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Hindu *Sanatan Dharma* and Digital Media Adaptation in South Asia

Binod C. Agrawal

Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the floodgates of 'digital media and religion' has swamped the western world in an unprecedented way. The digital war of religion has attracted Christian and Jewish scholars. It has been followed by Islamic scholars and followers having political overtones. In the recent past, some efforts have been made to discuss and debate Asian religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism (see Agrawal 2015a, 2015b; Eilers and Vu 2016). However, given the size of Hindu and Buddhist and a small Jain population, research studies on these religions remained minuscule.

The 2010 report of the New York based Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is a testimony of such assertion where there was no explicit mention of Asian religions in the debate. The SSRC report raised an important issue as to how digital media are influencing, shaping and reshaping religion globally. Six scholars of religion belonging to different fields of Social Sciences responded this issue in the report. In the said report, Campbell argued "More than reshaping the practice of religion, I would argue that the uptake of new media by religious practitioners and the resulting forms of online religion point to larger cultural shifts at work in the practice and perception of religion in society. New media tools support networked forms of community, encourage experimentation with religious identity-construction and self-presentation, and promote drawing from multiple and divergent religious sources and encounters simultaneously."

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Within three years, a much broader picture of digital media and religion emerged in an edited volume by Campbell (2013) where she included Buddhism and Hindu religions and broadened the understanding of religious practices in the digital media world. Still, there is a relatively dearth number of Asian resligions. For the purpose of discussion in this paper the term digital media has been conceived as "an electro-mechanical device having power and ability to store, view, create, distribute, modify, read and reproduce information in a variety of forms" (Agrawal 2015: 75).

Aim

The paper aims: (a) to describe and discuss *Sanatan Dharma* (popularly described as Hindu religion in the Western world especially propagated by the British colonial rulers) in global perspective; (b) the likely influence of digital media among Hindus who are spread across world though the largest number of about a billion Hindu live in India; and (c) to draw tentative conclusions about the likely influences and implications of digital media on the Hindu religion.

Global Hindu Presence

In an edited volume on caste, Schwartz (1967) reported about Hindus living in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Suriname, Fiji, South Africa and East Africa. These overseas Hindus were drafted as indentured labors who were largely unskilled men forced by the British colonial rulers to work as agricultural laborers on sugar plantation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In addition, the Hindu had lived in other Asian counties much earlier that included Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia to mention few. After India's independence in 1947 and its eventual partition into India and Pakistan, a new wave of Hindu migration took place to the west. After the communication revolution, a new wave of continuous migration of skilled Hindu information technology professionals to Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States has been anabatedly taking place. In parallel, unskilled workers have been regularly migrating from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan to these countries in search of work.

Oral Tradition in *Sanatan Dharma*

A Hindu, by and large, follows a method of oral communication in the religious practices who has no single founder or prophet and religious text (Radhakrishnan, 1968). Hence, there are multiple Hindu oral traditions of religious practices. Within oral communication, the *Sanatan Dharma* is practiced as *Parampara* loosely translated as "age old practice or tradition." *Sanatan Dharma* is based on *Vishwash* (translated as faith or belief). An individual Hindu identifies as belonging to a given *Sampradaya* (sect). In addition, a Hindu identifies him/herself as a member of an original linguistic region, sect and *Jati* (caste) within India or wherever they reside in the world.

The most important characteristics of *Sanatan Dharma* are its continuity and improvisation of the ritual practices with or without the assistance of priests or ritual specialists. The rituals and sacrifices could be performed anywhere as an annual or periodic or family or individual celebration orally prescribed and calculated as sacred *muhurt* or precise time or duration with the help of the Hindu calendar (Agrawal 1980: 34-42). It should be mentioned in passing that dispute often takes place on the date and time of ritual performances due to disagreements among the ritual specialists and method of calculation of *muhurt* or precise time or duration of ritual based on planetary positions.

Religious Belief

One of the most important beliefs in *Sanatan Dharma* is the concept of transmigration of the 'in-destructible,' 'un-flammable' and 'non-wet able' *Atma* (the soul of the living being) and its perennial bond with *Parmatma* (the supreme soul of god). Followers of *Sanatan Dharma* believe that there is an unending cycle of birth and death based on the deeds of the previous life of the individual *Atma.* So in order to break the cycle, the performance of good deeds is essential and required to achieve *Moksha* (ultimate salvation of *Atma* is to break away from the unending cycle of birth and death). *Moksha* can be achieved by doing good deeds in the present human life that allows *Moksha* or merger of *Atma* with *Parmatma* putting an end to the unending life cycle of death and birth (Mathur 1964).

It is believed that gods and goddesses also appear on earth as *Avtar* (human like beings on the earth) from time to time to reduce human suffering and for the destruction of prevailing evil and sinful activities on

earth. In this respect, the transmigration of soul, as one of the fundamental beliefs of *Sanatan Dharma* prevails in the Hindu psyche. The concept of transmigration of the soul is often used to provide "rational" explanation of human misery and misfortune on the earth.

The concept of the transmigration of the soul has multiple manifestations and representations in the expressive cultures, visual, musical and art forms in *Santana Dharma*. "In the multilingual composite civilization of India Sanskrit, apart from Tamil and many other languages, continue to be language of literary transmission of sacred knowledge and sacred literature. In Sanskrit it is largely as *Shruti* (oral recitation of scared text from memory over and over again spanning some time several centuries without any alteration), *Smriti* (oral social commentary recitations of prescriptive social conduct that should direct and regulate day-to-day individual and collective behavior in community and society) and *Shashtra* (codification of selected and well tested oral sacred recitations both in oral and written form sometimes spanning over several centuries emerging from the human memory, experience and deliberations)… The oral method of communication remained an integral part of civilization of India. The present day Asian civilizations are no exception in this respect where improvisation of 'oral' communications continue to be the most accepted, dominant, and trusted means and methods of exchange of information, knowledge and views in various domains of human experiences and accumulated wisdom without altering the aim and intend of communication" (Agrawal 2017:3). In the day-to-day oral discourse and discussion on the concept of *Atama* and *Parmatama* and their individual relationships is discussed in various forums in several social strata of the composite multi-lingual civilization of India. The quest to answer the question of human self and god continues.

In *Sanatan Dharma,* live story enactment of various incarnations of gods and goddesses are common and regular feature. Theatrical performances are carried out by "actors" and "actress" who remain in state of "liminality" during the period of festivity and hence are treated as incarnation of god or goddess (Kottak, 2006: 267-268). Such a performance has been in vogue for several millennia in the sub-continent of India and elsewhere in Asia. Hence, it is the author's contention that 'self-expression' through visual medium of television will receive special attention in S*anatan Dharma*.

Growing Acceptance of Digital Media

There is a growing acceptance and influence of digital media across South Asia especially in the socially hierarchal and multi-religious India (Agrawal 2016). While religious analyses within Hindu socio-cultural context are yet to be fully analyzed, realized and understood, observations indicate that digital media have no appreciable influences on *Sanatan Dharma*. It is speculated that digital media may not help in blurring *Sanatan Dharma*'s socio-cultural boundaries that might change the religious content, meaning and method of *Sanatan Dharma* religious practices especially Hindu religious self- expression.

The Study

This paper is based on a larger study of multi-religious survey of 711 respondents in which there were 300 Hindu respondents conducted in City of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. The Hindu sample consisted of adults above 18 years of age of either sex. In the survey, snowball technique of sampling was followed to select Hindu respondents who owned or had access to smart/mobile phone and/or owned television. The respondents were administered a pre-tested English close-ended questionnaire by a team of seven field researchers. The data collection was spread over two months: February to April 2015. Data checking, cleaning, entry and analysis were carried out from May to June 2015. The analysis for this paper was carried after separating the sub-sample of Hindu respondents.

Respondents' Profile

The respondents consist of 60.8 percent men and 39.2 percent women in which 53.0 percent were youth below 25 years old and the remaining 47.0 percent were adults above 25 years old. Barring few, all are educated in which as much as 50.0 percent have bachelor's degree. These respondents are students, business persons, employees and few housewives and very few retired persons representing a selected group of urban educated upward mobile and smartphone owners who could be defined as "middle class" of Ahmedabad.

The sample consists of 90.7 percent who own smartphones, 86.0 percent Internet users and 63.7 percent are laptop owners in which 60.7 percent also have home computers. It should be mentioned that almost all respondents

who are in business or service have computer access at their workplace. Consequently, use of digital media through smartphone, Internet, desktop and laptop report to be very high (Table 1).

Table 1: Digital Media Access*

Access	Percent
Smartphone	90.7
Internet	86.0
Laptop	63.7
Desktop computer at home	39.3
Sample size	300

* Multiple responses

Hindu Multilingual Digital Media and Religious Practices

The sample represents a unique genre of multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-content telecast and broadcast of television and radio. Several hundred satellite exclusive television entertainment, education, religious and news channels are broadcasting round the clock in Ahmedabad and beyond national boundaries. The same cannot be said about FM radio which is growing slowly. In addition, public service broadcast television and radio in Gujarati language broadcast are accessible across the state and in and beyond India. At the national level, over two billion viewers and listeners in their choice of over several dozen languages of India and South Asia are able to access these broadcasts. It is estimated that in major South Asian languages often more than 100 million viewers and listeners of Hindi, Urdu, Bangla, Punjabi, Telugu, Tamil, and Marathi apart from English are able to listen and view these programs.

The prime aim of television telecast is to provide education, entertainment and news round the clock. Multi-religious telecast was added to the list of important telecast. In case of radio, while entertainment was open for all, news was largely within the domain of public broadcaster like All India Radio. Smartphones carried both television and radio signals apart from print news.

Religious Digital Media Use

The analysis of the survey indicates that almost all respondents (96.0 percent) have access to direct-to-home (DTH) or cable television in their homes. Four out of five or 81.0 percent of respondents watch television for entertainment regardless of gender, education and occupation (Table 2). Further, no more than 13.3 percent view TV to gain any religious information or knowledge (Table 2). Though almost half or 49.0 percent of respondents have access to radio, very few listened to radio and little is known about radio religious listening by them.

Table 2: Current Digital Media Use*

Use	Percent
Entertainment	81.0
Knowledge	70.0
Professional	34.7
News	35.0
Religious	13.3
Total Sample	300

* Multiple responses

Hindu Response to Digital Media

Few broader questions relating to Hindu religious practices were asked to assess the way digital media have influenced Hindu religious practices. Qualitative analysis shows limited and diffused influence of digital media on Hindu religion.

Table 3 shows that 48.3 percent of Hindu read religious books, but only 14.0 percent preferred to read through e-books. Religious "apps" use on smart mobile phone was limited to 24.3 percent that too occasionally. These Hindu respondents though feel that digital media has provided them an easy access to religious information by way of opening up of a variety of new religious literature. On television, more than 34.7 percent Hindu respondents view *Bhajan* (songs in praise of god and goddess), 43.3 percent witness television *Aarti* (religious prayers during worship), 30.0 percent view television *Mantra* (religious chants to propitiate god and goddess) and 47.3 percent listen to *Garba* songs (Gujarati songs in praise of Goddess Ambe) and few

others use digital media for religious downloads (Table 3).

Mixed responses were recorded in Hindu worshiping methods as indicated in Table 4. Table 4 shows that as much as 41.7 percent of respondents opine that the worshiping methods remain unchanged in spite of television viewing. Also 25.3 percent feel that there are no changes in worshiping method as a result of televised viewing (Table 4). At the same time very few (16.3 percent) think that digital media help deepen their religious experience (Table 5). Meanwhile as much as 41.0 percent continue to rely on religious specialists and leaders in one or other as they are doing in the past (Tables 6). The analyses of the Hindu responses on the methods of worship, least acceptance of digital media for deeper understanding of religion and continued reliance on ritual specialists and leaders are reflective somewhat of low level of digital media influence on the believers of Hindu *Sanatan Dharma*.

Table 3: Religious Digital Media Use in Smart/Mobile Phone

Use	Percent
Use Digital Media Apps	24.3
Read Digital Media Apps	48.3
Read e-book	16.0
View/Listen*	
Bhajan	34.7
Aarti	43.3
Mantra	30.0
Garba	47.3
Dhun	12.7

*Multiple Responses

Table 4: Digital Media Exposure and Worshiping*

Worshiping	Percent
Increased	20.0
Decreased	43.0
Remained same	41.7
Cannot say	34.4
Sample Size	300

*Multiple Responses

Table 5: Experience of Digital Media for Religious Gain*

Experience	Percent
Deepened Religious Experience	16.3
Helped understand religion	19.7
Exposed religious dogma	3.0
Have view point on religion	12.3
Helped set goals in life	13.3
No change	25.3
Not specified	34.0

* Multiple responses

Table 6: Dependency on Religious Leaders

Dependency	Percent
To a greater extent	14.0
To some extent	27.0
Not at all	25.0
Cannot say	25.2
Sample Size	300

Conclusion

The analysis tends to point out that digital media is getting adapted, absorbed, and assimilated in Hindu *Sanatan Dharma*. While digital media is helping refine religious visual images and have created modern characters of Hindu gods and goddess, such changes seem to have limited effects on practitioners of *Sanatan Dharma* (Agrawal 2012). Further, the forgoing analysis shows continued reliance on oral communication and communication improvisation in the methods Hindu worshipping. Hindus continue to depend on the ritual specialists and religious leaders. The analysis supports the view that digital media has been least influential in the religious worship beyond providing the individual self-expression within multiple religious expressions. It seems digital media for many have become a new method and means of self-expression. Given the rapid changes in digital media, it is difficult to predict the direction and pace of change in socio-religious arena in the unbroken continuity of cultural, religious and visual landscape of Hindu *Sanatan Dharma*.

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Buddhist Communication of the True Roots of the Ecological Crisis

Anthony Le Duc , svd

Abstract

The attempt to explain the root cause of the ecological crisis has been carried out by environmental philosophers, scientific experts as well as religious thinkers. Buddhism with its unique approach to the human condition presents its own framework for dealing with the ecological crisis. The Buddhist framework places this issue within the larger reality of humanity being plagued by unwholesome tendencies, namely greed, hatred and delusion. These unwholesome tendencies represent the root poisons causing human spiritual and moral degeneration, which subsequently is manifested in personal and social problems, among them the ecological crisis. This paper applies this Buddhist framework to diagnosing the modern day ecological crisis and asserts that Buddhism needs to communicate its worldview to address negative human tendencies that compound the problem.

Introduction

The modern day ecological crisis is an issue that concerns the global community in the present and future. The extent of the situation demands attention not only from scientists, political leaders and social activists but also leaders of religion, which is naturally interested in what happens to humanity not only in this world but in the world to come. Buddhism is one of the religious traditions often turned to as a resource not necessarily because it

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offers ready teachings on matters related to the environment or environmental concerns, but because Buddhism provides a clear and methodical framework for addressing individual and social issues. This paper presents the Buddhist diagnosis for the ecological crisis within the overall Buddhist framework for assessing the human situation. In an age of advanced technological development coupled with increasing ecological destruction, Buddhism must actively collaborate with other religions and the scientific community to communicate truths about the world in order to counter negative human tendencies leading to environmental degradation. This task is necessary and more important than ever when there continues to be considerable ignorance of the gravity of the matter or even straight out denial of the presence of climate change.

Overview of the Buddhist Framework

Confronting the seemingly pessimistic situation of the human condition, the Sakyamuni Buddha like many of his contemporaries attempted to devise ways to deliver human beings out of the endless cycle of suffering and rebirth. After his experience of enlightenment at the age of 35, the Buddha managed to succeed in conceiving a program that would help his followers achieve emancipation through their own experience of enlightenment. The Four Noble Truths presented by the Buddha in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN.5.11) known as the setting of the wheel of *Dhamma* into motion can be categorized into three sequential steps: 1) Diagnosis of the perceived problem; 2) Presenting a goal or vision; and 3) Offering the path to realization of the vision.

The first two Noble Truths constitute the diagnosis part of the Buddhist pedagogy. The Buddha observed that the essence of mundane life was unsatisfactory because of the existent reality of impermanence of all things in the world. By observing life processes such as birth, aging, sickness, and death, as well as all the other events taking place in the world, the Buddha was able to give these realities a common descriptive name—suffering or unsatisfactoriness.

Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

The second truth locates the root of this unsatisfactoriness as due to the ignorance of the true nature of reality, causing one to have craving (*tanhā*) for things that do not bring about lasting happiness because they are ultimately impermanent. The Buddha listed three kinds of craving—craving for sensual pleasure, craving to become, and craving to get rid of unwanted things. Having made the diagnosis, the Buddha subsequently presented a vision of hope that is contrary to the condition of suffering that one experiences in life. That vision is stated in the third Noble Truth, which declares that human beings do not have to be enslaved to this perpetual cycle of unsatisfactoriness, that one can put an end to the suffering in one's life by achieving freedom from the various desires mentioned above. Finally, this vision of eternal bliss can be realized by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path with its threefold training of morality, concentration, and wisdom. The Noble Eightfold Path, therefore, outlines the path that leads to realization of the proposed vision.

In dealing with the escalating ecological crisis from the Buddhist approach, it is important that the situation be examined and analyzed systematically within this overall framework. The term "crisis" alone informs us that there is a problem, a state of imbalance, disharmony, dislocatedness, and lack of peace. Thus, the Buddhist approach to the ecological crisis needs to take the same analogous course as that which pertains to the entire human condition by first, making a diagnosis of the perceived problem. Only after the diagnosis has been made can there be a goal or vision presented for the problem, as well as a practical course of action that helps to realize that vision.

A clear understanding of where we are in terms of our relationship with the natural environment is helpful towards proposing a goal for where we would like to go and how to get there. An honest assessment and self-examination is crucial for devising appropriate remedial measures to address the crisis. The value of this activity is affirmed by the Thai scholar monk Phra Prayudh Payutto, who in a published talk entitled "Thai People and Forests," posed a simple question to his listeners as follows: "Is the relationship between Thai people and forests one of friendship or of enemies?" (11).[1] Obviously, Phra Prayudh intended for his listeners to make a conscientious examination of their attitudes and behaviors in order to evaluate the quality of the relationship between human beings with not only forests alone, but nature as a whole.

[1]This talk was originally published in the Thai language entitled คนไทยกับป่า "Khon Thai Kap Pa."

Phra Prayudh's question is pertinent because how human beings view nature and view themselves vis-à-vis nature has tremendous implications for the condition of the environment now and in the future. As humanity confronts the ecological crisis unfolding in ever more dramatic and disturbing ways, the question naturally arises, "What is the root cause of the crisis at hand?" Answers such as the overuse of non-renewable resources or materialism only express the symptoms but not the real problem because these explanations do not get to the profound issues taking place in the deeper realm of human spirituality and psychology. Unless one gets to the underlying root causes in order to accurately diagnose the problem, effective curative therapies could not be proposed. No doubt diagnosis for the ecological crisis can be made from a multitude of vantage points—scientific, sociological, political, as well as spiritual. The Buddhist approach proposes that the ecological crisis, like various problems involving human society, is a reflection of a fundamental issue involving human morality and spirituality. Only when this part of human reality is brought to light and understood for what it is can there be ways to successfully deal with personal and social problems that are the consequences of the imbalances taking place from within.

The Buddhist Diagnosis of the Ecological Crisis

Among the various approaches to diagnosing the ecological crisis, one that is proposed by many secular environmental ethicists points to the underlying problem of a militant or strong anthropocentrism that leads to a conflict between human beings and nature, ultimately resulting in nature's destruction and demise. The charge of anthropocentrism given by environmental ethicists as the culprit of the ecological crisis, from the Buddhist perspective, remains at the level of mere symptom but has yet to get to the deep roots of the crisis. Buddhism would immediately raise the question: "Where do the negative anthropocentric tendencies come from?" Application of the Buddhist framework requires an even more fundamental examination of the human situation in order to shed light on the crisis. It must be said at the outset that there is no direct Buddhist diagnosis of the ecological crisis *per se*. Certainly in the Buddha's time environmental concerns were not of the same degree or nature as what humanity is grappling with at the present even though, both in the past and nowadays, there are some basic issues that affect human beings and the natural environment. Water sanitation was an issue of great concern because drinking unclean water led to life threatening

diseases. The Buddha's prohibition for monks to urinate in the river was no doubt related to this concern for preserving water sanitation (V. IV. 205-206). Human intrusion into forest land also took place as seen in the story of the two tree spirits who lost their abodes due to human interference. The story entitled *Vyagghajataka* depicts two spirits residing in two separate trees in the forest. However, one of the tree spirits was bothered by the odor of the carcasses of the animals that the tiger and the lion had preyed on and left behind. This spirit wanted to frighten the culprits out of the vicinity. However, the other spirit warned him that this would not be a good idea. Despite the warning, the unhappy spirit followed through with this plan and scared them away. As a result, humans who previously only stayed at the edge of the forest for fear of the lion and tiger eventually became more bold and advanced deeper into the forest in order to hunt and find things to sell. The humans eventually would also cut down the trees of the forest in order to farm. Consequently, the two tree spirits were left without a home (J. 272; Chapple 141-142).

Today, scholars of Buddhism generally agree that in the Ganges region where Buddhism originated, urbanization and population growth were considerable. Deforestation subsequently had to take place in order for these urban hubs to appear along with mercantile activity and trade within and between population centers that were both in close and distant proximities. Buddhism, therefore, found its beginnings and growth as part of a growing urban movement and not something just limited to the wilderness (Lancaster 11-12). The Sakyamuni spent his childhood in a city environment, and even as a wandering ascetic, taught and lived in such an environment. Of the 4,257 teaching locales found in the early Buddhist canon 96 percent are in urban settings. At the same time, of the nearly 1,400 people identified in these texts, 94 percent are identified as residing in cities.[2] Thus, one can extrapolate that the environmental problems of the present day had its beginning even in ancient time as human societies developed using various means that impacted the condition of the natural environment. And even though the Buddha did not address environmental problems as a social concern, the Buddha did teach the truths pertaining to the suffering of sentient beings. The suffering experienced by human beings is often the result of the imbalances in how they build and maintain relationship with the people and the world around them. These

[2] Johan Elverskog, "Buddhist Contributions to Environmental Ethics: From Creative Destruction to Creative Protection." Lecture delivered at International Conference on Ethics, Climate Change and Energy, Mahidol University, Salaya, Thailand, November 27, 2014.

external defects, however, reflected more deep seated internal tendencies that serve as the root causes for all personal as well as social problems.

The Buddhist diagnosis of the ecological crisis, therefore, is based not on any direct teachings or observations that the Buddha made about the environment, but rather based on the Buddha's teachings about human conditions that lead to destructive actions on both a personal and social level. These negative human tendencies manifest themselves in new issues that represent the particular context of each timeframe in the history of the world. The Buddha divided the human situation into two states: wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) (D. III. 275). The root causes of these unwholesome states are greed *(rāga)*, hatred *(dosa)*, and delusion (*moha),* while the root causes of the wholesome states are non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. All animate life is impelled by these universal forces on an individual as well as collective basis. They are the motive forces behind our thoughts, words, and deeds. Introspection tells us that the unwholesome roots also known as the poisons lead to actions that result in suffering for ourselves and others in a way that contradicts with our inner desire for happiness. Thus, the realm of the unwholesome extends beyond what is considered as immoral since certain thoughts and actions, though not deemed immoral may still be considered unwholesome and is productive of unfavorable *kamma*-results (Nyanaponika Thera 4).

In basic sense, greed is the mental state in which one is constantly preoccupied with a feeling of need and want because he feels there is a lack in his life; and since his appetite is insatiable, even when he obtains what he has desired, he continues to feel the desire for lasting satisfaction. Hatred, which in the Buddhist sense includes other negative emotions such as disappointment, despair, anxiety and dejection, also has internal origins representing dissatisfaction towards oneself and others. Finally, delusion can be seen in the form of ignorance (*avijjā*) that leads to confusion and lack of directions, or lead to false views that result in ideological dogmatism and fanaticism. These three unwholesome roots manifest themselves in various degrees from mild to extreme. For example, greed may be expressed in a simple wish or in something more serious such as craving and self-indulgence. Similarly, hatred can take the form of mere dislike to something much more serious such as vengefulness and wrath. Delusion can range anywhere from dullness to conceit and ideological dogmatism (Nyanaponika Thera 5). In

the *Visuddhimagga,* the commentarial literature, these three roots are further described using various unpleasant images to emphasize the extent of their unwholesomeness:

Greed has the characteristic of grasping an object, like birdlime (lit. "monkey lime"). Its function is sticking, like meat put in a hot pan. It is manifested as not giving up, like the dye of lamp-black. Its proximate cause is seeing enjoyment in things that lead to bondage. Swelling with the current of craving, it should be regarded as taking [beings] with it to states of loss, as a swift-flowing river does to the great ocean. (Vism. XIV. 162)

[Hatred] has the characteristic of savageness, like a provoked snake. Its function is to spread, like a drop of poison, or its function is to burn up its own support, like a forest fire. It is manifested as persecuting (*dūsana*), like an enemy who has got his chance. Its proximate cause is the grounds for annoyance. It should be regarded as like stale urine mixed with poison (Vism. XIV. 171)

Delusion has the characteristic of blindness, or it has the characteristic of unknowing. Its function is non-penetration, or its function is to conceal the individual essence of an object. It is manifested as the absence of right theory, or it is manifested as darkness. Its proximate cause is unwise (unjustified) attention. It should be regarded as the root of all that is unprofitable (Vism. XIV. 163)

These three roots do not exist independently in the human consciousness but intertwine with one another and often serve as the impelling force for each other. For example, a person who suffers from greed may also harbor great hatred when he is not able to attain the things that he desires due to real or perceived obstacles from others. In the same manner, delusion is the foundation upon which greed and hatred stand because delusion leads one to believe that one ought to want and need something, or that one ought to hate certain people or certain things. It is because of this that the *Dhammapada* remarks that nothing is able to cause entanglement like the net of delusion (Dp. 251). Perhaps the biggest delusion of all, according to Buddhism, is the false belief in a self or an ego that causes one to do various things on behalf of this ego—building it up, protecting it from harm, and defending it from attacks, etc.

Although the three unwholesome roots or poisons are found in individual mental states, the negative consequences are not simply confined to the individual, but occur on the collective level as well. The social manifestation of the unwholesome roots are seen when individuals who suffer from these unwholesome states vie with one another in society and try to outdo one another. One's hatred becomes the source that instigates the hatred in another person which subsequently leads to an escalation of hatred and violence. Social and political conflicts arise out of this cycle of hate that begins with individuals but eventually emerges on a communal and even global level. Hatred is an especially anti-social defilement because it results from conflicting interests between ourselves and others. Individual leaders and institutions often promote hate for others in order to rally people to their collective cause or individual egotistical goals. Wars and atrocities take place on the common foundation of hate for the others. The current state of the world where nationalism is turned into nativism, religious fervor turns into radical fundamentalism, self-protection morphs into terrorism testifies to this promotion of hate by one group towards another group or groups of people.

The presence of the unwholesome roots on a social level is likewise seen with regards to greed and delusion. The need to own things, especially those things that are expensive, because of perceived satisfaction and happiness that come from possessing them is present in people of all age groups and social backgrounds. This tendency starts even from very formative years of life. An empirical study of poor children in Britain carried out by Richard Elliott and Clare Leonard, for example, shows the prevalence of peer pressure in young people's desire for possessing expensive fashion brands. According to the study, those who own famous brands are seen by respondents as more popular in school and fit in more with groups (Elliott and Leonard 355). Such findings are far from exceptional as confirmed by a UNESCO study of youth consumption patterns in various parts of the world, indicating that social peer pressure is the most important factor in youth materialism (UNESCO 31). A society characterized by materialistic tendencies is formed when its members feel that lasting satisfaction comes from possessing various gadgets and things. Indeed, this was the observation of the writers of the UNESCO report where young people associated having more with greater happiness. These thoughts are instilled in the people through advertisements produced by companies that feel that the indicator of success is uninterrupted growth year after year. Operating business upon this fundamental goal for unceasing

growth, producers of product advertisements must make use of stimulating and entertaining words and images in order to sell a dream or a life style as much as the product itself (Clover 86). On any given day, we are bombarded with advertisements every time we turn on the television, go online, or drive down the street. This situation is not limited to any particular socio-religio-cultural context. Whether in Western capitalist New York or Eastern Buddhist Bangkok, the consumer culture is strong and is the engine that makes the world go round. The Buddhist scholar monk Bhikkhu Bodhi illustrates the intertwining of the three unwholesome states in our globalized world in the following manner:

Through the prevalence of greed the world has become transformed into a global marketplace where human beings are reduced to the status of consumers, even commodities, and where materialistic desires are provoked at volatile intensities. Through the prevalence of hatred, which is often kindled by competing interests governed by greed, national and ethnic differences become the breeding ground of suspicion and enmity, exploding in violence and destruction, in cruelty and brutality, in endless cycles of revenge. Delusion sustains the other two unwholesome roots by giving rise to false beliefs, dogmatic views, and philosophical ideologies devised in order to promote and justify patterns of conduct motivated by greed and hatred (Internet).

The Unwholesome Roots and the Ecological crisis

The Buddhist approach to the ecological crisis does not depart from the basic framework that considers all personal and social problems stemming from a combination of the three unwholesome roots of greed, hatred and delusion. As Pragati Sahni contends:

As long as the mind is influenced by the three unwholesome principles of *rāga, dosa* and *moha* or greed, hatred and delusion the human race will be stricken by environmental and other forms of exploitation, as well as selfish actions, greedy consumer cultures, dissatisfaction and other attitudes that can be looked upon as vices (165).

Likewise, the late Thai monk Buddhadasa would remark that climate change and other imbalances in nature being experienced at this time is a result of an internal human moral degeneration that affects the external dimension

of the world.[3] The break down in human-nature relationship is reflected in the actions and activities motivated by the three poisons that promote one-sided interests without due consideration for the well-being of others, whether it is fellow human beings or the natural environment.

The first unwholesome root of greed negatively impacts the environment in multiple ways. When businesses operations are motivated by greed, environmental standards often get neglected for the sake of maximizing profit. This was seen clearly in April, 2016 when the people along the coast of Central Vietnam discovered all the fish along a stretch of more than 200 kilometers over four provinces had washed ashore. The livelihood of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese families who either directly or indirectly depended on the fishing industry, not to mention the diet of millions of Vietnamese were severely affected by this environmental disaster. After months of investigation and despite initial resistance on the part of the government to point the finger at the obvious culprit, a Taiwanese steel company, Formosa Ha Tinh Steel Corporation, it was finally concluded to nobody's surprise that the steel firm was indeed responsible. The company was found to have released toxic wastes through a pipe that extended from their onshore facility directly into the ocean.[4] Formosa Ha Tinh was fined USD500 million, a miniscule amount compared to the immediate and long term damage to the environment and to the life and livelihood of millions of Vietnamese people. The Formosa case in Vietnam is hardly unique. Countless similar cases could be found throughout the world.

Breeches in environmental standards are often enabled by the backing of corrupt government leaders willing to institute laws and policies that grant privileges to entities that are in the business of making money through environmentally destructive means, or turn a blind eye to blatant environmental violations. Personal gains offered to government leaders and policy makers make it possible for permits to be granted to mining companies building on pristine natural reserves, or for gigantic industrial complexes to go up next to lakes and rivers used by the local people for their daily living.

[3] Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's ideas come from a number of works that have been compiled and translated by Grant A. Olson. Olson gives the title of his translation "A Notion of Buddhist Ecology." In addition to the negative effect on nature, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu asserts that internal degeneration hinders spiritual progress.

[4] Associated Press, 1 July 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jul/01/vietnam-blames-toxic-waste-water-fom-steel-plant-for-mass-fish-deaths.

When government leaders are more motivated by personal financial gains than the welfare of the citizenry or the flourishing of the natural environment, transparency and mechanisms of check and balance needed for good governance suffer.

One of the greatest consequences of greed is the development of a consumerist culture. In the age of consumerism, businesses try to maximize their profit by selling as much of a product as possible, encouraging and feeding into people's desire for owning many things, even those things that are not essential to their life. In order to make even more profit and remain competitive in the market, these same companies have to continually release new products which they will try to convince consumers that they must have even though what they have been using previously is perfectly good. At the same time, competing companies also release similar products, which consumers are told, are better than the other ones either in quality or in price. Overconsumption harms nature severely because in order to produce all the things that supposedly satisfy human needs, an exorbitant quantity of natural resources must be used.

The greed that contributes to environmental degradation is often intensified by the second poison of hatred. Environmentally destructive hatred can be seen when individuals and groups employ aggressive tactics or when government entities institute aggressive policies in order to achieve selfish economic interests. A country or organization may employ imperialistic or oppressive means in order to acquire control or monopoly of natural resources to which they will exploit for economic gains. As a result, entire oil fields can be depleted and vast stretches of forests can be laid barren so that company executives and government officials can line their pocket with huge sums of money. While hatred in this militant form is obvious, there are also more subtle expressions of hatred, which may not readily be perceived as such. An example of a subtle form of hatred is apathy. Oftentimes, when people are told of the immanent dangers to the environment which can be seen through the rapid loss of species, the depletion of forests, and the pollution of rivers and the air, they display superficial concern but do little to change their own behavior which contributes to this destruction in the first place. In a sense, apathy could be considered a passive form of hatred that collectively contributes to environmental destruction no less than the militant expressions of hatred. In addition to apathy, one can point to negligence or simply a lack of concern

as manifestations of hatred, because these attitudes also express a negative disposition towards the other. While militancy may be limited to notorious individuals, groups, organizations, or governments, apathy, negligence and lack of concern are prevalent in the great majority of the people. This makes all people susceptible to blame when it comes to determining the root cause of the ecological crisis.

Delusion in the Buddhist framework is a strong driving force behind the ecological crisis since it is the foundation for the other two unwholesome states. Sometimes referred to as ignorance or possessing false views, this is a condition where people become attached to impermanent things such as material possessions and social status thinking that they can bring about true happiness and satisfaction. Armed with this delusion, we keep on hoarding and seeking without ever attaining the satisfaction that we long for, and the search goes on. Delusion or ignorance is also played out on a systemic level when it is believed that in real development, economic growth is the measure of national good, that high levels of production and consumption signify higher well-being, and the importance of unceasing GDP growth trumps sustainability (Ives 546). Sulak Sivaraksa, an Engaged Buddhist scholar and activist, comments:

Development can emphasize quantity or quality. With the former, we can measure results, but it is presumptuous to assume that more factories, schools, hospitals, food, clothing, jobs, or income will necessarily enhance the quality of life. Although these are all necessary, they are not sufficient… Development must also take into account the essence of our humanity. (35)

When it comes to the ecological crisis, delusion is also the ignorance of the true nature of the problem leading to undermining its seriousness or even denying that it even exists. Donald J. Trump, before becoming the president of the United States on multiple occasions had referred to climate change and global warming as a hoax in his Tweets. Only less than six months after assuming the office in 2017, Trump even went so far as to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement signed by 195 countries in December 2015. The words and actions of Trump both before and during his presidency represent one of the most egregious cases of climate science denial of modern time. The idea of climate change being due to anthropogenic causes has been overwhelmingly agreed upon by scientists throughout the world. Geochemist

James Lawrence Powell surveyed 13,950 peer-reviewed climate articles published between 1991 and 2012, and found that only 24 papers rejected the reality of global warming (0.17 percent). Of the 2,258 peer-reviewed articles authored by 9,136 scientists in the period between November 12, 2012 and December 31, 2013, Powell only found one single-author article that attributed climate change to non-human causes.[5] Despite such tremendous scientific consensus, many people still do not know of the reality of global warming. Even in the United States where no one is supposedly hindered from accessing information, only a small number of people are aware of this scientific position. In a 2017 survey, only 13 percent of respondents correctly identified that scientific consensus on climate change was over 90 percent.[6] The vast majority either thought that there was no scientific consensus or that it was much lower.

Why is there such a glaring gap between scientists and laypersons in their understanding about climate change? Lee McIntyre points to individuals and groups who carry out campaigns of misinformation to protect that economic or ideological agenda (Kindle). ExxonMobil, for example, was found to have funded organizations that deny climate change. Although the oil company under pressure from shareholder activists had promised in 2007 that it would stop funding researchers and activist groups that promote disinformation about global warming, eight years later it was reported that the company had given money to US Congress members and a corporate lobbying group that tried to block efforts to fight climate change.[7] The campaign of disinformation carried out by climate change deniers has been supported tremendously by the news media. Climate change skeptics would be given time on various news programs to debate with those who hold the opposite view. News programs which often upheld the model of presenting "both sides of the story" unwittingly gave equal time to climate change deniers. This gave the impression that the reality of climate change was a controversial position that needed to be debated, while in fact, the scientific community was already in near unanimous agreement on the issue (McIntyre Kindle). It was not only

[5] https://www.popsci.com/article/science/infographic-scientists-who-doubt-human-caused-climate-change

[6] https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/7/6/15924444/global-warming-consensus-survey

[7] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/15/exxon-mobil-gave-millions-climate-denying-lawmakers

the television programs that contributed to causing public confusion; the print media also played a role since many reporters simply wrote articles based on interviews with people holding different viewpoints but did not have the time or expertise to check whether those opinions were in agreement with scientific findings. Whether it was due to the need to create drama or to project the image of being balanced in their programming, media outlets helped to propagate the notion that climate change is not "settled science" and there is "no scientific consensus" on the matter. The denial of anthropogenic climate change, therefore, is a consequence of a conscientious intent to misinform or to communicate misinformation by those with vested interest in propagating this denial, sowing confusion and ignorance in the public about what is truly happening.

Conclusion

The diagnosis of the ecological crisis from a Buddhist framework indicates that the crisis is a reflection of a moral and spiritual degeneration, in which the human person is plagued by the poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion. These three unwholesome states act synergistically in human individuals and groups in order to bring about destructive relationships between human beings as well as between human beings and the natural environment. The Buddhist outlook asserts that personal and social problems (depletion of the earth's natural resources and destruction of the environment; proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction; utter disregard for human rights; political, ethnic, and religious conflicts; social poverty and unequal distribution of resources) all depend on how prevalent these interconnected poisons permeate human thoughts, words, and. The ecological crisis, therefore, is not an isolated or unique phenomenon but part of an intertwining network of issues that stem from a deep rooted spiritual malignancy infecting individuals and social systems. In this respect, the ecological crisis is consequence of human beings succumbing to the poisons of greed, hatred and delusion, causing them to indulge in selfish desires while discounting the well-being of others, especially of nature. Human-nature relationship becomes one characterized by harm and exploitation with the natural environment on the receiving end of human inconsiderateness. An unhealthy and unwholesome human-nature relationship fueled by the poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion if not rectified will increasingly cause nature to lose its vitality and equilibrium. As in any relationship, one cannot cause harm

to another without ultimately also being affected by the negative consequences that arise.

The Buddhist assessment of the ecological crisis, however, can only be useful if the truths regarding the crisis are accepted by scientists and laypersons. Consequently, Buddhist leaders and scholars must engage with both the scientific community and the public in order to educate themselves on the issue of climate change, at the same time being able to communicate accurate information to the world. Buddhism can play an important role in addressing the ecological crisis when its adherents not only avail themselves of empirical scientific facts, but also are able to analyze these facts and articulate them in ways pertinent to the well-being of humanity and the ecology. The challenge for Buddhism as with other religions and science concerned with the ecology, however, is to find ways to overcome the forces of greed, hatred and delusion working hard to perpetuate ignorance of and apathy towards one of the most serious problems of modern time.

Abbreviations

Dp *Dhammapada*
J *Jātaka*
V *Vinaya*
Vis.M. *Visuddhimaga*

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Communication Documents from and for Religions: Christianity

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Different Christian Churches worldwide have published documents and sometimes also 'guidelines 'on Communication, especially the so called "Mass Media". Thus the General Assemblies of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, a grouping of some 350 mainstream Christian Churches, treated communication and media in two of their General Assemblies of Uppsala (1968) and Vancouver (1983). Also, some individual member Churches have in addition published guidelines, as well as study papers and reflections like the Anglicans with an early report of a study group on upcoming new media developments.

From all religions in Asia the Roman Catholic Church has probably one of the bigger collections of documents on Social Communication. Already in 1936 **Pope Pius XI** published an encyclical letter on film *Vigilanti Cura* ("with vigilant care").[1] This document not only presented the US American initiative for good films but also underlined the wholesome role films can play for family and public life. They, however, have to also make a positive contribution and should be vigilant in their presentation of moral value. This document of Pius XI was followed by his successor **Pope Pius XII** by a special Apostolic Letter in 1955 which was presented in two separate parts at audiences of the Pope in the same year as allocations to professionals in the film industry. This document treats film in a general way in relation to

[1] *All Vatican church documents are named after the first two words of their Latin text*.

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the spectators, their value for education and the community in their different forms and relations to family, state and Church. Two years later the same Pope published a similar document as an Encyclical Letter not only on film but all the electronic media of that time: radio, television and film as means of promoting a healthy public and especially family life. He underlined the role of these media in helping to know each other better, to cooperate and also promote values for society, family and in common living without neglecting also danger in losing proper human values for society and living with each other. From these concerns and conscious of the responsibility of the Church in this field came also the proposal and initiative for the ***Second Vatican Council*** to discuss communication in a special document which seems to have been also a special concern of Pope John XXIII when he called for such a worldwide assembly of some 2600 bishops from all over the world. It was actually the very first time for such an assembly in the 2000 year-old history of the Catholic Church to discuss the field of social communication on this level. It ended in the publication of ***Inter Mirifica*** on December 1963 with 24 sections presenting general guidelines and basic concepts and structures whereas a more detailed treatment of special media and similar concerns which was also contained in the original proposal were postponed for another document to be worked out by experts in the field instead of Church ministers. This was finally published only some seven years later.

With the presentation of the Council document *Inter Mirifica* came also the proposal for the Church to use in future the expression of ***social communication*** which was contained in a footnote to the document handed over to the Council participants saying that "this Secretariat of experts considers it to be necessary to propose a *new name* for this field and proposed '*Instruments of* ***Social Communication****s'* which should be used in all future legal and doctrinal documents." In introducing this new expression it is argued that in this footnote that "different expressions for this new field like 'diffusion techniques' or 'mass media' or 'Publizistik' or 'audio-visual means' or even 'spectacle' are not sufficiently expressing the concern of the Church in this field" (cf. Eilers, 2014,144). From here the communication concerns of the Roman Catholic Church beyond media becomes clear. In the years after Vatican II, however, this new expression was unfortunately never further explained nor appreciated and properly used which seems to be unfortunate with new technologies and ways of communicating in place today which are far beyond 50 years ago at Vatican II. It is *social communication* which refers

to all ways and means of communication in human society. It also refers to the inner dispositions and outside expressions of humans far and beyond technology. The way we see and deal with each other is *social* communication where we express ourselves. It also refers to the 'atmosphere' of a 'sharing' as well as expressions of the inner self to others. It also refers—in Christianity—to a proper 'spirituality' with a proper openness to God, Self and Others as 'dispositions' and basis for any exchange of ideas, feelings and desires. In this understanding it refers to *all* ways and means of communication in human society where media and technology are only a very small part of a broader spectrum of life and society.

In the Vatican II document *Inter Mirifica* from 1963 for the Vatican administration also a special "*Pontifical Council for Social Communication*" is proposed (IM 19) which was established by Pope Paul VI already in April the following year. It was one of the first obligations of this Commission (later also named 'Council') to elaborate with the help of international experts a document to spell out in more detail what 'social communication' would mean for Christianity and beyond. This so called "Pastoral Instruction" went through different drafts and was finally published 1967 starting with the words ***"Communio et Progressio.***" The document has basically three parts: after a theological presentation (Nos. 1-18) —the first of this kind in a Vatican document—follow long sections on the role of social communication in human society (Nos. 19-101), the commitments of Catholics in the media (Nos. 102-180) and to conclude with 'future developments, challenges and the purpose of the document' (Nos. 181-186).

This text is actually considered even beyond non-Roman Catholic Christians and even other religions as one of the best documents on communication under the perspective of religion.

In the *theological* part, social communication is defined as being in its deepest sense "sharing of self in love" which actually is personal and not technological or instrumental in a traditional media sense! It is also remarkable that the text in its first longer presentation does not start—unlike *Inter Mirifica*—with the 'right' of the Church but rather with the role of social communication in human society in general only to be followed later with the catholic contributions. It should also be noted that the text goes far beyond traditional (mass) media and also speaks of advertising, public opinion, the freedom of and right to communication, artistic expressions, the role of culture

and the need for proper cooperation between the different communicating groups of society. In the third part also the importance of proper dialogue is underlined, which also of special concern of Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* published during the Vatican II Council.

Some 20 years after *Communio et Progressio*, a follow up document was presented to further underline but also develop the proposals and concerns of the original "Pastoral Instruction" in light of further developments in the field. This was published under the name *Aetatis Novae*—the "New Age" which partly repeats but also extends the earlier thinking. Special to this document is the stress on communication planning which is treated in detail especially in an appendix (Nos. 23-33).

The original Vatican document *Inter Mirifica* also proposes a proper communication structure and responsibilities in communication for the Catholic Church with ***national offices*** organized according to different media. In addition to this an annual ***World Communication Day*** is introduced which is celebrated every year since 1967 under a special theme. Thus, for over more than 50 years there is a great amount of thinking and proposal in the field in the perspective of the Catholic Church is available with inspiration which goes far beyond the original body for whom the texts were created. They treat, for example, several times the communication concerns of and for the family, communication in different stages of life, but especially also comments and proposals for the new age of digitalization with at least six different texts and perspectives, staring already in 1990 with Pope John Paul II's *The Christian Message in a Computer Age*.

The very last official document in the life of Pope John Paul II was on social communication, published on January 2005 a few months before he died under the title ***Rapid Development***. Originally, the text was foreseen for the celebration of 40 years of the Vatican II Communication Document *Inter Mirifica* in 2003. In his typical way he concluded the text with the admonition not to be afraid of: 1. New developments; 2. Of opposition; or even 3. Own shortcomings.

Himself being an artist (poet, writer, actor) since the early years of his life, Pope John Paul II also published on April 4, 1999 a special ***Letter to Artists*** where he describes the artist in a special way as reflecting God's image

which is proven also by the artist's role in history: religion needs art, art needs religion!

In *other pontifical documents* on specific themes very often they also have a special section on social communication related to the concerns of the respective document like youth, family, spirituality, and mission. In fact Pope John Paul II presents a special—and new—approach for the Catholic Church in his document *Redemptoris Missio* when he was considering new technical development comparing the old Greek marketplace, *areopagus*, to a *new culture* of communication which "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" (No. 37c).

Beside the Popes themselves, there are also quite some other Vatican documents on communication— treating the issue under different perspectives and concerns.

There was a series of documents of the ***Pontifical Council for Social Communication*** which started in 1989 with a "pastoral response" on *Pornography and Violence.* In the same year also the *Criteria for Ecumenical and Interreligious Cooperation in Communications* was published. This is followed by texts on *Ethics in Advertising* (1997), *Communication* (2000) and the *Internet* (2002). Together with the last one on the *Ethics on the Internet* also a general text on *Church and Internet* was published to cover the field beyond the perspective of ethics.

In a series of "*guides*" for teaching especially in seminaries the *Congregation for Catholic Education* published in 1986 a *Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* where after a general introduction on human communication, Revelation and Communication, going from communication to communion and the role of communication in and for priesthood common principles are presented and three levels of 'training' are presented, from a basic level of communication education to pastoral aspects and the possibilities for special training are presented.

Beyond all these documents from the center of the Catholic Church in the Vatican there are also quite some additional texts published either by single

bishops or also by bishops' conferences. An example for an individual bishop can be the pastoral letter of Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles *Film Makers, Film Viewers: Their Challenges and Opportunities* from September 30, 1992. The cardinal felt 'obliged' for such a letter since also Hollywood is part of his diocese. He prepared this letter in cooperation with film producers as well as viewers and based it on the understating of storytelling. He talks about television news, entertainment, art and religion entertainment but also the responsibility of producers as well as consumers. For criteria, he describes as general ones the following: evaluation of the characters, the conflict, and the evaluation of the development of the story. As special criteria in the evaluation of films he describes the following: relationships, sexuality, women, family, religion, work, possession, authority and violence. He concludes in saying that, "the criteria I articulate here, and the values that underlie them, are the exclusive property of no one religious community, ethnic grouping, educational level, economic class or political party."

An example of a regional bishops' conference document is the recent pastoral letter on communications *Being Church in a Digital Milieu* of the Antilles Episcopal Conference from August 6, 2017 which was signed by some 19 bishops of the region. The document begins in reference to "rapid developments" since the publication of the Vatican's Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* in 1992 which influence the lives of people and the Church today. This is especially true with the Internet and Web available to individuals for interactive and individual communication worldwide without any borders as a daily and personal experience inviting, however, also a collaboration between theologians, artists and writers for new challenges and inviting a "new way of being Church in a digital age." The document with all in all some 64 sections states that "We need to reflect on how rapid digital communication transformations are affecting our way of life, how we relate to each other and how we live our faith within Caribbean culture" (No. 24). The bishops ask, "What initiatives need we embrace to reflect and witness Gospel values" like the ones on family and the importance of dialogue (38), integral development and also considering the role of 'social media?' (41) Proposed is "a bold and courageous communications plan as a cooperative exercise" to respond to "the revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies… as a great and thrilling challenge" (56, 3). Pope Francis is also quoted saying that "it is not technology which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use

Religions in a "Digital Milieu"

A New Catholic Document from the Antilles

The development of new communication technologies brings also for religions new possibilities as well as challenges for their lives and activities. Today, no religion can escape this reality but not all seem to address it sufficiently yet. For the Roman Catholic Church, it was Pope John Paul II who already in 1990 published a World Communication Message on *The Christian Message in a Computer Culture* which he followed up in 2002 with a message on *Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel*. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, followed with even four messages on World Communication Day taking up special aspects from the new developments like in 2009 on *New Technologies, New Relationships... Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship* or the role of the priest in a digital world (2010), authenticity of life in a digital age (2011) or also the role and importance of social networks for religion (2013).

Now the Antilles Episcopal Conference has published as an extensive document *Being Church in a Digital Milieu*, a pastoral letter on communications on August 6, 2017 which deserves attention far beyond the Antilles.

After an introduction (Nos. 1-12) the document lists the "rapid developments" of communication technology (Nos. 13-31) and relating this to a "new way of being Church" (Nos. 32-44) and respective pastoral applications which leads to a properly integrated pastoral communication plan (Nos. 45-59). For this also, a proper pastoral guide is added, to make the document as practical as possible.

The ***introduction*** refers to Jesus Christ as a communicator "on all levels of human interaction." "He preaches and teaches to the masses using stories, parables and statements and shares in smaller groups with his apostles and disciples. He meets individuals like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and others in deep and very personal sharing" (No. 2). The Acts of the Apostles are called "a report on the continuation of the sending and ongoing communicating of God's Holy Spirit in the beginning of the Church" (No. 4). Following this, the Church "communication comprises all levels and means of communicating from interpersonal…up to internet, social media and digital

networks (No. 5) . "For the Church, communication is not primarily about technology or efficiency. It is a spiritual responsibility. It is about persons communicating what is most precious, the call to be reconciled with God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). Communication for the Church is ultimately about building communion with God and unity among peoples…" or as the Church document *Communio et Progressio* (1971, 11) states, "Communication is more than the expression of ideas and indications of emotions: at its most deepest level it is the giving of self in love."

The document calls to get away from "isolationist tendencies" of the Church and to "embrace the opportunities that rapidly evolving digital technology is offering." This calls for "a new spirit, a new approach, a new way of being Church in the digital milieu" (No. 10) which is today part of our life.

The ***rapid developments*** of ways of communicating and their consequences are subject of the following part of the document (Nos. 13 to 31) which first connects to earlier Church documents in the field especially the last general document of the former Pontifical Council for Social Communication *Aetatis Novae* which was published in 1992 in commemoration and continuing a pastoral instruction on social communication, *Communio et Progressio* (1971) which was demanded by the Second Vatican Council. The changes in communication in the span of 20 years between *Communio et Progressio* and *Aetatis Novae* were minimal compared with our situation today where digital technologies open new worldwide possibilities. "The fact that the Internet, in all of its manifold forms and applications" the Antilles Document says, "has permeated every aspect of modern human society means this form of communication must be reflected upon not only sociologically, but also spiritually and theologically," because—quoting Pope Benedict XVI—"the digital environment is not a parallel. or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young" (No. 17). Young people who "navigate the digital milieu with ease and creative precision... and frequency" are in the "digital media platforms" and are invited to assist in the new developments. This also includes artists who have "the ability to enkindle the religious imagination with a freshness that awakens minds and hearts to experience the Good News with a new richness" which brings also mutual enrichment" (No. 19).

Rapid digital communication transformations are taking place influenced by technical developments from "Web 1" to "Web 2" and "Web 3" which contribute to a new "culture" also for the life experiences of religions: how can we communicate faith to the current and next generation is now one of the single greatest challenges the Church in the Caribbean faces (25). Now based on the "Web 2" and "Web 3" culture, we experience a highly participatory "E-Culture" where 'likes' seem to be more important than truth. (No. 26).

"The digital world," Pope Francis states, "can be an environment rich of humanity, a network not of wires but of people" and only those who go out of themselves in their communication can become a true point of reference to others" (No. 28)

New Way of Being Church in the Caribbean

After the presentation of the 'rapid developments' the Antilles document develops in a new chapter on a new way of being Church in the Caribbean which can be equally valid also beyond Christianity for other religions. A question at the beginning is: how do the transformations of today affect the Church and—as such—any religions? Here the authenticity of religions also in the digital world is called for which is reflected in our lives (No. 33). Also religions (the Church) need to establish a presence in the digital world so that they understand this new cultural frontier…and to see which challenges the 'digital thought' does pose to faith and theology (No. 34). Here the role of the family—in a narrow and broader sense—seems to be important (No. 35) and the role of modern media are to be considered as was done in a recent document of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) I Aparecida (Brazil) 2007 where the now Pope Francis was involved as the former Archbishop of Buenos Aires.

Dialogue as an essential way to build communion and communication (No. 38) which leads to "authentic integral human development" (No. 38) is further recommended. The so-called "social media" especially as reflected in "social networks" are seen as possibilities to facilitate relationships and promote the good of society: "there is no doubt that the digital milieu can be used as a way of building a society that is healthy and open to sharing, caring and serving one another" (No. 41).

For the bishops of the Antilles all this "requires a bold and courageous pastoral communications formation program… It requires people who are committed to the mission of the Church and who bring their professional knowledge and their depth of skills to the mission of the Church (Religions!) in the 21st century" (No. 44).

Communications Plan

As a consequence of all foregoing considerations, the document of the Antilles Bishops propose an "Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan" which is outlined in more detail in the following paragraphs of the paper (Nos. 45-59)

In the ***Conclusion*** of their considerations the bishops encourage the Catholics – but also all other people and religions to "be bold and courageous as we move forward. Let us open our minds and hearts to read the signs of the times and listen attentively to one another. Let us explore and discover new methodologies and possibilities for communicating faith and awakening our Caribbean culture to the needs of the poor and all those who strive to live an authentic human life in the 21st century" (No. 63).

**The following page contains the full text of the document* New Ways of Being Church in a Digital Milieu *excluding the appendix.*

DOCUMENT

NEW WAYS OF BEING CHURCH IN A DIGITAL MILIEU

A Pastoral Letter on Communications from the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference

6 August 2017

INTRODUCTION

1. Good News to the poor is the mission and goal of all pastoral communications (see Luke 4:18). Through signs, gestures, words, books, moving images, audio, and social communications, the Church has sought to proclaim her message so that all people will hear it in their own native language (see Acts 2:11). To be faithful to this mission of evangelizing communications to the people of the Caribbean today, we will need a new missionary spirit, one that is built upon participation, dialogue, and collaboration and one that speaks to the heart, soul, and religious imagination of our Antillean people. We need a new way of being Church!

2. It is the Lord who sends: Go proclaim—communicate—the Good News "and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them…' (Matthew 28:19). Jesus Christ himself communicates, in his mission, on all levels of human interaction. He preaches and teaches to the masses using stories, parables, and statements and shares in smaller groups with his apostles and disciples. He meets individuals like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and others in deep and very personal sharing. Evangelizing communication builds on this example of Jesus Christ, always trying to meet people where they are—at their level of knowledge, feeling, and understanding—to bring them from their own life experience closer to the Father and eternal life.

3. The parable of the Good Samaritan emphasizes the relationship possibilities presented by a heart imbued with charity, mercy, and compassion. If anything, the digital age, with its new opportunities and limitations, has helped us to be able to reflect on this relationship in new ways. The pastoral challenge to the digital era is to ensure that technology serves human interaction, multiplies the opportunities for social relationships, and thus highlights the human need and the Gospel value of being a neighbour.

4. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read: 'You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (1:8). The whole book of the Acts of the Apostles is a report on the continuation of the sending and ongoing communicating of God's Holy Spirit in the beginning of the Church.

5. Thus, evangelizing communication comprises all levels and means of communicating from interpersonal through group communication to the mass media and the modern means of communicating, through Internet, social media, and digital networks. It is the Church's ministry and mission to communicate the Good News of salvation and God's love to all of humanity. The Church's call to evangelize and her prophetic mission provide the Church with the challenge and opportunity to seek to influence the values, judgments, and actions of Caribbean society. In this way, the Church invites people to a public dialogue of faith and strives to create an atmosphere conducive to Christian living for all members of the Christian churches in the Caribbean.

6. For the Church, communication is not primarily about technology or efficiency. It is a spiritual responsibility. It is about persons communicating what is most precious, the call to be reconciled to God. 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:20). Communication for the Church is ultimately about building communion with God and unity among peoples. 'We are to do this through words of hope and deeds of love, that is, through our very way of life. Thus communication must lie at the heart of the Church community.'[1] As the Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication (Communio et Progressio) stated so eloquently: 'Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level it is the giving of self in love.'[2]

7. Seeing the unimaginable rapid developments in communication technology that have taken place in the twenty-five years since the publication of Dawn of a New Era: Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications (*Aetatis Novae*), we the bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC) wish to reflect

[1] Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Dawn of a New Era: Pastoral Instruction on Social 1 Communications (Aetatis Novae), 6.

[2] Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Unity and Advancement: Pastoral Instruction on the Means of 2 Social Communication (Communio et Progressio), 11; John 6:53.

upon the gift and challenge that contemporary communication has brought to our region and our people. Situating ourselves within this rich tradition of ecclesial reflection upon the rapid development of communication and its integral connection to mission, we celebrate the gift that the development of communication has been to people who live today. Yet we cannot help but notice the serious challenges that the rapid changes in technological development are posing to our Caribbean people and, indeed, to people all over the world. 'Inasmuch as digital exclusion is obvious, parishes, communities, Catholic cultural centres and educational institutions could foster the creation of network points and digital rooms to promote inclusion, developing new initiatives, and utilizing those already existing by viewing them positively.'[3]

8. It is our hope, in this pastoral letter, to offer a pastoral reflection on the gift and challenge of communications and the rapid development in technology that we are experiencing. Furthermore, we will propose the design of an integral pastoral communications plan for our AEC region to assist our dioceses to more effectively use the gifts of this new technological evolution, ensuring it will always bring Good News to the poor, the marginalized, and those most in need. Finally, we will offer concrete steps to ensure all of our dioceses harness the new opportunities that these emerging and new digital developments have brought us.

9. At the heart of this reflection is the pivotal shift that digital technological developments have brought to the processes through which groups and society communicate and interrelate, that is, the increased need for collaboration and the use of resources necessary to ensure the Church can realize its pastoral mission more efficiently, effectively, and intelligently, taking into consideration quality stewardship of our limited resources. In our fragmented Caribbean societies, each of us—laity, religious, priest, and bishop—labour in isolation while facing the monumental task of deepening our faith and transmitting it to the next generation. Within dioceses, departments work in an isolated way from each other, often duplicating resources but always under using the rich gifts and talents available in their fellow stewards for the Kingdom.

10. Communication is essentially giving our self in love and the building of communion for the sake of the Church's mission in our Caribbean region. Therefore, we must face the deficiencies of our current model of being Church

[3] V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, 'The Aparecida Document', 490.3

with our isolationist tendencies and embrace the opportunities that rapidly evolving digital technology is offering. Before committing to the use of digital resources, we need a conversion towards a new spirit, a new approach, a new way of being Church in the digital milieu. We also need to recognize that these rapid changes in technology are also altering the ways that people— our parishioners, and especially the youth— are gathering and processing information, expressing themselves, and creating relationships. This change provides us with a challenge as Church: how to place this technology at the service of evangelization.

11. Our region faces massive challenges. There is the spectre of growing poverty with the resultant pockets of underdevelopment; the rising threats posed by climate change, making our region the second most vulnerable in the world; the rising national debt of many of our nations; the high level of domestic violence and abuse that our people live with on a daily basis; the rising addiction to pornography; and the most fundamental challenge of passing the faith to the next generation. Confronted with these challenges, we cannot but realize the magnitude of the tasks facing the Church and her mission in our region. 'The Internet is no small factor in our conversation here. It is a simple instrument of communication, which one can choose to use, but it has evolved into a cultural "environment" that determines a style of thought, creating new territories and new types of education contributing also to the definition of a new way to stimulate the intelligence and to tighten relationships. It is a way to live in and organize our world. It is not a separate environment, but it is becoming ever more integrated into our everyday lives.'[4]

12. These challenges must be met by a firm resolve from all of us to ensure the Church continues to be a significant force shaping this civilization. This will only happen if we are willing to act in collaboration, work tirelessly, and use all of our gifts and talents for the sake of the Kingdom. What we are proposing here is nothing less than a personal, ecclesial, and cultural conversion, embracing anew the spirit of the Gospel while using the new evolving digital communication resources available in our time.

[4] Antonio Spadaro and Maria Way Cybertheology: Thinking Christianity in the Era of the Internet. Kin4 dle Edition.Sept19, 2014. p. 139.

RAPID DEVELOPMENTS

13. Twenty-five years ago, the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Communications issued a pastoral instruction, A Dawn of a New Era (*Aetatis Novae*). The document celebrated the rapid developments in communications technology since the publication of *Communio et Progressio* (1972) following the Second Vatican Council. The opening of this landmark document states:

> At the dawn of a new era, a vast expansion of human communications is profoundly influencing culture everywhere. Revolutionary technological changes are only part of what is happening. Nowhere today are people untouched by the impact of media upon religious and moral attitudes, political and social systems, and education.
> It is impossible to ignore, for instance, that geographical and political boundaries were both of very little avail in view of the role played by communications during the 'radical transformations' of 1989 and 1990, on whose historical significance the Pope reflects in *Centesimus Annus*.
>
> It becomes equally evident that *'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 communications 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'*.[5]

14. The text makes three critical points that are vital for our understanding of the relationship between communications technology and the prophetic imagination of a Caribbean Church. ***First***, the development was rapid and has influenced moral attitudes, political and social systems, and education; ***second***, the communications transformation was connected to political transformations; and, ***third***, the media are now the chief means of education, guidance, and inspiration for individuals, families, and societies at large.

15. The transformation that *Aetatis Novae* spoke of in the preceding twenty-five years now seems insignificant by comparison to the transformation in the twenty-five years since. In 1992, Trinidad and Tobago had just contracted

[5] AN 1.

its second TV station and was on the brink of Cable TV and the explosion of media outlets. Internet was not in the Caribbean in any significant way, only emerging for popular use around 1995. Neither were cell phones in popular use. For the most part, the communications industry still had a monopoly in which the emphasis was on connections, not content, and the general population were consumers of production by local big state and privately owned media houses. 16. The emergence of the Internet and opening up of a diversity of communication technologies have changed everything. In Chapter Two of his groundbreaking book *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas L. Friedman addresses the ten forces that flattened the world: (1) the collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989); (2) Netscape making the Web accessible to everyone (1995); (3) work flow software, allowing machines to speak to machines without humans; (4) uploading—YouTube, Facebook, blogs, and Wikipedia with the dawn of Web 2.0; (5) outsourcing[6] ; (6) offshoring—many Caribbean countries have offshore industries; (7) supply chaining, e.g., Wal-Mart; (8) insourcing, e.g., UPS; (9) informing, e.g., Google now receives 100 billion questions per month; and, (10) the 'Steroids'[7] —personal digital devices. Over three billion people use the Internet now; by 2020, 75 billion devices will be connected to the Internet. Twenty-four hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute.

17. The fact that the Internet, in all of its manifold forms and applications, has permeated every aspect of modern human society means this form of communication must be reflected upon not only sociologically, but also spiritually and theologically. Pope Benedict XVI wrote: 'The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young.'[8] Most of these transformations have directly affected the lives of Caribbean people whether we realize it or not. Our access to an enormous amount of knowledge via Internet portals and services has all but transformed the peoples of the Caribbean and our culture. We are no longer simply consumers of media. With a simple digital device, each person is potentially a producer of media.

[6] Outsourcing is a practice in which an individual or company performs tasks, provides services, or manufactures 6 products for another company—functions that could have been or is usually done in-house. Outsourcing is typically used by companies to save costs.

[7] These devices include: cell phones, iPods, computers, laptops, etc. They are called *steroids* because they help a 7 nation to become powerful.

[8] Pope Benedict XVI, World Communications Day Message, 2013.

18. Caribbean people, particularly our youth, upload and have a presence on any number of digital media platforms. As digital natives, our youth navigate the digital milieu with ease and creative precision and, of course, with tremendous frequency. Therefore, as Church, we desire to call forth the artistic giftedness of women and men within our faith communities to assist us in our mission in the digital milieu. In his Letter to Artists, Pope John Paul II wrote:

> In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art…. Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colors, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen.[9]

19. Artists have the ability to enkindle the religious imagination with a freshness that awakens minds and hearts to experience the Good News with a new richness. We encourage collaboration between our Caribbean theologians, artists, and writers and those with digital technical skills for exploring the endless possibilities that are available to us. 'The Church has always appealed to their [artists'] creative powers in interpreting the Gospel message and discerning its precise application in the life of the Christian community. This partnership has been a source of mutual spiritual enrichment.'[10]

20. In *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, Thomas Friedman updates his theory. Friedman argues convincingly that there are three forces that are accelerating: (1) Moore's Law and the rapid acceleration in technological development, (2) the market and rapid globalization, and (3) Mother Nature with climate change and biodiversity. The technological shift in 2007 with the emergence of the iPhone has accelerated this transformation, putting technological power in the hands of many more people. In the Caribbean, many people now have mobile technology as a primary way of interacting with their friends, society, the global community, and the economy. Friedman argues that the shaping forces are affecting five areas: the workplace, politics, geopolitics, ethics, and community. An ecclesial perspective would include the family, the Church, and schools.

[9] Pope John Paul II, Letter to Artists, 1999, 12.

[10] *Ibid*. 13.

21. The rapid transformations we are living through today are unlike anything humanity has ever seen. The consequences are dramatic. The Caribbean is being shaped by these forces and they are transforming who we are becoming—as a people and a region. This has dramatic consequences for how we are Church in a digital milieu. It affects the thinking of the faithful who now come armed with perceptions or expectations already shaped by social media communities.

22. 'It is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply "connected"; connections need to grow into true encounters.'[11] It calls us to consider new ways of being Church in a digital age.

23. In The Ever-Present Origin[12] , Jean Gebser connects new technology to a change in human 12 consciousness, change in the description of our self and change in political organization. He indicates that change in technology today is not just a change in the way we get out information or in the way we communicate with each other. It is more profoundly a change in society and in the way we understand the world and the description we give to ourselves—our identity. The invention of the printing press is now synonymous with mental consciousness—a scientific world view—the birth of industrialization and the emergence of the Nation State. The new technology, the printing press, had a direct impact on the Protestant Reformation. It was not only that the Bible had become more widely available because of the printing press. It was also that a new form of consciousness emerged—mental consciousness.[13] Mental consciousness led to the 13 rise of new sciences. The Enlightenment offered an entirely new way of perceiving the world. It also led to the rise of the nation-state and national religion. With the printing press and the Enlightenment, religion and national identity merged hand in hand. Hence the religion of the Caribbean Island is directly connected to the dominant European nation that colonised.

24. As new communication technologies emerged, new forms of consciousness, descriptions of our self and forms of political organization also emerged; cinema, radio, and television emerged with the rise and spread of Pentecostalism

[11] Pope Francis, World Communications Day Message, 2014.

[12] Jean Gebser, *The Ever Present Origin*, Ohio University Press, 1983.

[13] Consciousness is the state or quality of awareness, or, of being aware of an external object or something within oneself.

and evangelical Christianity. Religion was no longer identified by nation-state but by how people began to think alike within the nation-state. The new communication technologies brought with them many dramatic changes to our world including a new form of human consciousness—integral. With the emergence of Internet, even more dramatic changes emerged. Web 1.0 was a static place in which people were still consumers of media. Then came Web 2.0 in which YouTube and Facebook facilitated active participation, Web 3.0 in which the intuitive web of algorithms is becoming more sensitive to people's context, and the emerging Web 4.0 in which the sensitivity will be both online and offline. This rapid transformation of the Web is affecting the religious landscape of the Caribbean person. A greater percentage of our population is now claiming to be spiritual with no official religious affiliation. This rising religious trend is connected to the emergence of the new technologies. This is one of the primary reasons we, the bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC), are writing this pastoral letter. We encourage you to collaborate in reflecting on how rapid digital communications transformations are affecting our way of life, how we relate to each other, and how we live our faith within our Caribbean culture.

25. How we communicate faith to the current and next generation is now one of the single greatest challenges the Church in the Caribbean faces. We are no longer in the information age of Web 1.0. We are living in what is called the 'age of attention economy web 3.0'. This means the designing of algorithms whose purpose is to push at the individual only things of their keen interest. During every online search we do, the algorithms learn our interest and narrow the results to our taste. If our newsfeed was full of the boring and drab day-to-day stuff, we would stop looking at it. So, for example, Facebook shows us the most extreme occurrences in our social network for the simple reason that the extreme events draw the most attention. There are multiple messages competing at all times for the attention of our people. The multiplication of communications channels has exploded the possibilities of reaching people. It has also made it much harder to get and hold our Caribbean people's attention, especially if they have not previously shown interest in things religious online.

26. This emerging culture, reckoning with the acceleration of technological innovation, globalization, and climate change, offers us some clues to this new emerging value structure. This culture is based on Web 2.0 and 3.0.[14]

[14] For an exploration of the attention economy see: Mark Manson, 2014, In the

This is a highly participatory e-culture. This is a collaborative culture. But it is a culture in which messages are shaped by the individual's eprofile. We have far more access to information but sometimes less access to truth. Facts and truth are being threatened on the Internet today, especially in social media platforms like Facebook. Some people are misled to instantly believe what they read, often without verifying, making them vulnerable to 'fake news' and other deliberate manipulations by the so-called 'trolls' and 'bots'. We need to educate our people to access truth from this emerging culture in which 'likes' are more important than truth.

27. Those who navigate the digital milieu value authenticity highly. Traditional understanding of authority is called into question. This generation wants to keep it real. They want the real deal. They want our words and teaching to match up with our witness and lifestyles. As Pope Paul VI has said: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses".[15] We need to do what the Gospel has always asked: Live the faith! As Church, we need to find ways to form intentional disciples who commit, as imperfect as we all are to living the faith handed on to us, treating each other as neighbours and living the commandment of love. As Pope Francis encourages us: 'Communication is really about realizing that we are all human beings, children of God. I like seeing this power of communication as "neighbourliness."'[16]

28. 'The digital world', states Pope Francis 'can be an environment rich in humanity; a network not of wires but of people. The impartiality of media is merely an appearance; only those who go out of themselves in their communication can become a true point of reference for others. Personal engagement is the basis of the trustworthiness of a communicator. Christian witness, thanks to the internet, can thereby reach the peripheries of human existence.'[17]

29. In ***Novo Millennio Ineunte***, Pope John Paul II focused extensively on the spiritual foundations for engaging in pastoral planning that is essential for a deeper and responsible communication in the new millennium. 'It is important

Future Our Attention Will Be Sold. 14 https://markmanson.net/attention

[15] Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi #41, 1975.

[16] Pope Francis, World Communications Day Message, 2014.

[17] *Ibid.*

however', John Paul II wrote: 'that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of "doing for the sake of doing". We must resist the temptation by trying "to be" before trying "to do". In this regard we should recall how Jesus reproved Martha: "You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful" (Luke 10:41–42).'[18]

30. The Acts of the Apostles (4:23–40) indicates the way and shows the concrete steps for a Spirit-based communication. After Peter and John testified before the Sanhedrin and were released, the whole community thanked and prayed to God. 'As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook, and they were all filled with the holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness' (31). From this, we can deduce the three steps of which any pastoral and evangelizing pastoral communications plan has to be made: (1) prayer, (2) being filled with the Holy Spirit, and (3) speaking the Word of God boldly. Pastoral and evangelizing communication starts with prayer because it is God's communication. It further must be filled with his Spirit, which brings us the courage to proclaim like the timid apostles on Pentecost, whom the Spirit changed into courageous presenters of his word.[19]

31. In the next section of our pastoral letter, we explore the values of the emerging digital culture for new ways of being Church in the Caribbean.

A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH IN THE CARIBBEAN

32. From the time of the Second Vatican Council, we in the Caribbean have sought a Church that was inclusive, a Church in which the laity participate meaningfully, a Church that speaks to the soul and fires the religious imagination of the Caribbean person.

33. We have made many strides in this direction through Schools of Liturgy, Bible, Communications (CSCC)[20], Evangelization and Parish Renewal Programs. This model of Church ushered in our taking responsibility for

[18] Pope John Paul II, At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*), 15.

[19] Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, Communicating in Ministry and Mission, Third Edition. SVD Publications, Philippines, 2008, p. 45.

[20] Caribbean School for Catholic Communications

our Church, with the first Caribbean bishops and priests. It has served us well in nurturing the Church to our present time. However, the rapid digital communications transformations we are experiencing today require of us a deeper reflection on a model of Church in the 21st century. How do these transformations affect being Church today? What initiatives need we embrace to reflect and witness Gospel values within an expanding digital milieu within our Caribbean region? The Church needs to re-imagine how to communicate faith and to be authentic in our communications. We need to live what we proclaim, conscious of the influence that the digital milieu is weaving into the tapestry of emerging generations.[21]

34. In short, the Church needs to establish a presence in the digital world so that it understands this new cultural frontier—both to learn the culture and to propose the Good News to the digital natives. Failure in this mission may well threaten the life of the Church in our region. As Pope Benedict advised in his address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in 2011: 'It is not only a matter of expressing the Gospel message in contemporary language; it is also necessary to have the courage to think more deeply—as happened in other epochs—about the relationship between faith, the life of the Church and the changes human beings are experiencing…. what challenges does "digital thought" pose to faith and theology? What questions and requests?'

35. With all the bizarre circumstances of our Caribbean history, family has been one institution, imperfect as it is, in which our ancestors have engaged in culture building against all odds. The plantation system attempted to brutally eradicate family among the slaves. As B. W. Higman[22] has demonstrated, our ancestors were resilient in building culture around family. With this in mind, we are proposing a model of Church based on family. The Roman Catholic Church in the Caribbean is a family of missionary disciples, traveling on the journey to holiness, building a civilization of love, and proclaiming Good News

[21] Generation Z, the generation born after millennials, is emerging as the next big thing for market researchers, cultural observers, and trend forecasters. Right after this is Generation A. Born after 2008, they were born into the rapidly accelerating world.

[22] An Australian, he lived almost thirty years in Jamaica, teaching at the Mona campus of the University of the West 22 Indies. Higman's interest in food history began in the Caribbean and resulted in Jamaican Food: History, Biology, Culture (2008). Most of his earlier books were concerned with the history of slavery, and his most recent is A Concise History of the Caribbean (2011).

to the poor. Pope Francis said: 'Here too, parents are the primary educators, but they cannot be left to their own devices. The Christian community is called to help them in teaching children how to live in a media environment in a way consonant with the dignity of the human person and service of the common good.'[23]

36. **The Aparecida Document** challenges us to look more deeply into the issue of the family and the media. 'Most of the mass media now present us with new, attractive, fantasy-filled images, which, although everyone knows that cannot show the unifying meaning of all aspects of reality, at least offer the consolation of being transmitted in real time, live and direct, and with up to date information…. the information transmitted by the media often only distracts us.'[24] The document continues, 'Our cultural traditions are no longer handed on from one generation to the next with the same ease as in the past. That even affects that deepest core of each culture, constituted by religious experience, which is now likewise difficult to hand on through education and the beauty of cultural expressions. It even reaches into the family itself, which as a place of dialogue and intergenerational solidarity, had been one of the most important vehicles for handing on the faith.

37. 'The mass media have invaded every space and every conversation, making its way also into the intimacy of the home.'[25] 'Still, it is clear that these media cannot replace the need for more personal and direct dialogue.… We know that sometimes they can keep people apart rather than together, as when at dinnertime everyone is surfing on a mobile phone, or when one spouse falls asleep waiting for the other who spends hours playing with an electronic device. This is also something that families have to discuss and resolve in ways which encourage interaction without imposing unrealistic prohibitions.'[26]

38. Communications is also the solution to building unity as Pope Francis writes: 'The walls which divide us can be broken down only if we are prepared to listen and learn from one another. We need to resolve our differences through forms of dialogue which help us grow in understanding and mutual respect.'[27]

[23] Pope Francis, 49th World Communications Day Message, 2015.

[24] V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, 'The Aparecida Document', 38.

[25] Ibid. 39.

[26] Pope Francis, On Love in the Family (*Amoris Laetitia*), 2016, 278.

[27] Pope Francis, World Communications Day Message, 2014.

Dialogue is the way to build communion and the 27 civilization of love and to engage all people of good will in a respectful manner. Dialogue is also another way of speaking about salvation. *Aetatis Novae* states: Here, in the Word made flesh, God's self-communication is definitive. In Jesus' words and deeds the Word is liberating, redemptive, for all humankind. This loving self-revelation of God, combined with humanity's response of faith, constitutes a profound dialogue.'[28]

39. The dialogue has an end in mind. Pope Paul VI called that end 'authentic development'.[29] It is the development of all people, every person and every dimension of the human person. It is a process or a journey from less human to more human conditions. It integrates our work of charity with our journey to holiness, holding the dynamic tension between these two dimensions of the faith. Pope Benedict XVI recovered this notion, from Pope Paul VI in his encyclical ***Caritas in Veritate***[30] and stressed the point that integral development is the vocation of the Church and 30 affirmed that the whole Church, in all of her activities, is called to authentic integral human development. Exploring this idea Pope Paul VI says:

> What are truly human conditions? The rise from poverty to the acquisition of life's necessities; the elimination of social ills; broadening the horizons of knowledge; acquiring refinement and culture. From there one can go on to acquire a growing awareness of other people's dignity, a taste for the spirit of poverty (Matthew 5:3), an active interest in the common good, and a desire for peace. Then man can acknowledge the highest values and God Himself, their author and end. Finally, and above all, there is faith—God's gift to men of good will—and our loving unity in Christ, who calls all men to share God's life as sons of the living God, the Father of all men.[31]

40. In this text, Pope Paul VI explores how communications as dialogue are both Good News to the poor and also a journey to holiness. It is the movement from less human to more human, from material, moral, and spiritual scarcity to giving ourselves to God in the service of development of people. Being Good News to the poor needs to become a deep and profound spirituality for

[28] AN 6

[29] Pope Paul VI, On the Development of Peoples (*Populorum Progressio*), 14.

[30] Pope Benedict XVI, Love in Truth (*Caritas in Veritate*)

[31] PP 21

all of our people. This too is part of the journey of development. In South Africa, they will speak of '*Ubuntu*'—our interconnectedness as human beings—I am because you are; it is a call for radical generosity. In Trinidad, it is the heart of the concept of '*Guyap*'—where people of a village will come to build a house and the owner will cook for them as the only exchange.

41. Social media can also offer us opportunities for such a kind of neighbourly way of living. 'Social networks can facilitate relationships and promote the good of society, but they can also lead to further polarization and division between individuals and groups. The digital world is a public square, a meeting-place where we can either encourage or demean one another, engage in a meaningful discussion or unfair attacks.'[32] There is no doubt that the digital milieu can be used as a way of building a society that is healthy and open to sharing, caring, and serving one another. Our communication messages must share the joy and the hope of the Gospel that comes from being unconditionally loved by Christ. An authentic voice speaks from the heart. 42. In the Gospel, Jesus gives us one commandment—Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another' (John 13:34). Jesus gives the test of discipleship as the visible sign of love: 'This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:35). This love must be communicated through our genuine commitment to development of all people. This is the Good News to the poor. This is inclusive of our commitment to nonviolence for which we need a formation process.[33]

43. These are the challenges the Church in the Caribbean faces today. The Caribbean Church needs to see the laity's role evolve with a robust collaborative and participative encounter within the Church and greater awareness of our co-responsibility for the Church's mission. Pope Benedict XVI says:

> Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but, as people who are really 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and acting. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops.[34]

[32] Pope Francis, 50th World Communications Day Message, 2016.

[33] Joseph Harris, CSSP, "Foundations for Pastoral Leadership and Non-Violence", delivered to Theology in the Caribbean Today Conference, 2001.

[34] Pope Benedict XVI, Message to the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International

44. This requires a bold and courageous pastoral communications formation programme for our laity to become missionary disciples in the digital milieu. It requires people who are committed to the mission of the Church and who bring their professional knowledge and their depth of skills to the mission of the Church in the 21st century.

A Pastoral Application:
Designing an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan

45. Our current Caribbean cultural context described above is being influenced by the rapidly evolving digital cultural milieu. In the face of this reality, the Catholic Church in the Caribbean, needs to embrace a bold, prophetic, missionary stance for both understanding the digital milieu for communicating faith and for re-imagining how to nurture collaborative ministries within the Antilles Episcopal Conference and each member diocese. This initiative offers the potential to maximize the impact we can exercise for faith formation and development of peoples and for nurturing a profound sense of faith community within our region. Collaboration, communion, and commitment are the foundational blocks for a healthy Catholic faith community within each parish, diocese, and the Antilles Episcopal Conference.

46. Pastoral communications planning is not something that a few people with greater status, power, and authority do for the rest of us. Quality and effective pastoral communications planning animates vitality and vibrancy within the diocese and parish. The creation of an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan is to be a cooperative exercise, involving all the ministries of the diocese (family, liturgy, communications, social justice, catechesis, Catholic education, vocations, permanent diaconate formation, etc.) around three values: collaboration, communion, and commitment.

47. The Integrated Pastoral Communications Planning Process will identify the diocese's specific goals and priorities for integrating varying forms of communication resources to support and promote the diocese's mission and vision. We seek to increase participation via effective communication for practicing and non-practicing Catholics across the Caribbean. Effective communication includes listening—our people must be listened to, consulted, and engaged by the Church, priests, and ministry leaders. How are the

Forum of Catholic Action, 10 August 2012.

messages being received? Effective communication must occur in homilies, liturgies, and celebrations. How effective we are in communicating will also depend on the quality of our submissions and our actions—are we walking the talk? This builds authenticity. The digital world is an environment in which people do not pay attention or believe simply because a Church leader is speaking.

48. In his first World Communications Day Message in 2014, Pope Francis said:

> 'We have to be able to dialogue with the men and women of today…. We are challenged to be people of depth, attentive to what is happening around us and spiritually alert. To dialogue means to believe that the "other" has something worthwhile to say, and to entertain his or her point of view and perspective.'

49. Nothing is more characteristic of an Integrated Pastoral Communications Planning Process than its collaborative nature. This is planning that we do together within and among ministries— based on the gifts with which our parish and diocese have been blessed and the needs of the faith community. Finally, vital faith communities have an amazing ability to sense and respond to change. Their members understand the need for both stability and adaptability. Faith communities are 'ever new and ever the same' because they have developed ways of thinking about what must always stay the same and what must always be in transition.

50. The (arch)bishop is the cornerstone of the Integrated Pastoral Communications Strategy and is as essential to the process as to any successful integration of a new system into the diocese. An Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan for the AEC is important for the future of the Catholic Church and the Church's diverse ministries because 'the use of media is now essential in evangelization and catechesis.' The plan is focused on strengthening all the ministries within the dioceses and throughout our Caribbean region through improving and enhancing communication.

51. The bishops' pastoral priority is the New Evangelization, with the purpose of the pastoral plan for communications being to foster a theology and spirituality of uniting the AEC region. The Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan, therefore, plays a key role in creating the framework for all commissions (at both the diocesan and AEC levels) to act in a coordinated way towards the fulfillment of the mission and priorities of the AEC bishops.

52. **Collaboration is vital for the process. It means**

1. The identification, release, and union of all the gifts, particularly those that are central to the ministry within the parish, diocese, and Conference for the sake of mission.
2. 'But one and the same Spirit produces all of these [spiritual gifts], distributing them individually to each person as he wishes. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:11– 12).
3. Taking quality time to discern, dialogue, pray, and to be open to sharing resources.
4. Keeping in mind people do not fear change, people fear loss!

53. **The integration of new digital communication technologies into our ministries reminds us that they**

- ➢ Are emerging tools (resources) for transferring and processing information (Web 1.0) and interaction between people (Web 2.0) but, more importantly, the sensitivity to people's context and needs (Web 3.0), which also affects, in a growing way, any Christian community.
- ➢ Require the Catholic Church (parishes, dioceses, and the Antilles Episcopal Conference) to cultivate 'an active, listening presence' (AN 8) so as to better understand the subtle needs and points of interest of our Caribbean people.
- ➢ Can, through careful understanding of the subtleties of the different generations, help us engage in a prophetic and inspiring social media presence that is responsive to where our people are and what interests them.
- ➢ Offer opportunities for the Church communications to tell the Church's story, interpret the events and structures of the world, and maintain good public relations by providing accurate information and news of the Church.
- ➢ Can enhance quality faith formation and should be present in cyberspace not only to present itself but rather to help and serve people in their lives and way to God.
- ➢ Call for a collaborative approach within the different communities and those responsible for their leadership.

- ➢ Call for the Catholic Church to be innovative and flexible, adapting as the social media culture evolves.
- ➢ Offer opportunities to design programmes to better understand youth and develop awareness and training for new technical (social media) possibilities, especially in the fields of learning, sharing, and support, but also in e-learning and evangelization.
- ➢ Challenge us to be willing and determined to bridge the 'digital divide' that still affects many Caribbean communities.
- ➢ Awaken us to be aware of the moral implications of the new digital resources (technologies) and help move us towards a proper approach to serve the wellbeing of human society.
- ➢ Call us to be alert to the psychological and spiritual implications of these rapid developments on the world, culture, taste, and expectations of young people.
- ➢ Call us to research and understand what these developments imply for our ministry, online and offline. Given, for example, that attention is becoming more limited and precious, what are the implications of this for homilies, for the way we carry out Church communication offline?
- ➢ Need to be learned and used actively by all 'communicators' in the diocese—including priests, persons in ministry, and believers.

54. **The Vision of the Antilles Episcopal Conference's Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan (IPCP)** cultivates quality collaboration, communion, and commitment within and among the dioceses of the region in order to promote a dynamic Catholic social communications media presence within the Caribbean.

55. **Desired Outcomes**

- ➢ To proactively use the expanding social communications media milieu for creating a robust, prophetic Catholic Church presence within the Caribbean for addressing the emerging pastoral needs within the Church and society.
- ➢ To inspire and stimulate a 'new mature spirit of living faith' within our Caribbean faith communities through the support of diverse means of social communications media.
- ➢ To integrate social communications media education into all ministry formation programs (e.g., catechesis, New

Evangelization, liturgy, social justice), inclusive of Permanent Deaconate and Seminary Formation Programs.

➢ To establish the Catholic Church's Caribbean Social Communications Network of creative thinkers or 'imagineers' for keeping abreast of the rapidly evolving social communications media research and developments for connecting diverse peoples within our Caribbean culture.

➢ To encourage, support, and reward diocesan ministers to pioneer new methodologies by collaborating within the diocese to support a fresh perspective for implementing an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan (financial, technical, and personnel support).

➢ To ensure that a comprehensive demonstration of collaboration, communion, and commitment is woven into the life and fabric of the mission and vision of the AEC and each member diocese.

56. Why is an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan for the AEC (Arch) Dioceses important for the future of the Catholic Church and Catholic Communications in the Caribbean?

1. 'The Church therefore must maintain an active, listening presence in relation to the world' (AN8).
2. '…the Church always must communicate its message in a manner suited to each age and to the cultures of particular nations and peoples, so today it must communicate in and to the emerging media culture' (AN 8).
3. 'The Church needs to be concerned for, and present in, the world of communication, in order to dialogue with people today and to help them encounter Christ. She needs to be a Church at the side of others, capable of accompanying everyone along the way. The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God.'[35]

57. **According to *Aetatis Novae*, an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan means**

1. Integrated = involves all forms of communications media.

[35] Pope Francis, 48th World Communications Day Message, 2014.

2. Integrated = involves all entities of ministry within the Church (Arch)Diocese.
3. Integrated = is a comprehensive plan for quality 'stewardship' of both finances and resources for animating and supporting the vision and mission of the Catholic Church.
4. 'Catholic media work is not simply one more programme alongside all the rest of the Church's activities: social communications have a role to play in every aspect of the Church's mission' (AN 17).
5. 'Church personnel require at least a working grasp of the impact which new information technologies and mass media are having upon individuals and society' (AN 18).
6. It is focused on 'strengthening' all the ministries within the dioceses. It is a 'collaborative ministry'.
7. 'We therefore strongly recommend that dioceses and episcopal conferences or assemblies include communications component in every pastoral plan' (AN 21).
8. 'Furthermore, communications ought to be taken into account in formulating and carrying out all other pastoral plans, including those concerning social service, education, and evangelization' (AN 23).

58. Steps for Developing an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan

59. There are four key steps for navigating toward an effective Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan. Each of these steps involves collaborative dialogue, discernment, and action for paving the way for the following phase.

1. Research Phase

a. Explore what is currently 'active' within the diocese or the region
b. Explore what is currently 'available' within the diocese or the region
c. Be familiar with and appreciate the new social media communication culture
d. Study the technological profile of those in ministry and those in the pew as this has significant implications for communications and ministry online and offline
e. Address opportunities and challenges

2. Design Phase

a. Sharing of resources (collaboration/networking with 'all ministries' within the diocese)
b. Dialoguing among the various diocesan ministries for effective, collaborative use of social media resources
c. Educating (preparing individuals for intellectual and professional social media development—CSCC); promoting 'professional training in the culture of communications in all pastoral agents and believers' (The Aparecida Document, n. 486b).
d. Providing spiritual formation of those engaged with the Church's media (retreats and spiritual formation via traditional + virtual)
e. Networking with secular media to support the Church's 'integrated pastoral communications plan'
f. Advancing new 'synergy' for public relations to support 'all the ministries of the local Church'
g. Supporting ongoing social media research for visioning the Church's ministry in a digital milieu.

3. Implementation Phase

a. Put into action
b. Define evaluation criteria
c. Continue networking/collaboration (flow of communications)
d. Praxis for impact—overall mission/vision

4. Evaluation Phase

a. Determine if the IPCP design/implementation addressed the mission and vision of the parish, diocese, or AEC
b. If not, how to adjust, adapt, or shift an element of the design
c. If yes, how to enhance, strengthen, and expand implementation
d. Confirm and lay out the next stage development/ implementation

Conclusion

60. We realize that the Church is immersed in a new communications milieu. This milieu has vast implications for how people are being formed, informed, and transformed in the present day. This same milieu is affecting not only how the Church communicates faith today but how we are to be Church in the 21st century. Without a doubt, opportunities and challenges lie ahead of us. The Church needs to engage in careful reflection, discernment, and creative pastoral action to ensure that its presence contributes to the reality of the digital milieu in a prophetic manner. This is most effectively realized when we work in collaboration, communion and commitment with one another.

61. Pope Francis wrote: 'It is not technology which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal. Social networks can facilitate relationships and promote the good of society, but they can also lead to further polarization and division between individuals and groups.'[36] The choice is ours to make. How we prepare those who minister and serve the Church is not a luxury but a growing necessity today.

62. 'In a world like this, media can help us to feel closer to one another, creating a sense of the unity of the human family which can in turn inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure a more dignified life for all.'[37]

63. Let us be bold and courageous as we move forward. Let us open our minds and hearts to read the signs of the times and listen attentively to one another. Let us explore and discover new methodologies and possibilities for communicating faith and awakening our Caribbean culture to the needs of the poor and all those who strive to live an authentic human life in the 21st century. We must be committed to our communication mission to help people experience conversion through God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis articulates our vision well. He says: Let us boldly become citizens of the digital world. The Church needs to be concerned for, and present in, the world of communication, in order to dialogue with people today and to help them encounter Christ. She needs to be a Church at the side of others, capable of accompanying everyone along the way. The revolution taking place in

[36] Pope Francis, 50th World Communications Day Message, 2016.
[37] Pope Francis, 48th World Communications Day Message, 2014.

communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God.[38]

64. We entrust this bold initiative to the maternal care of Mary our mother, the mother of the Word who became flesh. The first one, who, through her yes received the Word. She was the first to present the Word to the world. We beseech her intercession as we seek to make her Son manifest to all Caribbean people through quality collaboration, communion, and commitment within and among the dioceses of the region.

[38] *Ibid.*

NOTE

CALL FOR PAPERS

10th ARC Annual International Roundtable

"Religious Communication in Multicultural Asia:
Realities, Experiences, Challenges"

Saint John's University, Ladprao, Bangkok, Thailand

October 8-10, 2018

The Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication (ARC) is preparing its 10th Annual International Roundtable to be held at St. John's University in Bangkok with the theme "Religious Communication in multicultural Asia: Realities, Experiences, Challenges." The subtitles of this theme suggest three groups of research possibilities:

1. Realities: which describe but also analyze and project existing situations of social communication in and for religions in Asian countries.
2. Experiences refer to initiatives and situations of social communication by and in religions in Asia: how and when do communication activities in and for religion come into play with which effects and consequences? Do they influence religious activities and perspectives? When? How?
3. Challenges show the consequences from data and experiences and how to 'respond' to them like for special groups like refugees, political and moral pressures or other urgent situations.

We invite scholars to propose and present papers and studies taking up this concern in not only describing communication situations of religions but also evaluating them in view of population, cultural traits, history as well as in view of means, geographical and technical situations and personal experiences and challenges in a digital shrinking world.

This can be studies on communications needs, ways and means in their role and experience 'ad extra' as well 'ad intra' and reflected in the reality of the lives of the people. These 'experiences' are also to be placed and related

to respective cultural diversities and realities of groupings and respective environments, social needs and challenges. They can also be related to different age groups of a population—from youth to senior citizens—but also their social/educational status and their communication role and possibilities and expectations of respective populations:

- They can focus on different ways, means and experiences of Religion as content, as way of living but also as determined by a cultural environment…
- How and how far does Communication influence or even determine the culture/ behavior of people and their interaction with each other?
- Who are the main communicators within a political/religious system and how do they 'enact' interpersonal, social, ritual communication?
- Do existing social structures promote or hinder religious communication of groupings or parts of society? Which means are 'used' with which success or failures?
- What are the roles and experiences in communication of (religious) institutions or groupings?
- Who are the main 'communicators' or representatives within a given group? Where do their main 'influences' lie? What communicative 'role' do they or should they play?
- Any relations between social communication of religion and political structures or other concerns of society?
- Any communication between different religions or religious groups? Any cooperation on and of common concerns to be expressed and lived as a joint 'activity'?
- Any existing or planned special academic research in the field and possible results?

Timings:

Abstracts are expected on or before May 22, 2018. Final Papers should be submitted on or before August 28, 2008.

ARC Roundtables are limited to only 25 participants with their approved paper presentations. Accommodation and participation are free and papers presented might be published in *Religion and Social Communication*, the journal of the Center.

Submission and contacts:

ARC Director: Dr. Franz-Josef Eilers, svd arceilers@gmail.com;
ARC Asst. Director: Dr. Anthony Le Duc, svd leducsvd.arc@gmail.com;
ARC Secretary: Kenneth E. Rayco arcstjohns.bkk@gmail.com

BOOK NOTES

Elea, Ilana and Lothar Mikos (Eds.). Young & Creative. Digital Technologies Empowering Children in everyday life. International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media. Gothenburg: Nordicom,, 2017. 225 pp.

This book "presents cases of children and young people being actively involved when creating, sharing, and responding to media: what are they doing when the engage with media as do-it-yourself creators and producers?" (Introduction). It is the concern of this collection of 18 articles showing the "passion for creating and sharing" of young people. The editors are asking ask: How do young people "engage in participatory and collaborative social contexts"? With their collection they present examples of "creative experiences in classroom, from daycare to elementary school and international projects and festivals."

The contributions of the book are placed into five sections, starting with three articles on "Creativity" to be followed by contributions under "The Creative Youtubers," "Expressions of Creativity Among Children and Youth," "Collecting and Sharing Creativity" to be concluded with the section "Training Teachers to Spark Young People's Creativity."

The authors of the different presentations are as well as the editors from different countries like Brazil and Germany in a Swedish publication. The fact that the contributors also present different countries and continents shows the intercultural dimension of the concern about developing young people in their communicative talents. From Asia, Japan and Korea are 'represented.' The book stimulates and encourages to a further development and better understanding of the new and broad communication world children are born into today. It is an example which could also be developed also in single countries also as a challenge for religions.

Vos, Tim P. and Francois Heinderyckx (Eds.). Gatekeeping in Transition. New York: Routledge, 2015. 278 pp.

Gatekeeping used to be the 'privilege' of journalists to select and present news items for publication which they felt to be important for their readership. This was in a time where a 'teleprinter' in the newspaper was the main source for

incoming news. This changed completely when through the Internet everybody had an own access to news and information. No need any more for selection or restrictions for any news. Does this now mean that "gatekeeping" is past and "out"? This publication indicates already in its title new directions in the field. Gatekeeping is not 'dead' but only "in transition" and calls for "re-imagining" gatekeeping as a "concept in the digital area" Here it is seen and conceived rather as a study "about the construction of news and public affairs discourse" (p. 7). It studies beside others the "patterns of news consumption" (p. 10) and also the different "media gates" which exist and also their audiences. In this scenario also research engines are considered as "news gatekeepers in their own right" (p.12) and also the role of "digital media" is considered.

It is the goal of this book with contributions of some 13 authors to "highlight the divers approaches, styles and topics that merit examination through the lens of gatekeeping theory" (p. 13). It is the conviction of the editors of this volume—one of them from the United Sates and one from Belgium—that "the theoretical concept of Gatekeeping remains a relevant framework for exploring how news terns out the way it does. It is also emerging as a relevant means for exploring how and what news makes its way to audiences" (p. 19).

The 13 individual contributions of the book—by authors from the US but also from Belgium, Finland, England and Australia—are grouped under the following five sections: 1. Thinking and Rethinking Gatekeeping; 2. Individual Level: The New Gatekeepers; 3. News Routines: New and Old; 4. News Organizations – or Lack thereof; 5. Social Institutions: Gatekeeping the Gatekeepers; 6. Social Systems Near and Far; and finally the conclusion "Gatekeeping Theory Redux" by editor Heinderyckx of the Free University of Brussels.

All contributions are individually backed up with a list of resources. The book concludes with an Index of subjects and names.

Wood, Andrew F. and Matthew J. Smith. Online Communication. Linking Technology, Identity & Culture. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2015. 245 pp.

This publication is not a textbook or a dictionary in the field but rather a resource publication which in some 10 chapters which highlights the

main dimensions and implications of online communication in a solid and academically responsible way. The ten chapters of the book go from "Using Technology to Communicate in New Ways" via forming online identities ("The Self Among Other") to "Internet Culture and Critique." It discusses concerns like "forming online identities, relating online and "communicating in virtual communities" to "rebuilding corporations online," "carving alternative spaces" and the role of popular culture and respective online expressions.

All presentations are based on serious academic studies and data in the field which in this combination are hardly found somewhere else. This is further consolidated through a reference list at the end of every chapter which helps for deepening and further studies of the respective concerns. Beside the actual presentation, every chapter concludes not only with a summary but gives also a glossary for the main subjects presented, a list of topics for discussion and references but also an ethical inquiry and a special 'box' with "Online Communication and the Law." The general presentations of the book are further enriched with 'text boxes' on special concerns and expressions in fields treated in the respective chapters. In this way the book is a treasure for anybody studying and related to this field. It was first published in 2005 by Lawrence Erlbaum in Grand Rapids but is here in its second edition ten years later by Routledge.

Brandshaw, Paul. The Online Journalism Handbook. Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age. 2nd Edition, Milton Park: Routledge, 2018. 358 pp.

This publication is every else than the usual 'How to do' textbook in journalism. It starts with an overview of the rapid developments in the field from'traditional' journalism to the field being open to everybody who has the proper technical device. The traditional is reduced to a 'specialization' though basic journalistic principles still apply: now 'journalism' becomes 'social'—meaning to become part of overall society, something nobody expected when the fathers of the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church already with the concept of *social communication* (1964) which they proposed in their document *Inter Mirifica* for the approach of the Church. This, even up till today, is not fully understood and realized even by the people concerned at a time where everybody speaks about *social* media which are actually much more than just *media* as mere technology.

While traditional journalism was concerned about words and texts, pictures as news and their proper placement on 'paper,' online journalism does not deny this but covers other much broader dimensions with other platforms for communication like web, social media, apps and life blogging with 'mobile journalism' as well as audio, video, data and interactive codes and also with 'user generated' content. This book covers all these concerns quite extensively and in a well edited way. Every chapter starts with an overview of the chapter objectives, followed by a listing of the respective content under factual subtitles and special themes in separate 'boxes' concluding with a summary, proposed activities, further reading, online resources and a chapter related bibliography.

The role of 'online journalists' is described as "the ability to connect individuals to provide a shared experience that helps to debunk myths and enlightens individuals, while also offering a platform for a variety of voices to reach the truth about news events" (p. 156).

The twelve chapters of the book present the changing listings, business and technologies of journalism followed by extensive chapters on "Finding leads and sources online," "Writing for the Web," "Writing for social media and chat apps," "Liveblogging and mobile journalism," as well as "Online audio

and video," "Data journalism," "Interactivity and code" and "Community, social media management and user-generated content."

The book with a wealth of data is based on British experiences but will be of help far beyond also in other countries especially for Asia with some countries in the forefront indicated here though others are still to expect such developments. A special chapter on online media law in the book can also be inspiring for scholars of other countries.

The book has also a "companion website" and an index (pp. 345-358) which makes the publication even more useful beyond the well organized chapters and for further developments. The publication must be considered as a 'landmark' in its field.

BOOK REVIEWS

Horsfield, Peter. From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. 322 pp.

To present "a history of Christianity and media" from Jesus to the Internet is not an easy task and can hardly be accomplished in a one volume work as is attempted here. Some 2000 years are covered in 13 chapters, beginning with Jesus, over the 'Gentiles' to the creation of the Church, Christianity in the Empire, Latin translations, the East and through the Middle Ages into a "New Millennium," the Reformation and 'Modern World,' with "Electrifying Sight and Sound" to the "Digital Era."

What Peter Horsfield, from the Uniting Church in Australia and a long standing Christian Communication expert, attempts here is unique and to be appreciated, though quite some details and their presentation need also to critically be evaluated. Especially the first part of this book should be recommended since there are very few writings and studies on early Christianity, the so-called "Fathers" in view of religious communication from before the Reformation in the 16th century. The ministry of Jesus Christ but also the Acts of the Apostles have hardly been addressed and studied under the perspective of social communication as well also the early times till up the 6th century with figures like Sts. Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory the Great and other Church Fathers.

Every chapter of the book is well documented for the sources used but —and this seems to be a general weakness of the presentation—almost all of the "sources" are taken from secondary literature and not from a fresh and new look and analysis of originals. Thus for example, Augustine who comes from rhetoric and this way must be considered also a communications scholar already even from the time before his baptism is presented in general terms (p.103 ff.); but not in his attempts to "translate" semiotics/rhetoric into biblical perspectives as he does e.g. in his first three chapters (books) of his *Doctrina Christiana* and in applying the fourth chapter of the same book to Church preaching and thus 'creating' the basis for the theological discipline of "homiletics." Also, his *De catechzandis rudibus* as a concrete advice how to 'teach'—communicate—Faith are not even mentioned or evaluated under the author's perspective of media. Simlar things can be said of others from the Patristic time like Pope Gregory the Great (+604) whose *Pastoral Rule*

which (p. 108, based on Kueng 1994) is called generally "a manual of pastoral practice" overlooking the fact that the by far longest chapter of this influential book presents rules for preaching to some 40 different pairs of listeners like the sick and the healthy, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the forward and the timid etc. … which in our time would come down to very concrete "audience analysis."

Already in the beginning of Horsfield's Book there seems to be a dichotomy indicated between the "peasant" Jesus and the "sophisticated" Paul to make Jesus "Gentile" but there seems to be no word about the important and historical "communicative" happening of the early Christian community which is reflected in the reports, the discussions, final decisions and proposals of the Council of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles (Chapter 15) whose results were finally communicated through personal "reporters" to the different aprts of the community in Antioch and beyond.

The 322-page book reads sometimes over longer stretches like an editorial of a newspaper mixing data with opinions or opinionated presentations which would have no place in a strictly academic work. Fortunately, the sources used by the author are properly indicated. They show quite a different level of objectivity and go from more thorough studies to seemingly tour guides or other 'promotional' or opiniated sources. One example is the use of J.D. Crossan's book *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (1994) on Jesus in his media contest (Footnotes 21,23,24,35,38, 39). In general, however, the almost 20 pages references reveal quite a richness of mostly secondary sources.

The book calls itself in the subtitle *A History of Christianity and Media* and the expressions "media" or "mediation" are used throughout and explained as " part of a conglomerate of technological and non-technological social mediation.. by which people make meaning in their lives" (p.1). This approach is further explained in a section "What do we mean by Media" (p.4f) saying that "this study is that social reality itself is a mediated phenomenon, a communication ecology in which individual and social exchanges take place…." If this is the case why still using the expression 'media' or 'mediation' which by definition refer to means and therefore are always in the danger of an 'instrumental" expression! Media as means are only <u>one</u> part of a broader process which probably be better called simply 'communication' where media are just only *one* part while the whole of society with its facets is much

broader reflected or even more in the expression "*Social* Communication" as the communication of and in human society. Here realities like for example architecture, but also rituals and ways of life are communicative expressions of humans without being placed in the straightjacket of "media." Here also James Carey's concept and description of "ritual communication" comes in which is much more than media which this way would also include the life and communicative expressions of religions. Media and even "mediatization" is only *one* aspect of the broader process of communicating in human society!

This extensive book of Peter Horsfield is a good initiative for historical insights on Christian communication in general, but not yet a professionally detailed presentation which will need many more interested authors and researchers especially for the so-called "Patristic" period of history. For the time since the Reformation in 1517 there are already quite some studies especially also beyond the English language publications like the German study on the printing activities of the Catholic Church in Germany till 1520 by Falk (1878; Eilers 2014) and others like a study on the printing activities of the Roman Propaganda Congregation since 1626 (Henkel 1977) or a detailed study on the Roman 'Index' (Wolf, 2007) or another academic work *From the Bad to the Good Press* by Michael Schmolke (1971) about Roman Catholic communication attempts from the middle of the 19th to the 20th century or on Christian printing activities especially in Asian countries.

The present book of Horsfield gives a good overview and is a good beginning. But a less "opinionated" or even biased presentation based on solid original sources and studies would have been more helpful and also academically more valuable. It would be very much appreciated if the present book would "trigger" the begin of a series of more solid historical studies of the field.

Franz-Josef Eilers. svd

Brooks, Brian S. and James L. Pinson. The Art of Editing in the Age of Convergence. Eleventh Edition. New York/London: Routledge, 2018. 409 pp.

This book on editing was published for the first time already in 1971. It has not lost its importance over the years and is now updated and partly re-written again in its 11th edition. The title *The Art of Editing in the age of Convergence* indicates already the direction. The "convergence" indicates already in the title the "revolution in the way news is produced and consumed" (p. 9) which demands a new perspective and way beyond the basics of editing which are, however, still at the center: a good editor also today has to separate facts from fiction, to know and evaluate the source of his information and also determine their credibility. With this basic process and the new technical possibilities for 'transmission' the role of the editor shifts from being a "gatekeeper" who used to determine what when and where a news is "released" to be a "guide." In the past the editor was the one who had privileged access to news and information and to decide what, where, how and when to publish. Now, everybody has access to every kind of 'news' and its 'publication' but might not be able to properly 'edit' and evaluate it according to source, content and credibility.

The new ways of "convergence' of the ways and means of communication do not, however, abolish the need for proper editing but rather demand it—though in different ways according to means and digital possibilities of our times. In fact, even the simple consumer of every kind of 'news and information' needs a basic ability to properly 'edit' a 'news' in order to determine its credibility an value for profession and life. In this way the "art of editing' is needed even far beyond any professionals as well as beyond the press including all other communication means like broadcasting including the 'social' ones and the "web".

This new edition of the *Art of Editing* presents its content in four parts: after some introductory general considerations in the first part on "Editing in the Age of Convergence" the chapter two presents the "Fundamentals of Editing" in distinguishing from the general editing process details "for the big picture," for "Legality, Ethics and Propriety," for "Grammar and Usage," for "Style, Spelling and Tightening" and finally integrating the Macro and Micro within the editing process (pp. 27 to 231). This is followed—in part 3—with the visual side of editing: headlines, titles, captions and types.

The book concludes with a chapter on "Editing for Different Media" including beyond newspapers, magazines and newsletters, the Web, broadcast media and other fields.

The book is full of concrete data and information for praxis including also a section on editing "Religion Stories" to secure a correct terminology in writing about and from different religions (p. 222 f.). Every chapter of the volume also ends with a listing of suggested websites and readings which, however, is confined to US American sources. The numbering of the pages is now placed at the middle of the page instead of the bottom or the head which seems to make it more easy to find and use the pages.

The content of the publication confirms the fact that forms and also the sources of information might change but not the basic rules of editing and the basic principles on which they are based.

The volume presents also a 12 page glossary and an extensive index. This is an essential book for any editor which in the new edition is even more important considering the many changes in our communication environment.

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Bruns, Axel, Gunn Enli and Eli Skogerbo, Anders Olof Larsson, and Christian Christensen (Eds): The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics. New York: Routledge, 2016. 537 pp.

This publication originates not in the United States or even in Britain. From the five editors of this Companion, four are from Scandinavia and one from Australia which is also reflected in the 37 contributions of this volume which are presented under three sections: First are some more general considerations on "Theories of Social Media and Politics," followed by "Political Movements" and finally "Political Campaigns." The presentations not only 'report' but also in many cases also value initiatives and experiences. They consider the interdependency of politics and media: how social media intersect with the broader political and electoral process. The first section considers current and emergent theories on social media and politics and

their 'realization around the world: how movements adapt to social media for political campaigning is considered especially in the third part of the companion.

The contributions from different countries and occasions show the growing use and importance of 'social' media which are 'nourished' for example by a growing "personalization of politics" in being more focused and thus more 'concrete' than the usual (mass) media. In social media " everything we do is tagged to our identities: the posts, the likes, the links, and posts we share, the things we purchase online, the articles we read, our tagging identities and the things we are tagged in…" Identity is created by linking and sharing information" (p. 256). This actually holds true not only for politics but also in some way for religions and religious practices though this is not said in this book but somehow implied.

The quality of the different contributions differs in quality and information content which can be expected by 37 contributions of the volume, written by some 70 different authors. Some of the texts are just descriptive while others are more analytic by analyzing situations and possible consequences.

Asian countries represented in these studies, especially in the second and third section of the book, are Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, Singapore, India. China, Korea and Taiwan.

This companion is on "Social Media and Politics." Many of the insights and experiences from these fields can also be applied to religions and religious communities of Asia which in a growing way are not only 'exposed' to the new digital developments but are rather part of it and need to take them up and 'translate' traditional ways of communicating into the developing and already existing social networks of modern society.

The 537-page volume has also a short index and a list of the different contributors and their academic backgrounds.

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Defleur, Melvin L. Mass Communication Theories: Explaining Origins, Processes, and Effects (hardcover). London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 358 pp.

Anybody who has been studying mass media in the United States in the last 40 years has come across the name Melvin L. DeFleur as one of the pioneers in the field. Starting already with his *Theories of Mass Communication* in the late 1970s, he has several later publications, partly published with some companion authors. His whole life and studies were devoted to these fields. This last publication on mass communication theories explains the origins, processes and effects was originally published in 2010 by another publishing house (Pearson) is here presented in an (updated?) hard-bound edition. This new impressive book should also somehow be considered as his legacy to the field after his death on February 13, 2017. He himself explains the purpose of the publication as to first present and explain the origins and content of the various theories of mass communication by describing and explaining the basic ideas of the theories presented. He admits that he "truly enjoyed writing this book" with which he hopes that it provide "useful knowledge for students who take a course in mass communication theory" (*from the foreword*) in the American setting.

In his presentations he presents: 1. The background and origin of theories; 2. Discusses and clarifies ideas; but also 3. Presents new ideas developed for this textbook; followed by 4. Simplified statements of basic assumptions and predictions. He concludes every chapter with a "formal summary" of the content condensed in some six or more one sentence statements which help to keep the essentials and an overview over the 24 different chapters of the book. The first of these chapters presents the "Shaping the American Mass Media" to be followed by some general considerations on the origins, nature and uses of theories and the contributions to it by philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology (Chapters 1 to 6) before some further 16 chapters present different theories in the field in more detail. They include beside the usual theories like the bullet, gatekeeping, agenda setting, uses and gratification and the two-step flow of communication theories, also the ones on Diffusion of Innovations, the Dependence, Popular Culture and Critical communication theories to be concluded by "other formulations and concepts" like the "Spiral of Silence" perspective.

DeFleur defines mass communication as a "linear process in which professional communicators use media to design and disseminate messages widely, rapidly and continually to arouse intended meanings in large, diverse, and selectively attending and interpreting audiences in attempts to influence them in a variety of ways" (p. 32). He lists as mass media the press, film, broadcasting (radio/TV) and associated forms like cable, VCR, DVDs and "certain computer systems like Internet" "but only when used in point to multipoint manner by professional communicators to communicate linearly to large audiences, which does not happen often" (p. 33)! Such a 'definition' sets clearly limits to a later situation and development of technology with new and broad perspectives which were not (yet) part of DeFleur's understanding any more as he also admits in his foreword saying "that the author chose not to discuss the Internet or the World Wide Web as mass media which for him in the US are "private enterprises that are operated for profit" (p. xx).

Discussing in the first introductory chapters the roles of philosophy, psychology, sociology and political sciences especially the historical developments presented include also the role of leading theologians like St. Augustine, who is called a "remarkable figure' (p. 44) and Thomas Aquinas as a "great religious philosopher" (p. 45). In the chapter on public opinion, the struggle between secular and ecclesiastical powers is presented in referring also to St. Augustine's *City of God* (p. 61). At other occasions religion is treated with respect and also in positive forms like in the Philippines as helping the indigenous people and not forcing them into an imported ideology.

The six introductory and 18 further chapters of the book describe extensively different mass communication theories are further complemented by some "other foundations and concepts" (p. 328). This book is an essential instrument for any further communication research originating from the United States and beyond.

It is an excellent summary of an experienced and proven scholar though it does not yet look much forward to newer developments beyond the traditional mass media which are changing rapidly and are challenged in different ways today by the so called social media as mass phenomenon which were already emerging when the book was published first. But despite this, no communication scholar can bypass this excellent and thorough publication to become sufficiently aware of the historical background of our communication landscape today.

An extensive two column index (pp. 349-358) complements the publication.

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Xiaodong Dai and Guo-Ming Chen (Eds.). Conflict Management and Intercultural Communication. The Art of Intercultural Harmony. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2017. 318 pp.

This book has a special relation to Asia: not only that it presents papers from the fourth biannual International Conference of Intercultural Communication from December 28-29, 2014 sponsored by Shanghai Normal University, China but also many of the contributions in this volume come from Asia or are Asia related where also religion 'plays' an essential role.

The main concern of the publication is conflict management under the perspective of intercultural communication which is seen as "a dynamic process," where the examination of intr*a*/int*e*r cultural conflict negotiation can help to see how diverse strategies are enacted and which factors shape the process of conflict management between different cultures" (p. 4). Here, five steps are to be considered: 1. Describing the conflict in a way that is understood in both cultures; 2. Examining the problem from both cultural lenses; 3. Identifying the causes for both cultural perspectives; 4. Solving the conflict through synergistic strategies; and 5. Determining if the solution works interculturally" (p. 2).

The content of the book is presented in two parts: I. Perspectives on the study of intercultural conflict management with 9 presentations and II. Conflict management in cultural contexts with another eight contributions. The editors say in their introduction that all these developments are also to be seen under moral principles like human dignity, equality, justice, non-violence, sincerity, tolerance and responsibility (p. 3) which also points to the role of religions in the process which is later addressed in more detail by some authors in view of cultural dimensions and values.

The role and importance of dialogue is, beside others, treated in the first part of the book. Also here the special Asian dimension is obvious when a Chinese perspective of "the *yin* and *yang"* conflict management is presented (p.

144) and a "rethinking cultural identity in the context of globalization: comparative insights from Kemetic and Confucian traditions which are presented by author Jing Yin.

The contribution of Yoshitaka Miike on "Asia-centricity and its Ethical Imperative for Intercultural Communication" (p. 38-65) should be of special interest because there he develops an outline for "Intercultural Communication Ethics in Asia-centric perspective" with main points of this perspective of "Intercultural Communication Ethics" (p. 45) in subsections on "Recognition and Respect, Reaffirmation Identification and Renewal, Identification and Indebtedness, Ecology and Sustainability, Rootedness and Openness" (pp. 45ff).

The second part of the book presents eight papers on "Conflict Management in Cultural Contexts" which include also a paper from South Africa.

The role and impact of *religion* in the process of "Intercultural Harmony" is presented in different parts of the book like from the Qur'an, the Hindu tradition, but also Buddhism is mentioned beside a Confucian perception to be considered as part and help in intercultural processes. (p. 102f.) In writing on the cultural identity in the context of globalization (p. 155ff.*)* Jing Yin presents "Comparative Insights from the Kemetic and Confucian Traditions" and the role of these religious traditions in the intercultural process. Yoshitaka Miike points into a similar direction by quoting Ti Weining on the role of religious leaders saying that "The human condition today dictate that spiritual and religious leaders become proficient in two languages: one specific to their faith communities and one for global citizenship. Similarly experts and professionals should also feel obligated to become bilingual …one is the expert language relevant to their profession and the other is the language of the public intellectual. Unless they are capable of rising above their own interest groups, they cannot properly situate their expertise or professionalism in an increasingly complex and interconnected global village."

It is refreshing to see here religion as being an essential part of any human but especially also cultural communication in Asian realities—which is actually in other cultural and communication environments not always the case.

Beside the Asian-ness of this publication also the commitment to culture in communication is important which also includes the dimensions of religion and its role in society.

All articles in this book have a separate list of references related to the presentations and thus lead to further studies in the field. There is also an extensive index which can serve as a further Guide (pp. 311-318).

The editors of this very rich and stimulating volume are from academic institutions in China and the United States (Shanghai Normal University; University of Rhode Island). Prof. Guo-Ming Chen is also the president of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS).

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Austin, Lucinda and Yan Jin (Eds.). Social Media and Crisis Communication. New York: Routledge, 2018. 452 pp.

With some 29 contributions from different authors, this book is a solid grounding for the field of Crisis Communication and Social Media: "How publics receive, seek and share crisis information via Social Media." The book "covers current and emerging issues in Social Media and crisis communication but also points into further directions and applications in specific areas" (p. 1).

'Social Media' is a name often given to new ways of communicating where not any more just the 'professionals' are 'communicating' but where everybody is able to communicate any time everywhere with everybody who is one way or the other connected through the Net. This means actually that the "media" are available to everybody to express his/her ideas, experiences and opinions and formulate them in an individual way: t today everybody can be his/her own 'communicator' through 'media' because these means are much more than just technology—they are rather new ways of communicating available to everybody who has access to a respective 'network.' This needs also a new way of responsibility especially in dealing with crisis situations which is the special concern of this publication.

The book starts with an overview of Social Media research in the field from 2002 to 2014 and an article on "The Influences of Social Media on Crisis Communication Theory and Practice" (p.23 ff.) the editors present under "Current issues of Social Media and Crisis Communication" three articles. Section III of the publication on "Foundations and Frameworks" has subsections one "Organizational Approaches and Considerations" followed

by "Audience-Oriented Approaches" and "Characteristics and Types of Social Media." This is followed by Section IV with "Areas of Application" (p. 193) which treat corporate, non-profit, health, disaster, political and sport as special fields with two or three separate articles each.

The final part of the publication considers "Emerging Frameworks and Future Directions" with treating "Digital Dialogue" as measurement for "Social Media Engagement" and "Crisis Communication in a Changing Media Environment."

The section on non-profit organizations' use of social media should be of special interest to religions and religious organizations. The two articles in this part present some "best practices" for using "Social Media in Crisis based on American Experiences." The article of Melony Shemberger from Tennessee State University presents after a literature review some case studies on "Social Media Use in Action" which refer to the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013, the Salvation Army, a deadly tornado in Oklahoma in 2013 (p. 230 ff.) and ends with "Practical Guidelines and Advice, How to Use Social Media in a Crisis" with nine concrete proposals (p. 235) concluding that "[n]on-profits need to think about how social media can fit into their crisis communication plan in as much the same way they might already use the tools to build relationships or raise money." (p. 236).

Of special interest might be also the case study on "World Vision's lack of Vision" as "a case study of the 2014 Gay hiring crisis" (p. 238-249) Here a Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is proposed with "four response postures – denial, diminishment (particularly excusing by noting no intent to harm), rebuilding (particularly apologizing) and bolstering (reminding publics of past successes)—help with organizational reputation repair (p. 24ff.) In addition the suggestions of W.T. Coombs in his publication on planning, managing and responding in *Ongoing Communication* (2015) are quoted: 1. to be present; 2. be where the action is; 3. be there before the crisis; and 4. be polite.

From this experience the vision study suggests that social media are to be used for three purposes: 1. to determine relevance of issues; 2. to seek and share information; and 3. to find emotional support or space for emotional venting" (p. 241).

These examples confirm the value of the publication not only from an academic point of view but also for the communication practice of non-profit organizations and beyond.

In their concluding chapter (pp. 449-452) the editors indicate four steps to be taken and developed: 1. continue to applying established crisis communication theories; 2. continue addressing the research needs including also "applying more global approaches" and research; 3. expand research insights and develop social media and crisis communication specific guidelines for ethical communication; and 4. "It is important not only to mitigate negative crisis emotions…but also to foster genuine positive and constructive emotions in crisis messages and actions such as hope, relief and compassion."

The 461-page volume must be considered as a 'foundational' work for the field.

As usual all contributions of the individual authors are backed up with proper references. The book concludes with a thematic and author's index.

This publication indicates again the difficulty of using the expression "Social *Media"* which seems to refer mainly to technical means as "media" whereas the concern of this and similar publications goes much further than 'media' in the narrow and technical sense but rather to ways and means of communicating and also people and societies 'living' in this 'new environment.' It seems we still need a better and more appropriate expression than just 'media' which always somehow carries the label of technology which definitely is not sufficient when we talk about "crisis management and situations."

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

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Religion and Social Communication invites contributors of studies and abstracts that provide scholarly insights into the fields of Religion and Social Communication in Asia. The journal serves as a discussion forum board for religion and interreligious dialogue in Asia. The ARC reserves the right to accept or decline submitted contributions in order to meet the standards of the publication. We gratefully acknowledge all contributions.

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