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# Digital Expressions, Experiences and Challenges of and for Religions in Asia

*Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo*

Next year, 29 October 2019, is the golden anniversary of the first digital message that was sent between two ARPAnet computers of the U.S. Defense Ministry in 1969, which signaled the birth of the Internet. Meanwhile, Asia also marks an important milestone as the halfway mark of Internet penetration has been reached in Asia-Pacific, shortly after the silver anniversary of the coming of commercially-available Internet which was pioneered in Hongkong, Japan, and Malaysia in 1992.

In this present context of a highly digitalized world and a highly digitalized Asia, with more and more people spending more and more of their day online, the Internet and social media can be a formidable enemy or a powerful ally in building harmony and communication. On the one hand, these technologies, inherently social in nature, provide the means for faster and more convenient human contact. On the other hand, many have pointed out its adverse effects on the capacity of people to relate and communicate with depth and quality, both with others and with themselves.

This article surveys the positive and negative contributions of the Internet and social media towards building a culture of communication following the stages of the development of the Internet from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0. It also aims to provide a glimpse of the perils and potentials, opportunities and challenges in store for religions in Asia vis-a-vis human communication in the coming age of Web 4.0.

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**A network of networks**

The birth of the Internet and the groundbreaking test run in 1969 was both happy and foreboding. Charley Kline was trying to send the simple prompt "LOGIN" from UCLA to Bill Duvall at Stanford Research Institute about 350 miles away. However, only the first two letters were able to be sent before the system crashed, making the first digital message a message lost in transmission. Only after a reboot was the full message successfully relayed an hour later, and the rest is history.[1]

It is not an unknown fact that the Internet was originally developed as a communication mechanism meant to be used for war. This whole enterprise began with ARPANET (Advanced Research Project Agency Network), which was under the auspices of DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency). Only in the 1980's was its use expanded for non-military purposes, specifically for academic cooperation and sharing of knowledge, thanks to the initiative of the National Science Foundation. It was also around this time that the World Wide Web began to be developed which further expanded the function and reach of the Internet.

In its primary stage or Web 1.0, the World Wide Web has been termed "web of information connections"[2] or what I have called "informative web."[3] This consisted of individual sites or pages containing information, each located in "servers" physically remote from each other but connected to one another through a network called Internet. However, more than just a static collection of websites functioning like a type of library, it continued to evolve as a dynamic "information highway" for sharing knowledge across the globe. Hence, we have the terms "web" and "net," highly evocative images

[1] Guy Raz, "'Lo' and Behold: A Communication Revolution" https://www.npr.org/templates/ story/story.php?storyId=114280698 (accessed January 25, 2018).

[2] These descriptors are taken from Sareh Aghaei, Mohammad Ali Nematbakhsh, and Hadi Khosravi Farsani, "Evolution of the World Wide Web: From Web 1.0 to Web 4.0" in *International Journal of Web & Semantic Technology*, Vol. 3, No.1 (January 2012) http://www.ftsm.ukm.my/ss/Book/ EVOLUTION%20OF%20 WWW.pdf (accessed February 28, 2017).

[3] You may want to see my lengthier discussion of the evolution of the World Wide Web and how religions in Asia have responded to it in my article "How to Communicate in the Age of Web 4.0?: Challenges and Possibilities for Religions in Asia" in *Religion and Social Communication* 14:2 (2016) 106-121.



that highlight interconnectivity. The term Internet itself means "network of networks," a connection of connections that effectively link not only the machines but also the people using them. Thus, even in this prototype, one can already see in seminal form the capacity of the internet to connect people. As Allemang and Hendler say, "[E]ssential to the notion of the Web is the idea of an open community."[4]

When people are more informed, not only do they feel more included, they are also more empowered to participate. Making data available to many instead of limited to a privileged few empowers stakeholders who have access to information to become involved in affairs and issues concerning their community. For instance, combining the Freedom of Information laws we now have with the availability of public records in digital format allows access by the general public to data held by their governments. This enables even ordinary citizens not only to be more informed and more opinionated about matters affecting them, but also to engage more actively (and more intelligently!) in public discourse and holding their government officials and agencies accountable. Hence, far from being indifferent or isolated from their society, Tapscott remarks about the technology-savvy generation: "[t]hey want to be involved directly: to interact with [their governments], contribute ideas, scrutinize their actions, work to catalyze initiatives not just during elections but as they govern. And they will insist on integrity from politicians... They are going to shake up both politics and government."[5]

Similarly, in the religious sphere, access to information is shared more liberally in many religions, opening discussions on matters of church doctrine and discipline to lay members as well. Gone are the days when these lay "followers" simply "prayed, paid and obeyed." Nowadays, they are enabled to engage their religious leaders not simply in dialogue and discussion but also in debate and dispute, and later on, perhaps, in deliberation and decision-making in their faith group as well. Sharing information leads to shared knowledge and power, which may also potentially result in the sharing of authority, responsibility and leadership.

[4] Dean Allemang and Jim Hendler, *Semantic Web for the Working Ontologist: Effective Modeling in RFDS and OWL.* 2nd ed. (Waltham, MA: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2011), 2.

[5] Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009), 244.

The addition of a "write-function," would expand the original capability of the World Wide Web for connectivity, making it bi-directional and more dynamic. In this second stage or Web 2.0, which has also been called "web of people connections" or what I would call "interactive web," ordinary users become not just passive receivers but active creators of content as well. Not only can they interact with fellow users in different ways such as liking/ reacting, asking or commenting, they can also upload their own material in various online platforms such as *Friendster, Multiply* or *Blogger* - and later in *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, etc. These developments would then give rise to online communities or "digital networks," formed and bonded by what is aptly termed "*social* media."

By design, social media platforms are meant to facilitate and host interaction among people. Thus, Valkenburg points out that "...in social media, participants are potential senders of both interpersonal and mass communication messages, and they can seamlessly switch between the sender and recipient roles."[6] The most popular example of this, Facebook, was inspired by social directories given to students in the United States to encourage them to get acquainted with their schoolmates. It began by linking people from the same town, school or workplace but it has since evolved in its ability to connect people with various commonalities. Since then, more platforms have been introduced catering to various needs and interests but all with a social dimension.

This social character of the web coincides with the findings of a recent survey done by the Global Web Index in January 2018 which show that the most prevalent motivation of almost half of actual social network users today is in fact social in nature: "to stay in touch with what my friends are doing" (42%). Meanwhile, most of the other motivations that made it to the top ten of the survey are likewise relational: at fifth place we have "general networking with other people" (34%); at sixth place, "because a lot of my friends are on them" (33%); at the seventh and eight places we have "to share photos or videos with others" (32%) and "to share my opinion" (30%); and at the tenth place, "to meet new people" (27%).[7]

[6] Patti Valkenburg, "Understanding Self-Effects in Social Media" in *Human Communication Research* 43 (2017): 483-484.

[7] Olivia Valentine, "Top 10 Reasons for Using Social Media" in *Global Web Index*, https://blog. globalwebindex.net/chart-of-the-day/social-media/ (accessed February 15, 2018).



Aside from posts, comments and reactions, which are public, another important aspect of social media platforms is their private messaging feature. Private messaging makes these platforms a cheaper, more convenient alternative for communication than telephone or mobile, allowing family and friends from different parts of the world to stay in touch with one another. The online experience is further enhanced by photo and video messaging and other cosmetic effects like emojis, animated stickers and GIFs. Even work is made more efficient and cost-effective through collaborative features like "digital brainstorms"[8] and web-conferencing in platforms and applications such as *Dropbox, Google Docs, Google Hangouts, GoToMeeting, Quip* and many others.

Many social media platforms also allow users to create and maintain some form of "blog," a truncation of the world "weblog," which refers to an informal personal website with mostly casual, motley, diary-style entries. One's Facebook profile is basically a blog made up of texts and images, *Instagram* is a visual blog, while *Twitter* is a micro blog with entries originally limited to 140 characters later on doubled to 280. These blogs composed of various content that one creates or shares serve as one's online address and represent one's online image. A well-designed and engaging weblog gives positive online representation to a person or group, which can then attract and generate more social media connections. In fact, one post going viral is sometimes enough to make someone an overnight Internet celebrity with million of followers and subscribers. By publishing these blogs online, social media users keep each other constantly updated about their personal lives, as if they were seeing each other every day or every hour. Hence, the present crop of young people has aptly been called "connection seekers" who develop and express their identity online and obtain validation and affirmation online.[9]

In like manner, spiritual seekers also find various religious groups present in the different social media platforms. Some of them even form online faith communities like online ummahs, cyber sanghas, and virtual "dioceses

[8] Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital,* 262.

[9] Dorothee Hefner, Karin Knop and Christoph Klimmt, "Being Mindfully Connected: Responding to the Challenges of Adolescent Living in a POPC World" in *Permanently Online, Permanently Connected: Living and Communicating in a POPC World* ed. Peter Vorderer et al. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 177.

without borders." In *FunCity*,[10] the German city on the Internet, there has been a virtual parish named Saint Bonifatius, which has been shepherding souls online since 1998. Not only does it have a full staff of nine pastoral workers who take turns to be available to parishioners online, it also has a functioning library, oratory and more recently, a virtual cloister where people can drop prayer requests to cloistered religious who will read and respond to them. These online faith groups become part of the daily life of their followers who spend more and more of their day in social media. In my own country, people spend an average of nine hours daily on the Internet, with four of those hours spent on social media alone.[11]

Thus, as early as 1997, Caincross signalled the "Death of Distance"[12] as one of the consequences of this revolution in human communication. Indeed, the Internet's social function has become so important that it has also been influential in determining how it has been taking shape, with its other functions like commerce, industry and education built around this key function. Parks noted this *interpersonalization* of digital media, pointing out that "[s] ocial life, including important interpersonal relationships, may have become *mediatized*, but it is also the case that media have become *interpersonalized*. As we have seen, the media that individuals use for communication have become increasingly aligned with the rhythms and structure of their personal relationships and social networks."[13] As such, many of the online platforms and applications in current circulation are designed to mimic or at least integrate their social media counterparts. *Edmodo*, for instance, a popular Learning Management System, appears and functions like Facebook but with

[10] See the website of *FunCity*, http://funama.de/

[11] See the *Digital in 2017: Global Overview*, a quantitative study of Internet and social media penetration worldwide made by We Are Social, a marketing and PR agency specializing in social media platforms, in partnership with Hootsuite, a company that specializes in social media integration. In true digital fashion, the report is available online in the form of several hundred infographic slides at http://wearesocial.com/sg/blog/2017/01/digital-in-2017-global-overview (accessed 3 April 2017).

[12] Frances Cairncross, The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1997)

[13] Malcolm Parks, "Embracing the Challenges and Opportunities of Mixed-Media Relationships" in *Human Communication Research* 43 (2017): 513.



an explicit educational purpose. Even in online gaming, the trend is leaning in the direction of interactive and collaborative multiplayer games. Thus, while it may seem at first that gamers are withdrawing from human society into the world of online games, we can also say they are immersed in another human society that exists within the world of online games.

More recently, many online platforms already carry an added component that is characteristic of Web 3.0 known as the "web of knowledge connections" or what I call "intuitive web." The Internet having reached more than one billion websites in 2014, this main feature of the third stage in the development of the Internet is its ability to link, structure and integrate the massive amount of online data to make it more relevant and responsive to each individual user by becoming personalized and "user-sensitive." Hence, on the basis of one's standing online activity, search and usage history, and other personal data that one provides (voluntarily and consciously, or not) such as age, gender and location, many websites and applications automatically filter, adjust, and refine the content that it chooses to present to a particular user. This is made possible through the use of data-driven programmed responses called "algorithms." In this way, online platforms determine what pages you will likely find interesting, what things to advertise that you are likely to purchase, and what kind of people you are likely to enjoy connecting with. They will then lead you specifically to the kind of content that will engage you and to like-minded people that you will enjoy interacting with.

Hence, the ability of digital technology to connect people is raised exponentially by its sharpened ability to determine and propose the precise online connections that people are likely to click and get hooked to. With a power that no technology before it has ever had, Web 3.0 is able to create and strengthen bonds between people worldwide through its capability of determining the precise matter which can create, nurture and sustain those bonds: from having the same background, occupation or industry, to sharing similar philosophical, religious or political beliefs, or simply enjoying the same sports, games or hobbies. At the same time, the advent of tablets and smartphones that people can carry around as well as the development of wireless Internet connection has now made it possible for people to stay online almost constantly, giving rise to a phenomenon now termed as POPC: *Permanently Online, Permanently Connected*.[14]

[14] See a very interesting collection of articles Peter Vorderer et al., eds.

As Web 3.0 continues to develop its capacity to link, structure and integrate data, this time not only online but offline as well, we find emerging capabilities with important ramifications for the way people connect. For instance, through applications like *Grab* and *Uber* or *AirBnB*, the Internet links drivers with their passengers and transients with available lodging. In the field of education, more academic institutions already offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that allow an unlimited number of people to enroll and participate in a class regardless of their schedule or location. Long before Web 3.0, the Internet has already been used to connect romantic seekers with potential mates but this time, with the amount of personal data that it is able to gather and process, its matchmaking capabilities has also been significantly enhanced.

Even private offline experiences become online shared experiences, as when people who are viewing the same show on television from the privacy of their homes chat and interact with their fellow viewers through the use of official hashtags.[15] Nowadays, any event can be readily broadcast and streamed live through social media, allowing people not only to watch but to participate and interact from where they are. As such, the Internet today even carries with it a greater potential to influence offline realities like the outcome of electoral processes, as seen in the campaigns of Obama, Trump and Duterte. It also has the ability to shape public opinion, galvanize people for specific causes, and even spark revolutions as in the case of the Arab Spring. In the area of religion, we have analogous practices such as online pujas, virtual pilgrimages, live ritual streams, and even plenary indulgences transmitted through online means.

In this way, Aghaei et al. envisage that the coming Web 4.0 will become a "web of intelligence connections," or what I would call the "integrative web." According to their forecast, it will be a symbiotic and not just semantic web that will be characterized by a much more permeable and seamless "interaction between humans and machines in symbiosis"[16] or what

*Permanently Online, Permanently Connected: Living and Communicating in a POPC World* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[15] Arthur A. Raney and Qihao Ji, "Entertaining Each Other? Modeling the Socially Shared Television Viewing Experience" in *Human Communication Research* 43 (2017): 425-426.

[16] Aghaei et al., "Evolution of the World Wide Web: From Web 1.0 to Web 4.0", 8.



has been called the "Internet of Things." The walls will blur between online and offline and there will be a "fusion of horizons" between the Internet and the world outside of it. As we see more people spend more of their time online, virtual reality now becomes their new habitual reality, while reality itself is permeated more and more by the Internet and social media as it becomes even more pervasive, ubiquitous and omnipresent. Already, as Klimmt and Brand point out, permanent smartphone use is becoming mainstream, everyday behavior.[17] Unfortunately, there are still conservative religious groups here in Asia who continue to lag behind in the fringes of these digital developments, at the risk of being left out at the other end of the techno-cultural spectrum.[18]

Likewise, in the area of communication, the trend appears to go in the direction of increased computer mediation. As early as 2015, Meredith Gould, an expert in the religious use of social media, already suggested that the distinctions between real and virtual that were helpful when social media was still in its early stages are not that helpful anymore.[19] Online human interactions, although non-physical, are perceived as real and personal: involving real people and fostering real relationships. While this may still be an issue for digital migrants, it appears that digital natives no longer find it difficult to see online relationships as true and real, with many families and friends in global diaspora who remain intimately connected through various Internet platforms. For them, the Internet is not only a "tool" but a "space" where people can meet and love each other. Janet Murray refers to this as the "spatial affordance" of the Internet, which denotes the capacity of digital media to function as a kind of space that people inhabit.[20] In this sense, the Internet has evolved from being a mere highway or nexus to a venue or locus of social interaction and convergence.

[17] Christoph Klimmt and Matthias Brand, "Permanence of Online Access and Internet Addiction" in *Permanently Online, Permanently Connected: Living and Communicating in a POPC World* ed. Peter Vorderer et al. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 66.

[18] See Robbie B. H. Goh, "The Internet and Christianity in Asia: Cultural Trends, Structures and Transformations," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 4 (2005): 831-848.

[19] Meredith Gould, *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 30.

[20] See Janet Murray, *Inventing the Medium: Principles of Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 51-87.

As early as now, with people constantly connected through online platforms even when they rarely meet face-to-face, human communication has almost become virtually constant and constantly virtual. In the coming age of Web 4.0, we may expect a further increase in the POPC phenomenon and a corresponding blurring between what is called relational or fundamental communication and interstitial communication, with the trend in favor of more interstitial communication mediated by machines.[21] Where would Asia's religions be in the midst of this convergence?

**Internet and social media as threat to communication**

In his Keynote Lecture at the opening of the Theology Week held last January at the University of Santo Tomas, Cardinal Bo of Myanmar shared about seeing some Buddhist monks engrossed in social media instead of meditating. The monks he saw are actually no different from many of our own people today, especially the youth, constantly checking the Internet and social media on their tablets and smartphones. This point us to the other side of the reality of the Web as a potential enemy of harmony and communication, exacerbated by the threat of Internet addiction, which is beginning to take hold of many people, oftentimes without their noticing it. As Nicolas Carr notes: "[The Internet] is so much our servant that it would seem churlish to notice that it is also our master."[22]

According to a 2015 study done by Microsoft in Canada, 77% of those between ages 18-24 who were surveyed said that they usually reach for their mobile phone when nothing is occupying their attention while 52% check their phone every thirty minutes at the least.[23] While seemingly harmless, these statistics may actually be symptoms of a developing compulsion. Moreover, when the time people spend online is put together, it can take up as much as nine hours a day for the Internet with four of those hours devoted to social media alone,[24] affecting a person's productivity and taking time away from other offline activities like physical, face-to-face bonding with friends and family, even where this is possible. One study for instance reports that some students in China prefer online to offline social interaction and resorted to overuse of the Internet as a means of escaping societal pressure.[25]

In this way, people today can be physically present with each other but mentally and emotionally absent from one another because they are actually more present online. Turkle describes this phenomenon with the poignant oxymoron "Alone Together."[26] Another term has also been coined to denote the behavior of paying more attention to one's smartphone than to the other person present, which is now called "phubbing" or phone snubbing.[27] Moreover, while some are quick to migrate to digital platforms for various purposes, including religious ones, there are also those who maintain that authentic human connection is not really possible in the web. As one study on Buddhism and the Internet gathered:

> Not everyone agreed that Buddhism online offered a spiritual connection to others. One respondent said that they only felt community online as they would with the rest of the world and that the Internet was *for information and not communion*. Another respondent said 'I feel a sense of community when I look into one's eyes.[28]

[21] Sonja Utz, "POPC and Social Relationships" in *Permanently Online, Permanently Connected: Living and Communicating in a POPC World* ed. Peter Vorderer et al. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 142.

[22] Nicolas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 4.

[23] See *Attention Spans*, Microsoft Canada, 2015 https://advertising.microsoft.com/en/wwdocs/ user/display/cl/researchreport/31966/en/microsoft-attention-spans-research-report.pdf (accessed 3 April 2017).

[24] We Are Social and Hootsuite, *Digital in 2017: Global Overview*, http://wearesocial.com/sg/ blog/2017/01/digital-in-2017-global-overview (accessed 3 April 2017).

[25] See L. Zhang, C. Amos and W.C. McDowell, "A Comparative Study of Internet addiction between the United States and China," *Cyberpsychology and Behavior* 11 (2008): 727-9. See also Cheng-Fang Yen, Ju-Yu Yen and Chih-Hung Ko, "Internet addiction: ongoing research in Asia," *World Psychiatry* 9 (2010): 97. as well as F. Cao and L. Su, "Internet addiction among Chinese adolescents: prevalence and psychological features," *Child: care, health and development* 33 (2007): 275-281.

[26] See Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

[27] Utz, "POPC and Social Relationships." 145.

[28] Ally Ostrowski, "Buddha Browsing: American Buddhism and the Internet," *Contemporary Buddhism* 7, 1 (2006): 99. (Emphasis added.)

Aside from its direct effects on individuals which I have already discussed in an earlier article,[29] what also concerns us is that high exposure to Internet and social media can have harmful effects, particularly on the communicative and social skills of those who are overexposed to it, gradually eroding their capacity to connect and commune with other people with adequate quality and depth. For instance, Small quotes a Stanford study, which found out that for every hour spent in front of a screen, traditional face-to-face interaction drops by almost thirty minutes. As such, essential social skills like understanding emotional contexts and reading non-verbal cues tend to be in decline and there is greater likelihood among people nowadays of misinterpreting these contexts and cues or even missing them out altogether, which can lead to more frequent misunderstandings.[30]

Another concern that has been pointed out is that constant exposure to gadgets, especially from an early age, can hinder the development, not only of the capacity to relate with other people, but also of the capacity to be alone and to relate with oneself. In this manner, the dynamic struggle involved in relating with others and with oneself is readily replaced with the comfortable complacency of dealing with machines instead, or what has been called "robotic companionship."[31] Every available time, which could have been spent in social interaction or quiet reflection, is automatically occupied by picking up one's gadget to browse social media or play online games. This kind of tendency is especially magnified in the case of individuals who are already lonely and depressed to begin with, who are more likely to resort to online social interaction as a convenient replacement for offline unmediated human interaction, which is relatively more demanding in terms of depth, intensity and intimacy.[32] Such withdrawal can then spiral into other destructive dynamics, including but not limited to Compulsive or Problematic Internet Use.[33]

[29] See Leo-Martin Angelo Ocampo, "How to Communicate in the Age of Web 4.0?: Challenges and Possibilities for Religions in Asia" in *Religion and Social Communication* 14:2 (2016) 106-121.

[30] See Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan, *iBrain: Surviving the Technological Alternation of the Modern Mind* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

[31] See Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

[32] Klimmt and Brand, "Permanence of Online Access and Internet Addiction," 67.

[33] See Scott Caplan, "Preference for Online Social Interaction: A Theory of Problematic Internet Use and Psychosocial Well-Being," *Communication Research* 30 (2003): 625-628.



The wide repercussions of this loss, not only of the skills but also of the gusto for intimate and authentic human interaction, can only be imagined. How do we build a culture of harmony and communication among people who would rather relate through gadgets or *with* gadgets? Similarly affected is the capacity to commune with God and with oneself, especially when one is constantly and incessantly preoccupied by gadgets and online activity so that there is no more room for silence or prayer anymore. As Carr avers, "There is no Sleepy Hollow on the Internet, no peaceful spot where contemplativeness can work its restorative magic."[34] Thus, the person who is constantly hooked to the Internet may end up progressively isolated and empty, unable to relate or simply be present with other people, with God, and even with oneself:

> Minds wander. Attention drifts. But we've never carried on our person a tool that so insistently captivates our senses and divides our attention. By connecting us to a symbolic elsewhere, the smartphone... exiles us from the here and now. We lose the power of presence."[35]

We add to this the many other ways by which Internet and Social Media directly serve as a hindrance to human harmony, counteracting and at times almost overturning its gift for human connection.

For instance, the same Web 1.0 that promotes inclusion and participation can also become the source of exclusion. With "digital literacy" becoming as important as traditional literacy, the "computer illiterate" are the new illiterate who are marginalized and disadvantaged in many ways, from education and employment to social access. Educational systems already hard put in combating mere illiteracy struggle to integrate computer literacy in their school curricula. Companies that are mechanized and digitalized gain an advantage over those that use analog means of production that depend heavily on human labor. This leads to a growing pressure to shift more and more to mechanization and digitalization, which in turn leads to the displacement

[34] Carr, *The Shallows*, 220.

[35] Carr, *The Glass Cage: How Our Computers Are Changing Us* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 200.

especially of low-skilled laborers. On the national and international scale, Internet penetration levels and other related variables such as Internet connection speed, cost and availability are likewise shifting the playing field in favor of those on the greener side of the "digital divide" while those on the other side are being left out.

At the same time, better information dissemination leading to empowerment and increased participation can also result in an increase of conflict instead of an increase of harmony. For instance, believers who are now more informed but not necessarily more intelligent can become more critical and defiant towards their religious authorities who in turn are not always ready to deal with dissent and difference of opinion in a constructive manner. Last year, a starlet turned blogger who later on became a government official in the Philippines argued on social media for the return of the death penalty by offering an exegesis of a passage from Torah, claiming that the fifth commandment is more accurately translated as "Thou Shalt Not Murder" instead of "Thou Shalt Not Kill." She ended her post by saying: "With all due respect to the priests, people today are now able to read the Bible so when you quote, make sure that you quote in context."[36] The said post quickly went viral, generating more than 36,000 reactions, 2,300 comments and 10,000 shares. Nonetheless, popularity is not the best barometer of veracity. As the Caribbean bishops lament, even with the convenience of the Internet at our fingertips, "[w]e have far more access to information but sometimes less access to truth"[37] Connection does not always translate to communication.

The world of social media is one that is rife not only with opportunities but also with threats not just to social harmony but even to human dignity itself. While the Internet has truly become a web and net of human connectivity, the same network of networks is exploited to facilitate pornography, prostitution and human trafficking - including those that involve minors and children. One source estimates that 28,258 users are watching pornography on the internet every second while 35% of all internet downloads are related to pornography.[38]

[36] Mocha Uson Blog Facebook Page, Thou Shalt Not Kill, *Facebook*, 19 February 2017 10:28 P.M., https://www.facebook.com/Mochablogger/ (accessed 15 February 2018).

[37] Antilles Episcopal Conference, "A Pastoral Letter: New Ways of Being Church In a Digital Milieu" August 6, 2017, 26.

[38] Webroot, "Internet pornography by the numbers; a significant threat to society" https://www.webroot.com/us/en/home/resources/tips/digital-family-life/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers (accessed 15 February 2018).



According to *Thorn*, a non-profit organization dedicated to combat child pornography, 25 million images every year or about 480,769 images per week are reviewed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in the aftermath of the pornography explosion brought about by the Internet.[39] Meanwhile, the same social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are being used for human trafficking in its various stages from the recruitment of potential victims to advertisement and marketing.[40]

In this way, the Internet's capacity to connect people is abused for the wrong purposes and the people who are involved are dehumanized instead of being uplifted. As Pope Francis remarked in his address to the participants of the "World Congress on Child Dignity in the Digital World": "The net has its dark side (the "dark net"), where evil finds ever new, effective and pervasive ways to act and to expand."[41]

We also note the proliferation of fake news which has become commonplace. Instead of getting their news from newspapers, radio and television, people nowadays get their news more and more from the Internet where it can be had almost in real time. In the Internet, however, there are no gatekeepers of information to assure the veracity and accuracy of posted content. This situation is then abused by unscrupulous people who deliberately sow disinformation on the Web in order to advance their own agenda. A recent study in the Philippines describes how this "networked disinformation production" has already evolved into an underground industry: "an invisible machine: industrial in its scope and organization, strategic in its outlook

[39] Thorn, "Child Pornography and Abuse Statistics" https://www.wearethorn.org/child-porno graphy-and-abuse-statistics/ (accessed 15 February 2018).

[40] USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, "Human Trafficking: Cases and Patterns" University of Southern California, https://technologyandtrafficking.usc.edu/report/ human-trafficking-online-cases-patterns/ (accessed 15 February 2018).

[41] Francis, *Address to the Participants in the Conference on "Child Dignity in the Digital World,"* 6 October 2017, Vatican Archive, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/october/ documents/papa-francesco_20171006_congresso-childdignity-digitalworld.html (accessed 15 February 2018).

and expertise, and exploitative in its morality and ethics."[42] In effect, those involved in this systematic disinformation "hijack people's sentiments and sow public divisiveness" as well as "silence political dissent and enact historical revisionism."[43] Meanwhile, the rapid spread of fake news is fueled not only by the work of trolls and bots but also by the feelings and ignorance of people who uncritically believe and share reports, especially those that are in line with their own opinions or sentiments:

> Since anyone can easily create a blog or website, misleading and damaging information that sow discord and misunderstanding is likewise very easy to spread through the Internet in the form of fake news or rumors. These rumors are usually self-propelling and quickly become viral, especially since they feed on the emotions or sentiments of a particular group who are likely to spread them by clicking, liking and sharing.[44]

This in turn is worsened further by the algorithmic function of the intuitive web as it adjusts and refines the contents that it presents to each person in social media, effectively locking up the person in a narrow "echo chamber" where only sympathetic opinions are heard and all opposition is effectively filtered out.

The matrix of the Internet as an instrument of violence and war, which is as original as its matrix as an instrument for connecting people, continues

[42] Jonathan Corpus Ong & Jason Vincent A. Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines, An Executive Summary" http://newtontechfordev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Architects-of-Networked-Dis information-Executive-Summary-Final.pdf (accessed 15 February 2018), 3.

[43] Jonathan Corpus Ong & Jason Vincent A. Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines" http:// newtontechfordev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ARCHITECTS-OF-NETWORKED-DISINFORMA TION-FULL-REPORT.pdf (accessed 15 February 2018), 61.

[44] Anthony Olcott, "Rumor-the evil twin of strategic communication" in *Rumor and Communication in Asia in the Internet Age* ed. by Greg Dalziel (Oxford: Routledge, 2013) 161.



to show itself. For instance, there is concern over the practice of what has been termed as *e-jihad*, which can range from spreading jihadist propagandas and campaigns online, launching cyber attacks by means such as hacking and cracking, to using the Internet as a means to organize terrorist operations.[45] We also have the rise of online trolls, now known as "Internet Hindus" who rally under the banner of *Hindutva* and attack websites they deem offensive to Hindu religion and culture. Here in the Philippines, the war being waged online by the *Dutertards* and *Delawans* - as they call each other - is not only worsening but beginning to overflow offline. Within the Roman Catholic Church, conservatives and liberals wage an online war involving shameful verbal violence, which runs against its religious message.

**Some emerging realities**

As we have briefly seen, the digital world on the one hand carries so much potential in bringing people together, coming from its social nature and its power for connectivity inherent from the very start. Indeed, the network of networks has evolved from being simply a nexus to becoming a locus for human communion: "a network not of wires but of people."[46] On the other hand, the same Web can also be a nexus and locus of division, conflict and violence when placed in the wrong hands and exploited for the wrong ends, a grim and stubborn reminder of its dark beginnings as an instrument of war. This ambivalent if not paradoxical character of digital technology vis-a-vis harmony and communication persists until today and has been magnified even more by the interactive capabilities afforded by Web 2.0, which gave birth to what we now know as "social media," further enhanced by ongoing developments in Web 3.0 and onwards. What can the religions in Asia do in the midst of all these?

In his very thought-provoking book, *The Revenge of Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter,* David Sax mentions the curious practice of *Reboot*, a Jewish organization that weekly observes a "digital Sabbath" or total abstinence from technology along with their traditional weekly abstinence from work. It was an experience that he found to be "so restorative" that

[45] See Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

[46] Francis, *48th World Communications Day Message*, 24 January 2018.

he began to practice it himself.[47] Almost ironically, we find other similar initiatives at the heart of giant digital corporations like Adobe, which piloted *Project Breathe* in 2008 through the leadership of Scott Unterberg. This involves their employees spending 15 minutes of their working time each day to do quiet meditation "as a kind of 'time out' for people to recharge their batteries and center themselves." Aside from serving as a "reset" for the mind, this daily practice of meditation was found to produce very positive results including decrease in stress as well as an increase in concentration, creativity, productivity and overall happiness.[48] As Sax reports:

> Meditation and its broader umbrella movement, mindfulness, have become practically mandatory at the leading companies in Silicon Valley. Google's Search Inside Yourself Program features regular meditation classes, and the company even has a purpose-built labyrinth for walking meditations. Facebook and Twitter both have meditation rooms in their offices, something that is now even found at hedge funds and banks. Zen masters, monks and mindfulness gurus are as in demand in Silicon Valley as personal trainers and Java script coders, and Untenberg himself has consulted with Yahoo! Microsoft, Salesforce, SAP, and others (all entirely unpaid as part of his Buddhist teaching)."[49]

Already we have applications such as *Calm*, a meditation app which has earned more than 250 million dollars, that seek to counter the negative effects of digital media through digital means. Meanwhile, they also added *Breathe* in the new Apple watch, the psycho-spiritual counterpart of its famous applications that promote physical health and wellness. These and other similar technologies that fall under the umbrella of "quantified self" are already being introduced and integrated nowadays as a kind of "technological homeopathy" where at least some digital problems such as compulsive

[47] David Sax, *Revenge of the Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter* (New York: Public Affairs Publishing, 2016), xii.

[48] See *A 15-Minute Reset: Project Breathe,* https://blogs.adobe.com/conversations/2015/01/ project-breathe.html (accessed 3 April 2017).

[49] David Sax, *Revenge of the Analog*, 206. We find like initiatives for social media like "social media fasting". See: http://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2017/02/08/tim-ferriss (accessed 3 April 2017).



Internet use could be addressed.[50] They promote self-awareness with regard to one's use of the Internet and call for corresponding behavior modification if necessary. Moreover, they serve as the minimum spiritual sustenance of many digital natives who crave depth or at least silence in their lives but are otherwise alienated from analog spiritual resources.

These developments seem to give a hint as to where religions in Asia can come in to share their timeless gift and wisdom in the face of emerging technological realities. Apparently, there is also a thirst for things of the spirit on the Internet and social media. Ironically, it is the technocrats themselves who are once again at the forefront of these spiritual initiatives, rather than faith groups and religious leaders. In the context of today's permanently online and permanently connected world, where are we, religions in Asia, in the shaping of these emerging spiritualities? v

[50] See Klimmt and Brand, "Permanence of Online Access and Internet Addiction," 68-69.

# Religion in Development Communication: An Inexorable Concept

*Stanislaus Irudayaselvam*

**Abstract**

In spite of the pervasiveness and importance of religion in communication and development, the mainstream development communication research, policy, and practice has seemingly neglected it. The dominant paradigm of modernization focused mainly on economic development and ignored religion, spirituality, and non-material aspects, particularly their influence on and contribution towards development. The shift in understanding and definition of development communication as human development and as a process of unfolding the human potential changed this dominant view and put religion at the forefront. Communication, development, and religion are integrally related. Furthermore, religion cannot be omitted in holistic human development process. This article is a pioneering effort to articulate the inherent relationship of religion to communication and development. It also discusses how the Asian Catholic Church contributes to development communication.

## Introduction

"There is more to progress than economic growth. Genuine progress must be complete. No one can be left out. No part of anyone can be left out." (*Populorum Progressio*, 14) The words of Pope Paul VI express a holistic view of human development. In addition, the Pope's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*[1] calls for faith-based integral development. In contrast, development scholars and practitioners consider spirituality and religion as source of

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conflict, division, and oppression rather than development and liberation. Further, H. Leslie Steeves asserts categorically that religion, spirituality, and other nonmaterial factors are seldom central in the scholarship or practice of Western development--except as obstacles to change under the dominant paradigm of modernization. Historically, only a few communication scholars viewed religious or spiritual practice as a form of communication while most of them focused on practical communication functions (Steeves, 2001). Classifying the field of communication theory into seven traditions, Craig suggests that spiritual tradition is the neglected area which can be further developed into an eighth tradition (Craig, 1999)[2].

The neglect of spirituality and perception of religion as obstacle for change evolved primarily under the modernization paradigm of the 'West'. The narrow focus of modernization on the economic development failed to recognize the pervading importance of religion in humanity's march towards progress. Western scholars overlooked the positive role and power of religious communication in transforming individuals and communities. Such oversight leads to an opportunity to study how nonmaterial and spiritual realities can enhance the theory and practice of development communication.

This article examines how religion relates to communication and also to development. It reviews the concept of development communication and brings human development to the core. It seeks to analyze how communication, development, and religion interrelate with one another by surfacing their common features. By studying the nature of their interrelatedness, the role and relevance of religion in human development and in development communication practice become clearly defined. The article caters Asian Catholic Christian church in particular and studies the inherent relationship of Christianity with the theory and practice of development communication.

## Communication Perspective

Communication is one of the difficult concepts to define. The number of definitions available tells us how communication scholars toil to conceptualize it. In the words of Littlejohn and Foss (2008), "Scholars have made many attempts to define communication but establishing a single definition has proven impossible and may not be very fruitful." Littlejohn and Foss (2005) further emphasized the intention in communication when



they defined it as a process in which the sender transmits a message to the receiver with conscious intent to affect the receiver's behavior. Jamias (1988) describes communication as a process of mutual understanding through the purposive use of verbal and non-verbal symbols. Usually communication is limited to transformation of information but Theodorson notes that not only information but also ideas, attitudes and emotions are transmitted from one person or group to another primarily through symbols (Kotten, 2009). Wood describes communication as a systematic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings (Kotten, 2009).

Initially, communication practitioners and scholars relied on Berlo's SMCR model which depicted a linear mode of information transmission to change knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Later on, communication scholars like Schram and Roberts included feedback to the linear model and made the communication process complete and two-way. The communication process involves elements such as source, message, channel, receiver, effect, and feedback. Communication has different levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass communication. Communication evolved into a field in the last century with important contributions from the social sciences, biology, mathematics, and electrical engineering (Rogers, 1997).

### 1.1. Religion and Communication

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) rightly acknowledges the relation between religion and communication. FABC also affirms on one hand that religion is practiced in society, and on the other hand that communication is imbedded in religious practices of society. So, it becomes a challenge to study the ways and means of communication in and with the religious communities (Tirol, 2009). Udeani, Frühbauer, and Capurro (2008) claim that religions are not only the communities of faith but also of communication. Religious communication takes place vertically between human beings and the transcendent God, and horizontally among individuals and groups. Given this situation, it can be deduced that communication permeates most of the religions and that religions experience the challenge of using communication technologies for religious communication.

Tirol (2009) enumerates the reasons for exploring the relation between communication technology and religion. Firstly, communication and religion

share a common goal as both aim to improve society and transcend the human facility. Secondly, there is a growing interest on how communication technologies influence the expression of religion within the society. Thirdly, there is a question whether technology is changing the religiosity of the world by making people more or less religious. And lastly, the ways in which the communication technology can help religions to attain their goal and mission still remain to be explored. Very few studies are found to portray the adoption of information technology in religion as the communities and groups select the apt communication tools depending on the needs and availability in the given situation (Religion and Technology, 2009).

The Catholic Church, as an established religious institution, does not close her doors to recent developments and communication technologies. The known ecclesiologist, Avery Dulles (1971), explains that "the church cannot wall itself up in a cultural ghetto at a time when humanity as a whole is passing into the electronic age" (p. 13). The church has very well started reading 'the signs of the times[3] and incorporated the means of communication in her mission. For the Church, communication is social communication (Eilers, 2009, 223, 323)[4] and different church documents[5] detail the work of communication, the church's function and mission (Eilers, 2014). For Eilers (2009), religious communication through interreligious dialogue and through sharing of values and experience can promote human dignity and quality of life.

For human beings, it is essential to communicate. Communication is basic to humans. This reality is Christianity-grounded and reflected theologically in a communicating and personal God. God the Father and the Son communicate in the Holy Spirit. Humans are able to communicate because they are created in His "image and likeness." As Eilers (2009b) points out, the theological reality of communication is reflected and shown in God's communication to His chosen people in the Old Testament and in the incarnation of God Himself, in Jesus Christ in the New Testament (p.32). Thus, communication in Christianity is not just the use of any technical means, but rather lies at the center of Christianity and the Christian understanding of a communicating God. Christian God as a Trinitarian communicating God is the basis for all social communication.

### 1.2. **Church as Communication**

Communication is as much a part of people's daily life just like breathing. Robert Granfield, as cited by Wimal Dissanayake asserts that "communication is



so basic to being human that one cannot not communicate." Every word, action, gesture, and even silence is an act of communication. It conveys information to those around us. Communication touches upon all that we are and all that we do. Communication constitutes our inter-subjectivity. Through communication, one becomes a full human and cultural being. No community can be established or continue to exist without communication" (Dissanayake, 1983). A community will cease to exist when it stops communicating. Wilbur Schramm said that when we communicate we are trying to establish commonness. Without this commonness there is no community. It is through communication that a community begins, persists, and proceeds to exist (Quebral, 1988, 41). The interdependencies and tradeoffs in the relationships contribute much to the reflection on communication for human development.

Church, as the community of believers, is communication (Dulles, 1971). Plude (1994) proposes two models of communication in the church (p.7)[6]. The first model is the church as participatory *communio*[7] which views communication as a fellowship animated by Spirit with shared responsibility (Schillebeeckx, 1990). The second is an 'open system' view of the church that stresses the interaction and interdependence of the members in a church organization. Church as an open system emanates from a study of ecclesial cybernetics by Granfiend (Granfield, 1973) and Murdick's analysis of shared responsibility in the education system of the Church (Plude, 1994). Church communication is multidirectional and uses both the formal and informal styles. The appropriate channel or media is used to unite church members effectively to achieve communion among its members and with God.

### 1.3. **Communication Theology**

Communication theology looks at the whole of theology under the perspective of communication. A growing number of theologians see communication as a basic principle and essential dimension of any theology (Palakeel, 2003). The key concept in communication theology is self-communication of God, delineated by Karl Rahner, a German theologian (Eilers, 2012). Rhaner's term of God's self-communication indicates how God communicates Himself to Human beings as He is. Gilbert Greshake maintains that "communication is from its origin a decisive theological idea which grounds in the revelation, and which addresses the center of the Christian perception of God and of the world" (2002). He states that the origin of Christian communication lies in the event of Jesus Christ

becoming man because Jesus is the self-communication of God. For Greshake, a Christian theological concept of communication has its roos in the Trinitarian and Christological realities (Eilers, 2002).

Communication becomes a theological principle by which the Trinitarian God communicates in himself. Every human person is able to communicate because each person is created in His Image and Likeness. As Eilers (2014) notes: "The Bible is the first book on and of communication." The Old Testament contains various books and documents of this communication with God's chosen people (Eilers, 2014, 19-24). Conversely, it is also their way of communicating or non-communicating with their creator. Despite the fact that human beings refuse to respond to God's call, God continues to communicate to them and offers a new chance to reenter into communion with Him (Ta & Eilers, 2015). God's communication happens in words and deeds with humankind and thorough the use of social forms, cultural aspects and human languages to deliver His message so that people come to know God in their lives and history. Thus, communication theology does not start with the media or technical means but rather with the center of theology, with God Himself (Soukup, 2003). Here the communication does become the eye through which the whole theology is seen because the Christian God is a communicating God.

In the New Testament, the most important element of divine self-communication is the eternal word of God. The Son becomes flesh for the sake of human persons. The self-communication of God becomes very personal in Jesus. Jesus' communication opens eyes of the people of his time to another reality existing in human world: the kingdom of God. It invites people to enter into this reality. All communicative activities of Jesus (preaching, healing, admonishing, eating with sinners, living with the disciples and with the Father, praying, suffering and dying on the cross) embrace the whole life of human person and lead to a life with other and with the Father. He is the absolute sign of god-man-communication (Ciudadano, Virgilio, 2015). In this perspective, a Christian communicator is the one who is individually called by Jesus to imitate his life and who is also able to live in fellowship with the Father and other people through the Holy Spirit.

### 1.4. Holy Trinity and Communication

The innermost being of the Trinitarian God's communication is a deep personal activity of each divine person. It is self-communication between the



Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian God communicates with His people in Revelation especially through His Son when the Word became flesh and lived like one of us. The Trinitarian communion lives by interpersonal self-communication by which each divine person communicates the most precious and unique of its own to the other (Eilers, 2009b, 26). Thus, the process of communication is not a passing of information from one another, but it is a mutual enriching process that leads to a full communion of love. The Trinitarian life is a life of reciprocal communication in communion and a communion of love through self-communication (Eilers, 2009a). From the fullness of divine self-communication, God reaches out to human beings. Out of love He creates humans in His own image and likeness. With this act of creation God gives human person the possibility and life condition for communicating with each other. Thus, the human person becomes communicative and interdependent.

### 1.5. Communication and Catholic Church

The Church's ministry and mission is to communicate the Good news of salvation and God's love to its creatures. She continues God's communication, not only with the use of media or communication for her mission but **is** communication as Cardinal Avery Dulles points out. Communication becomes the essence and 'raison d'etre' of the church (Eilers, 2009a, 43-62; Eilers, 2009b, 19-33; Ta & Eilers, 2015). Through her existence and ministry, the Church continues the communication of the Trinitarian by revealing, and incarnating God into the here and now of every time and place. She sets the communicating Trinitarian God and His son present in the lives of people. She also considers the communication dimension of a participatory and dialoguing, prophetic and witnessing Church (Eilers, 2008).

The Catholic Church, as an institution founded by Christ, has a long history of more than two thousand years. The church is the community of the faithful who follow the call of Jesus and live in His Spirit. She is a communicative reality as she reflects the life of Trinitarian God in different dimensions. Church, as a communicating body, instructed her children especially with the writings of Saints Peter, Paul and John in the beginning, through the church Fathers like Saint Augustine and Pope Gregory the Great later. In the 19th century, a more positive approach to social communication developed and the Church started appreciating new means of communication. She coined and introduced the term 'social communication' in 1962 with the publication of the Vatican II document, *Inter*

*Mirifica* which sees communication as communication **of** and **in** human society (Eilers, 2009a, 223, 323). The decree of the Vatican II covers the whole field of communication from traditional and interpersonal communication to media and communication in cyberspace (Eilers, 2014, 85-108).

### 1.6. Church Documents on Communication

The Catholic Church as mother teaches her children in various ways through different documents[8]. The teaching authority of the church is called magisterium. The history of the church documents on social communication begins in the early days of Jewish-Christian religion with the Bible (Eilers, 2014). A Jesuit priest Enrico Baragli, one of the pioneers involved in formulation of church documents on communication, published the collection of church documents on communication.

Following his publication, Franz-Josef Eilers SVD published a compilation of all the documents from Vatican that can serve as a guidebook for the formation of future priests (Eilers, 2002b; Eilers, 2014). Eilers lists more than 42 official documents in his book apart from the teaching in the early and middle ages (Eilers, 2014). The church documents encourage church leaders to be effective communicators to make the church to be really communitive. Most of the documents repeatedly demand proper training and formation in social communication (cf. *Inter Mirifica* nos. 13, 15; *Communio et Progressio* 107, 111; *Aetatis Noveae* 18, *Guide to the Training of Future Priests* 11) (Ciudadano, 2015).

### 1.7. Communication in the Asian Catholic Church

Understanding the needs of the time and responding to the call for a vision of 'a new way of being church'[9], which is to consider the communication dimension of the communion of communities, the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) came up with radical decisions to promote, form the communicators, and establish a communicating Asian church. FABC is convinced that a participatory, witnessing, dialoging and prophetic church cannot be built without proper communication dispositions (Eilers, 2009b). Since 1996 the Office of Social Communication (OSC) of the FABC organizes the FABC-OSC Meet – the annual meeting of Bishops and secretaries responsible for social communication. Franz-Josef Eilers SVD[10] in his book lists all FABC-OSC documents on various themes pertaining to communication that increase the awareness and to develop visions, action plans that promote greater cooperation in communication in the continental level (2008).



#### 1.7.1. Graduate Program in UST

The FABC-OSC took up the challenge to contribute to communication formation in Asia and initiated an M.A Theology course specializing in social/pastoral communication in the University of Santo Tomas (UST) (MAT-SPC) (Eilers, 2008, 217-220). MAT-SPC is designed such that it offers students insights into communication theology, communication spirituality, and the communication dimensions of different pastoral ministries. Based on the theology of communication, MAT-SPC provides insights, poses challenges and develops dispositions. It aims to form professionals who are deeply spiritual servants for Church ministry. Offering courses on different media of social communication, it is more concerned about proper dispositions needed for the specialization. In 12 years, until 2014, the UST MAT-SPC has produced 36 graduates ("Social/Pastoral Communication - A Masteral (MA) and Licentiate (STL) Program," 2014). In connection to MAT-SPC, the FABC has also founded the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication (ARC) in Bangkok, Thailand. Two book series on the topic of religion and social communication and *Communicatio Socialis Prints* were published in cooperation with the UST[11].

#### 1.7.2. A Christian Communication Model

Apart from its research and publications, the Department of Social/Pastoral Communication in the University of Santo Tomas developed a communication model. According to this communication model neither the sender nor the ritual is essential but rather the message which is God's Word is the most important one (Eilers, 2009). Here the communicator is just the messenger or a channel through which God's message flows to the individual recipient or group of recipients who in turn become 'messengers' to the each other about their experience of God's Word, the message. This model recognizes God as THE source of all communication and the communicator is just a channel, an instrument through which God works. The communication is determined more by the experience of the message than with the technical means. This Christian communication model is based on Scripture and is concerned that the Message of God reaches people.

**MESSAGE** → **messenger** → **Receiver**

-Physical disposition

-Psychological/mental/ spiritual disposition

### 1.7.3. Radio Veritas Asia

Radio Veritas Asia, the voice of Asian Christianity and the only continent-wide radio station for the church in Asia, is at service for almost 60 years of evangelization through broadcasting. FABC-OSC takes care of the administration, operation, and financing of RVA with the guidance of the board of five Asian bishops. Founded in 1960, the RVA follows the effective ways of sustaining and informing the faith of those who already believe in Christ and of proclaiming Him to those who do not yet know Him. In the last 10 years, the RVA has received more than one million letters from listeners which praise the commendable service (Eilers, 2008). There are also listeners group created in different countries which act as the catalysts of change. The programs are recorded and used for further evangelization and social awareness programs. Today, it broadcasts in 18 languages with digitalized production and 24/7 going online. The development ushered the possibility of producing more programs in the native areas and broadcasted from RVA ("Radio Veritas Asia," 2018).

### 1.7.4. Communication in the Local Levels

Every catholic diocese has a commission for communication and evangelization. There is a pastoral center in every diocese that uses and promotes the use of communication technology. The celebration of the World Communication Sunday[12] yearly shows the importance of media and communication in spreading the Good News. Every parish community adapts itself to the appropriate and available means of communication like PowerPoint, social media and digital boards for their liturgy and communication (Tirol, 2009). There are many local catholic television and radio channels functioning in different parts of Asia in different countries. Many online videos of liturgical



celebrations and sermons are more and more prevalent. Protestant churches in general adapt themselves faster and easier to the growing the media as they are more local and open to the needs.

## 2. Development Perspective

Just like communication, development is also difficult to define with a single definition and it is broad enough to encompass anything that makes a person to improve. Development is always considered as a movement towards a better state. For a long time, development has been a secular business depending on the history and context in which it emerged. Development was seen fundamentally as a matter of material progress and economic growth and presumed that if the living conditions of people improve, the rest will follow (Groeneweg, 2012). Though development was primarily looked as the alleviation of poverty, the aspect changes as the understanding of poverty is redefined. Poverty is traditionally looked as low level of income or lack of material resources[13]. The consideration of subjective dimensions of income and wealth was a major shift in conceptualization of poverty. A welfare based multidimensional concepts and causes of poverty received major attention and led to a more general definition of wellbeing or even happiness that included non-income components like education, health, and access to markets. Thus, poverty is synonymous to 'vulnerability' that is caused not only by the low income but issues like illness, death, loss of work, fire or theft (Ruben, 2011).

### 2.1 Religion and Development

The Indian Nobel laurate for economics, Amartya Sen, states that religion and development have been intimately interwoven[14] (Sen, 1999) but in mainstream development thinking, policy and practice, religion has been neglected in the academic field, despite its pervasiveness and importance (Rakodi, 2007; Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011; Jones & Juul Petersen, 2011; Rakodi, 2012b)

Many of the development study and practice see religion as an obstacle or a panacea (Adogame, 2016). This view has been influential and predominant in mainstream Western development studies and policies in the past and today among religious skeptics, while many others believe that it should be kept out of the public sphere. The critics of religion consider the religious belief in the transcendent to be incompatible with the modern scientific knowledge, regard

religion as oppressive structure, judge that religious beliefs and practice hinder social change and improvement, and believe that, throughout history, the desire for religious hegemony has resulted in conflict, competition, violence and division (Rakodi, 2007).

The neglect of religion and spirituality in development has to be further elucidated. In 1980, *World Development* published a special issue entitled, "Religions and Development", at the time when development was defined in terms of economic growth and religion was neglected in the academic field and practice of development studies (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011). But this issue did not translate into sustained attention to the topic[15]. This special issue argued that this discrepancy between the reality of previously colonized countries on the one hand and aspirations of a development project modeled on the process that had occurred in the colonizing countries on the other called for a re-evaluation of the relationship between development and religion (Wilber & Jameson 1980). However the plea fell on deaf ears and there was rare reference to the role of religion in development (Beek, 2000)[16].

The most common reason for the neglect is the fear of imposing or appearing to impose an outsider's perspective. In many developing countries where the conversions take place, like India, many consider that religious organizations have used the 'development' programs to manipulate and impose their perspectives on their beneficiaries. Social science literature and philosophers referred to spirituality and religion as myths, whose overall negative effect on society will be replaced by scientific thinking. Karl Marx, in 1844, argued that religion was 'the opium of the people' and Sigmund Freud believed that religion is nothing more than 'infantile' response and 'the adult's reaction to his own sense of helplessness' (Rakodi, 2012a). So many contemporary development theorists and practitioners continue to hold the scientific/materialistic bias and evade spirituality and religion considering them as unscientific.

The next reason for the failure to engage the issue of spirituality and the negative attitude toward religion is the result of a mostly northern perspective that dichotomizes the sacred and secular. The long history of religious competition for dominance and state control in Europe led to the separation of church-state and religion became more problematic than helpful (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). This dichotomizing of the sacred and secular in the European society contributed to the avoidance of religion and spirituality and the preference of the secular society. There is a fear of conflict that manipulation of spiritual and religious themes and symbols can kindle distrust and hatred[17].



The lack of precedent models and theories for addressing spirituality is the other reasons for the ignorance of religion and spirituality in the development literature and practice (Ver Beek, 2000).

### 2.2 **The Changing Context**

Concentrating more on economic policies that could deliver economic stability, growth and prosperity, religion was perceived as irrelevant to modern societies because the visions of development from faith perspective differ significantly from economic perspective. As Goulet mentioned to religious groups, development experts may seem like 'one-eyed giants' who "analyze, prescribe and act as if man could live by bread alone, as if human destiny could be stripped to material dimensions alone" (Goulet, 1980). In 1980, he lamented the neglect of religion by development scholars, even though "most persons in developing countries still find in religious beliefs, symbols, practices and mysteries their primary source of meaning (Goulet, 1980, 482). Despite the "growing chorus of voices, in rich and poor countries alike, who proclaim that full human development is not possible without regard for essential religious values" that he detected (p. 488), little more attention was given to religion in the development debate in the subsequent twenty years than in the preceding two decades.

Given the apparently integral link between spirituality and issues central to development, it would seem reasonable that spirituality would occupy a relatively prominent place in development theory and practice (Tomalin, 2007). However, the subject is conspicuously under-represented in development literature, in the policies and programs of development organizations, forbidding the mutual contribution and strengthening of religion and development. Lebret considers development as cultural and spiritual as well as economic and political (Goulet, 1980). Gandhi, the Father of the nation of India, favored 'production by masses' over 'mass production' in which people are not respected and development aspect is diminished to mere production.

Until 1980 the concern was to create feasible conditions for economic growth and the mainstream development theory had been dominated by modernization theories for three decades. Religion was considered to be an aspect of culture of 'traditional' societies that hinder modernization (Nkurunziza, 2007). In 1970s there was a growing discontent with equating development with economic growth because in vast majority of developing countries the

rapid growth of the 1950s and 1960s did not eradicate poverty and modernists thoughts failed to deliver. Then dependency theory and related perspectives became influential in development studies which were followed by the neo-liberalism and structural adjustment programs (Nkurunziza, 2007). Later in 1990s development agencies started to pay attention to their relationships with religions and spirituality and in 2004 the human development was incorporated into neo-liberal approach (Rakodi, 2007).

James Rick (2010) argues that religion provides an alternative to the secular theory of development and it broadens the understanding of development bringing focus on human development not merely on income, GDP and economy. Religion brings in the questions of values and meanings linking human wellbeing. As faith is a key aspect of cultural identity and wellbeing, the paradigm shift has enabled faith issues to be incorporated easily into development. The teachings and practices of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, the Church documents and liberation theology promote this holistic human development. Khan and Bashar (2010) learned that it is impossible to separate religion from development since the religion derives people's behavior and actions in a more productive direction.

### 2.3 **Human Development**

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choice and having access to the resources needed to enjoy a decent standard living. In the words of Amartya Sen, "human development as an approach deals with what I consider the basic development idea; namely, increasing the richness of human life rather than the wealth of economy in which human beings live, which is only a part of human life itself" (1999). It is the human wellbeing and it had its first mention in 1990 UN Human Development Report which considered the primary objective of development is to benefit people (UNDP, 1990). The UN report gives the clear and fundamental articulation of the concept of human development and distances itself from the importance of economic aspects. Later the 2010 UN report (UNDP, 2010) further develops the evolving and dynamic idea of human development, enlarging people's choices and putting people at the center of the development process (Alkire, 2004). The complexity of human reality and its integral growth cannot be limited to a single agency like UNDP or a single aspect of economy. It includes matters of livelihood, relationship, peaceful life, spiritual activities, active engagement in politics, community activities, self-respect and emotional wellbeing.



### 2.4 **Religious Institutions in Development**

The origins of development assistance trace back to missionary works and religiously inspired initiatives during colonial era and it continued further under religious motivations. Today the religious organizations, NGOs, medical and educational institutions, religious self-help groups, relief and rehabilitation programs, religious charitable institutions such as Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)[18] have a commendable role in development (Carbonnier, 2013). The FBOs remain highly prominent actors in the development practice and prove that faith can be better engaged in divers development actions (Rick, 2010), and precisely put religion into practice (Wel, 2010). Emma Tomalin observes not much difference between NGOs and FBOs and the donors and funding agents adapt development approaches, and seek to reach all in need (Tomalin, 2007).

Wilber and Jameson caution if development processes failed to take religion adequately into consideration, there was a real risk of backlash and of developing countries rejecting the development project altogether. They argued that "religion is more than a mere instrument for development. A broad definition of development as meeting basic human needs would include religious values as one of those needs that are end in themselves"(Wilber & Jameson, 1980). Religion constitutes a framework that provides a set of norms with which to assess the legitimacy and validity of development process, a moral framework that in their view should not be ignored. Various trends have brought religion back into development studies: the rise of so-called 'political Islam'[19], continuing importance of religion in people's lives and identities in developing countries (Jenkins, 2007) and reassessment and recognition of contribution and importance of religious organizations like faith based organizations (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011).

## 3. Development Communication Perspective

From the beginning, it was not easy to define development communication and to develop it as a profession or as a field of study (Quebral, 2016). It is the interaction of two social processes - development and communication in any given environment. Dr. Nora C. Quebral, a real prophetess[20]of development communication, coined the term 'development communication' and she herself defined it more than once. The concept was

articulated on December 10, 1971 in the agricultural context. Dr. Quebral sharpened the definition later and redefined later development communication as, "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential" (Quebral, 2011). This revised definition has a shift from previous definition of 'speedy transformation of a country and mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth'(Quebral, 1973).

### 3.1 Development Communication and the Catholic Church

Manyozo (2006, 2012) argues that Latin America must be the first to speak of Development Communication in the form of Liberation Theology with the contribution of the Catholic Church[21]. In 1962, Pope John XXIII held a meeting with Church officials known as Vatican II, during which He wanted that the Church has to be more inclusive like a community. He believed that working with impoverished communities was vital and that work with poor people would be more effective. The bishops from Latin America present in the meeting were inspired by the Pope's ideas. Few years later, in August 1968, the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops was held in Medellin, Colombia. The prevalence of poverty and injustice was the major theme. The participants were convinced that the poorer countries of Latin America could not develop unless the oppression that was widespread in their government was corrected. The idea of the Christian-based community as one response was formally sanctioned by the bishops.

Liberation theology is more a movement that attempts to unite theology and sociopolitical concerns than a new school of theological theory. It is more apt to speak of liberation theology in the plural because these theologies of liberation find its expression among downtrodden, blacks, Dalits, untouchables, feminists, Native Americans, aborigines etc. The most significant and articulate expression in the beginning has taken place in Latin American context and has served as the model for other theologies of liberation. The leading proponents are responsive to social perspectives of Kant, Hegel and Marx. Liberation theology was also influenced by European political theology in J.B.Metz, Jurgen Moltmann, and Harvey Cox who criticized the ahistorical and individualistic nature of existential theology (Hillar, 1993).



Liberation theology not only covers the spiritual realm but also calls for social action on behalf of the poor, necessitates political involvement, and to collaborate to challenge the oppressive structures. Based on liberation theology, the goals of individual spiritual growth and empowerment are as important as alleviating material needs and the two areas are dialectically linked. It insists on the process of community discussion and decision making, consistent with community's cultural and religious values. The process necessarily includes an important role of its leaders and their practice. It involves people from varied economic classes and other social strata, assuming that all need spiritual awakening in a manner that can contribute to address broad social problems.

There are the two concrete and ideal examples of Latin American Liberation theology. One is Paulo Freire who strongly criticized the traditional 'banking educational' system that discouraged creativity and critical thought, and developed a new method of teaching literacy to the masses of peasants through the process of '*consceientização*'[22], (conscientization) or consciousness raising. Another is the liberation theology in Latin American which is largely manifest in the emergence of the Base Ecclesial Community, *Communidades de base,* (CEB) or small Christian communities in Brazil. The dialogic process of liberation frees people and communities to determine their own future. They describe how the fundamental beliefs shape development communication practice.

### 3.2 Approaches to Development Communication

There are two saliently tenuous approaches towards studying, teaching and practicing development communication: the development theory approach and the communication theory approach, since "we are talking about the processes that go hand in hand" (Quebral, 1988; Okunnu, 2014)

The development theory approach involved researchers and practitioners locating the origins, definitions as practices within the dominant development paradigms as they formulated the springboard for the emergence of development communication. Quebral asserts that development is the stronger principle in the tandem as it prescribes the goal, content and methods of communication. She argues that development communication is 'colored' by how we define development and as "the definition of development changes, the definition of

development communication also changes" (Okunnu, 2014). The development theory approach offers parallel comparisons between the evolution of development communication in relation to development theory.

The communication theory approach, on the other hand, involves scholars and practitioners who examine how media and communication experiments impact governance, democracy and livelihood. This approach is built on media effects research, social theory, political economy and liberal democratic political theory. The models of training programs that are being promoted by communication for social change consortium reflect this approach. In a particular way, Latin American universities adopt this social change training model whose origins are attributed to media of social communication, declared by the Second Vatican Council. The Catholic Church uses this approach and encourages her followers to be better communicators and to use the all communication means for development.

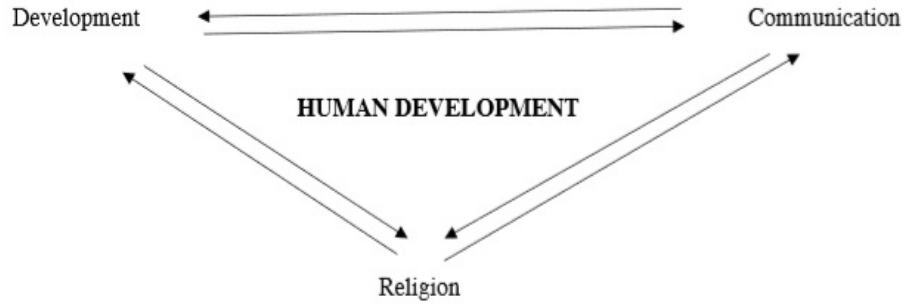
Analyzing communication in the service of development both in religious and secular approaches, the scholars propose transformation of individuals and the society, from poor state to a better state, from a lack of certain conditions, or from oppression, to a dynamic state that allows living the plenitude of life, that answers all the demands of human and society. In obtaining this dynamism and sustainability, communication employs available strategies, means and approaches. In particular for attaining better human development goals, Pitor Gracz proposes transformational communicational model[23] espoused by Flor and Smith (2015). It is assumed that human development can occur if only the right message can become the right norm or values of societies. Human development, as upheld by the Church, is humanity's transition from less human to truly and fully human conditions; integral human development promotes the good of every person and the whole person in all aspects (without exclusion); it is cultural, economic, political, social and spiritual with self-development and sustainability (Bendict XVI, 2009).

## 4. Interrelationship among Communication, Religion, and Development

Communication, religion and development are interrelated concepts in development communication theory and practice. We cannot keep away religion when we speak of the integral human development and growth of the



society. The internal relationship between these three entities can be seen from different lenses because development, religion and communication involve processes that are dynamic, interactive, continuing and never ending (Tirol, 2009). The following exhibit explains the integral relationship between the components and the continuing movement between the components to achieve holistic human development:




The above presentation displays the complex processes and relationships between development, communication and religion. Development as a non-static and moving concept has dynamic relationship with communication which of same nature. The vibrant relationship of development with communication leads to human transformation and facilitates development. They both in turn are related to religion that accompanies them in their unending interactions and processes. The consequence is this complex evolution is human development that unfolds every human potential.

## 5. Development Communication – a Human Development Process

Spirituality and religion are central to many of the daily decisions that people in the 'South' as well as in the 'North' make concerning their community's development. Despite their pervasiveness and importance, the mainstream development communication literature, policy and practice have systematically avoided the topic of religion and spirituality. This avoidance has resulted in inferior research and less effective programs and failed to provide the opportunities to reflect on how development and spirituality should shape each other (Kim, 2007). Religion and spirituality cannot be tidily isolated from other factors at work within and among people and communities. If development is truly about strengthening people's capacity to determine their

own values and priorities and to organize themselves to act on these, the researchers and practitioners of development communication must recognize the importance of spirituality and religion and give people the opportunity and power to decide how both, their religion and their development will and should shape each other.

Not only the poor countries but all need development. The goals are inherent in the meaning given to development. Some of the more qualitative ones are enhancement of quality of life, wellbeing of oneself, the unfolding of the human personality and the humanization of the individual. They are variants of the view that development does not end with high GNP nor even with high per capita income. The transformation of man/woman as the real goal of human development finds staunchest support in Latin America where Freire's concept of concientization, or self-knowledge leading to heightened aspiration on the part of the peasant, appears to be making great impact. This is because development communication is centered on the total human being and covers all aspects of life (Quebral, 1988).

The reappraised definition of development communication of Quebral focuses on human beings and that the media and technologies are just instruments for advancing the communication agenda (Lennie & Tacchi, 2011). As a theory, practice and field of study, development communication has begun to focus on social challenges and human development that entails economic, social, political and cultural independence (Quebral, 1988). The concept of development communication would stay vigorous as long as human development as a goal challenges our thinkers and doers. There may be change in concepts as the growth in understanding of development and the interactive process, communication that is most basic to our society. This human development demands commitment from the researchers and scholars of development communication. They have to work strenuously towards the humanistic goals, as well as the multi-faceted nature of human development that refers to the economic, social, political, cultural aspects, as well as the theological and spiritual concerns, and predict a wider scope for the study and practice of development than is ascribed to it as present (Quebral, 1988, 161).



**Conclusion**

Development communication as an evolving field of study, as theory and practice, has reoriented itself to focus more on social changes and holistic human development. At the beginning, it had the view of dominant paradigm and modernization for which only economic development is the core importance. Later, since development became the guiding principle in development communication, the concept of development changed as development was redefined and put the human individual at the heart of development process.

Today, the growth in the use of communication technologies in promoting and developing communicated communities that aim at the development of human person as individual as well as the community as a whole, is the primary goal of any religion. The redefined concept of development is relevant, and its practice caters to the wellbeing of every person and promotes holistic human development. Religion and spirituality are unavoidable in the process of human development as they are interrelated to communication and development.

The subject matter remains a challenge for further innovative research at the interface of development communication and religion. To advance the conceptualization of multidimensional poverty and its alleviation, the mutual interaction between religion and development communication has to be further explored. For strengthening the understanding of the role of religion in the development communication processes, though religion is not the only area relevant to development, heterogeneity in religious beliefs and practices of various religions have to be analyzed. As appropriate the communication technologies used for human development in local religious communities, the future study has to focus its analysis on the mutual contribution of religion and development communication at the grassroot level. The more open engagements of religion and spirituality from the part of the development world will open up new angles of interaction which will contribute to enrichment of both religion and development communication. Faith based organizations remain highly prominent actors in the aid industry and their paramount role played in the daily lives of individuals and communities to improve the lives of deserves ones need further research. Religions and development communication agenda are open and still to be explored.

## Endnotes

[1] The encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* deals extensively with human development. It claims development as a new name for peace. In the encyclical, the Pope turns his attention to the progress of the peoples of the world because of the widespread hunger, poverty, endemic disease, and ignorance present in the underdeveloped nations.

[2] Craig (1999) in his article, divides the field of communication theory into seven traditions according to underlying conceptions of communication practice: Cybernetic, semiotic, phenomenological, rhetorical, sociopsychological, critical and sociocultural. Craig suggests the spiritual tradition as a neglected area that might be further developed and become eighth tradition.

[3] The expression, 'Signs of the time' was first used by the Pope Pius XII. In the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, the Pope John Paul II adapts it and calls the church for the renewal in its own life and in its involvement in the world by 'reading the signs of the times'. In most of his writings, the Pope urges the Christians to reading the hopeful and concerning signs of the time.

[4] The term social communication was introduced by the Second Vatican Council in the document *Inter Mirifica* (1962). This was a great change in Church's approach to communication and Eilers calls it "Modern Positive Approach'.

[5] Eilers lists 42 documents of the Church until 2014, in a special way during Second Vatican Council (1963-1965), pertaining to communication and how the concept of communication is developed over time and promoted the mission of the Church.

[6] Considering church as communication there were different models proposed specially by ecclesiologists. Though no one metaphor can contain the totality of Church's nature and each contributes to our understanding, each proposed model has different image of the Church and has its own style of communication. Particularly after Vatican II the view of the church changed, the church became very participatory and promoted shared responsibility. Here F.F. Plude brings out the already existing three models and adds her own fourth model, church as an 'Open System'.

[7] A corresponding communication/*communio* model was offered by Pottmeyer and spoke about of *communio* as a leitmotif a norm or criterion-for the church, her structures and relations. This *communio* has a theological and anthropological meaning Cf. (Plude, 1994).



[8] Official documents of the Catholic Church have evolved and differentiated over time, but commonly come from four basic sources: 1) Papal documents, issued directly by the Pope under his own name; (Papal documents include Decretal letter, Apostolic constitution, Encyclical letter, Apostolic letter, Declaration and Motu proprio.) 2) Church Council documents, issued by ecumenical councils of the Church and now promulgated under the Pope's name, taking the same form as common types of papal documents; 3) Curial documents, issued by offices of the Holy See but authorized by the Pope; and 4) Bishops documents, issued either by individual bishops or by national conferences of bishops.

[9] Under the guidance of Vatican II, the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) has come up with its Teachings and its Journey towards Creating a Participatory Church in Asia through Basic Ecclesial communities. FABC encourages to create the Basic Christian Communities to as the miniature of the church and make the church to be more participatory reflecting the ancient Christian communities.

[10] Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD played an important role as FABC and OSC secretory in establishing the graduate program in UST and development of RVA to serve the Asian Church. He authored many books on Social communication which serve as the text books for the graduate program in UST and elsewhere.

[11] Until now three books have been published in this series: Two of them edited by Binod C. Agrawal and the last one by Franz-Josef Eilers and Anh Vu Ta. (Cf. Agrawal, 2015). The series of *Communicatio Socialis Prints* has goes to publish four books to its account authored by different Asian Communication Scholars (Ciudadano, 2015).

[12] Every Year the Church fixes the World Communication Day with a special theme and the Pope gives a special message to the faithful and the bishops organize different meaningful activities in their diocesan level. For example, this year, 2018, the Pope stressed on the 'fake news and journalism for peace' and urged the Catholics to protect the communication which is the real means of promoting goodness, generating truest and opening the way to communion and peace.

[13] This concept is strongly influenced by modernization theorists. The World Bank approach to poverty measurement based on 'one dollar a day' standard is illustrative for this way of thinking.

[14] Amaetya Sen, an Indian writer and Nobel Prize winner, points out that Ashoka, a convert to Buddhism in the third century B.C., openly championed religious tolerance. Great Fathers of the nations like Gandhi intended to draw upon and incorporate spiritual insights rather than sidelining them (Sen 1999, 236).

[15] The known journals for development make only rare reference to the role of spirituality and religion in development. Between 1982 and 1996, there was only one article on the role of magic and witchcraft in development was published in *World Development.* Though the 1980 entire issue of *World Development* was dedicated to the topic of religion and development, it was not translated into sustained attention to the topic.

[16] Ver Beek conducted a search of papers published in three of the most prominent development study journals during 1982 – 1998 and found only rare references the role of religion and development. He found that *World Development* had only five articles focused on religion, while 83 dealt with the environment and 85 with gender.

[17] Specially in the Middle East, in the places of religious fanatics and rightwing governments people are afraid to talk about spiritual themes and symbols. There is no clear understanding and openness among the followers of religions. The lack of open dialogue is also one of the causes for the fear of conflict.

[18] FBO, as defined by Clark, is "any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or form a particular interpretation or school of thought within faith" (2008, 6).

[19] In the late 1970s the Iranian revolution and election of Ayatollah Khomeini posed puzzles for international development community's attitude towards religion. The success of political parties that have allegiances to religious principles coming to power alarmed Western countries. The international political dimensions of Islam have contributed to broader changes in the global geo-political context and made the topic of religion unavoidable in the study of international relations.

[20] Dr. Quebral assumes the prophet Isaiah's role and claims that she is the voice of the wilderness crying for the new branch of communication.

[21] Manyozo in his book on Media, Communication and Development, traces the different models of communication emerged in different cultural, geographical and ideological contexts. He suggested that development communication can be divided into six schools (Manyozo, 2006). He argues that Latin American School must be the first that introduced earliest experiments of development communication.

[22] *Consceientização* – a Portuguese word to mean "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, 17).

[23] The Transformational communication Model focuses on the institutional network



development and capacity building to achieve sustainability. It manifests sending and receiving messages in different levels of the society.

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# The Role of Inclusive Language in an Inter-Religious Dialogue and Communications

*Rico C. Jacoba and Jeramie N. Molino*

**Abstract**

*Inclusive language is a language that is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory views of particular people or groups. It is also a language that doesn't deliberately or inadvertently exclude people from being seen as part of a group. Inclusive language is sometimes called 'non-discriminatory language.' This paper explores on the role of inclusive language in inter-religious dialogue and communication. The goal of developing inclusive societies is embodied in a number of international, national and state laws relating to equal opportunity and anti-discrimination. In the Catholic Church, several documents have been written about inter-religious dialogue. Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD contributed so much in the field of Social Communication and expounded this by explaining that "dialogue is seen as a way to make contact with another person or group of persons." Building up on Eilers' idea, this paper argues that "Inclusive Language" is imperative in all forms of communications especially in inter-religious dialogue and communication.*

**Keywords:** *inter-religious dialogue, communication, inclusive language*

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## Introduction

Dialogue is a special element in any communication.[1] In every organizational communication, dialogue is "part of everyday organizational life."[2] According to Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, one should not only see it as a special way to improve relationships or to develop "dialogical wisdom" as some scholars do. It is a way of being with others as opposed to a way of thinking only through issues and problems.[3]

Cultural and religious multiplicity have developed as key concerns at the turn of a new epoch.[4] Moreover, religious diversity has become a major social concern, linked to the growing variety of religious codes within and between religions.[5] Promoting dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect between and among communities—local or international—is no longer an option. Now that religion is at the center of the world stage, interfaith challenge has become a necessity. As a consequence of cultural and religious diversity as well as the fast-changing movements in global communication, not to mention the recent threats of terrorism all over the world, "the interrelationship between the nation-state and faith communities is evolving. And faith communities, working in tandem with government authorities, have an important role to play in creating a civil society."[6] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) "seeks to aid individuals in appreciating the diversity of beliefs present in societies while fostering peaceful, respectful interfaith exchanges. This means recognizing not only that many differing faiths exist, but also that these faiths have different interpretations of their religious sources and origins."[7]

[1] Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*. 4th Updated Edition, (Manila: Logos (Divine Word) Publications, Inc., 2018), 273.

[2] Ibid., 273.

[3] Ibid.

[4] *UNESCO World Report. Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue.* http://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/pdf/Investing_in_cultural_diversity.pdf (accessed August 28, 2018).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Desmond Cahill and Michael Leahy. *Constructing a Local Multifaith Network. A partnership under the Australian Government's Living in Harmony Initiatives.*

[7] UNESCO. *Making textbook content inclusive: A focus on religion, gender, and culture*. (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017).



Asia's diverse population reflects a multi-faith religious landscape. As nations are divided by culture and faith expressions, the Catholic Church in Asia has to initiate and promote mutual understanding and respect that will bind and strengthen our communities. It has been a common observation that most of the people in the Asia, for example in the Philippines and some other predominantly Christian areas, look at the *Moro* or the Muslims differently, perhaps because of the news they hear about them. The same is true of a Christian who does not have much knowledge of Buddhists, Hindus and other religious groups. Remarks uttered against people of other religious systems can range from being strange to simply being derogatory and offensive. Daniel Febella, a Catholic school teacher, observes that "Muslims and Christians can never co-exist."[8] However, he believes that Christians and Muslims can still be friends. This is a clear indication of misperception due to wrong information that people in non-Moro parts of the Philippines receive. It is important to review how communication and information have been carried out among Christians and non-Christians not only in the Philippines but all over Asia.

In 2011, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, wrote:

> Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for the person's point of view, opinion, and proposal. To dialogue entails a cordial reception, not a prior condemnation. In order to dialogue, it is necessary to know how to lower the defenses, open the doors of the house, and offer human warmth.[9]

For many years since the Second Vatican Council, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has developed important materials to guide the

[8] Santosh Digal. *Mindanao: relations and dialogue between Christians and Muslims continue despite violence* . http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mindanao:-relations-and-dialogue-between-Christians-and-Muslims-continue-despite-violence-17616.html (accessed August 19, 2018)

[9] Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio. *A Church in Dialogue: The Catholic Church and Interreligious Dialogue* http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Nostra_Aetate_-_50th_Anniversary.pdf (accessed August 19, 2018).

faithful who are engaged in interreligious activities.[10] These resources contain what has been referred to as "modes" or "methods" of interreligious dialogue. These methods include:

- The dialogue of life, in which believers live side by side and come to know each other through daily interactions and friendships with their neighbours and colleagues;
- The dialogue of works or of practical cooperation, in which believers collaborate on important projects on a local or broader level, to meet basic human needs and help to improve the community;
- The dialogue of experts, in which specialists come together to examine important things of similarity and difference between faiths, and to understand more deeply the meaning of their beliefs and teachings;
- The dialogue of religious experience, in which believers share with each other about their forms of prayer, their spiritual ideals, and their sense of the transcendent.[11]

The Church sees dialogue as an important element in evangelization and renewal. According to Eilers,[12] the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* of Pope Paul VI triggered the Council Fathers to the discussion and subsequent publication of the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church and non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*) and the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*).

In implementing these "modes" or "methods" of dialogue, appropriate language is crucial. The aim of this paper is to point out the role of inclusive language in inter-religious dialogue and communication. It will particularly answer the following questions:

1. How is interreligious dialogue and communication carried out in the Catholic Church?
2. What is the role of inclusive language in an interreligious dialogue and communication?

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission,* 273.



These questions will be answered by using hermeneutic content analysis,[13] a method of textual analysis.

**Discussions**

Eilers[14] explains that the mere word "communication" is right from its origin a theological expression. He asserts that from its origin "communication" is a decisive theological idea which is grounded in Christian revelation and has its theme the center of the Christian understanding of God and the world.[15] As believers of God, Christians who are engaged in the work of interreligious dialogue have the responsibility to communicate using language in a humane way; they must "avoid bias and take care not to abuse the humanity of others for whom Christ died."[16] In reality, not all people pursue a personal identity that corresponds to their religious affiliations. However, all human beings certainly have their own belief and values.

If one wishes to engage in interreligious dialogue and communication, one will point to special areas of concern about bias in language and to suggest ways that members of the dialogue process can be more accurate, ethical and inclusive. Such sensitivity to inclusive language must include the sensitivity to sexual bias. Both men and women have been victimized by biased use of language. However, women have suffered greater discrimination because the generic use of terms such as "he," "men" and "mankind" has favored the masculine over the feminine. The exercise of more inclusive language not only helps to overcome masculine bias, but is a more accurate reflection of reality.[17] Another area is racial bias. Racial bias is a form of implicit bias which refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect an individual's understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. The *Guidelines for Inclusive Language* states:

> All persons share a common humanity. Racial divisions are often cited by one group of people to justify enslavement,

[13] K. A. L. Vieira, et.al. *Hermeneutic Content Analysis: a method of textual analysis*. In International Journal of Business Marketing and Management (IJBMM) Volume 2 Issue 8 September 2017, www.ijbmm.com (accessed August 28, 2018).
[14] Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission,* 273.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ferdy E. Baglo, (ed). *Guidelines for Inclusive Language*. Issue: 1987. Office for Communication Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1987.
[17] Cf. Baglo, 1987.

> separation or oppressive treatment of other human beings. It is pointless to avoid references to the differences among persons in colours of skin, eyes, or hair, but these references should be made in the proper context and should not carry emotional or moral freight.[18]

Furthermore, an important attitude that every individual who engages in interreligious dialogue should be aware of is ethnic bias. In the Philippines, for example, there is a great deal of conscious and unconscious prejudice against what are perceived to be the characteristics of other ethnicities. A person who has a dark complexion is usually referred to as "*nag-aaral sa UP Diliman*" (studying at UP Diliman), wherein "*Diliman*" is derived from the word "*dilim*" which means "dark" in English. "The principle that all persons are created equal is accepted, but society cannot fully disguise its nationalistic bias. Language frequently fosters this bias."[19]

Finally, sensitivity should include consciousness of religious bias. Compassionate use of words means reverence for people of various religious convictions. But this does not imply that those who engage in interreligious dialogue "will avoid religious bias prompted by prejudice, ignorance, chauvinism or hatred."[20] In the Philippines, the Cordilleras' belief system was usually labelled as "pagan" by the early Christian missionaries. "In the 20th century, Christians should be especially aware of the horrors of the holocaust of World War II, a tragedy for all of humanity; but especially for the Jews."[21]

**What is Inclusive Communication?**

Inclusive communication, both verbal and written, means developing and sharing information in ways that everybody can understand. How we communicate needs to be tailored to suit each person.[22] There is a barrier in communication when information is written or explained in a vague manner.

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] http://www.eccv.org.au/library/An_Investment_Not_an_Expense ECCV_Health_Literacy_Paper_FINAL.pdf



Some key principles of inclusive language include good wishes to a person's values (cultural, spiritual and emotional) and beliefs. One must demonstrate respect of how people describe who they are and what is important to them (relationships, gender, abilities and identities). It must also focus on a person's strengths, assets and what they can do, not their limitations, deficits or what they cannot do.[23] It is observed that among the feminist groups, there is a clamor to eradicate the use of gender bias language. However, there are other conservative groups who claim that it is a trivial concern; but the reality is one can never underestimate the importance of language in the formation of our consciousness and perspective.[24] By the rise of feminism and the growing awareness to the rights of individuals, inclusive language has been one of the focal points of discussion. The reality has been carried out even in the area of interreligious dialogue. However, in its desire to accommodate the legitimate interests of inclusive language, the Church ought never to lose sight of the fact that Christian reality is Christological and that we do not exist as Christians by ourselves or in ourselves, but by Christ and in Christ. We should, therefore, always be attentive to the possibility that interreligious statements are formed and informed by Christological considerations.

**Inclusive Language and Dialogue**

Language is our main form of communication and it plays a powerful role both in contributing to and in eliminating discrimination. Language that is exclusive is harmful because it can inhibit or prevent students reaching their full potential and benefitting from their educational experiences. People can be hurt, demeaned and offended by discriminatory language. Even 'positive stereotyping' (for example, suggesting that a particular race, gender or age group are gifted in a particular area) can be damaging as this oversimplifies individual characteristics and ignores the diversity within groups and society more broadly. The use of inclusive language is an important way to reflect the diverse nature of Asian society. Non-discriminatory language avoids false assumptions about people and helps to promote respectful relationships. A commitment to inclusive language is an important attribute of a modern,

[23] Ibid.
[24] Syed Farid Alatas, Lim Teck Ghee, Kazuhide Kuroda (eds.). *Asian Interfaith Dialogue: Perspectives on Religion, Education and Social Cohesion*. (Singapore: Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA) and The World Bank), 2003.

diverse and inclusive society. Inclusive language enables everyone to feel that they are being reflected in what is being said. This is the real essence of dialogue.

In the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) Pope Paul VI introduced a new approach which he calls "dialogue."[25] Cardinal Arinze describes the dynamic as follows:

> Interreligious dialogue is a meeting of people of differing religions, in an atmosphere of freedom and openness, in order to listen to the other, to try to understand that person's religion, and hopefully to seek possibilities of collaboration. It is hoped that the other partner will reciprocate, because dialogue should be marked by a two-way and not a one-way movement.[26]

Eilers expounded on this by explaining that "dialogue is seen as a way to make contact with another person or group of persons." He continued by saying that "Pope Paul VI describes the dispositions for this kind of communication when he lists in '*Ecclesiam Suam*' the following characteristics for a genuine dialogue:"

> Clarity before all else; it should be accompanied with the meekness of Christ; confidence not only in the power of one's word, but also in the goodwill of both parties in dialogue; and finally prudence is needed to allow for the psychological and moral circumstances of his hearer, particularly if he is a child, unprepared, suspicious or hostile.[27]

Dialogue requires a language that does not discriminate others. According to the Council of Europe:

> Discrimination occurs when people are treated less favourably than other people are in a comparable situation only because they belong, or are perceived to belong to a certain group or category of people. People may be discriminated against because of their age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political belief, race, religion, sex or gender, sexual orientation, language, culture and on many other grounds. Discrimination, which is often the result of prejudices people hold, makes people powerless, impedes them from becoming active citizens, restricts them from developing their skills and, in many situations, from accessing work, health services, education or accommodation.[28]

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission,* 273-74.



In the Catholic Church, such discrimination has been evident in several past dealings, either formal or informal, with other non-Christian groups.[29] The Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* brings up-to-date the agenda of dialogue of the Catholic Church in the modern world. Pope John XXIII, first-hand witness of the disaster suffered by the Jews during World War II, took initiative as an apostolic delegate to Turkey to provide a safe passage for the Jews.[30] His meeting with Jules Isaac, a Jewish historian, made a significant impact realizing how Church teaching had a lot of influence to the anti-Semitism that triggered the Shoah/Holocaust. He directed a review on this matter and included it in the agenda for the preparation of the Council.

On the colloquium commemorating the twentieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, Pope John Paul II was very positive and happy for it brought together Christians and non-Christians in a collaborative effort.[31] The Holy Father said:

> I believe this to be a sign of maturity in our relations and a proof that the thrust and practical recommendations of "Nostra Aetate" really do inspire our dialogues. It is hopeful and

[28] Council of Europe. *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/discrimination-and-intolerance (accessed August 29, 2018).

[29] Margaret Thornton and Trish Luker. *The Spectral Ground: Religious Belief Discrimination* https://www.mq.edu.au/public/download.jsp?id=67397 (accessed August 29, 2018).

[30] The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. *Nostra Aetate Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions Anniversary Reflections*, 2015. https://www.catholic.org.au/about/bishops/statements/1726-nostra-aetate-declaration-on-the-relation-of-the-church-to-non-christian-religions-50th-anniversary/file (accessed August 14, 2018)

[31] Pope John Paul II. *Address On The Occasion of The Colloquium On The Conciliar Declaration «*Nostra Aetate*»*, 19 April 1985.

> refreshing to see this done in an encounter commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration.[32]

For many, this document is a breakthrough in the Catholic Church's ecclesiological position towards non-Christian religions. Catholics no longer focus on the errors of others but look more on building goodwill with them. However, there are groups of traditionalists who adopt a contrasting perspective, seeing *Nostra Aetate* as problematic. Some have voiced criticisms of the document as misleading and presenting a false outlook about the missiological vision of the Church. Others look at it as disastrous in its implementations. Even Pope Benedict XVI himself had some reservations about *Nostra Aetate* and voiced some critical observations about it. The Pope states:

> In the process of active reception, a weakness of this otherwise extraordinary text has gradually emerged: it speaks of religion solely in a positive way and it disregards the sick and distorted forms of religion which, from the historical and theological viewpoints, are of far-reaching importance; for this reason, the Christian faith, from the outset, adopted a critical stance towards religion, both internally and externally.[33]

**Inclusive Language in the Bible[34]**

Rev. Jann Aldredge-Clanton, PhD[35] explains that "the only way to begin in some faith communities is with non-gender divine language; however, to be truly inclusive we need to move toward language that Becky Kiser calls 'gender-full

[32] Ibid.

[33] *Pope on Nostra Aetate's "weakness"* October 11, 2012 http://unamsanctamcatholicam.blogspot.com/2012/10/pope-on-nostra-aetates-weakness.html (accessed August 15, 2018)

[34] Jann Aldredge-Clanton, *Changing Church: Stories of Liberating Ministers* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 157-158.

[35] Rev. Jann Aldredge-Clanton, PhD, is an author, teacher, and chaplain who serves as adjunct professor at Perkins School of Theology and Richland College, Dallas, Texas. Jann is a widely published author and hymn lyricist. Read about her newest book, *She Lives! Sophia Wisdom Works in the World on Christian Feminism Today.* Professor Stephen V. Sprinkle, PhD, describes Jann as "the leading voice standing at the crossroads of feminist emancipatory theologies today."



rather than genderless.'" Because of centuries of association of "God" with male pronouns and imagery, this word generally evokes male images, so is not truly gender-neutral. Referring to "God" as "She" brings gender balance.

Furthermore, Aldredge-Clanton argues that the Bible provides many female divine names and images. "Wisdom" (*Hokmah* in Hebrew Scriptures; *Sophia*, Greek word for "Wisdom," linked to Christ in Christian Scriptures) stands out in the book of Proverbs (1, 3, 8), in the books of Wisdom and Sirach in the Catholic canon and in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. Among other female divine names and images in the Bible are "Mother" (Isaiah 66:13, 42:14, 49:15); "Mother Eagle" (Deuteronomy 32:11-12); *Ruah* (Hebrew word for "Spirit," Genesis 1:2); *El Shaddai* (Hebrew for "The Breasted God," Genesis 49:25); *Shekinah* (feminine Hebrew word used in the book of Exodus to denote the dwelling presence and/or the glory of God); "Midwife" (Psalm 22:9-10); "Mistress of Household" (Psalm 123:2); "Mother Hen" (Matthew 23:37); "Baker Woman" (Luke 13:20-21); and "Searching Woman" (Luke 14:8-10). For Rev. Jann Aldredge-Clanton naming the Divine as "Wisdom," *Sophia, Hokmah*, "Mother," *Ruah*, "Midwife," "Baker Woman," "She," and other biblical female designations gives sacred value to women and girls who for centuries have been excluded, demeaned, discounted, even abused and murdered. Exclusive worship language and images oppress people by devaluing those excluded. This devaluation lays the foundation for worldwide violence against women and girls.

Moreover, Aldredge-Clanton explains that inclusive language also helps to heal racism and supports the sacred value of people of color by changing the traditional symbolism of dark as evil and white as purity. We can name Deity as "Creative Darkness" from which the universe came (Genesis 1:1-2), and symbolize darkness as a sacred well of richest beauty (Isaiah 45:3). We can celebrate the life-giving darkness of the "Womb" (Psalm 139:13-14) and of the "Earth" (Psalm 139:15-16).

Including multicultural female divine images along with male and other gender images in worship contributes to equality and justice in human relationships and right relationship with the earth, while expanding our experience of divinity. Through this inclusive worship we spread the Good News of liberation and abundant life for all. Eilers re-echoes the words of biblical scholar Lucien Legrand saying "that the entire Bible is a language and

communication. The biblical God is a God who speaks. He calls and blesses the patriarchs. His words sends Moses on his liberative mission."[36]

**Communion as Inclusive Language**

The openness to God and self leads to an openness to others, in listening to their stories and experiences, their needs and aspirations, in the sharing of faith experiences and in creating and supporting living communities.[37] The issue of inclusive language is neither simply nor easily defined.[38] Using the theology of communion, the Second Vatican Council could describe the Church as the pilgrim People of God to whom all peoples are in some way related and are bound by an inclusive language. It is in this context that the local Churches in Asia need to foster greater communion of mind and heart through close cooperation among themselves.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) began to explore the idea of Church as communion. This communion is expressed in the Church as "a communion of committed disciples—be they clergy or laity—working for the liberation of Asia."[39] The turning point was the Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly in Bandung, Indonesia which coined the phrase "communion of communities."[40]

FABC's ecclesiology is rooted, first and foremost, in a "commitment and service to life."[41] It goes without saying that these life experiences are not abstract, metaphysical, intellectual, or theoretical constructs, but rather, they are made manifest in social, political, economic and religious dimensions. Such a commitment and service to life may be understood from a two-fold

[36] Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission,* 23.

[37] Ibid., 37.

[38] Inclusive Language and the Liturglcal Prayer of the Church, https://www.rcan.org/sites/default/files/files/WOW%20V15%20N1(1).pdf (accessed August 29, 2018).

[39] Jonathan Yun-Ka Tan *A New Way of Being Church in Asia: The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at the Service of Life in Pluralistic Asia* http://www.jonathantan.org/essays/missiology.pdf (accessed 24 July 2018).

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid



perspective, viz., an explicit epistemological perspective that allows one to understand the Asian peoples and their life experiences better, but more importantly, an underlying theological perspective that recognizes the presence and workings of God in the Asian peoples' life situations.

A sincere assessment of the Church's communal integrity is an essential task. Nowadays, in Asia where partisan and public unrest is rampant, the Catholic Church has to go back to what has been initiated in Vatican II. Dialogue has been initiated; Vatican II laid down the principles and epistemological framework in doing so. Pope Francis, in his homily said, *"The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! 'Father, the atheists?' Even the atheists."*[42] Pope Francis' explanations provoked admiration from some groups and disquiet from others.

**The "Challenges" and the "Signs of the Time"**

Before and during 1963, there was no Internet, no cable television, no mobile phones, no Facebook, no Twitter, no Instagram, and other similar technological means of social communication. But some means of communication like radio, film, television, newspaper and the telephone radically encompassed communications particularly in 1870 (Vatican I). And the reason for *Inter Mirifica's* promulgation is the necessity of formation in the light of media and ongoing structures as the world grows and develops. In this new era of communication, social media and the Internet have particularly changed the means of communication within each other in the community. Considering the church as the "Body of Christ," media such as digital, online and social communication platforms are effective ways to serve others in the ministry.[43] Hence, email, Tweet, hang signs, video announcements and digital newsletters are different practical strategies for Church towards effective way of communications.[44]

[42] Mathew N. Schmalz. *Thinking With Nostra Aetate: From The New Pluralism To Comparative Theology.* College of the Holy Cross, USA

[43] Lazarus, Natchi. *The Connected Church: A Social Media Communication Strategy Guide for Churches, Nonprofits and Individuals in Ministry.* February 7, 2017. https://www.amazon.com/Connected-Church-Communication-Nonprofits-Individuals/dp/1543013813/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8 (accessed June 30, 2018)

[44] Meyer, Kem. *Less Chaos. Less Noise: Effective Communications for*

On the one hand, social media is considered a revolutionary technology in this era which may help spread the Gospel in a new way.[45] In communicating the message and truth behind the Gospel, web and social media could be leverages toward effective ways of sharing.[46] On the other hand, this digital presence needs practical step-by-step guide on how to use technology wisely and create ideas using media for ministry.[47] It is indeed important that the faithful have to be guided using social media for effective Church and social communication.[48]

Today, challenges on social communication have not diminished. It is much needed in the present time with *Communio et Progressio, Aetatis Novae, and Redemptoris Missio* as guides in media and digital developments.[49] As Msgr. Robert Trisco[50] states, the Council Fathers regarded social communications as a feature of contemporary society and recognized that it is providing positive guidance for various media. But the world of journalism sees that the document didn't sufficiently reflect the challenges of the modern

*an Effective Church.* Thirty One Press and Wired Churches.com, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-9974274-0-0. https://www.amazon.com/Less-Chaos-Noise-Effective-Communications/dp/099742740x. (accessed June 30, 2018).

[45] Wise, Justin. *The Social Church: A Theology of Digital Communication.* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).

[46] _____. *Outspoken: Conversation on Church Communication.* ed., Tim Schraeder and Kevin Dnedricks. (Los Angeles, CA: Center for Church Communication, 2011), https://www.amazon.com/Outspoken-Conversations-Communication-Tim-Shraeder/dp/146373817X/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8. (accessed June 30, 2018).

[47] Bourgeois, David. *Ministry in the Digital Age: Strategies and Best Practices for a Post-Website World.* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

[48] Gould, Meredith. *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways,* 2nd Edition. (Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), www.amazon.com/Social-Media-Gospel-Sharing-Good/dp/0814647073/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8) (accessed June 28, 2018).

[49] Franz-Josef Eilers, *Social Communication at the Asian Synod: A Documentation-Social Communication in "Ecclesia in Asia" and recent FABC Documents*. In Eilers, Franz-Josef (Ed.). (2002). Church and Social Communication in Asia. Documents, Analysis, Experiences. FABC-OSC Book No. 1. (Manila: Logos Publications, 2008), 85-122.

[50] Msgr. Robert Trisco is an eminent American Church historian for over 40 years, a 'peritus' at the Second Vatican Council



world.[51] Indeed, it makes sense since the faithful are experiencing more of explosive communications. It is a challenge for every Christian to harness these tools (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) of social communication to share, to teach, to cultivate and to nurture the faith and message of the Gospel. It may also form ministries to serve the Church in the digital age and beyond.[52] Social media has to play a role to transmit an inclusive agenda rather that spreading "fake news" that reinforce divisions and exclusions among different religions and faith-based communities. In the introduction of the book *Communicating in Ministry and Mission***,** Eilers argues that:

> It is in the Church's ministry and mission to communicate the Good News of Salvation and God's love to His creatures. She is to continue the communication within the Holy Trinity, God' communicating Revelation and Incarnation into the here and now of daily life through the centuries. This is done in the threefold way of proclaiming (Kerygma), a living community (Koinonia) and caring SERVICE (Diakonia*).*[53]

Indeed, mass media communicate news and may foster peaceful relations. But it can also be a means of manipulation of truth. Carlo Cardinal Martini pointed and related the 37th Chapter of the Book of Genesis[54] in terms of distortions of the truth which grows into false transmission of information. This has to be constantly guarded and protected. It is the task of every Christian and Catholics according to him to use the media for communicating the 'truth' and supreme 'dignity.'[55]

[51] Msgr. Robert Trisco, "Why did the Council decide to create document on communication*?*". *Inter Mirifica: 50 Years Service, The promulgation of the Vatican II Decree on Communication*. www.intermirifica50.va/content/pccs/inz/en.html

[52] Jerome, Daniella Zsupan. *Connected Toward Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age.* Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014).

[53] Eilers, *Social Communication at the Asian Synod,* 13.

[54] The brothers of Joseph stripped him of his tunic and sold him into slavery. They dipped his tnic into the blood of a goat and gave their father the blood-stained clothes, reporting to him that their brother was denounced by wild animals. This inflamed his emotions and feeling of anger.

[55] Augustine Cheong Myeong-jo, Bishop of Pusan and Vice President of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea. Newsletter No. 44, Article 103, 2003.

Likewise, according to Sr. Solange Ngah,[56] a woman theological ethicist, in a forum on Communication and the Media, social communication should not be ignored for it is among the theological disciplines.[57] The very purpose or means of social communication is to participate with people and improve their lives in a meaningful and creative way.[58] Hence, social communication is an instrument of service for the people and for enrichment of their conscience. And so, "communicators" have to acquire proper training, correct competence and moral responsibility.[59] Communicators are therefore encouraged to learn how to use a more inclusive language in their activities of communicating.

Moreover, *Inter Mirifica* points on sustainability of the following: ***discussion*** on public communications/relations of Asian Bishops' Conferences; ***education*** as formation for recipients of modern media (i.e., *young people and heralds of the Church*); ***publish*** books with develop guidelines on systematic and formation of media (i.e., *"Social Communication Formation in Priestly Ministry"*-Logos Publications, Manila); ***Catholic communication projects*** (i.e., *Radio Veritas Asia*); and ***annual meetings and conferences*** of bishops and secretaries for social communication have to be printed and available in books or magazine for the lay people to read (i.e., *"Church and Social Communication in Asia: Documents, Analysis, Experiences"* -Logos Publication, Manila).

**A Key to Successful Interreligious Communication**

Right from the first general assembly of the FABC in 1974 in Taipei,[60] there were for Asia at least three levels of dialogue of the Church in evangelizing communication: the dialogue with other religions, dialogue with people, especially the poor, and the dialogue with cultures.[61] Inclusive language is imperative for success in all of these. According to Steven D.

english.cbck.or.kr/newletter/ )

[56] She is a member of the Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of Emmanuel Witnesses, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

[57] Vatican II, Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio,* No. 108

[58] *Communio et Progressio,* No. 7, §2

[59] *Communio et Progressio,* No. 15 §2

[60] Eilers, *Social Communication at the Asian Synod*, 274.

[61] Ibid.



Cohen,[62] using inclusive language helps to demonstrate care towards others in order to understand what they are facing. There is a big difference between saying, "You must solve this problem" and "We must solve this problem." The first statement makes the audience responsible for solving the problem. The second implies that the speaker will work with the audience to solve the problem.

Cohen suggests not to "tell your listeners what they should do. Instead, use inclusive language to explain what you all can accomplish together." In interreligious communication, it is important to use inclusive terms like "we." It is also important that one has to be sensitive in using "gendered nouns."[63] "Man" and words ending in "-man" are the most commonly used gendered nouns in English. These words are easy to spot and replace with more neutral language, even in contexts where many readers strongly expect the gendered noun. A recent study done by Jane G. Stout and Nilanjana Dasgupta of the Women and Public Policy Program of the Harvard Kennedy School found out that "the use of gender-exclusive language (such as using masculine pronouns) can cause women to feel ostracized and less motivated in important professional environments."[64] Ram Charan,[65] a well-known author and speaker who spent most of his life working with big companies, wrote that "dialogue is the basic unit" of work in organization. The data from interview to the members of UBAS clearly indicates that language is the basic unit of productive interreligious dialogue. Encouraging the use of inclusive language is imperative to our success. To be clear, this isn't about political correctness but about being mindful and purposeful in communicating with others and doing so with empathy.

[62] Steven D. Cohen is a leading expert on persuasive communication and effective presentation skills. He is an instructor at the Harvard Division of Continuing Education and holds a faculty appointment at the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School. https://www.extension.harvard.edu/professional-development/blog/struggling-engage-your-audience-be-inclusive.

[63] Gender-Inclusive Language. https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-language/. (accessed July 18, 2018).

[64] Jane G. Stout, and Dasgupta, Nilanjana. *When He Doesn't Mean You: Gender-Exclusive Language as Ostracism*. http://gap.hks.harvard.edu/when-he-doesn%E2%80%99t-mean-you-gender-exclusive-language-ostracism.

[65] Sumita Singh. *Inclusive language is important to a thriving and diverse work culture.* https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inclusive-language-important-thriving-diverse-work-culture-singh.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Interreligious dialogue is "part of the Church's evangelizing mission" thus an essential element in any evangelizing communication. The Church, therefore, urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of the religions. These virtues of prudence and charity require the ability to use inclusive language. Asia, as a multicultural society, embraces people from all kinds of faith expressions, cultural diversities and multi- language ethnic groups. The Church must strive to help maintain a peaceful society, ensuring that every Asian has a sense of belonging and opportunity. Building effective relationships within and between people is an important contribution to social harmony, helping to focus all those involved to identify emerging issues and address common questions.

There have been several works about interreligious dialogue and social communication in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council in 1965. It is important that in all its endeavor for interreligious dialogue and communication, the Church must be sensitive on the role of inclusive language. It may "make" or "break" a harmonious relationship that has been started or will soon be started. Hence, a simple reflection in what we will be doing is important. Engage ourselves always and ask the following questions: Have you used "man" or "men" or words containing them to refer to people who may not be men? Have you used "he," "him," "his," or "himself" to refer to people who may not be men? If you have mentioned someone's sex or gender, was it necessary to do so? Do you use any occupational (or other) stereotypes? Do you provide the same kinds of information and descriptions when writing about people of different genders? Perhaps the best test for gender-inclusive language is to imagine a diverse group of people reading your paper. Would each reader feel respected? Envisioning your audience is a critical skill in every writing context, and revising with a focus on gendered language is a perfect opportunity to practice.

The Asian bishops pointed in their FABC General Assembly in 1974 the need for dialogue with people and the dialogue of life. For Eilers, all are called to such a dialogue and are thus participating in the evangelizing communication of the Church. The role of inclusive language in evangelizing communication is to help dissolve misunderstandings, improve relationships,



free people from fear of each other, contribute to the deepening our own faith, and lead to greater unity.

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# *REPORTS*

## Religous Endowments of the Vijayanagara Rulers

### Introduction

The people and kings of Vijayanagara gave too much prominence to the minutest details of public or private conduct is to be traced to their inherent orthodox nature. What appears to foreigners as pagan formalities were really indispensable ceremonials to the Hindus who were under the abiding influence of their classical doctrines. Most of the charitable activities were conducted by the Vijayanagara rulers, other royal family members, merchants, rich individuals etc. They made rich endowments for conducting educational activities, religious, construction of tanks for irrigation and drinking water and other charitable activities. They were always accompanied with the great scholars and royal priests who always guided the rulers to conduct such activities. We can have a large number of such instances in the inscriptions by which they pleased their gods in view to establish peace, law and order and prosperity in the state.

### Religious Endowments and Charitable Activities.

Nuniz relates to us that: "The king of Bisnaga is a Brahman; everyday he hears the preaching of a learned Brahman, who never married nor ever touched a woman" (Sewell, 1988, p, 390). Although Nuniz is wrong in stating that the emperor of Vijayanagara, Achyuta Raya, was a Brahman yet he suggests in his words an important feature of everyday life of the Hindu kings. This feature was the company of learned men among whom they passed a part of their time. The learned Brahman mentioned by Nuniz is identified with Vyasaraya, the great Vaishnava teacher (Somanatha, 17). Somanatha in his *Vyasayogicharitam* tells us that Narasa Nayaka, Vira Narasimha and Krishnadevaraya were daily being instructed in *Dharma* by that celebrated Vaishnava leader. Somanatha says about Narasa Nayaka:

> *"Eva meva bhaktya sambhavayantam rahasyenam*
> *dharmapadopadesena pratyah manugrihanamu"* (Somanatha, 59).

Vira Narasirhha was likewise devoted to the same *raja-guru* and he referred as *Punyakirtanena vasudhadhipena hamseneva kamalakarah pratyahasu upasenya (manah)"* Somanatha, 64).

Krishnadevaraya's noble example of devotion to Vyasaraya is unique;

"*Tena Krishna mahipalena trisanghya kuladevatayamiva mukutatatamalatikusumasekharikriyamana nakhamayusajate mahanubhave... Vyasayogiti.. .* " (Somanatha, 67-68).

An inscription dated A.D. 1463 of the times of Immadi Praudha Devendra (Mallikarjuna Raya) informs us how he got himself ready for an occasion of granting gifts: "He being moved to make grants, having bathed in water from the sacred *Tirthas,* attired in purified flaxen garments, united with Brahmans who had performed the religious baths, the great king (with titles) named Immadi Praudha Devendra on his birthday (natal star), in the pure Bhaskara *Khsetra* at the foot of the Hemakuta Hill, on the bank of Tuhgabhadra, in the presence of the god Virupaksha in holy place, at an auspicious time in the presence of the god Chandramauli in the Barakuru kingdom, gave the villages belonging to *Chaturmandi*... for the offerings to the god Ramachandra (E.C., VIII, Nr,79). According to Dr. B. A. Saletore, this inscription evidently is to be interpreted in the sense that the king gave the villages, which were in the Tuluva-*rajya*, according to the usual custom in the temple of Virupaksha at Hampi (Saletore, 1934, p, 231).

The inscription dating to the reign of Harihara II gives more details about the manner in which grants were made which may be noted in this inscription. In A.D. 1410 "Harihara Deva II, seated on his hereditary throne in the city named Vijaya.. .(Vijayanagara) examined the *dana sasana* made by Dharmaraja in the *Dvapara-Yuga...* granted of his own accord, with pouring of water and presentation of gold coins, flowers and *akshate"* the village Dharmesvarapura on the bank of the Kshiranadi in the Gajakonapuri (Anegundi) kingdom for the worship of the god Dharmesvara. Although the copper-plate inscription looks suspicious because of its wrong date (E.C., IX, Ht, 34), the statement that the *dana-sasana* was made by "Dharmaraja in the *Dvapura-Yuga,*" nevertheless contains one point about which all inscriptions agree. This refers to the ceremony of pouring water and the presentation of a gold coin. Krishnadevaraya in A.D. 1514-15, at the time of making a gift, was surrounded by his *purohitas* and a



number of Brahmans well versed in the *Srauta* learning; and he also gave many gifts with the pouring of water together with the presentation of a gold coin (E.I., XVIII, p, 165). The references to this detail of the ceremony are found in almost every record of the times. It may be observed here that even on occasions of remission of customs and other dues, the provincial rulers observed the same formality. Mallinatha-Odeyar, who was in charge of Bemmattanakallu, raised an upper storey of stones for the god Siddhanatha of that locality, constructed other works of merit, and in order that this work of merit might continue forever, presented Chikkapura in Bemmattanakallu, with the pouring of water, for the decorations, illuminations, and offerings of the local deity (E.C., XI, Cd, 2).

**Corporate Religious Activities**

We shall now learn about the corporate activities of the people of Vijayanagara in matters related to the religious sphere of life. The record dated A.D. 1556 tells us that, by order of the *Maha-arasu,* the Mahanayakacharya Nidugal Timmanna Nayaka, and subjects of the Nidugal-*Sime* (a great number named), and other Goudas and subjects, with the *Setti-Pattana-svami* had purchased the Tumukunte village in the Nidugal kingdom, and placing Gutti Tirumala Rajayya's seal bearers *(Mudremanushyaru)* in front of Kenchappa Nayaka, granted the village for the services and festivals(specified) of the god, in order that merit might accrue to Gutti Tirumala Rajayya Deva *Maha-arasu* (E.C., XII, Si, 31).

The following epigraph dated A.D. 1588 suggests that the donors were not forced to make endowments by the officials of the Government. Appaji-Senabova of Koppa (descent stated), having set up the god Gopalakrishna on the bank of the Tungabhadra in Nari in *Koda-nad,* bought certain specified lands and presented them for the offerings of the god. The epigraph contains the following interesting information-witness, who will see to the carrying out of this work of merit: all the *nad* officers of Koppa-Koda-Nad-4000; all the cultivators of the two *Angadi* of Koppa; the Brahmans of Bommanapur, Nagalapura, Narasimhapura, Belgula, New-agrahara, Mangalapura and Somalapura. The agreement was written with the approval of both parties by Sankappa *Senabova of Koda-nada* (E.C., VI, Kp, 57).

The Kurudimale temple *priests (sthanikaru)* granted to Siddappa's son Timmanna, a *dharma sasana* or a deed of sale, in A.D. 1442, in connection with

the construction of a virgin tank named Siddasamudra in the Kurudimale-*Sime*, the rice fields to be formed in the land under the embankment being in Tudaghatta-*Sime*. The price at which the land was sold for 50 *honnu* (E.C., X, Ml, 259; E.C., VI, Gu, 4). In A.D. 1515, the three Hebbars of the Kalasa-1000 village, and outside the village seventeen persons (named), and all the elders *(muligar)* of Nuju, agreeing among themselves, sold the village of Nuju to Surappa *Senabova,* excepting certain specified dues, for certain services to be provided to the god Viranarayana and Kalasanatha (E.C.,VI, Mg,88).

The harmony that existed between different religious sections of the people is to be specially seen in the epigraphs relating to the activities of the Brahmans, the *stanikas* and the Jainas. In A.D 1368 certain *Goudas* (named) of Uyyanapalli, together with all the Brahmans of Kesavapura or *Nagara* and other *Goudas* (named) of various villages, granted from each family the petty taxes, the tank and lands of Matruhalli, to provide for the service of the god Anilesvara of Haradanahalli. The concluding lines of the epigraph tell us that agreeing among themselves, and of their own accord, in the presence of the officer Siriyanna, they granted them, with presentation of a coin and water to the god Anilesvara (E.C., IV, Ch,113). According to an effaced inscription dated about A.D. 1372, all the Brahmans of a certain *agrahara* conferring among themselves made (an agreement) regarding a loan of 150 *gadyana* to be given to their ryots from the treasury of the god Ramanatha (E.C., IV, Gu, 33b).

The *Panchalas* and the *Settis* too could express their devotion to the local gods by jointly giving gifts of land. All the *Panchalas* of the Yenne-Nad in A.D. 1398, in order to provide for the necessaries of worship and decoration for the god Anilesvara, announced an offering at the rate of one *hana* in the several villages. The Raya Pettis of the customs dues, by both roads, granted 11 *Varaha,* 18 *hanas* realized from the old *godage,* included in the customs dues paid by the oil mongers as oil mill tax to provide for the perpetual lamp of the god Channakesava of Aneganakere. The epigraph, however, contains the information that it was granted by order of Lakkanna Odeyar in A.D.1399 (E.C., V, I, Cn,175). In A.D.1475 certain Gaudas (named) bought land (specified as forty-five *gadyana)* from Kanchi Sambhu Deva's son Govinda Deva, for the god Kesava of Kasaraguppe in *Ede-nad* in Chandragutti (E.C., VII, Sb, 527).



The great minister Gaureya *Dannayaka* with all the Gaudas, Settis and others (not named), granted specified lands in Bhagirathapura for the offerings of the god Varadaraja (E.C. XI, Ht, 128). Certain Settis (named) together with "the existing Brahmans" (named) of the *agrahara* Vishnusamudra also called Kereyasanthe, caused a *bhogamahtapa* to be erected in front of the temple of the god Janardhana, and granted to it all the wet land under the Chamanahalli pond, "except what had previously been granted,—and of the land under the water course from the eastern sluice, one half to the temple and one fourth to the Brahmans.

From an effaced inscription dated A.D. 1533 we learn that the temple of the god Chandramaulesvara having built on the bank of the tank formed in the Arkkavati river and "having brought a Kasi Linga (or *Linga* from Benares) set up the god Chandramaulesvara, Nandikesvara and Vighnesvara and on making a petition to the Brahmans, many learned Brahmans of various *gotra, surtas,* and names, at the auspicious time of consecration, granted specified land for the offerings of the god, together with land for an enclosure to the temple, house for the priest, and a street with the land adjoining it (E.C., IX, Nl, 31).

In A.D. 1534 the temple of the god Tirumala of Chakkere in the Kudalur-*sthala,* also called Rajaraja-Chola-Chaturvedi *mangalam* in *Kelale-nad,* by order of the royal *treasurer(raya-bhandarada)* Timmappayya, was given to the Establisher of the path of the Vedas, the Chakrakolu Vijaya Chudamani Nallaru Timmaraya-Chakravarti-ayya's beloved disciple, the son of Ramayya and Ramanujamma, Narayanayya. And all the Hebbaruva Brahmans of Kudalur and Malalur, with the consent of all the farmers and subjects of these villages, gave to the temple priest *(sthanika),* Narayanayya, land (specified) for the service of the god Tirumala together with certain taxes (E.C., IX, Cp, 155).

In another effaced record dated about A.D. 1430 we are told that Srigirinatha Odeyar gave munificent donations for a new *chhatra* or rest-house of the god Srigiri Mallikarjuna. Sangama Devi (wife of Srigiri Odeyar?) gave up the house she was in, together with wells and fruit trees for the nineteen Brahmans for whom the *nada* people had provided in the *chhatra,* " the Brahman, who attends to them, and two women to clean up, for these thirteen persons, whoever is the manager of the Brahman *chhatra* will collect from the *nada* people the amount specified and provide the *bhatta* (or rice) required for the whole thirty -two persons." The inscription does not, however, enlighten us

on the question whether the *nada* people themselves authorized the collection of the specified fee (E.C., VIII, Tl, 33).

As regards the orthodoxy of high officials, who were not of the priestly class, we may cite the evidence from an inscription dated A.D. 1629, which speaks of Immadi Tammaya Gouda, who was the grandson of Sugatur Tammaya Gauda of the fourth *gotra.* We are told that he and his wife, and certain *Goudas* had the *agnisthoma* (sacrifice) performed by Krishna Somayaji (E.C., X, Mb,62). According to an inscription dated A.D. 1358 he performed various works of merit, e.g.; getting tanks and channels dug, planting areca-gardens, constructing golden palanquins, *chamaras,* and umbrellas for gods; and in addition to these he made sluices to the tanks he had constructed, planted lines of trees on the four sides, and performed the ceremony of *upanayanam* to the *pipal* trees planted at the four corners (E.C., III, Ml, 22). Thus, by making endowments to the gods, the Vijayanagara kings, nobles, people and merchants were always supporting religious activities without any discrimination and expecting anything from the society. It shows their great charity and generosity, which should be model to this warring world.

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## "Interculturality"

The experience of Intercultural Communication in Religion can for Christianity be traced back already to the beginnings of Christian communities when Jewish and Greek cultures met and became part of each other as reflected in the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible. During the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), the discussions were how and under which conditions Jewish and Greek members of the new communities coming from different cultures should live their faith which is also an 'intercultural' experience. In fact already at Pentecost in Jerusalem, members of different tribes around the Mediterranian were together and experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit in an 'intercultural' experience.

The history of Christianity is actually full of intercultural experiences and challenges like when Pope Gregory the Great (+604) sent a group of missionaries lead by Saint Anselm of Canterbury to England with the advice not the destroy the 'heathen' temples but to change them into Christian Churches.

It was Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) who used for the first time the expression of 'culture' contrasting it with 'nature' in such a way that everything added by humans to 'nature' would be 'culture.' The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church (1962-1965) described culture as "indicating everything where man develops and perfects his bodily and spiritual qualities…" and speaks of a "plurality of cultures" and also refers to the new ways of "communicating with each other" (*Gaudium et Spes* 53/54).

Edward R. Tylor (1832-1917) defined culture in 1871 as "that complex whole which includes knowledge. Belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capibilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" and by now many more definitions have been given. Actually the attempts of Christianity for 'sharing faith' or mission must also be seen as attempts for intercultural communication: to understand, connect and relate with and in different cultures. This is why for example Arnold Janssen, the founder of the Divine Word Missionaries sent already in the last quarter of the 19th century his students not only for study in philosophy and theology but also for linguistics and ethnology. The foundation of the academic periodical *Anthropos* in 1907

with Wilhelm Schmidt of his community was actually an attempt to invite the members of his society in non-European cultures to study, write about and document their observations, insights and experiences for academic studies and reflections. "Anthropos" which later also developed into a specialized institute still exists till today.

The development of Intercultural Communication began as a special concern of Edward T. Hall who was triggered by his own experience with indigenous people in the United States. He introduced "intercultural communication" with his first publication *Silent Language* (1959) followed by *The Hidden Dimension* (1969), *Beyond Culture* (1977) and finally his *Dance of Life* (1984) where he presented and further developed the field. It was also him who developed the concepts of 'high context' and 'low context' cultures which helped in a deeper understanding of cultural relationships and approaches. Already in his *Silent Language* he presented a section under the title "Culture is Communication" (Chapter 5) reflecting his understanding of culture as a communicative happening.

The growing mobility of people especially after the Second World War with easier travel, growing cultural exchange, studies and also new ways and means of communication up to our digital days contributed to intercultural exchange and experiences. Now everybody can reach everybody, anywhere in the world at any time which Frances Cairncross called with her seminal publication *Death of Distance* (1997). All this resulted into a rapid growth of courses, publications and studies in the field of "Intercultural Communication" beginning especially in the 1980s. Out of this came also the new expression "*Interculturality*" indicating a growing reality in human society: not only the growing number of 'moving people' but also the broader worldwide cooperation between people of different cultures from all over the world becomes a reality. This is as well reflected also within religions and especially in religious communities which are in growing way composed of people from different cultures from all over the world. These developments and situations call for a deeper analysis and also solid practices–including theological approaches…

The situation of "*Interculturality"* is considered as being part of the broader field of *Intercultural Communication* and might be used also as a "general term for intercultural studies" as Adam Brandt and Kristian Mortensen



indicate in an article "Conversation Analysis" within a volume in *Research Methods in Intercultural Communication* edited by Zhu Hua (2016). They see "Interculturality" as a "general term for intercultural studies" and apply their field of 'conversation analysis' to be used here as:1. Investigate intercultural interactions from a macro-perspective; but also 2. to "unpack how issues of interculturality emerge as relevant in and through the interactional works of participants" (p. 298). Interculturality studies are generally considered as to "investigate interactions that are "nature of an encounter or interaction, as taking place between participants of different cultural backgrounds. The term tends to be used in post-structural or ethnomethodological approaches to intercultural communication and emphasizes that an encounter can only be described as intercultural if it is demonstrably being treated as such by those involved…" (p. 307). Also here *Interculturality* is seen as a section of Intercultural Communication as the overall field of studies and research but also as praxis. What happens when persons from different cultures meet, live and work together? What are the psychological, attitudinal but also spiritual and theological experiences and needs for mastering common situations and concerns contributing to 'effective' work and proper dispositions for possible common programs and concerns?

*Franz-Josef Eilers, svd*

# ARC's 10th International Roundtable held at Saint John's University.

The 10th International Roundtable of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication (ARC) with the theme *Religious Communication in Multicultural Asia: Realities, Experiences, Challenges* was held from 8 to 11 October 2018 at Saint John's University (SJU), Bangkok, Thailand, the home of ARC.

From numerous abstracts received, thirteen papers from fourteen scholars all over Asia were selected for presentation in this year's roundtable.

On the first day, the participants were treated to a welcome dinner by Dr. Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, SJU Chancellor, at the SJU Mansion. They were also welcomed by Dr. Franz-Josef Eilers, svd, ARC Director and Dr. Anthony Le Duc, svd, ARC Deputy Director.

Over the course of three days, the participants presented their respective researches for discussion and reflection. A special presentation from Dr. Sikares Sirakan from Thailand Communication Network was also given.

The participants were:

| **Name** | **Title of Presentation** | **Institutional Affiliation** | **Country** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fr. Amornkit Prompakdee, MA | Signs and Symbols in Art and Architecture of Christianity and Buddhism in Thailand | Roman Catholic Diocese of Suratthani | Thailand |
| Dr. Anthony Le Duc, svd | Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue in Asia in the Post-Truth Era | Assumption University, Bangkok; Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication | Thailand |
| Dr. Binod C. Agrawal | Indigenizing Colonial Religion of Composite Civilization: A Fresh Interpretation of *Sanatan Dharma* in Democratic India | Gujarat Vidyapith | India |
| Mr. Leo-Martin Ocampo, MA | Digital Expressions, Experiences and Challenges of and for Religions in Asia | University of Santo Tomas | Philippines |
| Mr. Jose Destura, Jr., LPT, MA | Resilience as a Growing Field of Communication Research—its Relation to Asian Religions | De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute-Special Senior High School | Philippines |
| Mr. Nguyen Bang Nong, MA | Current Realities of Religion in the Central Highlands, Vietnam: Different Experiences Between State and Local People | Institute of Anthropology, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences | Vietnam |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dr. Sebastian Periannan | Social Media and Religious Communication in the Perspective of an Indian Scenario | St. Peter's Pontifical Institute | India |
| Dr. Chandrabhanu Pattanayak | Ramayana as the Symbol that Bound Hindutva Together | Institute of Knowledge Societies, Centurion University of Technology and Management | India |
| Mr. Leslin Bastian, MA | Connecting with the Millennial: the Indian Christian Youths' Music Experience | Centre for Media and Entertainment Studies, MICA, Ahmedabad | India |
| Fr. Stanislaus Irudayaselvam, MA | Religion in Development Communication: An Inexorable Concept | University of the Philippines-Los Baños | India |
| Dr. Shubha H. S. | Reinventing Religious Rituals in the Digital Age. Exploring the Daily Practices Among the Brahmins in Karnataka | Manipal Academy of Higher Education | India |
| Mr. Kenneth Rayco, MA | Religious Communication in Spanish-era Philippines (1565-1898) | St. Jude Catholic School, Manila; Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication | Philippines |
| Dr. Rico Jacoba Dr. Jeramie Molino | The Role of Inclusive Language in Inter-religious Communication | St. Louis University, Baguio City | Philippines |
| Dr. Vinod Pandey | Religious Contributions of Communication in Bringing World Peace: Analysis of Ancient Texts of Hindu India | Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Gujarat Vidyapith | India |



The 11th ARC International Roundtable is slated on 9-12 March 2020. Further details are to be released to the ARC Network and through the official ARC channels.

*Kenneth E. Rayco*

**ASIAN RESEARCH CENTER FOR RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE**

**Religion and Social Communication Research in Asia: Basic and Practical Considerations in a Digital World**

Saint Louis College
Bangkok, Thailand
9-12 March 2020

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Research in the field of religion and social communication advances and changes in accordance with time and social context. The contemporary milieu with its digital landscape calls for creativity and new directions in research. Research in religion and social communication means digging deeper and going beyond simple descriptions or just monitoring realities in a superficial manner. Research demands examining deeper reasons, relationships and 'roots' for phenomena, thinking, and action. It also investigates the fundamental issues including dimensions, expressions, impacts and potentials.

The proposed theme for the 2020 ARC International Roundtable, which celebrates the 20th anniversary of the foundation of ARC, wants to emphasize the importance of research in the field of religion and social communication, with considerations to the digital context. The Roundtable will accept submissions that give attention to the two main topic areas: basic and practical.

In terms of basic considerations, submissions might examine the areas of concern such as:

1. How are age-old religious and philosophical worldviews being challenged or re-envisioned in the digital milieu?
2. What models, strategies or frameworks are appropriate for religious communication in the contemporary context?
3. What are main communicative possibilities and challenges for religion in a new and digital world?
4. What is the impact of intercultural/religious communication on local cultures and communities?
5. What are common grounds between religion and culture? How are they expressed and communicated in the people's social and devotional practices?



Practical considerations may address areas including but are not limited to the following:

1. How are religious customs and behavior of people affected or reflected in a new way by modern means of communication?
2. How can traditional concerns of religious communication expressed or enhanced by technological advancement?
3. How can religious leaders employ modern means of communication to appeal to new generations of faith seekers and adherents?
4. Is there a 'digital popular piety'? How prevalent is it? How is it affecting individuals and religious institutions?
5. How do modern means of communication create opportunities for fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue?
6. How do cultures influence or even determine religious practices?

Please send a 350-500 word abstract on or before 14 October 2019 to the following email address: arcstjohns.bkk@gmail.com.

We welcome submissions from professional researchers and MA/PhD candidates. Accepted papers have the opportunity to be published in ARC's scholarly journal Religion and Social Communication. Scholars whose proposals are accepted for presentation will be subsidized with board and lodging for the event. There is also no registration fee for participants.

# *BOOK NOTES*

**Zhu Hua (Ed.): Research Methods in Intercultural Communication. A Practical Guide. (Oxford/Chichester:Wiley Blackwell, 2016). 347 pp.**

London-based Zhu Hua is the editor of this "practical guide." She presents contributions from 22 different authors to show how "research paradigms influence the way intercultural communication scholars study culture and specific issues in intercultural communication and methods." After her own introduction and three additional articles on studying culture, identity, and discourse under the heading "Linking Themes, Paradigms, and Methods." Two further groups of studies are presented under "Key Issues and Challenges" with themes like "How to Identify Research Questions," "Interculturality and Ethics," "Competence," "Work with Research Participants," and "Developing Respective Proposals" are presented (6 articles). The final section is on "Methods" and presents under this heading 12 further contributions. All of the 27 authors of the book are all highly qualified in their fields.. Most of them come from Britain though there are a few single contributors also from the US, Ireland, Hong Kong, Japan and Denmark. Every chapter includes also one sample of a case study and concludes with a listing of literature, proposals for further reading, and short descriptions of key themes related to the subject presented. The book concludes with an index (pp.343-347).

Zhu Hua is also co-editor of the book series *Routledge Studies in Language and Intercultural Communication*. This publication should be considered as a basic source for intercultural studies!

**Trappel, Josef (Ed.): Digital Media Inequalities. Policies Against Divides, Distrust and Discrimination. (Göteborg: Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, 2019). 288 pp.**

This publication of the Euromedia research group of the European Communication and Research Association (ECREA) shows that that the traditional inequalities in media continue to exist also in the new ways of digital communication though the 'actors' are changed: the traditional media 'owners' are substituted by conglomerates like Google, Amazon and others…



There are economic, social and technology related inequalities which are also related to the Internet: we are "travelling from old to new forms of communication inequalities with indicators like ownership concentration, control of a very few companies over large numbers of customers, gender and knowledge gaps." "In the digital regime some types of inequality are aggravated (e.g. power shared by an extremely small number of actors worldwide), while some are new (algorithm filtering and selection, big data, surveillance and social scoring.)" (from the Introduction).

This collection of 16 contributions from a single and sometimes multiple authors are exclusively from European countries and universities. One basic contribution is from Dennis McQuail who wrote "Equality—an ambiguous value" before his death on June 25, 2017.

Editor Josef Trappel of the University of Salzburg also introduced the volume. The book is published by Nordicom in Sweden and also available for download in the Internet free.

Similar studies on the challenges of "Internet inequality" should be developed also for other countries/territories especially for Asia like Korea, Japan, China, Hongkong, Taiwan, India and complement this European study! They should also consider in a special way the communication dimension of religions as a major factor of Asian cultures.

**Croucher, Stephen M.: Understanding Communication Theory, A Beginner's Guide. (New York/London: Routledge, 2016). 365 pp.**

This book is almost like a dictionary on communication theories and approaches. In a refreshing way, it covers not only just single media in the traditional way but takes a broader approach to the field where for example "mass communication" is only one of altogether 13 chapters of the book. The publication begins with the presentation of three basic approaches to theory: the social scientific, the interpretative and the critical approach. On this basis, the following chapters present interpersonal, organizational, intercultural, small group, health and mass communication followed by persuasion, rhetorical theory and critical cultural theory. All presentations are very well documented with some hundreds of sources in a some 30 page reference section (p. 319-352) in the end of the book.

The subtitle of the book reads 'A Beginners Guide" and thus seems to indicate the introductory character of the publication which is considered as a source for undergraduate students. In reality, however, the rich and well documented content of the book will easily go beyond and also enrich other scholars and serve as a first orientation in the different fields presented. The presentations are also a first orientation for any other interested scholar and help to understand and qualify concepts and understandings in a broad way.

The second and main part of the book has the title "Theoretical Contexts" and gives insights into the different fields presented. They present the different 'structural ' fields in communication but some reflect more the content of the respective fields like health communication or persuasion. Section 12 on "Rhetorical Theory" deserves special mention because it brings us back to the old Greek/Roman field of rhetoric which plays also an important role in communion history of Christianity with St. Augustine as a main representative – though this is (unfortunately?) not really mentioned in the text. Rhetoric is very seldom present in our modern studies and approaches.

Every chapter in the "Theoretical Contexts" begins with an outline and introduction followed by the presentation of the different data and main considerations of the field. The texts are always backed up by graphically highlighted guide questions and summaries which are inserted within the overall text. Each chapter concludes with a summary, a list of key terms, proposals for activities and a full text 'student paper' on a related subject as an example how to approach the field and to encourage also students at the undergraduate level. A 10 page index concludes the publication which can be highly recommended not only as a textbook but also as a source and first orientation in the field.



# *BOOK REVIEWS*

**Bugeja, Michael: Living Media Ethics Across Platforms. 2nd Edition. (New York: Routledge, 2019). 337 pp.**

The very first edition of this book was published in 2007. This new version is not only updated but also extended into broader and additional fields which makes it an outstanding source and presentation of living ethics on different platforms to analyze and explain moral decision making at the workplace under the following headings: 1. Ethical Awareness, 2. Falsehood, Manipulation, Temptation, Bias, and 3. Fairness, Power and Value Systems (p. xvii) ending with "personal and professional standards. The purpose of the publication is "to teach discussants how to 'do ethics' that is to teach the process by which they can practice and improve their own ethical decision making abilities" (p. xix). In this, the book focuses on "ethical concepts that apply across all platforms" (p. xx).

Philosophy is important and undergirds several chapters of the publication striving for a "unified set of principles" which also includes the role and background of religion: "Ethics have been associated with contemplation and introspection and this book reminds us and tries to help us to develop these abilities" (p. 2). With this concern, the book shows us "how to access global media from a moral rather than conventual perspective," because by now we have a "muted environment" being 'chaotic' across many media platforms which require a "new mixed media ethics guidelines that apply to amateur and professional presentations whether they blog, tweet, broadcast or write for newspapers." (p. 3) where "motives are emphasized over the medium" (pp. 13ff).

"A basic tenet of ethical decision making is listening to the conscience and developing a strong value system to affirm it." Here the book lists also as examples of living ethics the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was executed in 1945 in a German concentration camp (p. 15). Also, the Buddhist concept of 'mindfulness' is considered as proper ethical foundation (pp. 17ff.; 23). The focus of the book is "on the pressure that outside forces exert on our inner lives, tempting us to take ethical shortcuts or resist them, undermining or enhancing our values" (p. 26) where once again also Religions "play a role making us to believe in a power greater than ourselves" (p. 36 f.) and going beyond the "filters through which we experience the world" (p. 39).

For "Building our Ethical Base" (Part 2) as well as in the chapter on "Responsibility" the importance of "consciousness" is stressed and an "inner voice to distinguish right from wrong" which helps us also to foresee how our actions affect others" (p.75).

The second part of the publication goes into many concrete examples and principles for "Testing Your Ethical Base" which 'speaks' about the role and importance of conscience because "without a strong value system you are likely to yield temptation" (p. 177). This might bring one for example to 'plagiarize' (p. 199 ff.) which seems to become more and more a problem with the many 'resources' available now in the digital world, where "the only gatekeepers ..are one's conscience and awareness" (p. 210). The book gives some guidelines for ethical Internet use (p. 210) and also points to religious conflicts in the use of 'stereotypes' (p. 241 ff.).

The third section of the publication (p. 249 ff) presents considerations and experiences on "Enhancing Your Ethical Base" which treats in three chapters fairness, power, and values in communication analysis with concrete proposals for communicators.

Each of the 11 chapters of the book starts with a summary and concludes with a proposal for a personal journal exercise and a listing the resources used. In addition to the chapter resources, a 'selected bibliography' is added to the book (pp. 327-330). An index (pp. 331-337) concludes this rich and stimulating publication which is solely based on US American experiences and resources which can in many ways, however, also applied to other countries and continents like Asia. There are probably not many books which cover the field in a certain depth and updated professional knowledge.

*Franz-Josef Eilers*



**Mascheroni, Giovanna; Ponte, Cristina; Jorge, Ana (eds.): Digital Parenting. The Challenges for Families in the Digital Age. The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media Series. (Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2018). 239 pp.**

This 2018 yearbook of the Children, Youth and Media Office of Nordicom asks how to relate to or mediate children's use of digital media (From the Preface) and also includes the role of social media in support of parenthood. It presents studies of 32 researchers mainly from European countries, but also from the US, Israel, Singapore and Australia are presented under the following headings: 1. Digital Parenting in Context (with 7 contributions), 2. Digital Parenting in Practice (with 7 studies), 3. Challenges, Risks and Opportunities of Digital Media for Parents and Children (with 6 contributions). The introduction of the volume reflects, on the basis of the studies of the different authors present, a solid overview of the field. They address not only the situation with digital technology of families in general but also approach different situations under the aspect of parental responsibility and as "the role of children and young people in Internet adoption in different situations" like rural communities, disadvantaged families and approaches to "cultivating youth citizenship." The contributions speak of parental development of "mediatization" and habit development in early child age and beyond. This includes also a possible "early gambling behavior" and "media education from the perspective of professionals" (p. 147).

The challenges, risks and opportunities refer especially to 'data justice in family life,' 'screen time' rules but also 'digital parenting' with children including Facebook and photography experiences.

The general view of the publication also refers to a 'digital generation gap' where even the children 'teach' their parents, which actually should be reciprocal process whereby parents, children and family are transformed" (p. 10).

The editors state in their introduction that their book "addresses the challenges and opportunities faced by parents in digital times taking into account multiple levels of digital penetration among families from different social classes and regions across the world." The contributions "engage with evidence drawn from a wide range of methods for data collection and analysis: surveys administered to both children and parents, allowing a comparison of the answers; longitudinal observation of families and child- parent relations, showing changes

and continuities in time; in-depth interviews with parents and young people; ethnographic research, including auto-ethnographies; discourse analysis of online discussions on sensitive topics." The evidences, it says, are "drawn from a wide range of methods for data and analysis. Surveys administered to both, children and parents, allowing a comparison of the answers; longitudinal observation of families and child-parent relations, showing changes and continuities in time; in depth interviews with parents and young people; ethnographic research ..discourse analysis of online discussions on sensitive topics…" (p. 11).

Over the years Nordicom has developed as a rich and broad source of studies and considartions far beyond the Nordic countries. This will unfortunately end with this volume and future publications and studies will confine themselves to 'nordic' countries only. This might, however. also be an invitation and challenge to other countries and continents like Asia to follow the example of Nordicom with something like an "*Asia or Southeast Asia-Com*" where Asian universities cooperate in planning and executive research in their respective cultures which would also include Religion as an essential part! Any takers?

**Galvin, Kathleen M., Dawn O. Braithwaite, Paul Schrodt, Carma L. Bylund (eds.): Family Communication, Cohesion and Change. 10th Edition. (New York: Routledge, 2019). 480 pp.**

As the 10th edition since 2008, this book reflects a strong development on family and communication as a growing special field of study and research. This is "to understand the role of communication as family members co-create and transform family systems" (p. xv). The book describes and investigates but does not prescribe how family members should or should not communicate. While the first three chapters of the publication give a theoretical foundation for the field, chapters 4 to 12 present major themes and trends like 'Communication Patterns and the Creation of Family Identity;' 'Relational Maintenance Within Families;' 'Intimacy Within Partnerships and Families,' 'Communication and Family Roles and Types;' 'Power, Influence and Decision-Making in Families;' 'Communication and Family Conflicts,' 'Communication and Family Developmental Stresses;' and others like 'Family Communication and Unpredictable Stress' to conclude with 'Family Communication and Well-being.' The framework of understanding of family is based on two principles: 1. Family as a system of interconnected relationships; and 2. Communication as the primary way families develop, create, maintain and alter identity (p.3).



Every chapter of the well-organized and well-presented book starts with a chapter overview followed by two examples introducing the field with basic considerations like in the chapter "Communication Patterns and the Creation of Family Identity" with "Forms and Relational Cultures," "Family Communication Rules, Family Secrets." Their functions and patterns is followed by family communication networks, narrative and storytelling including also new media (pp. 106-139). All chapters end with discussion questions, keywords and respective resources to the theme and text presented. Relational maintenance, intimacy, power with decision making as well as conflicts, development stress are further fields presented in more detail. The last chapter refers to the well-being of the Family.

This well presented publication originates and is based in the United States and thus reflects first and foremost experiences and concerns from there which might be similar also in other continents and countries of the world though culture an demographic structures of Asia and Africa might need additional studies and different approaches.

Religion seems not to be a special subject of this book though occasionally it is mentioned like with 'family rituals and religious celebrations' related to family (e.g. pp. 156 ff or 414 f.). There are, however, within Religions—at least in Christianity—some teachings and reflections on family as specialized fields of 'pastoral care or support' for families. With often extensive programs they would also need the knowledges and considerations of a book like this for solid planning and depth related communicating dimensions of their ministry like prayer services, accompanying life situations ("rituals') but also certain activities like pilgrimages as for example the *Kumbh Mela* with millions of people moving to the Ganges for 'washing their sins' in India or also the Black Nazarene in Manila and their relations to family.

The 490-page book has the subtitle "Cohesion and Change" which is reflected in a solid way of the presentation. It concludes with an 18 page subject and a two pages author's index.

*Franz-Josef Eilers, svd*

**McKay, Jenny: The Magazines Handbook. 4th Edition. (London: Routledge, 2019). 358 pp.**

This handbook was first published in 2000. On its third edition in 2013 it calls itself an "introductory guide to all aspects of magazine journalism and publishing." Author Jenny McKay starts her introduction with the admission that "Magazines have been an important part of my life since I bought my first pocket money copy of 'Robin' to read about the adventures of Andy Pandy" (p. 1). This 'love for magazines' permeates the whole book which makes it easy to 'read' but even more so to 'apply.' The new edition presents all in all 18 chapters, four of them written by other—additional—authors because of their specialization like the ones on law, design and also "magazines in the digital world." The publication "is for people who want to work as magazine journalists" (p. 3) which also means that it starts with the difference between journals, newspapers and magazines to be completely devoted to magazine journalism: training and careers are presented as well as jobs and careers, ideas and information before the 'techniques' and implications of different ways of writing are presented (Chapters 6 to 10) to also address editing and production, design, illustrations, publishing to conclude with "issues of conduct" and law (Chapters 17/18).

The book originates from the very personal and practical experience of the author and extends in a realistic way also to the role and functions of press officers and press releases (p. 66 ff.) which proofs the realistic way of writing and style proposed.

Every chapter concludes with recommended readings, including websites, to complement texts and content of respective chapters. This shows again the practice orientation of the publication. This book is written almost exclusively from an experience and reality of the British market. Many things, however, might also be valid and applied to other parts of the world especially also to former British administrations like India for Asia and parts of Africa with proper local adjustments.

There seems to be no word on and about Religion as content or even a market like religious news magazines or publications for spiritual experiences and practices which at least in Europe seems to have quite a traditional and stable market (London published *The Tablet* exists already since 1840). Asia, though with an overall lower literacy rate and greater cultural differences shows overall strong Religion elements which could be considered as well. Also, the culture dimension should be considered as an important element for magazine content but also for market and distribution.



This very practical and 'lively' book is much more than a somehow 'dry' treatise but a lively and very practical guide and companion for anybody working or interested in the field!

*Franz-Josef Eilers*

**Atton, Chris (ed.): The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media. (London/New York: Routledge, 2019). 596 pp.**

The fields of group communication and group media were already part of communication studies and practice especially in Latin America in the last quarter of the 20th century. They were especially used and developed in Church circles for and with Basic Christian Communities over and against the "big mass media" dominated by politics and commerce. In Church activities they developed a special dynamic in and through so-called "Basic Christian Communities." Some Church documents like the Fourth Synod of the Archdiocese of Manila in 1979 describes them, referring to a document from Latin America (Puebla), as "being less costly and easier to handle, they offer the possibility of dialogue and they are more suited to a person-to-person type of Evangelization that will evoke truly personal adhesion and commitment" (cf.Eilers, 2014, p. 593; 2009, pp. 195 to 211).

The new developments and experiences of this present Routledge Companion should also be seen in light of earlier communication studies and practices which are now much more extended and applied also in their general, political and societal developments and dimensions. They are now labelled as "alternative and community media" which goes beyond Religion. They broaden to some extent the former "group" also to other parts of society. This way the "community" in the title of this book can be seen as an extension and broadening of the former "Group" and "Group Communication" concept: "often organized and produced by 'ordinary' people, local communities or interest groups…primarily interested in social and cultural practices" as the

editor Chris Atton writes (p. 1). In the first chapter of the book, their impact is seen by Mike Mowbray on two levels: 1. The individual and social and immediate group level impact for participants in production, and 2. Broad social and political impact related to public formation, group representation, political deliberation, contestation and social movement formation and mobilization (p. 22). Here, the first contributor to the volume sees four 'logics': 1. Participation, 2. (Counter) Public Formation and Facilitation, 3. Critical Emancipatory and 4. Heterodox -Creative logics. He sees the possibilities of 'alternative media' in their dialogic or horizontal communication rather than the hierarchical determined "mass communication" (p. 24).

The 50 articles of this companion, written by the same number of authors, are grouped into six main sections, starting with basic considerations under the heading of "Concepts" with 8 articles, beginning with Mike Mowbray's "Alternative Logics? Parsing the literature on Alternative Media" followed by contributions "Vanguard Media.." "Alternative Media and Voice.."(Chapter 3) or on "Commercialism and the Deconstruction of Alternative and Mainstream Media (chapter 5)… The following groupings are: II. Culture and Society (6 chapters), III. Policies and economics (10 chapters), IV. Doing Alternative Journalism (10 chapters), V. Communities and Identities (7 chapters) , VI Cultures of Technology (9 chapters).

In his introduction editor Chris Atton from the School of Arts and Creative Industries at Edinburgh Napier University in the United Kingdom, describes the field of alternative and community Media as "media that bypass the usual channels of commercial production and distribution—often organized and produced by 'ordinary' people, primarily interested in social and cultural practices…" (p. 1). The 50 contributions of this companion cover a broad field and many concerns from differently oriented contributors which might lead also to the question how they are selected and invited to contribute. There seem to be only a few from non-European/US contributors: only three are from or on Africa, two are from Asia and the one from Australia is on "central Australian indigenous media" (Chapter 41). Beside others, they treat also the role of NGOs in Africa which often are financed by outside funding agencies (p. 50 ff.) but there is also the need to go beyond outside NGOs moving from 'alternative media institutions' in Africa to 'alternative mediation' (p. 92 ff.). This considers beside others also interpersonal, traditional, and 'original' forms of communication, based on local ways of



communicating like discussions and other genuine local forms of 'sharing' (p. 92 ff.) including rumor and humor. ..

The two contributions from Asia somehow complement each other: while the contribution on Korea is based on the section on "Policies and Economics" of the book (p. 258 ff.), the Indian presentation is placed in the "Culture and Society" section (P. 134 f.).

The article on Korea presents 'historical' developments of alternative communications in the country before the revolution in 1987 and after shifting the landscape from political to capital power to alternative means of communication which became somehow complemented by the Internet and also small groups of local radio stations with only 1 kW power and without local news or political issues. There is a move from "*Minjung*" to alternative media, "Minjung" referring to 'lower class including the laboring class, peasantry and the urban poor (p. 259), or so-called grassroots people in society which those days also became a movement for Christian Theology in developing a local "*Minjung Theology*" developed from local culture and situations.

In his chapter from India, Pradip N. Thomas presents the 'Right of Information Movement' and the primacy of orality and traditions of listening, hearing, speaking, denouncing and announcing, the role of 'voice' makers as community oriented change agents (p. 142). This is reflected also in the '*Jan Sunwai'* as public speaking and a local "means of communicative and performative traditions that enabled a balance between speaking, listening and actioning" with priorities established by local people (p. 136 ff). "The *jan sunwai* is indicative of a public sphere that is grounded in the rhythms of locality animated by ordinary people who are agent of a collective, shared memory that refuses to be erased or forgotten" (p. 139).

This volume covers under the perspective of "Alternative and Community Media" quite a broad field from technology of cultures, to digital media alternatives like 'digital storytelling' and making "media" participatory. With 50 different authors for the field one must expect different levels of quality in content and expression which once again leads to the question how and under which perspectives the different authors were selected. A companion like this one definitely fills a 'gap' and will be essential for everyone who

is concerned about the role and importance of alternative and community communication.

The book concludes with a 14-page index which in itself can stimulate considerations on certain themes by going beyond the presentations of the 50 authors of the companion by using them as source for additional considerations going beyond a single article.

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**Oakley, Kate and Justin O'Connor (eds.): The Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries. Paperback Edition. (Milton Park: Routledge, 2019). 575 pp.**

This companion was originally published in 2015 but is here presented in a paperback edition which makes it more available. It is a collection of 43 articles on the "importance of cultural production and consumption against the purely economic imperatives of the 'creative industries'" as the introduction says. The contributions are grouped into seven sections with the following headings: I. Perspectives on the Cultural Industries; II. Core Cultural Industries; III. Space and Place; IV. Cultural Industries and Labor; V. Audiences, Intermediaries and Markets; VI. Policy and the Cultural Industries; VII. The Profiles of the Cultural Industries. This listing of contributions together with an extensive and well documented introduction of the two editors from Great Britain and Australia show how the field covers products and services from a cultural to a creative approach. They reflect three aspects of 'cultural industries': 1. The word 'culture' is distinct from 'economic', 2. 'Cultural Industries' refer first and foremost to a traditional artistic mode of cultural production and 3. Culture and production are to be considered only as part of a re-conceptualization: how is cultural production structured in contemporary society and how does this affect the kind of culture we get? The contributions and the authors of this volume are concerned with the changing aspects of 'cultural industries,' their production systems, their 'texts,' audiences and their regulation (p. 10): How is cultural production structured in contemporary society? How does this affect the culture we get and why does this matter?

The presentations of this book not only 'report' but also contribute to a new and deeper understanding and reflection on the 'cultural industries' and related fields: they also develop new insights and ideas as fresh and 'new' contributions to the field. In this way the volume must be considered also as a source for new thinking and further development of the field. (p. 27). The 'core cultural industries' include, beside others, perspectives on core cultural industries like literature, newspapers, television, popular music, video, sports, advertising and audio/video technologies. They also refer to space and place, industries and labor, audiences and markets, policy and politics of cultural industries. All of them are reflected in the contributions of this publication. Some give a good overview and indications for developments, and others also o break 'new' ground.

Religion, however, as a basis and decisive source and field of cultures seems not to exist in the 'world' of this rich volume. Asian cultures can not be studied without their religious origin and values. Are they also one way or the other part of 'cultural industries' or even one way or the other at their 'origin'? Are there in 'cultural industries' also 'religious' dimensions which might one way or the other also part of them or even at their 'origin'?

The book ends with a 30-page index including a long enumeration of names. Separate listings of authors and subjects would make this index more user friendly and inviting for studies in the field, beyond authors and names.

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