enlighten the daily lives of Latin American people, their preoccupations, and the important events. The Church should have her own channels of information and news for her dialogue with the world³¹.

The Synod of Africa

Reflecting on the actual circumstances, the Synod of Africa (1994) pleaded for a new awareness of social communication. In the post-synodal exhortation "Ecclesia in Africa", John Paul II refers to the theological aspect of communication by calling Jesus Christ "the excellent communicator"³². The Pope affirms that, in recent years, the Church has developed a new awareness of social communication and recognized the obligation of promoting social communication inside and outside the Church. John Paul II asks for more information among the members of the Church by commenting Proposition 57 of the Synod. Such an attitude will bring forth unusual advantages of communicating the Good News of the love of God, which is revealed by Jesus Christ³³.

The Synod of Africa also discussed the traditional means of social communication such as songs, music, mimic, theatre, proverbs, and story telling, which until now have been a source of inspiration for the modern means of communication. They transmit and reveal popular wisdom.

Modern means of communication must be considered not only as instruments of communication but they are also a world to be evangelized³⁴. This statement is a clear reference to the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and it is also a reception of it.

Means of communication create a new cultural world, a new areopagus, on which the Church must be present. For many, this world is an essential instrument of information and formation which influences individual and social behaviour. New generations grow up in this world and are formed through it.

²⁸ Puebla 1085.

²⁹ Puebla 1091.

³⁰ Puebla 1089.

³¹ Puebla 1092.

³² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Vatican City 1995, 122.

³³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* 122.

³⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* 123.

Here, the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* indicates an occasion for evangelization: the Christian message must be “integrated in this new culture, which has been created by modern means of communication”. John Paul II. is aware that this constitutes a complex problem, since this culture arises from a “new language, new techniques, and new psychological attitudes”³⁵.

The Asian Synod

The Asian Synod of Bishops was held in Rome in 1998. As similar meetings of bishops used to do before, the Fathers offered a message to the people of God. In this address they called to mind the mission of the Church, which has been entrusted to her by the risen Lord, “that all may have life and have it abundantly” (cf. John 10:10)³⁶. The bishops asked the Catholics to give a central place in their lives to the Word of God. “All Christians have the duty to proclaim Christ”³⁷. Asian Christians have to do this in consonance with the Asian cultures, because they do so a “context of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural situation, where dialogue has clearly become a necessity”³⁸.

The bishops highlighted the importance of inculturation by the statement that “the Church becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is and a more effective instrument of mission”³⁹. She is “called upon to enter a triple dialogue: a dialogue with cultures of Asia, a dialogue with religions, a dialogue with the peoples of Asia, especially the poor”⁴⁰.

In order to achieve this, the bishops asked for a plan for ways of social communication, more concretely, for public relations offices, which promote “media education, the constructive use of media, such as press and publications, television, radio, and the Internet”.

The bishops underline that the media rightly are called the modern areopagus, and that here is the place where the Church can play a prophetic role, and, wherever necessary, become “the voice of the voiceless”⁴¹.

Once more, John Paul II illustrates the importance of the mass media in the post-synodal exhortation “Ecclesia in Asia”. He explains the great influence of the means of social communication in the context of globalization. They have become so important, since they are for many “the chief means of formation and education, of guidance and inspiration in the behaviour of individuals, families at large. In particular the younger generation is growing up “in a world conditioned by mass

³⁵ RM 37c.

³⁶ J. H. Kroeger – P. C. Phan, *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia*. Quezon City 2002, 44. Message to the People of God 5.

³⁷ Message to the People of God 5.

³⁸ Message to the People of God 5.

³⁹ RM 52.

⁴⁰ Message to the People of God 5. Kroeger - Phan, *The Future of Asian Churches* 46.

⁴¹ Message to the People of God 5. Kroeger - Phan, *The Future of Asian Churches* 46.

media”⁴². There are new ways of communication “with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology”. They lead to new ways of thinking and far-reaching changes in Asian societies.

The evangelizing mission of the Church is deeply affected by the impact of the mass media. In this document the Pope asks to make use of the media to spread the Christian message, and beyond this to integrate the message in the new culture, which has been created by modern means of communication⁴³. Therefore, the local churches “need to explore ways of thoroughly integrating mass media into their pastoral planning and activities”⁴⁴. They will “infuse Asian cultures with the values of the Kingdom”⁴⁵.

In this context both the Fathers of the Synod and John Paul appreciate the contribution of Radio Veritas Asia, which is the only radio station for Asia, and its almost thirty years of evangelizing service through broadcasting. They renewed their commitment to strengthen this excellent instrument of social communication. John Paul II encourages the Asian Episcopal Conferences to continue their efforts by sustaining this Christian voice of Asia⁴⁶. He wishes that through appropriate language programming the radio helps Catholics in corroborating a sense of their identity in a continent where Christians are a minority.

John Paul II reinforces in the last section of the post-synodal exhortation the recommendation of the Synod Fathers on evangelization through social communication using again the expression “areopagus of the modern age”⁴⁷. Mass media can offer an invaluable service to human promotion and the spreading of the truth of Christ and the teaching of the Church. The Pope also suggests establishing in each diocese of an office for social communication. He underlines the importance of media education for Catholics by saying: “Media education, including the critical evaluation of media output needs to be an increasing part of formation of priests, seminarians, religious, catechists, lay professionals, students in Catholic schools and parish communities”⁴⁸. Such a program requires ecumenical collaboration with members of other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and with other religions, which help to spread Christian and Gospel values through the media. The future of the Church and her growth in Asia depends to a great extent upon the use of mass media for evangelization. This requires highly professionally trained communicators and apostolic Christian witnesses.

⁴² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48a.

⁴³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48b.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48b.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48b.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48c.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48d.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 48d. Cf. F.-J. Eilers, SVD, *Communicating in ministry and mission. An introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication* Logos (Divine Word Publications) Manila 2003.

The Cultures of Africa – Voiceless in the internet An Exploration in Franz-Josef Eilers' Tracks

Giso Deussen

Gerade bei einer Arbeit über die christliche Publizistik Afrikas muss das ganze Orchester der Publizistik mit allen seinen Instrumenten berücksichtigt werden. Dabei ist besonders zu beachten, dass für Afrika die originäre Publizistik weit bedeutender ist als die intermediäre. Deswegen muss auch versucht werden, die verschiedenen Erscheinungsformen der christlichen originären Publizistik – die in ihrer Art und ihren Wirkungen durchaus nicht immer europäischen Vorstellungen entsprechen – aufzuzeigen und zu belegen.

[Especially in a study about the Christian science of publication in Africa, the whole range of media studies with all its facets has to be taken into consideration. The fact that the original use of the media is of much more importance than the intermedial one is of a high meaning in this context. Therefore, it is necessary to make an attempt to present and compare the different forms of original Christian publication practice – which by no means always corresponds to European ideas.]¹

In 1964, *Christliche Publizistik in Afrika* was published. Franz-Josef Eilers handed in this study as his diploma thesis for his degree in missiology at the Faculty of Theology at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Already this early work reveals the dilemma of a “communicative rift” between different continents and cultures. With the addition of the internet, this rift has become even deeper and more difficult to bridge than Eilers could have demonstrated back in 1964. He was rather optimistic that the timelessly valid problems, which he listed then, could be solved.

Forty years ago, in 1967, his dissertation, *Zur Publizistik schriftloser Kulturen in Nordost-Neuguinea*² was published. With reference to the mass media then fashionable – the internet appeared only a generation later – Eilers developed statements which are still valid today. These throw a new, revealing light on the discussion about “primitive”, and thus “voiceless” cultures in a digitalized world and could help to both name and finish an alarming scandal: Many cultures of this world are not present in the internet – and therefore (to use a term of the functional media studies, of which Eilers is an excellent member) not included in “social communication” either.

¹ Franz-Josef Eilers: *Christliche Publizistik in Afrika. Eine erste Erkundung*, Steyl 1964 (= publications of the Missionspriesterseminar St. Augustin/Siegburg), Nr. 13, p. 13.

² Franz-Josef Eilers: *Zur Publizistik schriftloser Kulturen in Nordost-Neuguinea*, Steyl 1967 (publications of the Missionspriesterseminar St. Augustin/Siegburg), Nr. 18. Unfortunately, both publications by Eilers exist only in German.

Eilers describes the problem with reference to Burridge³ as follows: The starting point of the investigation should be the following question: Which role do the modern mass media play in the process of social and economic conversion, which cannot work without a considerable amount of interpersonal communication? A “solution” he sees – again, with some optimism – in the rather great role mass media can play in the cultures not yet connected – as long as the use of these media is suitable to the cultures in question:

Dass es nicht darauf ankommt, eine unüberblickbare Fülle von Nachrichten und Meinungen zu bieten, sondern dass die modernen publizistischen Mittel in dieser Situation zunächst eine große pädagogische Aufgabe haben, indem sie – möglichst anknüpfend an bestehende Traditionen, Vorstellungen und Gebräuche – versuchen, vorsichtig und verständnisvoll diese Entgrenzung aller Lebensbereiche zu begleiten und so zu helfen, dass dieser Entgrenzungsprozeß nicht zu einem Entwurzelungsprozeß, sondern zu einer Verwurzelung von Altem und Neuem in einem diesen Menschen nötigen Verhältnis führt.

[It is not important to offer a vast amount of news and opinions. Instead, the modern means of communication have first and foremost an important educational task: They should – by resuming traditions, ideas and customs, if possible – accompany the dissolution of all aspects of life carefully and with understanding and thus help to make this not a process of derooting but one of firmly connecting of old and new in a way suitable for the people concerned.]⁴

This forty-year-old statement may have come true as far as the “classical” media, which were “modern” then, are concerned. However, even this may be questioned. The appearance of the internet has caused a much more depressing situation: the process of dissolution appears to have failed whereas that of derooting has rather been increased.

Now, the central question is: Which chance do different cultures have in a digitalized world? The request of a global ethics of internet use follows quickly, as if good will could solve a problem which has – nearly unsolvable – economic, technical, political and cultural causes. In this essay, I want to ask how the African cultures and their use of modern media for communication are present in the internet. This is meant to be a continuation of Eilers’ “explorations” of 1964 (and 1967), and the ideas he presented in them.

³ K.O.L. Burridge: *Mambu: A Melanesian Millenium*, London 1960, p. XX.

⁴ Eilers (1967), pp. 222f.

Missing Internet Links

Having a first look at the “African cyber space”, one may be surprised by the rich range of information offered. But soon it becomes obvious that much of this comes from the North or from South Africa, the internet community of which is 30 times as large as that of all other African states taken together.

Auslandsafrikaner, Studenten und Immigranten schaffen hier ein ‚Cyber-Afrika‘, das mehr Ausdruck der Diaspora als Artikulation des ‚Schwarzen Kontinents‘ selbst ist.

[Here, non-natives, students and immigrants create a ‘Cyber-Africa’ which is rather a result of their diaspora situation than a means of expression by the ‘Black Continent’ itself.]⁵

Which are the reasons for Africa’s bad results in an international comparison? The internet requires a certain amount of infrastructure for telecommunication.⁶ Many African states neither have the technical network necessary nor a network which covers their whole territory. Most internet-links are to be found in the capitals. These also have 50% of the telephone networks, although their inhabitants are only 10% of the entire population of Africa. Compared globally, Africa has the most underdeveloped infrastructure: only 2% of the telephone connections but 12% of the global population are African. So are only 1% of the internet users.⁷

While one is surfing in this rather thin “black net”, some further questions come to one’s mind. Who presents this data? Who has access to this technology? Nearly everything which we know about Africa today comes from this net, which is open to the “happy few” only. Which image of African cultures are we shown? But more about that later.

Reasons of the Missing of Internet-Links⁸

The reason why so many people in Africa do not use the internet is not only the lack of technical infrastructure. Rather, the unconnectedness results from an interaction of several barriers which prevent people’s access to the internet. These can be classified as: infrastructural, economical, socio-cultural and educational. Further barriers exist

... sowohl im Mikrobereich (z.B. kann ich mir einen netzfähigen Computer leisten?) wie auch im Makrobereich (z.B. kann eine

⁵ Christian Flatz: *Internet in Schwarzafrika* (1999) www.interasia.org.

⁶ Cf. Armin Lanzinger: *Internet in Afrika – Eine allgemeine Einführung*, www.interasia.org.

⁷ www.Nua.com (November 4th, 2002).

⁸ Cf. the carefully researched and richly documented paper by Thorsten Eckardt: „Länder, Völker, Kulturen offline: Zugangsschranken des Internets“, seminar paper in the seminar „Internetethik“, Fachhochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, winter semester 2002/2003, February 14th, 2003.

Gesellschaft die notwendige technische und bildungsmäßige Infrastruktur bereitstellen?).

[... both on the micro-level (e. g. can I afford a computer which is internet-accessible?) and on the macro-level (e. g. can the society provide the technical and educational infrastructure?)]⁹

For Africa, the infrastructural and economic barriers are obvious.¹⁰ In connection with a media-ethic point of view, especially the socio-cultural and educational barriers are of interest here. They can prevent the internet-use at least as effectively as the material barriers. Many cultures – among them the cultures without a written heritage which Eilers describes – are “internet-incompatible” for socio-cultural reasons:

Naive Kulturen verfügen in Bezug auf Alltagsverrichtungen häufig über ein außergewöhnlich hohes Maß an Informationen, die allerdings nonverbal weitergegeben werden, oder, sofern verbal vermittelt, in den großen europäischen Sprachen nur ungenau oder falsch wiedergegeben werden können und deshalb für eine Speicherung und Transferierung in ‚universal‘ eingerichteten Medien ungeeignet sind.

[Concerning the actions of everyday life, naïve cultures often have an extraordinarily rich amount of information, which, however, is handed down nonverbally, or, if it is handed down orally, it can be translated into the important European languages only with difficulty. Therefore, it is not suitable for being transferred to and memorized in ‘universal’ media.]¹¹

So, the members of such cultures cannot use the internet for spreading – even life-saving – knowledge. From an intercultural point of view, the (supposedly) media-suitable internet is not as universal as it seems.

The assumption that people generally are interested in using the internet cannot be verified either. As a sort of predisposition,

closely related to this is the psychological disposition of the individual to engage new and fairly complex technology, and it is the situation that many are debarred from the network by their fear or loathing of technology, or technophobia. ... Such individuals are effectively unable to function either as producers or consumers of content in the network.¹²

⁹ Bernhard Debatin: „Grundlagen der Internetethik: Problemfelder und Lösungsperspektiven“, www.uni-leipzig.de/+debatin/uruguay/vortrag.htm (August 17th, 1999.)

¹⁰ Vgl. especially Eckardt and Debatin, in addition see Olu Oguibe: „connectivity, and the Fate of the Unconnected“, <http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/6/6551/1.html>. (December 7th, 1999/ June 13th, 2007).

¹¹ Klaus Wieglerling: *Medienethik*, Stuttgart, Weimar 1988, p. 185.

¹² Olu Oguibe, cf. n. 10.

In addition, Olu Oguibe states “the absence of social conditions necessary for individuals to develop a healthy and rewarding relationship with new technologies”.¹³

Even if all the barriers described above were conquered, still a lack of education would prevent a large part of the population from using the internet. For this, it is necessary to be able to read and write. 20% of all above 15 years of age on this planet are analphabets (UNESCO 2002), 1,8% in Europe, 11% in Latin America, and 40% in Africa. In some states, such as Niger, the percentage is 84% in general and even 92% among women. Another fundamental barrier of the internet is the English language. About 70% of the information presented in the internet is in English; however, only 7% of its users are native speakers of English. An estimated 15% of all people on Earth speak English more or less well as a foreign language.¹⁴

It is obvious that also a certain competence and affinity for the use of technical equipment is necessary for the use of the internet. However,

... Beschaffung, Anwendung von Computern und unreflektierte Euphorie allein genügen nicht.

[... the obtaining and use of computers in addition to an unreflected euphoria is not enough.]¹⁵

The use of information from the internet and everything which can be summarized as “media competence” is of high importance.

Results From the Barriers of the Internet and the Distorsion of Cultures

Certainly the question may be asked if most of the internet’s contents are of importance at all for people who have to deal with much more pressing existential problems such as the access to clean drinking water, a sufficient supply of food and medical care. But they are denied access to all the internet’s contents, which means also to those pieces of information which could be highly suitable for the solution of their problems. Another, cultural, problem may be even worse: the peoples and cultures in Africa concerned are not only “deaf” but also and especially “dumb”. Neither can they present themselves in the global internet-community nor are they perceived – at least not in the internet. Therefore, in the internet – as in many other media – many cultures are not present. They have no access to this new, important “ethnoscape”¹⁶, which has formed within the “world online”. These “ethnoscapes” are no image of societies already existing outside the internet, but

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cf. David Crystal: *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 60f.

¹⁵ Anton Kolb: *Die Fluchtgesellschaft im Netz. Neuer Ethik-Kodex für das Internet*, Münster 2001, p. 175.

¹⁶ Olu Oguibe, cf. n. 10.

...what one might call a netscape or cyberscape where information and individuals circulate and bond into a new community. And as this community broadens, in spread and significance, we are effectively implied in the relativization of the rest who remain on the outside of its borders.¹⁷

The “world online” has to understand that the “world offline” is qualified down and that the internet is not “the Earth online”. Rather, it is a new, virtual planet which qualities, culture and laws and ideology are by no means compatible with terran reality. The internet is dominated by Western culture, languages, religions, philosophies of life, traditions, values and morality. This means a loss of cultural identity, a „kulturelle Entdifferenzierung“, to use Klaus Wieglerling’s¹⁸ expression. Tendencies of cultural standardization work against cultural diversity:

Die Vielfalt der Kulturen wird durch die genannte Entwicklung leichter eingeebnet. Was auf diese Weise entsteht, ist sicher keine allenfalls erwünschte Globalkultur.

[The diversity of cultures is reduced much easier by the development described above. What is formed thereby is certainly not a global culture merely wished for.]¹⁹

At the end of 1999, Bill Clinton, then president of the United States, spoke warningly of a “digital rift”: What cannot be digitalized should be extinct from the “map”.²⁰

The exclusion of some social groups and cultures does not mean that they are not talked about in the internet; and not only are they talked about, they are also talked about in favour of. Thus, it could be regarded as positive that the “inhabitants” of the ethnosphere online study and engage for these cultures. However, the Nigerian artist Olu Oguibe²¹, whom I have already quoted above, contradicts this statement vehemently. He criticizes the fact that “self-made representatives,” instead of the groups excluded themselves, speak in the net:

Like free agents, they inhabit the nooks and crannies of the net and engage in innumerable activities and negotiations on behalf of groups and cultures who are essentially unable to deny or withdraw the authority that such representatives appoint unto themselves.²²

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Klaus Wieglerling, p. 228.

¹⁹ Anton Kolb, p. 148.

²⁰ Quoted in Anton Kolb, pp. 12f.

²¹ Olu Oguibe is an artist, art historian, prize-winning poet and a leading commentator of cyber culture. His excellent web site offers an introduction into Afro-American art essays, interviews and artists’ profiles.

²² Olu Oguibe, cf. N. 10.

For many participants, the internet is the fastest and simplest contact to other cultures. They quickly give way to the temptation of gaining their experience of the world from the net. However, often the information online is not even a reality conveyed by journalists (which, thus, could be said to be of a certain authority), but exactly this reality created by those self-named agents. Oguibe says that “the truth-value of information gathered from the net is reinforced rather misleadingly by its essentially textual proclivity and in turn by the fact of text’s historical and scriptural association with truth especially in the west.”²³ This is a typically Western attitude. The cultures of Africa, who can look back at a vast tradition of non-written communication, are of a completely different opinion and corresponding feelings.

Oguibe writes that information from the internet was regarded more and more as reliable. Instead of looking out of one’s own, real, window, those who are regarded as distant and not accessible because they are not connected to the web were often studied via information which is taken from this very web.

With this in mind, one cannot but wonder, should the network continue to displace other knowledge systems as it is bound to, ... might it not become a barrier instead of a bridge?²⁴

Within this context, Oguibe could excellently refer to the works of Eilers, if he knew them. The so-called delegates of the neglected and excluded societies are everywhere in the web. These delegates believe to know what is best for the “poor people,” they engage in having this done, they debate, and thus, they gain a profile for themselves. However, often they hardly know the people for whom they have such a compassion.

Searching the web for information, e.g. about Africa, one is confronted with the immense informative flood which is so typical of the internet. A closer look then reveals that most of the sites are not *from* Africa, but *about* Africa and *from* Northern America or Europe, where the corresponding servers are located also. This aspect leads to a growing distorsion of the “world offline”. Social groups are characterized in the internet by their appearing representatives, their so-called interests are presented there without their knowing, and much less having the chance to interfere. Here, Oguibe sees multiple possibilities of malevolent abuse:

The digital network provides a new corridor of infringement and tresspass which the infringed may not always be privileged to broach.²⁵

There can be no doubt that information for the World Wide Web can – relatively easy (and cheap) – be produced, manipulated, and, according to Oguibe, “[be disseminated] on a bewilderingly vast scale.”²⁶ This would make it possible for

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

participants of the web, “to fabricate and disseminate possibly fictive and potentially injurious constructs and narratives of the Other to the rest of the world, when such populations have no equally enabling devices to encounter, evaluate, critique, challenge or seek to invalidate images and representations of their selves and their state of being”.²⁷ In the internet, they are not privileged to act “because they can neither speak on their own behalf, nor are they able to exercise control over the dynamics and dialectics of the network.”²⁸

Therefore, the dignity of such underprivileged people is not respected. This shows how important it is to fulfill Article 19 of the UN’s *Declaration of Human Rights*, and why the right to be informed is a human right and valid for every person.

To be excluded from

... the myriad conversations taking place in this enclave of privilege, some of which have significant bearings on or consequences for their condition and well-being ...²⁹

can have a significant effect on both the conditions of life and the self-esteem of the African cultures.

If the Net empowers us to possess the voice or invent the narrative of the absent, does it not by so doing also enable us to scar his body?³⁰

Oguibe’s question exactly hits the point. Klaus Wieglerling’s answer to it is a clear “yes”. He sees this as a possible cause of the increasing national, ethical and religious riots all over the world. Violence and terrorist activities up to wars can be caused by potentials of resistance, which are

... nicht immer rational [gespeist], ... [weil] der, der in der Welt seine Identität nicht mehr artikulieren kann, sich auch gegen die Ansprüche dieser hegemonialen Kräfte wendet.

[... not always fed by rational thought, ... because a person who cannot express his or her own needs in the world attacks those of these hegemonial powers].³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Wieglerling, p. 227.

The Fate of the Unconnected, and Some Questions for Preparing an Ethics of Internet-Use

Do the unconnected regain their voice and their dignity when they become connected? Is it only necessary to bridge the “digital rift”? Is it sufficient to close the gap between the people with access to information and knowledge and those who lack this access to achieve the image of a global society which communicates in peace and mutual respect? Until now, the way to this noble destination has been only doubtful and despairing. This is so because the “digital rift” is just a mirror image of the social rift which exists on the economical level – and not only in underdeveloped countries. Only those who can afford and manage a computer – in other words, those who have competence to deal with modern media – have access to the internet. Even the educational systems of the people connected have not been able to provide everybody with this competence.

With all emphasis on the dignity of those cultures who are without writing and, therefore, voiceless in the internet, especially in Africa, one fact remains: The structures of the information societies and the access to them are not decided about in the South, but in the North.

Mit dem Vormarsch der neuen Technologien sind Information und Wissen die neuen Rohstoffe des 21. Jahrhunderts geworden. Wem gehören sie? Wem gehört das Internet, wer kontrolliert den Zugang zum weltweiten Netzwerk?

[With the advance of new technologies information and knowledge have become the new raw materials of the 21st century. Whom do they belong to? To whom belongs the internet, and who is in control of the access to the World Wide Web?]³²

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, dealt with these questions. However, because this was about a considerable amount of money, the states of the North and the economical powers prevented an open debate from taking place. Nevertheless, the statements of two great parties became visible in the form of two different models³³: The “market-model”, representing the economical powers and the United States, is based on treating knowledge and information in the same way as material goods and traditional services; this means that also the immaterial goods of knowledge and information have owners. They have the exclusive right to exclude others from the right to use their goods and to regulate access to them strictly by the use of copyright, patents and licences. Not the WSIS, which has never been taken seriously by the United States, is responsible for these decisive questions, but the WTO, GATS or the WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization). Within these organizations, the governments meet among themselves and behind closed doors. This is fought by the civil society with its model of an information society with a

³² Roman Berger: „Wem gehört das Wissen der Welt?“, in: *St. Galler Tagblatt*, November 14th, 2005.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*

”human face”. The numerous organizations for human rights, the media and global development which were able to take part in a United Nations’ summit conference in Tunis, want to reach a higher quantity of justice when access to new technologies is concerned. The debate was dominated by the first group who was – at the background of their own interests – concerned with regulating and access to the internet. The representation of cultures does not appear in their model. Nevertheless, something could be moved. In Geneva, and even more in Tunis, the representatives of the civil society had the chance to strive in front of the WSIS for a formation of the information society which is not only concerned with economical and technical criteria, but which takes seriously the contents of the sites. They requested from the world conferences an agenda which also includes ethical and social aspects.³⁴ Two aspects are of special importance here: First, especially the underdeveloped countries and neglected global regions need to have access to information technology, both as producers and as receivers of information. Second, the access to the media contents should be included in the access to the media devices. The cultural identity of the societies in different states should be kept intact. A public service should be guaranteed for also in underdeveloped countries, and communal media should be supported. In addition, the concentration of power to only a few globally acting media magnates by diversification and also to some national and regional media branches should be achieved. Furthermore, the role of small communities and individuals and their taking part in public life is emphasized. Here, the so-called “community-media,” such as community radio stations, local TV-stations, videos and printed media, play an important role. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other players of the civil society have made their voices audible last but not least by their being connected to the Web. The Christian Churches have fallen in with these organizations on an international level.³⁵ The result of this civilly-social connectedness is often regarded somewhat critically; no wonder when the vast problems existing are taken into consideration. Nevertheless, the aims reached are not to be underestimated: both civil societies and the Churches can rely on a dynamic network of coordination, exchange and linking, which has grown by the help of the WSIS.³⁶ They use their networks more and more to discuss the necessity of an ethics of information and to look for solutions for the problems described – which appear insoluble nowadays.

Away from a fruitless, damaging and false discussion about the “cultural warfare”, a development becomes visible by which it seems possible to establish a culture within the Web sensitively and responsibly:

There is a nascent if inchoate morality already developing in the network and this could be extended to include awareness of and a conscionable relationship with those who are on the outside. This is

³⁴ Urs A. Jaeggi: „Neue Technologien rufen alte Geister“, in: *Medienheft Dossier 20*, Zürich, November 28th, 2003, pp. 13f.

³⁵ Cf. Charles Martig: „’Formieren’ heißt das Zauberwort. Kirchen als globale Akteure der Zivilgesellschaft“, in: *Medienheft Dossier 20*, Zurich, November 28th, 2003, pp. 32-34.

³⁶ Cf. Chantal Peyer: „Der Kampf gegen den digitalen Graben. Eine Bilanz zum Weltgipfel der Informationsgesellschaft 2005“, in: *Medienheft*, Zurich 24th, 2005, pp.1-7.

an area where artists and other cultural practitioners could play a useful role corollary to tradition in regular society. Not only do they need to inject a certain criticality into their own practice with regard to the place and fact of the unconnected, they could also help to raise the awareness advocated here across the platform of the network.³⁷

Special awareness is to be paid to a serious problem which Philippe Queau calls „schleichende Standardisierung der Kulturen,“ in English, “creeping standardizing of the cultures.” He shows that the digital code, the internet and cyber space increase the implementation of abstract forms of culture. Cultures based on orality have no room in cyber space except in a museum-fitting way.

Das ist ein Phänomen mit schwerwiegenden Folgen: eine Kultur der Technik, der Abstraktion und des Virtuellen setzt sich als weltweite kulturelle Norm, als latenter einziger Bezugspunkt durch, wodurch die anderen ‚Seinsweisen‘ marginalisiert werden.

[This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences: An abstract, technical and virtual culture becomes the worldwide cultural norm, the only latent reference point; thus, all other ‘forms of existence’ are marginalized.]³⁸

Here, we come back to Franz-Josef Eilers. His teacher, the honoured mentor of several generations of media scholars, Henk Prakke (1900-1992) from the Netherlands, wrote in his preface of *Christliche Publizistik in Afrika*:

Die vorliegende tüchtige Untersuchung bietet uns einen systematischen Überblick der publizistischen Publizistik in Afrika. Sie regt die Wissenschaft zu weiterer Forschung, die Praxis zur Erkenntnis der wesentlichen Bedeutung der publizistischen Arbeit an.

[This competent investigation offers a systematic overview over the medial praxis in Africa. It stimulates scholars to doing further research, the people in practice to recognize the importance of the work in the field of the media.]³⁹

In the preface of *Zur Publizistik schriftloser Kulturen in Nordost-Neuguinea*, Prakke writes about Eilers:

Der Verfasser ist unzweifelhaft in ein wissenschaftliches Gebiet vorgedrungen, das für die publizistische Forschung Neuland

³⁷ Olu Ouguibe, cf. N. 10..

³⁸ Philippe Queau: „Eine ethische Vision der Informationsgesellschaft durch Diversifikation“, November 22nd, 1998, Telepolis Artikel URL: www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/6/6434/1.html.

³⁹ Franz-Josef Eilers (1964), p. 9.

darstellt. Er wird der letzte sein, der nicht zugeben würde, dass er mindestens ebenso viele Fragen stellt als er beantwortet.

[There can be no doubt that the author has entered a scholarly area which has, so far, been an undiscovered country for media scholars. He would be the last to deny that he asks at least as many questions as he answers.]⁴⁰

For the last forty years, Franz-Josef Eilers has been faithful to this judgment of his teacher. His pressing questions, inspired by his deep belief in the power of Christian communication have not only furthered the scholarly debate, but also the practical world of communication, the “communication of the cultures” – even in the global world of the internet. He was not interested in great ideas (these fail often enough when they are confronted by reality), but in specific, human-oriented actions.

Es kommt ja gerade hier nicht darauf an, große überperfekionierte Kommunikationszentren zu schaffen. Eine dezentralisierte publizistische Arbeit scheint den örtlichen Gegebenheiten weit mehr zu entsprechen. Vielleicht muss auch die moderne Publizistik in einem gewissen – aber guten – Sinne ‚primitiv‘ werden, um jene Aufgabe zu erfüllen, die ihr eigentlich in den Gesellschaften der Entwicklungsländer allgemein und Neuguineas speziell zukäme.

[It is not important to create big, over-perfect centres of communication. A decentral publicational work seems to correspond much more to local situations. Perhaps the modern science of the media has to become “primitive” in a good way in order to fulfill its original task in the underdeveloped countries in general and especially in New-Guinea.]⁴¹

This statement was written forty years ago – is it not valid today still, when the unconnected cultures are meant to get a slowly growing chance in the internet?

⁴⁰ Franz-Josef Eilers, (1967), p. 11.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 223.

The Concept of Dialogue and Its Ethical Implications A Contribution to the Concept of Social Communication

Ineke de Feijter

‘As the term ‘social communication’ has become in the meanwhile more and more accepted (...) far beyond the Church use, it seems important to become more clear on this concept of social communication’ (Eilers, 2002:318).

Eilers summarizes four interrelated criteria and underlines their situational concreteness: numerical arguments; publicness; importance for the members of a community (information, interpretation, and entertainment); and inclusion of all (traditional) means of communication.

He defines social communication as being concerned *not* solely about mass media and technology, but “more with the interaction of human beings in their public expressions within a respective society or cultural group” (Eilers, 2002:318).

Interaction and public expression appear to be pivotal in this definition. The term ‘interaction’ refers to a degree of reciprocity, ‘public expression’ refers to conveying one’s thoughts, (religious) convictions or feelings publicly.

Both dimensions inherently include ethical issues. The societal public realm e.g. involves issues of media access and protection of communication rights or public service broadcasting. Interaction implies taking questions of power, relationship and position into account. Moreover there are ‘overarching’ issues like the global information and communication imbalance.

In this essay I would like to discuss the concept of dialogue¹, including its inherent ontological and ethical implications. This concept might offer a lead to furthering the reflection on social communication, both within church use and beyond, as urged for by Eilers.

By this contribution I honor his scholarliness and friendship, as well as the many (personal and e-mail) dialogues we had, in its authentic meaning and significance: mutually searching, learning, inspiring and being enriched, and - at times - disagreeing.

I wholeheartedly hope there are many to follow.

Dialogue and Dissemination

Peters (1999:33-62) contrasts two basic concepts in communication theory - dialogue and dissemination - by comparing the communicative styles of Socrates and Jesus as described by their ‘canonical disciples’, Plato (*Phaedrus*) and the synoptic evangelists (*synoptic gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*).

¹ This essay is based on de Feijter, Ineke. 2007. *The Art of Dialogue, Religion, Communication and Global Media Culture*. Berlin, Lit Verlag (distributed in the UK and North America by Global Book Marketing, London, Transaction Publishers, Rutgers University).

In staging a debate between the greatest proponent of dialogue, Socrates, and the most enduring voice for dissemination, Jesus, (sic) I aim to rediscover both the subtleties of what can count as dialogue and the blessedness of nondialogic forms, including dissemination (1999:34-35).

In Peters' opinion, dialogue is often 'uncritically celebrated'. 'Socrates' model of the proper and pathological forms of communication resounds to this day. We are still prone to think of true communication as personal, free, live, and interactive' (1999:50). 'Much of culture is not necessarily dyadic, mutual or interactive. Dialogue is only one communicative script among many. The lament over the end of conversation and the call for refreshed dialogue alike miss the virtues inherent in nonreciprocal forms of action and culture. Life with others is as often a ritual performance as a dialogue. Dialogue is a bad model for the variety of shrugs, grunts, and moans that people emit (among other signs and gestures) in face-to-face-settings. It is an even worse normative model for the extended, even distended, kinds of talk and discourse necessary in large-scale democracy. Much of culture consists of signs in general dispersion, and felicitous communication - in the sense of creating just community between two or more creatures - depends more basically on imagination, liberty and solidarity among the participants than on equal time in conversation' (1999:34).

With respect to this last argument, it might be questioned whether dialogue, in this way, appears to be minimized to more of a quantitative issue than a qualitative one?

Peters describes Socrates' ideal of communication as 'souls intertwined in reciprocity' (1999:43). Soul and word are to be matched, implying selection of the (elite) receiver and disapproval of dissemination. According to Peters, to Socrates even mass communication is 'a dialogue writ large: no stray messages, furtive listeners, or unintended effects are allowed' (1999:46). This is also the reason why Socrates objects to writing. Audience and speech must be closely correlated. Socrates, 'almost thinks in the demographic terms of modern media marketing' (1999:45/46).

Whereas Socrates favors dialogue, according to Peters, Jesus favors dissemination.

Based on a different view of love (*agape* instead of *eros*), of communication (dissemination instead of dialogue) and of reciprocity (undifferentiated scattering as opposed to tight coupling), Peters opposes the communication of Jesus as described in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke to the one favored by Socrates in the Phaedrus.

Peters' argumentation is based mainly on the parables² - especially the parable of the sower (Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8), the 'parable about parables'. 'It is a parable about the diversity of audience interpretations in settings that lack direct interaction (...) the parable of the sower celebrates broadcasting as an equitable

² The word *parable* stems from the Greek *paraballein* which means: *parabole*. Next to the parable of the sower, Peters points to the parable of the laborers (Matthew 20) and the three parables on the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son (Luke 15) in order to base the issue of the suspension of reciprocity.

mode of communication that leaves the harvest of meaning to the will and capacity of the recipient (1999:51/52).

In order to summarize the differences as signaled by Peters, Socrates holds a private and esoteric mode of communication that includes a reciprocal relationship in the intimate setting of dialectic. Love, or *eros*, is attracted by beauty, type of soul and longing for oneness.

In opposition, Jesus' communication is radically public, exoteric, and includes the dispersing of meanings and asymmetrical relationships. Love or *agape* is attracted by need and compassion for otherness. 'Love is supposed to be universal and indifferent to personalities. *Agape* – or Christian love – is supposed to be mass communicated' (1999:56).

In search of forms of communication most fit for democratic polity and ethical life, Peters prefers 'loosely coupled dissemination over tightly coupled dialogue' (1999:35). However, he recognizes that both dissemination and dialogue cannot do completely without one another (dissemination without dialogue can become scattered, dialogue without dissemination can become tyranny). Nevertheless, according to his opinion, the motto of communication theory ought to be: 'Dialogue with the self, dissemination with the other' (1999:57).

The Christian doctrine of communication, says Peters, is a doctrine of broadcasting. 'There is, in sum, no indignity or paradox in one-way-communication. The marriage of true minds via dialogue is not the only option; in fact, lofty expectations about communication may blind us to the more subtle splendors of dissemination or suspended dialogue' (1999:62).

However thought provoking, Peters' views on dialogue and dissemination raise questions. It is said that the Synoptic Gospels evaluate dissemination quite positively, based on a different vision of love and communication, and that Jesus is the 'most enduring voice for dissemination'.

If we take biblical theology as the point of departure, it is, however, not that clear which view of communication is favored. Next to the parables (which are not always directed to the public at large, nor restricted to the communicative conduct of dissemination, see e.g. the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 or of the excuses in Luke 14:15-24), the gospels tell various stories which can be characterized as dialogues. Examples are to be found in the healings (of the one possessed, the daughter of Jairus, (Mark 5, Luke 8), the Syrophenician woman and the deaf-mute (Mark 7), the blind of Bethsaida (Mark 8), in the dialogue with the rich young man and the healing of Bartimeus (Mark 10, Luke 18) in the story of the twelve year old Jesus in the temple (Luke 2), in the healing of the leper and the paralytic (Luke 5), in the story of Jesus anointed by the sinner (Luke 7), the confession of Peter (Luke 9), the story of Zacheus (Luke 19) the story of the men on the road to Emmaus, the dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), with the adulteress (John 8) and the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15) etc. Moreover, in a variety of cases people are instructed by Jesus *not* to speak of what happened (e.g. Mark 3:7-12, Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew 9:27-30)

The parables are part of the New Testament, which also includes other forms of communication and other volumes like the letters of Paul, the Acts and the Revelation of John. Moreover, they originated and are embedded in a *liturgical* tradition of the early congregations.

But probably the main objective, next to the fact that Peters' view is based on only a few of the parables singled out of their context, is that the New Testament cannot be detached from the first, Jewish, Testament. Jesus was a Jew, who lived in the Jewish tradition which was based on Jewish Scriptures. The Old Testament shows a variety of conducts of communication varying from stories, drama, ethics and law, prophetic texts, to proverbs, personal wisdom, and poetry, songs of lamentation, psalms and even direct dialogue with God (Job). It can be argued that the Hebrew tradition, (as is shown even by the gospels, since they cannot be understood without the Old Testament) is at least a tradition as much of dialogue as of dissemination. Searching together for religious wisdom and interpretation is an important feature of Judaism. Theological study groups, (the Jewish *leerhuis*), up until today, are a main form of teaching and learning in which dialoguing is predominant.

Felicitous communication, meaning: creating just community, depends more basically on imagination, liberty and solidarity Peters argues (1999:34). Obviously he finds these conditions better guaranteed in Jesus' dissemination than in Socrates' dialogue. Broadcasting and one way communication are at the core of the Christian doctrine of communication.

This raises problems of both theological and communication theoretical nature. It might be questioned whether dissemination truly is a better guarantee for imagination, liberty and solidarity. This brings to the fore the crucial underlying issue of what is exactly meant by Peters by *dialogue* and by *dissemination*. If dissemination means free accessibility for all through dispersion, indifferent to an equal relationship, and dialogue is for the happy few, reciprocal, dialectic, excluding liberty and real solidarity - both meanings appear to include features of a *contradictio in terminis*.

On the subject of free accessibility within dissemination, it might be asked: to what and on who's terms? A message that is determined by the sender? Then why would Jesus allow himself to be persuaded by the Canaanite and Syrophenician woman even in such a way that, from a biblical theological point of view, this might be looked upon as a conversion and turning point towards his own mission? Dissemination can also be free of commitment as the story of the rich young man reminds us. Moreover, it is questionable from a biblical theological point of view whether Jesus (and God) is indifferent to an equal relationship. It might be argued that in the creative action of God (man created in His image) and in Jesus' term 'Son of man' when designating himself, the divine relationship with man contends both features of symmetry and asymmetry rather than God and humanity as 'radically asymmetrical', as Peters states.

A final theological point concerns Peters' statement that Platonic *eros* passes through the particular to arrive to the general, whereas Christian *agape* passes through the general to the particular (sic) (1999:61). In biblical theology it is the other way around: the love from God passes through his people and his son towards the *koinonia* - the whole living world. God's love for and meaning with man and creation is exemplified in his very close relationship with *the one* (his people, his son), but not exclusively bound to them. In and through this 'one' it extends to all, as the

dialogue with the Canaanite woman shows. This is the *pars-pro-toto* principle of the Bible³.

The communication theoretical drawback in Peters' argument about the Christian doctrine of broadcasting and non-paradox of one way communication is in his assumptions attributed to its model. One way communication, by definition, is sender-based. Peters, however, refers to Socrates' dialogue as 'sender oriented' in contrast to Jesus' 'receiver-oriented model' of dissemination (1999:35). Moreover, each perspective on communication and thus on a communication model⁴ implies views about the audience, message and identity. The attribution of dissemination to Jesus' communication then has consequences. A transportation or transmission model of communication e.g. looks upon a message as information that can be transmitted, delivered and measured in likeness and meaning (Soukup:1999). These consequences, both on communication theoretical and on theological grounds, cannot be held.

It is questionable, therefore, whether both Jesus and Socrates are given their due in Peters' view of their communicative conduct. Forrester (1993: 67-78), arrives at a very different conclusion: 'Kierkegaard found key, and very similar, clues to the proper relationship of truth and communication in the lives of Socrates and Jesus. Socrates attacked the sophists, and Jesus attacked the Pharisees; in both cases objecting to a radically distorted understanding of the relation of truth, the message, and communication, the medium. The sophists, according to Socrates, regarded themselves as free to manipulate the message, so as to their own objectives and goals. It was something they could manipulate and possess, apportion, sell or use to get their own way. The teacher, the communicator, conveyed information to the recipient. Socrates and Jesus, on the other hand, believed in dialogue, in probing and searching together for the truth. For Socrates, any attempt at manipulation, or foreclosing the discussion, or determining its conclusion in advance, destroys authentic dialogue. Truth cannot be imposed by power; it must be freely sought and freely appropriated. Socrates taught and practiced a self-involving, probing and practically orientated kind of dialogue which always involved respect for the participants as people. (...) Both men encouraged people to probe, to question, to enter into open dialogue. And this in itself was seen as a direct threat to existing powers. Power, Kierkegaard suggests, always seeks to control communication and regards, open, dialogical communication as a threat' (1993:70-71).

Jesus' conversation with the rich young man, the Samaritan woman at the well and with the people accusing the adulteress and with the adulteress herself, to mention but a few examples, confirm this image of dialogical conduct. It is necessary, therefore, to take a closer look at the concept of dialogue.

³ See, for example the work of *the Amsterdam School* of biblical theology and exegesis, building on the work of Karl Barth, Heiko Miskotte, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. Its most prominent authors are Frans Breukelman, Karel Deurloo, ter Schegget and Rochus Zuurmond.

⁴ See *The Art of Dialogue*, section 3.3.5 and 3.4.3.

The Concept of Dialogue

In search of a grounding theory of what we provisionally will term '*relational communication*', we will draw on the work of the Jewish philosopher of religion Martin Buber (1878-1965). In his famous work, *Ich und Du* (1923) - translated into English as *I and Thou* in 1937, he develops a dialogical principle as an *ontological* category⁵. In doing so he extends communication theory beyond its usual realm of e.g. transporting, en- and decoding, exchanging or interpreting messages. Communication, then, is not only about the media, interaction or public expression, to put it into Eilers' words, but also about one's being. More specific it is about one's being in a relationship to another, and about the inherent ethics involved in this communicational relationship.

By proposing Buber's theory as the ground for communication, we hope to overcome the, in our opinion unfruitful discussion on dialogue *or* dissemination and point out the inherent ethical issues involved in (social) communication: "Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations" (Buber: 1958:3)⁶. This is probably the shortest summary of his dialogical concept given by Buber himself.

He distinguishes two primary words, which are always combinations, never isolated words. *I-Thou* and *I-It* (the *it* can also be replaced by he or she). There is no *I* in itself. It either refers to *Thou* or to *It*.

The basis of the realm of *It* is different from the realm of *Thou*, which establishes the world of relation.

If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things. Thus, human being is not *He* or *She*, bounded from every other *He* and *She*, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world; nor is he a nature able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. But with no neighbor, and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself. But all else lives in *his* light. (...) I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*. But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once more. In the act of experience *Thou* is far away (ibid, 8,9).

I-Thou, says Buber, can only be spoken with the whole being. Something which *I-It* never can.

The *Thou* meets me through grace - it is not found by seeking. But my speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of my being. The *Thou* meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. (...) The primary word *I-Thou* can be spoken only

⁵ In his later work *Between Man and Man* (1929 in German - translated in English in 1947), Buber illustrates his basic concept as developed in *I and Thou*.

⁶ The edition referred to is the second edition that was published in 1958.

with the whole being. Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting (ibid, 11).

The relation to the Thou is a direct one. No system of ideas, foreknowledge, aim or anticipation intervenes. Thou appears in its relation of mutual and simultaneous action with the I. It cannot be grasped in space nor time, neither can it be defined but by the intensity of what happens in the relation.

This relational aspect cannot be extracted from its social dimension. Buber, in this respect, distinguishes between a world which is ordered and the world-order.

There are moments of silent depth in which you look on the world-order fully present. Then in its very flight the note will be heard; but the ordered world is its indistinguishable score. These moments are immortal, and most transitory of all; no content may be secured from them, but their power invades creation and the knowledge of man, beams of their power stream into the ordered world and dissolve it again and again (ibid, 31).

Spirit is thus defined by Buber as that which is between the *I* and *Thou*. Entering with one's whole being into relation is living in the spirit. Every particular *Thou* is then 'a glimpse through to the eternal *Thou*' (ibid, 75). In this sense, God - says Buber - is the 'wholly Other' but also the 'wholly Same', who 'properly may only be addressed, not expressed'.

To Buber there is 'divine meaning' in the life of the world and man. 'He who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to God' (ibid, 95). 'But again and again, man brings about, instead of realization, a reflexion to Him who reveals: he wishes to concern himself with God instead of with the world. Only in such a reflexion, he is no longer confronted by a *Thou*, he can do nothing but establish an It-God in the realm of things, believe that he knows of God as of an *It*, and so speak about Him' (ibid, 115). Structures of communal life 'draw their living quality from the riches of the power to enter into relation' (ibid, 49).

In the history of the individual and of humanity, however, Buber observes a 'progressive augmentation of the world of it' (ibid, 37). The development of experiencing and using (making spirit into a means of personal enjoyment) is due to the decrease of power to enter into a relationship. This undermines, in Buber's words, 'solidarity of connexion'. In this respect, Buber differentiates between person and individual. The latter differentiates himself from others, and thus from his true being. The former, by sharing in relational events, becomes aware of his being. However, Buber underlines there are not 'two kinds of man, but two poles of humanity'. Everybody lives in this 'twofold I' (ibid, 65). But the stronger the I of the *I-Thou* in the twofold I, the more personal one is.

Interestingly, Buber gives three illustrations of 'lively and impressive' *I*'s bound up in relation. The first is Socrates: 'This I lived continually in the relation with man which is bodied forth in dialogue' (...) 'went out to meet them' (...) and 'took

its stand with them in reality' (ibid, Congruent with the other changes you made in this respect? 1958:66).

The second is Goethe: 'The *I* of the pure intercourse with nature'. The third one is the *I* by Jesus⁷, the '*I* of unconditional relation', who 'calls his *Thou* Father'. 'If separation ever touches him, his solidarity of relation is the greater; he speaks to others only out of this solidarity' (ibid, 1958:66, 67).

Summarizing, the need for dialogue is fundamental to identity, social life and humanity for Buber. It is *Thou* which makes me to an *I*, a person able to relate to the other in connected solidarity, and therefore related to the Eternal.

Dialogue⁸, to him, is being in a living mutual relation with another. *Genuine dialogue*, therefore, is not identical to conversation or debate, as he explains in *Between Man and Man* (1947). Neither is it a privilege for 'spiritual' people, as some kind of spiritual luxury, or an intellectual activity like dialectic or discourse (argue). The aim of the debate is to make a direct hit. The one spoken to is not regarded present as a person. In a conversation (a chat or a talk) the aim is not communication or connection, nor to learn from or influence someone, but confirming one's own self reliance (1947:37, 38).

Genuine dialogue is also related by Buber to genuine community, which is neither individualism nor collectivism. 'The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation. The fundamental fact of human existence is man with man (...) It is rooted in one being turning to another as another, as this particular other being, in order to communicate with it in a sphere which is common to them but which reaches out beyond the special sphere of each (...) This is the sphere of 'between'. (ibid, 244).

Being fundamental to identity, social life and humanity, we would like to suggest this perspective of dialogue (both as term and process) as an adequate point of departure with respect to (social and religious) communication. It involves anthropological and relational aspects (identity and human interaction) as well as social issues (community and social life), two points mentioned by Eilers as being pivotal to social communication. Moreover, it inherently involves ethical issues, not

⁷ A similar argument is given by Kierkegaard in *Training in Christianity* as shown by Forrester (1993). 'Kierkegaard found key, and very similar, clues to the proper relationship of truth and communication in the lives of Socrates and Jesus. Socrates attacked the sophists, and Jesus attacked the Pharisees, in both cases objecting to a radically distorted understanding of the relation of truth, the message, and communication, the medium'. Forrester, Duncan B. 1993. 'The media and theology: some reflections', in: Arthur, Chris 1993 *Religion and the media*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

⁸ Dialogue stems from two Greek words: *dia*, meaning 'between' or 'through' and *logos* which means 'word'. *Dialogos* thus refers to: 'in consultation' 'by mutual word'. It is a prominent word in the Bible. In Genesis as well as in the Gospel according to John it is used in the first sentences. 'And God said, let there be light: and there was light' (Genesis 1:3, King James version) and 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (The Gospel according to John 1:1, King James version).

The Greek term *logos* is related to the Hebrew *dabar*, which is best to be translated by *word-and-act-in-one* (God said and it was). Interestingly, Buber and Rosenzweig, in their German translation of the *Thora* (the five books of Moses) use the German word *Treu*, which means as much as loyalty, fidelity. It stems from the Hebrew *emeth*.

only in the realm of identity and human interaction, but also with respect to the public aspect of communication. Respecting another person (and oneself) as a subject in his or her own right implies that he or she is not to be made into an object, as a 'target' of communication⁹. It also means that people's communication rights, such as the right to be properly informed and freedom of speech (public expression) are taken seriously.

Communication rights, however, cannot be exercised without the existence of a free public space. The marketability of the public domain (and the role of the media in this process), the erosion of public service broadcasting and the weakening of fundamental communicative freedom rights like the freedom of expression and privacy and data protection, in this respect are a serious concern. The same holds true for participation, inclusion and diversity.

This raises the question whether current normative paradigms of public communication are still adequate and which media ethics are needed¹⁰. It also questions the position and the contribution of churches and theology in this respect.

The quest for (new) media ethics and possible theological contributions, owes much to the input by three scholars: Hamelink, White and Christians. The next section of this essay then, will pay attention to their insights.

Communication and Media Ethics

Hamelink (1995, 1999, 2002) points to the moral challenges in what is popularly known as the 'information society'. This concept, however, in his opinion is based on assumptions with a nearly mythical status in common parlance. Many of those assumptions are related to a misunderstanding of the relationship between technology, information, social processes and moral progress as one of direct impact and linearity. Accumulation of information is supposed to effect more knowledge, power, understanding, proper action and the prevention of conflict. This deterministic view, says Hamelink, veils key sociological questions of benefit, decision, participation and accountability.

The same applies to the myth of the 'perfection' of innovations in ICT's, leading humanity (or humanized robots) to a society beyond risks. Critical questions whether we want these developments, how 'risk free' risk free actually is, or who is to be held accountable in the case of failures, are covered up or simply do not emerge. The equation of technological innovation with moral progress leading to harmony and peace is neither under discussion. Stressing the term *information* society over and over again causes the urgent need for *communication* in complex global societies, to disappear from view. The increase of information - to an extent that people are overwhelmed by it while others are deprived of it - and the decrease of capabilities to communicate with one another are inversely proportional.

⁹ This questions e.g. whether marketing techniques are suited for religious communication.

¹⁰ New possibilities of ict's such as disembodied communication, neural intelligent networks, or the humanization of robots extend this concern and make the ethical demands involved more urgent. With respect to the church it might even be asked whether issues of a *status confessionis* are involved.

‘To solve the world’s most pressing problems, people do not need more volumes of information and knowledge, they need to acquire the capacity to talk to each other across boundaries of culture, religion and language. Dialogue is absolutely essential and critical to the encounter between civilizations. Globalisation without dialogue becomes homogenization and hegemony. Localisation without dialogue becomes fragmentation and isolation. In both cases the sustainability of our common future is seriously at stake’ (Hamelink, 2002:42). Dialogue is not within easy reach, and mass media’s content of ‘babbling, hate speech, advertising blurbs, sound bites or polemical debate’ is not particularly helpful, according to Hamelink. The first step to be taken is internal dialogue, including three difficult prerequisites: critically questioning one’s own assumptions, suspending one’s judgments and listening receptively and silently.

The last issue Hamelink brings up is the urgency to adopt a universal declaration on the *Right to Communicate*. Current human rights law, in this respect, is inadequate since it does not ‘deal with communication as an interactive process’. The right to communicate includes information rights, cultural rights, and protection rights, rights for communities and participation rights¹¹.

The challenges deduced by Hamelink are:

- 1) to openly discuss the key sociological issues with respect to the information society;
- 2) to identify a realistic view of the possibilities and importance of information
- 3) to identify a realistic view of moral progress due to scientific and technological innovations, - inclusive of facing risks -
- 4) to realize the urgent need for ‘communication societies’ instead of ‘information or knowledge societies’;
- 5) the learning of dialogue and

¹¹ Examples of *information rights* given are: the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right to express opinions without interference by public or private parties, the right of people to be properly informed about and have access to matters of public interest, and the right to access public means of distributing information, ideas and opinions; *cultural rights* refer to, for example, the right to promote and preserve cultural diversity, the right to freely participate in the cultural life of one’s community, the right to artistic, literary and academic creativity and independence, the right to use one’s own language, the right of minorities and indigenous people to education and to establish their own media; *protection rights* include, for example, the right to be protected against interference with their privacy by mass media or by public and private agencies involved with data collections, the protection of people’s private communications, the right of protection against forms of communication that are discriminatory in terms of race, color, sex, language, religion or social origin, the right to be protected against misleading and distorted information, the right of protection against the systematic and intentional propagation of the belief that individuals and/or social groups deserve to be eliminated; *rights for communities* encompass the right of access to public communication, the right of recognition that knowledge resources are often a common good owned by a collective and the right of their protection against private appropriation by knowledge industries; *participation rights* vary from the right to acquire the skills necessary to participate fully in public communication to the right to people’s participation in public decision making on the provision of information, the production of culture and knowledge, and the choice, development and application of communication technology.

6) the adoption and codification by the international community of the human right to communicate.

The key issue, then, is: How to arrive at genuine social dialogue and which media ethics of public communication are needed accordingly?

White (2003) states that the paradigms of social responsibility and public service no longer provide an adequate foundation when it comes to normativeness of public communication. These paradigms, rooted in the libertarian tradition, which - since the invention of the printing press - has been the foundation of democratic communication and free flow of public opinion, are now outdated. Instead, a '*communitarian*' ethics emerges.

According to White, several developments allow for this. Among them are the political independence of the new nations and the rise of a multicultural worldview; new public philosophies by scholars like Buber and Habermas; new community media and group communication aimed at 'conscious raising' such as the pedagogy of Paulo Freire; the development of movements on alternative communication and public journalism; and the increasing importance of normative theory (academic and professional).

Likewise, developments in communication studies made their contribution. The linear concept of communication with its focus on author and media/message was criticized in the mid 1970's and shifted the paradigm. White perceives the particular importance of three shifts:

'(1) The convergence model of communication, which owes much to social interaction approaches to social science. (2) The ritual, communion model of mass communication proposed by James Carey and forum model put forward by Horace Newcomb. (3) The continued development of the critical-democratic approaches in communication theory with the emphasis on reception theory, audience reception networks, the new semiotic approaches to the complexity of the text, the importance of alternative construction of meaning of fan networks and other perspectives that have an origin in French and British Marxist cultural studies.

The critical tradition has also provided a foundation for developing qualitative methods of research which emphasize subjective meaning' (2003:289/290).

The development of communitarian communication, says White, is part of a 'much broader trend toward a new foundation of civil society'. The active subject of human relations has become more prominent, whereas overarching ideologies and nationalism have faded. Moreover, institutional volunteer-based organizations, including churches, have lost their appeal and appear to be unable to provide functional forms of social identity. Mobility, in this respect, is not merely a geographical notion, but also holds for social cultural areas including belief systems. Open, flexible communities (both geographical as well as virtual), easy to enter as well as to leave, are most easy to identify with, says White.

Communitarian ethics thus appears to provide a more adequate basis in the contemporary society. However, communitarian ethics and community communication approaches are flawed by the fact that they do not tackle what White identifies as 'the major problem of the colonization of our human life' (ibid, 291). By this he refers to the demands placed on human interaction by the productive system - that is centered on profit - and, to a large extent, by the media.

Trends in world communication (deregulation, liberalization, privatization, concentration, globalization and commercialization) converge towards disempowerment. Communication, however, is capable of empowering people as well - despite its limits such as the lack of a global dimension and the danger to create new forms of dependency (Hamelink, 1995:121-150). He includes various complementary approaches in this respect. At the regulatory level (legislation, self-regulation, access, the right of reply in mainstream media), at the educational level (critical awareness of the organization, functioning, and content analysis of the media), at the level of alternative communication next to mainstream mass communication (forms, contents, structures, processes), at the level of access and participation (both in means, management and production), and, finally, at the technical assistance level (development of communication facilities).

Because of the limits and the shortcomings of the application of empowering strategies, however, Hamelink prefers an understanding of empowerment as 'self-empowerment' - despite of flaws such as financial sustainability or lack of infrastructures, In this strategy, people empower themselves through participation in their own (community) media and networks, that creates a public sphere in 'cyber space'.

A matching paradigm for self-empowerment communication, says Hamelink, can either have the state or the market as its center. Its inspirational source is civil democracy. A notion of civil society¹² that is adherent to the nation-state is outdated. Solutions to global problems, as well as the future of the world society, are beyond its reach. The development of a global, civil society which 'should give the concern about the quality of the "secondary environment" priority on its agenda', is needed (ibid, 147). As it is also necessary to develop major, global, civil initiatives in the realm of world communication. An example of this is the *People's Communication Charter*¹³.

Next to communitarian and global ethics as urged for by White and Hamelink, Christians (2000, 2003) adds the concept of 'cross-cultural ethics'. Theoretical models, in his opinion, must be 'explicitly cross-cultural', in order for media ethics to 'respond to the simultaneous globalization of communication and the reaffirmation of local identities' (2000:3). The key challenge, he observes, is the substitution of the 'Eurocentric axis' of communication ethics by a comparative model. Crucial, in this respect, is the development of a 'believable concept of truth' since there are many complex and polemical debates in theoretical discourses about communication ethics. These debates, due to the input of social and feminist ethicists, for example, concern social ethics (holistic, gender inclusive and culturally constituted) that replace individualistic autonomy (based on canonical morality). Another issue centers on narrative ethics and the relationship between contextual values and normative guidelines. Two other topics of discussion involve the possibility and credibility of universals in cross cultural ethics and a legitimate

¹² By civil society, Hamelink refers to 'all social transactions in the public and private sphere that are not interfered with by the state'. Its defense is legally arranged for in, for example, civil rights and constitutions. Hamelink stresses it also needs protection against corporations controlling economies and global cultural production. (1995:146).

¹³ www.unesco.org/webworld/com/compendium/sub_content.html.

version of distributive justice (now defined by terms of the private market instead of social needs). A final issue concerns the ‘politics of recognition’. What is meant by this is whether democracies, based on equal representation for all, have to take account of and grant explicit recognition of cultural and social identities (race, gender, religion). According to Christians, this is not only vital with respect to the challenges of multiculturalism, but essential for the long term vitality of democracy.

The concept of truth is essential in a comparative ethical communication model. ‘The central question as we develop a cross cultural ethics is whether scholars of communication and culture can recover the idea of truth. As the norm of healing is to medicine, justice to politics, and critical thinking to education, so truth telling is the occupational norm of the media professions. Without articulating a sophisticated notion of truth, any new model of comparative ethics will have an empty center’ (ibid 2003, 295).

Christians himself opts for a concept of ‘truth as disclosure’. Interestingly, he considers a theological framework to be ‘inescapable’ for the development of this concept. ‘In that sense, this essay on the state of communication ethics at present challenges philosophical and sociological perspectives to match theological ones on the question of truth. Clearly, the theistic worldview represented here must meet the standard of religious diversity to be credible, as communication ethics becomes international in scope’¹⁴ (ibid 2003, 295).

‘Truth as disclosure’ is an alternative to historical ‘correspondence perspectives’ of truth by both mainstream media and philosophies. Central in these views are objectivism, human rationality, neutrality and impartiality. These perspectives are increasingly controversial and attacked, and Christians’ plea is to relocate truth in the moral sphere. ‘Truth is a problem of axiology rather than epistemology. With the dominant scheme no longer tenable, truth should become the province of communication ethicists who can reconstruct it as the news media’s contribution to public discourse’ (ibid, 296).

The moral framework that grounds truth is expressed by Christians through the Hebrew *emeth* and the Greek *aletheia*. The former means trustworthy, genuine, authentic - the latter openness and disclosure. Truth has to do with essence - the heart of the matter¹⁵. Christians exemplifies such a non-correspondence view of truth as expressed by Augustine’s¹⁶ rhetorical theory. Knowledge or opinion are not central in rhetoric, but ‘truth-producing’. ‘*Aletheia*, in Augustine, ‘tends to be more relational than propositional, a dialogically, interpersonal, sacramental act rather than a statement... taking into account and being motivated by [the cardinal virtues] faith, hope and charity’ (ibid, 297)¹⁷. Truth as *aletheia* is related to moral

¹⁴ Christians also presented a non-theological perspective of the concept of truth in ‘Social Dialogue and Media Ethics’, in: *Ethical Perspectives* 7:2-3 (September 2000), pp. 182-93.

¹⁵ This moral reading of truth has been reflected by many, as Christians shows, among whom Bonhoeffer, Kierkegaard, Buber, Levinas, Gandhi and Hammarskjöld. But it can also be found in Buddhism, the Talmud and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

¹⁶ Before taking up his office as bishop of Hippo, Augustine (AD 354-430) was professor of rhetoric in Milan.

¹⁷ Christians draws in this quote on Glenn Settle, ‘Faith, Hope and Charity: Rhetoric as Aletheiac Act in *On Christian Doctrine*, *Journal of Communication and Religion* 17:2 (September 1994) p. 49.

discernment and is contrary to contemporary views of truth, which -instrumentally- look upon truth as facticity.

Related to the concepts of *emeth* and *aletheia*, the other theological root of truth that is given by Christians is creation. The created order founds the worldview of the Kingdom and structures all created existence¹⁸. It also affirms truth as knowable. It is not autonomous or abstract, nor is it about static qualities of objects, but about the human act of knowing. In that sense, it is inherently personal: knowing and acting accordingly. Thus Jesus can speak of ‘doing or living the truth’. ‘*Aletheia* is not the correspondence of intellectual knowledge and facts. It must be done¹⁹ (...) Truth as disclosure and authenticity is rooted in our creatureliness’ (ibid, 299). Its intrinsic universal value is derived from this being grounded in creational truth, or with the ‘primal sacredness of life as a protonorm’, (...) ‘which establishes mutual respect as a basis for cross cultural collaboration in ethics’ (ibid, 2000:2, 3).

By personal, Christians does not refer to some kind of individuality, but to a ‘deeply meaningful, even religious concern’. Truth is not to be separated from humanity as a whole. It is an integral part of human existence and social formation. In this sense it is an ontological category. ‘Human existence is impossible without an overriding commitment to truth. As a primary agent of the lingual world in which we live, the news media²⁰ have no choice but to honor this norm as obligatory for their mission and rationale’ (ibid 2003, 299).

Applied in media praxis, this means there is no need for objectivism and correspondence, but for ‘precision in *aletheia*’: getting to the heart of the matter. In terms of authenticity and disclosure, Christians suggests ‘interpretive sufficiency’. ‘Interpretive sufficiency seeks to open up public life in all its dynamic dimensions. Ethnographic accounts have the ‘depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence’ that permit ‘a critical consciousness to be formed’ by readers and viewers. Rather than reducing social issues to the financial and administrative problems defined by politicians, the news media disclose and lay open to enable people to judge authenticity themselves’ (ibid, 2003:300). According to Christians, ‘sensitised concepts’, in this respect, are vital. They are integrating and give insights from

¹⁸ In this respect, the first words of the creation story, *In the beginning*, deserve to be considered more closely. Many translations associate the word with a temporal connotation, as if it were some point in history to trace back to the ‘origins’ of the world. However, the Bible is not a history book, or a book about physics. The book of Genesis was written at the time the people of Israel were deported into Babylonian Exile and started reflecting on how it had come to this and on their existential roots. This is *after* the story of Exodus. In Hebrew it says: *Beresjiet*; in Greek: *En Arche*. Most intriguing is the translation into Latin by: *In principio*. This translation opens up the opportunity to understand the creation story as the fundamental *principle* of God regarding creation and humanity, which is to provide for a created order, which structures all existence. A space to live for the entire creation, under the protection of heaven, and room for humanity to blossom with mankind in relationship to God and his neighbor.

¹⁹ Note, in this respect, the inherent relationship to the Hebrew word *dabar* that is prominent in the story of creation, as explained in footnote 7.

²⁰ Christians focus, for the sake of specificity, is on news. However, he explicitly includes communications institutions, technologies and practices (2003:295).

within the data. They relate theory and praxis dialectically and not in a linear manner.

Truth understood in creational, cross-cultural terms then should be the 'media's defining feature', and the 'master principle of communications' (both as a scholarly field and professional practice), concludes Christians. It grounds the public resources for solidarity, social dialogue and peace. Recovering truth telling and developing credible general normative values for cross cultural, comparative communication ethics, however difficult to achieve, are a foundational task, that must be supported by many, including religious communities and institutions.

Contributions and Responsibilities of the Churches

Concluding this essay I would like to make a few remarks with respect to the foundational task mentioned by Christians for religious institutions. These remarks are based on the findings in a study of 26 recent policy statements on the media and communication, published by a variety of churches in Western Europe²¹.

The involvement and the social and ethical responsibilities regarding the media and communications by the churches is one of the issues explicitly researched in this study. It is a realm extensively covered for by the statements. This coverage however is problematic in some ways. When related to the concept of dialogue, the public sphere and media ethics, these problems become even more pregnant.

It is not clear, for example, what concept of dialogue exactly is referred to by the church statements. Do they really understand and acknowledge the fundamental need and significance of dialogue to identity, social life and humanity? Regardless even of what the churches themselves understand to be their mission or their needs within the realm of communication? Do they truly opt for dialogue, including its corresponding consequences? The constant mingling of views about communication and media in general, - related in the majority of the cases to a linear and instrumental view - with church communicational goals of communication - in terms of proclamation - poses difficulties. They become evident in the unclear position with respect to the exact relationship between dialogue and dissemination.

A similar problem is to be identified in the social/ethical realm where engagement in communication issues for the sake of society and communication - in its own right - interferes with ecclesial communication demands. Responsibilities are recognized, but appear to be directed outward, without becoming a real concern taken on in church praxis. The focus is on a moral evaluation of media and ICT developments. Human dignity, problems of pornography and moral standards, access for all, diversity and giving voice to the voiceless and media education are the issues that appear most frequently. These are all commendable issues. They are not related, however, to the churches themselves. As long as they are not incorporated within all church policies and, in this respect, also act as a force for

²¹ See de Feijter, Ineke 2007a. *Representing Faith in a Digital Media Culture: Problems in Church Policy Statements on Media and Communication*. Paper presented at the International UCSIA Conference, University of Antwerp, Belgium. April 2007. And de Feijter, Ineke. 2007. *The Art of Dialogue, Religion, Communication and Global Media Culture*. Berlin, Lit Verlag. pp. 145-260.

internal standards and (institutional and communicational) transformation, they end after being put on paper.

Moreover, an underlying profound mapping of both social and technological communication developments and processes in relation to one another - including a critical evaluation - is lacking. This means that the conditions for grounding one's vision, taking a stand, and action remain rather vacuous. Important issues, in this respect, are the gravity of the erosion of the public space and the global commons as a public resource, as well as the issue of media regulation. Opinions expressed in the statements regarding these subjects might have been more helpful if they would have clarified these underlying processes, which remain out of sight in current frames and discourses.

Furthermore, they are often either formulated in terms of responsibilities by others, or in terms of (moral) demands, which do not interfere with the ecclesial agenda. Properly grounded solutions or suggestions are not made, nor are there proposals for action in this respect.

It is to be questioned e.g. why broad ecumenical and (inter)religious cooperation, however mentioned, is not sought for. The same applies to concerted action with initiatives by (civil) organizations working towards similar options in the field of communication, ICT, communication rights and the development towards a 'communication society'. An example of this is the incomprehensible absence by official representatives or delegations of the churches in the CRIS (Communication Rights in the Information Society)²² campaign. To my knowledge, churches have neither officially joined initiatives like the People's Communication Charter.

One last issue is the lack of a paradigmatic account in the field of communication ethics. An elaborated, well grounded contribution to the development of an ethical framework is not given either. This is more surprising since Christians, who is a communication scholar, opts for a theologically founded paradigm, showing the importance of contributions that could be made by the churches (or other religions).

²² The CRIS campaign was launched by the *Platform for Communication Rights*, a group of international media and communication NGO's (including WACC and Cameco) in November 2001. It's goal is to create a space for civil society organizations to reflect, act and network on the information society by raising awareness, stimulating debate, facilitating mobilization, sharing information and lobbying and advocacy. The campaign wants to help build an information society based on the right to communicate, principles of transparency, diversity, social and economic justice and equitable gender, cultural and regional perspectives. Themes and actions include: strengthening the public domain, ensuring affordable access and use of electronic networks, securing the global commons as a public resource, instituting democratic and transparent governance, tackling information surveillance and censorship and support community and people centered media. The CRIS Campaign wants to broaden the agenda of the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) that was held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 and encourage the participation of civil society groups. Source: *Media Development*, Vol. XLX 4/2002. London, WACC. See also <http://cris.comunica.org/>, <http://www.comunica.org/>, <http://wsis.itu.int>, <http://sos.comunica.org/> and <http://www.comunica.org/v21/>. On the issue of gender and media in relationship to the campaign see: www.genderwsis.org and 'Women reclaiming Media' special issue of *Media Development* no. 3, 2005.

But even assuming (theoretically speaking) a theological paradigm would not be an option, it might still be questioned whether churches should prioritize communication issues for the sake of the sustainability of a common future for humanity. Given the complexity, the radicalness, the variety and abundance of information and communication problems in global societies which impact nearly every other area of life, the answer should be yes.

Commitment to the whole of creation and the dignity of every human being belongs to the essence of Christianity. This also holds true for dialogical communication, which is a defining feature of personhood and the basis for relationships and community, as Buber shows.

Of this dialogical communication, churches might become authentic and inspiring examples themselves, concurrently arriving more closely to their destination. Moreover, it is a prerequisite for their public communication, their relevance and their being in terms of credibility, ethics and community.

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Religion and Mediated Popular Culture: The Need for Dialogue

Frances Forde Plude

...it is finally only the human being who is really capable of information and knowledge. This goes beyond the new technical means and stays as a quality of the human person.

Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Community*¹

I have been blessed with colleagues who respect cultural differences; and who listen. This has watered the roots of my own deep respect for dialogic communication and the empowerment supported by two-way communication. This paper reviews recent dialogic theory and develops a proposed ‘map’ of the practical terrain, reflecting upon how various communication technologies have produced a ‘talk-back’ culture. This culture has often been a challenge to the Catholic Church and her leadership.

The M.I.T. scholar Ithiel de Sola Pool is directly responsible for my ‘born-again’ passion for the interactive or dialogic dimension of communication. During my Harvard doctoral studies I had access to his classes at M.I.T. Pool also generously served as my dissertation advisor as I wrote on direct broadcast satellite policy development.²

In addition to my classes with Pool, two of his works were influential in my thinking. The first, *The Social Uses of the Telephone* (1977), studied basic concepts such as the telephone’s productive functions, the transparency of the tool when used, its importance for isolated individuals, the special role of women in its development, its function as the ‘heartbeat’ of large cities, and its life-saving role in telephone conversations and hotline groups.

Armed with these reflections I began to see dialogic communication as vital to a society in general, and to the Catholic Church specifically. I began to understand the importance of guaranteed and universal *access* to talk-back communication systems and tools. Early United States public policy reflected this access issue; the U.S. Congress required the telephone company monopoly to provide service for isolated rural communities along with its lucrative high-density urban phone development.

Pool’s later book, *Technologies of Freedom*, published in 1983 shortly before his death, helped me to understand the key role that emerging and converging new-technology interactive communication tools would play in encouraging freedom of

¹ This is just one of several helpful Eilers volumes.

² Pool had, himself, done some writing on DBS issues, but the theoretical questions were transformed in the late 1970s when the Communication Satellite Corporation (Comsat) announced its intention to develop DBS. I was pleased that Pool wanted to reconsider his satellite ideas through my dissertation research.

expression and the processes of negotiation throughout the world. In this work Pool examined the significance of:

- unhindered speech
- limited resource availability
- computers as the printing presses of the future
- avoiding communication monopolies
- the marketplace of ideas
- the importance of a diversity of voices and tools
- the role of limited regulation

As Pool noted, *idea development and speech are not free if these communication forums are not open*. Today, sadly, even in some advanced societies and institutions (some would say even in the Roman Catholic Church, for example), there are serious restrictions on two-way communication; many members – minority groups, laity and women – are not able to participate in representative numbers in policies and decision-making at upper levels of the Church’s administrative structure.

Analytical Framework

Reflecting upon the relationships among communication studies, media, culture, and religion – and the challenge of supporting authentic integration of these sectors – several concepts emerge.

Foremost is the principle/process of *interactivity*, and I will examine that below. I begin by reflecting upon the development of interactive communication systems up through the late modern context, I have examined this evolution in the light of co-existing cultural factors, varied media formats, and strands of social and religious thought. Later in this paper I will examine dialogue as theory and communicative action, including the concept of interactivity as *infrastructure* – the role of networks in contemporary communication systems.

Finally, I will mention briefly several practical applications of these interactive ideas. The first ‘case study’ is the *mediation* issue – the process of interactive meaning-making that occurs within individuals and social groups. The other practical arena is the field of *missiology* – the changing theology of how evangelizing should be done by religious groups around the world.

I believe faith communities must give as much attention to the culture of dialogue as to the culture of mass media (news, advertising, entertainment). I believe it was Mark Twain who commented that he did not understand what prose was until he realized he had been speaking it all his life! People are in an interactive mode all of their lives! This reality must be acknowledged along with the impact of mass media in popular culture.

These thoughts came into focus in new ways when I was invited to join the International Study Commission on Media, Religion and Culture www.iscmrc.org.

This small think-tank allowed very rich dialogue and direct experiences with varied cultures as we met for a week annually around the world – in North America, Asia, Latin America, Western and Eastern Europe. Especially helpful to me were the discussions where we stepped outside of Western cultural ‘boxes’.

Each member of the Commission continued their research and writing at their home base between our meetings, but then we were able to share these ideas when we met. For example, Stewart Hoover directed a project called “Symbolism, Meaning, and the Lifecourse,” in which more than 250 persons were interviewed regarding how various kinds of families approach the media in their homes. This research demonstrated clearly that audience reception data show we underestimate the rich interactivity occurring between audience members and varied media and popular culture content and formats.

Permeating, underlying, all mass and individual reception are the processes of interactivity. Individuals and cultures are constantly engaged in the interactive task. And in religious and academic settings, when we do not understand, or when we ignore, these interactions we overlook much of what constitutes communication.

As I stated above, my own deep respect for two-way communication was established over twenty years ago during my Harvard/M.I.T. studies. Since then I have left behind a paper trail of reflection on aspects of interactivity in communication studies.³

The Development of Interactive Communication Systems

Figures 1-4 (Appendix) represent my attempts to ‘map’ roughly some of the developments of interactive communication systems. I use the term *systems* because various categories of this framework represent systemic changes rather than separate events, technologies or idea patterns.

On these ‘maps’ I have placed various components (cultural structures and structures of social/religious thought) in relationship to emerging media formats as I try to hint at the links between the three categories. In many cases there are *causal* connections. However, often events and changes (especially in the area of cultural structures), simply occur *together with* the media formats and social/religious thought patterns; there are not always provable direct causes, but the categories are often inter-related. It is also difficult at times to sort out and match timelines exactly.

What the proposed links *do* show is that the increasing diversity of media channels – especially those media formats that allow ‘talk-back’ – seems to facilitate a number of things: decentralization; economic, political, and religious liberation; and the decline of hierarchical authority structures, for example.

Figure 1 begins with a unified medieval Christendom in a feudal culture. All these changes, however, with the introduction of the medium of printing. As books become a

³ See the References list for some of my writings on the issue of dialogue in communication.

commodity we see the ability of individuals to interact with ideas and specific writers; various sectors of society gain their own voice.

As the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution sweep over Western civilization, centralized religious authority is further weakened and multiple distribution channels – including transportation links – facilitate interactivity.

As technologies empower the systematic increase of bureaucratic structures, churches themselves become more bureaucratic and, under Pius IX an attempt is made (through the *Syllabus of Errors*) to control Catholic thought and refute modernist tendencies. There is an increased centralization throughout all cultures – financial systems, colonial empires, and media empires (networks). Churches increasingly use newer communication tools to evangelize than they had done in the past – first with an oral tradition, then with schools and monasteries, and later with the printed text.

As talk-back forums and technologies develop (Figure 2), it becomes more difficult to control the communication content of inter- and intra-group exchanges. Liberation movements emerge and become stronger, fueled by “people-on-the-streets” power – people who are connected instantly by faxes, Emails, chat rooms, and cell phones.

The Second Vatican Council renews (and re-formulates) Catholic Church teaching and Council theology articulates concepts like collegiality and the unique importance of the local (national, regional) Church leadership and voices. Global collaboratives emerge, fueled again by technological links that facilitate two-way communication and financial transactions and trade. Later, Vatican II renewal impetus slows, and the churches in the Northern hemisphere experience loss of personnel and membership while religious communities grow rapidly in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. People in the Northern countries (many liberal and secular) are, even today, completely unaware of the growth of Christianity in these areas. And yet, facing the challenge of many voices, central authorities in the West like the former Soviet Union and the centralized core of the Catholic Church are under siege – by liberal/conservative religious thought, but also by national- and ethnic-loyalty voices that grow louder as they become more interconnected within regions and across boundaries, much of this fueled by technology links.

These dialogic developments, and accompanying tensions, grow (Figure 3) as various media converge – computers linking with communication networks, along with the interface of satellite and telephone distribution systems. Ownership of media companies becomes concentrated even as communication messages increase and diversify. Political states also both converge (the European Union, trade zones, etc.) and also break up into ethnic enclaves, with many wars erupting. Churches try to encourage peace but their voices are muted by the scandal of division and tension among the religious groups themselves.

In Figure 4 our current late modern scene contains growing numbers of immigrants and refugees, a world-wide AIDS epidemic, especially devastating on the African continent, increased use of U.S. unilateral power in Iraq, and global church sex scandals. News media covering these events become increasingly interactive and argumentative. Internet use continues to grow and mobile technology becomes widespread and smarter. Copyright issues focus on computerized video and audio

distribution formats. The Al Jazeera news network, along with others, provides an interconnected focus for the Arab world. And, finally, blogs, MySpace and many similar sites, showcase millions of self-proclaimed producers of their own media.

Many religious groups reel under these cultural events, along with the challenge of the rapid spread of interactive communication technologies (a “digital culture”). Used to speaking authoritatively, they struggle to deal with a talk-back world.

Dialogue as Theory and Communicative Action

In a recent book, *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins notes “...we are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide.” This transformation is occurring in the Southern hemisphere, far from the secularized, ‘liberated’ soil of the North (Europe, North America).⁴

Jenkins warns that the presence of many fundamentalist “non-democratic states with theocratic pretensions” means that by the year 2050 almost 20 of the 25 largest nations will be predominately either Christian or Muslim and at least ten of these nations will be the scene of intense conflict. This could well be “a new age of Christian crusades and Muslim jihads.”⁵

As I write, the world is experiencing more than 50 in-progress or recently-concluded wars, many of them killing innocent civilians, engaging youth as combatants, and resulting in millions of refugees. Religious fervor fans many of these conflicts.

These factors – and the hope that understanding dialogic processes can lead to communication, political, and religious breakthroughs – prompt me to continue the study of dialogic or two-way communication – both in theory and in practice.⁶

⁴ Jenkins notes that as we assembled retrospective lists approaching the twenty-first century “the attitude seemed to be, what religious change in recent years could possibly compete in importance with the major secular trends, movements like fascism or communism, feminism or environmentalism? To the contrary, I suggest that it is precisely religious changes that are the most significant, and even the most revolutionary, in the contemporary world. Before too long, the turn-of-the-millennium neglect of religious factors may come to be seen as comically myopic, on a par with the review of the eighteenth century that managed to miss the French Revolution.” Of course, for Americans, the impact of the religious right in politics, and the 9/11 attack, brought religion to everyone’s attention.

⁵ Jenkins argues: “Over the past century ... the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. ... If we want to visualize a ‘typical’ contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*. ... (By the year 2025) there (will) be around 2.6 billion Christians, of whom 633 million would live in Africa, 640 million in Latin America, and 460 million in Asia. Europe, with 555 million would have slipped to third place” (p. 2).

⁶ Four books have been especially helpful to me in practical ways: *The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict Into Cooperation*, by Daniel Yankelovich, Simon and Schuster, 1999; *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, by William Isaacs, Doubleday, 1999; *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments*, by Bradford

A work that has been helpful to me is Dominic Emmanuel's study *Challenges of Christian Communication and Broadcasting: Monologue or Dialogue?* (Macmillan, 1999). Emmanuel traces the development of dialogic theory from interesting sources: Martin Buber's relational *I and Thou*; the mystic Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian of the Communist era;⁷ and the work of Brenda Dervin and her colleagues⁸ in seeking a conceptual space within which to posit the task of dialogue – which they call a theory of 'in between' (based somewhat on Buber's *Between Man and Man*).

Dialogical theory has been enriched, of course, by the contributions of two German intellectuals, namely Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* and the two-volume work of Jürgen Habermas entitled *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Emmanuel notes that both "argue for a life of dialogue and explain why dialogue is important for human life in modern democratic societies."

Key among Gadamer's thoughts are concepts such as the nature of interpretation; the phenomenon of understanding beyond exclusively scientific investigation; the need for receptivity or openness to the other's tradition as a genuine partner in communication; the theme of the 'fusion of horizons' (of the other, of the past), opening up new horizons, like the 'in-between' of Buber and Dervin.

Habermas, seeking the sources of reliable human knowledge, interacted with the work of Gadamer. Emmanuel notes that "Habermas's main work is an attempt to prove that ordinary use of language by competent speakers embodies within it a dialogical principle..."

The theory of communicative action of Habermas is intrinsically dialogical. Emmanuel explains that the theory of Habermas "makes a significant contribution to the understanding of dialogue, in that it proposes that one does not need to look for arbiters to conduct conversation or dialogue among individuals or communities, but that the language uttered for fundamental communication in everyday social transactions, embodies in itself the very principle of dialogue."

In his chapter, "The Reception of Doctrine: New Perspectives"⁹ the theologian Richard Gaillardetz proposes a new dialogical model of doctrinal teaching and the reception of this teaching. (I have often thought that the reception of church doctrine, like reception of media program material, often yields surprises for the producers of the doctrine.) Gaillardetz notes: "Habermas came to see the emancipatory power of human communication. It is only through authentic communication that we can overcome the alienation which is endemic to our modern world."¹⁰ Gaillardetz concludes: "... the

Hinze, Continuum, 2006; and *The Art of Dialogue: Religion, Communication and Global Media Culture*, by Ineke de Feijter, Transaction Publishers, 2006.

⁷ See *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, by Tzvetan Todorov, Manchester University Press, 1984.

⁸ Brenda Dervin, John Higgins, Robert Huesca, Tony Osborne, Priya Jaikumar-Mahey, "Toward a Communication Theory of Dialogue," *Media Development*, XL, 2, pp. 54-61 (1993).

⁹ The Gaillardetz chapter is in *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church*, edited by Bernard Hoose, Ashgate, 2002, pp. 95-117.

¹⁰ Ibid.

acid test for any community is not harmony but how differences of opinion and even division are handled within the community.”¹¹

The Infrastructure of Dialogue: Networks

While the theory of dialogue is enriched by Buber, Dervin, Gadamer, Habermas and others, dialogic infrastructures are growing everywhere like a variety of flowers in a well-tended garden. I like to think of these as ‘webs of significance’ or ‘webs of inclusion,’ as the business consultant Sally Helgesen refers to them. If we ‘think link,’ all varieties of networks come to mind:

- computer *internets* and *intranets*
- mass media networks that are satellite- and telephone-linked
- prolific chat forums, blogs, MySpace-type arenas
- talking back to TV/radio/film through call-ins, blogs, and Email reactions
- market-transaction networks from large corporate transactions to E-bay sales
- 24/7 stock market transactions
- military defense and surveillance systems
- data base links that contain our credit card transactions or medical records
- increasing mobile network links
- ubiquitous cell phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs)

Networking, under different names, has been occurring for many centuries. The Roman and British Empires were certainly networks. Various faith communities are networks. What has changed, of course, is the *facilitation* of networking through recent interactive communication technologies like those mentioned above. We are beginning to see thoughtful evaluations of the impact of widespread dialogical networks as they permeate and alter our cultural habits.

Jon Alterman has written *New Media, New Politics: From Satellite Technology to the Internet in the Arab World*, a publication of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He notes that even mid-level communication technologies have internationalized local politics. The role of audio cassettes from Paris in fomenting the Iranian Revolution is quite well known.

Now, however, the fact that news emerges easily from global sources like on-the-spots blogs means one can ‘work’ politics (and, I might add, religious and cultural messages) from anywhere in the world. This can build loyalties that go way beyond national borders – for example for Iranians; Jews; Asian, Hispanic or Ukrainian diaspora groups dispersed around the world. With increased public discussion and Internet sites, everyone competes for idea-coverage and some bad ideas surface. In the midst of conflict, peoples’ appetite for information increases. This may seem to go

¹¹ Ibid.

‘downhill’ as entertainment intervenes, but the widespread dispersion of entertainment formats also changes cultural content and boundaries.

The concept of being ‘boundaryless’ is address by Stanford Law professor Lawrence Friedman in his work *The Horizontal Society* (Yale University Press, 1999). He states:

In modern society, identity (and authority) is much more horizontal... modern men and women are much freer to form relationships that are on a plane of equality (real or apparent) – relationships with peers, with like-minded people... We are becoming ‘fluid and many-sided,’ evolving a ‘sense of self appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our times’ – a sense of self that Robert Jay Lifton has called ‘protean.’¹²

Friedman notes that “(a) horizontal group becomes a kind of nation when it generates a strong sense of belonging and demands a high level of commitment,” like ‘The Nation of Islam.’ The Internet, of course, makes linking among horizontal groups easy and instantaneous.

This clearly has religious implications:

The horizontal society has weakened two pillars of religious identity: first, that religion is truly a heritage, something given as a birthright and not to be abandoned casually ... and second, that one’s religion is the One True Faith. The latter is still official dogma in some religions, but it is not what many people really believe. The chief dogma of the horizontal society is individual choice.¹³

As one seeks both unity and diversity, the concept of ‘plural equality’ emerges and Friedman asks: Can this work? He notes that many rainbow coalitions are nothing but talk, and plural equality at the level of culture and ideology is more difficult. As successes he cites Singapore and the Federal Republic of Switzerland. He guesses that “each country has its own chemical reaction to plural equality... there must be, perhaps, some kind of minimal, but binding, identity.”

Friedman points to the consequences of the horizontal society:

- it has been created by mass media, transport, and modernity
- authority tends to merge with celebrity status
- this affects, at the deepest level, a person’s sense of self
- this society is a society on the move since messages get to remote areas
- the society is divided into identity groups

¹² *The Horizontal Society*, p. 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Practical Considerations

I have selected two arenas where practical applications exist as we look at interactivity 'on the ground.' Both represent large ideas that perhaps many have not considered thoughtfully enough.

The first is the theory (and reality) of *mediation*, as proposed by Jesús Martín-Barbero.¹⁴ Martín-Barbero's challenging work notes that audiences interact – to some extent even control or mediate – mass media content and impact. He notes: "Now the masses, with the help of technology, feel nearer to even the most remote and sacred things. Their perception carries a demand for equality that is the basic energy of the masses."¹⁵

One example of the power of interactivity is cited by Martín-Barbero:

In a poor slum of Lima, a group of women attempted to better organize the market place. ...they found a tape recorder and some loudspeakers... The women began to use the tape recorder to interview people of the neighbourhood as to what they thought about the market and to provide music and celebrations... They were criticized by a person of higher status, a nun, who ridiculed the way they talked... some of the women went to the communication center to announce dejectedly, 'We discovered that the nun was right... But we also have understood that with the help of this little machine we can learn how to speak.' And from that day the women of the market decided to tell stories about their own lives. They no longer used the recorder just to listen to others but they began to use it to learn how to speak.¹⁶

This incident reminds me of the revolutionary work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire.

The second grassroots application of interactivity or dialogue that interests me needs a lot more reflection than I can give it here. When you read more about respecting local cultures and local theologies and the staggering growth of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America, one becomes aware of the need for re-thinking the evangelization procedures of religious groups. One work has been very helpful: *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Orbis, 1988) by Louis J. Luzbetak.

Missiology is a form of applied anthropology, and the Church is clearly an agent of cultural change. When Christianity interacts with local cultures there is a missiological

¹⁴ These ideas are discussed extensively in *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*, Sage, 1993, translated by Elizabeth Fox and Robert A. White.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 186.

dilemma. Often this results in dual religious systems operating alongside each other. (One hot-button area today is work being done by theologians attempting to write about Christ and other religions/cultures). Luzbetak provides a helpful summary of missiological applications when conditions do favor change.¹⁷

Conclusions

An underlying issue of the current U.S. Catholic Church crisis (in addition to victim pain) is the predominately one-way communication culture of the church's organizational leadership. As the church renews itself, lay people will insist upon being heard; leadership will be pressured to *listen*, especially by media oversight.

My reflections here have pointed to the need to recognize the interactive fabric of media, religion and culture. We have reviewed the historical development of communication/media interactivity, along with accompanying cultural structures and structures of social/religious thought. We have considered how dialogue theory has been enriched by the work of individuals like Buber, Bakhtin, Gadamer, Habermas, and Brenda Dervin and her research team. We have also looked at the emerging analysis of horizontal networks on political activity, personal sense of self and the result of bonded (sometimes exclusive) identity groups.

Two specific examples include the importance of mediation in audience reception and the different approaches to evangelization (missiology) in the light of newer respect for grassroots cultures and feedback. All of this needs to be studied in the context of global religion, especially the growing numbers and the strong force of religious identity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

At its foundation, much of this is a power/dominance issue. There is a need for the growth process around the world to be socially informed, rather than demand based. Everett Rogers and Lawrence Kincaid put it another way: "... the capacity to develop and manage communication networks is an important prerequisite for self-sustaining socio-economic development over time."¹⁸

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¹⁷ See pp. 351-359.

¹⁸ *Communication Networks: Toward a New Paradigm for Research*, Everett M. Rogers and D. Lawrence Kincaid.

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Appendix

Figure 1
Development of Interactive Communication Systems

CENTRALIZED PERIODS

Constructed by Frances Forde Plude

<u>Cultural Structures</u>	<u>Media Formats</u>	Structures of Social/Religious Thought
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feudal society • monarchy • Crusades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oral traditions • art in culture • monastery scriptoria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic Church's association with medieval culture • monasticism • cathedrals dominate village squares • Thomism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformation • rise of Middle Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • printing • books become a commodity • newspapers in Europe by 1607 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic Church's unified/central authority threatened • other sectors experience their voice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlightenment • revolutions (France, U.S.) • schools emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letters of correspondence • posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a secular society, philosophy and science assault religious authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Revolution • steam engines encourage travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telegraph and telephone • penny press emerges • rails link geographic areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic Church social theory supports workers after many years of labor strife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bureaucracies increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elevators, skyscrapers, telephones encourage organizational structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • churches increase their own bureaucratic structures • Pius IX <i>Syllabus of Errors</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • much centralized economic and political power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ banks/financial systems ○ colonial empires ○ nation-states clash in two global wars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mass media grow/concentrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ newspapers ○ magazines for large audiences ○ radio ○ large television networks ○ cinema 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • churches see media as a way of evangelizing mass audiences (spreading the word) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ church publishing grows ○ TV and radio ministries ○ centralized unified voice ○ large audiences stressed

Figure 2
Development of Interactive Communication Systems

DECENTRALIZED PHASES

Constructed by Frances Forde Plude

(1960s to date)

<u>Cultural Structures</u>	<u>Media Formats</u>	Structures of Social/Religious Thought
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liberation movements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ social structures under siege ○ feminism ○ civil rights ○ gay rights ○ sexual revolution ○ ecology/green revolution ○ growth of choice/options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ structures for group support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. base communities 2. telephone support groups (A.A., bereavement support, women's groups) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vatican II • "people of God" view emerges • emphasis on <i>local church</i>/vernacular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ development of national bishop conferences ○ increasing <i>laity</i> roles defined but not implemented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cybernetics/systems theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ new social management tools ○ new decision-making styles • pyramid management structures/hierarchies are under pressure in social institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mass media threatened by cable/VCRs/individual satellite feeds • national newspapers and magazines cut back; specialized journals and local press expand • newsletters multiply with electronic publishing and E-mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large numbers of clergy, religious leave vowed congregations and dioceses • co-responsibility concept develops with parish/diocesan councils • theologians argue against excessive central control by Rome • central authority of Roman Catholic church feels under siege again (like at the Reformation) and gets defensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political/social organizations threatened, somewhat paralyzed, by "tyranny of many small minorities" • corporations decentralize • Soviet Union begins to break apart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • computers merge with communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ people interconnected horizontally (like telephones earlier) • media/information overload assaults individual and institutional effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liberation theology • charismatic movements • polarization within churches • Vatican II impetus slows • few people enter religious orders • laity frustrated by limited voice • celibacy for priests is questioned • women's ordination movement • growing number of Christians in Asia, Africa, and Latin America

Figure 3
Development of Interactive Communication Systems

GROWTH OF DIALOGIC THEORY/STRUCTURES

Constructed by Frances Forde Plude

<u>Cultural Structures</u>	<u>Media Formats</u>	Structures of Social/Religious Thought
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing numbers of global mechanisms/cooperation/treaties to solve global issues (ecology, famine, fishing, trade tariffs) • European Union and other regional consortia formed • collaborative legal structures struggle to get born (space law, international technical standardization) • glasnost/end of Cold War • Eastern European democracies struggle politically/economically • increasing use of UN • emergence of term “World Order” • Berlin wall falls and unites Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>increasing use of intra-group media/messaging</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ answering machines ○ computers ○ fax ○ Email ○ mobile radio/phones ○ paging systems ○ teleconferencing • need to coordinate media due to overload of information sources and content • convergence of media • concentration/cross-ownership of media companies • digital technology begins to replace analog modes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing strength of local and ethnic theologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ national bishop conferences ○ priest-personnel senates ○ women asserting themselves; religious congregations restructure ○ language pressured to move beyond gender ○ liturgical varieties • growing awareness that prayer (contemplative, charismatic) is widely practiced among laity, not just professed religious • collectives of theologians organize joint statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wars emerge from lack of negotiation and unified world order mechanisms • a struggle to be truly collaborative among nations • strong nation-state presence (U.S./U.K./Europe, etc.) remains • UN role shows need for more formal, institutionalized collaborative mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>global attempts to establish communication links</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ domain addresses encourage Internet use ○ copyright protection of intellectual property becomes a concern ○ privacy issues emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • growing attention to global poverty and justice issues • voice of the churches somewhat muted due to their own strife • churches called upon to move beyond internal divisions to offer the world a moral, spiritual collaborative vision

Figure 4
Development of Interactive Communication Systems

A POSTMODERN VIEW

Constructed by Frances Forde Plude

<u>Cultural Structures</u>	<u>Media Formats</u>	Structures of Social/Religious Thought
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing globalization • increasing ethnic clashes with national boundaries and nearby states • growing numbers of immigrants and refugees flowing over borders • sociologists identify the reality of 'the project of the self': autonomous and reflexive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing breakdown of large network audiences within U.S. and other countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ cable diversification ○ global satellite broadcasts ○ VCR transmission systems • news broadcasts become more interactive and argumentative • increasing popularity of talk-back • cell phone used for audio/video • computer miniaturization/growth • blogs, Web sites like MySpace project self narratives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • established religious groups struggle to adapt to rapid technology change, growing liberation movements and a culture of talking back • media-literacy movement (in schools and churches) contributes to media awareness and some media-bashing • global attention to sex- and cover-up scandals within Catholic Church; leadership crisis emerges • gradual awareness of 'a generation of seekers' (after spirituality)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • world-wide AIDS epidemic • negotiation theorists and practitioners attempt to resolve difficulties • growing use of peacekeeping forces • increasing global terrorism and attack on U.S. World Trade Center • growing use of U.S. unilateral power (Iraq, etc.) • Middle East war erupts with increased use of suicide bombers • increased outsourcing of labor • climate change awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWW and internet use develops cyberspace network world with increased use of motion video • changes occur in personal communication habits • system-wide communication in corporations and politics changes • wireless technology allows on-the-spot dialogic networks • music videos and video disks make entertainment product more mobile • CDs, DVDs and iPods permit video and audio downloading and piracy • Al Jazeera news network gives a systematic voice to the Arab world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • churches and media researchers become aware that audience <i>reception</i> is key; it is <i>individualized</i> and sometimes <i>rebellious</i> • pluralism and ambiguity • hermeneutics voices issue of cultural <i>interpretation</i> • communication is re-defined by some as cultural <i>mediation</i> • growing visibility of fundamentalist movements • tensions rise as growth of Christianity and Islam explodes in Africa, Asia, Latin America

Inter-Religious Dialogue as Communication

Fr Henry D'Souza

Only those who have experienced the living and vibrant religious and cultural diversity of Asia can understand the importance of inter-religious dialogue in the mission of the Church in Asia, the cradle of many world religions and civilizations. One such person who knew the heart of Asia and delved deeply into its soul is Fr Franz Josef Eilers.

William Arthur once declared, “The truly great are the most grateful. The most inspiring are the most inspired. The most convincing are the most convinced. The most pleasing are the most pleasant.” How true is this in the case of Fr Eilers, who has been a grateful, inspiring, convinced and pleasant communicator and reached out to others in dialogue. As an accomplished communicator, Fr Eilers has been in the forefront of promoting multi-lateral communication and collaboration, especially in Asia.

The communication dimension of inter-religious dialogue was not particularly addressed and studied in depth. It was only Fr Eiler's brilliant mind which could think of an international colloquium on the theme and design a colloquium which took care of the various aspects. The theme was approached in four steps: the *first* was an overview and insight of inter-religious dialogue from the perspective of the Vatican II and FABC documents. The *second* step was the study of the inter-religious dialogue experiences in the Asian countries. The *third* was a discussion on the use of modern means of communication for inter-religious dialogue. And the *fourth* was an attempt to understand social communication in different Asian religions. The colloquium was held Nov. 22-27, 2004 in the idyllic and exotic cultural ambience of one of the world's best known tourist destinations, the Indonesian Island of Bali. At the end of the four day conclave, the participants came up with the final statement: *Inter Religious Dialogue as Communications*.¹ I was indeed privileged and happy to take part in this historic colloquium.

Later, under the able leadership of Fr Eilers, the FABC-Office of Social Communications, as a follow-up of the Bali colloquium, organized a special round-table conference of invited scholars from the great Asian religions and delved into the theme: “Social Communications in Religious Traditions of Asia” in October 2005 at Assumption University in Bangkok.

The inter-religious dialogue was not a mere appendix to the communications work of Eilers. Rather, it is an integral part of it. The inter-religious dialogue itself has been his way of life, and it permeated all his wide range of communication activities. His leadership for the Radio Veritas Asia, which has been acclaimed as a “Missionary of Asia”, his openness to invite appropriate resource persons from different faiths for conferences and the inclusion of sites of other religions in the itinerary of the city tours

¹ Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD: *Interreligious Dialogue as Communication*, p. 187, Lagos, (2005).

organized by him during the Asian conferences, amply prove his abiding commitment to the cause.

Inter-religious Dialogue as Communication - Concepts

The term ‘communication’ implies neither technology nor the mass media. Scholars would define communication as a “process by which information is exchanged between or among individuals or groups through a common system of symbols, signs, and behavior.”² In the words of Fr Eilers himself, “Communication is not just the use of technical means and instruments like the mass media. It is a dimension of human and spiritual relatedness and relationship achieved through conversation, interaction and sharing. This is why we purposely maintain and continue to use the Vatican II expression “Social Communication” which refers to all communicative processes and practices in human society.”³ Hence, social communications encompasses the whole spectrum of human activity which urges all humans to reach out to one another to relate, to share and build a community of people.

Dialogue is defined as a conversation between two or more people. It is a particular, yet a common form of communication between individuals and among groups. Therefore, inter-religious dialogue would technically be a conversation between followers of two or more religions. All religions have huge numbers of followers. As religious men and women, these followers communicate among themselves and also relate to the followers of other religions. Some would do it informally and others through more organized approach with the motive of mission in mind. How such an activity is seen as communication, is the question in hand. As Fr Eilers quoting Kevin Barge and Martin Little, puts it so succinctly, “Dialogue is a way of being with others as opposed to a way of thinking through issues and problems only.”⁴

Inter-religious Dialogue

The inter-religious dialogue allows the parties to express their own uniqueness and be transformed by features distinct from their living faiths. Dialogue proves that religions are not all the same, but they all exercise the right and duty to enrich mutual existence, both human and social. “The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions.”⁵

² wikipedia.org/communication.

³ Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD: *Interreligious Dialogue as Communication*, p. 8, Lagos, (2005).

⁴ Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD: *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, p. 196, Lagos, (2005).

⁵ Vatican Council II: *Nosta Aetate*, n. 2 (1965).

Inter-religious dialogue can be perceived and understood in different ways, given one's background and experience. There is no one definition which is universally acceptable. Many would restrict it to the theoretical discourse involving formal communication, although some would see it as a communication for mission, and a few others would envisage it as a communication in mission. Let us see briefly what they mean.

Inter-religious Dialogue as Formal Communication

For many, the inter-religious dialogue brings to the mind a picture of a group of scholars and religious leaders belonging to different religions, talking about the uniqueness of their own religious tenets and yet declaring how important it is for all to live together in peace and harmony. For many people, inter-religious dialogue is something elitist and meant only for the scholars and the learned. Such a '*dialogue*' appears to imply what Christians ought to be doing primarily is *talking* with people of other faiths. For quite a few, the inter-religious dialogue is very much an activity of the mind, of ideas, concepts, principles and well sounding discourses. Here, communication involved is to explain, elucidate, understand and, hopefully one day, to grow in mutual understanding and respect.

Inter-religious Dialogue As Communication for Mission

For a missionary, the inter-religious dialogue is fired by missionary zeal, aimed at sharing one's faith in Christ with people of other religions. They take inspiration from Jesus' words, "As the Father sent me so I send you". These followers are eager to communicate the faith they rejoice in. Here, inter-religious dialogue becomes a tool and an opportunity to communicate the Good News. No doubt, both the parties listen to the voice of God in each other, so that the other can listen to the voice of Christ. "We do not stop at a sympathetic understanding of one another's faith but we really believe that we have something to give them and we try to give it, our faith in Christ."⁶ As by this understanding, the inter-religious dialogue tends to be more of a one-way communication than a two-way one.

Inter-religious Dialogue as Communication in Mission

In this form of dialogue as communication, the parties both sincerely journey together; cherish all the divine communication received through historical experiences and look for mutual fulfillment. As Jesus clearly declared, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt

⁶ Peter Doherty, S.J.: *JEPASA Conference*, Patna, India, (1996).

5: 17). Jesus did not demand to forego all the Jewish heritage and experience, but he interacted with them, inviting them to

“advance with Him further into the mystery of God. They were not asked to deny the truth as they knew it but were asked to believe Him and trust what He told them about God. But everything was done within the framework of the Hebrew religion, in the synagogues, during the festivals, according to the prophets and the teaching of the ancients. Christ certainly criticized what He saw as corrupt, but basically He accepted the religion and worked within it.”⁷

Asian Experience

Often people ask, “What is your approach, inclusive, exclusive or pluralistic?” For an Asian mind, there is hardly an exclusive paradigm. As per the Biblical world-view, God’s plan includes everyone, excludes nobody. St Paul excellently describes this plan as “the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.” (Eph 1: 9-10). However, God “set apart” an “exclusive community” with a specific mission to include all. They were commissioned to be agents of promoting and fostering the divine dialogue and communication.

The Biblical dialogue and communication is of great significance for Asia. A large majority of the Asians are poor. They are deeply involved in the day to day struggle to make the two ends meet. They are greatly dependent on God. They communicate to God, pleading him to grant them their daily ‘*roti*’ (bread), ‘*doti*’ (dress) and ‘*makan*’ (shelter). In their anguish they cry to Him to set them free from the bondage of poverty, deprivation, illness and injustice.

Story telling is a powerful mode of dialogue and communication in Asia. Asian stories are full of struggles against injustice and pain. The Asians love stories and epics which describe the victory of good over evil. This is why the “Story of Jesus” appeals to them. They are easily able to identify with the carpenter of Nazareth who was anointed “to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” (Luke 4: 18-19). They find solace and hope in the One who was beaten up, scourged, humiliated and killed on the cross and rose again. They appreciate the Jesus who engaged the poor in a dialogue of life, bringing them dignity, freedom and new life in the Spirit. This approach connects to them and communicates with them.

If we truly consider the inter-religious dialogue as communication, then it can neither prove one’s superiority nor syncretism. It can neither be a compromise relegating the uniqueness of Christ, nor the loss of the urgency of mission. We are to be well aware that the minority Church in Asia, like the poor majority of Asia, needs to

⁷ Peter Doherty, S.J.: *JEPASA Conference*, Patna, India, (1996).

be deeply engaged in the day-to-day struggles to live with dignity through the dialogue of life with people of other religions. We, the Christians in Asia, need to foster a vision of inter-being, having knowledge and respect for neighbours of other living faiths, live in daily encounter with them. An inter-religious dialogue, in fact, is a communication in which people of diverse God-experience, with loyalty to their respective faiths, confront their common enemies such as poverty, illiteracy and illness together. As children of one God, they work together, to bring succour to victims of terror, tsunami, earthquakes and political domination. However, they do not block the communication which may lead them to unity and communion.

Importance and Urgency of Inter-religious Dialogue

Christianity is essentially a life of communication with the Triune God and the people of God. “The Triune God is a God of communication...Creation is one form of his communication outside of Himself. Further, He communicates Himself to humanity to build a community of love amongst all peoples...Jesus Christ came to communicate the fullness of life so that all could have ‘life, and have it in abundance’”⁸.

Consequently, the communication through inter-religious dialogue is core to Christianity. Ever since Vatican II’s document *Nostra Aetate* (1965), the inter-religious dialogue has become an important concern of the Catholic Church. Also, in 1974, the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences’ (FABC) General Assembly emphatically declared that inter-religious dialogue was one of the priorities in the Church’s evangelizing communication.⁹

What the Bishops of Asia stated at the foundation of the FABC already in 1974, “We pledge ourselves to an open, sincere, and continuing dialogue with our brothers of other great religions of Asia that we may learn from one another how to enrich ourselves spiritually and how to work more effectively together on our common task of human development,” is of great significance.¹⁰ In the socio-political context of today, where terrorism ignited by religious fervor is eating into the very vitals of the civilized society, where minorities are targeted by communal forces and where violence is perpetrated in the name of religion, nothing could be more urgent than communication which is inter-religious.

However, all that is easier said than done. The challenge is to continue communicating through inter-religious dialogue. Insisting on the need to persevere on the path of dialogue, Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* said, “I wish to encourage them to persevere with faith and love, even in places where their efforts are

⁸ Henry D’Souza: *Called to be a Communicating Church*, p. 35, Media House, Delhi (2004).

⁹ Rosales, Gaudencio/Arevedo Catalino (Ed): *For All the Peoples of Asia: FABC Documents 1970-1994*, Vol. I, p. 11-25, Claretians, (1997).

¹⁰ Rosales, Gaudencio/Arevedo Catalino (Ed): *For All the Peoples of Asia: FABC Documents 1970-1994*, Vol. I, p. 11-25, Claretians, (1997).

not well received. Dialogue is a path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father.”¹¹

Conclusion

For over forty years, since the Second Vatican Council, much inter-religious dialogue and communication has taken place. While on the one hand such an effort has not gained the desired momentum, on the other hand an increasing number of individuals and followers of other religions are realizing the need for it, too. In Asia for instance, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, both individually and collectively have started new initiatives for inter-religious dialogue. There is a greater realization among the intelligentsia and the civil society that solution to the conflict-ridden world is not less dialogue, but more interactive dialogue.

Unfortunately, for too long a time now, there has been much head-level dialogue with a greater emphasis on philosophical discussions and meetings. The time has come now to move on to a communication mode, where people of diverse religious affiliations will hold conversations, meet and interact and look for mutually fulfilling relationships.

The inter-religious dialogue can neither be an academic discourse nor an argument, but a communication in which fellow humans undertake a journey together, like the two disciples of Emmaus, during which they allowed their “eyes to be opened and recognize Him.” (Luke 24: 21). It is a process of listening, learning, and recognizing the unfolding of God’s liberating plan, not by destruction, but by fulfillment of one’s religious experiences, so that one day, their “happiness may be complete.” (John 16: 24). Until then, we can only pray in the words of India’s Nobel laureate poet, Rabindranath Tagore, “Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; where words come out from the depth of truth; where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection; where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit; where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action, into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”¹²

¹¹ Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 57

¹² Rabindranath Tagore: *With Joyful Lips*, p. 300, Society of St. Paul, Bandra (1999).

Spirituality of Communication in the context of “Communalism, Consumerism and Terrorism”

Sebastian Periannan

This paper is written in the honour of Rev. Dr. Franz-Josef Eilers SVD, for his remarkable contribution done in the field of Social Communication. This is a reflective experiential, existential and a concept paper rather than a documentational one.

Understanding the Concept

Communalism leads to fundamentalism, works in undemocratic ways and means and resulting in sectarianism or isolationism. Consumerism begets materialistic indifference and hedonism. Terrorism tortures the innocent through unjust means, creates chaos and jeopardy. Whereas, spirituality is the image, conviction and confidence of a person, vision of life, and his mission with its community/society or organisation. Spirituality is a dynamic force, energy and a way of life of being good, doing right things and behaving in a just manner. In the same way, communication is an art, science, process and method. The impact of communication calls for a deeper understanding of the influence of the media and impact of information communication technology in relation to communalism, consumerism, and terrorism in the modern world.

Communication

Communication is comprehension, contact and feedback. Communication is a process of sharing in, or sharing with, of mutual giving and taking. Our entire life consists in an interplay of sharing-in and sharing-with. Communication is sharing and exchange of thoughts, of feelings, of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills.

Communication is a social practice of inter-relations and inter- actions, dialogical and two-way, accessible and ubiquitous, democratic and selective, emancipatory and creative, participatory and liberative and requiring various skills: technical skills include idea and technique; psychological skills include mutual understanding and confidence; theological skills embrace faith, wisdom and charity¹

¹ Gaston Roberge, *“The Faithful Witness: on Christian Communication”*, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1999, p. 28.

Spirituality

As a foundation of Christian principles of communication the following statements reflect the Communication Spirituality:

- By God's grace and His self-communication through creation, we participate in the life and even the nature of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Christ as a perfect communicator loved the Church and gave his life through his death and resurrection to make her the holy temple of the Spirit. Like Mary, the Church serves Christ's mission.
- The purpose of engaging in religious/spiritual communication is to invite the addressee to a personal encounter with God, the Gospel and His Kingdom.²

Therefore, spirituality

- involves enlightened freedom and committed responsibility
- immerses into luminous joy and blissful peace
- anchors on fulfilling one's duty and service to the people in need or to humanity
- is generated through educated imagination and scientific innovation
- Is identified with rational contemplation and faithful mysticism
- is supported by intense prayer and benevolent acts of mercy
- leads to a life of holistic holiness and solidarity with the environment
- is sustained through pure faith and legitimate morals
- is an expression of awesome awareness and wholesome gentleness
- envisages lighted revelation and radical revolution
- presupposes conscientious conversion and total transformation
- supposed to oppose inhuman sensuality and hedonistic materialism
- must promote God-given justice and gratuitous gift of charity

Situating the Context

Every day we are bombarded with bomb blasts or terrorist attacks, organised crime, mafiosi, kidnapping, ransoms, communal hatred, discrimination and corruption or the like. Newspapers, television and the internet are loaded with consumerist competitions, communal violence, and terrorist targets.

Communalism

Communalism is against communion, which is against communication:

Economic and Political Roots:

² Ibid., p. 101.

It is evident that economic poverty, social discrimination, religious antagonism and political aberrations are important roots of communalism.

The craving after wealth and power has been a reason for several communal riots when the prosperity of one group in business or industry has been resented by the others. The poor have always been victims of exploitation. They have to work for all and fight for all sections even during communal clashes for making a living. They are the greatest sufferers in every bundh and curfew. They are deprived of their daily employment and of their daily bread.

Political Aberrations:

Every possible means, legitimate and otherwise, are used by politicians and other vested interests to gain power and positions. They promise security and growth to the religious groups, while they preach the paradise of equality and sufficiency to the poor.

Socio-cultural Roots:

Communal conflicts take place largely in urban and industrial areas where conflicting socio-cultural interests exist and political awareness is high.

Ideological Support:

The absence of a clear ideology capable of directing movements to secular goals has strengthened the forces of communalism.

Psycho-religious Roots:

In an urban society lost in anonymity, identity consciousness becomes an important factor of polarisation.³

Consumerism

It is fascinating to see the creativity of the 'media manipulators' who use media in such a powerful way to sell their commodities, to beguile and convince people about the 'good news' of their products. Media is the language understood by everyone.

Consumerism divides the people into 'have' and 'have nots'; rich and poor. Most of the people in materially developed countries and middle-class people in the Third World already live in the consumer society. And poorer people increasingly aspire to join it.

The new possibility, for hundreds of millions, of living in abundance and comfort has immense social, ecological, cultural, moral and personal repercussions in today's world. Many crucial problems are indeed related to the wasteful consumer society and its demonstrating effects on the economically less developed countries.

³ S. Arulsamy (ed.), "*Communalism in India: A Challenge to Theologizing*", Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1988, p. 4-6.

Consumerism is ultimately based on wrong values, which make genuine development impossible. For material self-interest is the predominant incentive in our society. In many ways, we idealise economic prosperity. Our real goals are economic growth and “a constantly greater increase in the standard of living”.⁴

Consumerism has become an environmental factor of great importance. All our senses encounter the presence of consumer durables, which engulf the poor and the rich alike. A wide range of consumer commodities seems natural and organic. But a closer look at the distribution of these commodities exposes the truth.

Capitalism propagates that consumer goods are ‘essential’ for human life.

Consumerism is an ideology. It creates an anti-poor value system.

Consumerism works on human emotions and fears. People are often gripped by a sense of insecurity. Casual and contract labour as well as unstable employment create much anxiety.⁵

Terrorism

Terrorism destroys and kills, prevents peace and promotes violence. The terrorists in the international level are, no doubt, well marshalled into doing all kinds of activities needed for a modern man. The present air travel facilities have provided worldwide mobility to all. The radio, television, internet computers (to exchange information worldwide) and communication satellites have provided the facilities to millions of people throughout the world. With the help of such scientific aids terrorists are easily attracted toward the mentality of violence and death. Because of such facilities, there has already been a long tradition of privatisation of fear-psychoses because of terrorist violence.

Terrorism is most commonly born out of political events and circumstances. Such political circumstances keep on changing while terrorism persists even at a low ebb. It is something enigmatic for us. The terrorists comprehend that violence is a part of modern politics, a part of life. According to their philosophy, terrorism endeavours to bring political redressal in a short time.⁶

Hardly any of the daily news bulletins communicated to us by the mass media fails to mention one or more terrorist acts that have taken place in some part of our world. The names of well-known international terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, Taliban and others have today become common household names. Most of us in the contemporary world are getting so accustomed to hearing about terrorist attacks such as car bombings and suicide bombings that we have become more or less insensitive to

⁴ John Desrochers, “Quest for Well-Being and Challenges of Consumerism”, in *Integral Liberation*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March, 2001), p. 3-8.

⁵ Samuel Jesupatham D., “The Politics of Consumerism”, in *Integral Liberation*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March, 2001), p. 41.

⁶ Abdul Quddus., “*The Mirage of Terrorism*”, Guwahati: Amaranth Pages, 2003, p. 348.

the immense damage and destruction done to human lives and property in almost every such attack.⁷

Terrorism is a systematic, unpredictable mode of violence pitted against the innocent public in order to terrorise individuals or even a government to attain political objectivity. Terrorism has been used by political organisations both rightist and leftist; and also by nationalistic and ethnic groups, in the name of revolution. In some special cases the army and the secret police of an elected government may resort to terrorism to achieve some selfish aims.

Terrorism infuses a feeling of catastrophe among human lives. It brings irretrievable loss, or inevitable death. It puts life on ransom and portray a picture of gruesome horror.

The ambit of violence in creating anarchy, disorder, insecurity of life and property and holding society at ransom has increased manifold during recent years. The proclivity for bloodshed, hostility, wrath, jealousy, contempt, resentment, frustration, ethnic hatred etc. are the early signs of future terrorist behaviour.

For the insurgents of different parts of the developing world, terrorism has become a usual and burgeoning campaign. The Jewish terrorists, the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, the Palestinian terrorists, the modern religious fundamentalists, the Mujahideens of Kashmir under the abetment of Pakistan are some examples of modern day terrorist campaign. Terrorism is a steadily growing intimidation to the world to-day, which thwarts peace to linger in this beautiful world.⁸

Heart of the Matter

A man wants to hang a picture. He has the nail, but no hammer. His neighbour has one. And so our man decides to go next door and borrow it, but he hesitates: "What if my neighbour will not lend me the hammer? Yesterday he greeted me so hastily. Perhaps he was in a hurry. But perhaps the hurry was only an excuse; maybe he has something against me? Well, what? I have not done anything to him; it is just his imagination. If someone wanted to borrow a tool from me, I would give it to him right away. So, why will he not? How can a person deny so simple a favour to his neighbour? People like this jerk are the ruination of others. And he also imagines I am dependent on him for his hammer. Just because he has a hammer. I have had it up to here." And so he storms to his neighbour's house and rings the bell. The neighbour opens the door, but before he can say his friendly "Good morning", our man shouts at him, "You can just keep your hammer, you idiot!"⁹

This story tells us nothing but the following hitches and more:

⁷ Vimal Tirimanna, C.Ss.R., "Can the War against Terrorism be Won?", in: *VJTR*, Vol. 68, No. 7 (July 2004) p. 521-539.

⁸ Abdul Quddus, "The Mirage of Terrorism", p. 4-6.

⁹ Cf. Willi Lambert., "Directions for Communication: Discoveries with Ignatius Loyola", Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2001, p. 44.

- We are biased, prejudiced and judgemental.
- We exaggerate the news and the truth.
- We deal with many vested interests in politics and communication.
- The rules of the games are popularity, money and profit.
- Pleasure, power, possessions dominate the world.
- Dominating people oppress the poor.
- Poor people have nowhere to go. They are helpless, hopeless and jobless. The situation is becoming dark and dismal.

Through the mass media of communications, such as television, the internet, videos, CDs, magazines, telephones, etc. alien, bizarre and immoral values, life styles and practices of the globalised world are invading everyone. Practices such as the use of drugs, 'safe' sex, contraception, generation gaps, euthanasia, abortion, call centers, out sourcing of jobs etc. are dismantling the traditional moral, religious, spiritual and social value system of our sub-continental society. A this-worldly, materialistic, secular, consumeristic, individualist, libertinistic, licentious worldview is being systematically and steadily spread into every country.¹⁰

As Pope Benedict XVI in his recent book *Jesus of Nazareth* voices out, "Confronted with the abuse of economic power, with the cruelty of capitalism that degrades man into merchandise, we have begun to see more clearly the dangers of wealth and we understand in a new way what Jesus intended in warning us about wealth".¹¹ The Pontiff cautions his readers against the spiritual weaknesses of modern materialistic life, in which people seem to think they can do without God. He criticises the "cruelty" of capitalism's exploitation of the poor but also decrying the absence of God in Marxism.

Culture Communicates

Descartes, the philosopher, said, "I think, therefore I am"
 An African would say, "I dance, therefore I am"
 An Asian might estimate, "I meditate, therefore I am":

For physics, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, not his biography, is of interest. For Sigmund Freud's psychology, a knowledge and understanding of the course of his life is more meaningful. And when someone speaks of the art of communication, as does Ignatius of Loyola, one is justifiably curious to know how he behaved when

¹⁰ Thomas Manjaly, Kuriakose Poovathumkudy, Peter Haokip (Eds.), *In the Service of Mission: Studies in honour of Archbishop Thomas Menampampil*, Shillong: Oriens Publications, 2006, p. 5.

¹¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, yet to be published in English as on date. cf. Examiner Vol. 158, No. 16, April 21, 2007, p. 8.

involved with human beings – how he communicated and how he learned communication in the school of life.

When we speak of “southerners”, for example, of Italians, we may think that they are born “communicative”. And we do not mean just with their mouths. They speak with their whole bodies, especially with their hands. For them, “[v]erbal and nonverbal communication” are not foreign terms from the technical lingo of psychologists, but obvious matters of everyday experience.

When I asked a Basque confrere to give me the key characteristic of a Basque (in Spain) conversation, he told me a story. He had once observed two Basques sitting across from each other in a train compartment. After a good long time sitting in silence, looking out the window, and occasionally lighting their pipes, one of them said, with a little puff of smoke, “I have bought a cow”. A long, eloquent silence follows. Then his neighbour responded, with emphasis: “I have two cows on my place”. Then definitive silence on the part of both. And my confrere added that, in all probability, when they got home, each one told his wife that a good, interesting, protracted conversation he’d had.¹²

Human Experiences of Spiritual Communication

An experience which a religious sister recounted to me may make clear the importance of listening. She was visiting an old sister of her order. The two had long been friends, and the old sister was at the point of death. Since the younger sister knew that this was likely their last time together, she was especially open to every word the grievously ill sister said. “Would you like to say something more?” asked the visitor. And the answer came, “Unless you’re here, you don’t hear it.” Somewhat surprised at the response, the younger sister asked what her friend had meant. But the other only said, peacefully and with her own emphasis, “Unless you’re entirely here, you don’t hear it”.¹³

Searching, longing within is communication

The motion within a person who speaks most often and most clearly of God is perhaps longing. There is a story of the student who asked his rabbi, “Rabbi, where is God?” And the rabbi answered, “Tell me where God is not!” Ignatius’s answer could run: God is where you seek God. Or to put it differently: God is with you when you seek God. God is in your inmost longing.¹⁴ As Sankara points out the spiritual search is

¹² Willi Lambert., *“Directions for Communication: Discoveries with Ignatius Loyola”*, Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2001, p. 8.

¹³ Ibid., p. 67-68.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 187.

like the inquiry of one who is standing in the middle of Benares and asking passers by “Where is Benares (an Indian city)?” They answer, “Do you not know that you are standing in the middle of the city of Benares?” So the search is not an anxious and hopeless groping but a confident questioning of oneself.¹⁵

Trust and understanding is communication

One day Augustine was in Ostia, the Roman seaport, strolling on the beach. He was deeply lost in thought, seeking to get to the bottom of the Holy Trinity. Suddenly he saw a little child who was pouring water from the sea into a little hole in the sand. When asked what he was doing, the child answered, “I am pouring the sea into this hole”. With benign amusement, Augustine responded: “But child, look at that great, endless sea. You cannot get that into your little hole in the sand!” To which the child responded to the great theologian: “Nor can you grasp the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your understanding”.¹⁶

Listening and response is communication

When Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of a visit to the German College in Rome, was asked by a seminarian what he had to say of obedience, the answer, perhaps, was a little bit of side stepping, but altogether correct as well, was: “Obedience comes from listening. Obedience begins with listening and hearing”.¹⁷

Reconciliation is communication

The capacity for communication always means, as well, living in the tension between conflict and consensus. In meditating on the New Testament, one finds some seventy passages where conflict and confrontation occur. Many of these confrontations lead to divisions, many lead to a new, deeper unity. The phrase in the *Acts of the Apostles*, “They were one heart and one soul”, shows only one side of the history of the church. On the reverse side, we read that Christians were in constant conflict and search. The most outstanding symbolic figures for this fruitful confrontation, but also for reconciliation, are Peter and Paul (where the actual antipodes, Paul and James, were the principals, and Peter more the mediator).¹⁸

¹⁵ John B. Chethimattam, “*Constructing an Indian Ecclesiology*”, in: *Evangelizing in the Third Millennium*, Third Millennium Series No. 1, Rajkot: Deepti Publications, 2006, p. 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215-216.

Deep encounter between Spirituality and Communication

On the one hand, the gospel-universality is something conspicuously spiritual; it is the universality of God's overwhelming grace, goodness and compassion. On the other hand, it is something that links up with the endless openness and transcendence of the human spirit in communion with the infinite mystery. The message of Jesus and the mystery of his person offer us a deeply spiritual, grace-based and refreshingly new approach to spirituality and communication.

We may recall here that Karl Rahner, picturing the future, once noted: "The devout Christian of the future will either be a "mystic", one who has "experienced" something, or he will cease to be anything at all.¹⁹ This mystical experience will be the bedrock of the future wherein spiritual communication will be the hallmark.

Promoting a culture of tolerance and peace

When we are faced with the culture of violence, death, and a clash of civilisation, we need to promote tolerance and peace. Tolerance is not a weakness. It is only as much weakness as showing the right cheek to someone who slaps you on the left (Matt. 5.39). Such an attitude and pattern of behaviour can step only from a deep spiritual experience and mental frame of wisdom.

"We are tired of weapons and bullets" a peasant wrote to Catholic Archbishop Romero of San Salvador. "Our hunger is for justice, for food, medicine, education and effective programme of fair development". Archbishop Romero, himself an ardent champion of justice for the poor, was never tired of repeating "violence resolves nothing, violence is not Christian, not human". As the Catholic Archbishop Dom Helder Camara of Recife and Olida (Brazil) used to say, "Today, as always, humanity is led by minorities who hope against all hope, as Abraham did".

Desmond Tutu, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town used to feel the weight of his mission during his peaceful crusade against apartheid, too. He would say, "...sometimes there are moments when you are in the depths, or you just have to say to God 'God I am tired'. At those times, I throw myself into the strain of faith, and I am carried along in my prayers, and not just of those on earth."

Mahatma Gandhi knew how to befriend his fiercest antagonists. He was determined to change the language of dialogue with the imperial authorities to non-violence. He said, "we hope to reverse the process by our action and show that physical force is nothing compared to moral force, and that moral force never fails". He kindled India's pride and faith.

¹⁹ Felix Wilfred., "A new way of being Christians: preparing to encounter neighbours of other Faiths", in: *Concilium* (ed. by Christoph Theobald and Dietmar Mieth, "Unanswered Questions") 1999/1, p. 40-51.

A great admirer of the Mahatma, and a true Baptist pastor, Martin Luther King, thought, unearned suffering was redemptive. He wanted to avoid the tragedy of his community becoming bitter. He wanted to cut the chain of hate. He wanted to place the ethic of love at the centre of their lives. “You must not harbour anger”, he would admonish, “You must be willing to suffer the anger of the opponent, and yet not return anger. No matter how emotional your opponents are, you need to be calm.

He insisted greatness did not consist in being strong, but in using the strength rightly. He and his aides often conducted ‘non-violence worship’ (= prayer – meeting for peace) for the followers.²⁰

What Can Media Communication Do?

The media are the pride of place and most important and main source of information and knowledge to promote much needed values to counter and face the reality of consumerism, communalism and terrorism. We need to propagate:

Values of Non-violence, Compassion and Forgiveness

Non-violent ways and means respect others. Compassion reaches out to the suffering; the other, who is wounded, one way of attaining freedom, is to forgive those who have hurt us. Forgiving is getting rid of the poison of hatred, from within us. A culture of non-violence and peaceful negotiation needs to be urgently organised and promoted.

People Oriented Democracy and Ethics

The political giant Nelson Mandela, tested by fire in the battle against apartheid, tells us how African music was a great force in stirring up the masses of people towards their liberation. There is a need to develop the forces and institution for a bottom-up globalisation that recognises and sustains localities, differentiated cultures and national sovereignty.

Relevant and Renewed Spirituality

Every religion must be open to prophetic voices and movements, so that there is a process of reformation and renewal. The dialogue of the great religions is already a positive element for the future of global community. Inter-faith solidarity is an

²⁰ Sebastian Periannan., “Communicating for peace and life”, in: *Masihi Sevak: Journal of Christian Ministry*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, (January 2006), p. 87-89.

unrealised strength for Asia to be a region of peace. Asians of various faiths must experience, the wholeness of God's creation, through inter-faith solidarity by living as dialoguing, peaceful communities.

The Dalai Lama, who has retained an inner serenity about himself, in spite of the pain of exile and the memory of the hardship of his fellow Tibetans under the Chinese yoke, says, "When we sit and meditate, we certainly find some peace of mind. We are able to generate compassion toward the poor and needy, and feel more tolerant towards our rivals. The mind is more relaxed and less aggressive".

Gender Equality

Women have to have equal opportunities to develop themselves and contribute to the community. The confrontation with human suffering and response in terms of compassion has developed in the victims, some of the values required to sustain different world of solidarity, humanness, the spirit of sharing, the technique of survival, readiness to take risks, endurance and steady determination in the midst of adversities.²¹

A path to Spiritual Communication

Communication is a process and product in nature. The same thing is applied to spirituality too. As Ira Progoff, the developer of the *Intensive Journal*, observes, spirituality can be seen in terms of products of the spiritual journey or in terms of the process of the journey (Dorff: 1980, Progoff: 1975). In terms of products, we look for answers which certain spiritual journeys have generated and validated in the course of time. When we look at spirituality in terms of product, we speak of the rules, the rituals, and the teachings which reflect the spiritual experience of certain religious persons and individuals. These become encoded as the three C's of traditional religion: code (rules), cult (rituals), and creed (teachings).

A product spirituality is a spirituality based on traditions. It faithfully follows the products of other people's spiritual journeys now enshrined in books of rules, guidelines, prayers and rituals. When we look at spirituality as a process, we attend to the process that generates the codes, cults and creeds – our own journey, our own life experiences. We seek to discover God in the process of our own lives. We listen to the God who speaks to us in the depths of our own being. We listen to the invitations of grace that come to us the moment-by-moment unfolding of our lives. We experience God not only in the books of prayers and prayer meetings., but in the context of our everyday experience.²²

²¹ Ibid., p. 95-97.

²² Jose Parappully SDB., "A Mature Spirituality for Today: Some Salient Characteristics", in: *VJTR*, Vol. 68, No. 2, February 2004, p. 101.

A faith approach to Communication is not just a matter of utilizing modern media to spread the Gospel message. The message must sound true. Communication is effected through words, signs and symbols. But it is also to be accompanied with deeds and be the expression of authenticity of life. In silence it will find its roots in the depths of the divine mystery and of the human soul.²³

The following as a method or path to develop the spirituality of communication varies from different approaches and traditions, be it religious or otherwise. This path integrates that communication sustains the people in the struggle to know the Truth, the Way and the Life. A spirituality of communication calls for a spirit of awareness in the face of consumerism, a spirit of quest for the truth in the wake of communalism, and finally a spirit of fidelity and understanding in the horror of terrorism.

Respect for oneself and others

Human respect includes all those behaviours and attitudes related to the development of a healthy awareness and knowledge of oneself and others. If only we know to respect each other, nature and culture, there could have been many human problems averted. Human respect demands accepting one's emotions honestly and facing them constructively and sensibly. We should respect others through kindness and patience. Pope John Paul II points out about happy memory: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life meaningless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it".²⁴ As it is said by St. Paul in *Acts* (17:27): "God is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist". As Paul admits, this has not only been affirmed by Christians, indeed, what within Christianity is called the "universal salvific will of God" (cf. *1. Tim* 2:4), has a number of parallels and functional equivalents in other religions. In Islam, the *Holy Qur'an* (16:36) proclaims "For We assuredly sent

Amongst every People a messenger
(With the Command), 'Serve Allah, and eschew Evil'..."

In Hinduism, we find the deep conviction that God is present in the innermost self of all beings, and that, as Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgîtâ* (9:23):

"Even those who are devotees of other gods, worship them with faith -
they also sacrifice to Me alone ...".

²³ Legrand Lucien, "Biblical Dimensions in Mission", in: *National Seminar on the Role of the Pontifical Mission Societies*, National Office of Pontifical Mission Societies, (Bangalore 2004), p. 41.

²⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) no. 10.

In Buddhism there is the widespread doctrine of a universal Buddha-Nature, that is the view that all beings have the potential for realizing enlightenment and ultimate salvation, and in the famous *Lotos-Sûtra* (5:45f) the supramundane Buddha exclaims:

Dialogue

- The *Dialogue of Life*, in which persons seek to live together in an open and neighbourly atmosphere.
- The *Dialogue of Action*, in which Christians work together with non-Christians.
- The *Dialogue of Religious Experience*, in which persons rooted in their own religious traditions share their religious experiences of prayer, contemplation and quest for God.
- The *Dialogue of Theological Exchange*, in which specialists deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritage.²⁵

Friendship

Friendship entails a number of good things, one being the effort and ability to understand our friends as they understand themselves. Only when we share their joys and sufferings, we will have a chance to understand how their faith helps them to cope with their sorrow and how it nourishes their hope. This is the kind of understanding which is crucial for inter-faith spirituality and it makes friendship a key-virtue.

There is no need to brag and no room for contempt. Let us try to be simply honest and avoid weighing with two measures. For example, let us not compare all the nice ideals in the theory of our own religion with all the horrible failures in the practice of the others. Jesus' parable of the speck in our neighbour's and the log in our own eye is highly relevant to inter-faith friendships. If there is any need for criticism, it should be uttered cautiously and with much sensitivity.

Gratitude

If gratefulness is deep and profound it implies what German mystics have called *Gelassenheit*. The term covers meanings like calmness, equanimity, and letting go or not being attached. Detachment is of course a major spiritual feature of the eastern religions, while the religions of the west have primarily emphasized a loving involvement. Detachment and involvement are different, but not antagonistic. A closer look into the spiritual traditions of the east and the west exhibits that both are not only compatible but complementary. We need to be attached to the creator for His goodness,

²⁵ Pontifical Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, Document “*Dialogue and Proclamation*”, No. 42, 1991.

love and mercy. One must show one's gratitude to God, nature, parents, teachers, elders and leaders and all those who contributed for our well-being.

Awareness of strength and weakness

Strength and weakness are internal factors of oneself; others, one's community, organisations and institutions. When we are aware of these factors we will be able to assess the situation and act accordingly. We should be aware of our resources and limitations at all levels of spirituality and communication.

Analysis of opportunity and threats

It is one thing to be aware of the problems and situations and at the same we should also take stock of the available opportunity and the threats that emerge from consumerism, communalism and terrorism. These are the external factors of culture, religions, ethnicity, business, trade, administration and languages. The analysis of opportunity and threats might answer the question, whether it is the goal or the means.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a significant task in society, religion and peace for that matter. It is always attentive to the affirming the dignity and rights of every individual. Reconciliation should not be used to derail the peace process of establishing justice. "As followers of the prophetic Christ we seek justice; as followers of the self emptying Christ we seek reconciliation. Our efforts to pursue justice must take place, and find direction, through our efforts to pursue reconciliation".²⁶ Here, one can reiterate the restorative justice over retributive justice. Growth in communal harmony, balanced view of life and respect for the neighbour always has to deal with overcoming crises, with rejuvenation, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

A Practical application

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, St. Paul, The Prophet Mohammed and Buddha are the great and effective Communicators. They engaged themselves through Spiritual Communication. They have left an incredible mark and an indelible impact in the annals of history and the hearts of human beings. Apart from these great personalities, Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa of the last century are also great Communicators of Spiritual Communication. Gandhi's speeches, marches and prayer meetings, Mother Teresa's charitable activities, prayers, and encounter with the

²⁶ *Conclusions of the Ishvani Kendra Silver Jubilee Colloquium* (2001) no. 17.

destitute are the authentic examples of spiritual communication. It is in their way of life we get the answer for the current problems of communalism, consumerism and terrorism.

Rev. Fr Josef Eilers, SVD, his vocation, vision and mission brings to light and insight that he is an authority in social communication, a well known writer, a solid professor of communication, has a warm human personality endowed and embodied with spiritual communication. In fact, I chose to write on this topic because of his influence and inspiration in my life.

Two things strike me most when I think of this outstanding Communicator. First, his great missionary zeal with which he has worked for the Communication Apostolate of FABC-Asia, and the globe. Far away from his home country, he, like many other missionaries has made himself at home with the people of this region – Asia, as though he were with his own. His missionary spirit arises out of deep and mature Christian faith and conviction. The second is Dr. Eiler's relentless efforts and tireless works to bring communication where there was no idea or experience of that knowledge of Social Communication. Only a person who experiences the inner joy of peace and communication can become an instrument of peace and communication.

Taking on the Challenge of Furthering Catholic Communications: An Ongoing Task in an Ever-Changing World

Daniela Frank

The history of the Catholic Media Council (CAMECO) is closely linked with the name of Fr Franz-Josef Eilers SVD. Over many years, he was one of those shaping the development of our office, thus laying the foundations for what CAMECO is today. The aims of the Catholic Media Council were formulated by its “founding fathers” as “promotion of the work of the Catholic Church in the field of social communications in developing countries, particularly through advice, planning and assistance in education and further studies” (CAMECO Statutes §2 (2)). How have these original objectives been put into practice? By now, CAMECO looks back on a history of about 38 years – nearly four decades which have witnessed many changes in the world, in the Church and in social communications. Accordingly, CAMECO’s activities, priorities and ways of proceeding have had to change as well. With this contribution, I would like to illustrate the major developments within our tasks, the challenges we perceive and our perspectives on how to respond to them as a service of the Church for the Church.

The Beginning

Fr Franz-Josef Eilers was very much involved in the preparatory activities which finally resulted in the foundation of CAMECO. During our seminar “30 years of CAMECO: Media with the Poor?” in 1999, during a round table discussion on our history, he remembered: „At the 1968 world congress of UCIP¹, in Berlin, Dr. Otto Kaspar² told me that they had a development commission in UCIP, a group of people of which he was president, trying to raise support for Catholic press projects. From his experience, he realised that there should be more co-ordination, co-operation and planning of publication projects. Struggling to obtain support from the funding agencies for publication projects, it became clear that they should have some kind of office to promote these projects and help with the necessary planning. That was the basic idea for the founding of CAMECO.” In 1969 – a few years after Vatican Council II with its Decree on the Means of Mass Communication *Inter Mirifica* – there was already a growing awareness in several funding agencies, of the importance of communications and accordingly a growing need for professional advice for these types of projects. Dr. Kaspar asked Bishop Heinrich Tenhumberg, the head of the co-ordination office of the German Bishops’ Conference with the government in Bonn, to

¹ UCIP – Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse (International Catholic Union of the Press), based in Geneva – www.ucip.ch.

² At that time also Editor-in-chief of the weekly paper of the Diocese of Essen, Germany.

arrange a meeting of the funding agencies and the representatives of the Catholic media organisations Unda³, OCIC⁴ and UCIP, on neutral ground, to discuss the idea of founding an office dedicated to this area of concern. The first official meeting in preparation of the future Catholic Media Council took place on June 14th 1968. Six months later, Cardinal (at that time Msgr.) Andrzej Deskur participated for the first time, thereby representing the (then) Pontifical Commission for Social Communications which had been involved right from the beginning. After many discussions the association known as the Catholic Media Council was founded in Germany on June 16th 1969.

The name was Fr Agnellus Andrew's (Unda) suggestion, and at a later meeting it was proposed that it be abbreviated to CAMECO. Msgr. Jesús Iribarren of UCIP became CAMECO's first president and Mr. Karl Höller was nominated as first executive secretary in October 1969. The office in Aachen finally opened on January 15th 1970. During our 1999 roundtable, Karl Höller recalled the many questions they dealt with in the beginning, such as

- What are the criteria for the evaluation of communication projects?
- How to define the role of press and communications in the process of development?
- Would it be sufficient to evaluate a single communications project without taking the communications system of a society into account?
- How to underline the importance of qualified training?
- How to make use of the modern communication technologies for the Christian media groups?

When CAMECO started operating there was already a clear idea of its tasks and these tasks lay in four major areas:

Firstly, to endorse roundtable discussions between mass media organisations and funding agencies. A „Kuratorium“ or advisory board consisting of representatives of agencies, of experts and of the media organisations OCIC, UCIP and Unda, was founded for this purpose.

Secondly, to open new fields of co-operation with non-Catholic or non-Christian groups and institutions. CAMECO representatives travelled a lot in the first year for this purpose, including visits to the World Council of Churches in Geneva, WACC⁵ in London, UNESCO in Paris, FAO in Rome and American foundations like the Rockefeller Foundation, all of which dealt with media projects.

³ Unda used to be the International Catholic Association for Radio and Television; in 2001, it merged with OCIC to SIGNIS, based in Brussels – www.signis.net.

⁴ OCIC, Organisation Catholique Internationale de Cinema (International Catholic Organisation for Cinema and Audiovisual Media).

⁵ WACC, World Association for Christian Communications, originally based in London; since 2006, the headquarters are located in Toronto, Canada – www.waccglobal.org.

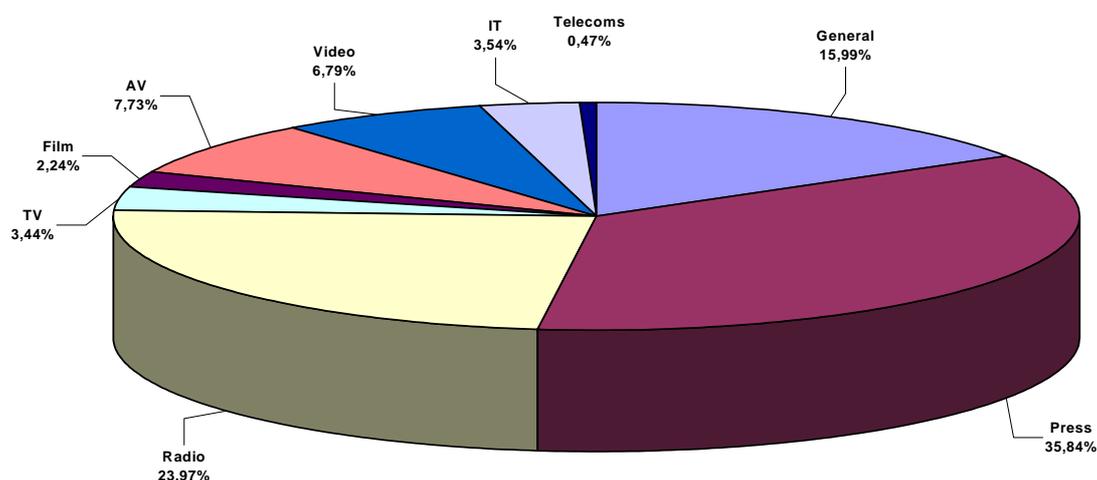
The third task was to prepare the basis for the evaluation of media projects. Therefore it was necessary to read scientific papers and studies, to visit congresses, etc. The Catholic Media Council's archive was set up at that time and by now has become one of the most important archives for Christian communications worldwide.

The fourth task was to evaluate media projects presented to the funding agencies by so-called Third World partners. CAMECO soon gained the trust of most of the agencies and in July 1970 was already "overloaded" with 22 mass media projects from all Southern continents. Although CAMECO was originally a German initiative, agencies from other European countries as well as from the United States of America also became interested in the services offered. Thus, step by step, CAMECO developed into a specialised office where many Western funding agencies were co-operating: including those working in the field of development as well as those oriented towards pastoral activities⁶. Accordingly, up to today, CAMECO perceives itself more as an international than German institution. This international vision has become even more evident with the growing number of so-called advice projects. Not only agencies asked CAMECO to assess applications received, but media initiatives from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific region, and since the early 1990s also from Central and Eastern Europe, started to contact CAMECO directly before presenting their projects to a funding agency.

Through the years, the central activity of CAMECO staff, but not the only one, has been the evaluation and assessment of project applications in order to be of help in the decision-making process of the funding agencies. With the growing experience of the collaborators and the establishment of contacts with media initiatives and organisations on the different continents, it has also been increasingly feasible to give direct advice to people on the spot, concerning the professional development of their work, and also with regard to the question, if, and how their initiatives could receive financial support from the international funding agencies. Meanwhile, around 40% of the applications received by CAMECO are so-called "advice projects". Altogether, in its 38 years of existence, CAMECO has assessed more than 16,000 projects from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific region as well as Central and Eastern Europe (since the 1990s).

⁶ In 2006, altogether 24 funding agencies and other donor organisations, including dioceses, mission procurement offices of religious congregations and some non-Church related entities asked for the assessment of projects.

Evaluated Projects 1971 – 2006
All Media Categories
No. of Projects: 16.405



Already in its early years, CAMECO was asked to realise in-depth research on the situation of specific media sectors – e.g. on the Catholic press in francophone Africa or the use of “mobile cinema” in India. CAMECO has also been involved in the preparation and realisation of on-the-spot evaluations in the different regions – a task that has constantly grown in importance, especially over the past years.

Including Central and Eastern Europe in the Areas of Concern

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, several organisations, particularly in Germany and Austria, extended their support to the local Churches in Central and Eastern Europe but in the first years mainly without much co-ordination. After the breakdown of the Eastern Bloc the Churches in the old as well as in the newly formed countries faced a tremendous need for educational and informational material. They also searched for publications, news agencies and publishing houses to spread the gospel; their messages could now be heard on radio and their presence could widely be seen on TV. A growing number of applications were sent to funding organisations, and CAMECO was also asked for assistance. In 1993, as a result of these increasing demands CAMECO established a desk for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) on a provisional basis, which was fully integrated, receiving permanent status in the third year of its existence.

The partners in the respective countries were not used to funding organisations' procedures or to consultancy organisations like CAMECO. They were suspicious and afraid of openly stating their ideas and the philosophy of their projects while the donors in the West had to present clear views and perspectives, based on proper planning to

enable the respective board to come to a decision. At the same time, the countries were undergoing processes of accelerated change in their societies: The political systems and laws, the economies, the cultures and even the official languages changed rapidly. The ability to react to those new needs was restricted, not only by financial problems but also by the fact that Catholics were not allowed to work in the media sector in many countries during communist times. Therefore most of the communications projects were started with the euphoria of newfound freedom but lacking professional personnel. In a first phase, the local Churches focused on following traditional structures: they (re)established publishing houses (incl. printing presses), (re)opened their own periodicals before they started being active in radio, video or TV production. However, in most of the Central and Eastern European countries this period of catching up was rather short, compared to other regions of the world.

Major concerns Throughout the Different Continents

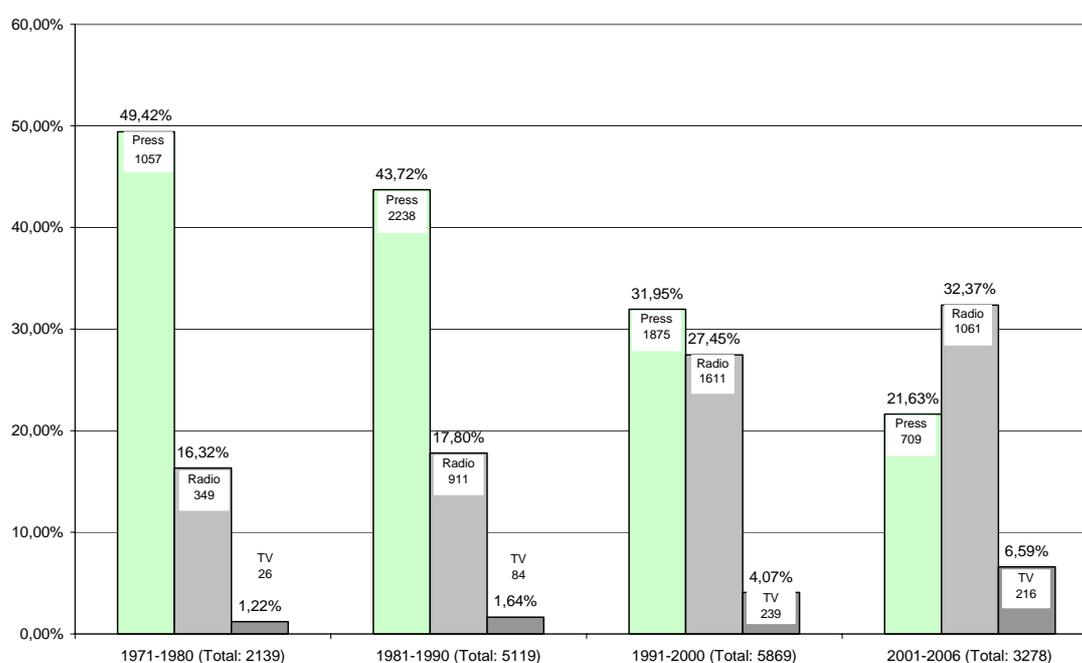
While the involvement of CAMECO in the communication activities of the Churches in Central and Eastern Europe is comparatively new, we have been in touch with partners from Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific region from the very beginning. During the nearly 40 years of CAMECO's existence tremendous and rapid changes in the communication sector, which also influence the media involvement of the Church strongly, have taken place. For a long time, CAMECO predominantly received projects in the print sector (magazines, publications and printing presses), in the meantime the audio-visual or electronic media have gained importance in most regions. Whereas Latin America can traditionally be considered as a continent of radio, it has only been since the beginning of the 1990s that changes in legislation have made it possible to operate private or community radios in many African countries. Accordingly more and more local Churches have launched into audio production or established radio stations, sometimes in collaboration with other nongovernmental organisations. This development is clearly reflected in the number of radio projects registered at CAMECO during the last years. The trend from "print media" to "radio" is also reflected in the numbers of projects evaluated during the four decades of CAMECO's existence. Whereas the number of "print media" projects has declined during this period, there has also been a clear increase in projects in the field of radio, particularly since 1990.

Additionally, over the past years, the number of project applications related to television has grown. In many parts of the world, the Church feels challenged – and more and more even obliged – to be present on television as it is – on a global scale – the most intensely used medium and also the one that is considered to have the strongest influence on people's perception of the world and their ways of organising their daily lives. The different manners in which the Church's presence can be ensured best in the different media environments are still being widely discussed – especially whether the Church should possess stations of her own or find better ways to be present in the existing television market of a specific country or region through programmes

produced by well-equipped studios. In any case, this discussion is also reflected in applications received by CAMECO.

A concern that has kept its primary importance over the past four decades has been training. Without any doubt the availability of qualified and experienced personnel is a key factor for an effective performance of Church media institutions as well as for the development of adequate media strategies and the continuity of projects. Thus, in all these years much attention has been paid to the formation of communicators and of pastoral agents involved in media activities, including the development of adequate training programmes and the corresponding institutions on the continents themselves. Up to today there is a consensus that more attention needs to be paid to formation and training – ranging from introducing seminarians to the importance of communications in pastoral work to the qualification of

Development of print, radio and television projects since the foundation of CAMECO



communication coordinators at diocesan, national and regional level, up to the professional training of all people involved in Catholic communications and concepts for ongoing formation. Unfortunately, this consensus still mostly exists in theory – putting it into concrete practice continues to be a great challenge. Nevertheless, the number of training programmes on the Southern continents has grown, more and more seminary rectors are open to including communication in the curriculum, and new ways of providing training are implemented; including distance courses and e-learning.

In all these years, CAMECO's policy has also been to encourage the partners in the developing countries as well as in Central and Eastern Europe to move towards the planning of communication structures beyond isolated initiatives, facilitating the co-operation of different projects at national and regional level and thus effecting a stronger unity of the Church and the non-governmental sector in the media field. In accordance with key Church documents as the Vatican Council II's Decree *Inter Mirifica* (1964) or the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* (1992), special emphasis has been put on the coordination of Church communication activities at diocesan, national, regional and continental level. From CAMECO's point of view, the Episcopal Commissions for Social Communications and their respective offices should and could play an important role in stimulating and co-ordinating the communications efforts of the local Church, promoting the development of an integrated communications strategy and policy and its realisation in close collaboration with all those active in Church communications. A respective pastoral plan for communications, developed according to their specific contexts, should point out that "Catholic media work is not simply one more program alongside all the rest of Church's activities: social communications have a role to play in every aspect of the Church's mission" and therefore has "something to contribute to virtually every other apostolate, ministry and program"⁷.

Re-Adapting to a Constantly Changing Context

In reflecting continuously about our activities and concerns, it became evident that the focal points of CAMECO have changed over the last few years. CAMECO is receiving a growing number of requests to advice local partners: in their assessment of needs (especially in the field of training), in their strategic planning processes to be able to better respond to expectations and demands from their target groups, or in their efforts to coordinate their different activities with other partners more effectively in order to make the best use of the specific strengths of all initiatives involved. Also the questions with which the donor organisations approach CAMECO have changed. Thus, profound discussions are going on with the donors about future priorities and strategies in supporting the local Churches – not only because of continuously decreasing financial possibilities. All this has been happening against a background of a rapidly changing media landscape in which also Church and Civil Society partners have to reposition themselves in order to air their concerns and take part in societal opinion-forming. Therefore, in 2004 CAMECO decided to put the work of our office to the test, doing so of course in close dialogue with our partners in the North as well as in the South and East. Through a survey among donors collaborating with CAMECO and among key partners in the different regions, we asked about the image of CAMECO and how far the services offered meet our partners' needs.

Of course, a survey does not discover an unknown continent, but it brings to the surface many questions already pending. By a number of funding agencies as well as

⁷ *Aetatis Novae* (1992) #17.

by partners in the South and the East, it was clearly confirmed that for example support in strategic planning was considered to be more important than assessing individual projects. Thus, the awareness is growing that the development of communication initiatives should be based on systematic assessments of needs and opportunities and that activities should be imbedded in strategic planning processes. The success of a media enterprise also depends on an organisational development that encourages financial and social sustainability and improves human resource management and operating procedures within the initiative. Being aware that initial funding does not provide a guarantee for the sustainable operation of a radio station, a media centre or a Church magazine when they struggle with their inability to finance projects over many years, also the donors have started to specifically support the capacity development of their partners.

Ideas for Future Priorities

In consequence, CAMECO intends to foster direct consultancy, sometimes offered by our staff but also making use of local expertise, supporting partners by connecting them with experts in their regions or with international communication networks and media organisations. In close cooperation with the donors, we want to encourage local partners to develop mid- and long-term programmes instead of concentrating on single projects. Promoting strategic thinking implies efforts for further qualification on the spot; therefore a more systematic approach towards capacity building seems to be useful. For CAMECO, we have developed a first framework for our different activities, paying attention to three target areas:

- Media management of periodicals, publishing houses, radio and television stations or production studios, including strategic planning, organisational development and increasing sustainability;
- Improvement of structures and strategies of Church communication commissions and offices, including developing pastoral plans for communications, organisational development of the respective structures and qualification of personnel; and
- Communication strategies by social and pastoral initiatives and organisations, including public relations and campaigning.

Through our daily work, we are in touch with many Church communicators, especially from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific region as well as Central and Eastern Europe. Of course, the projects passing through our offices do not reflect the entire Church communications – but we suppose that they convey quite a representative mosaic of the developments in Church (and community) communications. From our experience and our perception as well as the demands we are confronted with, we would propose some topics as priority issues in line with our aim of promoting Church communications:

- Qualification and on-going training of Catholic communicators, regardless of whether they work in Church or secular media, continue to be an urgent need. Although media and journalism differ a lot inside and between countries, regions and continents, compared to the quality on the secular media market, Church media unfortunately often continue to be considered as rather amateurish and semi-professional. Training needs also include basic concepts of management such as personnel and organisational development, strategic and financial planning etc.
- We have mentioned already several times the need for a more systematic approach and strategic planning processes. This also calls for the development of a culture of monitoring and evaluation, of learning from one's experiences and sharing best practices with others. Unfortunately, Church communicators often seem to be "lonely fighters" – and after finishing their mandate, the successors start from scratch again. From our side, we plan to systematise and further develop concepts of monitoring and evaluation in the field of communications.
- Within the Church, thinking about one's audience seems to be a fairly new topic. For a long time, it was taken for granted that people would use Catholic media because they are Catholic. Such an approach often leads to a kind of "in-house communication" only aimed at those people who are already closely linked with the Church and her institutions. But what about a dialogue with a wider public – and especially with those who are distant towards the Church, whatever the reason might be? As Church, we should reflect more explicitly on the impact we are aiming for. Talking about impact immediately implies questions on objectives and target audiences and necessarily, also leads to other aspects of strategic planning processes. Thus, reflecting on the impact of our partners' media activities could help them to pay more attention to a more systematic development of their initiatives.
- As financing continues to be a big problem in most regions of the world, it seems to be worthwhile to reflect more explicitly and without reluctance about fundraising and marketing on financial sustainability. There are many success stories (and failures as well) among Church media initiatives, others could learn from. Therefore we would like to collect and systematise experiences of our partners on the different continents and network experts in the field to support respective processes in the media.
- Although, as Church we can be considered as one of the biggest "global networks", networking within the Church cannot be taken for granted at all. Often it is a long learning process to overcome individualism and to understand that a network is more than just the sum of its individual members. Within the Church, we are provided with a number of networks, as e.g. the international media organisations SIGNIS and UCIP. But we can still improve in making use of the specific opportunities they offer – strengthening the individual member

and speaking with one voice. Advocacy and lobbying also call for stronger cooperation with secular partners, sharing our visions and concerns.

- As a final point, I would like to mention the invitation to use the possibilities of new technologies, to open up to the culture of electronic media and their interactive ways of communications. There is a challenge to learn new languages, to translate our Church messages into the words and images of young people, of those more distant to the Church or those with a different faith background. Communication is a highly dynamic field, not only because of the technological development. Therefore, an on-going reflection on our target groups and their ways of communication, of our message and the language we use and the most adequate means to communicate with the public is a must.

CAMECO was once founded to support the improvement of the communication work of the local Churches (as well as of groups representing civil society) so that they can contribute to the pastoral and social development in their individual contexts. And we aim at making use of and further developing our specific capacities and possibilities for a better service to our partners in the South and East as well as in the North. The way that this support has been given has changed in many respects. But the initial task has not lost its importance. Evangelization means communications, in order to announce Christ's message – with the media as a “providential opportunity to reach people everywhere, overcoming barriers of time, of space and of language; presenting the content of faith in the most varied ways imaginable”⁸. Much has been done already – but there is also still a lot to be done to respond to this mission.

⁸ Apostolic letter *The Rapid Development* by Pope John Paul II, 24.01.2005, #5.

Shifting Sands: Catechesis, Imagination and the Digital Culture

Angela Ann Zukowski

“For authentic communication of the message to be possible ... in a world that is reaching the dimensions of a ‘village,’ we must, in every field, commit ourselves to improving our competence in communications in order to place it at the service of the Gospel.”

(Communicating Christ to the World. Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini)

Introduction

A friend sent me a book entitled *Our Iceberg Is Melting* by John Kotter.¹ The note inside stated: “You’ve been a sentinel with a clarion call to the changes going on around us! I’m sure Kotter will speak to you as he has spoken to me and as I seek to graciously embrace change.” Kotter’s book is a fable about a penguin colony in Antarctica. A community of emperor penguins live as they have lived for many years. Then one curious bird discovers a potentially devastating problem threatening their home – and nearly no one listens to him. However, in short order the colony realizes that their culture is changing, and scouts are needed to explore new options in order for them to survive.² Eventually new techniques, roles and perspectives are embraced as a new iceberg is found. This delightful fable offers many applications for pastoral ministry today but especially in regard to the emerging new ‘digital culture’ that is transforming the very ground on which we stand. This essay will not expand upon the challenges, wonderment and success of these penguins. It does, however, set the stage for calculating what is happening to us today due to evolving communications technology which is altering how people think, feel and communicate with one another, especially in regards to faith formation and ministry.

In this essay, I will explore how our ability to deal with imagination, change and resistance enables one in ministry to disclose new portals for incorporating e-spaces for evangelization and catechesis. The e-spaces selected are not meant to be exclusive but inclusive of other media/communications technology resources. Currently iPods, Blogs, YouTube, FaceBook, online and blended adult faith formation are the focus of

¹ Kotter, John. *Our Iceberg is Melting*. St. Martin’s Press. 2006

² Ibid. Kotter. p. 130-131. The Eight Step Process of Successful Change identified by Kotter is: **Set the Stage:** (1) Create a Sense of Urgency (Help others see the need for change and the importance of acting immediately). (2) *Pull Together the Guiding Team* (Make sure there is a powerful group guiding the change). **Decide What to Do:** (3) Develop the Change Vision and Strategy (Clarify how the future will be different from the past); **Make it Happen** (4) Communicate for Understanding and Buy In, (5) Empower Others to Act (Remove barriers); (6) Produce Short-Term Wins (Create some visible, unambiguous successes as soon as possible); (7) Don’t Let Up. **Make it Stick.** (8) Create a New Culture.

my research and design in positioning evangelization and catechesis within the expanding digital culture.

Then an older and highly respected member of the colony suggested that they try something new. “Maybe you should do what Fred did when he found our terrible problem. Walk around, keeping your eyes and minds open. Be curious.” The Head Penguin, recognizing the need for a different approach, agreed. “Let’s try it,” he said, and so they did.

(Our Iceberg is Melting – Kotter)³

Early Research and Developments

Late in 1996 the **ACTA Foundation** commissioned the **Institute for Pastoral Initiatives** (the Center for Religious Communication) of the University of Dayton to assess the availability and use of communication technology for catechesis and adult faith formation for both parishes and Catholic schools. The results of the study offered a picture (1996) of efforts being made to assimilate the new communication technologies into catechetical programs. The hope was that the data would serve as a basis for planning the Church’s priorities and catechetical strategies for the 21st century. The final report was organized into nine sections: a survey of Catholic school principals, a survey of directors of religious education (catechesis) at the parish and diocesan levels, as well as Catholic media professions. A content analysis of religious education sites on the Internet, publishers of religious media with included with findings and conclusions based on the study.

The results reported (1996) were consistent with the consultative experiences of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives prior to the study. Although there was a significant movement within our contemporary educational culture to integrate new communication technologies in the learning environment, religious education (catechesis) had not kept pace with the evolving media revolution. There were a number of factors that triggered this reality:

- ✓ A traditional methodological understanding, appreciation, and preference for catechesis at all levels.
- ✓ The application of new communication technologies to the catechetical environment historically had been a slow process of initiation.
- ✓ The struggle and tension for integrating creative methodology (technologies) with the content of catechesis into a meaningful learning experience.
- ✓ The perception that new methodologies and/or technologies are extras or irrelevant to catechesis.
- ✓ The cost of acquiring hardware and new software inhibit any consideration for redesigning catechetical learning environments.

³ Ibid. Kotter. p. 60.

- ✓ Catechetical formation and training programs seldom include the formation needed to introduce, raise consciousness, demonstrate practical applications, and identify resources and curriculum design for the integration of new communication technologies to the catechetical environment.
- ✓ The idea that we live in a ‘new era,’ that is, a new culture, with a new language, psychology, and techniques has not yet been affirmed or seriously addressed within our catechetical environments even though *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Aetatis Novae* spoke profoundly in this regard.
- ✓ The lack of a comprehensive infrastructure within the diocese and/or parish/school had inhibited the design, development, and use of new communication software to support new catechetical approach.
- ✓ Limited financial hardware, and software resources to motivate catechists.
- ✓ The failure of CTNA (Catholic Telecommunications Network of America) to capture the catechetical imagination of the US Catholic Church.
- ✓ Limited conversations and collaboration among Catholic media producers and publishers with those in the catechetical ministry to come up with a comprehensive integrated catechetical plan to meet new needs resulting from a new communications culture.

A follow-up grant (1997-1999)⁴ enabled The Institute for Pastoral Initiatives⁵ team to spend two years monitoring the development of e-learning in our Catholic higher institutions in the fields of theology, religious studies, religious education and pastoral leadership formation. In November 2000, a colloquium was held at the University of Dayton entitled *Going the Distance: Theology, Religious Education and Distance Learning*. The intensive two-day experience further confirmed earlier research. While an increasing number of the faculty in these departments is using instructional technology and the Internet for traditional classes, there was a definite reluctance to consider e-learning or more comprehensive application of technology for these fields of study. However, there were twelve beacons of light shifting the sands, and their stories have been documented.⁶ All the colloquium participants addressed the resistance of theology or pastoral ministry faculty toward e-learning. Some of their reasons for resistance were rooted in reducing the amount of contact time (physical) between instructor and student by 50 percent, or the conducting full on-line courses.

⁴ This grant was received from Our Sunday Visitor Foundation for catechetical research.

⁵ The Institute for Pastoral Initiatives mobilizes the resources of the University of Dayton for partnerships with the Church that create and implement innovative pastoral initiatives designed to meet the needs of the Church and to articulate faith within the context of the contemporary culture.

⁶ Catholic Universities that were early beacons of light navigating into distance learning for Theology, Pastoral Theology, Religious Education and Pastoral Leadership Formation were: Newman University (Kansas), University of Great Falls (Montana), Chaminade University (Hawaii), Creighton University (Nebraska), Aquinas Institute (Missouri), University of St. Thomas (Minnesota), St. John’s University (New York) and The Institute for Pastoral Initiatives – University of Dayton (Ohio).

Catholic higher educational institutions became stagnated in our discussion on e-learning when they continued to perceive the methodology for course offerings as an either/or versus a both/and. There was no doubt that personal contact and the socialization process was imperative for learning for them. The colloquium participants concluded that if Catholic Higher Education would continue to share their e-learning experiences, implementation strategies and research findings, we may find that in the end the quality and distribution of Catholic Higher Education and Ministry Formation would be enhanced. More importantly we could make a Catholic contribution to the e-learning culture as it unfolds.

Today we see that while the resistance continues to some degree, the hand writing is on the wall. Our Catholic Higher Education Institutions have come to realize that money, distance, time, lifestyles and family obligations are preventing, for a growing majority, the participation in traditional ways of learning. Thus, we are slowly observing three or more courses being available online from within any given Catholic Institution with ‘blended learning’⁷ addressing the ‘resistance issues’.⁸

*The world is in great need of “imagers” of the Gospel; that is, individuals who are able to vision new patterns and use new techniques (technologies) as the tools of an artist to capture the religious imagination of the culture.*⁹

(Angela Ann Zukowski)

The openness to God and self leads to openness to others, in listening to their stories and experiences, their needs and aspirations, in the sharing of faith experiences and in creating and supporting living communities.

(Franz-Josef Eilers)¹⁰

Catechesis and Communication

In 1997 the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) was published.¹¹ The Preface to the GDC states:

⁷ Blended Learning is addressed later in this paper under E-Learning.

⁸ Catholic Higher Education making some bold steps in this regard in Theology, Religious Studies, Pastoral Ministry Formation: The University of Dayton, Notre Dame University, Boston College, to name a few.

⁹ Babin, Pierre & Zukowski, Angela Ann. *The Gospel in Cyberspace: Nurturing Faith in the Internet Age*. Loyola Press. 2002. p.157.

¹⁰ Eilers, Franz Josef. *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*. Logos (Divine Word Publications). Manila 2004. p 34.

¹¹ *General Directory for Catechesis*. Vatican City. Published by USCCB. Washington. DC 1998.

The basic intention of the Directory was (and remains) that of offering reflections and principles, rather than immediate applications or practical directives. This method has been adopted principally for the reason that defects and errors in catechetical material can be avoided only if the nature and the end of catechesis, as well as the truths and values which must be transmitted are correctly understood from the outset.¹²

The concrete application of these principles and pronouncements by means of guidelines, national, regional or diocesan directories, catechisms and other ways deemed suitable for the effective promotion of catechesis is something which pertains to the specific competence of the various Episcopates.¹³

There are twenty-seven direct GDC references to communication or the use of media (communication technology) for catechetical ministry. Several of these references prepared the ground for animating the recommendations of our ACTA Foundation Study. The GDC references were:

The Church, in transmitting the faith, does not have a particular method nor any single method. Rather, she discerns contemporary methods in the light of the pedagogy of God and uses with liberty “everything that is true, everything that is novel, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honor and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. (Phil 4. 8)

Hence, a variety of methods is a sign of life and richness” as well as a demonstration of respect for those to whom catechesis is addressed.¹⁴

The first areopagus of the modern age is the world of communication, which is unifying humanity...The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large”(RM). For this reason, in addition to the numerous traditional means in use, the media has become essential for evangelization and catechesis (AN). In fact, “The Church would feel herself guilty before God if she did not avail of those powerful instruments which human

¹² Ibid. Article 9. p. 12-13.

¹³ Ibid. Article 9. p. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid. Article 148. p. 145.

skill is constantly developing and perfecting... in them she finds a new and more effective forum a platform or pulpit from which she can address the multitudes. (EN)”¹⁵

While some of the communication technologies referred to in sections of the GDC are now dated the inner vision for studying and applying the expanding communications technology for evangelization and catechesis is ever present.

As indicated above the concrete application of the GDC principles were left to the various Episcopates. Thus, in the National Directories for Catechesis (NDC) publications¹⁶, we discover how the local Churches perceive media or communications technology integrated into their ministries; however, here again, some, not all the references would soon be dated because of the shifting sands of the communications technology; yet, the inner spirit is there for expansion, inclusion and adaptation. The United States NDC states:

In some instances, communication technology changes so rapidly that before an individual medium and its inherent implications can be properly understood, it is already obsolete. This can confuse catechists and make them hesitant to employ contemporary media in catechesis. It will be helpful for diocesan catechetical and communications personnel to explore each individual medium of communication for its catechetical potential so that they may better assist catechists in developing the specific skills needed for the effective use of these media in proclaiming the Gospel.

Contemporary communications media do not merely transmit information; they generate visual, audible, emotional, and in some cases entirely virtual experiences for individuals and communities. Well-planned catechesis must employ these media so that the message of Jesus Christ can be effectively communicated in the real circumstances and culture of those who seek him.¹⁷

Those, to whom the Gospel message is addressed today, both young and old, are, in a sense, children of the media. They have been reared in the media age and have a high level of comfort with using media.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid. Article 160. p. 153.

¹⁶ Each country needs to reflect upon their own National Directory for Catechesis to determine how communications technology is addressed and encouraged. This chapter reflects developments in the United States.

¹⁷ *National Directory for Catechesis*. USCCB. Washington, DC. 2005. Article 69. p. 287.

¹⁸ Ibid. NDC. Article 106.

Given the time passage since the 1996 *ACTA Foundation Study, Going the Distance Colloquium* and the recommendations of the *GDC* and *NDC*, one of my graduate students decided to research for her Master Thesis if the impact of these documents and the melting of the communications technology into the every day lives of individuals had any major affect on catechesis eleven years later.¹⁹ Do catechetical plans include a comprehensive integrated approach for applying communication technologies for new learning spaces and adapted to the new ‘digital culture’ whose citizens are ‘digital natives’?²⁰ Are there more technological tools and resources available to catechetics and have opinions and attitudes changed since 1996?

Summary highlights of Sattler’s research (2007) indicates that while there has been tremendous growth in the inclusion of communications technology in every day life, school and business environments, as well as the development of e-libraries, Church management and liturgical software resources that catechesis has not kept pace with the evolution. Throughout her research project, a common theme continued to be noted as in the 1996 study that lack of time, resources, formation and expertise to use technology effectively in catechetical environments is present across the board. Many survey participants noted that communication technology is used to enhance lessons, not to take the place of textbooks, real-life experiences or catechists themselves. They also noted frustration with a lack of updated, relevant catechetical materials with media / communication technology components. Many catechists are still uncomfortable with using technology. Negative opinions and attitudes about communication technology most frequently appear with the lack of understanding and knowledge application. While Catholic schools may have more immediate accessibility to these technology resources, SMART board, iPods/podcasts, blogs, content management systems, computers in the classrooms, Internet access, PowerPoint presentations, etc. they are less frequently applied to religious education (catechesis) than other subject matter. This is demonstrating a direct link to how students approach religion classes since their learning style has already shifted in light of the new learning environment away from a traditional way of learning. Students today are “digital natives”; they have grown up surrounded by and immersed in technology from a very young age. Some catechists state that they struggle to keep up with their students. Many catechists and pastoral leaders are “digital immigrants” who have not had the ability or opportunity to become as fully immersed in this new culture as their students or those they serve in ministry.²¹

In summary, the communications culture is exploding around us, weaving itself into the fabric of most people’s lives. The fundamental constructs of 21st century cultures

¹⁹ Sattler, Tarla Nicole. Information and Communication Technology Usage in Religious Education Classrooms. Unpublished. The University of Dayton. April 2007.

²⁰ The term ‘digital natives’ is currently used in most educational technology literature to speak of the millennial generations lived experience with digital technology today. It is woven into the very fabric of their way of life.

²¹ Ibid. Sattler. p. 22.

are intimately linked with each new digital development that alters the way we think, feel, experience and communicate with one another.

Catholic schools are striving to keep pace with the best of their ability for supporting communication technology plans in the schools. This impacts how our students are reading, analyzing, synthesizing, designing, processing and communicating within their learning environments and world. In effect, the ‘digital natives’, belong to a new learning culture that challenges the catechetical field today. Whether it is a mobile/palm phone, iPod, or a WiFi laptop computer, our young people today are “wired” in more ways than one and are socially communicating with parents and friends. Where we were once comfortable with learning how to run a Slide Projector, VCR, 16 mm projector, and 35 mm camera, now passé, we are now faced with using the LCD Projector, Digital Photography, Digital Video, iPods, UTube, FaceBook, MySpace, Weblogs, Instant Messaging, and other up-to-the minute social networking tools. This generation use tools like iTunes, iPhoto, GarageBand, iMovie, iDVD, and iWEB to name a few digital tools options.²² Yet, catechesis still lags behind in methodology.²³ According to the report *New Students, New Tools, Creating Digital Learning Environments*,²⁴

Multimedia and creative tools help students learn in new ways, manipulate information in various forms, and share compelling presentations. From photo editing to movie production to online collaboration, students interact with professional tools and learn the skills they will need as adults in this global environment.

While we need to be sensitive for adapting our methodology to the cultural context of those we serve, we also need to be on the cutting edge – observing, researching, experimenting and applying new methodologies influencing the ‘digital natives’ of the 21st century with the Gospel Message. In *Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, we read:

²² Cervany, Caroline. *Media Spheres: Means of Communication*. To be published in *Catechist* journal. The University of Dayton Catechist Series. Peter Li, Inc. Winter 2008.

²³ It is not my attempt in this article to speak to the content of catechesis which is very well defined in the General Directory of Catechesis, Catechism of the Catholic Church, National Directories of Catechesis, or National Catholic Adult Catechisms., and other documents. My goal is to focus our attention on an expanding reality of the ‘digital age’ and its potential impact on how we evangelize and catechize. What has evolved is a ‘new culture’. This new culture does have ‘a new language, techniques and psychology’ that cannot be ignored if our evangelizing and catechizing is to take root. It is not one or the other but both/and and those who minister for the Good News need to be adequately acquainted with these communication technologies exploring their depth and horizons for the impact and/or utilization for effective ministry.

²⁴ Technology and Learning. “*New Students, New Tools, Creating Digital Learning Environments*. NewBay Media. 2007.

But, without a doubt, the Internet's immense potential can be enormously helpful in spreading the Good News. This has already been proven by various initiatives the church has taken, calling for a responsible creative development on the new frontier of the church's mission.²⁵

We are realizing today that students must become lifelong learners in the progression of their faith life; thus, they are expected to take more responsibility for managing their own learning.²⁶ Communications technology can be an effective means offering this lifelong support.

The scenario I am projecting is not meant to discourage us concerning our perceived reality. I explore copious Catholic journals scouting emerging digital and e-resources to support pastoral ministry, catechesis and evangelization. What are definitely emerging in rapid speed are excellent online and digital managerial resources for the parish. One article indicated that using technology to enable and support ministry should not be considered an alternative means of doing work of the church but rather a deliberate act of good stewardship. It went on to say that 'no community should risk spiritual bankruptcy' by consuming the time and energy of its ministry leaders in failing to provide them with the tools and resources they need to offer their very best talents. Technology exists today in a variety of categories to remove some of the tiresome burden of administrative tasks from those called and commissioned to ministry. A quick survey of digital resources carries us to a clear leader in the field is *Logos Research Systems, Inc.*, provider of Logos Bible Software, built on the Libronix Digital Library System. The freely downloadable Libronix DLS engine reads the electronic books available from Logos and third-party publishers. These powerful tools, sold separately or bundled in collections, automate bible study.²⁷

Technology continues to provide assistance and insight for those who craft the liturgy. The stand-bearers in this are GIA (with HymnPrint.com and LiturgyHelp.com) and Oregon Catholic Press (with Liturgy.com and PrintandPraise.com) have both added new features to their online editions. New online and digital resources continue to be introduced on the market to support our ministry needs.

There are any number of individuals, Catholic Institutes, Centers and academic institutions who are navigating the new digital culture pioneering new techniques to stimulate the religious imagination. Each and everyone needs to be applauded. Many of these works alone or in isolation of other ministries or partners due to any number of factors: lack of understanding of their vision, funds, support, qualified or interested partners, available technology, cultural/political situation, etc. However, this need not keep us from dreaming and imagining what might be possible in our future. We need to

²⁵ *Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture*. Vatican. 1999. See also *Christifideles Laici* #44.

²⁶ Zukowski, Angela Ann. *The New Frontier: Integrating Media and Technology in Ministry*. RCL Professional Study White Paper for Religious Education. Allen, TX. 2002. p. 2.

²⁷ Ministry & Liturgy. August 2005. p. 16–18.

stand as sentinels upon the world (a light on a mountain top) being creatively inspired (Holy Spirit) to be innovative animators of a new catechesis for a new period in history.

The following pages are designed to contribute toward moving the conversation forward for a new catechesis (approach/methodology). I realize that by the time this article may be read some dimensions of it may be dated for a particular culture as well. There are yet many barriers and degrees of resistance that we encounter as we pioneer the new media landscape. However, it is the ‘spirit’ with which it is shared that I hope will stir the embers of our religious imagination to keep the embers burning for creativity, innovation and inspired catechesis for the 21st century.

There are different approaches in today’s Church to the integration of social communication. In a growing way the development of convergence and integration in communication can be seen as moving from a single mass media to multi-media integration and finally converging into possibly one device like computers.
(Eilers)²⁸

Imagination, Catechesis and Communication

In his book, *The Glass Walking Stick*, G.K. Chesterton wrote: “What is wanted is the truly godlike imagination, which makes all things new, because all things have been new. That would really be something like a new power of the mind.”

Remembering his own imagination in childhood, he spoke of “a sort of white light on everything, cutting things out very clearly, and rather emphasizing their solidity. The point is that the white light had a sort of wonder in it, as if the world were as new as myself; but not that the world was anything but a real world.”²⁹ Perhaps as we strive to hold an open perspective to what evolving communication technologies have to offer our new evangelization and catechesis for the 21st century, we might wish to hold Chesterton’s ideas in mind and heart in order to maintain our enthusiasm, imagination, creativity and wonder.

“True imagination,” said Chesterton, “is founded in the astonishment and wonder that results from shining that ‘white light’ of clarity upon the objective reality.” “I am confident,” Chesterton wrote, “that there is no future for the modern world, unless it can understand that it has not merely to seek what is more and more exciting, but rather the yet more exciting business of discovering the excitement in things that are called dull.” (Spice of Life)

Chesterton calls us to reclaim our imagination because imagination dares to take risks (spiraling upward). It dares to have fun, dares to play and dares “to waste time,” dares to engage in nonsense. In these days when expanding economic dynamics seem to hold us hostage with ambiguity, stress, anxiety and fear of the unknown, do we close

²⁸ Ibid. Eilers, p. 61.

²⁹ Peters, T.C. *The Christian Imagination: G.K. Chesterton on the Arts*. Ignatius Press. 2000.

our windows and doors of imagination, wonder and innovation? Or do we see great opportunities through the “new power of the mind” and in exposing ourselves to the “white light” of new insights, possibilities and pathways into the future no matter how big or small the reality around us?

In *Common Fire*³⁰ the moral dimension of imagination is addressed.

The moral life of a community is determined, in part, by the images available to it for the formation of the imagination by which it lives. Artists and what we call “the media” are primary providers of those images in the contemporary world. The vocation of the artist is whatever medium is to reveal the truth of the human condition and to enlarge our imagination of life, through the exploration of the beautiful and the sublime, the ordinary and the degraded. It has been said that artists serve a prophetic function in society, not because they see into a crystal ball, but rather because they are so attentive to what is happening in the present when others are looking through the spectacles of yesterday. The word “art” is rooted in the act of connection, fitting things together.

A few years ago I read a book entitled *The Disney Way*. The book highlights what enabled Walt Disney to capture the imagination of not only the culture but also the people with whom he surrounded himself. Disney began by forming a group of people he called “imagers.” Their job was to be engaged in “Imagineering,” that is, to engage in constant creative thinking about the work they were missioned to do.

Imagine if we applied this principle of “Imagineering” to the work of the Church or the catechetical ministry for the twenty-first century? In order to maintain the “Imagineering” spirit, Disney employees are encouraged to participate in “dream retreats.” Walt Disney had a four-pillared philosophy to bring his ideas into reality: dream, believe, dare and do. The dream retreat methodology is, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” A dream retreat environment propels participants into a world of new ideas that often spark innovative solutions to the problems at hand. I am not suggesting that we need to totally accept “The Disney Way” for our catechetical ministry. However, I do believe there are clues for us to learn from Disney that can be applied for designing a comprehensive integrated communications plan especially for the Church’s catechetical and evangelizing ministries. We now live in a rapidly expanding ‘digital culture’ with ‘digital natives’. It has shifted the way we work, learn, play and communicate with one another. As ministers of the Gospel, we cannot ignore this reality. It is all too easy to think from within the box. We need to put new wine into new wineskins, if our communicating faith is to be sustained in the future. Yet, there seems to be a hidden fear about change.

³⁰ Daloz, Keen, Keen and Parks. *Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*. Beacon Press. 1996. p. 229.

A change is something you do, and a fad is something people talk about.

(Peter Drucker)

Pastoral communication for catechetics in modern times, however, can not limit itself only to books. Audio-visual means including the Internet are to be used as well as the methods of group communication.

(Eilers)³¹

Living with Change

To live in these times is to live with change. Change is a condition of our existence. Not just isolated, one-time, occasional changes, but ongoing, continuous change. The digital culture is constantly changing, complex, and uncertain. These qualities may cause us to stay away from it. We all resist change in some dimension of our lives. We know that we are defined by our paradigms and feel assaulted when they are threatened. So, to speak about finding a ‘new way of being Church or new methodology/technique to embrace evangelization and catechesis for the ‘digital age’ may appear threatening or challenging to some.

In her book *E-volve!*, Rosebeth Moss Kanter (2001)³² identifies 10 classic reasons why people resist change in the early stages of any new endeavor:

1. **Loss of face** – Fear that dignity will be undermined; embarrassment because the change feels like exposure for past mistakes.
2. **Loss of control** – Anger at decisions being taken out of one’s hands, power shifting elsewhere.
3. **Excess uncertainty** – Feeling uninformed about where the change will lead.
4. **Surprise, surprise!** – Automatic defensiveness – no chance to get ready.
5. **The “difference” effect** – Seems strange and unfamiliar, and challenges usually unquestioned habits and routines.
6. **“Can I do it?”** – Concerns about future competence, worries about whether one still will be successful after the change.
7. **Ripple effects** – Annoyance at disruptions to other activities and interference with the accomplishment of unrelated tasks.
8. **More work** – Resistance to additional things to do, new things to learn and no time to do it all.
9. **Past resentments** – Memories of past hostilities or problems that were never resolved.
10. **Real threats** – Anger that the change will inflict real pain and create.

³¹ Ibid. Eilers. p. 101.

³² Moss Kanter, R. *E-volve!* Harvard Business School Publishing. Cambridge, MA 2001. p. 256.

These ten points of resistance are worthy of our consideration as we strive to choose ways for incorporating communication technologies into our ministries. If and where they exist, we need to clearly point out how we can surmount these barriers to pave a fresh pathway for invigorating the religious imagination and constructing valuable ongoing faith formation opportunities.

We perceive only the sensations we are programmed to receive, and our awareness is further restricted by the fact that we recognize only those for which we have mental maps or categories.³³

(Ben Zander)

The consciousness of the communication situation of the recipients in all their dimensions is decisive for Christian communication. It is to make the recipients the main concern and not our own projections or ideas...It means in the spirit of service to reach out beyond formalities and doctrine into the real life of peoples.

(Franz-Josef Eilers)³⁴

Kanter³⁵ indicates that ‘to live with e-culture is to live with change. Not just isolated, one-time occasional changes, but ongoing, continuous, ubiquitous, never-finished change. Change is a condition of existence.’ Therefore, that even under benign circumstances, pastoral leaders must be even more skillful at handling the human side of change when the environment is turbulent and the impact of change revolutionary. Kanter sees seven classical skills involved in innovation and change: (1) tuning into the environment; (2) kaleidoscope thinking; (3) an inspiring vision; (4) coalition building; (5) nurturing a working team; (6) persisting through difficulties; and, (7) spreading credit and recognition.

These skills need to be practiced if we are to reach deep into a new power of the mind bathed in a white light and allow our imagination, intuition and wonder to unleash new creative alternatives for embracing the new evangelization and catechetical initiatives of the 21st century. This is what is called the “spiraling up effect.”

We all have times, however, when it seems that ideas and insights just don’t come. Perhaps the true test of our creativity is finding new ways to transform those blocked moments. Sampson Raphaelson, screenwriter of the first talking movie and famous playwright of the 1930s – 40s defined imagination as “the capacity to see what is there.” Usually the lack of imagination is a lack of conscious practice of our

³³ Zander, Rosamund, Zander, Benjamin. *The Art of Possibility*. Harvard Business School. 2000. p. 10.

³⁴ Ibid. Eilers. p. 77.

³⁵ Ibid, Kanter. p. 258ff.

imaginative abilities. To become fully alive, we need to engage in deep consciousness of the people and world around us.

Vaclav Havel held that our way of being in the world was one requiring that “Consciousness proceeds being.” Furthermore, as we become more conscious, we realize that everything around us is invented and thus we also can invent new ways of doing what we are doing now. Alexander Graham Bell once said, “Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds.”

Imagine what it could be like if in our evangelization and catechetical endeavors we consciously resolve to invent new ways for jumping over perceived digital culture hurdles, barriers and handicaps that appear to prevent us excelling in creativity and imagination even in the darkest moments. How would our presence in the digital impact our ministries and ministries formation?

Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication rests not only on one medium or one strategy but rather on integrated ministries and integrated persons who are convinced that the Church and every Church member is and are essentially communication. Christ is born and made flesh into concrete situations by concrete persons here and now.

(Franz-Josef Eilers)³⁶

Innovation Styles

In *Flash of Brilliance*, William C. Miller (1999) indicates that each person employs a mixture of distinct innovation styles, each with its own unique question to stimulate new ideas:

Visioning – What ideas give us an ideal future?

Modifying – What ideas optimize what we have done?

Experimenting – What ideas combine different elements?

Exploring – What ideas start with totally new assumptions?

By becoming fluent in entertaining the questions above regularly through critical reflection, we engage in a continual waking awareness that opens doors and windows to the white light of imagination for new pathways and innovation.

The new communication era challenges us to be beacons of light to the impact of the expanding digital culture for the mission of the Church. Our hopes and dreams for what is possible do not have to fade with the unexpected and surprising pressures and challenges we encounter from negative forces around us. Instead of influencing a dynamic that causes a “spiraling down” effect, let us positively call one another to practice a “spiraling up” effect in our dynamics with one another.

³⁶ Ibid. Eilers, p. 61-62.

Our goal might be to make a covenant to maintain a sense of wonder, imagination and innovation at every step along the way. If and when we face resistance to change within ourselves, or those we minister with, step back and embrace the white light within in us and exercise the power of the mind for inspiring wonder, imagination and innovation. Keep in mind that creativity emerges when we open ourselves to something bigger than our own minds or ways of doing something. In this manner, we maintain a spiraling up effect that influences a healthy, energetic and creative space for the Gospel to be experienced.

I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.

(Albert Einstein)

Evangelizing communication is an activity which aims at sharing and spreading God's love and redemption to people beyond the confines – material or mental -of the established Christian community.

(Franz-Josef Eilers)³⁷

New Pathways: E-Socialization

Three times a semester I sponsor a “**Catechist Vocare Dinner**”³⁸ with my students. I have over 45 students who participate in a two year program entitled The FORUM for Young Catechetical Leaders. My goal is that these students will become outstanding catechists attuned to the wisdom of our Church’s rich heritage, the insights from General and National Directories for Catechesis and innovative for applying communication technology to their catechetical ministries. One evening as we waited for students to arrive, I shared with them insights from recent articles about You Tube, MySpace, FaceBook and wondered how these might be applied to catechesis.

There was immediate enthusiasm. One student indicated that he had just finished writing a paper on his Facebook experience, comparing his entries with others. He was interested in the transparency, authenticity, vulnerability and focus of each site. One student indicated that before he arrived for dinner he had checked in with the MySpace, YouTube, CNN and NBC Websites. He could not imagine not linking into these sites at least four to seven times a day, as each student entered the conversation, I realized that students find these online ‘places’ or ‘spaces’ an interesting if not significant location to connect with people all over the world.

These are really e-socialization places. As pastoral leaders, ministers and catechists, we cannot ignore this reality, especially in young people’s lives. We need to consider that these are places or spaces that we ought to incorporate into our ministries. We are

³⁷ Ibid. Eilers. p. 189.

³⁸ In 2007 The Institute for Pastoral Initiatives created the ‘Catechetical Digital Scholarship’. This scholarship is presented to UD FORUM students who have created an innovative way to authentic communicate faith within the digital culture.

already aware that there exists growing number of Catholic entrepreneurs adventuring into this new cyber territory with attention-grabbing success in this regard.

Educational theorist Marc Prensky says that young people are “digital natives” well versed in the uses and etiquette of computers, digital cameras, mobile phones, text messaging, Weblogs, and the like. The youth were born into a world filled with gadgets and online community and to most of them it is a way of life.

There are some who prefer the synchronous vs. the asynchronous approach for e-socialization. Both offer significant opportunities to nurture a sense of community. Synchronicity offers an immediate dimension to ‘community’ and e-learning. Catechists and pastoral leaders ought to carefully deem how they might apply it. For example, Instant Messaging is not a good way to deliver a lecture. It is better suited to brainstorming, investigating, discussion, networking, or exploring common issues.

We need to face the fact that a new digital democracy is emerging and expanding with quantum leaps, and young people are the primary citizens. In *Time* magazine’s person of the year issue, James Poniewozik states, “On the Web, anyone with a digital camera has the power to change history”³⁹ While some educators and Church leaders continue to question whether the Internet offers any real socialization experiences or opportunities, chatrooms, Instant Messaging, **YouTube**, **MySpace**, **Facebook**, wikis, **LiveJournal** and similar spaces are nurturing the digital culture for self-expression and relationships. User-generated content is revolutionizing the media and digital landscape. It is reported that users upload approximately 65,000 new videos to the **YouTube** site every day. A year ago, they watched 10 million videos a day; now they watch 100 million (Poniewozik).

Video-sharing sites are changing the flow of information. It is so simple. All one needs is a combination of a digital camera and a Web site and one is contributing to the new media landscape. It is easy, cheap and offers free distribution. That makes it both potent and complex. The March 2, 2007 *Washington Post* (Jose Antonio Vargas) in its online lead story stated: “Yesterday, as part of what the video-sharing site describes as a voter education initiative, it (**YouTube**) launched “You Choose ‘08’ where voters can find the official Web videos from Hillary Clinton, Rudy Giuliani, Barack Obama et al. listed on one page. Here the viewers are encouraged to post text comments and video responses and rate candidate-created videos.”

YouTube became a phenomenon in 2006. Another *Time* magazine article indicated, “**YouTube** is to video browsing what a Wal-Mart Super center is to shopping; everything is there and all you have to do is walk in the door.” We now are seeing that YouTube is a media outlet and a social force – a place where ideas and images can spread instantly, cheaply, democratically and anarchically (Tumulty, 2006)⁴⁰ **YouTube**, **MySpace** and the like are the fastest growing sites for e-socialization. Here we discover people from all walks of life sharing dimensions of their life in an open forum. Of course, there is always the factor of authenticity with

³⁹ Poniewozik, J. „On the Web, Anyone with A Digital Camera Has the Power to Change History“. *Time*. 12/2006. p. 63.

⁴⁰ Tumulty, K. *Time*. 12/2006. p. 69.

their entries; however, whether the profiles are true or not, individuals are engaging in online conversation and finding meaning and a sense of belonging. For, as Kanter says, “It’s not the computer that creates community, it’s the human connections. The relationships that electronic networks enable can potentially transform social institutions, in powerful, beneficial ways.”⁴¹

I have yet to find a student who has not indicated that something is happening that is making a difference in how the student feels about himself or herself and relationships with the world via those who visit their site and engage in animated, extensive and revealing conversations. As people are beginning to move away from mainstream TV programs and toward reality shows, **YouTube**, **MySpace** and **Facebook** create personal engagement with the virtual reality that add a new dimension to their lives. We have yet to understand the tip of this iceberg of what is developing here and the difference it will continue to make in humanity’s socialization processes in the next five to ten years. Many questions remain, but it is becoming more obvious that this new democracy is not going to disappear anytime soon.

Clearly, social-networking sites can create and maintain relationships that wouldn’t have existed otherwise. But can they sustain relationships? Are these expanding e-socialization sites only a way to avoid dealing with people face to face? Is it possible that our youth, in particular, can loose the limited interpersonal communication skills they currently have by our ignoring, encouraging, or affirming their time in these “places”? Much research is demanded in this area. We need to be cognizant of our responsibility for monitoring and determining the ethical factors that influence the lives of our youth and young adults by time spent online. Yet, I have found with my online ministry there is a profound personal depth of spiritual sharing and caring that begs our pastoral attention and support.

I know I have much to learn about these expanding online ‘places’ or ‘spaces’. I need to spend quality time with the young women and men that are around me every day, listening and in conversation about their experiences with **YouTube**, **MySpace** and **Facebook**, as well as spending a bit more time there myself to capture the breadth and depth of the culture. I have no doubt that standing side by side with young adults we can explore positive and creative ways to work in shaping this emerging online democratic culture. We may not alter it dramatically, but we can demonstrate that we can create a countercultural dimension to this online reality that could make a difference for enhancing the dignity of persons in a cyber culture today.

The value of an idea lies in using it.

Thomas Edison

Pastoral communication will give them the necessary guidance and will help to digest what they see and hear. Here, especially young people can be partners in pastoral work who are often quite familiar with these new technologies in

⁴¹ Ibid. Kanter. p. 25.

communication. They can develop special programs for pastoral ministry through the internet and help maintain computer and online systems.

(Franz-Josef Eilers)⁴²

New Pathways: Communicating Faith Experiences – Blogging

Weblogs (blogs) are a new medium that has risen out of the web culture. In July 2005 over 52,000 blogs were listed with 511 new blogs listed in 7 days.⁴³ While it may appear to be similar to discussion boards it is a relatively new technology that has emerged out of the youth web-culture. People maintained blogs long before the term was coined, but the trend gained momentum with the introduction of automated published systems, most notably Blogger at www.blogger.com. A blog is an online journal or diary which reflects the personality of the author. Applied within a learning environment blogs can motivate people to read, critically reflect on one another, contributions and enhance the quality of their own faith formation. It can be considered a discourse tool for web-based catechetical learning.

Blogs may provide new strategies for bridging feelings of isolation by offering more engagement and interactive content and supports the emergence of individual voices. Researchers are indicating that growing self-expression is manifested in blogs. Furthermore, as attempts have been made to create a sense of online community through discussion boards, sometimes with limited success, blogging is cultivating the desired sense of online community. One may ask how and why this has occurred. Some researchers indicate that since it has evolved out of the normal stream of e-culture it has become a democratic medium for all involved. Other researchers believe that online discussion groups and e-mail may be losing appeal.

Blogs are creating pathways for the new evangelization giving space for individuals to ask questions, define inquiry, process and synthesize data and information, creating digital faith stories/histories, draw conclusions and develop action plans for ongoing faith or spiritual formation based on newfound knowledge with like-minded people. They afford a diary-like monologue, invite dialogue and promote a learner-centered approach because they afford personal expression (Wrede, 2003).

The shift in the learning paradigm from an objectivistic to a constructivist perspective within the learning environment seems to be the key for understanding Blogging.⁴⁴ Constructivist perspective is that knowledge is constructed not transmitted. The learner is active in the process. In order for Blogging to be effective it requires an attitude of exploration, interaction and manipulation within the learning environment by the bloggers.

⁴² Ibid. Eilers, p. 176.

⁴³ See www.blogwise.com/bycountry.

⁴⁴ Dickey, Michele. „The impact of web-logs (blogs) on student perceptions of isolation and alienation in a web-based distance-learning environment.“ *Open Learning*. Vol 19. 3. November 2004. p. 280.

Anyone with basic computer and internet skills can establish a blog on the Web. The Pew Internet & American Life Project recently reported that 7 percent of the 120 million adult Internet users in the United States have created blogs. In 2004 alone, blog readership jumped 58 percent.⁴⁵

Blogs offer the opportunity for conversation and discourse which seems to be fostering collaboration and support social negotiation in learning. What are some applications of blogs?

Newspapers, businesses, political campaigns, religious groups, self-help agencies and individual interest groups are designing blogs to network, share and gather information. Teens represent half of all bloggers to explore hobbies and link to interesting or fun websites. Many use their own blogs to socialize across the Internet, and more use them in classrooms, as teachers find new ways to explore the form's potential for learning.⁴⁶

Creating a blog can build bridges among Pastoral leaders, catechists, catechist's students/parents, adults interested in forming online support communities, evangelization, spiritual seekers and more. By establishing a blog on Catholic Church updates (universal or local), Catholic Trends, new Catholic resources, or as a basis for stimulating interest in Vocations, stirring the embers of those interested in the Catholic Faith, diocesan staffs/teams working together are means toward encouraging a dialogic process. Yet, blogs offer fast feedback and some pastoral leaders/catechists may not be ready to handle the flood of information and/or the expectations created by opening the door to share insights.

Bishops, pastors, pastoral leaders and catechists are creating blogs to share their faith, spiritual life, Catholic Book Clubs, insights for inspiring their faithful, social action issues, sharing lesson plans, curriculum designs, seeking collaborative diocesan/parish projects, seeking new resources, etc. blogs are breaking new ground for pastoral interaction. A casual journey through blogs operative within your geographic area (considering yourself an observer) can offer insights into what people are talking about, what is stirring within the local culture.

Yet, there is still the question whether Catholic pastoral leaders desire to use this communication technology for reaching out to their faith community. It really is not an either/or but possibly a both/and reality.

As Michele D. Dickey states, "it is important to acknowledge that the tools do not evoke the dynamics of a learning (*faith*)⁴⁷ community, but rather these dynamics are the result of the interplay between content, the instructor (*pastoral minister/leader*) and the learners (*audience*). The affordances of tools, however, may impact discourse and interaction."⁴⁸ Exploring ways to overcome the sense of isolation, lack of socialization, or frustration with understanding how to apply the Web for ministry, as we have said

⁴⁵ Colgan, Craig. *What's in a Blog?* American School Board. July 2005. p. 18.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Colgan.

⁴⁷ The italics are my insertion into Dickey's quote because I think it can apply.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Dickey. p. 289.

before, is still a pioneering effort. We have only just begun to explore and define new possibilities for the future for the Church's place in the cyber culture.

If you are interested in becoming more familiar with the evolution of blogging here are a few steps:

First, spend some time researching and reviewing existing blogs (see the links in the footnotes⁴⁹). The fastest way to understanding blogging is to try it out. Dialogue with young adults who are engaged in blogging can be a great revelation, as well. Get a feeling for how blogs work, are arranged and developed.

Second, check out who among your diocesan and parish ministers have tried to integrate blogging into their catechetical or pastoral ministry activities. Does the Diocesan Communications Plan offer guidelines or recommendations for blogging?

Third, the advent of communication technology (blogging) enables individuals to collaborate in a virtual team setting regardless of whether they are all in the same office at the same time or in different buildings, parishes, or diocese. A virtual team is a group of individuals who work across time and traditional boundaries on a temporary basis to bring different perspectives and skills to the team. Identify a ministry group to pilot designing a blog (Blogger is totally free, and if you have trouble just click on the button and you can get help to navigate you through the process. www.blogger.com/tour_end.g). All one needs to move forward are: a computer, Web browser and an Internet connection. Blogging software is also needed but there are some free Weblog sites (www.blogger.com) to explore its possibilities.

*The Possible's slow fuse is lit
By the Imagination*⁵⁰

Emily Dickinson

New Pathways: iPods Gateways for Catechetical Opportunities

During the 2007 International Consumer Electronics Show held in Las Vegas, Nevada, Bill Gates' keynote highlighted the current reality of the digital era. He pointed out that 65 percent of homes now use digital cameras and more than 2 million digital photos were taken last year. There is a high penetration of multiple personal computers in the home (now 40 percent in the USA). He indicated that the younger generation spends more time on a Windows PC than watching TV. Portable devices are proliferating. Digital cameras are six megapixels and up.

⁴⁹ www.weblogg-ed.com – a site dedicated to discussions about the use of Web-related technologies in K-12 education and resource to collect rich web links, best practices and related information, www.fixeducation.blogspot.com offer links to other bloggers and advocacy organizations. Other information blogging sites: www.typebad.com, www.blogger.com, www.schoolblogs.com, www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/blog, and www.bloglines.com.

⁵⁰ Emily Dickinson, "The Gleam of a heroic Act", in T. H. Johnson, ed., *The Complete Poems* (Boston Little, Brown 1960. Written 1887; originally published 1914) xix-xx.

Gates noted that when it comes to storage space people aren't talking about *gigabytes* anymore, but *terabytes* and *petabytes* of storage. Add to the conversation that the *Time Magazine* Person of the Year (2006) is you: "Yes, you. You control the Information," the cover statement read. Well, to tell you the truth, I do not feel as if I controlled the Information Age. I feel that the Information Age controls me most of the time. I find myself scurrying around with the support of the '*digital natives*' striving to simply comprehend what is happening at times without even yet using or applying it to my ministry. However, I understood what was being communicated in the *Time* issue. An entirely new culture of "youngsters" is breeding a culture that is evolving at nano speed. It is a speed that I cannot even fathom at my age. I stand back in amazement and wonder: Have we finally become fully functioning "cyber beings," or a "cyber humanity" (Is this really a form of humanity?) that is a form rising faster than my yeast in bread-making mornings? We cannot not address this issue in some way. I do not lie awake in fear, but there are moments when I do wonder what these expanding communication technologies are becoming – a Trojan horse, a gateway to a new consciousness, or a pure fantasy that will disintegrate eventually and leave little to show for it in a way of "being human." Or can it be a gift of communion of nations and peoples that awakens us to both our moral and social responsibilities, as well as a deeper breadth and depth of spiritual enrichment and understanding of one another.

The iPod's entry into the digital culture was swift. A podcast is a radio-like program posted on a website that people can either listen to on their computer or 'subscribe to' so that new episodes are automatically downloaded onto their iPod or another portable device whenever they are posted. Those who first got used to synchronizing their address book and calendar between their phone and their computer, now synchronize their iPods every day to their favorite podcasts. Podcasting is the medium of the masses.⁵¹ Both young and old now have an earpiece for a mobile phone or an iPod in one ear. Watch them stroll, ride/drive to work or school, move between classrooms, go to the gym or hang around common areas. Some catechetical leaders proclaim the iPod's potential while others see it as one more technological trap. Yet, some of the most popular iPod educational uses include recording lectures, taking oral notes and even using the device to create electronic flash cards. Current research indicates that the iPod's potential in learning (catechesis & evangelization) is still under utilized. We have a way to go.

The design of the iPod and its interface is clean and simple. Setup is straightforward – you install and configure iTunes on your PC/Mac, plug the iPods in and you are away. To use the iPod as a recording device, you need to purchase an external microphone, which opens up a range of possibilities. Lectures, interviews, discussions could be recorded for playback and analysis or study. The convenience factor (size and additional functionality) could make iPods preferable to traditional recording devices of these types of activities."

⁵¹ Dwyer, David. „Using Modern Media to Teach the Faith“. *Catechetical Leader*. Vol 17. 2006. p. U3.

The Director of the Paulist Young Adult Ministries has an iPod program called “The Busted Halo Cast”. Twice a week their cast of regulars spends thirty minutes answering questions of faith that their listeners have left on their voicemail line. They have chosen to catechize by way of casual conversation about our faith.⁵²

Currently I am intrigued with iStoryCreator. I see many possibilities for catechesis. This software allows users to create a number of alternative learning experiences. The software allows the author to create texts and then provide options to the user to influence how the story or game progresses. This can be used to create catechetical quizzes, role-playing games, tutorials, demos and many other text-based possibilities that can be interactive or not. There seems to be much room for innovation here. Currently I am recording some of my classes and placing them on my website. A student who misses a particular session can download that session or guest speaker and keep up with the class. There are a slowly growing number of Catholic individuals or groups who are using iPods for daily spiritual enrichment. The Liturgy of the Hours, Meditation for the Day’s Liturgical Readings, Prayers, Mini-retreats, Catholic Literature, Homilies, Masses, etc. can now be downloaded to one’s iPod.

iPods of the next generation is already on the way to market. However, as we see that iPods now exist in the hands of those we strive to catechize or evangelize, why not take advantage of the technology and demonstrate that it can be a great catechetical and evangelizing tool that expands the “space” where catechesis and evangelization occurs today!

*Through the heart new perspectives open up, new alternatives are recognized, new connections are noticed and the world becomes newly enlightened. Imagination gives us new lenses through which to look at our teaching and to be refreshed.*⁵³

Gloria Durka

*The Internet can also provide a kind of follow-up which evangelization requires. Especially in an unsupportive culture, Christian living calls for continuing instruction and catechesis, and this is perhaps the area in which the Internet can provide excellent help.*⁵⁴

(Pope John Paul II)

New Pathways: Catechetical E-Learning

When the first astronauts circled the globe and projected back to us those fabulous pictures of our earth, we were awed. For the first time humanity looked back upon itself from outer space. Years later as the spacecraft Voyager navigated millions of

⁵² Ibid. Dwyer. U5.

⁵³ Durka, Gloria. *The Teacher’s Calling: A Spirituality for Those Who Teach*. Paulist Press. 2002. p. 34.

⁵⁴ Pope John Paul II, „World Communication Day Message 2002“, in: *Communicating in Ministry and Mission* (Eilers). p. 177.

light years from the earth, it sent back new discoveries and insights about the planets and our universe never before thought or imagined. We repeatedly realize that our universe holds information, experiences, and stories yet to be revealed. We need to be people of constant openness.

Such an attitude needs to be embraced as we consider the opportunities that lie before us through the Internet or World Wide Web (WWW). Do computers and the Internet have a space for “faith formation?” This is one of the questions we frequently encounter. In one sense – like Voyager’s journey into space – the Internet is a new frontier, the new missionary landscape, it holds new discoveries and experiences for the ministries of catechesis, the new evangelization, and catechist formation.

What are some factors one might consider when thinking about designing, facilitating, or participating in an e-learning catechetical experience?

In one sense e-learning is simple. It is offering catechetical and adult faith formation experiences to an alternative site other than the point of origination. Yet, how the catechetical experience is distributed is what makes the difference. The word e-learning does not always imply the same means of distributing. Frequently the term is applied to simple correspondence courses, one is usually not engaged in a community of learners; one’s primary contact is the instructor to whom one sends tests and papers.

The term ‘community of learners’ is the key. It implies a conscious effort to engage in some type of socialization process/interactivity. Interactivity, whether asynchronous or synchronous, advances the catechetical dynamic. Thus, when we think about using any of the techniques described above or the Internet we need to ask how interactive the experience can be. We have yet to discover the breadth and depth of this interactivity but it is unfolding every day. We need to encourage catechetical leaders and course designers to accelerate the paradigm for Internet interactivity.

We do have to be realistic in so far that catechetical e-learning is not for everyone or everyone all the time. Even though we have a growing culture of ‘digital natives’ it is going to take time for the Catechetical field to define and refine how it can be integrated into our ministry.

The methodology for a catechetical e-learning is definitely different from that of the traditional classroom. As a result, some of the desired outcomes may vary. As a matter of fact, some of the content may not even be adaptable to the Internet. So, one needs to consider carefully how content, desired outcomes and design are in concert. Interactive e-learning carries peculiar risks, formidable startup costs, and an initial investment of time and personnel. Collaboration can offset these challenges somewhat. There may be colleges, universities, centers, regional institutes, or other catechetical/educational entities that are willing to work together on a project. If we really want to get moving in e-learning, this may be the preferred direction – collaboration or partnerships.

If interactivity is the key, facilitators (online instructors) should be prepared to keep the conversations focused and moving along with an animated pace. Participants need self-discipline to program their life to engage with e-learning, and facilitators the same. Facilitators need to create a “cyber presence,” meaning that the participants

(particularly in an asynchronous course⁵⁵) need to know/see that the facilitator is present. The engaged the facilitator/instructor, the more present and interactive the participation. This has been demonstrated hundreds of times with my own e-learning experiences and observing the 75+ facilitators of the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation.

If the catechetical e-learning experience is synchronous, the participant needs to be at the Web site at a particular time. If participants are within different time zones, this needs to be taken into consideration. If the experience is asynchronous, the participant can respond to the various elements of the course at any time. Avoiding procrastination is imperative. The participants need to understand that nurturing a community of learners online is a conscious and rewarding effort.

We have discovered that certain skills need to be in place to make interactive catechetical e-learning work. These skills are: 1) Self-discipline, 2) Critical reading, 3) Critical reflection, 4) Basic writing and communication, and 5) a desire to interact with others. Without these skills being nurtured and developed, interactive e-learning cannot succeed.

High quality interactive distance learning is all about attitude (participant and facilitator), collaboration, feedback (responsiveness), affirmation (success in the dialog process), and relationships (community of learners, and a new place – called cyberspace. These, along with the skills listed above, create the foundation for an effective catechetical e-learning experience.

*When we consider media as a vital element of our cultural surround, and environment in which we are immersed, rather than simply as tools of communication, we can be more aware of the multiple ways in which we make meaning, and in which media play a role in that meaning making.*⁵⁶

(Mary E. Hess)

Exploring the New Pathways: Blended Learning

The last universal technology in learning – the printed book – is more than 500 years old. Yet in the past 10 years alone, more than 10 major new technologies for learning and collaboration have been introduced (Singh and Reed, 2001)⁵⁷.

These evolving communication technologies already have created a new enriched landscape for learning as we have seen above. However, our focus is not on the communication technology itself, but on how we design and deliver learning today.

⁵⁵ Asynchronous – not in real time.

⁵⁶ Hess, Mary E. „From Trucks Carrying Messages Ritualized Identities: Implications for Religious Educators of the Postmodern Paradigm Shift in Media Studies“. *Religious Education Journal*. Vol 94. Number 3. Summer 1999. p 273.

⁵⁷ Singh, H & Reed, C. *A White Paper: Achieving Success with Blended Learning*: Redwood Shores, CA. Centra Software. 2001.

Harvi Singh and Chris Reed indicate that “it is not the mixing and matching of different learning delivery modes by itself that is of significance, but the focus on the learning and the learning outcomes”.

Blended learning has been the buzzword in the past three years to describe a new learning context. But blended learning is nothing new. Have we not we all been doing this for most of our educational careers? I think we should all agree that there is no one single learning theory that will solve all our catechetical or ministry issues today. We know that different learning styles require different solutions and that attempting to discover the right mix to stimulate or motivate quality catechesis is the critical concept.

The key to blended learning is selecting the right combination of media that will open the doors to the greatest impact in our students’ lives. We are discovering new portals for enhancing the quality of our learning while blending both learning theory (Keller, Merrill, Bloom et al.) with e-learning resources.

Singh and Reed define blended learning as “focusing on optimizing achievement of learning objectives by applying the ‘right’ learning technologies to match the ‘right’ personal learning style to transfer the ‘right’ skills to the ‘right’ person at the right time.”⁵⁸ Blended learning is the combination of multiple approaches to teaching. Some authors even may refer to it as “hybrid learning” or “mixed learning.” No matter how one defines the concept, it basically has to do with the application of e-learning tools and techniques with traditional methods. Therefore, blended learning can be accomplished through the use of blended virtual and physical resources.

To make blended learning effective, one needs to start by looking at all the media options available for the learning experience. It is an attempt to combine the best elements of traditional face-to-face instruction with the best aspects of distance learning. An educator begins by studying the existing learning landscape to determine the resources that can be included in a blended learning environment; for example, computers, Internet courses/resources, DVD and audio/video conferencing. One lesson that is being learned is that the highest impact learning experiences blend a more complex media with one or more of the simpler media. A web-based course for introduction followed by a real “hands-on” interactive class is an obvious mix⁵⁹

New Dimensions of Blended Learning (Catechesis):

Various dimensions of the blend are emerging:

1. Combining offline and online forms of catechesis over the Internet or intranet and offline catechesis in the traditional classroom setting.
2. Self-paced and live, collaborative catechesis that may include review of Catholic literature and exercise followed by a live online peer-to-peer discussion of the application into a new catechetical experience.
3. Use of generic catechetical materials with live classroom or online experiences.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Singh & Reed. p. 2.

⁵⁹ Bersin & Associates. *Blended Learning: What Works*. Oakland, Ca. May 2003.

4. Weaving a new pattern of the amount of time in the traditional classroom with online synchronous and asynchronous experiences.

Blended learning is changing the way catechists think about and use their time in the traditional learning spaces. Catechists are finding that traditional classroom time is being renegotiated to make the best creative use of time with the whole class in order to give specialized time to individual needs and concerns. Creating new patterns for interaction with the course content as well as collaborative and self-paced learning is the ground that enables blended learning (catechesis) to work. The question is not 'if we should blend'. Rather the question is what are the ingredients? Or, one step further: "How does the blend awaken our students with a new desire for lifelong faith formation anywhere and anytime?"

*Because human beings are essentially embodied and social, however, grace as the spiritual mystery at the heart of reality has to be manifested in concrete, historical, visible ways. God's presence is mediated in and through creation and human history, but that mystery remains hidden and untapped unless it is brought to word.*⁶⁰

(Mary Catherine Hilker)

*Through the Internet, the Church not only participates in the dialogue of society like sitting and chatting in the marketplace (Forum, Areopagus) of the world. It is also through the Net that information and reflections on Christian faith are transmitted. The Internet can stir interest "and makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian Message."*⁶¹

(Franz-Josef Eilers)

Conclusion

I spent several reflective days by the shore embracing the beauty of the surroundings. It was here I hoped I would be refreshed, liberated and inspired to contemplate a new direction. The weather was seasonably unpredictable. I watched children build imaginative castles in the sands. The waves consistently jostled the shoreline causing the children to move to a more secure space for their artistic creations to survive. With each move the children adapted to the situation and courageously began again to build that perfect sandcastle amidst the shifting sands. There was a demonstrated ability among them to quickly adjust to the shifting situation and begin again with new strategies. These children like the emperor penguins mentioned earlier in this chapter, have something to say to us in these shifting times.

⁶⁰ Hilker, Mary Catherine. *Naming Grace*. Continuum Publishing Company. 1997. p. 47.

⁶¹ Eilers, Franz-Josef. *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*. Commentary on John Paul II's World Communication Day Message 2002. p. 232.

The communications age in which we live is not going to settle down any time too soon. It is constantly going to shift and evolve authoring in new opportunities and challenges for us in ministry. It is imperative that we are alert to the possibilities that the change offers us and with our imagination explore creative solutions or approaches to design comprehensive integrated digital pastoral communication plans and strategies to support our evangelizing and catechetical ministries. Developing a pastoral digital communications strategic plan may seem, to some, to be close to impossible to achieve. How can parish leaders and ministers create effective strategies when the communication culture changes rapidly and will continue to change over time? Communication technologies certainly do play a role in supporting the mission, vision, and values of the Church. These must drive our application of the technology and not vice versa. The way to craft an effective comprehensive pastoral digital communications plan is to engage those who are to be impacted through dialogues to answer the question, "How can digital technologies help the local church achieve its strategic goals?" In addition, any pastoral digital communications plan will have to be a living document updated periodically to reflect changes in the cultural conditions of the local Church's priorities or technologies themselves. All too often it seems easier to ignore or repel the shifting situation and define the problems and call for resistance. There is no doubt that we need to carefully read the signs of the times and discern the changes and the impact they could reel within our faith communities and culture. This is common sense.

In this essay, I have attempted to articulate a few areas I believe the Church needs to become more imaginative and creative. It is here that the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives team continues to research, monitor, experiment and explore new pathways for pastoral ministry. The digital culture we now live in has already transformed how we live, think, communicate and nurture community. Our task is to define how we evangelize and catechize within this new culture. We can see it either as a 'gift evoking a call' or a 'threat provoking fear'. It is our choice. We have the imaginative ability and creative skills to artistically connect with this mounting digital age and make a pastoral difference. If we believe it, we will see it!

In closing, I want to recognize and celebrate the life work of Fr Franz-Josef Eilers. He is one who has with profound faith and wisdom actualized his creative potential throughout his life. He continues to perceive possibilities and opportunities. He gives himself over to the Spirit to both preserve and animate the Church's positive engagement in her prophetic communications role and ministry. He is one who has inspired and encouraged those of us who follow him to trust the Holy Spirit's work within us and go forward with faith, confidence and enthusiasm.

Interdisciplinary Approach is Inevitable and a Major Challenge in Communication Studies

Jacob Srampickal

Introduction

Interdisciplinary studies is a commonly used term in academic circles. It has different meanings and forms. Let me begin by expanding the concept before I look at an attempt at interdisciplinary communication studies in communications tried at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome for the last 28 years, to which Fr Eilers has made a contribution.

Understanding the Interdisciplinary Approach

Wikipedia notes that interdisciplinarity is the act of drawing from two or more academic disciplines and integrating their insights to work together in pursuit of a common goal. "Interdisciplinary Studies", as they are called, use interdisciplinarity to develop a greater understanding of a problem that is too complex or wide-ranging (i.e. AIDS pandemic, global warming) to be dealt with using the knowledge and methodology of just one discipline.

A human person by nature has an interdisciplinary nature. Memory, imagination, feelings, intelligence, physical strength etc form part of the wholeness of a human being. The real formation of a human being comes when all these elements contribute together to his\her growth. Even the growth or development process is an effect of an interdisciplinary approach. The past traditions, the present situation and a future vision and challenges together shape the thinking for future planning and growth. There is also a substantial interdisciplinary approach, that of cultural, spiritual, material, sensual and spiritual approaches to human problems. In the world of the academia, the interactions between the students, professors, administrators, and other socio-political and cultural events together make a strong bearing on learning. In short, an interdisciplinary approach needs to be seen in the interactions with one's own experiences, reflections and daily actions.

There is a growing tendency towards interdisciplinary cooperation all over. People from different disciplines try to put together their experience and knowledge in order to face some phenomena that stubbornly resist the assaults of independent disciplines. One of the best metaphors for this situation is found in an old Romanian fairy tale called Harap Alb. The hero gathers for the accomplishment of his mission several men, each with his special power (one sees over large distances, another has the strength to bend trees and break them into pieces, another can drink huge quantities of water etc.). This worked very well and the mission was accomplished: while each participant

played his role at the right time, the awareness of the mission belonged always to the hero, to Harap Alb. (*Suteanu C., in <http://www.geocities.com/paideusis/e1edcs.html>*)

One of the pioneers in education, Maria Montessori, argued that just as animals have their function in life inscribed in their genes, so too humans have a specific role to play. A bee will produce honey, while a cow makes milk. For the human being the same goes, but at the individual level. So every individual has a function in this universe, but it is not inscribed in his or her genes. Through education and through his or her own psychological development he will find that and develop the skills and knowledge that he needs to perform his mission. Every human being has a natural course to follow. Anyone cannot become anything. We have talents in a certain direction, we have a disposition to do things. And here is what I believe: that this is one of our main duties in life: to follow that cause, to be close to your personal nature and to take things from there and perform the functions that we are made to perform. I feel quite strongly connected to that kind of inner voice. And I think that one should use the mind to recognise this inner voice and find ways to perform what needs to be performed best. In that way the mind follows the natural, rather than trying to create reality, as Western thinking tends to pretend (Montessori, 1948, 1949)

The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, one of the most brilliant ones of the 20th century had maintained that 'reading the word needs to lead to reading the world'. According to him education is not just studying a discipline and contributing to its development, but seeing the world from all perspectives and developing a concept for development based on the study of the actual situation. Amazed with the participation of the people in the discussions that he organized as part of an education process, Freire realized that learning to read and write can also be a process of analysing reality and of becoming critically aware of a situation, helping the people to learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to rebel against oppressive structures. Clearly interdisciplinary studies were part of his scheme. He insisted that the mere transfer of knowledge by an authoritarian source to a passive receiver did nothing to help promote the growth in the latter as a human being with an independent and critical conscience capable of influencing and changing society. Amazed with the participation of the illiterate people in the discussions that he organized, Freire realized that for adults, learning to read and write can also be a process of analysing reality and of becoming critically aware of their situation. The people believed in fatalism and to change this attitude Freire introduced the anthropological concept of culture and insisted that they are the makers of their own culture, that change is possible if people work for it. His education programmes was aimed at conscientization, a process that would enable the marginalized people to learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to rebel against oppressive structures. (Freire, 1968)

Specialization Versus Interdisciplinary Approach

There was a time when specialization was the order of the day. It came about as there were too many general practitioners, and it was felt that some people need to be

specialists. Today the order of the day is interdisciplinary studies, an addition or improvement to the idea of specialization: someone who studies a subject from different points of view and fields. However, interdisciplinarity is indebted to those who specialize in one field of study - that without specialists, interdisciplinarians would have no information and no leading experts to consult.

Some place the focus of interdisciplinarity on the need to transcend disciplines, viewing excessive specialization as problematic both epistemologically and politically. When interdisciplinary collaboration or research results in new solutions to problems, much information is given back to the various disciplines involved. Therefore, both disciplinarians and interdisciplinarians must work complementarily to each other in order to solve problems.

In a sense, *interdisciplinarity* involves analysing a subject from various angles and methods, eventually cutting across disciplines and forming a new method for clearer understanding of the subject. A common understanding unites the different methods and acknowledges an entire subject or problem, even if it spreads to other disciplines.

Further explanation from Wikipedia makes the concept clearer. Interdisciplinary programmes often arise from a shared conviction that the traditional disciplines are unable or unwilling to address an important problem. For example, social science disciplines such as anthropology and sociology paid little attention to the social analysis of technology throughout most of the twentieth century. As a result, many social scientists with interests in technology have joined science and technology studies programmes, which are typically staffed by scholars drawn from numerous disciplines, including anthropology, history, philosophy, sociology, and women's studies, environmental studies etc. They may also arise from new research developments, such as nanotechnology, which cannot be addressed without combining the approaches of two or more disciplines. Examples include quantum information processing, which amalgamates elements of quantum physics and computer science, and bioinformatics, which combines molecular biology with computer science. In a sense, those who pursue interdisciplinary studies or practice interdisciplinarity in their lives are seen as pioneers, and even risk-takers, at the cutting edge of scholarship, science and technology. In this way, interdisciplinarians are able to acknowledge and combat the present and future problems of humanity. (Wikipedia)

Van Leeuwen describes three basic models of interdisciplinarity: centralist, pluralist and integrationist. The centralist model is a relation between different autonomous disciplines, in which each discipline considers itself as the centre of the universe of knowledge. From this centre, it reaches to other disciplines. The pluralist model places problems and issues in the central position, and then seeks to bring various relevant disciplines together to research these problems. This process does not affect the status quo of the different disciplines. The integrationist model also gives a central position to problems. But it assumes that no discipline is capable on its own of resolving this problem. Therefore, an interdisciplinary team is organised with specific tasks and principles of integration to resolve the problem. In this particular model, disciplines may lose their autonomy. Disciplines cease to function as traditional professions and

are reduced to particular skills that are helpful to address the problem (Van Leeuwen, 2005:3-18)

Let me look at a typical interdisciplinary programme designed at a US university, say in this case the California State University. The Interdisciplinary Studies Program at this university normally allows students to design unique courses of study leading to a BA or MA degree. The programme expands upon the traditional university education by offering both undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to design their own programs of scholastic inquiry. Interdisciplinary Studies students have a vision, and the program assists the students in creatively applying that vision to unique courses of study, paving the way for the acceptance of new academic disciplines that meet the needs of students with diverse viewpoints and heritages.

The Interdisciplinary Studies Program offers students the opportunity to develop individualized, coherent, intellectually challenging, cross disciplinary academic plans, utilizing courses from selected departments. Each student, with the help of a faculty advisor, selects courses and focuses his/her program on the basis of a unifying issue, theme or topic called an area of concentration. The area of concentration must meet three criteria to be acceptable:

- First, the area of concentration must be interdisciplinary. This means the area of concentration must integrate and focus approaches and knowledge from at least two fields and disciplines. The principle of integration can be historical, regional, thematic or problem-focused.
- Second, the area of concentration must not replicate any existing major. The purpose of the Interdisciplinary Studies Major is to link students with clusters of courses and faculty where no structure or formal program exists.
- Third, the area of concentration must be feasible. Each student's proposed program must be discussed with a faculty advisor to ensure that the range and number of courses required will be available. Note: The student's role in the selection of the area of concentration is active not passive. The student must actively plan his/her program and cultivate relationships with assigned or designated faculty. Furthermore, the student has the greater initial responsibility in shaping his/her program. The Program also provides an opportunity for groups of faculty to develop new majors. The bachelors degrees in Engineering Technology and Women's Studies originated in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

Students have created cross-disciplinary programs such as the following: Music Management, Neuroscience, Sport Psychology, Ecological Studies, Sport Management, Sport Nutrition, Biomedical Ethics, Feminism in Philosophy and Literature, Marine Toxicology, Global Relations Management, Audio Engineering, Technology-Based Learning. (However, these are merely titles that students gave to their program of study. The ISP do not have their actual course for you to use as a framework to follow. Each student who is interested in the ISP need to do research and

come up with their own proposed program of study.) (ref: Website of the California State University)

Other Concepts Among Disciplines.

Let me look at other concepts propagated and practised in the context of diverse disciplines.

In *Multidisciplinary studies* professors join together to work on a common problem, split apart unchanged when work is done. Multi-disciplinary studies present information and methodologies on a given topic from more than one discipline in a “parallel” way, not by integrating the disciplines, but by presenting them side by side.

Trans-disciplinary studies means questioning the paradigms, models, assumptions, etc., of two or more faculties. “A transdisciplinary approach brings into focus ways in which theories, disciplines, paradigms, traditions, etc might be enhanced and developed through dialogue with others in interdisciplinary research – ‘how a dialogue between two disciplines or frameworks may lead to a development of both through a process of each internally appropriating the logic of the other as a resource for its own development” (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002, 185-208)

Cross-disciplinary studies deals with research studies that interweaves or touches the limits of the areas treated in different faculties

Interdisciplinary studies may be also seen as a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or professions. It draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective. Interdisciplinary studies join together to work on common question or problem. Interaction may forge a new research field or discipline. Interdisciplinarity, as the term is most often used in educational circles, occurs when researchers from two or more disciplines pool their approaches and modify them so that they are better suited to the problem at hand, including the case of the team-taught course where students are required to understand how a given subject like land use, may appear differently when examined by different disciplines like biology, geography, and economics.

Barriers to Interdisciplinarity

Because most participants in interdisciplinary ventures were trained in traditional disciplines, they need to learn to appreciate differing perspectives and approaches. For example, a discipline that places more emphasis on quantitative "rigor" may produce practitioners who think of themselves (and their discipline) as "more scientific" than others; in turn, colleagues in "softer" disciplines may associate quantitative approaches with an inability to grasp the broader dimensions of a problem. An interdisciplinary programme may not succeed if its members remain stuck in their disciplines and in disciplinary attitudes. An openness to understand others' points of view is a must in

forging interdisciplinary ways. However, often it is noticed that those trained in classical ways lose this openness and think of other newer disciplines as unnecessary.

The Importance of Interdisciplinary Approach is Important to the Church

Problems within the Church or the relations between the Church and society at large are too complex to be studied from a single perspective. This entails different dimensions of interdisciplinarity: the theories draw on neighbouring disciplines and try to integrate these theories. Team work consists of different researchers from different traditionally defined disciplines working together.

Those with an open vision realized that the crisis of faith in the world and de-Christianization was in great part the inability of the Church to communicate well in the modern world. In fact John Paul II pointed to it in his *Areopagus*¹ concept in *Redemptoris Missio* (1986). "The first Areopagus of the modern age is the *world of communications*, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a "global village." The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large... Since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology. Pope Paul VI said that "the split between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly the tragedy of our time," (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.40) and the field of communications fully confirms this judgment" (37c).

Pope John Paul II goes on to say that there are many other forms of the "Areopagus" in the modern world toward which the Church's missionary activity ought to be directed; for example, commitment to peace, development and the liberation of peoples; the rights of individuals and peoples, especially those of minorities; the advancement of women and children; safeguarding the created world, the *Areopagus* of culture, scientific research, and international relations which promote dialogue and open up new possibilities. The pontiff urges the faithful to be attentive to these modern areas of activity and to be involved in them. He also suggests that solutions to pressing problems must be studied, discussed and worked out with the involvement of all with the support of international organizations and meetings, involving many sectors of human life, from culture to politics, from the economy to research. (37d). Clearly, the

¹ *Areopagus* is a courtyard or public sphere where the wise men of ancient Greece gathered together to share cultural wisdom. It is reported in Acts that Paul went to the Areopagus and managed to convince the wise men, talking their language and in their style. Pope John Paul II uses this example for churchmen to use the ways of the media to communicate powerfully today.

Pontiff is suggesting the need for interdisciplinary studies that can help the Church adapt herself to the changing times.

The Concept of Interdisciplinary Studies at the Gregorian University

For us at the Pontifical Gregorian University (PUG), in Rome, the idea of interdisciplinary studies originally sprouted in the mind of Fr Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, a man of extra-ordinary vision and convictions, who had seen similar studies at Sofia University in Japan way back in the late Seventies. He was struck by the fact that professors from the different departments were teaching at a diploma course in theology for contemporary man. Coming back home he suggested this idea to his Delegate for Formation. He was keen that Gregorian takes up this approach, as the University proposes to form leadership in the Church, and leadership in the Church must have a broad, multidisciplinary perspective in order to respond to the cultural and social challenges of today. P Carlo M. Martini, the Rector (now retired Cardinal) fully endorsed this idea.

Interdisciplinary Studies in Communication

It was in the area of communications that the experiment was first tried and the Rector, Fr Martini saw much value in interdisciplinary studies in communications. He was convinced that communications is a subject that entered into every other field of study and that communications cannot be taught only by experts in media. When the Centro Interdisciplinare sulla Comunicazione Sociale (CICS) was first discussed at the Gregorian University in the late 1970s, a number of leading professors from other disciplines such as Fr Peter Henrici, (philosophy) Fr Juan Beltrao and Prof. Leonora Masini (both theology) were deeply interested in developing a more interdisciplinary perspective. With clear support from Fr (later Bishop) Agnellus Andrew OFM, the former Unda World president and later Vice president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, Fr Franz Josef Eilers of the SVD communications, and Stefan Bamberger, the Jesuit co-ordinator for communications, a programme was set up which had clear interdisciplinary structures. The Jescom Newsletter reports: “The first level of a planned 3-level course in social communication is being given this semester at the Pontifical Gregorian University. This marks the first time that social communication has been offered as a separate course within the university’s curriculum “The second level,” the news continues, “to be given next year will focus on the interdisciplinary relationships between social communication and the existing specialties being studied at the university. A final ‘specialized’ level will concentrate on pooling together the best talents at the university – professors, students and guests from elsewhere – to explore through deeper research and group discussions the catholic doctrine and praxis of social communications and its instruments... the programme started with 34 students

from 18 different countries, enrolled in a course titled, "Introduction to the Problems of Social Communication." (No. 2, 1981:3)

CICS at the Gregorian was keen to contribute and enrich each of the faculties at the Gregorian with a communication and media dimension in their formation, so that students who became leaders of the Church in different parts of the world could communicate their ideas to their world in a more constructive and appealing manner and thus help the Church to be ever renewing in proclaiming the mission of Christ. This of course, those involved realized, may be done in two levels: by developing courses that linked communications to areas like theology, philosophy, social sciences, missiology etc. so that students studying in these faculties see the value of communications. And it was also found necessary to help those doing licentiates and doctorates in different faculties to have a media dimension, i.e. the ability to communicate using media, learning media ways, critiquing the media products and performances constructively, relating with the public at large, in short, being at home in a media-saturated world.

At the second level communications studies also wanted to get enriched by interacting with theology, philosophy, social sciences, missiology etc. In fact, today, most secular universities have a full first year of social sciences like economics, sociology, anthropology etc which gives a sound basis to understand communications in a secularized world. However, the Gregorian attempt was primarily, to find a Christian angle to communication with course like theology of communication, Bible and communication, pastoral communication, philosophy of communication, sociology of communication, culture and communication, mission and communication etc.

This interdisciplinary link, the proponents of the idea thought, would make communications, a basic aspect of human life inseparable from other vital considerations and discussions influencing life in its varied forms. Hence the students, through their academic pursuits and research, are led to discover and consolidate the link between communications and other disciplines. One of the major elements of communications is cultural adaptability, which when understood and practised, helps one present messages in a way acceptable to an audience. It is part of inculturation, an area very important to the proclamation of the Good news of the kingdom to new generations in diverse cultures.

Communications and Other Disciplines

In fact a major problem, as already mentioned above, is that those formed in the classical format or the so-called scholastic style, are full of knowledge, often abstract and not much in tune with the actual life situations of the people. Communication training helps one to listen to the stories of the people, which helps them sharpen their message, reinventing these to adapt to the conditions of the people. Of course one can communicate only from an abundance of knowledge. And communication is not merely giving information but sharing deep knowledge based on real situations and thus building deep relations. Any awareness thus developed is clearly part of the socio-

political, economic and religious realities of today. It is linked to the culture in which it is evolved. This is why communications instantly needs to take an interdisciplinary approach. Communications, as *Aetatis Novae* (1992) has suggested, is an activity that must enter into every apostolate of the Church (no. 18). Let us examine how communications links itself to the various disciplines the Church is involved in.

Theology: There are several links between theological issues and communications. Revelation is God's communication with humans through the ages. The Holy Scriptures too are the revelation of the Spirit to help us understand God's message of love. Jesus' incarnation, life, death and resurrection are attempts at communicating God's love for mankind. The Church is the continuation of God's communication of love and truth in history. The sacraments are symbolic communication through rituals perpetuated in the Christian community. Liturgy is a mode of celebration perpetuated through rituals and can be interpreted as the people's responses to God's communication.

Philosophy involves the search for truth through reason, and part of it deals with the study of knowledge, language and interpretation, all issues central to communication. Languages, signs, symbols, codes, etc help communicate the knowledge. The various theories of philosophy shed light on the way people comprehend and interpret messages. Philosophies of major thinkers like Marx, Sartre, Kafka, Habermas and others have been recreated by the media either in fictional or audio-visual popular forms.

Social Sciences are the base of communication studies. Disciplines like anthropology and sociology supply the frame-work for a mediated society. Economy, politics, international relations, development, globalization etc are monitored by global media relations. The means of communication in terms of ever evolving technology has sociological and anthropological effects. The development of society is closely related to the evolution of language and the quality of communication.

Missiology studies the proclamation of the Good News in different cultures, amidst diverse religions. Obviously, the way the gospel is communicated in different cultures is a very important aspect of communication studies. The sharing of the Good News is itself a loving act of communication, which entails the self-giving of the individual to those around him or her, after the example of Jesus the 'perfect communicator'.

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially affecting the behaviour in a given context. In the mediated world, the audience is most important and psychology plays a major role in making communication effective. Psychology directly affects the field of communication in terms of blocks, noise, inner disturbances etc. In the process of listening, a major element of communication, the listener's emotions play a very important role. Communication

becomes subtler and psychologically manipulated when one comes into the area of advertisements. A student of communications cannot do away with basic principles of personality-development, self-concept, identity, perceptions, simulations, subliminal seduction etc which have deep roots in psychology. Audience theories, techniques of advertising and marketing, public relations etc also draw from the sources of psychology. Finally humans are communicating animals and psychology deals with human behaviour.

Spirituality: Media experiences replete with cultural nuances have often proved to be deep spiritual experiences. Artistic representations and cultural symbols have often led humans to go beyond the self towards the absolute.

Students from the various faculties can easily choose a communication and media dimension for deeper study at the licentiate or doctoral levels. This obviously will help them see the importance of media in contemporary society.

A common misconception about media training is to take it merely as gaining advanced technical expertise. The PUG, while considering technology as useful means to good communication, insists that students gain depth in major social, cultural, spiritual, theological and philosophical issues of the day. Hence all students are advised to get some kind of interdisciplinary exposure by taking courses in other faculties of the PUG or by taking a combined degree in communications and another discipline. In their higher studies in communications, students discover various links with theology and philosophy. Students from countries with large Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist populations find it useful to combine communications with missiology and inter-religious dialogue. Those specializing in journalism, documentary video or radio can opt for courses in the social sciences - the social teaching of the Church, social analysis, economics, political science, cultural anthropology, psychology, administration, etc. In any case, it is mandatory that each student writes a thesis which combines communications and another discipline.

One also notices that several media producers, through films, television serials, literature etc, make forays into theology, philosophy, psychology, spirituality etc, providing subtle yet popular interpretations which enrich or complicate the common man's knowledge of the discipline, as well as take the professional by surprise.

The Ways Adapted to Realize this Interdisciplinary Studies in Communications at PUG

One could easily argue that CICS has had five different ways of realizing interdisciplinary formation:

- (1) Every student, especially those in theology, philosophy, canon law, church history etc, could **do a few courses** which would:

- a) enable him or her to see the importance of good communication in the life of the Church,
- b) give some skills of communication,
- c) understand that communication is at the heart of Christian theology and philosophy
- d) enable them to see the power and impact of communications media in shaping today's thinking,

The CICS designed a series of courses to fit each of the faculties, and, in the time of the first Director Fr Peter Henrici, these were given the codes of those faculties. When they had the codes of the faculties and if the faculty encouraged students, the courses were well attended and quite successful. There were several such course like the relevance and importance of communications media and interdisciplinarity today, theology of communication, planning pastoral communications in the local church, Philosophy of communications, social systems from the perspective of philosophers who have spoken on communications, theologies of communication in the thoughts of church's major theologians, communications and culture, mission and communications, intercultural communications today, bible and communication, documents of the church on communications, inter-religious dialogue and communications, etc. Unfortunately, this objective of interdisciplinarity generally failed at the Gregorian University because deans began to exclude these courses and did not encourage or even discouraged students to take the communication courses. Some students who were keen to attend these courses have complained that they were being discouraged.

- (2) The second level of interdisciplinarity is the **two year diploma** programme given at CICS. This diploma had several courses of an interdisciplinary nature like the ones listed above. This responded to the basic objectives of CICS to prepare
- Diocesan Directors of communication
 - Deans and professors who can add a communication dimension in major seminary formation
 - Professors who can teach subjects related to communication, theology and philosophy
 - Trainers who can help the Church cope with the media revolution
 - Directors of Catholic media institutions, transmission centres
 - Lay specialists in the media who want a more theological and philosophical orientation

Students got in the programme of CICS a strong interdisciplinary approach to communications:

- Heavy emphasis on the theology of communication
- Introduction to the philosophy of communication
- Introduction to social analysis and communication
- Theoretical base to analyse media influence on society

This diploma programme has been the basis of the success of CICS because the directors of CICS could control and direct the programme of courses and other aspects of formation. In the recent years this has been turned into a Master Interdisciplinaire of two years. A new Diploma Interdisciplinaire of one year, too, is introduced.

- (3) The third level of interdisciplinarity was to allow students to take a **Diploma in communications along with the licentiate** in the other faculties. Being a Diploma programme this was open to anyone already enrolled in another faculty. Students interested in doing an interdisciplinary degree with a strong specialization in theology, philosophy or other faculty. At the outset the faculties of theology, philosophy and missiology cooperated with this concept. Increasingly, theology and even philosophy were less and less cooperative. Theology deans were not willing to allow students to consider the Theology-Communication courses for their programme or were unwilling to allow a student to do their final paper on an interdisciplinary topic. There are relatively few students doing theology and communication right now.

At one point, communications was made a specialization in the faculty of philosophy, but the Dean of Philosophy would not recognize communication courses for the licentiate in philosophy unless the communication professor had a degree in philosophy. The students simply crossed over and did the diploma in communications – which had no relation to philosophy.

The cooperative program with missiology and spirituality worked well for sometime, and there were a good number of students in these interdisciplinary programs. But these programs, good as they were, have been cancelled for a technical reason and the lack of interest by the deans concerned. The students could either take two extra years or finish the required credit spread in the year doing the licentiate in the respective faculties. A number of students did this and some of them even did a doctorate in a communications topic from the faculty they did the licentiate. They were quite impressed with the kind of courses that had close links with their subject of the main study at the faculty. This was a substitute for the real interdisciplinary programme which would mean a licentiate in theology with specialization in communication.

- (4) There was a special co-operation and a successful one **with the faculty of Social Sciences**. The CICS diploma program of two years was made one of the specializations of the 4 specializations of Social Sciences: social doctrine of the church, sociology, economics and communication. In fact, it is useful for people in communication to have a strong background in social teaching of the church, social analysis, some political science and some economics. Students took the 12 basic courses that are taken by social doctrine, sociology and economics in one year and then did the communications diploma program in two years.

The relation with Social Sciences worked fairly well because the dean was quite cooperative. There was continual discussion of student applications, courses, etc. The dean liked this combination particularly interesting, at a time when the number of students for other specializations in Social Science was failing, communications brought in large number of students. At present the three other areas in social science do not have as many students as those in communications.

However, often the communication students often did not find the subject matter of the social sciences interesting because the subject matter was oriented more toward sociology majors, the lecturers were unclear, the method was uninspiring. The link between communications media and sociology, economics, anthropology, international relations, demography, etc were not clearly spelt out as the professors knew little about communications media. Nevertheless, the relation with Social Sciences did enable hundreds of people to be trained for communication leadership in the Church with an academic degree. Many of them continued to do doctorates in the faculty of social sciences with a communications topic.

- (5) A fifth level of interdisciplinary cooperation, may be the interdisciplinary **dialogue between professors**. Peter Henrici attempted to promote this from the beginning of CICS. During the school year, the professors argued, they had no time, so the idea of the Cavalletti (a villa outside Rome) seminars in late September was begun as a cooperative project with the Jesuit research centre in London, headed by Dr. Robert White. From 1981 Fr White from the London centre and Henrici organized the Cavalletti seminars every two years. Persons like Jack O'Brien, Franz Josef Eilers, Paul Soukup, Carl Huber, Arij Roest Crollius, Gerry O'Collins showed a keen interest in such conferences. The format was to invite 12 theologians interested in communication and 12 communication specialists interested in theology. The conferences were on various themes like pastoral theology and communications, Fundamental theology and communications, Systematic theology and communications, Moral theology and communications, Bible and communications, philosophy and communications etc. These conferences have given ample opportunities to those to in faculties of theology, philosophy, missiology to develop interdisciplinary approaches. Although professors have been easily available for these conferences from other universities, those from the Gregorian have been slow to attend these. However, some have been sympathetic to the idea of interdisciplinary studies, and have helped develop the interdisciplinary nature of communication studies, and others have guided students to do interdisciplinary research. Yet a number of courses related to theology, philosophy, the Bible and missiology have been developed at the communications centre, all by the efforts of communications teachers, especially Fr Robert White. Sadly the courses in theology, philosophy, missiology in the respective faculties given by professors who attended these conferences do not reflect the communicative angle, the courses are more or less classical in nature and does not take into account the communications scenario today.

Although the seminars were very successful that a number of books came out of them, it was never possible to bring many Gregorian professors into interdisciplinary dialogue with communications. The common language of the conferences was always English, and this may have been an obstacle for some. Although about six professors have attended these conference and presented papers, they have not yet developed any course related to communications with a C code.

Developing Interdisciplinary Studies in Communications and Theology – the CICS Experience.

Now let me develop precisely how the interdisciplinary concept was developed with regard to theology and communications.

According to *Ad Gentes*, Christianity originated in the Trinitarian communication that overflowed into the world through many and varied ways and finally through the Word-become-flesh. The Church is by nature a community of communicators². From the moment of its origin, the Church has always used the best means of communication at its disposal. The Scriptures and the many manuscripts, liturgies, sacraments and rituals, art and architecture are all clear examples of how the Church was the leading communicator in all centuries. Even in modern times, the Church was the first one to use the mass media of printing and the radio.

But today, we find that the whole rhythm of change in the field of communication has such a momentum that the Church is far behind compared to the world as a whole. The technical, financial and human resources required by the modern electronic-digital revolution are beyond the reach of the Church. Besides, embarrassed by the over-indulgence in sex, pornography, violence, consumerism and worldliness propagated and promoted by the modern media, the Church was initially suspicious of modern media and isolated itself from these “wonderful means” of human expression. Later came the realisation that these are excellent means to propagate the good news if used with critical discernment. Today the Church considers media as the “modern Areopagus” (RM, 39) and “the house-tops” from which the Good news can be proclaimed. (EN, 45). In recent times we find a full appreciation for communication revolution as is clear from Pope John Paul II’s message to the participants of a congress on the Church and information technology (IT) in Monterrey, Mexico, April 1-5, 2003: “faith and culture are called to meet and interact precisely in the area of communication...”.

² *Sapienzia Cristiana*: means Christian wisdom i.e. matters of scholarship taught in universities regarding the Christian doctrine.

Communication and Theological Formation - the Background

The Cavaletti seminars tried to establish several links between theological issues and communications. Some themes treated include: Revelation as God's communication with humans through the ages, The Scripture as the revelation of the spirit to help mankind understand God's message of love, the Church as the continuation of God's communication of love and truth in history, The sacraments as symbolic communication through rituals perpetuated in the Christian community, Liturgy as a mode of celebration perpetuated through rituals and interpreted as the people's responses to God's communication, etc.

Communication and Theology: Pastoral Formation

After all these, there is hardly any successful attempt at integrating communication within the overall pastoral, theological and missionary context. This is because an integrating principle is lacking. Some experts in communication and theology think that a theology of communication is the key to solve this problem. Others say that we have to go beyond any adjective theology to a "communication theology". That means any integration of communication and theology presupposes at least an implicit conceptual consensus on a fitting concept of theology and of communication.

To change anything in the Church, or to help the Church adapt to new ways, there needs to be a new, reformed theology, and changes should first take place in theological pastoral formation. However, communication education has not occupied an important place in the theological curriculum except as a "technique" for proclamation or as electives. The priority in the present formation seems to be for oral expressions such as preaching, teaching, proclamation, or at best, to homilies. The print media are respected, and the audio-visual media as a whole are not very important. Though there is some scope for group communication, the traditional top-down model of communication dominates the teaching and life in the seminaries. In short, in several regions of the world a proper communication education is not taken into serious account. In relation to communication and priestly formation four attitudes are identified:

1. Isolation: no formal training in communication, or communication is considered as an extracurricular activity.
2. Compartmentalisation: communication is considered as useful and important, but not exactly as part of theological formation, electives are offered.
3. Collaboration: More awareness and synergy exist and independent departments/individuals collaborate; some common efforts.
4. Integration: communication is considered as the "heart of the church". Integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum is developed.

A Theology of Communication?

It was believed that for communications to get accepted in Church circles a theology of communications has to be developed, in brief an attempt at ‘baptising’ communications. Though various Church documents and many books and articles highlight the necessity of integration of communication and theological formation, no clear theology of communications is found. The Cavalletti seminars tried to develop some of these ideas. The early Church documents considered the media as God-given gifts, yet as *means* for achieving communion and progress, and as *potent media* for communicating the faith or as a *means for multiplying* the voices and making them heard far and wide. It is an approach from outside, a kind of “what could be done with it?” A theology of communication may be based on:

- a) an interpretation of revelation, faith and grace as events of communication;
- b) a vision of man as a being-in-communication, capable of communicating among men and with the transcendent;
- c) a better awareness of the cultural-symbolic aspect of human life-symbolic communication, cultural manifestations as symbolic expressions;
- d) a perception of the new cultural industry- the power of manipulation and persuasion of the media.

Requirements of the future ministry suggest that a purely instrumentalist view of communication or an ensuing theology of communication cannot suffice any more. What is to be achieved by integration is not just a new style of homiletics or a few audiovisual skills, but developing a theology which is communicative and a communication dynamism to the existing courses and by offering further courses on communication, with practical-pastoral relevance. Thus a theology of communication in priestly formation may be developed based on information gathering, its meaning, significance, communication, community and communion may all be interpreted as parts of a single process of man aspiring towards meaning and self-transcendence. Theology enters here opening up a supernatural horizon. However, a purely rationalist and academic approach to theology in terms of a faith seeking understanding should give way to a faith seeking meaning and relevance. And a conceptual theology needs to be substituted by a habit of theologizing. Here is where a communication theology enters the picture.

Communication Theology or Communicating Theology?

In fact, the theology of communication as explained above may appear very much as a “patronising” of communication, which prevents genuine dialogue. To become relevant and to make sense to the people of today, the Church has to imbibe the spirit of the modern communication, especially its language and style and learn its logic and literacy and integrate the communication dimension within life and theology of the

Church. Hence we need to move “towards a communication theology”, in which theology and communication would fecundate each other to generate a language and expression of faith which would be in the language of the faithful. Lonergan speaks of eight functions of theology. The eighth function is communication, i.e. communication of theology, i.e. how to live the theology that we study in abstract ways. According to him, to communicate its truth adequately theology needs a base drawing from both religion (theological base) and the culture in which it finds itself. For Lonergan, theological communications operates through the basic art of talking, teaching, preaching, writing, art, gesture etc. Preaching is the culmination of the theological process. It is not teaching that pushes on to the behavioural transformation we normally call conversion. It incorporates sound theology, but it is so done that the recipient is moved to action. In other words, preaching is meaningful only when it succeeds in its intent. If theology has to motivate into action, it has to mediate between religion and culture, it must do so by addressing the feeling that motivates a group as well as its beliefs. Preaching as communication evokes both feelings and feelings and finally touches values.

According to Lonergan, preaching is the culmination of the theological process. As a functional speciality of theology, the term communications refers to the transposition of the consciousness from the realm of theory to the realm of common sense in relating Christian doctrine to cultural reality. This distinct meaning makes clear the shift in the conscious subject from the more universal and abstract language of theory to the language of the particular in its environmental and cultural distinctiveness. In a more general sense, communication (without the *s*) is the communication of insight or understanding to the experience of another, ie What one understands is communicated intersubjectively, artistically, symbolically, linguistically, incarnately Communication can take place on various levels or in various differentiations of consciousness: common sense, scholarly, aesthetic, scientific (theoretical), religious or mystical. In an interesting discussion of *symbol* Lonergan stresses the importance of internal communication (1972: 66-67). By this he means an attentiveness to what is going to on in one’s feelings. It s in feeling that links are discovered between mind and body, mind and heart, and heart and body. Lonergan also stresses the need for a pluralism of communications, a meeting of people in terms of their distinct worlds of common sense But the most profound meaning of communication for those engaged in community building is Lonergan’s reference to communications as the condition of possibility of the collective subject. The principle communication Lonergan refers to here is not that of speaking what we know, it is revealing who we are. It is not introspection that reveals us to ourselves, Lonergan stresses. It is reflecting on who we are as we live in communion with others (1972: 328 ff). To initiate the process towards proper integration of communication and theology, we need to seek areas of interface between theology and communication and explore ways and means to develop more communication.

Cavaletti Seminars and the Development of Courses with More Pastoral Dimensions at CICS

From the beginning the directors of CICS decided that to attract students to the CICS they had to make it a centre of communications studies that linked to the pastoral ministry. Some areas developed include:

The term 'pastoral communication' popularized by Aetatis Novae (1992) was first coined at CICS by Robert White. He initiated a three months' course in English in the summer which clearly stressed how the Church could make full use of communications based on sound theology. This course attracted a lot of students from all over the world. CICS developed as virtually the only place in the world where a student could do a licentiate and doctorate in theology of/and communication.

This interdisciplinary approach seemed important because if a theology of communication is quite weak in the Church there can also be a lack of a theological vision in the communication/media activities of the Church. And most church leaders will continue to think of communication as a purely technical affair which is a tragic mistake.

All students were encouraged to attend the basic intensive seminar on "Theology and Communication", initiated by White, led now by the new professors, Jacob Srampickal, Giuseppe Mazza and Augustine Savarimuthu. This seminar, based on the most recent documents of the Church in communication, stresses a method of theological analysis in communications and applies five major areas of theology to communication: Fundamental, Ecclesiology, Moral Theology, Biblical Theology and Christology. The final essays or papers for the seminar is designed as a programme of teaching communication in the local ecclesiastical seminary, which helps them teach communication in the seminary.

Many graduates are, in fact, teaching this same communication course in the local seminaries.

CICS has been running four or five core seminars on theology and communication taught by White, Srampickal, Nuno Martins, David Eley, Paul Soukup and Giuseppe Mazza. P. Martins set up the two basic seminars on the theology of communication: 1st St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas; 2nd Contemporary theologians. Rahner, von Balthazar, Lonergan and others who speak on theology and communications. Mazza has assumed these seminars now that P. Martins has returned to Portugal. These seminars are designed for those who are doing an interdisciplinary Licentiate or Doctorate degree in theology and communication, about 3-5 every year and other students who will be likely to be teaching communications in seminaries.

The library has absolutely every major publication dealing with theology and communication.

The Publication of Books

The Cavalletti seminars are an important tradition and the book series, “*Communication, Culture and Theology*”, which was founded on the Cavalletti seminars regularly published significant books. The coordinator of this series is Paul Soukup, sj. Some of his books written inspired by these conferences are:

- Recent work in communication and theology: a guide for the CICS*
- Fidelity and translation: communicating the Bible in new media*
- From one medium to another: communicating the Bible through multimedia.*
- Media, culture and Catholicism.*
- Communication and theology: introduction and review of the literature*
- Christian communication: a bibliographical survey.*
- Communication and Lonergan: Common ground for forging the New Age*

CICS continues to have a world-wide network of former students and others doing active work in this area. Typical is Fr Jose Palakeel, an ex-graduate who is a major force in India for theology and communication. Fr Joseph Faniran in Nigeria, Anna Maria Yvenes in Chile are also trying their best to relive the vision they have imbibed in their training years at CICS.

Today in many parts of the world where communications is taught within the Church, the CICS syllabus in theology and communications is followed with local cultural adaptations

Interactions: Attempts at merging theology and communications today in formation

Now briefly let me outline some of the developments in theology and communications as it has been tried in some places, to help understand what exactly we intend by these conferences. In some places some of these have been tried, but did not become a matter of regular practice. How is the interaction between theology and communication, understood and practised today from very basic level onwards in different parts of the world:

1. Using media technology in theology classes. E.g. use audio visual aids like slides, over head projectors, video projectors etc to explain theology,
2. Using media productions in the theology class: E.g. use a religious movie on Jesus, sacraments etc in the class use a purely secular film in theology class and find theological significance in them,
3. Finding communication explanations to theological tracts: revelation, sacraments, parables, miracles, Jesus as a perfect communicator etc (communication in theology) or theologies of communication,

4. Acquiring the ability to communicate powerfully what is learned in theology: e.g. homiletics, oratorical skills, rhetoric,
5. Relating moral theology to the morals media preach, for today, many people get their values from the media. E.g. *Million Dollar Baby* was pro-euthanasia. *Broke Back Mountain* made us look at gay relations more sensitively; how does a moral theologian react to these? Do these become part of the moral theologians' teachings? Can they ignore them esp. as most people are value educated by the media?
6. Theologizing. Connecting theological tracts to real life events and vice versa finding theological explanations to everyday happenings, tragedies etc a theology emanating from grass root experiences. E.g. Liberation theology developed in the 60s in Latin America was explained to be a theology coming from people's experiences of living the faith,
7. Number 6 leads to communication of, or communicative theology, a theology that is rooted in reality, a reality that is very much mediated today. It is a theology which makes sense to thoroughly media influenced groups of people who are driven by consumerism, materialism and wide-spread secularization. Contextual theology, as it is often termed, not only needs to consider issues of poverty, rich-poor divide, multi-religiosity, oppression etc, but also of the godless attitude of today's people. This could also be a pointer to the numerous people leaving the Church today.
8. Communication as a constituent of theological education. Egs:
 - a. Participatory learning: professors and students as learners together sharing, consulting freely and searching together.
 - b. Reworking a theological concept, eg. today's priest, Eucharist etc, in the form of a modern day playlets, tableau, a video etc
 - c. Ability to discuss media events in the light of theology, or a media interpretation of an important event. Providing a Christian interpretation to events around us,
 - d. Asking students to do a role play, a video, a song, a poster etc instead of a regular essay or oral exam to test their knowledge of the subject, i.e. Rephrasing theology in these popular media helps students assimilate what are studied and apply it to real life events.
 - e. Developing inter-personal relations, sociability, approachability in a theologate so that students and professors search together.

The Present Situation

A Work in Progress

Because of the efforts of CICS, one should not get the impression that everything is perfect in this field. Far from it. Obviously the interest on the theme needs to be continuously sharpened. As mentioned already, often communicators wonder if the Church is interested in the new culture spawned by the media at all. Or is the Church at

her own wavelength ignoring the media, doing her own thing without really reflecting on the theological implications of these? One of the major problems, as mentioned earlier, catholic communications personnel often notice is the large amount of theoretical input in theology given to future priests and religious in abstract doses, with which they often fail to connect to reality. The reality they face is mediated, thoroughly impacted by media influences.

On the other hand, many attempts have been made by media people to use the media, following the instrumental aspect of the media without a proper theology that explains why media usage is important. We feel it is important to develop a vision for communication and media education within the Church. It seems that unless theologians wake up to the media and its impacts on our ministry, media will always remain an outsider in the Church.

Some Practical Examples to Highlight the Lack of Understanding of Interdisciplinary Approach

A film like *Million Dollar Baby* wins the best film award at the Oscars, and obviously becomes quite popular all over the world. The film highlights euthanasia and makes a point in favour of it. The moral theology professor never bothers to watch this film or make a comment on it. In the same way, a number of movies and tele-serials approve gay relations, extramarital relations, conviviality etc. The moral theology professor keeps silent over all these.

A group interested in inter-religious dialogue wants to show a film on actual happenings in multi-religious countries and subsequently wants to hold a discussion on the issues highlighted. An invitation is sent to the university. The university authority passes the invitation to the Director of the communication centre because it concerns a film. He does not think that those involved in missiology and inter-religious studies need to be part of this debate. As much as I admire the authority's good intention that communications personnel must be interested in inter-religious issues, I wonder if those involved in inter-religious dialogue should not be exposed to an audio visual and mediatic exposition of the same issues. They, it seems, should learn everything from books only.

The students do a minimum of audio-visual productions in order to get used to the language of the medium they are specializing in. Often they carry around audio video equipment to shoot what they need for their productions. This has created a general feeling that all communications training is technical. And this has been repeated quite so often in the university, degrading communication studies.

Often secretaries of the various faculties at the university ask the secretary of CICS for help in providing video projectors, tape recorders, photographic assistance, audio-video duplicating facilities etc. In other words, for most in the university, CICS is primarily meant to supply audio visual aids.

All these indicate that work needs to be done to achieve constructive cooperation between a classically trained group of professors and their younger colleagues, in an

interdisciplinary approach. However, this article has presented strong arguments towards the gains to be made for the further development of theology and its mission in the present-day world. Once the insight that specialists can contribute to an interdisciplinary orientation and vice-versa can be shared, the Gregorian University is bound to enter a new and productive stage to the benefit of all involved, the further development of our work and mission in the world. Though it may be a long road, it is worth the effort and to build that road step by step.

An Evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Experience

The PUG is really a collection of separate faculties. Each dean is a power unto himself and is interested only in strengthening his own faculty. Most professors are classically formed and continue their style in the strictest scholastic manner. Many think communications, social sciences, inter-religious dialogue, missiology etc are subject not to be taught there at all. This way of thinking overlooks the fact that these subjects build bridges between the academia and the world in which the Church is situated.

In recent years the Gregorian University began to define a 'centre' as an academic unit with less importance. Accordingly a centre is designed and promoted by professors from different departments who together undertake teaching and research in an area that has an interdisciplinary nature like formation of superiors, spirituality, inter-religious dialogue etc. It can be either part of a faculty or independent and supported by different faculties depending on its nature. The centre has a director, who has proficiency in the subject and is appointed by the rector. As and according to the situation the centre can be suppressed or continued. Communication studies, though started already in 1981, is forced to be a centre of this type now. Why communication studies cannot be part of this centre is clear as most deans of different faculties have a lack of understanding of the character and importance of communication. At the Gregorian, although a broadminded interdisciplinary communications studies was envisaged at a grand scale by persons who had clearer vision, now it has unfortunately been pigeon-holed into a narrow sense, an almost impossible concept. Communications is made to struggle in that newly refurbished concept.

Clearly many US universities had begun interdisciplinary studies as early as in the 70s. Every doctoral candidate had to have a major field and two minor fields related to his\her thesis topic. Those who had sociology of development (heavily communication) had also a minor in economics and in formal organizations (eg. social psychology). This background is enormously helpful in future work, especially in teaching development courses and directing a broad range of doctoral theses. Continental European universities have not cultivated interdisciplinary approaches as much as American universities. No wonder, most deans and professors at the PUG have little interdisciplinary formation. Understandably, this makes it difficult for them to grasp the importance of interdisciplinary studies and the importance of communication in this context.

For this reason, I proceed to present and summarize the potential of PUG in terms of interdisciplinarity and communications. I will indicate the importance of the cooperation of specialists and the specific value they can perform to enhance an interdisciplinary approach within the university. A common fallacy is that anyone who is not familiar with the discipline of communication may have to reduce its meaning to the technical aspect of it. They perceive communication as flaunting cameras and watching tele-novellas, thus failing to recognise that it is an academic discipline in its own right.

All the interdisciplinary courses at CICS now have been developed by professors from communications as they clearly understand how communications can relate to social sciences, theology, philosophy, etc. Those from these classical faculties often find it hard to value the courses developed by these communication experts. This has led to a situation in which they do not want to develop any courses by themselves related to communications, or do they want to recognize any course developed by communication experts. In this sense, it would be especially interesting to start a more open and fruitful dialogue with the professors from classical faculties, who according to the Gregorian regulation are supposed to sustain the interdisciplinary centre.

Much could be gained if these professors would develop a more open attitude that would allow them to perceive that those from communications have developed their concepts from the communicative angle, looking at the way the society or the Church functions in reality. Once they could recognize that these communication teachers actually teach theology in action, it might become easier for them to understand the relevance of communications in improving the relevance of theology within present-day society.

The main proof of this arguments are the CICS graduates who, with their broad interdisciplinary formation, do extremely well in their work in dioceses because they can dialogue with those in theology, in ecclesial administration, in social sciences, those from other religions etc. However, they are often confronted with the same problem that people formed largely in theology simply cannot understand what communications are about and often have little sense of the local cultural context. It would be interesting, therefore, to involve these graduates and their colleagues within the discussion that this article aims to get started.

Regarding the Cavaletti conferences itself, some suggestions may be made:

1. More theology professors need to be interested in communications and find the link between theology and communications. So far, the earlier seminars had more communication professors and very few professors of theology. And we find this a major weakness. It is true that these efforts have encouraged the communications professors to take the initiative and promote the link between theology and communications. Now our attempt will be to get more of theology professors and formation personnel interested and involved in teaching communications. In this seminar we have tried to get more theology professors. 40 % are ology persons and

60% communications personnel. We hope this slant can be more helpful in taking communications to theology.

2. It is important that more rectors and deans of theological seminaries worldwide get interested in this interdisciplinary approach between theology and communications. Exposure to such new ideas to personnel involved in formation too would help the universal Church very much, since their specialist knowledge is much needed.
3. In the Church, a new idea needs to be continuously promoted. After a couple of conferences everything needs not be made right. Today we have new sets of theology and communication professors, most formed in straight jackets without much exposure to interdisciplinary approaches. Hence conferences of this type can open up new ways of thinking for them.
4. It is also important to concentrate more on specific themes, more specifically on formation in communication and theology.
5. There is a general feeling that theoretically much has been achieved, academically much has been taught about the relationship between theology and communications. But in practice, i.e. in the area of communicating theology, or developing a communication theology there has not been much success. The aim of the conference, then, should be to facilitate integration.
6. The papers and studies of these conferences need to be properly documented and published and promoted all over the world in different languages. As mentioned earlier, some of Paul Soukup's books have been inspired by these conferences, but not directly from the papers of these conferences.

What More Can We Do?

Habits die hard, old habits die harder. Although the late Pope John Paul II had said in clear terms that the media are the new *Areopagus* (RM, 37) and the future of the Church that is steadily losing numbers depends on how she involves in the media culture to present the Christian message in a mediated manner, in a manner appealing and attractive to the media generation, there is hardly any future; hardly anyone, especially those training to be future priests in major seminaries do not realize the importance of this. The future, many think, is in promoting traditional ways.

At CICS, interdisciplinarity may be more clearly defined and a permanent policy may be established. This requires a practice of dialogue. As long as every dean can do what he wants, there will be no permanence. All should be led to see the value of an interdisciplinary programme for the work of leadership. Most younger deans will accept this readily but do not dare to make changes to their approaches. Some will accept it only under obedience to the administrators of the university.

Today CICS continues to work with a new Interdisciplinary Masters in communications. This Masters has a strong base in theology, philosophy and communications. This is a formation that helps the students to translate what they study to their ministry effectively. Interestingly, a number of professors in theology, philosophy and missiology have agreed to take courses at CICS with a C code.

The intensive conference on theology and communications, philosophy and communications, etc will continue in the summer months to expose the new generation of professors in communications and other disciplines of the interdisciplinary nature. Since those from other disciplines are still formed in very classical traditions, this kind of conferences can continue to freshen the thinking. The above-mentioned professors who have agreed to take courses at CICS will participate in these conferences.

Getting two or three professors together to handle a lesson is going to be an important experiment. Earlier one person alone managed a course, now attempts are made to bring together two or more professors in an effort of team-teaching: one from theology and one or two from communications together are advised to teach one course – a truly interdisciplinary idea.

The real interdisciplinary programme would mean a licentiate in theology with specialization in communication. Hence arrangements could be made so that a student can do the combined degrees in no more than three years. This means that each faculty would recognize at least “bridge” courses of communication for the licentiate in the given faculty. There are many T courses in theology which have a theological/communication content. A faculty should recognize such an interdisciplinary specialization as a degree programme in its own right.

Students doing a licentiate in theology, philosophy, canon law, Church history, missiology etc may be encouraged to do the new one-year Interdisciplinary Diploma at CICS. This will give them the necessary skills to communicate what they learn in their studies. Students who have done the above programme could be helped to do a doctorate in their faculty choosing a communication theme. Professors from communications could also be their moderators.

As mentioned earlier, in many US universities students choose courses from two or more disciplines and work closely with faculty to design programmes that meet their diverse educational and career goals. Clearly in an Interdisciplinary Studies programme the students have to decide what they want to study and where they want to concentrate. Much responsibility is placed on them to decide for themselves on what they want to learn and what they want to be in the future. So rather than the university itself forces courses on the students for an interdisciplinary programme the possibility of designing one such programme may be left to the students who have their specific choices of subjects. This is one area to which CICS may lead to.

Conclusion

As the spectrum of the academic moves forward with more research and discoveries, even *sapientia cristiana* need to pave newer ways of presenting the church

in the new *areopagus* formed by the media. This is the challenge of interdisciplinary studies for a university like the Gregorian. This is why we feel it is important to maintain an on-going dialogue between theology and communications media, strengthened continuously by periodic reflection by theologians and communicators.

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The Case for Communication in Theological Education

Pradip N. Thomas

Part 1: The Rationale

Perhaps the best way for me to introduce this subject is to begin with a provocative question – Is there a need to take communication seriously in theological education/formation? After all, is communication not, in a formal sense already a significant aspect of current theological education – the teaching of homiletics for instance, and at least in some seminaries worship and liturgy and the exploration of issues related to culture in the context of the study of mission? In any case, in a context characterised by an already overstretched study and teaching environment why deal with a subject as vague as communication – with its multi-faceted meanings that range from the infinitesimal to the pachydermic and that is a challenge to most people let alone the proverbially blind. Do we not already have enough contextual theologies to fill a few oceans with enough to spare – so why another one? Imagine God’s own bewilderment at yet another theology directed towards making the universal God our particular one.

All these are valid questions for which I have, at least for the moment, no compelling answers. Communication means different things to different people. And this confusion is often reflected in communication text books. It is a multi-accentual word and its meanings are derived in context and tainted by perspective. I am going to stick to what is a simple definition of communication which I think is more than adequate for the task at hand. Communication takes place when two or more people exchange information resulting in the making of meaning, leading to mutual comprehension and understanding. This process is amplified and extended by the media – traditional, mass and new technologies and in such contexts one can usefully link communication to structures (such as Time-Warner and News Corporation), to processes (such as production, routines, styles), to ideology (news values), to technology (such as television, computers and telecommunications), to skills (copy writing, editing), audiences (segmented and mass) and to the ways in which all of these factors influence and are in turn influenced by culture, society, politics, economics and law, and by national and increasingly by global forces.

The Contribution of Media Education

The objective of communication is fundamentally linked to the making of meaning. Every expression and act of communication involves intent. The symbols of mass culture are not just expressions of information per se but are fundamentally statements

of intent. The world of advertising that someone once described as the ‘science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it’ ranks among the world’s most potent manufacturers of desire and consequentially of meaning. In an era in which the media have become central arbiters of meaning, of definitions, of choices and options, of opinions and values, of the agendas of public discourse, in a context in which all of us are shaped in witting and unwitting ways by a variety of mediated agendas, can we but not take communications seriously? The values that filter through the media are a primary source for the world’s values and it would seem that by all accounts these sources of values are providing stiff competition to traditional sources of values, those that are linked to religion, family and the educational system. The media have become our story tellers *par excellence*. There are many stories, powerful, superfluous, enlightening, irritating. Most of them convey values, consumerism, the glorification of the market, individualism, the inevitability of the prevailing political order, the good life, self-help and so on. The media are involved in the manufacturing of consensus around such values, of making the prevailing order of politics and economics sound and look entirely normal, reasonable and acceptable. All this is related to what one may call media power.

What is perhaps of primary concern is the fact that we have all, in different ways, in different places become bearers of values supportive of the global order often without our even knowing it. We consent without our consenting. This has led to a situation in which the structures of human consciousness, our modes of thought, our capacity to think and act, even our freedom to believe has been immeasurably affected by the cultural environments that we are all a part of. The media affect both what we know and the way we know. Understanding through seeing is different from understanding through reading. We are captives to both types of making sense of our world. This business of social shaping, its inexorability and our inability to control change and the ways in which it affects our lives as individuals and as members of a community is something that the church has scarcely begun to comprehend let alone deal with. The steady displacement of cultural traditions – for instance in terms of what we eat and drink, what we wear, the cultivation of new life styles and attitudes, how we bring up our children, our understanding of morality, new work patterns brought about by technology, etc., all these are just not isolated instances of cultural change. They impact on our lives in a cumulative manner. Take for instance the last mentioned impact of technology on our work – since information has become a premium commodity, those of us who use this technology are *willy nilly* caught up in its logic. Our understanding of ‘time’ for instance has changed for immediacy has value, is profitable and has become a goal in itself. So we reply to emails even before we get them, get withdrawal symptoms if we do not, carry our laptops with us even if it is a damned nuisance, all the while silently acknowledging God’s greatest gift to humankind – Bill Gates.

The need to understand these processes is, I believe, quite fundamental to our discernment of God in the here and now, in the context of a resolutely material world and in the midst of this mediated environment that we call life. We need to discern God’s presence as well as his absence because this knowledge is central to our shaping

the world that God wants for us. **It would seem that one of the purposes for introducing the study of communication in theological education is media education, an education that will enable and equip seminarians to understand the world of mediated values, its languages and concepts and the processes and structures that sustain it. This will enable in the contextualisation of the Gospel – to help relate the Gospel as history with the Gospel as lived in the here and now. Such an understanding can lead to a counter-response, one in which media values are tempered by Gospel values thereby enabling communications to exist for the greater common good.**

The kind of education is exemplified in the following story. After many years of waiting, a village finally got electricity. One of the first things the villagers did was to pool their money and buy a television set from a salesman who was travelling through the region. Lots of people from outside the community had been telling them what a good thing television was. Little else went on for the next couple of months while everyone in the village stayed glued to the TV. Then, one by one, people got tired of it, until almost no one watched anymore. The man who sold the television set showed up again one day expecting to sell dozens more. Puzzled, he asked the people, “Tell me, why aren’t you all watching your new TV?” “Oh we don’t need it,” was the answer. “We have our storyteller”. “Don’t you think” said the travelling salesman, “that the television set knows a lot more stories than your storyteller?” The villagers were quiet for a moment. Finally an old man spoke up: “You’re right. The television set knows many stories. Probably more than our storyteller”. He paused. “But our storyteller ... knows us”.

It would be perverse to take a Luddite view on things. I would be the first to admit that some technological applications, like computers, for instance, are immensely useful tools. They help us network, to streamline the services that we have on offer, explore and use knowledge in efficient ways and so on. Media education is not all about painting a grey and bleak picture of media futures. It is also about helping people to appreciate the good things about the media, about the potential of the media to move one’s emotions and excite one’s passions in a positive manner, to educate and to inform. In other words a primary objective of media education is to groom discriminating media consumers - so that we are able, on the one hand, to recognise the fact that computer-mediated applications are not an all-sufficient substitute or a blueprint for ordering all of life’s experiences, and on the other hand, also to appreciate and discern the worth of media fare that communicate the rumour of angels in our world today. The televisual genre seems to be a primary site where the moral stories of our times are acted out. These are often expressed through direct stories such as the *Bible* and the *Ramayana*. The more challenging ones, however, are the indirect ones, Roberto Benigni’s *Life is Beautiful* to the more obscure uses of religious motifs in a film like *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*. The treatment of enduring themes such as love, truth, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation in these and others films point to the fact that theology as ‘knowledge about God’ can also be learned and picked up in the most unlikely of locations, such as a film theatre. In other words popular culture can be a channel for the expression of religious values and moral truths.

Therefore we need theologies of popular culture and communication that illumine God's presence in our world. Such theologies will equip seminarians to appreciate culture and communication as an essential element of the lives that we live and the environments that we breathe, a much-needed input to understanding and doing mission and pastoral work.

Theological and Biblical Understandings

If media education is one side of the coin, the other side is the study of Christian communication. Communication in theological education is made up of a composite of these two areas. It is all about a dialogue leading to mutual illumination together with the communication of the results of this dialogue. Let me briefly introduce this second area through highlighting two sets of questions that are central to this project.

1) How (is?) does one (to?) come to an understanding of the making of meaning in the Gospels, through the metaphors, symbols, language, parables, narrative structure, the communicative God of the Bible, the communicative action of God through Christ, the Word made flesh, the Biblical basis of communication? And how does one relate this understanding to our context with its rites and rituals of mass culture, faiths, traditions and practices, ideologies and structures, the play of power, of poverty and large gaps between the communication haves and have nots? **In other words, what do we need to do to evolve a theology of communications?**

2) How does one communicate this understanding through forms that are accessible and credible? **How do we evolve a communicative theology, a theology that is perceptive to the metaphors by which society models its life and that can be communicated through appropriate channels ranging from traditional forms to new technologies?**

This paper is by no means an exhaustive introduction to the subject. Let me illustrate one possible way of understanding communications from a Biblical perspective. It is based on one of Christ's communicative actions. It is an illustration of an incarnational model of communication – the Word made flesh, that of a living, loving, communicating, self-involving God inspiring commitment to communication as truth making and truth telling. A model of communication exemplified best by Jesus' own life and ministry.

His story, which I presume we are all familiar with, starts with the birth of Jesus to Jewish parents in a region occupied by the Romans. By all accounts those were difficult times, characterised by an unforgiving political and economic climate – a dominant hierarchy, collaborators that included tax collectors and a clerical/scribal class allied to maintaining doctrinal purity and the status quo at the expense of real communion with their people, the presence of the military, of Caesar and so on. The climate was resolutely against ordinary people, both women and men. It was also an era characterised by vertical flows of communication, from the top down –

manipulated and propagandised to the core. In comes this man called Jesus onto the scene. His mission which seemed rather fool-hardy at the best of times, must have been compelling and at the same time unwelcome. He was not by any stretch of the imagination a normal leader. For a start he knew his scriptures and in a strange way the scriptures knew him, but his people did not. His mission of communication also turned out to be very unusual, even until his death and beyond to his resurrection. He listened. He spoke. He kept silent. He told stories. He reached out. He questioned. He did not keep to conventions nor to the script. At times his answers were double-edged and tinged with irony and it was left to his critics to unscramble what he actually meant.

Jesus' interpretation of the attempts by the Pharasiac-Herodian coalition to entrap him on the question related to the lawfulness or otherwise of the need to pay taxes to Caesar (Mark:12:13-17) is an example of the power of the story to initiate transformative change. Jesus' answer 'Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and Pay God what belongs to God' can be seen as a powerful inditement of the temporal political order of Caesar's. Ched Meyer in his book *Binding the Strong* (1997:312), has remarked that Jesus was in no doubt that God, not Caesar, owned Israel and so he 'rejects the option of political co-operation with Rome' and 'the authority of Caesar' and all that his coin represents. Caesar, as far as Jesus was concerned can keep the image, for God owns reality. But in typical Jesus' fashion, his statement was an invitation to his opponents to act on their allegiances. The ball is in their court. It is a check-mate. At the end of the round, they, rather than Jesus, are left to ponder on the position that they ought to take on the issue. This was typical of Jesus' mode of communication. It was direct. It was also indirect. But the purpose was the same. He came to change the world. And the change that he was concerned with was people-centred. For want of a better word to describe his communicative action, he was a radical 'illuminate', a person whose personality and moral authority created a desire for change in the lives of some of his followers. Those who were touched by his ministry were to recognise the links between the temporal and the eschatological, the theological and the political. But what is interesting is that His people did not understand his mission even until his death. Here was an unknown God communicating an accessible, loving, caring, God – a failure during his time perhaps, but surely not in time.

Theology, in this sense is not merely learning about a God who was, but about a God who is actively present in the here and now. It is about relating the story of the Gospels to the story of our times. Of being able to relate the moral worth of the story related to paying taxes to Caesar to contemporary manifestations of indebtedness or that of the widow's contribution to illustrate the power of mammon and the struggles of women against patriarchal versions of power in our world today. And of being able to be informed by a conviction that all these are not just moral stories but real options.

Jesus' ministry illumined the fact that the Bible originated in and was strengthened by an oral tradition that was characterised by both the verbal and the visual, the Word of God and the Image of God. It would seem that in our over-theorised, mainly literary theological environments, we have become captives to the word and in the process have lost out on the image. At the cusp of an overtly visual era, it would seem that

there is an urgent need to reclaim the centrality of the oral and the visual, of the image in our learning and doing theology. The image has become a major source of meaning in our world today. It challenges our traditional word-based knowledge. It forces us to re-consider the roles played by image and narrative, story and culture in the Gospels. This in turn will help us to redefine the communication mission of the church. The choice is not between what we already do and what we ought to do, but communication in support of and in addition to areas such as homiletics. **I believe that critical communication studies is in a unique position to explore this interface and in the process to enrich theological formation.**

Let me very briefly deal with what I have reflected on so far by looking at how all this fits in with the average student at the seminary, the potential pastor who will eventually spend his or her life time in the midst of communities, as a representative of the church, equipped with the Word of God in the confluence and midst of cultures, in rural and urban contexts. What kind of an approach to communications must be followed that will enable the student to have an understanding of the world of communications and how it impacts on culture - of the world of images, the symbols of mass culture, the many strains of popular culture that will enable reflections on the presence of God in a resolutely material world.

So what would a contextual study of communication need to privilege? Firstly, the need to be exposed to media education. This will enable the seminarian to get a critical knowledge of local and global media realities and of the values supportive of contemporary forms of consumer and popular cultures. Secondly, the need to understand the interface between Christ and popular culture through a Biblical understanding of communication on the one hand and that of popular cultures on the other. This would mean that, for instance in the Kenyan context, the rookie novice ought to be able to relate the message of the Bible to local forms of popular culture. He or she should be in a position to distinguish the local pop music scene, of *benga*, the Luo music style, of *cavacha* rhythms, the *rumba*, of rappers like *Hardstone* and the reggae band *Them Mushrooms* as much as with other social expressions of communication not least because his/her potential audience listens to such kinds of music six days a week and lives in the confluence of such cultures. We cannot afford to dismiss expressions of popular culture as the contaminated 'other side', music for sinners, stories without hope, cultures that are beyond the pale, characterised by the absence of Christ. We need to see the incarnational Christ in the midst of these cultures not in the separation of Gospel and culture. Thirdly, the need to be faithful to the communicative actions of Christ and to model our attitude to communications in that light. The Good News is about life in the midst of death and deprivation. It is about speaking the truth, and that involves the taking of risks. It is about being credible. And fourthly, about communicating Christ through all means. The need to acquire at least one communications 'skill' ought to be a mandatory aspect of this project.

Part 2: Lessons from India

One of the primary obstacles to the introduction of any new subject in theological formation is the force of tradition. To some extent this reticence to accept the unfamiliar is understandable since we are, as a rule, creatures of certainty, resistant to change. To the late Jesuit story-teller Anthony de Mello (1998:xii) theology was ‘The art of telling stories about the Divine. Also the art of listening to them’, but stories that were meant to be tasted and felt that and would lead to the transformation of the listener.

The Guru’s Cat

Each time the guru sat for worship with his students the ashram cat would come in to distract them, so he ordered them to tie it when the ashram was at prayer.

After the guru died the cat continued to be tied at worship time. And when the cat expired, another cat was brought into the ashram to make sure that the guru’s orders were faithfully observed at worship time. Centuries passed and learned treatises were written by the guru’s scholarly disciples on the liturgical significance of tying up a cat while worship is performed.

There is of course an obvious meaning to the story about the Guru’s cat and that has to do with education including theology becoming captive to tradition. The President of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), Albert van Heuvel in his address to the WACC Central Committee meetings that were held in Cape Town in 1999 made a pertinent observation regarding the force of tradition. He noted that ‘Popular study of the early Ecumenical Councils has ... shown that almost none of the early dogmas was ever unanimous in its pronouncement, in spite of the official records. Yet they became the only authentic teaching of the church’ (1999:37). This observation would seem to suggest that there are times when we are not aware of the sometime dubious antecedents of traditions that we rather blithely follow. I chose this story to illustrate the fact that theological education is at times carried out with little concern as to its relevance to the needs of a post-modern world, the need for translation. The story makes the point that it is so very easy for us to lose sight of the eternal message of the Gospel, in a context characterised by unvarying tradition. The guru’s disciples opted to make tradition and in the process lost the plot. They got so engrossed with the form that they invested symbolic meaning in a tradition founded on dubious antecedents. In that process they missed the point about communication: credibility.

The force of tradition has been an obstacle to the contextualisation of theological education in India and elsewhere. More than a decade after the formal induction of the study of communication in theological education in India, this attitude still persists. There is a mind-set that finds it hard to accept that the study of communication is more

than the study of skills, many are convinced that it is all about technology and technique, about gimmicks and how it can be used in the task of persuasion. There is a pervasive belief in 'instrumentalist' uses of technology, that a computer with Pentium 4 processing capacities and a studio with digital equipment is all that is necessary for the mission of the church. As a result there are any number of examples of seminaries in Asia who have access to technologies but not to content, who may know what they are doing but not 'why' they are doing it. The lead, for such instrumentalist uses of communication is invariably taken from groups in the evangelical traditions who implicitly believe that every new technology is a gift from God to be used to extend His Kingdom. Such groups have no time for the kind of niceties that some of us believe in – for instance the social uses of communications.

In the early 80's, the organisation that I was formerly employed with WACC, launched a serious bid to involve seminaries in Asia and elsewhere to take seriously communication as a subject of study in seminaries. Workshops and seminars were organised in Indonesia, South Korea, Myanmar, Philippines, Argentina and with the Inter-Church Media Programme in South Africa. For a variety of reasons, notably local interest, it was decided to concentrate on building a programme in India. The plan was three fold – 1) to convince the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (that is the governing body of Protestant seminaries in India) of the importance of the subject, 2) to conduct a series of region-specific ecumenical workshops on the theme and 3) to follow up with specific faculty seminars on media education and Christian communication. These objectives were linked to cultivating interest in the subject both at the level of seminary teachers and those in positions of authority in the church hierarchy. An additional objective was to stimulate interest in the exploration of communications perspectives from within existing theological disciplines such as Systematics, Pastoral Theology and Church History. Continuing interest in this programme from the Senate was followed by a curriculum development exercise that led to the publication of a book entitled '*Communication in Theological Education – A Curriculum*' that subsequently became a text book that was used at BD level. In June 1988, the Senate recognised the first of the M.Th programmes in Communication at the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, followed by similar programmes at the Gurukul Lutheran Seminary, Chennai and of late at the United Theological College, Bangalore. In the early 90's the Senate made the study of communication a compulsory subject at BD level.

I was subsequently involved in teaching on the program at TTS, Madurai and I opted for an inter-disciplinary approach. The program was strongly grounded in sociology although I was able to draw upon faculty resources to illumine areas that I was not qualified to address – from radical political economy to feminist theology. The approach taken at Gurukul, Chennai is strong on technology and the one in Bangalore, that is today the strongest of the programs, emphasises ethics.

Present Status: It has been a struggle. The lack of trained staff, of resources, of facilities continues to stymie the development of communication departments in India and elsewhere. WACC has been involved in supporting a few scholars, some of whom

are at present teaching communication in their respective seminaries. But it is an uphill struggle made worse by shrinking budgets and a conspicuous lack of leaders in the field. It is interesting to note that while there are any number of graduates who can quite competently teach communication skills – journalism, audio and video production and so on, there continues to remain a woeful lack of people versed in theory and more importantly the theological imagination necessary to weld the two areas together in a meaningful manner. As yet, employment opportunities are limited. There are few options for those who want to explore the world of communications in a church context.

And so, decades later, despite all the work that has been done, communication in theological education in India still has a long way to go. However I believe that the living traditions of Christianity in Asia along with the great wealth of contributions on communication and theological education from scholars like Fr Franz-Josef Eilers, will make that long journey a lot easier.

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Radio Broadcasting in the Brazilian Amazon

Fr Roberto M. Ebisa, SVD¹

The Amazon holds the greatest natural resources and the most complex biodiversity and ecosystems in the world. It corresponds to 43,38% of South America of which 66% is within Brazilian territory. In fact, the Amazon occupies 60% of Brazil's total land mass with a population over the threshold of 21 million. Its health is a global enterprise because the forest soaks up greenhouse gases which lessens global warming. But despite constant warnings from all sectors of society, deforestation is rampant everywhere. Ranchers and soybeans planters continue to set on fire large swaths of the jungle. The danger is that the Amazon could eventually become too small to produce the rain that it needs to survive. But even though continually threatened and destroyed, the Amazon is still considered as the biggest tropical forest in the world.

And since 1980 the Divine Word Missionaries have marked their presence in this majestic region beset with Herculean problems in the midst of untold natural resources. In February 1997, for the first time, I set foot into this gigantic region of endless green. And just like any young missionary, I was oozing with enthusiasm to share the Gospel values in this mission frontier.

The work of evangelization in the Amazon was, and still is, a big challenge. Few years back, the Conference Of Bishops of Brazil organized a National Assembly of Bishops, priests, religious, and the laity to address the issue of Evangelization in the Amazon. The event was geared towards joining forces together to put into operation projects in solidarity with the Church in the Amazon. It calls for a more concerted effort in giving value to the struggles of the inhabitants in the region – particularly the abandoned and the oppressed in far-flung communities, their dignity and riches, challenges and hopes. This is a mission mandate which we Divine Word Missionaries have been doing all through these years.

¹ My passion for communication, specifically for radio broadcast, is not happenstance. I was initiated into this field as a young theologian under Franz-Josef Eilers in the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay City. It was through the prodding of Fr.Eilers that the portal to the world of social communications slowly opened for me. And it was through his intervention also that, for the first time, Divine Word Seminary sent a seminarian to work for one year in a radio station. In 1987, fresh from his first year in theological studies, I became the first Filipino SVD assigned as a regent for one full year at DYRF, an AM station at the University of San Carlos in Cebu City, Philippines. And after my ordination 1993, I took post graduate studies in Development Communication, major in Broadcasting, at the University of the Phillippines in Los Baños, Laguna. This was in preparation for his future work in the Brazilian Amazon forseen by Fr Eilers. Today, I hold the position of General Manager of FABC's Radio Veritas Asia (RVA), a short wave radio that broadcast 16 languages all over the Asian continent based in Manila. In this article I gladly recount my experience of broadcasting in my nine years of missionary activities in Brazilian Amazon as an expression of gratitude to my professor, Franz-Josef Eilers, whose friendship I treasure to this very day.

Indeed the Amazon is so vast that one would need, almost always, a whole day of travel to reach far-off communities – be it settlements along the mighty and muddy Amazon river and its innumerable tributaries or the mountain villages. And not only that, accessibility for some areas are simply next to impossible as there are no roads to follow.

For 9 years I had been working in the Saint Anthony parish of Alenquer, a sleepy town in the left margin of the Amazon River. It has a population of more than 60 thousand inhabitants, scattered all over its land mass five times bigger than my province of Cebu, in southern Philippines. In fact, the State of Pará, to which the town of Alenquer belongs, is almost 15 times bigger than the entire Philippines in terms of land area.

It was really a mountain climb at the onset as I tempered that burning desire to do something for the mission. And just like any neophyte missionary I had to face squarely an indispensable challenge: learning a new language. Although learning a new language is a humbling experience, it is the surest way to the heart of the people. It gives them an untold joy when a missionary grapples mouthing their language, no matter how crooked or grammatically incorrect. They always embrace and welcome this attempt as an expression of a missionary's sincere desire to be part of their daily struggles, to be one with them in their plight.

The parish of St. Anthony covers 146 communities scattered throughout its vast municipal territory. Considering its immense territorial boundaries, one of the biggest obstacles in our pastoral care was the great distances we had to travel in order to reach out to our parishioners. And more than two scores of these communities are nestled along the muddy Amazon River and its tributaries. These settlements, half of the year during rainy season, are practically submerged in water, and the residents have to abandon home and livelihood. They would move to higher grounds and stay there till the water subsides. This is an annual cycle of the life of our parishioners residing along the Amazon river and its tributaries. Understandably, this cycle has a tremendous bearing in our ministry.

Confronted with this stark reality it dawned on me the indispensable role of the radio in this vast mission territory. When I got my first mission assignment, the superiors made it known that once in Brazil my main task would be in line with communication apostolate, particularly broadcast and print. In fact, to equip myself properly, I was sent to take a postgraduate degree in Development Communication in the University of the Philippines. An idea then was slowly taking shape in my head to utilize radio waves for our pastoral activities in this gigantic mission territory.

The first thing I did was to get the support from my fellow missionaries as we were five priests serving the parish of St. Anthony. Although we came from five different countries, winning their support was the easiest part of the enterprise. We were all of the same mind and heart that with radio airwaves we will definitely be able to reach our far flung parishioners in season and out of season. And since contact with the people we are serving was very important in our ministry the green light turned on right away. The communities which we are able to serve with a maximum of visits three times a year would soon be connected to us through radio broadcast every week!

And of course we were already excited with the many catechetical possibilities at our disposal once we have a program on the air.

Since there exists a commercial AM radio in Alenquer itself I considered it seriously as the venue for the radio program I had in mind. I crushed out the idea of airing our program in a powerful radio station owned by an adjacent Diocese in a nearby town. All for practical purposes and of course the pride that goes with the fact that we would soon be broadcasting a church program right in the backyard of St. Anthony Parish in the town of Alenquer. I started to draw plans for the production of the program: the human and financial resources, format and content. Since the majority of the inhabitants in Alenquer are Catholic, I was optimistic that I would get financial support from the people themselves. It is just a question of how to go about it, turning the right knobs once the program itself is concretized. And for this I envisioned the commercial establishments as sponsors for the project.

From then on my eyes were fixed on Radio Ximango da Amazonia, the only existing AM radio station in town which has a 10KW power. Its broadcast covers the whole territory and even extends to neighboring municipalities. The initial talk with the station manager was very positive ushering another rush of hope in our direction. But that was only the first step of the series of battles I had to conquer one by one.

The production team was one important consideration I had to address right at the very beginning. I needed to have volunteer broadcasters to anchor the radio program itself. The parish cannot afford to hire and pay professional broadcasters. And to solve this issue I conceptualized a training course on broadcasting for representatives from the urban and rural communities of the parish. More than 50 participants showed up for this three-day live-in seminar. I introduced to the group the basic elements of communications, then specifically, writing for the radio, mechanics of interviewing for the radio, and how to use the microphone. It was not an easy task as more than 50 percent of the participants were out of school youths. But everybody was excited since for majority it was something new. Interest was not lacking. And with enthusiasm abounding in the air, learning was as easy as it was enjoyable. In the end the experience was very rewarding for them but specially for me who discovered some real talents in the process.

At the end of the training seminar I picked out six persons from the participants for the core group of volunteers. They were to be the production team of the radio program yet to be born. In the days that followed these six volunteers became my partners as I shared with them that burning desire to come up with a radio program for the parish of St. Anthony. And as if part of the plan, the Prelature, few weeks after our live-in seminar, came out with an intensive training for the Communication Apostolate or PASCOP (*Pastoral de Comunicação*). I right away fielded these six volunteers to have a more comprehensive view of the social communication apostolate. Together we participated a 5-day seminar and expectedly part of the inputs was on broadcasting again. The timing was heavenly and I could not have asked for more!

With my team organized, dubbed simply as PASCOP, several meetings were held until finally we were able to put flesh to the skeletal outline of the radio program. After several considerations we came out with RADIO ALERTA as the title to the program.

RADIO ALERTA was a radio magazine program. Its duration was three hours and 30 minutes, with four segments, aired every Sunday over Radio Ximango da Amazônia. It started with the live broadcast of the Holy Mass directly from one of the chapels in Alenquer at 6:00 in the morning. Our first broadcast was on Mothers' Day in 2002 and there was an overwhelming listenership on that day in the town proper and in the far flung communities. We had more than three weeks of plugging on the air and also in the pulpit of our chapels for the scheduled maiden broadcast of the new program. It was the first time that a Holy Mass was aired live from one of chapels in the town proper celebrated by one of their pastors and heard all over town and the nearby towns as well. Looking back, I could still picture the joy of the Ximangos (people born in Alenquer are called *Ximangos*) having finally the live transmission of the Holy Eucharist from their own backyard. And yes, the business establishments in the town rallied behind for the needed financial backing as sponsors to the program.

Following the Holy Eucharist was an hour-broadcast that featured an interview of two leaders from a raffled community in the town of Alenquer. These raffled communities have to send their leaders to the radio station, and for the first part they will have to tell the story of their community: the name of the community, how it got its name, when it was founded, who were the founders, where it is located and how many inhabitants. They will end the sharing by exposing the main problems in their community and their request to the local authorities. This segment became a hit also since not everybody knew the history of each community much more than where it is located and why it got such a name. An outcome which we were aware right from the start was that with this block we made some enemies among municipal officials. The reason was that most of the problems of these communities were related to health, education and transportation. And of course our hosts, which at the very beginning included myself, had to call the attention of some concerned officials. In fact there were times when we called these officials over the phone and asked them to answer the allegations of some community leaders.

The third block of the program was a thirty-minute presentation of some historical information about the town of Alenquer. For this we invited historians and educators to elucidate some historical events involving the town. It is a kind of journey into the history of the town itself and it was well appreciated among the senior citizens of the town.

The fourth and final block of Radio Alerta dealt with letters from our listeners. These were read on air, and most of them were birthday greetings and requests for songs. These segment became very popular with the youth. Songs requested varied from pop to religious, and the program was another 30 minutes.

Although Radio Alerta was enjoying listenerships, two things kept bugging the production team: finances and freedom of speech. Since Alenquer is an underdeveloped town where corruption is rampant, it was certain that one day the sponsors would also dwindle away. And of course there was the discomfiting fact that Radio Ximango was heavily aided financially by traditional politicians. Thus, when caught in the line of fire on certain social issues, the administrator had to dock to the side of his great sponsors for survival reasons. And Radio Alerta made enemies among

local politicians because of its stand on certain issues like health and education. More than once I was summoned by the manager requesting that we soften our stand on problematic issues which had bearings on particular sectors in the municipal office.

These two nagging concerns had fully drawn my attention back to an earlier project I had embarked together with some Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in Alenquer. A year after I had arrived in the town, I co-founded a community radio, ***Radio Comunitaria de Alenquer*** (RCA). Unfortunately, before the radio was able to gain more grounds, after its initial broadcast, the government closed it down. Representatives from the National Telecommunications Office padlocked its studio for lack of documentations. Of course we knew that this was not the real reason behind the closure. Fact is, the community radio was a brainchild of the opposing political party, ***Partido dos Trabalhadores*** (PT) and this was why it was always seen as a threat, an enemy of the state. We were asked to comply voluminous documents for us to go on air again. And after such documents were submitted we were asked to submit yet another set of documents. This went on and on, an endless submission of documents to legalize the existence of the radio. In a word, they did not want us to go on air! In fact, to drive their point, they always referred to the community radio as ***Radio Pirata!***

On our part there was no giving up even though the situation seemed hopeless. Inspired by the great number of followers of Radio Alerta I moved onward with the documentation process for RCA. It should be noted that the documentation was a difficult task taken up seriously by some of the lay leaders who were themselves co-founders of RCA. And then a sort of a miracle took place. The candidate for the presidency of PT, LULA, won the presidential election. And we were in high heavens for many reasons and one of those was the community radio. Sure enough, many issues concerning the documentation processes for the legalization of the radio became immaterial. Months after the new president took office, hundreds of community radios all over Brazil were legalized.

This new development ushered in new vigor in our missionary endeavors. With this new reality PASCOM tried to create new plans in relation to Radio Alerta which by then was nearing its second year of broadcast. After all the communities had been presented on air we officially pulled out some segments of Radio Alerta from Radio Ximango. We did not take out the whole program as we maintained the airing of the Holy Mass because of the said station's wider coverage, and RCA reaches only to the nearby communities and the town proper itself. Thus the Holy Mass was aired over Radio Ximango da Amazônia and also parish information, like seminars and pastoral visits continued to be plugged in there. However the live broadcast of the Holy Mass over Radio Ximango enjoyed a simulcast at RCA. The parishioners in the town proper and the nearby communities would tune-in generally to the latter since an FM station is stereophonic, and quality is far better than the AM broadcast.

In due time another set of programs sponsored by the parish and manned by PASCOM was introduced at RCA. We concentrated on Family Life and the Youth this time. The six founding NGOs had their own time slots everyday, and they fielded their own broadcasters, most of them participated the broadcast training seminar I had organized. With the radio legalized, it ushered a kind of a new era in the town. Finally

there was an alternative medium for the people to air their grievances particularly in line with public service. RCA brought to the people things as they really happened, the truth behind any news. And the cunning politicians could not censor us anymore as we operated from money coming from our own pockets, contributions from humble and poor individuals, people from different walks of life. For the parish we opted for weekend programs and PASCOM was always involved in the development of the station in the name of the parish. In 2005, through the efforts of the parish, RCA received some funding from Adveniat for its present studio and equipment. And the founding members rallied behind to supply labor force to renovate its present building.

Today, RCA is operating full blast and has helped a lot in the spiritual upbringing of the Ximangos. And equally important is that it has become a watchdog to the political, economic and social maneuvers of the government officials. Countless were the developmental programs that had awakened the consciousness of the populace in Alenquer. Noteworthy were the programs geared towards environmental issues, like preservations of their forest and, more importantly, the fishes in the Amazon river and its numerous tributaries.

Indeed through the potency of community radio the people were empowered and their voices were heard. So many distant dreams were realized and communities were formed through active and democratic participation. Everybody was counted, and each one felt a sense of belonging. The town of Alenquer became one big family!

Building Digital Bridges

Considerations for Ministry in the Emerging Communication Landscape

Anthony G. Roman

There is a difference between a teenager's world view? and that of their parents'. This is not the strongest opening statement I can think of. But consider the table by Gallagher below, which shows generational and geographic differences between Catholics (1988). Although he stresses the geographic location as a factor, I think the age factor alone is enough as a determinant of the differences he cited, regardless of the location. These differences can be observed among members of every household, whether in rural or urban setting:

	Older Generation (Rural)	Younger Generation (Urban)
Faith question	What the Church teaches	Who is Christ for me?
Church	Source of community Expression of shared meaning	An option among many for a weekend Usually boring
Church's moral teaching	Sets the social standard	Archaic Irrelevant
Liturgy and music	Comfort and security	Old fashioned Out of date Unmoving

Such differences have consequences for ministering to young people. People advanced in age, like our parents, mostly think of ways to improve the youngsters' situation, and rightfully they do so. However, the gap between young peoples' and parents' contexts is becoming a factor to reckon with in a world appearing through media development. And this gap also seems to be a mere continuation of past situations. Our grandparents found themselves in a similar conflict situation with their children, our parents. And so did our parents, with us.

My mother recalls how my grandmother warned her of dancing too much "Boogie" and of her fascination with Elvis "the Swinging Pelvis" Presley. My grandmother whined about how mother's generation seemed to be engulfed in a pop culture which was opposite from their time of the 1920s. The era, characterized by ladylike women and gentlemanly men, prim attires and Victorian-style dances, was gradually overshadowed by ear-bursting prom music, ballooning petty-coats, naked necklines and swinging bodies on the dance floor.

Not too long ago, my present age minus about 21 years, it was my turn to get hooked on artists like Madonna and Michael Jackson. And it was my mother's turn to complain to colleagues about my media behavior and the youth culture of the time. One evening, while I was watching the British artists Simon Le Bon and "gender-

bender” Boy George on TV, mother sneaked in from behind me and asked “Is that the kind of program you like?” She used an Ilocano¹ term to refer to the pop icons’ performance as “wobble-wobble.” Obviously, this was not her ideal of entertainment, but it was mine. Twenty-one years later, it was my turn to complain about my teenage cousins’ fascination with pop artists such as Garbage, Beyoncé, Puff Daddy, and the like. And I suspect that, soon, these cousins will also complain about the media behavior of those younger than themselves.

Some dynamics are clearly at work here. In the three generations I have just described, pop culture did not only evolve. The members of the different cultures meeting at certain points also produce conflicts or conflict situations. Both groups, the young and the old, question the ideals of the other. One group imposes its ideals upon the other, while the other tries to assert an identity of its own, while discovering new boundaries. In the area of media appreciation, savvy and consumption, these two groups collide.

Since we are dealing with digital media at present, I would like to refer to this gap as another new form of *digital divide*, only this time, the phenomenon is happening within families and communities. It is the focus of this paper to address this “generational digital divide”. Drawing from Papal statements, documents published by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference’s (FABC)-Office of Social Communication as well as from library resources, I will propose three measures to help reducing this gap: (1) using the present media landscape as a springboard for moral development, (2) communicating, taking into account the ‘new culture’ created by modern means of communication, and (3) modeling communication on the Source of all good communication, the Perfect Communicator, Jesus Christ.

But first, let us draw a picture of the situation I have described. If we plot this gap on a diagram, we will have two sloping lines traversing through a time-line of globalization and development of communication technology against a measure of media appreciation, media using ability and consumption (Fig. 1). This rudimentary presentation shows two progressions representing both young and mature sectors of society remaining off tangent for the most part, with no point of convergence. This has serious consequences in ministry for the younger generation.

¹ Ilocano is a dialect spoken in the northern Philippines.

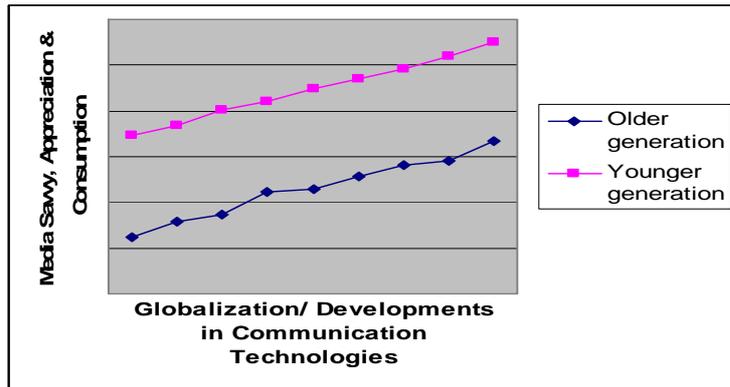


Fig. 1: Generational “Digital Divide”

A friend once tried to relive his talent for telling stories when two of his nieces came while he was repairing his car. He thought the classic “Cinderella” tale would appeal to the girls aged five and four. So he proceeded, making sure that all dramatic details were well incorporated, but all the while he observed a blank stare and a faint smile in the young faces. He heightened his emotions and even inserted suspense but the faint smile remained. Finally he reached the lost shoes episode, and on to the “happily ever after” remark; still, there was no remarkable reaction from the children. He did a little questioning in order to bring the narrative experience to a close and seal in the moral lessons. But the older niece’s first reaction was: “Kuya Edgar², you are bluffing! That’s not how the story goes.” Edgar was sure that he had been faithful to the text of his Lady-Bird book which he had read ages ago. So, he asked: “How did you learn the story?” “*Ever After!* Kuya Leo rented it for us last week,” was the quick reply. Edgar then explained why there were differences between the two stories, and why the moral lessons were completely missing in the second version. Needless to say, Edgar felt more embarrassed than triumphant after this experience. He was from the Lady-Bird era. His nieces are in the digital Hollywood era.

The Communication Landscape

In a meeting of Bishops responsible for communication in Asia which was about “Family and Communication, Communication in the Family” (Bishops’ Meet 2003, Negombo), I suggested a three-way communication for families amidst factors hindering authentic communication, open sharing of experiences, dialogue, and mutual understanding: The communication with God, Source of all good communication, through prayer and contemplation, should come first; second, the communication with family members in order to express the love which binds them together and helps developing moral sensibilities, especially in the younger family members; and third,

² *Kuya* is Tagalog for “older brother”, Tagalog is another dialect spoken on the Philippines.

the communication with other families, in communion and solidarity, to live what it means to be a community.³

The factors hindering authentic communication of and in the family are television, the Internet, video games, mobile phones and shopping malls.

Television

- Television has penetrated most if not all Asian households. Today, common talk, especially in urban areas, revolves around the number of television sets at home rather than the question if a family owns a set or not. In 2000, a study of the “Asian Media and Information Centre” (AMIC) found that young people do not only spend a considerable amount of time in front of the TV, they also have access to programs meant for adults and actually watch them.⁴ Young adolescents who were interviewed for the research said that they do not find any program suitable for their age. TV programs are either too “kiddish,” mostly appealing to very young viewers, or adult-oriented. This was seen as a problem because kids in their teens may not be ready for the programs’ often complex plots and portrayal of uninhibited sex and violence.⁵
- Disturbing news correlating promiscuity with the burgeoning communication technologies in Asia was published in “The Week” in India October 2002. We read: “The explosion of television in the early 1990s, followed by the Internet in the mid-1990s, and now mobile telephony ... has allowed greater interaction between the sexes allowing them freedom to shed traditional inhibitions. Discreet channels of communication like chat lines on the net, telephones and SMS are a great lure for youngsters to experiment with premarital relationships.”
- “India Today” has published an article in October 2002 entitled “Material Children,” featuring young people being lured into “blatant consumerism,” calling this phenomenon the “new religion for adolescents.” The researchers argue that young children have changed role models from traditional figures like Mahatma Gandhi or Jesus Christ to pop icons they see on television, films and advertisements. “Youngsters tend to take the materialism expounded in ads as gospel,” the article said.

³ Roman, Anthony: “Family and Communication, Communication in the Family.” In: “FABC Papers” No. 110. Hong Kong: FABC, 2003. pp. 4-18.

⁴ Anura Goonasekera, et. al.: “Growing Up with TV, Asian Children’s Experience.” Singapore: AMIC, 2000.

⁵ “We’re now used to and actually enjoy bite-size, quick and snappy programs on TV and film; no matter how long they are. U.S. consumer trend researchers call this ‘technomorphing’: changes in our expectations as a result of rapid changes in technology. Steven Johnson, author of ‘Everything Bad is Good for You’ argues that TV’s ‘erstwhile linear, single-themed plotlines used to call for passivity, today’s increasingly multi-pronged programs are actually making us smarter.” (McNicoll, Tracy: “A World of Digital Dimsum.” In: “Newsweek” Sept 26-Oct 3. p. 84).

Internet

- Consider this TIME magazine article (May 27, 2006) and what it relates about time spent by young Americans on digital devices and the Internet:
Today 82% of kids are online by the seventh grade, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project. And what they love about the computer, of course, is that it offers the radio/CD thing and so much more--games, movies, e-mail, IM, Google, MySpace. The big finding of a 2005 survey of Americans ages 8 to 18 by the Kaiser Family Foundation, co-authored by Roberts, is not that kids were spending a larger chunk of time using electronic media--that was holding steady at 6.5 hours a day (could it possibly get any bigger?)--but that they were packing more media exposure into that time: 8.5 hours' worth, thanks to "media multitasking"--listening to iTunes, watching a DVD and IMing friends all at the same time. Increasingly, the media-hungry members of Generation M, as Kaiser dubbed them, don't just sit down to watch a TV show with their friends or family. From a quarter to a third of them, according to the survey, say they simultaneously absorb some other medium "most of the time" while watching TV, listening to music, using the computer or even while reading.
- China is the most rapidly growing online market in the world. Its number of Internet subscribers reached 80 million in 2003, second only to 140 million in the United States (Yoo & Kim 2004). The mainland has 68 million web surfers. They are expected to number 142 million by 2007 (Logan & Luk 2004). Multi-media messaging, which enables mobile users to send colour pictures, animation, recorded sounds and videos 40 times faster than second-generation systems, had only 8 million PRC subscribers in 2003, but experts believe that it will expand to an industry worth US\$22 billion by 2008 (Taipei Times 2004).⁶

Video Games

- “The Strait Times” (Oct 2002) described how young South Koreans are “turning into broadband zombies.” The gaming industry are producing “zombie-like addicts who are turning on and into computer games and dropping out of school and traditional group activities, becoming uncommunicative and even violent because of the electronic games they play.”
- The virtual world of MMORPG – Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games – has become addictive to pathological levels, Smith & Jones company will open a 24-hour addiction treatment center for so-called online game addicts in Amsterdam. Young Koreans are getting “hooked on the virtual world” to the point

⁶ John D.H. Downing, with Yong Cao “Global media corporations and the People’s Republic of China. (Internet web text). (2006). World Association for Christian Communication (Producer and Distributor).
 Available: http://www.wacc.org.uk/wacc/publications/media_development/2004_4/global_media_corporations_and_the_people_s_republic_of_china.

of dying from the excessive number of gaming hours. The country's "shortage of recreational diversions force millions of students and adults to escape into cyberspace and be transformed into knights who slay dragons, spaceship captains who save the world from aliens, or princesses who crusade for a lost throne in medieval Europe." The Korean government now runs a Center for Internet Addiction Prevention and Counseling to help teens overcome their online addiction.

7

Mobile (Cell) phones

- Now we head toward the next phase, when the power of the Internet is extended to mobile devices. Though an estimated 700 million people all over the world are online, this is nothing compared to the 2.1 billion people with cellphones. Rich Templeton, CEO of Texas Instruments, which makes the chips at the core of most of the world's mobile handsets, predicts that, by 2010, four billion people will have a mobile.⁸
- SMS has become a vital part in the Filipino lifestyle. SMS also helped overthrow the corrupt Estrada government in 2001. The major telecommunications companies have estimated that in 2005 the number of mobile phones/subscribers will have risen to 49 million, almost 60% of the population. In 2002, Nokia estimates that there were around 10 million cellphones in the Philippines, transmitting about 100 million text messages a day.⁹ In a recent tech-show in Singapore, IT experts estimate mobile phone companies now processing 200 million text messages daily.
- With the advent of digital media including SMS, much human experience has become "mediated by electronics and telecommunications networks." "Membership to our culture – the shared experiences with people – becomes based less on traditional criteria like location, ethnicity, kinship ties or religion but rather on affordability and our ability to purchase access to the network."¹⁰ The phenomenon of mobile phones has created a gap between the people who are connected to an SMS net and those who are not. There is a perceived elitist membership into the culture of mobile phone users, while non-members remain as outsiders.

⁷ "There is a neurological explanation for this addictiveness. The human brain is wired to respond strongly to situations that combine both the promise of reward and the exploration of new environments. Professor Jaak Panksepp of Bowling Green State University calls this the 'seeking circuitry' in the brain controlled by the neurotransmitter dopamine, which plays a crucial role in most addictive drugs." (Johnson, Steven: "I Can Stop Playing Anytime I Want." In: "Newsweek" Sept 26-Oct 3, 2005. p. 68).

⁸ Kirkpatrick, David: "Life in a Connected World." In "Fortune" magazine June 26 2006.

⁹ Roman, Anthony: "Texting God: SMS and Religion in the Philippines." In "Religion and Social Communication, Journal of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication" vol. 3 no. 1 2005. Bangkok: ARC, 2005. pp. 41-59.

¹⁰ Celdran, David: "Text Revolution". In: "I, The Investigative Reporting Magazine," April-June 2002.

*Shopping Malls*¹¹

Malling, or hanging out in shopping malls, has emerged as a new way of spending leisure time. In Manila (Philippines), there is already a high concentration of shopping malls. They are the “new plazas,” replacing the traditional social center of towns and cities. There is not one municipality or city in the metropolis of Manila that does not have at least one mall, and new ones are upcoming. *I, The Investigative Reporting Magazine* (2002) reported that the most important Filipino mall developer, SM, plans to build two new shopping malls per year within the decade. 45 more malls are scheduled for construction during the same period. Another mall developer plans to build some 100 “strip” malls in several provinces across the country.

Malls are the “new down towns” where people do not only shop. A vast array of goods and services are available under one roof, family members would not even have the time to sit down and talk to each other. Although one emerges from a mall as better informed of what is new and what is “in,” malling is never the same as quiet moments of recollection or intimate sharing of experiences/spending time together with a trusted person. The experience of malling is often less relaxing, even stressful, says an observer. But young Filipinos still flock to the malls even on weekdays, regarding them as the ultimate hangout place.

Observers, however, are wary about the phenomenon. Apart from manipulating people to buying through aggressive (sometimes offensive) commercial schemes, malls seem to introduce another “divide” among people; a notion of “othering” or “us versus them.” Not everyone is allowed inside the malls – those who are not dressed properly or looking suspicious are denied entry so as not to “upset the malls’ carefully calibrated environment.” Prices of goods and services are also mostly exorbitant, giving wrong signals about the ideal kind of living to rural people and kids.

Many other facts can be added to this; facts about how families and communities are robbed of opportunities for authentic communication, dialogue and sharing experiences. Is there a way out of all this? The Chinese character for the word “crisis” brings together two characters; one for “danger,” the other for “opportunity.” A crisis therefore, is both danger and opportunity. Can we turn this crisis into an opportunity?

There were two dominant reactions to the “The Da Vinci Code” movie (2006). One was the outright rejection of the film as un-Godly and profane, even sacrilegious. The other recognized the need to review, renew or revitalize catechism and evangelizing efforts. The way modern means of communication seem to work in our societies can be looked at from the second perspective. This is essentially what my three proposals embody (cf. below).

¹¹ Roman, Anthony: “Family and Communication, Communication in the Family.” In: “FABC Papers” No. 110. Hong Kong: FABC, 2003.

Wealth to harness

But before discussing them, let us consider two things:

1. The media are neither an all-evil phenomenon nor a hot bed of vice, as some people might think. The Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*, the magna carta of communication, states that modern media have the capacity of carrying the message of salvation. “Modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel... are invaluable helps for Christian education... offer marvelous opportunities to all for considering the implications of their religious convictions through the discussion of events and problems of the day...” and make more interesting the “teaching of Christianity.”¹²

We can draw positive moral and spiritual insights from media products; certainly because Christians are present in media specifically the secular media. In the Philippines, there is a group of actors, producers, directors and industry workers called the *Oasis of Love* Catholic charismatic ministry. There are Protestant groups of entertainment personnel involved in socio-civic causes. Famous Catholic directors have networked with NGOs and Church bodies seeking media literacy and providing media reading skills for Filipinos.

In Hollywood, Christian entertainment workers wanting to be Christ’s witness through their work in cinema and television have connected in a group called *Act One*. TV shows like *That ‘70s Show*, *Joan of Arcadia*, *Touched by an Angel*, *Boomtown*, *ER*, and *NYPD Blue* all have Christian professionals behind them, expertly incorporating Christian and human values in plots which seem trivial, vulgar and controversial on the outset. Strong Christian themes are also woven into films like *X-Men*, *The Matrix*, *The Incredibles*, *Spiderman*, *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, the *Harry Potter* series, and other films which enjoyed commercial success and worldwide releases.

Act One’s publication “Behind the Screen, Hollywood Insiders on Faith, Film and Culture” (2005) urges viewers to shun neither television nor films so as not to miss the very realm where God wishes to manifest Himself.¹³ By monitoring programs and giving feedback to networks and movie productions, Christian viewers will be helping those Christian professionals behind the screen improve and witness more of their faith through the entertainment media.

The Internet is also a haven for religion seekers. While it has the image of being full of pornographic and violent material, the Pew Research Center in the US notes that:

Nearly two-thirds of online Americans use the Internet for faith-related reasons. The 64% of Internet users who perform spiritual and religious

¹² *Communio et Progressio* nos. 126-131, Pastoral Instruction (1971). In: Eilers, Franz-Josef (ed.): “Church and Social Communication, Basic Documents.” Manila: Logos (1997).

¹³ Lewerenz, Spencer and Nicolosi, Barbara (eds): “Behind the Screen, Hollywood Insiders on Faith, Film and Culture.” Grand Rapids, MI: Bakerbooks (2005).

activities online represent nearly 82 million Americans. Among the most popular and important spiritually-related online activities measured in a new national survey: 38% of the nation's 128 million Internet users have sent and received email with spiritual content; 35% have sent or received online greeting cards related to religious holidays; 32% have gone online to read news accounts of religious events and affairs; 21% have sought information about how to celebrate religious holidays; 17% have looked for information about where they could attend religious services; 7% have made or responded to online prayer requests; and 7% have made donations to religious organizations or charities.¹⁴

This means that, alongside the “garbage” we find online, there are offerings which give users a premium including faith premiums like those mentioned. In Asia, efforts are invested to enrich Internet exchanges with religious content. In the past seven years, bishops' conferences and dioceses have opened web portals to reach a wider audience for their services and to convey Christian and human values online. Consider just a few examples:

- The Seoul archdiocese has opened a Cyber-Pastoral Centre at <http://veritas.ne.kr> to help form and prepare catechumens for baptism. Catechesis via the Internet is the thrust in this computerized society, eliminating barriers of time and distance in religious communication while maintaining personal contacts.
- The diocese of Uijeongbu, Korea, has launched on-line TV broadcasts with mottoes “Beautiful Eyes Looking at the World” and “A Path Opened to the Beautiful World.” This service offers formation programs for lay people, social welfare and cultural programs.
- An Internet chatroom for seminarians is planned with the Union of Catholic Asia News (UCANews) at the fore to create a forum for dialogue and discussion among seminarians throughout the continent.
- The first online evangelization school opened in Hong Kong in 2005; it is headed by an Italian priest of the Pontifical Foreign Missions Institute. Its mission is to train Christians to do evangelical work and to preach the Gospel to non-Catholics.
- The Jesuits in Singapore maintain an online Bible prayer guide where visitors can receive Gospel E-messages daily via the Free Gospel Email service.
- In the wake of disasters like the 2004 killer Tsunami, websites of NGOs and other Church bodies carried the news to far-off continents and served as channels of relief and support to survivors and families of victims.

¹⁴ Raine, Lee: “Faith Online: 64% of wired Americans have used the Internet for spiritual or religious purposes” (Internet web text). (2006). Pew Internet & American Life Project (Producer and Distributor). Available: http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/126/report_display.asp.

- On the occasion of its seventh anniversary of establishment in 2004, The Catholic Church in Tajikistan opened its official Internet website with facts about the Church in the Central Asian state. Uzbekistan has long maintained a presence in cyberspace with its Agnuz website providing news and information to local Catholics.

2. The second consideration is the fact that young people are a treasure of resources which can be harnessed for pastoral ministry. A youth group in Laos doing missionary work at home is also extending pastoral care to locals in need. They are leading clandestine prayer sessions amid threats of apprehension by local authorities. They are “missionary minded” said a Bishop from Thailand, and “zealous” given that the entire country has only one Bishop-pastor.¹⁵ All over Asia, we find similar stories: of brave young people who sometimes give their lives because they love Jesus so much. Recently, a young Jesuit seminarian was killed in Cambodia in his effort to save children from a landmine. Two Missionaries of the Poor – one Indian and one Filipino – were killed in cold blood in Latin America. Young Vietnamese Catholics were in the news lately for leading a musical prayer session at Thanh Da parish attracting some 400 other young people to the melody of their flutes, organ and guitar. Singaporean youths recently attracted a throng of young people in a staged skit showcasing real life dramas of people and how they found God.

Young people in Asia are smart, intuitive and at home with digital gadgets. They are the “best people to catch other youths for Jesus.” Employing youths as partners for ministry has the following advantages:¹⁶

- They are practical, not flooded by theory – easily motivated and effective
- Jesus, for them, is often a personal hero, and this makes all the difference
- Relationships are at the center of their lives, and so is evangelization. They spontaneously build communities.
- “Their freshness and enthusiasm, their spirit of solidarity and hope” (EA 47) transforms all that they do, even the everyday Church life.
- For young missionaries, creativity is at its height. (They are) restless about what is dry and boring. This can be powerful in the hands of the Holy Spirit.
- They are an integral part of the multi-ethnic background of Asia and as such the best ones to be in dialogue with cultures in everyday life.

¹⁵ Pimphisan, George Yod: “Youth as Missionaries: The Laos Experience.” In: “E-generation, The Communication of Young People in Asia.” Manila: Logos (2003). p. 153.

¹⁶ Edezhath, Edward: “Sharing Christ with Youth.” In: “E-generation, The Communication of Young People in Asia.” Manila: Logos (2003). p. 147.

The Media: springboards for moral sensibility

According to the ritual theories of Victor Turner, Arnold van Gennep and others, there is a stage in every ritual (or communication process) at which the participants change. That stage, referred to as *Liminal* or stage of *Liminality*, is likewise a stage of self-transcendence. One is taken out of one's context and transported to a plane of "between and betwixt," the "now and the not yet," a threshold separating two realms of existence. At such a point, the changes sought in the ritual process, let's say in a rite of passage, is confirmed. One either experiences separation after a burial rite, integration after a wedding ceremony or confirmation after a graduation rite. Thereafter, the participant is brought back to his or her original context, transformed psychologically, cognitively and emotionally.

Turner refers to liminal experiences as something that involves the mysterious, has an "antiseccular" even religious component, and experiences in which the "revelation of an Other" is experienced. William James' study of religious experience (1971) led him to the conclusion that, when a person is converted, "some religious ideas that were previously peripheral in consciousness now take central place." Turner, however, speculated that in today's industrialized (information) society, people might be involved in the *liminoid* instead . This is a term he invented to denote its resemblance with the liminal but without the capacity to let participants experience "absolute transcendence" or seeing the "Ultimate Power of Creation which made finite creatures."¹⁷

Consider this assessment of Csikszentmihalyi and his example of what he calls "autotelic" or that "activity in which one loses oneself or becomes totally engrossed, regardless of the external rewards."

You yourself are in an ecstatic state to such a point that you feel as though you almost don't exist. I've experienced this time and again. My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what's happening. I just sit there watching it in a state of awe and wonderment. And it just flows out by itself.¹⁸

James forwarded this example of a ritual participant experiencing partial self-surrender or letting go in the process:

An athlete... sometimes awakens suddenly to an understanding of the fine points of the game and to a real enjoyment of it, just as the convert awakens to an appreciation of religion. If he keeps on engaging in the sport, there may come a day when all at once the game plays itself

¹⁷ Goethals, Gregor: "Escape from Time, Ritual Dimensions of Popular Culture." In: Stewart Hoover and Knut Lundby: "Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture." Thousand Oaks, CA; London; New Delhi: Sage (1997). pp. 125 & 128.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 124-125.

through him – when he loses himself in some great contest. In the same way, a musician may suddenly reach a point at which pleasure in the technique of the art entirely falls away, and in some moment of inspiration he becomes the instrument through which the music flows.¹⁹

Giamatti writes about the point where an artist, actor or athlete achieves “near-absolute concentration” which transforms the individual and spectators alike:

The individual’s power to dominate, on stage or field – and they are versions of the same place and are only by analogy altars – invests the whole arena around the locus of performance with his or her power ... Power flows in a mysterious circuit from performer or spectator ... and back, and while cheers or applause are the hoped-for outcome of performing, silence or gasps are the most desired, for then the moment has occurred – then domination is complete, and as the performer triumphs, a unity rare and inspiring results.²⁰

While liminal experiences remind us of our Absolute End, the liminoid ones give us pseudo-religious experience that help us achieve perfection in sports, the arts, and other secular activities. Both liminal and liminoid experiences have the ability to transform individuals and give them a sense of freedom, but liminal experiences are the more reliable way of reaching the realm of the mysterious and the holy. Consider, for example, the liminal experience in quiet moments of prayer, reading the Bible together and attending Mass. Participants are better transformed into the persons they are meant to be, compared to the liminoid experience of watching, say, the World Cup, staying focused on an exercise regimen or shaking heads with Madonna or Britney Spears via an Internet-transmitted concert. The results of the “conversion” are far more questionable in the latter. There are three ways to address this issue, namely, to:

- a) Increase liminal experiences in societies and communities,
- b) Decrease the liminoid, or
- c) Turn the liminoid into liminal.

The Carmelite Father Henk Hoekstra and his colleague Verbeek expounded on the third point, urging that communities adopt a “dialogical spirituality” in media use.²¹ This process engages viewers in a conversation about a common narrative experience, say a film, and collectively draws their understanding and experience of spirituality from both narrative and individual viewers. Such a dialogue aims to:²²

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 126.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 127-128.

²¹ Hoekstra, Henk and Marjeet Verbeek: “Possibilities of Audiovisual Narrative for Moral Formation.” In: Rossi, Philip and Paul Soukup (eds.): “Mass Media and the Moral Imagination.” Kansas, MO: Sheed & Ward (1994). pp. 212-233.

²² Ibid. p. 224.

- Teach viewers understand audiovisual language and its aesthetic and ethical implications (colors, music, symbols, non-verbal expressions);
- Make viewers sensitive to the forms of implicit or explicit morality in the mass-mediated culture (through the analysis of the audiovisual program);
- Develop a moral judgment about morality in different audiovisual programs;
- Stimulate and cultivate dialogue about the audiovisual programs and morality in general;
- Stimulate the development of a moral judgment on the mass-mediated world.

All media products can be a subject of such media dialogue, or even songs, literary works, video games, advertisements and MTVs. The initiative only requires a capable person or team of persons to direct and re-direct the discussion, ensuring that ethical, moral and theological issues are properly addressed. The Titus Brandsma Media and Spirituality Center of the Carmelites in Manila regularly holds film dialogues of this kind for religious and lay groups.

This kind of dialogue goes well into the direction of *media education* which is a persistent concern of the Church.²³ And, it can happen within families as well. The bishops of the annual Bishops' Meet 2003, headed by the theme "Family in Communication. Communication in the Family", encourages families "to share media like watching TV programs together. Parents and children discussing together the use of TV, with the children even participating in the decision about the use of the TV, can be an enriching experience of communication and a means for growth and maturity for all." (Recommendations, no. 3)

Communicating in today's 'new culture'

Communication technologies have created a new culture and are radically influencing the way we live. New communication technologies (NCTs) create a new vocabulary and new relationships via the internet, email and other technologies which the Church cannot neglect. Young people, especially in cities, grow up with the latest communication equipment. Church leaders should be aware of the importance and possibilities of modern communication technologies for their communities especially their young members, and take up

²³ cf. "Communication Challenges in Asia." Bishops' Meet 1996 Tagaytay City, Philippines; "A New Way of Being Church in Asia – Communication Consequences." Bishops' meet 1997 Samphan, Thailand. no 5.b; "*Novo Millennio Ineunte*: FABC Concerns – Communication Challenges. FABC Offices present their vision & concerns." Bishops' Meet 2001. no. 7; "Modern Communication Technologies: Challenge for the Church in Asia?." 2nd Bishops' Institute for Social Communication (BISCOM II) Bangkok, Thailand. Recommendations, no. 2; "Social Communication Formation in Priestly Ministry and Mission." 3rd Bishops' Institute for Social Communication (BISCOM III) Samphan, Thailand. Orientations, no. 3.4, Recommendations, no. 1.

these challenges. NCTs require a proper introduction and continual updating of Bishops, priests, seminarians, religious and young people with Church responsibilities. In her education, the Church should empower all media consumers, especially the young, in the proper use of NCTs. Priests, seminarians, religious and lay people should be trained as *cybermissionaries* to fully utilize NCTs for evangelization. The expertise of professionals for such formation should be invited.

These are excerpts from statements of two meetings organized for Bishops by the FABC-Office of Social Communication. One was on “Modern Communication Technologies: Challenge for the Church in Asia” (BISCOM II, 1999) and the other was on “Megatrends Asia: Communication Trends for the Church” (Bishops’ Meet 1999).

From the statements we see the emphasis on the need to empower *all* media consumers in today’s communication landscape. But prior to that, the Bishops did also highlight a necessary condition for effectively empowering media consumers, that is, the “proper introduction and continual updating” of everyone with Church responsibilities. Often we find in families (and communities) parents being taught by teenagers how to operate mobile phones or how to maneuver a mouse. Usually, parents inherit their children’s outmoded mobile phones so that they can have a more hi-tech unit. This is not to say that parents should go to the far extreme of *fandom* for gadgets and gizmos.²⁴ This might reduce them to mere *techno-freaks*, jeopardizing their ability for open and dialogic communication. The Bishops point to a balanced, critical and compassionate stance towards communication technologies and the new culture created by them.

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has dealt with the subject of this “new culture” quite extensively in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), offering advice about communication and ministry in a society marked with ubiquitous new media. He wrote:

The first Aeropagus of the modern age is the world of communication, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a ‘global village.’ ... Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the ‘new culture’ originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact

²⁴ In the continuum between two poles: fandom and censure, “fandom” is the state of being an ultimate fan, admirer or aficionado of media and/or technologies; while “censor” cuts off all affiliation and use thereof.

that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology. Pope Paul VI said that ‘the split between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly the tragedy of our time (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20), and the field of communications fully confirms this judgment. (no. 37c)

This statement by the Pope was my framework for a 2004 study on SMS (short messaging system or texting) and Religion in the Philippines. There are religious SMS services offered by mobile phone companies and some religious groups in the country where some 49 million people (60 percent of a total population of 77 million) are mobile phone users, exchanging about 200 million text messages a day. I wanted to gain insight on whether or not Catholic students are using religious SMS services, which generally send quotes from the Bible at a premium rate. I also compared religious use of the cellphone against the secular chat services offered by mobile phone companies. My study involved a survey of 500 Catholic students in the metropolis of Manila. Here is what I have found:²⁵

1. Religious SMS are sent to individual subscribers from two sources:

a. Mobile phone companies and some religious groups send Premium-rated Biblical texts and inspirational quotes to subscribers comparable to news alerts, traffic advisories, and financial information. About 38 percent of the young people subscribe to religious SMS service while the majority complain about the cost this kind of service involves. Some say that it is boring and too Catholic, while others do not like being passive in a one-way communication process.

b. Users themselves send and resend so-called “forwarded messages” about God and Christian living at a cost which is the same as the normal texting rate. These forwarded messages are the youth’s everyday greetings linking them with friends and remaining in touch with them. These messages are also found to boost one another’s morale. An earlier study which I have quoted in my research shows 80 percent of the texters are pleased at the arrival of the messages, a third said they feel important, and another third said they were inspired by them.

2. SMS provide the opportunity for ordinary users to be content developers themselves. A carefully crafted message fitted for a liturgical season may be sent and re-circulated to a user’s network of friends. Paul Levinson calls such developers “mobile hearths,” people who can immediately enact or implement thoughts and ideas via the technology at hand, in this case mobile phones and SMS. In order to dilute the flood of SMS with religious thought, one only needs a hint of piety and time to craft religious forwarded messages.

3. Religious SMS in the Philippines have adopted the “new language” of the texting generation. Religious texts are expressed using abbreviated words and

²⁵ Roman, Anthony: “Texting God: SMS and Religion in the Philippines.” In: “Religion and Social Communication, Journal of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication” vol. 3 no. 1 2005. Bangkok: ARC, 2005. pp. 41-59.

sentences with incorrect grammar – all in the name of economy: the economy of space and the economy of signs. A simple TC, GBU or JAPAN can powerfully convey loving concern for the other. TC normally closes a lengthy greeting and asks the recipient to “take care.” GBU invokes God to Bless You. JAPAN refers not to the country but to “Just Always Pray at Night.” More intimate texters may end their greetings with ITALY, “I trust and love you.”

4. SMS technology is used in the Philippines for a wide range of purposes but mostly for entertainment. SMS voting is the “in-thing” among TV programs, mainly in variety and game shows. News programs receive SMS feedback from viewers. Mobile phone companies also offer as staples in their host of services ringtones, polyphonic tunes, logos, screen savers and games. These have very short shelf-lives, but they remain constant offerings of mobile phone and wireless service companies in the country. Other services include religious SMS (one-way sending of inspirational quotes mentioned above), and chat services – the mobile version of the Internet chatrooms where relationships are formed.

I examined whether religious SMS services are used by young people or if they show a leaning towards the secular mobile chat services. And I found that, alongside the 38% religious SMS subscribers, another 34% subscribe to mobile chat services.

43% of the students are aware of religious SMS services, but some are not happy with being passive in the SMS exchange. They would enjoy an active, interpersonal exchange rather than the one-way sending of Biblical and inspirational quotes. Mobile chat subscribers, meanwhile, enjoy meeting chatmates and new friends. For them, chatting with strangers is exciting, entertaining and a kind of adventure.

The topics of the chat sessions were not exactly known but there is strong evidence, and a few informants attest to this, that they revolve around relationships and sex. The identities shaped by young people for themselves to lure potential chatmates reveal much of their intentions and needs. The COLLEGE chatroom, maintained by a mobile phone company, had this partial list of chatters at 0915 hours on 31 July 2006.²⁶

²⁶ The names given by chatters to call themselves deserve some explanation. In the “College” chatroom, there is one resident who is matured enough to call himself “dad.” *dad4m2msop* is short-cut for “dad for man-to-man sex on phone.” This chatter is seeking overtly sexual conversations or text exchanges, which stimulate masturbation. *m2mlove* chatter is seeking a homosexual relationship (man to man) beyond physical connectedness (love). In Tagalog, the word “pare” and “tol,” means close male friend. “Sarap” means delicious, and “mo” is equivalent of the word “you.” *tol-sarap-mo* means “(male) friend, you are delicious!” “kan2tero..” is actually “kantotero” which means “fucker.” *kan2tero27m*, 27 years old, sees himself as a fucker. *sextayopre1* invites other male chatters to a sex session. *chupaero23* is a 23 year old male who calls himself a sucker (chupaero). *lickmepare* invites other male chatters to lick him. In the “Teens” chatroom, a resident calls him/herself a lick of nipples (bubslicker). There is a *gameboy15*, *missh0rny*, and a *stud7*. *sarapsexpare* tells another male chatter (pare) that sex is delicious. *gwpoprakbybro* is actually “gwapo para kay brother” which literally translates to “handsome for brother.” *biwntsbfl* translates to “bisexual wants boyfriend.”

<i>dad4m2msop</i>	<i>gwapodude1</i>	<i>hotnhard2</i>	<i>avalanche8</i>
<i>mrhunk25</i>	<i>tol-sarap-mo</i>	<i>guy4m2m</i>	<i>chupaero23</i>
<i>educbachelor</i>	<i>ivan2311</i>	<i>pre-cum76</i>	<i>str8pogiboil</i>
<i>centurion</i>	<i>voltaire23</i>	<i>hardy27 mms</i>	<i>lostgurl</i>
<i>hunk2hunk41</i>	<i>hotm2m9</i>	<i>bon1</i>	<i>Lickmepare</i>
<i>m2mlove</i>	<i>kan2tero27m</i>	<i>sextayopre1</i>	<i>m2mtxtm8pare</i>

The TEENS chatroom is inhabited by these chatters, and more, at 0917 hours on 31 July 2006:

<i>precious49</i>	<i>xwif</i>	<i>joseph023</i>	<i>stud7</i>
<i>bubslicker</i>	<i>john384</i>	<i>jay691</i>	<i>sarapsexpare</i>
<i>kayle16</i>	<i>9278443506f</i>	<i>gameboy15</i>	<i>cutie399</i>
<i>monchie3</i>	<i>brent</i>	<i>win16</i>	<i>gwpoprakymbro</i>
<i>ichizen</i>	<i>sexyteen</i>	<i>sniper112</i>	<i>biwntsbfl</i>
<i>tea3</i>	<i>dyamiam mms</i>	<i>misshOrny</i>	<i>sexym2m2</i>

The same mobile company maintains 11 chatrooms in total.

Equally, if not more disturbing, is the fact that one out of 10 of my respondents (aged 15-24) has had sex with an SMS chatmate. Some informants also said they have had overly sexual exchanges with a chatmate, culminating in masturbation by both parties. “Mobile sex” is a reality now as much as “online sex”, which is happening via the Internet.

This study opens doors to a better understanding of young people and the youth culture in the Philippines. Young Filipinos are seeking to connect and relate with other people – family, friends, peers, even strangers. Mobile chat services provide this opportunity. Sadly, religious SMS services generally do not. They do, on the one hand, encourage reflections on God’s word, helping forge and deepen a relationship with God. Another way to achieve this, however, is by giving young people the chance to SMS other individuals about their faith.

Young Filipinos are seeking “connections” with people, and not with machines which send inspirational quotes for a fee. After all, Filipinos are generally fun-loving and enjoy the company of friends. Friends are a “comfort zone.” Content providers should be able to incorporate this reality into the religious SMS services.

A mechanism could be found which enables young people to interact with other people about their faith, forming “communities of texters” which are based on Christian values. Communities of faith are thriving on the Internet; there could be communities of texters as well. Such a service can be considered more “integrated” to the youth culture in the Philippines.

John Jewell (2004) distinguishes between “connectivity” and “connection” as one that provides access (connectivity), while the other has something to do with building relationships, enabling the sharing of experiences and dialogue – the building blocks of

community (connection).²⁷ The sending of Biblical quotes via SMS provides connectivity between the users and the Bible. The technology renders itself as a channel bringing God's Word to the user who may not have ready access to the Holy Book at a particular time. Establishing SMS communities, meanwhile, goes into the direction of connection as Jewell understands it. This distinction made clear, he says, would produce positive results in online ministries.

Professor Jewell, who is a pastor himself, suggests likewise that between "technology" and "ministry," Church leaders have to choose ministry. Technology merely supports ministry, and if we place all our energies, say, in communicating online or via SMS, we risk imposing technology rather than integrating it in ministry. He forwards thus the following propositions:²⁸

1. To be aware of the pitfalls of NCTs in the life of the Christian community
2. To be aware of the promise of new technologies that can facilitate and enrich ministry
3. To develop a working strategy for integrating technology and ministry

In *The Rapid Development* (2005), Pope John Paul II, herald and Father of the Universal Church, resounded the words of our Lord saying "Do not be afraid!"

Do not be afraid of new technologies! These rank "among the marvelous things – *inter mirifica* – which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use and to make known the truth, also the truth about our dignity and about our destiny as His children, heirs of his eternal Kingdom."

Communicating what we have

Communicating via technologies require a working knowledge of new technologies and their applicability to the context and target community. Since we communicate with a vast audience, at times geographically spread, we ought to consider forms and styles which suit our message and the degree of acceptability to our hearers and viewers. Often when using media, we communicate information about happenings in our parishes, news of events as well as pronouncements made by Church leaders. Our efforts are often spawned by the need to share Church teachings such as the latest encyclical or the new pastoral instruction. This is paramount to the faithful's spiritual growth and moral development.

However, there is another level of communication which is equally important as, if not more so than, the formal teachings of the Church. Jesuit Father Paul Soukup says

²⁷ Jewell, John: "Wired for Ministry, How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies can Serve Your Church." Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press (2004). pp. 18-20.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 25.

this communication happens in the ground, in the environment where Catholics live.²⁹ This environment filled with interpersonal dealings and personal encounters is where moral development actually takes place. The Church's communication in this environment is both necessary and crucial because this is where people would "see how they love one another." Soukup calls this realm, the "common sense Catholic living."³⁰ Sadly, this realm is often neglected bringing forth rift, misunderstanding, and division in our families and communities.

Consider these examples:

- Pope John Paul II instigated the World Meeting of Families and for years has pointed out, in a number of apostolic letters and homilies, the value and dignity of the human family. In the 2003 world meeting in Manila, he made a selfless effort to be present with the congregation via satellite television, despite sickness and fatigue.
- A chaplain of a charismatic group sounds well on the microphone. He is able to move people and bring them to tears if necessary. One morning, he reprimanded a lowly janitor for using too much water on the plants. The dumbfounded fellow, who had not met the priest before, was shocked at the priest barking "Do you know who I am? I pay the bills in this house!"
- An elderly priest hearing confessions one evening told a young student who had asked him to be his spiritual adviser to wait until the line of confession would have finished. Surely, after the last person got out of the confessional, he met the student like an old friend. The new found friends chatted until a long time after the priest's bedtime.
- A middle-aged member of a Catholic women's group, wearing her pristine uniform, cheated in a Communion queue, staring blankly at the shocked youngster she overtook. Without blinking, she turned and paced towards the priest giving Communion. The same woman raised her arms wide open as she sang the "Our Father."
- A mother talked about her family's dramatic escape from the oppressive rule of a local government official. Her audience: an irate youngster who felt he did not need to hear the story again and suffer the pain all over again. But he did not want to offend his mother, so he pretended to listen. The mother finally ended praising God for being responsible for the deliverance. This gave hope to the young man and renewed his faith.
- Brother Peter was everybody's friend. With his wrinkled face, he smiled at everyone every time. He was the caretaker of the chapel I go to at 5pm during work days. Every time I came to the chapel, I found Brother Peter there, and for a whole hour he would accompany me with his silent chores – arranging prayer books and preparing the white board for tomorrow's Liturgy. He was my inspiration. Long

²⁹ Soukup, Paul: "The Church as Moral Communicator." In: Rossi, Philip and Paul Soukup (eds.): "Mass Media and the Moral Imagination." Kansas, MO: Sheed & Ward (1994). pp. 200-203.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 200.

after Brother Peter had a stroke and headed on to heaven, I'd like to think that he is still there in the chapel at 5pm watching and praying with me.

Interpersonal (relationship) communication is very important in today's communication landscape. Bishops gathered for BISCOP II (1999) said:

We are not to lose sight of the truth that it is the person and not the technology that is the best means of communication especially in Asian cultures (Bishops' Meet 06). Despite the new communication technologies, we should not forget that it is people which matter most. NCTs must help, not enslave them. Personal relationships, a warm smile, and time for one another are still important. The advent of NCTs should not undermine or diminish *human* and traditional means of communication. (Orientations, no. 5)

Pope John Paul II reaffirms this in his message for World Communication Day 2002 saying:

The fact that through the Internet people multiply their contacts in ways hitherto unthinkable opens up wonderful possibilities for spreading the Gospel. But it is also true that electronically mediated relationships can never take the place of the direct human contact required for genuine evangelization. For evangelization always depends upon the personal witness of the one sent to evangelize. (cf. *Rom* 10:14-15). (no. 5)

This brings us to consider the "witness of life" urged by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* where he wrote:

... for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal... "Modern man listens more willingly to witness than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." (no. 41)

Father Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, has written extensively on Communication Theology and Spirituality. In his book "Communicating in Ministry and Mission," he forwards a proposition to view communication *as* a theological principle after scouring the Papal teachings as well as the landmark works by the well-known theologians Greshake, Rahner, Martini and others.³¹ He also establishes a profile of a Christian

³¹ Eilers, Franz-Josef: "Communicating in Ministry and Mission, Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication, 2nd ed." Manila: Logos (2004). pp. 17-26.

communicator as someone who is first and foremost grounded on God, the Source of all good communication, and imbued with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.³² Eilers emphasizes this in unison with the Bishops gathered in 1998 on the theme of the Asian Synod of that year and its consequences for the communication ministry:³³

With the many challenges which being faced today, we felt that the spirituality of those involved in social communication must be re-emphasized. Such a spirituality “flows out of the communication of the Holy Trinity. (Bishops’ Meet 1996)

Jesus Christ as the ‘perfect communicator’ (*Communio et Progressio*, no. 11) is the model for all Christian communication.

“Christian communicators need to be men and women of Spirit-filled prayer, entering ever more deeply into communion with God in order to grow in their ability to foster communion among their fellow human beings. They must be schooled in hope by the Holy Spirit, *the principal agent of the new evangelization (Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, no. 45)...” (John Paul II, World Communication Day 1998)

Any spirituality of communication is first and foremost expressed through the witness of life (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41) which means for the communicator in Asia:

- a) to be a person of contemplation and prayer, similar to the missionary whom Pope John Paul II describes as a “contemplative in action” (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 91)
- b) the ability to build communities through love, sharing, communion, relationship and quality
- c) the content of one’s communication should reflect one’s spirituality rooted in the Incarnation – communicators needs to be people-oriented
- d) the proclamation of Kingdom values amidst a society of violence, corruption and evil forces.

Eilers also proposes a “Model of Christian Communication” which, unlike secular linear communication models, gives primacy to the message rather than the sender of the communication process.³⁴ In the new model, the Sender is subordinate, and a mere channel of the Message who is God Himself. (Fig. 2) Thus, communication without the necessary grounding in the Message would hardly have an impact on the receivers. This calls to mind well-known communication tenets such as “we are what we say”

³² Ibid. pp. 30-36.

³³ “Synod of Bishops- Special Assembly for Asia: Social Communication Perspectives and Challenges” Bishops’ Meet 1998 Final Considerations. Taoyuan, Taiwan. Final Considerations, no. 1.

³⁴ Eilers, Franz-Josef: “Communicating in Ministry and Mission, Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication, 2nd ed.” Manila: Logos (2004). pp. 150-151.

and “we cannot give what we don’t have.” Some communication paradigms lifted from the Gospels can also be recalled like “... out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (cf. Mt 12:34) or the Lord’s promise of an Advocate who turns disciples into witnesses: “... but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (cf. Acts 1:8). When the Lord first sent the disciples on mission, he assured them “... do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” (cf. Mt 10:19-20)

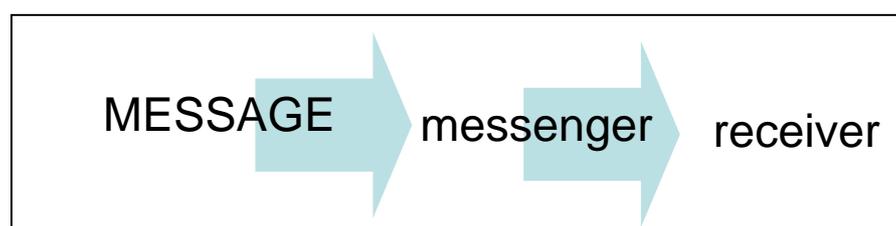


Fig. 2. Model of Christian Communication

Conclusion

The following propositions are aimed at minimizing the digital gap between older and younger generations, and aiding ministry for the young:

1. Adopting a “dialogic spirituality” which enables parents, teachers, Church leaders and young people to reflect on their media experiences and draw moral sensibilities from them;
2. Using the proper technology for ministry, taking into account the “culture” of the target receivers;
3. Being grounded on God, the Source of all good communication, through prayer and contemplation.

These propositions can help bringing families and communities through the crisis caused by burgeoning media and communication technologies. However, on the level of practice some concrete measures have to be enacted. The following related issues might also be considered:

1. Are there programs for spiritual enrichment in the community? How effective are they in forming better Christian communicators?
2. Are there communication education/formation programs for families, parents, teachers, Church leaders and young people?
3. Which professional organizations or persons (lay or Church-related) can be invited to help form and empower media consumers in the community?

4. Are there professional organizations or persons who can animate, develop and promote creative talents for communication and media use?
5. Is there proper “communication” planning in the community?³⁵ Do existing plans respond to recent communication developments?
6. Which organizations/ academic institutions can help study the realities and condition of today’s youth especially in view of the new communication culture?

³⁵ Cf. “Aetatis Novae, Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications” nos. 20-33. Pontifical Council for Social Communications (1992). In: Eilers, Franz-Josef (ed.) “Church & Social Communication, Basic Documents 2nd ed. Manila: Logos (1997). pp. 131-136.

Communication History and the Institutions of Communication

Michael Schmolke

Introduction

Der Institutionsbegriff führt in der Soziologie ein eigenartiges Doppelleben. Auf der einen Seite gehört er zweifellos zu den zentralen Begriffen, sozusagen zum harten Kern soziologischer Begrifflichkeit und wird auch mit entsprechendem Respekt behandelt. Aber auf der anderen Seite besteht wenig bis gar kein Konsens darüber, was mit diesem Begriff eigentlich genau gemeint ist. Die Zahl der Definitionen ist beachtlich, ihr Spektrum umfaßt sehr verschiedene inhaltliche und formelle Bestimmungen und Kriterien. Aber auch, wo kein Dissens besteht, bleiben inhaltliche Bestimmungen auffällig diffus und vage.

[The notion of “institution” has a strange double existence within social studies. On the one hand, it doubtlessly is one of the central pieces of the sociological terminology and is treated with the corresponding respect. ... However, on the other hand there is only little or no consensus about the term’s meaning. The number of definitions available is considerable; they cover a range of different formal rules and criteria. But even where no consensus can be found, the criteria in terms of content remain relatively vague.]¹

Since this essay is not concerned with the worry the sociologists have but deals with the historiography of the institutions a decision is needed. Speaking from a socio-philosophical point of view, institutions are complexes

die den Zusammenhalt von Mensch, Gesellschaft und Kultur ermöglichen; sie geben an, wie soziales Dasein insgesamt besteht, Gebildecharakter gewinnt und sich entfaltet.

[which support the cohesion of man, society and culture, they show of what social existence consists, how it develops, and how it gains its structural character.]²

From a juridical point of view, institutions are “Einrichtungen,” which means, on the one hand, man-given, common forms of order,

¹ Johann August Schülein: *Theorie der Institution*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1987, 9.

² Cf. Wolfgang Lipp/Hasso Hofmann/Christoph Hubig: „Institution“. In: *Staatslexikon* ⁷1987/1995, Vol. 3, cols. 99-109.

bezüglich elementarer privater, gesellschaftlich-wirtschaftlicher und politischer Verhältnisse wie Ehe, Familie, Eigentum, Erbrecht, Vertrag, Vertragsfreiheit, Körperschaft, Gericht, Regierung, Parlament, Staat, Kirche usw.

[which are concerned with elementary, socio-economical and political relations such as marriage, family, property, hereditary lease, contracts, freedom of contract, corporations, courts of justice, government, parliament, nation, churches, etc.]³

On the other hand, it can also mean institutions which have been founded:

Ihre [d. h. der Institutionen] ‚Erscheinungsform‘ sind die Organisationen.

[Their form of appearance are organizations.]⁴

These should be sufficient definitions for this essay; these terms cover both “real” institutions (such as the press, public service broadcasting, the freedom of speech, the free flow of information, the Church as communicator) and specific institutions (such as the BBC, the magazine *Time*). Therefore, let us use a “wider” meaning of institution, which in this form appears not only in social but also – typically – in media studies, and is respected there:

In den Medien wird der Begriff Institution eher locker benutzt: Pfarrer Brauns Wetterprognosen fallen ebenso darunter wie der Dienstagskrimi, der Bundestag genauso wie die Bundesgartenschau. – An diesem Gebrauch ist im Grunde nichts auszusetzen. Für nicht-analytische Zwecke sind Begriffe dieses Abstraktionstyps und -grades keine unbedingte Voraussetzung – eher im Gegenteil. Wenn nur hervorgehoben werden soll, daß es sich um eine feste Einrichtung handelt (ohne daß das Thema ‚Feste Einrichtung‘ angesprochen wird), genügt ein verständlicher Hinweis, der sich auf einen unpräzisen Vorab-Konsens stützt.

[In the media, generally a rather loose definition of institution is used. Both Father Brown’s weather-forecasts and the Thursday-evening-crime movie, the German Bundestag as well as the national horticultural exhibition are called so. Generally speaking, there is nothing wrong with this usage. A term of this kind of abstraction is not necessary for a non-analytical purpose – on the contrary, rather. If only the fixed state of an institution is to be estimated (without discussing

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

the topic as such), an understandable hint based on an imprecise first consensus.⁵

My own definition, which I have used for many years in my lectures and seminars, and which I use without having reflected the clarifications presented above, does justice to the termination of ‘institution’ and from this point follows the media until having reached its touchable reality. It says:

Wenn wir Massenmedien sagen, können wir damit Phänomene auf vier Ebenen bezeichnen:

„Medium/Massenmedium“

- 1) als Institution: ‚*die* Presse‘, ‚*der* Rundfunk‘, ‚*der* Film‘,
- 2) als Gattungsbegriff generell: ‚*Zeitung*‘, ‚*Zeitschrift*‘,
- 3) als konkrete Organisation: z.B. das ZDF, die ‚*Süddeutsche Zeitung*‘, mitsamt dem Süddeutschen Verlag,
- 4) als konkretes, dem Endverbraucher vorliegendes Produkt: die Zeitung als bedrucktes Stück Papier, der Film als Rolle, die Fernsehsendung als Programmstück.

[When we speak of the mass media, this can mean phenomena on four levels.

Media/mass media as

1. institutions: *the* press, *the* radio, *the* film
2. term for a genre: newspapers, journals and magazines
3. specific organizations: the BBC, *The Times*
4. specific product for a consumer’s use: a newspaper as a piece of paper with print on it, a film on a spool a television broadcast as a piece in a programme.]⁶

What has been said until now may be sufficient to clarify the dual terminology of institution. However, so much is necessary because already the question if we use (only) a media-historical or a communicational-historical point of view, plays an important role for the understanding of the terms ‘institution’ and ‘organization’.

Because I do not only want to discuss this theoretical difference but also study institutions of communication in their form of specific organizations of the media, a definition of the term ‘organization’ is needed at the end of this introduction. Organizations are “soziale Gebilde” [social constructs],

die

- dauerhaft ein Ziel verfolgen und

⁵ Schülein (1987), 9f.

⁶ This definition has not been printed before.

- eine formale Struktur aufweisen, mit deren Hilfe Aktivitäten der Mitglieder auf das verfolgte Ziel ausgerichtet werden sollen
- [which
- continuously follow an intention and
 - have a formal structure by the use of which its members are able to guide their activities to the fulfillment of this intention.]⁷

On another level of abstraction, they are

Ressourcenpools oder korporative Akteure ... Sie entstehen, wenn Individuen einen Teil ihrer Ressourcen einer zentralen Disposition unterstellen, die außerhalb ihrer selbst liegt.

[resource pools or cooperative players ... they are built whenever individuals offer to give up some of their own resources for a central disposition outside of themselves.]⁸

Speaking with the words of Max Weber, organizations are “Anstalten”, “Betriebe”, “Behörden” [institutes, companies, offices]: they affect groups, work „mit einem spezifischen Ziel“ [with a specific purpose], companies have an economical, offices have an administering purpose.⁹

Digression: The Churches

Churches – which means the Christian churches of European origin – are excellent examples of institutions. This does also count for all other religious communities if they – see above –

den Zusammenhalt von Mensch, Gesellschaft und Kultur ermöglichen.
[have influence on the inter-relations of humans, cultures and societies.]¹⁰

However, rather than other religious communities, the Churches are characterized by hierarchical order (“hierokratische” [hierocratic], in Weber’s words) Especially if their hierarchy is lead from a central instance, communication is an essential tool for their effectivity. Thus, from her earliest beginnings underground, the Church has been a communicative institution, and this in two ways: The first results from its mission to

⁷ Alfred Kieser/Herbert Kubicek: *Organisation*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter³1992, 4 and 1.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ernst M. Wallner: *Soziologie*. Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer⁶1979, 130f.

¹⁰ Lipp/Hoppmann/Hubig (1987/1995).

preach, the second results from the necessity to establish itself as an institution via communication. Franz-Xaver Kaufmann speaks about a

scheinbare Konvergenz von soziologischen und theologischen Kirchenbegriffen.
[seeming convergence between the sociological and the theological terminology of the Church.]¹¹

For him, the term “Church” serves

zur Kennzeichnung der sozialen Zusammenhänge ..., in denen typischerweise religiöse Kommunikation stattfindet.
[to characterize the social connections ... in which religious communication typically happens.]¹²

As a communicative institution, the Church naturally had saved the communicative structures of the Roman Empire from its fall and even brought it to flourish again among its following systems: messengers, literality, books, libraries, archives and the extended use of symbols.

The Church was surprised by the radical modernization in communication caused by the invention of printing by Gutenberg (and Caxton), not so much because there was now an even vaster amount of communication but rather because the new media – so to speak – automatically withdrew from its influence. It was born outside of this institution, and although it was meant to serve the Church (e. g. by the printing of bibles), it could not really control it directly from the beginning. Ever since the Church as a communicative institution has struggled with the modern media and their consequences, since the Second Vaticanum even theoretically. The term of “communicatio socialis”, the origin of which Franz-Josef Eilers describes in his textbook *Communicating in Community*¹³, is the verbal mark of this trial, which has not yet been entirely successful. As far as I know, there is no historical depiction of the Church with its communicative actions and care as the leading topic.

The History of Institutions as the History of Communication

The theoretical debate concerned with the term of communication in the field of public and current communication (media and communication science) is not very rich. Only recently, Ulrich Saxer has taken three attempts not only to encourage both the discussion and the research within this field, but also to test the concept in practice. His

¹¹ Franz-Xaver Kaufmann: „Kirche“. In: *Staatslexikon* 1987/1995, Vol.. 3, cols. 409-413.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Franz-Josef Eilers: *Communicating in Community*, Manila: Logos Publications, 1994, 259-261.

latest attempt¹⁴ shows (his) two “Basiskonzepte” [basic concepts], one based on the institutional and one on the media point of view. According to these, institutions are

dauernde Regelungsmuster, die sich auf wichtige Bedürfnisse beziehen; entsprechend rechnen sie zum Ordnungsgefüge der Gesellschaft, zu ihren Strukturen und basieren auf bestimmten Sinndeutungen; sie begründen korrespondierende Erwartungen und Verhaltensweisen und verfügen vielfach über ein materielles Substrat.

Medien sind komplexe institutionalisierte Systeme um organisierte Kommunikationskanäle von spezifischem Leistungsvermögen.

[continuous forms of regulation, which are related to important needs; in correspondence, they are counted among the social order and its structures, they are based on certain interpretations of meaning and they cause the corresponding expectations and reactions, and often, they have a material foundation.

Media are complex, institutionalized systems which are organized around communicative channels with a specific capacity.]¹⁵

Saxer argues – not surprizingly – that systems appear within this context; after all, Niklas Luhman wanted to replace “institution” by “system.”¹⁶ In this context, it is important to mention the concept of *institutionalization*. This is, according to Saxer,

„durchgehendes strukturierendes Prinzip von Mediensystemen“.
[a constant structuring principle of medial systems.]¹⁷

This is institutionalization because it requires

einen besonders großen gesellschaftlichen Gestaltungsaufwand.
[an especially large amount of social effort of creativity.]¹⁸

This means an essential difference from the simple building up of a (media) organization.

The difference becomes clearly visible when famous examples are considered. The London *Times*, for example, is often praised as a national institution, so is the BBC.

¹⁴ Ulrich Saxer: „Annäherung an eine Rundfunk-Institutionengeschichte“. In: Wolfgang Duchkowitsch et al.: *Journalismus als Kultur*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1998, 213-225.

¹⁵ Ibid, 216.

¹⁶ Cf. Niklas Luhmann: *Institutionalisierung – Funktion und Mechanismus im sozialen System der Gesellschaft*. In: Helmut Schelsky (Hg.): *Zur Theorie der Institution*. Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag ²1973, 27-41; 28.

¹⁷ Saxer (1998), 224.

¹⁸ Ibid.

This does – in both cases – not mean the media organizations and the financial and legal relations behind them, this rather means *The Times* as the companion of the British nation in its changing intra- and international political appearances since 1785, this means the BBC as the mother of all public broadcasting stations, the „unerreichbare Wunschbild“ [unreachable perfect image].¹⁹

Of course, Germany also has her great institutions of publication, such as the press, the broadcasting system, and so on, but it is not rich in phenomena comparable to the *Times*. Is *Bild*, a German high-circulation daily paper, only a media organization, or is it also a national institution? Is the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*? Or is, perhaps, the Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* a general example of a media institution, not only a national one? These questions with their anecdotic tone lead us directly into a communicational-historical approach to specific items.

If one demands to write a history of communication and not just a history of the media²⁰, one has to write the history of institutions; the beginnings, the times of the flourishing, the times of decline of institutions of public social communication must be studied and presented. But then, where is the history of the media as a history of organizations, which is of foremost interest?

The largest part of the history/histories of the media which are studied and published – if one does not take biographies into consideration – are available in the form of monographies about media genres or organizations. A history of communication could not be written without the countless studies of single or regional phenomena or genres – which may be described as approximations of the first kind. The basis for a history of communication must be thoroughly researched data and facts; not a „Anhäufung beziehungsloser Tatsachen“ [collection of unrelated facts]²¹, however, which Winfried Lerg calls “wertlos” [without value]. Lerg agrees that there have been authors who, even before the interest in communication history began, have distanced themselves from the „leidigen ‚Medienfixierung‘“ [tedious ‘fixation in the media’] or who did not even subordinate under it from the beginning. He names authors from the 19th Century; e.g. Robert E. Prutz, writing about journalism as a

Selbstgespräch, welches die Zeit über sich selber führt.
[monologue which time holds with herself.]

¹⁹ Michael Tracey: *Das unerreichbare Wunschbild*. Ein Versuch über Hugh Greene und die Gründung des Rundfunks in Nordwestdeutschland nach 1945. Köln: Kohlhammer-Grote 1982.

²⁰ Cf. Michael Schmolke: „Kommunikationsgeschichte“. In: Rudi Renger/Gabriele Siegert (Hg.): *Kommunikationswelten*. Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag ²1999, 19-44. In this essay I follow the statement that the history on communication is a history of structures, which, of course, contains institutional elements, cf. pp. 26-28. Institutions are always structures, but not all communicative structures are institutions.

²¹ Winfried B. Lerg: „Pressegeschichte oder Kommunikationsgeschichte?“ In: *Presse und Geschichte* [I]. Beiträge zur historischen Kommunikationsforschung. München: Verlag Dokumentation 1977. 9-24, 10.

Further, Lerg names Karl Bücher, Karl Knies and Robert Schäffle, who recognize the means of communication as “Verkehrsmittel” [means of transport] and as

Einrichtungen [vgl. oben: Institutionen!], durch welche der Austausch geistiger und materieller Güter in der Gesellschaft bewirkt wird.
[institutions (see above!) by which mental and material goods are exchanged.]

Finally, there is Erich Everth, who (in 1926!) began to see newspapers in a functional manner.²²

Lerg’s judgment of Otto Groth, who (only) tried the „Integration von Tatsachen und Theorie“ [integration of facts and theory]²³ is a little too hard. After all, in Groth’s classic *Die Zeitung*, within its first sentences, one finds a really institutional understanding of newspapers:

Die demokratische Epoche hat die Tagespresse zu einer Macht erhoben, die ihre Herrschaft auf allen Kulturgebieten durchsetzt, die aber täglich um ihre Anerkennung kämpfen muß, auf die die Großen herabsehen und als deren Herrin sich die Masse gebärdet, der sich aber beide willig unterwerfen, die in keiner Verfassung gegründet und gefestigt ist, von der aber Ordnung und Autorität im Staate abhängen.
[The democratic epoch has given power to the daily papers which push through their reign in every cultural area, but which have to fight for its daily acceptance, a power on which the powerful look down and as whose sovereign the mass seemingly acts, to whom, however, both willingly surrender, a power which is not founded on any constitution, but on which depend both order and authority in a nation.]²⁴

This means that newspapers, “das Zeitungswesen” [the newspaper press], (as Walter Hagemann and Emil Dovifat would have said) are institutions as defined above, a complex of conditions which makes possible

den Zusammenhalt von Mensch, Gesellschaft und Kultur.
[the solidarity of humans, cultures and societies.]²⁵

In *Die Zeitung*, however, Groth has presented rather an encyclopedia of the press in his time than the history of an institution, and even when he took up his old *leitmotif* of

²² All quotations are taken from *ibid*, pp. 11-14.

²³ *Ibid*.

²⁴ Otto Groth: *Die Zeitung*. Ein System der Zeitungskunde (Journalistik). Mannheim: J. Bensheimer, 4 vols, 1928-1930; vol. 1, VII.

²⁵ Cf. above.

1928 – the leading power on all cultural areas – again after World War II, and made it the title of his monumental work *Die unerkannte Kulturmacht*, he intuitively expressed what was correctly meant; however, he missed any connection to the then contemporarily obvious, namely to institutional or *Systemtheorie*.²⁶ Nevertheless, both great works of Groth should be respected in their historical dimensions as histories of genre and as contributions, or at least as precursors of a well-reflected institutional history. Let us look now at some other examples:

The Histories of Institution, Genre, and Organizations

“Great works” such as the ones by Groth are rarely dared nowadays, however, the field of histories of genre in German is not entirely empty. Publications (of corresponding length) have been presented in the last 30 years: for the press by Kurt Koszyk in cooperation with Margot Lindemann²⁷ and Heinz Pürer in cooperation with Johannes Raabe²⁸, for broadcasting by Hans Bausch in cooperation with Winfried Lerg, Ansgar Diller and Hansjörg Bessler²⁹, more recently by Heinz-Werner Stuibler³⁰, and for television by Knut Hickethier.³¹

These works show the idea that the press or radio-broadcasting can develop into institutions for a society among different governmental appearances, and work as such, in different degrees: those about the press do so less, those about the radio more. The reason for this is easily understandable: While the press (as an institution) has entered the society in the form of institutions straight from the beginning (printing companies of more or less free, in any case private foundation), whereas the radio-broadcast has been intentionally ‘introduced’; first in the German-speaking countries, and 1926, (after the BBC had become a corporation instead of a company) also in England.

The Radio

Despite the fact that most broadcasting stations were preferably founded under civil law (as joint stock companies in Germany and Austria) first, the cooperation of politics, more precisely of the government, was very intensive and perhaps also historically necessary because of the uncertainty what this kind of “broadcasting” was

²⁶ Otto Groth: *Die unerkannte Kulturmacht*. Grundlegung der Zeitungswissenschaft (Periodik). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 7 vols, 1960-1972.

²⁷ *Geschichte der deutschen Presse*, 4 vols. Berlin: Colloquium Verlag 1966-1986.

²⁸ *Medien in Deutschland*, vol. 1 Presse. Konstanz: UVK Medien²1996.

²⁹ *Rundfunk in Deutschland*, 5 vols. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1980.

³⁰ *Medien in Deutschland*, vol 2 Rundfunk. 2 Teile (= 2 parts). Konstanz: UVK Medien 1998.

³¹ *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*. Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler 1998.

and what it might become. Lerg in his fundamental work does not speak about “the foundation of many regional radio companies”, he speaks precisely about

Die Entstehung des Rundfunks in Deutschland. Herkunft und Entwicklung eines publizistischen Mittels.

[The development of broadcasting in Germany. The origin and development of a medium.]³²

In postwar Germany, the broadcasting system had to be reorganized: controlled by society, but always independent from the state. (A commercial model under civil law was not imaginable.) So, a new institution was founded: Public Broadcasting, following the model of the BBC.

This has indeed become an institution; (first) for (The Federal Republic of) Germany and (later) for Austria. For both cases more or less explicit institutional histories, especially and understandably, much more histories of organization, have been written. These are worth having a look at:

In Germany

The institution of public broadcasting in the Federal Republic of Germany has been a typical and, as one can say today, classical postwar-institution. The stations were rebuilt and brought to use again by the corresponding allied forces. First, they were military stations, then, for quite a while, they were stations of zonal military administrations. The largest of them, which covered the whole British zone, was the Hamburg-Cologne-Complex, better known as the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk (NWDR). Its new organization was

maßgeblich von Hugh Carlton Greene beeinflusst, der seit 1940 Leiter der deutschen Abteilung der BBC war.

[influenced especially by Hugh Carlton Greene, who had been the head of the German department of the BBC since 1940.]³³

This preparatory work was combined in 1946/47 in a memorandum, which says about the legal form of the new station:

Es ist vorgesehen, dem NWDR während des Jahres 1947 den legalen Status als öffentlich-rechtliche Anstalt vergleichbar der BBC zu geben.

[It is planned to give the NWDR the legal status of a public broadcasting institution comparable to that of the BBC in 1947.]³⁴

³² Frankfurt: Josef Knecht ¹1965.

³³ H.W. Stuibler 1998, part. 188f, cf. N. 30.

³⁴ Cf. M. Tracey 1982, 66.

The „Hauptaugenmerk“ [main aspect in view] was the

Freisein von Staats- oder Parteikontrolle.
[freedom of the control by the state and parties.]³⁵

The public role of this way of organizing the station, which was codified in Directive Nr. 118 of the British military government on January 1st, 1948³⁶, was accepted by the public only hesitantly. But also the Bayrischer Rundfunk (BR), the second largest in the zones, received the same status in the (Bavarian) Broadcasting Law of August 10th, 1948, so did all other stations of the ‘Länder’. Although politicians were not always of this opinion, they worked quite well for decades, although with much expenditure, and so did the ZDF, the second TV channel in Western Germany, which was founded on the basics of a national treaty between the German ‘Länder’. So, when it came to first attempts of liberalization in the broadcasting system in the 1980ies, the public broadcast was a *rocher de bronze*, hard to shake, for some its own monument, for others something like a myth.³⁷ The works of Bausch and Stuiber, which I have mentioned above, offer a careful and rich image of this institutionalization, however, rather as a history of organization than as a systematic history, and not with this institutional-historical aspect in the centre.

Histories of German broadcasting stations (as institutions) have been written in a considerable number, however, there are not so many that the field could be said to be covered. Like with the press companies, often celebrations such as anniversaries are a good reason for a retrospective. This can have three forms: a special *Festschrift*, a chronicle, or a well-researched historiography. *Festschriften* and chronicles, which often appear intermingled, can be treasuries. They need not be judged by their form, but by the reliability of the data they present and – in case of a chronicle – of their completeness respectively the criteria according to which the data presented have been chosen. Since they are either written or ordered by the organization which celebrates its 20th, 50th or 70th anniversary, these texts also are material for public relations: therefore, especially careful source studies are necessary. However, brochures such as the exhibition catalogue accompanying the exhibition *20 Jahre ZDF*³⁸, or even *20 Jahre*

³⁵ So in an announcement by the British occupation general Alex Bishop on Oct. 15th/16th, 1947 (Zone Council); Facs. in: Hans Bausch: *Rundfunkpolitik nach 1945*, Part 1, = vol. 3 von Bausch 1980, 56.

³⁶ Ibid, 62.

³⁷ Cf. Michael Schmolke: „Rundfunk-Metamorphosen“. In: Wolfgang Duchkowitsch et al. (Hg.): *Journalismus als Kultur*. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag 1998, 203-212.

³⁸ Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Hg.): *20 Jahre ZDF*. Eine Ausstellung zur Vor-, Gründungs- und Aufbaugeschichte des Zweiten Deutschen Fernsehens aus Anlaß des 20. Jahrestages der Unterzeichnung des ZDF-Staatsvertrages. Mainz: ZDF 1981.

*Deutsches Fernsehen*³⁹ a compilation by the ARD's Press Service, are welcome sources of historical information. Several stations have developed their own published series and magazines, which then could contain historical specials. Examples are the Sender Freies Berlin with its *Werkstatthefte*⁴⁰ and the Süddeutsche Rundfunk with its *Südfunk-Hefte*⁴¹. The Westdeutscher Rundfunk affords the luxury of its own historical series (*Annalen des Westdeutschen Rundfunks*) in which – in vol. 2 – in 1974, 50 years of broadcasting from Cologne were looked back at.⁴² Some companies have received monographies based on university research and written from a (desirable) distance. An outstanding example is Klaus Wehmeier's work *Die Geschichte des ZDF, Teil I*⁴³.

In Austria

Hans Bausch's German History of Broadcasting in five volumes has an Austrian counterpart: Viktor Ergert's *50 Jahre Rundfunk in Österreich*⁴⁴ in four volumes. This is a kind of 'narrative' history, which orders its considerable amount of data and sources not according to scholarly rules and then hides it behind a structure which is hardly informative. Ergert's work is easy and good to read, however, it can hardly be called an institutional history and only marginally qualifies as a history of the organization of RAVAG, the stations of the occupation (1945-1954) and the ORF. Theo Venus, however, offers institutional history for an early phase of the institutionalization of broadcasting in Austria.⁴⁵ Norbert Feldinger has done so for the controversial years of reconstruction after World War II⁴⁶, and Heinz Wittmann, a scholar of jurisprudence, for the tedious and time-consuming legalization of the – in the narrow sense –

³⁹ Programmleitung Deutsches Fernsehen ARD (Hg.): *20 Jahre Deutsches Fernsehen*. Sonderdruck aus Pressedienst 5/73. München: ARD 1973.

⁴⁰ E.g.: Karl-Hermann Zehm: *Geschichte des VOX-Hauses*. Das erste Funkhaus mit regelmäßigen Programmen in Deutschland. SFB-Werkstatthefte 12. Berlin: SFB 1982.

⁴¹ Examples are: Edgar Lersch: *Rundfunk in Stuttgart 1934-1949*; Konrad Dussel, Edgar Lersch, Jürgen K. Müller: *Rundfunk in Stuttgart 1950-1959*; Ausstellungsbroschüre *70 Jahre Rundfunk in Stuttgart*; Südfunkhefte (17/1990; 21/1995; 19/1994) all published in Stuttgart.

⁴² Walter Först (Hg.): *Aus Köln in die Welt*. Beiträge zur Rundfunkgeschichte. Köln: Kohlhammer-Grote 1974. – The counterpart for Hamburg as a broadcasting city is: Heinz-Günter Deiters: *Fenster zur Welt*. 50 Jahre Rundfunk in Norddeutschland. Hamburg: Hoffmann u. Campe 1973.

⁴³ Mainz: v. Haase u. Koehler 1979. – Nicole Prüsse hat 1997 Wehmeiers „Teil I“-Titel aufgegriffen: *Die Geschichte des ZDF. Teil II*. Münster: Lit Verlag 1997.

⁴⁴ Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1974-1985. Co-authors of Vol. 4 are: Hellmut Andics and Robert Kriechbaumer.

⁴⁵ Venus (1982).

⁴⁶ Norbert Feldinger: *Nachkriegsrundfunk in Österreich*. Munich et al.: Saur, 1990.

institution of broadcasting according to the demands of the theory of democracy and the Constitution.⁴⁷

The History of Television as the History of Institutions

Until today, histories of television have preferred institutional, but also programme-related historical attempts to those interested in organizations. For this, there is a simple reason: Specialized companies, whose purpose it is to produce, organize and spread TV-programmes, have not existed in Europe for a long time. The British ITV, which was founded in 1954, had been the only 'TV-only-organization' for a long time. The ZDF, which had been developed from a complicated historical process with difficulties regarding media-political and company-related topics,⁴⁸ has been discussed,⁴⁹ and also the history of the introduction of TV in the Third Reich has been regarded from an organizational-historical point of view.⁵⁰ The phenomenon of television as such gains greater awareness, however; this is certainly so because it is a form of presenting images which unites all old and new ways of doing so and, furthermore, corresponds best with the image of the media as an all-uniting work of art which the postmodern philologists, philosophers and the scholars of cultural studies have in common. Conventional, historiographic attempts will demystify TV as well as they can, and make it a typical social institution. At the moment, this institution has to be seen as developing; this means that histories of TV which have an institutional point of view are histories of institutionalization. Winfried Lerg has presented a first sketch for the time in which could not yet be spoken of a social institution of television, it is for the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. It ends with the announcement of failure:

Von einem Massenkommunikationsmittel ... kann hier nicht die Rede sein.

[Of a means of mass communication ... cannot yet be spoken.]⁵¹

⁴⁷ Heinz Wittmann: *Rundfunkfreiheit*. Öffentlichrechtliche Grundlagen des Rundfunks in Österreich. Wien/New York: Springer-Verlag 1981.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rüdiger Steinmetz: *Freies Fernsehen*. Das erste privat-kommerzielle Fernsehprogramm in Deutschland. Konstanz: UVK Medien 1996.

⁴⁹ Cf. N. 43.

⁵⁰ Klaus Winker: *Fernsehen unterm Hakenkreuz*. Organisation, Programm, Personal. Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau Verlag 1994.

⁵¹ Winfried B. Lerg: „Zur Entstehung des Fernsehens in Deutschland“. In: *Rundfunk und Fernsehen* 15. (1967) Nr. 4, 349-375.

Authors who wrote about later periods are still confronted with this social organization as if with a monumental statue; if one wants to control this fascinating device, one also has to integrate the history of the receivers.

In the meantime, we have at least two histories of TV in German, one by Hickethier⁵², and one by Thomas Steinmaurer⁵³. Both capture the institutionalization of TV, and both do so by the use of side tracks. Hickethier sees his work as a

programmgeschichtlich akzentuierte Darstellung,
[a research with the history of programmes as its main topic,]

for him,

steht das Programm im Zentrum der Fernsehkommunikation,
[„the programme“ is in „the centre of TV-communication“]

and thus – from his historiographic point of view –

werden „die Institutionen der Sender, Technik und Produktion zur Voraussetzung und die Rezeption zur Folge des Programms“.
[the institutions of sender, technique, and production are the preconditions of, and reception is the result of the programme.]⁵⁴

So, he is interested in TV's becoming an institution in the recipients' heads. This is also Steinmaurer's topic, but not the programme is of his main interest, but the set in the field of the 'dispositive;' in other words, he is interested in the way the receiver (meaning both man and set) enters the centre of spare time existence, in the living area, in the technical and temporal structures of reception, and from there back to society: Institutionalization, if not *expressis verbis*.

This clarity, which is wished for concerning the situation of learning and teaching in the field, we find (only and for the first time, as far as I know) in the Swiss history of television by Saxer and Ganz-Blättler, which is titled: *Werden und Wandel einer Institution*, and subtitled: *Medienhistoriographie als Institutionengeschichte*.⁵⁵

⁵² Knut Hickethier unter Mitarbeit von Peter Hoff: *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*. Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler 1998.

⁵³ Thomas Steinmaurer: *Tele-Visionen*. Zur Theorie und Geschichte des Fernsehempfangs. Innsbruck/Wien: Studien-Verlag 1999.

⁵⁴ K. Hickethier (1998), 5.

⁵⁵ Ulrich Saxer/Ursula Ganz-Blättler: *Fernsehen DRS: Werden und Wandel einer Institution. Ein Beitrag zur Medienhistoriographie als Institutionengeschichte*. Zürich: Institut für Publizistikwissenschaft und Medienforschung 1998.

The Press

In contrast to broadcasting, ‘the press’ has not been established. Only after it had existed for a long time, authoritative systems of different colours have tried to make the press of their governmental area an institution. Lenin’s description of the press as a collective propagandist, agitator and organizer has already been written in 1901 (*Iskra* Nr. 4). It was related to

Schaffung einer gesamtrussischen Zeitung.
[the creation of a paper for the whole of Russia.]⁵⁶

However, it was raised to a doctrine for the creation and orientation of the whole Soviet press after the building of the Soviet Union. For the time of the Third Reich, the *Schriftleitergesetz* (a law concerning the editors) and the *Reichskulturkammergesetz*, a law about the Chamber of Culture, (in which the chamber of the press was one of seven) were the strongest impulses for the creation of a new type of press, although the NS-leadership did not, like Lenin, have a plan for doing so during revolutionary times. The corporate reformation of the press could have led to a closed corpus after a while; a forced membership (in the Chamber) and daily orders concerning the printed media were contained in the sketches of the institution, as in most cases generally corporate systems of order resulted from institutions.

A look at the press as a whole, however, since 1605, then single entrepreneurs and their companies, and thus, organizations, developed at the beginning. Only when the weekly periodicals and magazines were not to be pictured without because of their usefulness and acceptance the press had gained a character comparable to that of an institution. Early reviews about ‘the newspapers’ reveal acknowledgement and a certain respect of the new printed media as a collective.⁵⁷ Only much later – at the beginning of the 19th century – it appears as ‘the Press’ and is connected with the building of public opinion.

If ever since the press has been regarded from a political, historical or economic point of view, then this has been done most often in the context of its functions serving politics and society, sometimes also the economy. A (very vague) collective term for this could be „die öffentliche Aufgabe der Presse“⁵⁸ [the public tasks of the press]. However, this term, which, as far as I know, was first used in an NS law of 1933, is connected to many disputes of legal and political nature. It has not yet been used as the leading term of an institutional history because the public tasks of the press have not yet clearly been named. In later histories of genre, like the fourth volume of *Geschichte*

⁵⁶ W. I. Lenin: „Womit beginnen?“. In: *Iskra* 4 (1901), reprinted in: Lenin über die Presse, Prague, 1970, 73-79, 78.

⁵⁷ Karl Kurth (Hg.): *Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung*. Brunn/München/Wien: Rudolf M. Rohrer Verlag 1944.

⁵⁸ So is (among others) the title of a judicial study by Horstpeter Klein. Düsseldorf: Rheinisch-Bergische Druckerei- und Verlagsgesellschaft 1973.

der deutschen Presse (Koszyk/Lindemann)⁵⁹ or the opening chapters 1-3 of the volume of *Medien in Deutschland* (Pürer/Raabe) which is concerned with the press, institutional-historical ideas do not appear. This is, according to Pürer, caused by the conception of the volume:

Die Entscheidung für einen chronologischen Aufbau der Ausführungen lagen nicht so sehr medienhistorische Interessen als vielmehr systematische Überlegungen zugrunde.

[The decision for a chronological order and realization was caused rather by systematic ideas than by media historic interests.]⁶⁰

Pürer and Raabe wanted to present systematically and tightly ordered information about the total amount and status of the German press shortly after the reunion. However, because they work chronologically, they necessarily describe a development, thus, institutionalization is revealed, although this was not intended by the authors. A clearer presentation of institutional history can be found with Koszyk. In the second volume of the history of the press he describes in Chapter XI the beginning of party organs as part of the development of the position-taking press (both Conservative and Liberal), becoming the organs of the modern parties at the end of the 19th Century, the Catholic (= Zentrumspartei) and the Social Democratic movement.⁶¹ Then, not only many new media companies were founded, but also an institution which is typical of the German (and Austrian) socio-political development: the partisan press. If democracy was to be established continuously in Germany, this institution had to establish continuously as well, in connection with the whole party system. Because of this thought Hitler destroyed the parties and their party organs already in the spring of 1933, although the companies survived as long as they were regarded as 'civil', i. e. non-partisan. Thus, if democracy was to be revived in Germany after 1945, also the party organs had to be revived. However, it was soon obvious that the papers did not work accordingly any more. So, they disappeared soon. Heinz Dietrich Fischer, who has studied the resurrection and final decline of German party organs, presents in a short summary institutional-historical aspects among others.⁶² The fact that many party organs were 'licensed' by the allied forces and thus privileged, played an important role; these papers were allowed, despite the otherwise common prohibition, to appear in the years 1945-48 with their own special licence. These licenced papers reveal a process of economic *establishing*: *Institutionalized* were, in the time of the *Wirtschaftswunder* [economic miracle] only those licenced papers which were functionally successful. These were regional papers which had a limited political

⁵⁹ Kurt Koszyk: *Pressepolitik für Deutsche 1945-1949*. Berlin: Colloquium Verlag 1986.

⁶⁰ H. Pürer/J. Raabe (1994), 10.

⁶¹ Kurt Koszyk: *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Colloquium Verlag 1966.

⁶² Heinz-Dietrich Fischer: *Parteien und Presse in Deutschland*. Bremen: Schünemann Universitätsverlag 1971. – The summary mentioned in the text: 516-524.

connection, while the party organs, which could not regain their position as institutions which they had had before the Hitler-Era, declined and disappeared in the seventies. In Austria, the faith in the party organs was surviving. Only in 1991 people who were interested in politics amazedly watched the disappearance of the Social Democratic *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.⁶³

The by far largest part of the Histories of the press are histories of medial organizations. Scholarly treatises are contrasted with publication of the publishing houses, many of them *Festschriften*. It is a truism, but it needs to be said: Both genres can be of varying quality. Weak doctoral dissertations and diploma/master's theses and scholarly crash publications can be recognized because of certain criteria and avoided by those who write their own final theses. The *Festschriften* of large publishing houses or important papers and magazines, however, are at first sight surrounded by an aura of authenticity. Of the weaker, the bad, the disturbing ones among them readers should be warned. With regard to their quality as sources not everything that is authorized by the celebrating house is authentic. Often these texts are used in order to present false legends or keep them alive. Good *Festschriften* offer a mixing of reflexion, well-researched articles and chronical elements with words and pictures.

Summary

At first sight, both the terms of medial institutions and of communication are understandable and clear. In contrast to a communicator, who describes single humans in the process of communication, medial institutions obviously are organized collectives with a differentiated task-order. But just as the communicator must be questioned (like: communicator or communicator-organization?) also the media institution needs a second look. The term of institution, normally belonging to the fields of jurisprudence and sociology, which was discussed in the introduction, cannot be left aside because the wider, more common term of media institution is equalled with the media company or corporation. It cannot be left aside especially because there are obviously institutions of the media, as complexes which support the cohesion of man, society and culture (cf. introduction). The public broadcasting is an excellent example of such. Institutions are not founded like organizations, but they grow out of a phase of institutionalization. According to Saxer's suggestion, this process should in any case be integrated in the project if one wants to write the history of an institution. The same counts, in case the process has happened, for de-institutionalizations. It may show the power of the former institution more clearly than the existing institution itself. The history of institutions and their institutionalizations is in the way which Saxer suggests and demonstrates a consequent realization of communication history, last but not least because the media-organization in question has to be integrated into historical research.

⁶³ Norbert Feldinger/Michael Schmolke: *Parteien und Parteipresse*. Die Tageszeitungen der politischen Parteien in Österreich nach 1945. Salzburg: unpublished report 1995.

A Dutch Miracle? The Rediscovery of Religion by Journalists in the Netherlands¹

Joan Hemels

'After turning up their noses at religious issues for years, newspapers and magazines immersed themselves in the matter [in 2006].' This is not the observation of a communication expert, but of Elma Drayer (2006: 9), a journalist and columnist for *Trouw*, a Christian newspaper with a good antenna for social and mental shifts in a country that seems to be desperate for orientation. Since February 2002, when the first cabinet of Jan Peter Balkenende took office, this search resulted in a change in the perception of values and the compliance to rules of conduct by the citizens both in politics and the media. At the same time, the Dutch public began to realize that they were living in a multicultural society in which tensions between foreigners and natives were starting to emerge. The mass media (newspapers, newsmagazines, radio and television) played an important role in this process; they gave concerned politicians and other opinion makers a voice.

In the last decades of the 20th century, journalism was impeded by a social taboo on criticism on foreigner issues, especially in the big cities. The dream of a developing peaceful multicultural society was not to be disrupted. In 2000, the social democratic publicist Paul Scheffer addressed this issue in a full-page article in the liberal newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, which, albeit hesitantly, initiated a debate in the media on a policy plan. When liberal politician Frits Bolkestein, the future commissioner of the European Union, addressed the same issues in the progressive-leftist newspaper *de Volkskrant* in 1991, the opposite had happened: he had been bombarded with criticism (Bolkestein, 2006). The shocking events of September 11th, 2001 in the United States were undoubtedly the prelude to feelings of uncertainty about safety in the Netherlands. Because of this, the suspicion towards fundamentalist or non-fundamentalist Muslims has grown, abroad as well as within the Netherlands. The media reported on cautionary security measures, occasional criminal investigations and

¹ The choice of this subject has been inspired by the character of the book in which the result will be published: the *Festschrift* for Professor Franz-Josef Eilers SVD. This Dutch-speaking world citizen with a boundless dedication to the Catholic world church, especially in developing countries, has always shown a particular interest in the Low Countries, which are so small on the world map. He had a strong bond with the Dutch Professor Henk Prakke (1900-1992), who taught 'Publizistik', communication studies *avant la lettre*, at the Westfälische Wilhelms Universität in Münster (Klein, 2006). Prakke motivated Eilers, who is a member of the congregation of Missionaries of the Divine Word (Sancti Verbi Domini, SVD), to write his dissertation on the disappearance of the scriptless culture in Papua New Guinea, in a mission area of his congregation in Papua New Guinea. When he further developed the 'Religionspublizistik', Eilers was again inspired by Prakke (Eilers, 2000). For nearly forty years, science and practice of church and religious communication are indebted to him for the quarterly *Communicatio Socialis*.

plans for anti-terrorist actions. Politicians were quick to demand risk-reducing measures from the government. In opinion journalism, attention shifted from the risk society in general to the risk of fundamentalist imams and/or imams rebelling against Western society. Almost imperceptibly, religion in a multireligious society crept onto the agenda of the public. Security officers, but also journalists wanted to know what was going on within the walls of Holland's five hundred mosques - the first of which was built in The Hague in 1955.

In the aftermath of the Pim Fortuyn murder on May 22nd, 2002, some opinion makers emphasized the necessity of 'modernization' of the Islamic faith. Suddenly some people saw Islam as a threat to democracy. On the opinion pages of newspapers and magazines and in discussion programmes on television, critics of Islam recommended Enlightenment thinking as a remedy. After all, Christianity had lost its dark sides during the two centuries of development in and after the Age of Reason, and (most) Roman Catholics and Protestants developed into rationally thinking citizens. According to them, the majority of the Muslims who came to the Netherlands as immigrant workers and refugees were far from ready, and even their children and grandchildren had a long way to go. All of a sudden, everyone had a new opinion on the Koran in the country of the Bible with its shrinking Bible Belt of orthodox Christians. Public opinion and journalism left foreign Christians more or less out of the equation. However, newspapers and magazines did publish positive articles on the numerous Protestant-Christian religious African communities in Amsterdam-Zuidoost, a neighbourhood with a high rate of foreigners. Most people will not realize that there are 800.000 foreign Christians in the Netherlands, and roughly the same number of Muslims.

A typically Dutch Subject for a World Citizen

Against this background, how can the remarkable rediscovery of 'religious matters' by Dutch journalism be explained? However, this was - and in 2007 still is - the case. Can further analysis show that more is going on than one suspects at first sight? This is a very topical question considering the persistent media debate on issues such as social values, the imparting of values, the modernity, or lack of modernity, of Islam, the relations between Christianity and Islam, the freedom of religion in relation to freedom of speech, etc. Late in 2006, the publication about a survey by an advisory council of the government (which will be discussed later on) marked the beginning of a new phase in the public debate on religion, atheism, believers and non-believers in Dutch society. Controversy focused on the question if ideology can be employed as a legitimate means to change the minds, attitudes, and, in some cases, even the behaviour of that part of the population which does not show even partial responsibility for and involvement in society. Sceptics wanted to know exactly how ideology relates to the government, especially considering the separation of church and state.

The day after Elma Drayer's column in *Trouw*, professor of religious philosophy Henk Vroom wrote in the same newspaper: 'The burning question is what policy the

government can develop to give issues like "ideology" and "faith" their legitimate, necessary place in the public domain - without the Minister of Justice (and religion) turning himself into a vicar, parson, imam, guru or even Zen master.' (Vroom, 2006:7). Vroom, who teaches at the Centrum voor Islamitische Theologie (Center for Islamic Theology) of the Protestant-Christian Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, argues that Western governments do not necessarily have to be neutral in philosophical/religious matters, despite the separation of church and state. According to him, practice shows that they often aren't, for example when they financially support churches in their social activities - there is no church tax in the Netherlands; churches are true volunteer organizations in civil society. Church leaders have not taken part in the debate yet, but it is well-known that they are not interested in a civil religion. However, they cannot remain silent, and will have to express their opinion in public. On December 22nd, 2006, *Trouw* published a cartoon by political cartoonist Tom, which showed an office building in the shape of an exclamation mark in front of well-known ministry buildings in The Hague, and a passer-by who said to his wife, '...and that is the new Ministry of Search for Meaning...'

A Ministry of Search for Meaning in a secularized country like the Netherlands is as yet inconceivable. Still, one wonders why political cartoonists, columnists, journalists and other opinion makers fill column after column in the printed media and many hours of broadcasting time with controversies, opinions, and personal stories on religion, issues of meaning, spirituality, ethical creed and a longing for a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life and society. How can this shift be explained? Although God was a rather prominent topic in journalism during the last decade of the 20th century as well (Hemels, 1999), the context has changed into one of a multicultural and multireligious society. Moreover, even administrators and their civil servants show an interest in religion as a binding element instead of a disintegrating force in society. This article is meant as a tentative explanation for the renewed interest by Dutch journalism in 'religious matters' and everything relating to it.²

The Multiculturalism Debate and Two Murders

The assassination of the populist Pim Fortuyn in 2002 ended his meteoric rise in Dutch politics. He had publicly criticized certain 'medieval' aspects of Islam. During

² The research for this contribution fits in with the author's international research project 'QualiMedia' on the quality of mass media content in general and of digital multimedia in particular in the multireligious and multicultural society. This project forms a part of the European Union's Socrates Program Grundtvig 2 and is supported by The Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR) of the Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Europees Platform voor het Nederlandse Onderwijs (European Platform for the Dutch Education) in The Hague was promoting the application for the Grundtvig 2 project, but this national agency of the European Commission, neither this European authority, has any responsibility for the tenor of this publication.

I wish to acknowledge Lucie van Rooijen, M.A. for the translation.

the parliamentary elections in 2002, his political party Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) won an overwhelming victory, but within one year this success evaporated. The country was startled by yet another political murder when the film director and journalist Theo van Gogh was killed on November 2nd, 2004. Together with the Somalian-born militant politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali he had made the film *Submission*, which Muslim circles experienced as disrespectful towards the Koran – in the film, parts of the Holy Book of the Muslims had been written on the naked body of a woman. Both murders jolted a country that liked to portray itself as welcoming, open to the world and tolerant. In politics and the media, a debate flared up on how only lip service had been paid to multiculturalism for decades, and on how its drawbacks had been ignored on account of political correct thinking, also in journalism.

Not surprisingly, journalists and programme makers were roughly woken from their dream of a Dutch multicultural model society. After all, preparative to his political aspirations, Fortuyn had published a weekly political column in the *Elsevier* newsmagazine for years, written highly readable and not too thick books, and given speeches all over the country for groups of people who were susceptible to his criticism on the 'purple' coalition of the social-democratic Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA - Labour Party) and the liberal Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD - People's Freedom and Democracy Party), presided by Wim Kok, who dominated the political landscape of the late 20th and early 21st century. However, radio and television programme makers discovered him relatively late, i.e. in the initial period of the 2002 elections. Theo van Gogh was a media man through and through, a sharp columnist and television and film maker. With her handsome appearance and amazing life story, Hirsi Ali conquered the media so naturally and quickly that she was considered a 'media miracle'. Her mission was to free Muslimas of the patriarchal yoke of Islam, but in those circles she found no response. Religious Muslimas thought her too radical, she was rather a terror than an example with her independent lifestyle and her criticism on the position of women in Islam and the attitude of Islamic men. However, Hirsi Ali's strategy to spread her message through the media in a confronting way was appreciated by those Dutch who were concerned about the prevailing negative perception of Muslims, and wanted to push them into the emancipation and integration process as quickly as possible. Sociologist Yolanda van Tilborgh (2006) concludes that Hirsi Ali did influence Muslimas indirectly because they feel supported by her ideas in their personal quest to fulfil their ideals in their own way.

The French philosopher and writer Pascal Bruckner (2007) wrote a confronting article on the Netherlands after Hirsi Ali had withdrawn as a Member of Parliament and left for the United States in 2006. She had been politically compromised by a white lie about her family name when she arrived in the Netherlands as a refugee, so that the validity of her Dutch passport and the legitimacy of her parliament membership were questioned. According to Bruckner, multiculturalism in the Netherlands was 'the racism of anti-racism. It chains people to their roots'. As an example he mentioned the social-democratic mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen. Although Cohen does not call himself religious, since 2002 he has pointed out to the 'secularists' that followers of Islam and other religions have a 'moral agenda', which is sometimes at odds with a

number of more or less accepted customs in Dutch society. Cohen mentions certain views on alcohol and drug use, divorce, pornography, fraud, the commercialization of life, and relationships. According to Cohen the true dynamic power of religion can only be understood when we realize that religions offer their followers a perspective to a just or more just society. He thinks that when societies cannot offer that perspective in a different way, it is obvious that religions gain ground. The moral agenda of religions could also have an appeal to people who want to surmount the existential emptiness of a secular society.

In his vision on the meaning of religion for the integration of migrants in multicultural society, propagated in his speeches and publications, Cohen follows two tracks: he wants to maintain the secular state, but at the same time refuses to ignore the very things religion has to offer and does offer believers (Cohen, 2007). In the days following the murder of Van Gogh in Amsterdam, his approach has significantly contributed to the prevention of escalating unrest – there were no hate actions against Muslims. However, Bruckner reproaches Cohen for not dealing with orthodox Muslim groups even when they consciously discriminate women, for fear of disrupting social cohesion. According to Bruckner the choice for coexisting, small, separate communities each with their own values is not a sign of tolerance, but of intolerance. He says Western intellectuals, such as the Dutch-British author Ian Buruma, Timothy Garton Ash ('the apostle of multiculturalism'), and the Dutch bestseller author Geert Mak regard the flamboyant Ayaan Hirsi Ali as a satanic witch who engaged in a battle against a fundamentalist Islam, and do not realize that the emancipation of women is necessary for progress in Arab-Islamic societies.

Shocked Confidence as a Blessing for Opinion Journalism

The commotion and turmoil around Fortuyn, Van Gogh, and Hirsi Ali damaged the political stability the Dutch were so used to, but the shock therapy was a blessing for the public debate. Even outside the political domain, asylum policy became the subject of a broad social debate. The future of refugees who requested status in the Netherlands before stricter regulations went into effect on April 1st, 2001, and who have not been repatriated by programmes established by the third Balkenende Cabinet - formed on July 7th, 2006, a minority cabinet of the Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA - Christian Democrats) and the VVD - led to great political disruption and disagreement on a general pardon. Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk of the conservative VVD resigned on December 14th, 2006 in the outgoing cabinet after refusing to cooperate on a general pardon for a specific group of asylum seekers, which the new Parliament had demanded when they took office right after the elections in November 2006.

Looking back on the period from 2000 onwards, and specifically on the three Balkenende governments since 2002, there was repeatedly cause for a public debate on a multicultural, and therefore multireligious, society. This is one of the reasons why the public domain developed the need to reflect on religion, in particular on Islam and its relationship to Christianity, which is rooted deeply in Dutch society. As for daily

newspaper journalism, this interest exceeds the contributions of the editorial staff and external experts, and the growing number of reviews on books about religion in all its positive and negative aspects is striking. Publications of well-established authors on civil religion, secularization in Western Europe, globalization, and terrorist threats from Islam, religion and politics, etc., are reviewed and sometimes translated into Dutch (Heumakers, 2007). There is extra attention for television documentaries and debating shows on Islam and other monotheist religions in previews and recaps. Full-page articles by foreign experts are translated and printed. Columnists with and without a religious background or conviction have found a new source of inspiration in religion or the rejection of it.

To the credit of Dutch journalism, the discussion did not get stuck at the question whether or not the burqa and headscarves can be worn in public spaces and at work. News service and opinion making on non-Christian religions received a new impulse. Although the educational function of the general media in the past few decades faded more and more into the background, there was an occasional hint of educational aspiration. For example, on February 19th, 2007 the student's website of *NRC Handelsblad* newspaper launched a new digital theme paper on pdf format entitled 'Mystiek & Geloof' (Mysticism & Faith, www.nrc.nl/scholieren). Not only did it feature Hildegard von Bingen and other visionary mystics, but also religion, all kinds of superstition and rituals, such as druids and gothics.

Tolerance as a Result of the Age of Reason or of Religion?

The debate on Islam has had a remarkable side effect in Dutch journalism, for now religion is discussed from a broader and, specifically, more historic perspective. Dutch quality newspapers contain heated expert discussions on tolerance as a result of the Age of Reason and on the civilizing influence of its legacy on Christianity in the past two centuries. This closely pertains to the attention for the ratio between a basic right on freedom of speech and the basic right on freedom of religion. These basic rights are both embedded in the Dutch Constitution - regardless of merit - in articles 6 and 7 respectively. Article 1 of the Constitution concerns the anti-discrimination principles. It reads: 'Everyone who is in the Netherlands is treated equally in similar cases. Discrimination based on religion, life principles, political tendencies, race, sex or any other ground, is not permitted.'

Starting from this anti-discrimination article in the constitution, journalist Michiel Hegener proposed an ambitious and controversial government campaign. It should propagate the idea that the freedom of worship also means that others are not restricted in their freedom of religion and/or sense of meaning and purpose in life. This would mean that people can abandon their religion if they wanted to. In Hegener's opinion, the freedom of religion has too one-sidedly stuck to a commitment with the government: it should leave citizens more freedom in their choice of religion. As a consequence, the fact has been overlooked that citizens should not begrudge each other

that freedom. Hegener argues that Muslims do not allow anyone to abandon Islam (Hakkenes, 2007).

The liberal politician Atzo Nicolaï (VVD), first state secretary and later minister in the third Balkenende government, even pointed out the danger of self-censorship. Politicians should avail themselves of the freedom of speech, and not be afraid to express ideas that may shock, agitate and distress. Nicolaï (2007) regards freedom of speech as a basic right which 'precedes e.g. the freedom of religion' in democracy. Other opinion makers have seriously wondered if Jews, Christians and Muslims and other religious are not being favoured in Dutch jurisdiction. After all, the criminal code contains two articles in which believers are expressly protected against insults and blasphemy. Article 137c concerns the insulting of a group of people 'for their race, their religion or life principles, their heterosexual or homosexual tendency, or their physical, mental or intellectual disability'. Article 147 makes 'scornful blasphemy in a way that hurts religious feelings' punishable. This article also states that 'a servant of religion' (imam, priest, minister, et cetera) should not be ridiculed 'in the permitted observation of his duties.' This article 147 is a thorn in the flesh of libertarian intellectuals, including columnists and journalists. According to some jurists this anti-blasphemous article is incompatible with the principle of separation of church and state. However interesting, I will not dwell on this subject. In the legal world however, the subject of religion and basic rights is very topical indeed (Kooke, 2007; Buwalda et al., 2007).

According to authors who were assigned the most square inches in the newspapers, tolerance can only exist when there is no appeal to controversial religious arguments in political debates within or among societies. As soon as religion starts playing a role in politics, these authors see great danger. Do not bicker about the question who is right on religious matters, but live and let live from a cosmopolitic point of view, is the advice of Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006), the Ghanaian philosopher who works in the United States and delivered the Pierre Bayle speech in Rotterdam in 2006. Bart Tromp (2007), extraordinary professor in the theory and history of international relations at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, also thinks the acceptance of spiritual, religious or ethical pluralism is the sole basis for living side by side in a state system. He argues that Protestant church communities have implicitly taken over the principle of separation of church and state and that the Catholic church has done this explicitly. As long as Islam does not accept apostasy, this religion may pose problems.

Tromp pleaded for a sharp distinction between the fact that religion is a social phenomenon, and the notion that religion is good or useful from a social perspective. According to him, facts and values are mixed up too easily in the public debate. He also interceded for the 'advocates of atheism' in the debate on religions, since they only avail themselves of words and arguments. In Tromp's words: 'There are no atheists who want to ban plays and exhibitions and shut down churches, burn books and kill writers because they are offended in their holy atheism; there are no atheists who demand that true atheists wear atheist hats, caps or ties, only consume atheist food and drinks, and [want] people with different views to conform to these demands.' With his quip, Tromp

criticized Michaël Zeeman (2006), the (non-Catholic) Rome correspondent for *de Volkskrant*, who had a go at 'the moral intolerance of the new atheism.'

Early in 2007, in his weekly column in *Trouw*, J.A.A. van Doorn, retired professor of sociology (2007) signalled a shift from the elimination of religion as a political and social phenomenon toward a positive assessment of the moral and social functions of religion. This is in keeping with the means to advance social cohesion propagated by the mayor of Amsterdam. Van Doorn calls this pro-religion attitude 'racy', because '[t]he past few years an increased vigilance was proclaimed on the role of religion in the public domain.' The Nestor of Dutch columnists, J.L. Heldring (2006), linked this change without further ado to the rise of radical Islam; this had left the 'secular intellectuals', who had recently determined the contents and tone of the discourse on religious matters, 'speechless'. Had they not, Heldring wondered, become a bit old-fashioned?

Two Foreign Experts Participating in the Debate

In his Thomas More Lecture 2006, Jonathan Israel, professor of modern European history at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton Township, New Jersey, proposed a more detailed study of the Dutch Enlightenment tradition and its philosophers, such as Spinoza. This would provide a better understanding of the friction between freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and might prevent religious feelings or theological critics from influencing general and political culture. To Israel (2006), being able to speak one's mind is more important than being able to believe what one wants. With this view he provoked certain opinion makers in the weeks following his speech and its publication in the *NRC Handelsblad* on November 11th-12th, 2006 (see 'Opiniedossier' on nrc.nl/opinie), while others agreed with him. The American Dutchman James Kennedy, professor of contemporary history at the Vrije Universiteit (as of the academic year 2007/08 at the Universiteit van Amsterdam) criticized his colleague, who is internationally renowned for his knowledge of Dutch history during the age of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands – which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Kennedy (2006) argues that religion cannot be banished from public life by the collective will of secular thinkers. According to Kennedy, the 'up until recently remarkable freedom and tolerance in the Netherlands' are not the result of a philosophical programme, but a 'quest for a *modus vivendi* in a hopelessly pluriform society, which is sometimes illogical from a philosophical point of view', which was also the case after the German occupation (1940-1945) during World War II. Kennedy sees the solution in giving uniform rights to all people, including the right to the freedom of speech, even when this means that religion is publicly and fiercely criticized and may cause conflicts with religious groups who feel assaulted in their deepest convictions. According to Kennedy, history shows that traditional religions are not the only ones who suppress deviating opinions by ideological dogmatism or the litany of the majority. The adherents of enlightened philosophers would also be rather

good at it.

In her traditional Christmas speech in 2006, Queen Beatrix urged the public not to let the freedom of speech become a non-existent right to insult. ‘Each word’, the queen said, ‘should be prepared for a reply. Boundaries are laid down in a law which provides rules based on equality and rights for everyone.’ (X, 2006). Media response showed that the queen had touched a raw nerve of the Dutch soul with her speech. Tolerance for other cultures and lifestyles, as well as respect for the diversity of religions, should not lead to smothering the debate just to spare religious sensitivities with certain believers.

Especially journalists, scholars and other society watchers knew no limits in their statements. They emphasized the importance of the free word in every possible way, also when it came to religious matters. Tolerance was not a purpose in itself, not a value that would make all others redundant.

To most Dutch, faith is still an important part of their identity. And faith is not just about religion. According to the columnist Bas Heijne, all discussions of the past few years about political, cultural, and social issues, have their origin in ‘faith which is deemed to be the truth’. ‘Islam, the integration debate, the rediscovery of the Dutch identity, the canon [of important events in Dutch history], the massive rejection of the European constitution – each time it is about the need for an individual, marked identity and the dangers flowing from such a need – religious zealotism, claustrophobic provincialism, out and out racism, or the paranoid rhetoric of the heroes of the free word.’ (Heijne, 2006). The quote is a controversially formulated typification of the tendency towards group thinking and a persuasive propagation of the very thing the Dutch consider sacrosanct. It may be explained from the historic tension between the need for uniqueness and independence of ideologically different sections of the population on the one hand, and on the other hand the necessity of a joint attitude and openness towards the rest of the world, which is so overwhelming for this small country. Another columnist, Anet Bleich (2007), very concisely summarizes the mission of the Dutch society under the given circumstances: ‘In the near future, it’s all about breaking insular thinking and entrenchment [behind the dikes], creating a new political consensus on the Netherlands as an open, tolerant, internationally oriented country.’

National Identity and the Perception of Religions

Before going into the Dutch identity concerning religion, it might be good to look at the European dimensions of this theme. Also – or maybe even in particular – in the European context, the question rises which identity the various European membership states have and if they are being perceived as such by the population. Religion increasingly presents itself as one of the determining factors. For example, the Dutch media did not fail to notice that the European Committee suggested the introduction of a religious code on 6 February 2006, i.e. a code of conduct for the mass media concerning publications on religious issues susceptible to agitation among religious

groups. This proposal was prompted by the cartoon riots of late 2005 and early 2006, after several newspapers and magazines had decided to print a number of controversial cartoons about Mohammed, with freedom of speech as their starting point.

In September 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* had asked 40 cartoonists to draw cartoons in which Mohammed was depicted. The Danish writer Kåre Bluitgen had had great difficulty to find an illustrator for his children's book *Koranen og profeten Muhammeds liv* (Koran and the Life of the Prophet Mohammed). On September 30th, 2005 the *Jyllands-Posten* published twelve images of Mohammed as illustrations of an article on self-censorship and freedom of speech. Late in 2005 and early in 2006, some time after the publication in the Danish newspaper, several Muslim countries reacted to the publication with violence. Out of sympathy for the Danish newspaper and as a protest against self-censorship and the gag on the press, a total of 143 newspapers in 56 countries, including eight Muslim countries, decided to publish some of the controversial cartoons. In Brussels the commotion resulted in the idea to introduce a religious code for journalists. It met with so much resistance that it was quickly rejected. However, the concept of a 'religious code' did end up in the Dutch language (Sanders, 2006). The fact that the executive committee of the European Union of all organizations had at least made the impression of calling for a form of self-censorship which led to criticism in circles of politicians, legal specialists and journalists.

The Birth of the Republic of the United Netherlands

The murder of Pim Fortuyn in 2002, followed by the murder of Theo van Gogh more than two years later, accelerated the debate on the identity of the Dutch society. The conduct of the politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali as an advocate of modern Muslimas and her controversial naturalization, followed in 2006 by her leave for the United States, redirected the media's attention to the strained integration process of refugees and other foreigners in Dutch society. The colonial past and the adherent Dutch involvement in slave trade had clouded the representation of the efforts of Dutch politicians to make headway with the multicultural and multireligious society. To gain an insight in the way in which the society of the present kingdom functions, some knowledge is required of the genesis of the Republic of the United Netherlands in the second half of the 16th century.

The components of the national identity are usually: national consciousness of the population, the ethnic situation, cultural life and the religious map. In the 16th century, the Reformation ended the Christian unity of medieval Europe. This resulted in fierce religious wars, which lasted until 1648. The Protestant minority was persecuted in countries with a Catholic monarch and put under severe pressure. The way in which the various European countries developed during the centuries following the onset of the Reformation varies highly. The struggle for independence against Spain in what are now the Netherlands, resulted in a republic with a Protestant signature. (Van Deursen, 2006)

In the Spanish Netherlands, the oppression of Protestantism and other discontents resulted in a massive revolt against King Philip II of Spain. The Northern provinces and a number of Southern-Dutch cities decided to continue their battle against Spain together. On 23 January 1579 they signed an agreement called the Unie van Utrecht. Article 13 of this treaty established that no one could be persecuted for their religion. Practise however proved to be harsher than theory: in the 17th and 18th century, Catholics and Remonstrants seceded from the Reformed church were hindered in their religious practise. They did not adhere to the true faith and therefore were excluded from public posts. Thus, the officially proclaimed religious tolerance was impaired in daily practice, but a limited freedom of religious practise could be negotiated.

The independent Republic came into view earlier than could be expected in 1579. On July 26th, 1581 the States General issued a well-founded statement that Philip II was no longer Lord of the Netherlands, the ‘Abjuration,’ which is known as the ‘Plakkaat van Verlatinghe’. The States General of the United Netherlands acted from a decree of ‘Verlatinghe’ (abandonment), which had been renounced by the deputies of Brabant, Gelre and Zutphen, Vlaanderen, Friesland, Holland, Zeeland, Overijssel, and Mechelen. The rift between the Northern and Southern provinces progressed in the subsequent years. At the same time more distance was created with the central Spanish regime by not appointing any more new governors. In 1588 the States General of the seven Northern provinces decided to fully continue on their own authority, and the Republic of the Seven United Provinces was a fact. However, this sealed the political dominance of one religion, the Reformed, and Catholics were degraded to second-hand citizens.

For the area known as the Netherlands today, the Peace of Münster, negotiated in 1648, meant that Reformed and Catholic inhabitants of the Republic of the United Netherlands had to come to some sort of coexistence. Until 1795 the Catholics came off worst. Till far into the 19th century they had to make extra efforts to show that they were trustworthy and loyal citizens of the kingdom established in 1815. For their self-respect it was significant that they got back their own bishops in 1853 and were no longer considered as a mission country by Rome. From a social point of view, the Catholics had a lot of catching up to do. That they succeeded in this can be explained by the way in which they participated in and contributed to the development of the Dutch nation. Just like the emotionally charged word ‘apartheid’, the Dutch have produced the equally untranslatable twin concepts of ‘verzuiling’ and ‘ontzuiling’ - in this sense, there is a similarity between the word pillarization and the word apartheid, which denotes the racial segregation policy in the Republic of South Africa until 1991.

In the age of *verzuiling* [literally ‘pillarization’], Catholics, Protestants, social democrats and also – nolens volens, so more or less against their will – liberals tried to reinforce their own identity by choosing their own newspapers, magazines, broadcasting companies, schools, trade unions, political parties, universities, etc. On the other hand the elite of the various ‘pillars’ were prepared to cooperate in a social sphere, particularly in politics. This led to the concept dubbed ‘pacification democracy’ by the Dutch American Arend Lijphart (1979). This means the willingness to work closely together on a high political level to serve the general purpose, despite

ideological separation at the basis of various parts of the population – in varying coalitions and without violating their own principles. From that point of view, pillarization and pacification are two sides to the same medal. In the school funding controversy and the battle for universal suffrage, this strategy had proved successful.

Pillarization ('Verzuiling') as an Example for Muslims?

Job Cohen, the secular mayor of Amsterdam mentioned before, is no longer alone in his opinion that religion can boost social cohesion and, with it, the integration of Muslims. After initial scepticism and even rejection of this view in the media, Cohen gets more and more support from politicians, social scientists and public opinion watchers who participate in the public debate on the most desirable development of the multicultural and multireligious society. Some of them regard the tendency of Islamic organizations to establish their own 'pillar', not only with mosques, but also Islamic schools, universities, football clubs, political parties, etc., as an opportunity for social emancipation of Muslims living in the Netherlands. Within a few generations they would be able to integrate into society from their own pillar. This process of pillarization could in the long run turn into a process of depillarization. In the columns he wrote for *de Volkskrant* for years, Kees Schuyt (2006), professor of sociology and legal expert, also renowned in managerial and governmental circles, pointed out the religious pluriformity in Dutch society at the time of the pillarization. According to him, criticism within a pillar against other groups did not seriously jeopardize religious tolerance. Political cooperation with respect for each others' religious convictions remained possible. Precisely this respect e.g. for Islam has started to disappear in the depillarized Netherlands, causing religious dividing lines in society to become visible again. The indifference toward religions has turned into curiosity about or aversion to religion, also influenced by the fact that journalists and programme makers have rediscovered religious themes.

From about 1870 to 1960, pillarization rooted Catholics, the Reformed, and the social democrats socially, culturally, and politically in Dutch society. Then came decades of depillarization, although pillars can still be detected in education, the formation of political parties, and the media. The way in which civil society organizes itself socially, politically, ideologically and culturally, between the state on the one hand and the market on the other hand, also bears the signs of pillarization. The concept of pillarization is typical of the Netherlands (and in a way also of Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland).

In the pillarization era, Catholics and Reformed joined forces in the 'school funding' controversy. Both segments of the population were against neutral (public) education, but fought for the right to Catholic or Reformed ('special') primary schools, albeit with the same financial support from the government which public education received. In the constitutional revision of 1917, the financial equalization for primary education was established and provided for legally in 1920. Based on this financial principle of equalization, which by now holds for all levels of education, Islamic

schools can be established as well. However, they should meet certain quality standards. A pressing matter is whether the establishment of more and more Islamic schools is favourable to the integration or whether mixed schools are preferable. On November 10th, 2006 the country's largest newspaper, *De Telegraaf* (liberal-conservative), published the responses from participants of the feature 'Proposition of the Day' to the following proposition: 'Freedom of education based on ideological denomination hampers the integration of immigrants. Of all respondents, 41 percent answered 'yes', and 55 percent 'no'. No less than 69 percent of the respondents to the Proposition of the Day thought that freedom of education suits a modern, multicultural society. Furthermore, 49 percent think that religious instruction in all schools, including public schools, is conceivable, provided that broad attention is given to a wide variety of religions. A majority of the participants (57 percent) think compulsory religious instruction is a bad thing and contrary to article 23 of the constitution, which regulates the freedom of education (Hiskemuller, 2006). The article was illustrated with a picture from 2002 in which the archbishop of Utrecht, Adrianus Cardinal Simonis, teaches religion at a secondary school.

In the 'roaring sixties', radical mental changes set in motion the process of depillarization, which ended nearly a century of pillarization (De Rooy, 1997). Dutchmen who were better educated and earned more money wanted to be considered as independent citizens. They grew annoyed by slavish obedience, no longer needed political and traditional religious leaders, and turned from institutions which were associated with pillars, including church communities. Both the religious and political sphere started to show signs of polarization. The readiness to aim at a political consensus was subjected to great pressure in the 1970s, because it would cause social discrepancies to be smoothed over at the cost of the underprivileged. Only in the 1980s and '90s, compromise democracy came in the picture again, mainly under the influence of unemployment resulting from economic recession. In the whole of Europe it was established that this 'poldermodel' played an important role in the economic revival between 1993 and 2002.

Religion as a Controversial Factor of National Identity

Not accidentally, a new assembly took place on January 23rd, 2007 at the very spot where the Unie van Utrecht was sealed, with the signing of a declaration. In the presence of Queen Beatrix, representatives of the main religious and ideological movements in the Netherlands signed a joined declaration of mutual respect. It states that no religion or ideology can incite to or threaten with violence or discrimination against dissenters. The first thirteen signatories belonged to Roman Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Hinduist, Jewish, Islamic and Humanist Church congregations or organizations. Only one day later, over three hundred organizations and individuals had expressed their support to the declaration through a website called www.invrijheidverbonden.nl. This was widely covered in the media.

Elsbeth Etty (2007) of the *NRC Handelsblad*, a columnist with little or no feeling

for religion, but with a keen perception, wrote a condescending article entitled ‘Policy Along the Lines of Religion’ about the ‘assembly of a cardinal, some ministers, pandits, rabbis, imams, a Buddhist monk and one woman who probably represented humanism’. She thought the commemoration of the Unie van Utrecht, attended by the queen, somewhat resembled a ‘super-fashionable catwalk full of colourful gowns’. But it could also be regarded as a ‘Bruegelesque carnival celebration’. She is right however in her criticism of the referral to the Unie van Utrecht of 1597, which roots in the thought that religious freedom did not come about until over 200 years after the Unie. The notion of looking for historic parallels as a foundation for the religious pacification between Christians and Muslims in the Netherlands in particular, is rather far-fetched. The theme of the third ‘Week of History’ in 2006 (Week van de Geschiedenis, 2006) was ‘Religion and Superstition’. Yet for the special issue published for the occasion, this broad theme was restricted to ‘Faith and Conflict’ (Geloof en conflict). Etty – and other opinion makers – think the ‘pious, sugary, and obligatory concordance among religious leaders on mutual tolerance indicates the ambition to gain more religious influence on government policy’.

Secularization: Not Strictly a Dutch Phenomenon

In discussions on the national identity of separate European countries, the factor of religion cannot be ignored. Half the Dutch population call themselves religious, though only a quarter of them have affinities with the church. Of the British, 63 percent call themselves non-religious, including half the people who do call themselves Christian. In France, only one out of two people say they are Catholic. Of these Catholics, only 8 percent go to church on a regular basis. One out of three Frenchmen say they are ‘without religion’ and 4 percent consider themselves to be Christian, though not tied to a church. Only 3 percent of the French are Protestant, so the image of France as a Catholic country persists. In the political discourse the separation of church and state, which was gained after a heavy fight in 1905, is so prominent that God is preferably left undiscussed. Yet the French correspondent of *de Volkskrant* remarked: ‘The slumbering Catholic character of the French elite erupted in the media at the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005. For days news broadcasts spent at least 15 minutes a day on the subject, while conservative newspapers like *Le Figaro* filled no less than seven pages a day with news from Rome. An overkill, one could say in retrospect, considering the latest figures on the gradually declining interest of the French in Mother Church.’ (Obbema, 2007).

According to the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP, Social and Cultural Planning Bureau), the Dutch go to church less frequently, but do not ignore religion. Catholics are less eager to ‘deregister’ from their church than Protestants. Even when they no longer go to church, they retain their affinity with the Catholic culture, which is averse to strict Calvinism. Protestants decide more consciously and out of principle whether or not they want to be a member of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (Protestantse Kerk in Nederland: PKN) or a more conservative church. Out of the 5

million Catholics, only 350.000 still go to church. For the two million PKN Protestants, this number is half a million. Also, an increasing number of people are choosing for the optimistic, positive sides of religion: faith in human possibilities, the significance of prayer, and the afterlife. These 'alternative believers' are probably no less socially motivated than traditional churchgoers, is the opinion of the advisory planning bureau SCP of the government. Moreover, secularization does not appear to result in less commitment to society. The declining number of churchgoers is evened out by the fact that higher educated people with good salaries are basically prepared to do volunteer work, and occasionally donate to charity. Dutch society is inconceivable without the phenomenon of volunteer work. Even church communities are fully dependent on donations because of the absence of church taxes, and the dedication of volunteers is the main driving force of thriving church committees. Positive research results of the SCP led to the headline 'Seriously, A Lot Is Going Well In This Country' (N.N., 2006).

In the mass media, the thought is gaining ground that in the past few decades – i.e. the age of depillarization – traditional devotion in the Netherlands is declining steadily, but that the Dutch keep on labelling themselves as religious, and are not as sensitive to atheism. The religiousness of today no longer resembles that of fifty years or longer ago. Or as Cardinal Simonis, chairman of the Bishop's Conference of the Roman Catholic Church Society in the Netherlands put it: 'In the Netherlands, God is like a general out of service and without an army', but 'In the Netherlands, God is far from retired'. He thinks that in spite of the growing secularization, there appears to be a need for cultural, spiritual and religious reorientation – both within the church and in a broader context of a secular and individualized society. 'People are not just searching for religious and spiritual realization in various ways outside the church. Within the church there is also great pluriformity. Religious convictions are being individualized to a high degree. Everyone customizes their faith according to their personal taste, in spite of the resistance of religious traditions, theological insights or church doctrine.' (Simonis, 2006) This article will show that not only the one Dutch cardinal, but also journalists from newspapers and magazines take into account a comeback of religion, though not in an institutional (church) context, but rather in the form of a certain view of life and lifestyle.

Debate on Faith in the Public Domain

The last media hype in the Netherlands that will be discussed in this article was sparked off by the question whether the government, in spite of the separation of church and state, can further the interest for religious and ideological issues. On December 19th, 2006 a 'survey' was published by the Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR: Scientific Council for Government Policy), which was established in 1972 and earned a lot of prestige over the past few decades. This voluminous publication, entitled *Geloven in het publieke domein* (Faith in the Public Domain, see: www.wrr.nl), served as a catalyst for well-balanced views, but also for

tendentious articles in the newspapers. The discussion focused on the question whether more attention to religion and issues of meaning and purpose in life from the government will benefit (the development of) responsible citizenship. Religion is no longer considered as a vanishing phenomenon, a suspicious marginal phenomenon in a secularized society, but as a dynamic force wielding inspiration and tolerance. In this vision, religion is no longer exclusively church bound, nor is it connected to the number of churchgoers or church communities or the development of church attendance. Attention focuses on the various forms of spirituality connected to certain lifestyles people perceive as meaningful.

The two authors mentioned in the introduction of this article, Drayer and Vroom, reacted to the WRR study. It mobilized supporters and opponents of religion in the public and political domain, who based their often polemic contributions to opinion making on the survey. Those who want to reduce religion to a purely individual affair were confronted with an awkward observation of the WRR: without a religious or humanist view of life, the Dutch would be impartial to ethics. According to the WRR these 'outsiders' accounted for a quarter of the population. Apparently, there was a connection between good citizenship and social bonding on the one hand and an ethical or religious view of life on the other. Therefore, the WRR pleads for more attention to religion and sense of meaning, also by the government, as it will re-establish and reinforce citizenship. Just like humanists, independent 'spirituals', the free-floating individuals who think that each and every one should find their own truth, would be losing their hold on society. In reaching the outsiders, the WRR sees no great role for the churches, since their attitude is too cognitive and they do not know how to find the way to people's hearts. An exception are the American-style evangelicals, such as a particular group of the Vrije Baptisten (Free Baptists) in Drachten (Dros, 2006).

Although the survey of the WRR, conducted with twenty experts, may not be an official advice to the government – a report with policy recommendations will follow in 2007 –, right after publication it got a remarkable amount of attention in debating programmes on television and led to piles of publications in newspapers and newsmagazines. In the debate some chose the side of the WRR, because they think the principle of the separation of church and state no longer has to result in absolute forbearance of religious matters by the state. According to professor Vroom, who was quoted earlier, opinions on what makes a 'good citizen' are not neutral. Neither does he think they find their origin in the ideals of prosperity and personal freedom that were so strongly emphasized in the past few decades. Vroom thinks Christianity, humanism and the Age of Reason made a mark on them as well. In their response to the negative publication in the newspaper *Trouw*, the WRR emphasized that the separation of church and state does not mean that the government is 'neutral' or that politics and religion are not allowed to have anything to do with each other. When groups of civilians keep their backs turned to society, they might be persuaded to a different attitude on the basis of democratically established rules. For example civilians might be expected not to use violence, to respect freedom and take responsibility for others to secure human dignity (Van de Donk and Jonkers, 2007). Van de Donk, the chairman of the WRR, who is also professor of public administration at the Universiteit van

Tilburg, is intent on proving that religion is indeed very important, even in an apparently secularized country like the Netherlands. He says his council, which can be regarded as a ‘think tank’, are ‘in the luxurious position of not being caught in the spasms of public opinion, as opposed to some politicians or media’. Van de Donk considers the cultural crisis in which Dutch society now finds itself to be one of the causes for the revival of religion, not – as in old times – in the shape of a ‘regulation system’ which lays down what people should and shouldn’t do, but as a source of ‘good advice.’ (Zonderop, 2006).

The place of religion – whatever its shape – in the public domain of the multicultural and multireligious society will be one of the subjects which will continue to score points on the political agenda, and therefore on the agenda of the media. For example, on 3 February 2007 *Trouw* published a section entitled ‘Zonder geloof gaan we niet verloren’ (‘Without Faith We Won’t Be Lost’). In it, two historians, Amanda Kluveld and Rozemarijn Schalkx (2007) defend the right to a ‘meaningless’ existence, Jabik Veenbaas (2007) consults the ‘deeply religious Enlightenment thinker’ Immanuel Kant, and Karin Melis (2007) uses the power of argument to point out that the WRR survey does not prove what sense of meaning is and what that sense of meaning truly implies. To illustrate how important the longing for spirituality really is to silence the distress of the soul, Melis refers to the excessively successful glossy magazine *Happinez* (subtitled ‘Mindstyle magazine’) which, established in 2003, saw its edition rise to 155.000 copies within four years.

The Start of the Fourth Balkenende Government

The discussion on desirable and undesirable recommendations based on the WRR publication will continue under the fourth Balkenende government, which was installed on 22 February 2007 after a difficult, 91-day cabinet formation. A political compromise was reached on controversial issues which will come up over the next four years of this cabinet term. All themes mentioned in this article will be dealt with. The community spirit of Amitai Etzioni is an important source of inspiration to prime minister Balkenende. This American sociologist and communal philosopher, who also advised Tony Blair, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, wrote in a Dutch newspaper how much he admires the way in which Balkenende succeeded in drawing ethical matters into the policy debate – the so-called ‘norms and values’ (‘normen en waarden’). Etzioni’s communal movement arose in the early 1990s in the United States as a reaction to conservative organizations, which tried to reverse the ‘deterioration of morals’ by exerting pressure on the White House. They demanded that schools teach conservative religious values. Etzioni worked for the Democrat presidents Carter and Clinton at the time. He broke the prevailing taboo in progressive circles that ethics should not play a role in the public domain. Etzioni considers a nation not only as a state, but rather as a community, a community with an ethical culture, which entails moral values playing a role in public life. Etzioni was born in Germany in 1929. His Jewish family is part German, part Dutch (Meeus, 2007).

In retrospect, the harsh neoliberal market-oriented mentality enforced by Dutch politics in 1994, was too easily acclaimed by political journalists rather than followed with a critical eye. They moved too far towards their opponents: the politicians. Things will change now. Since the establishment of the fourth Balkenende government, the political situation in the Netherlands offers a good breeding ground for the implementation of ideas on community spirit, issues of meaning, and a reconsideration of some ethical issues. Each initiative in any of these areas by this government will reignite the media debate. Because of the new coalition agreement one fears social conservatism and insufficient awareness of the benefits of individualism. The party factions of Christen Democraten Appèl (CDA, Christian), Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA, Social Democratic Labour Party), and ChristenUnie (CU, orthodox-Christian Union) gave their blessing to the cabinet foundation agreement entitled 'Samen werken, samen leven' (working together, living together). A majority of Dutch journalists received the agreement as a 'patronising' but balanced mixture of Christian values and economic progress as seen by CDA leader Jan Peter Balkenende, combined with the social ingredients of PvdA leader Wouter Bos and his party. The 53-page publication of the agreement, in which the influence of the Christian ideology at the heart of both CDA and CU is evident, shows a new emphasis on social cohesion, values education, family life, and mutual respect. CU leader André Rouvoet is now the first Minister of Youth and Family in the parliamentary history of the Netherlands. The moral side to certain medical issues has been included in the agreement at the insistence of the ChristenUnie, a traditional opponent of legalized gay marriage, abortion and euthanasia. None of these rights are to be changed or limited, but the CU has successfully lobbied for the right of individual civil servants to refuse the performance of gay weddings – gay marriage has been possible since 2001. Furthermore, the CU has secured funding for the promotion of alternatives to abortion and assisted suicide during mandatory waiting periods. According to several polls, a majority of the Dutch public reacted positively to the agreement. Bos and Rouvoet both became vice prime minister and minister. Bos took on the Finance portfolio.

Conclusion

The comeback of religion and issues of meaning and purpose in life in journalism is evident from the fact that some national newspapers could be used as an important source for this article. Causes for this revival have mainly been mapped out with a contextual approach, but a final explanation cannot be given (yet). For when it comes to religion and view of life, 'something' has happened in the hearts and minds of the Dutch as well. This contribution may be a challenge to analyse, if and in which way religion in its many appearances occupies Dutch newspaper and magazine readers, television watchers, in short, 'media consumers.' In any case, results from religious-sociological and religious-psychological research show that more than half of the Dutch are not yet finished with religion. Likewise, churches as representatives of civil society still play a role as religious or ethical institutions in the social midfield, even

though church attendance has dropped significantly.

An important gain of the revived debating culture in recent years is the acknowledgement that the core values of democratic society ask for an intensive and permanent debate on who we are and who we want to be. In a critical review of the coalition agreement of the present coalition partners, the left-liberal sociologist and publicist Dick Pels (2007) wrote: ‘So it is not so much the ethic consensus, but rather the lack of it, and the will to keep on talking about it with each other, which binds us as democratic civilians. One of the things that keeps things together [a hint at Job Cohen’s words and approach] is the difference in opinion about what does keep us together. In that respect it’s rather a civilized way to ‘endure’ disagreements than to permanently overcome them.’ Others comment that it is not about strengthening the community in a city, neighbourhood, or village (‘bonding’), but about broadening and strengthening the limited networks by connecting various groups, which will result in ‘bridging.’ The fear of the combination of ‘Christian patronizing’ and ‘social state paternalism’ of the new government keeps politicians of the opposition, journalists, and scientists who take part in the public debate, on their toes. Journalists occupy a special position in this respect, because as gatekeepers they can also give others a platform, by which the opinion making does not restrict itself to the publishing elite. Examples are prominent Dutchmen who shed light on political policy plans (Oosterbaan, 2007).

It is extremely important that newspapers are open to the public debate. On the opinion pages of *de Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, and the *NRC Handelsblad* there is no lack of a lively, fair, and sometimes in-depth discussion on the issues that really matter in the Netherlands at the moment. The newspapers mentioned have introduced special sections to offer a bigger platform to the public debate on topical issues. For *Trouw* these are ‘Letter & Geest’ (Letter and Spirit) and ‘de Verdieping’, (The Deepening), in *de Volkskrant* ‘Het Betoog’ (The Argument) and in *NRC Handelsblad* ‘Opinie & Debat’ (Opinion & Debate). This last section bears the well chosen subtitle ‘Podium voor argumenten, ideeën en levensbeschouwing’ (Platform for arguments, ideas, and view of life).

The revival of the interest in religion and ideology is not just about initiatives in the field of journalism. A striking example was the ‘Week of history’ with the theme of ‘Faith and Conflict’. (Week van de geschiedenis, 2006) Together with a publisher of schoolbooks, *NRC Handelsblad* developed the project already mentioned, ‘Mysticism and Religion’. Educational initiatives for adults take place in debating evenings, lecture cycles and joined neighbourhood activities with natives and foreigners. On a local level religious communities respond well to the revived interest in religion in the multicultural and multireligious society. However, it is regrettable that church leaders and the church communities united in the oecumenical Raad van Kerken (Church Council) hardly take part in such a topical public debate. Apparently it is so hard for churches to speak out on burning issues, that they rather keep silent. Despite the understandable risks for churches and their leaders that ensue from a public debate, this spiral of silence is a regrettable attitude.

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In Celebration

Fr Franz Josef-Eiler's life is a rich tapestry of wisdom, experience and commitment. The accolades articulated within the pages of this *Festschrift* is a testimonial regarding the deep admiration and respect of all those who have been privileged to be woven into the fabric of his life. Eiler's life-long contributions have provided us with resources to maintain communities of discourse concerning the importance and meaning of social communications for the internal and external life of the Church. It has been stated that the growth of any craft depends on shared practice and honest dialogue among the people who do it. This Eilers has accomplished by creating a continuing conversation about that which has most mattered to him throughout his life. His integrity, consistency and commitment provide for us a portrait of a man who stayed the course of coherence between his method and himself. This is most recently reflected in a paper he prepared for the Gregorian University (Rome 2007), as he wrote:

“Despite technical developments it will always *be people* who are to be responsible and finally determine the content and use of different communications means. This holds as well for the “production” side as for the recipients. On the one hand, we have to encourage creativity and ideas in developing *human and Christian messages*. On the other hand, also the recipients have to be enabled to use the offers of the communications “industry” in such a way that they support the *growth of persons and human communities*.”

His life and works seamlessly challenge each one of us toward this vision of the ‘growth of persons and human communities’ as the focus of all social communications within the Church and cultures. He accomplishes this task by his tireless and prolific writings, lectures and conversations around the world. He has become a mentor for many of us evoking something great in us and keeping the vision of which he is passionate about alive in us and for future generations.

Eilers' life is the horizontal threads of a weaving that holds the conversation true to its projected form. He is the ground from which each contributor to this *Festschrift* has been touched through the years. We have discovered that each chapter is a varicolored weft thread complementing and deepening the character, wisdom, insight and experiences that Eilers has nurtured and shared with each personal encounter. The tapestry is not finished. It continues to unfold as new ideas radiate from the mind and heart of Fr Eilers.

There is no doubt that Eilers' work is the ground for future generations. He has demonstrated the capacity to awaken a truth within us, a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling the impact that his life and works have and will continue to have on all those who seek to explore the prophetic mission of social communications in and

for the Church, as well as for the development of justice and peace for all people. It is left to present and future generations to cultivate their minds, hearts and praxis for enriching and complimenting the development of the tapestry begun by Eilers dynamism, wonder and inquisitive mind.

In celebration, it is with appreciation and gratitude we recognize and celebrate an outstanding priest, friend and colleague – Fr Franz-Josef-Eilers, SVD, PhD.

Helmuth Rolfes and Angela Ann Zukowski

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All the contributors to this work are related to Franz-Josef Eilers in a special way: as scholars, companions and friends, some are his disciples, others share his work for the support of Social Communications in the theology and ministry of the church with Eilers in many projects. They all agree that estimation of Eilers' work and their feelings of respect and friendship towards him.

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