Ignatius Loyola and the Internet: **Insights from Ignatian Spirituality on the use of the internet for evangelisation.**

By: Russell Edward Pollitt

Supervisor: Prof. S. Rakoczy

Submitted in fulfilment for the Master of Theology degree by thesis in the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008.

Declaration

I, Russell Edward Pollitt, hereby declare that unless otherwise indicated in the text, this thesis is my original work.

It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signature:_____

Date:____14 March 2008_____

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who, in some way or another, have contributed to this thesis.

A special thank you to my Jesuit community – in KwaZulu-Natal and Johannesburg – for their encouragement and support to 'get the thesis done!' During the last part of my writing members of the community stepped in to afford me the time to go away and write, for this I am grateful.

A special thank you to the Pretorius' for the use of their cottage in Prins Albert, to complete writing this thesis.

To all the authors I have quoted in this thesis.

Finally, I am truly grateful to Prof Sue Rakoczy for all her guidance, encouragement, support, and hard work. Your thoroughness, pace of work and dedication was really appreciated!

Abstract

The internet has brought about a revolution in human communication, unparalleled, because of its ability to communicate instantaneously across the globe. It has transformed our culture and made, what seemed impossible, now achievable with the click of a mouse, from an office in a city or in the comfort of your lounge. The computer networks we use are far more than a means of communication. They are agents of social change. I try to analyse what impact the electronic media have on human worldview and behaviour. I highlight some of the challenges that electronic media pose: we are not sure how these media (and technologies) will continue to shape our lives as they develop at a rapid pace.

Jesus of Nazareth spent his incarnate life proclaiming the reign of God and, in doing so, invited humanity into a relationship with God. He commissioned his disciples and, the whole Church in all time, to continue his proclamation of Good News. In obedience to his command the Church has, throughout history, used the communication technologies at her disposal to carry out this command. The internet makes another technology available to the Church.

In this thesis I attempt to better understand the impact of communication technologies, specifically the internet, on the Church. I look at the relationship between the Church and mass media. I analyse how the Catholic Church has responded to the advent of the internet and, how the internet has been used for the task of evangelisation. I investigate some of the key documents of the Church on the means of Social Communication, focusing especially on those of the Second Vatican Council, in order to understand how the Church understands and perceives the media.

Using the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola I offer an Ignatian Communications Model to help the Church use the internet more effectively for evangelisation. St. Ignatius lived in a time when another communication revolution took place: the advent of the Gutenberg printing press. I show how, using his spirituality, the Church can better use the internet for the task of evangelisation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

i

This makes the task of writing about the internet and the Church even more challenging – what the future holds in terms of where our technology is taking us is simply unpredictable. On the other hand, surely, wherever our technology leads us to, the fact that it is 'transporting' us to a new way of being and relating means that the message of the gospel also needs to make this journey if it is speak to the men and women of our own times where they are so as to direct their minds, hearts and very beings to the Kingdom of God.

The Church, from the time of Jesus Christ, has had as her foremost task that of communication: proclaiming the gospel. Jesus spent his incarnate life doing just this: proclaiming the Kingdom of God, proclaiming the gospel and inviting humanity into a relationship with God. The great commission at the end of the Gospel of St. Matthew is Christ's instruction to the disciples and the whole Church in all time:

> Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the
> Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all
> the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of
> time (Matt 28: 19-20).

The apostle, St. Paul, later makes it clear that it is communicating the gospel which is his task (not just his task but obligation!) and hence the task of the Church and all who believe '… for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!' (1 Cor 9: 16) In his first letter to Timothy he says that it is God's will that all human beings should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2: 4).

The contents of this proclamation, this invitation, have not changed but the mode of proclamation certainly has from the time of Jesus and St. Paul. From itinerant preachers, in the early Church, the mode of proclamation has developed through the printing press to the possible use of hi-tech data lines. The way our society understands itself has dramatically shifted as communications technologies shape a new world. It is into this

ascertain whether or not technology has been constructively engaged with and used for the benefit of the Church. I seek to evaluate to what extent the Church has embraced the technologies at her disposal for the core mission of evangelisation.

I will do this by first examining the development and transformative power of communications technology and therefore contextualise this study i.e. explaining how we got to where we are in our own time. I do not in any way claim that I have done justice to the development of communications technology through every phase of development. I try to give a broad outline so that there is some historical perspective for us now and hence the context of and, for this study. I look at major shifts in communications technology but concentrate on the development of the printing press. I do this because this marked a significant shift in the Church (the impact of the press on the Reformation for example) and because it is during this time that Ignatius Loyola lived and hence this world which he experienced and worked in.

I will then look at the impact that electronic media have had on human worldview and behaviour, paying particular attention to the views of various theorists who have attempted to analyse the power of communications technologies. By doing this I seek some understanding of the social implications of communications technology and its anticipated and projected effects on the human person and human society.

I then seek to examine the Catholic Church's response to communication technology, paying attention to the theology of communication presented in the documents of the Church on social communications, especially those from Vatican II.[2] I will try to make a critical assessment of the Church's response to the mass media. Anecdotal evidence as well as admittedly limited personal observation and usage of the internet seem to suggest that the Church has not fully began to realise the power that communications technology affords – especially the internet – and has therefore fallen behind in making use of this technology.

---

[2] Vatican II was the twenty first Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church which opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI in 1965.

Hence, in the title of this thesis, 'evangelisation' is a broad term which reflects a process all believers, I argue, should be engaged in.

I believe that the internet is a tool which we can use for communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is, however, a tool amongst many others (books, magazines, television, radio etc.). Therefore the reader should keep in mind that although I do make mention of these others, my focus is on the internet using Ignatius Loyola as a guide. His insights and method, I argue, can help the Church use the tool (internet) more effectively. I chose Ignatius Loyola not least because I am a member of the Society of Jesus which he established but, also because I do believe that he still offers us a method of working which has value for us today. This seems to be affirmed by others today like Chris Lowney in his book *Heroic Leadership. Best practices from a 450-year-old company that changed the world.* He uses the spirituality of Ignatius Loyola as a basis for developing a leadership model for organisational success.[3]

No study is without limitations. There are a number in this study. I did not look at the ethical dimensions of the internet. This, I think, will become more and more of a concern at the internet grows and people have to re-negotiate ethics, ways of acting and behaving, in using this technology. Another limitation is that, for the purposes of this study, I have not ventured, except in passing, to look at the two-tier world which is emerging: the world of those who have access and the world of those who do not have access to the internet. There are a number of reasons for this, each in their own perhaps a topic of study: education and literacy, technical awareness and money. This, I would argue, is also a question which is a study in itself. Another area which I touch indirectly but do not focus on is that of power. Power shifts have taken place. Everyone who has access to the internet has access to, what may have been in the past, 'guarded' information. It is, however, not only those who have access who have power but also those who create and control the networks which we use who have the greater power. Hence patterns of power shifts have taken place, which would in themselves be a topic for study.

---

[3] Lowney, C. *Heroic Leadership. Best practices from a 450-year-old company that changed the world.* (Chicago: LoyolaPress, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

2.1 The Communications Revolution

A revolution has taken place not only in the way we communicate but also in the mode of communication. The internet has introduced a new form of communication unparalleled because of its ability to communicate to many across the globe at any time. We have entered a new world order of communication. Castells (2001: 3) points out:

> Core economic, social, political, and cultural activities throughout the planet are being structured by and around the internet, and other computer networks. In fact, exclusion from these networks is one of the most damaging forms of exclusion in our economy and in our culture.

There is no doubt that the internet has transformed our culture and made what seemed impossible now possible at the click of a mouse – from banking, buying and business to email, military intelligence, academic research, counselling and prayer. It seems hard to find something which is *not* available on the internet. The advancement of this technology has changed and shaped our world in a new way.

The internet has not only brought about a new wave in communications but has also enabled other significant shifts to take place in the structure of society and the world.

Globalisation[1] is an example of this. The 'global village'[2] we now inhabit has been driven, powerfully, by the internet because of the ease of communication it offers and the free movement of information which it facilitates. While the internet has enhanced our ability to communicate technologically, it is also subtly changing the very structure of human communication. A new social, cultural, economic, political and religious paradigm is taking shape through our communications technology. Castells points out that perhaps we are only going to be able to shape and change our reality when we understand our communications medium which has become an expression of ourselves: 'The internet is an expression of ourselves - through a specific code of communication, which we must understand it we want to change our reality' (2001: 6).

2.2 Towards a definition of Communication

Communication is a complex subject and any single definition would not be adequate. Yet it is fundamental to human life: 'The communications process is utterly fundamental to all our psychological and social processes' (de Fleur 1970: 76). It is what human beings spend their lives doing in one form or another: communicating. For the purpose of this study, I attempt a broad definition of 'communication'.[3]

The word 'communication' developed from the Latin word *communis*, which means to share, to have in common. Other derivatives in English are commune, community and

---

[1] Bard & Söderqvist *Netocracy* (Pearson Education, 2002: 119-142) offer an interesting analysis of two kinds of globalisation; first, 'capitalist globalisation' which has as its purpose the maximisation of profits; second, 'netocratic globalisation' whose goal it is to seek out the universe in the global arena and experience the world and lifestyles that new technology brings in reach. When using the term 'globalisation' I am referring to the process whereby the whole world is, through various technological conditions, economic conditions, socio-cultural conditions and political conditions, being united or unified. 'Global' means 'one world'. Therefore people, through various means, are being brought together and united in a way that we have not seen before. Nations, one could argue, are becoming less important as a sense of 'global community' develops in which there is cooperation on many different fronts – especially economic and political. I argue that the internet has made an enormous contribution to globalisation.

[2] A term coined by Marshall McLuhan (Jonscher 1999: 93).

[3] For further study of 'communication' it would be helpful to consult de Fleur, Melvin L. *Theories of Mass Communication* 2nd Ed. (New York: David McKay, 1970) specifically Chapter V: *Elementary Characteristics of the Communicative Act*. Other works that can be consulted in this field: George Herbert Mead, 1934. *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; George A. Miller, 1951. *The Idealised Communication System. Language and Communication*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.; Debray, R. 1996. *Media Manifestos: on the technological transmission of cultural forms*. London: Verso.

10

body language and hear their words. When one communicates on the telephone one only hears words and cannot see the all the accompanying body language(s), which might be an important part of the message. An aspect of communicating is lost on the telephone, and yet by using the telephone one is able to talk and therefore communicate, albeit in a somewhat reduced manner maybe, opposed to the ability not to communicate if we had no telephone system. Communication takes into account the time, place, context, audience and medium. Hence, it is clear that communication is a complex activity but it is primarily about the ability to be in relationship with others.

2.3 The Development and Evolution of Communications

2.3.1 The Oral Tradition

Human beings have always found ways of being in relationship with others by sharing information. Every culture has to preserve and pass on the body of knowledge that matters to that culture and which is essential for the survival of that culture. Oral cultures preserved and passed on knowledge without writing or any other system of record keeping except by the human subject and their capacity of memory. An oral culture, Walter Ong argues in his book *Orality and Literacy* (1982), is one in which people are totally unfamiliar with writing. He says that primary oral cultures are actually in the majority and that from an historical standpoint writing is a relatively recent development; even among the 6,700[4] or so languages which currently exist only 78 have a literature (Ong 1982: 7). Use was made of music, poetry, ritual, formulae and epithets which served as memory devices.

Memory was important for the ability to communicate the history and traditions of a cultural group to the next generation. Because of the nature of oral tradition, people would have a thorough knowledge of their own people's history and traditions. However,

---

[4] It is difficult to give an exact figure of the number of languages that exist in the world, because it is not always easy to define what a language is. The difference between a language and a dialect is not always clear-cut. It has nothing to do with similarity of vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation. Sometimes, the distinctions are based purely on geographical, political, or religious factors. It is usually estimated that the number of languages in the world vary between 3,000 and 8,000. For more information see: http://www.ling.gu.se/projekt/sprakfrageladan/english/sprakfakta/facts.html (Accessed 5 January 2008).

12

there would be little and limited knowledge of those of another culture. Information was shared within a cultural group and passed on within that specific group. Script developed and evolved marking a shift from the oral tradition to the written word. People developed a system of writing in the Ancient Near East so that information could be recorded. The first writing systems developed, roughly, at the beginning of the Bronze Age. The system began with pictures or symbols drawn onto clay tablets. The system was derived so that people could keep accounts. These systems evolved into more sophisticated systems – like writing on parchment with an ink or dye. For 4000 years this is how information was recorded. The advent of the printing press saw the dawn of a new way of sharing knowledge. This meant that people could research and learn about their own and other cultures, because it was recorded in text, and hence they were able to gain broader knowledge than they were able to before. Text also enabled a record system which shifted the main organism of recording from the ability to remember to script; the knowledge of a culture could be recorded and did not have to be passed on from one person to another in a physical sense, for example, while preparing the evening meal together or sitting around the fire at night, but could be passed on via text which required no other (except the writer indirectly) in the process of acculturation.[5] Presence became less important as did time and space.

Ong, in his book *Orality and Literacy* (1982) deals with this shift from primary oral cultures to chirographic ones. He examines the shift from an oral-based stage of consciousness to one dominated by writing and print and the changes this brings about in the way human beings think. Thus the shift from an oral culture changes not only the environment and mode of the message but also the way people think. Ong looks at the current emergence of what he terms a 'second orality' dominated by electronic modes of communication. He says that these incorporate elements from both the oral and chirographic mode of communication, some of which have been subordinate for a while. Therefore the change in mode of communication does not totally abandon the previous modes but incorporates elements of these modes.

---

[5] By 'acculturation' I refer to the learning process whereby an individual assimilates a culture.

The oral tradition by its very nature is personal and requires presence for information to be passed on from generation to generation. It presupposes a social setting where people are together in a context where history, stories and traditions can be communicated. It also evokes the imagination in both the one communicating and the listener. It demands that memory be utilised and that the listener always pay special attention to detail so that they can store this in memory and pass it on to another at a later stage. The story may evolve – like the game 'broken telephone' one can play in a room full of people which invariably is 'broken' and the message obscure by the time the final person in the chain hears it – but there is value not only in the content of the message, but also in the personal contact and the social conditions this tradition creates. A family may gather at night and stories about the history of the family, for example, are told to the young. The tradition is being past on during a family gathering and the time spent together is for telling stories, asking questions and sharing experiences with each other, but it also gathers the family into a period of being physically present to each other. In an oral culture it is the elders who passed down the traditions, history and stories of the culture. This assumes that there is a distinctive hierarchy within the family. The very nature of the oral tradition means that a hierarchy is maintained. The elders have something to give to the young, something the young need to know and cannot get easily in any other place. Modern technology may enable us to save and pass on stories as well as historical and cultural information more accurately, but it does not create the same social environment which was created by the very nature of the oral tradition.

2.3.2 The Shift from Oral Communication and Early Writing to the Printing Press[6]

The printing press invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the middle of the fifteenth century had extraordinary consequences. Although there had been 4000 years of written (script) ways of keeping records, the printing press marked the beginning of a major new development. Importantly, for this study, the printing press brought a massive challenge to Christendom. It was the start of the communications revolution and the revolution in

---

[6] Regis Debray proposes three historical ages of transmission technologies: the logosphere (the age of writing, theology, the kingdom and faith), then the graphosphere (the age of print, political ideologies, nations, and laws), and then the age of videosphere (audio/video broadcasting, models, individuals and opinions). See: http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdebray1.htm (Accessed: 13 March 2008).

the management of information. The press can also be said to be the initial beginnings of what we now call modern science and other advances which led to the industrial revolution.

> Printed books were the source material of the astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, and without the printing process his manuscript may well have gathered dust on the shelves of a monastery library. Instead, his *De Revolutionibus,* the thesis proposing for the first time that the Earth moved in orbit around the Sun, spread quickly across the world of learning, where nothing would ever be the same again (Bard & Söderqvist 2002: 9).

The printing press opened up a new and exciting world and enabled people to read and discover things never thought of or imagined before. Knowledge could be shared outside of cultural groups and some of the knowledge was inspiring and moved others to begin new pursuits. There was what could be described as a knowledge or information explosion.

> Christopher Columbus read about the travels of Marco Polo, large numbers of manuals and other technical literature circulated in Europe, and the tidal wave of the new information prompted the development of the techniques and new thinking on the management of information – methods that paved the way for the gradual development of the sciences. Among the many innovations that followed in the wake of the printing press (after a certain incubation period) and that thoroughly and comprehensively altered our way of looking at ourselves and the world, were the clock, gunpowder, the compass and the telescope (Bard & Söderqvist 2002: 10).

The printing press introduced not only a new way of organising and distributing information, but initiated a new world order. People's understanding of the world, natural and human, was slowly being transformed by the information which had become available. Elizabeth Eisenstein attempts to capture the far reaching effects of this invention,

15

Francis Bacon's aphorism suggesting that it changed 'the appearance and state of the whole world' is cited repeatedly and with approbation. But although many scholars concur with Bacon's opinion, very few have tried to follow his advice and 'take note of the force, effect, and consequences' of Gutenberg's invention. (1979: 3-4).

Eisenstein, in her magisterial work, then goes on to analyse some of the effects of this invention. She demonstrates changes that take place in personal and social behaviours, as well as deeper changes in the very structure of European societies, including the Church.

The printing press changed the speed of communication, the access to information and dissemination of information. It also changed the presentation of information and made information available in many places at the same time. Suddenly established hierarchies (like the Church) were called into question and, like the elders of the tribe in an oral culture, found their role diminished as alternatives arose. It diffused knowledge as never before and brought about changes in family life, authority, economics, politics, religion and the exploration of the globe. It was not necessary for the family to gather round the fire now primarily to socialise the young; knowledge about traditions and history could be learnt from books in an isolated fashion which did not require the presence of another – least an authority figure. Memory slowly became less important because there was no need to remember if one is assured of the fact that you can look the facts up again on a printed page if you forget them. The diversity of knowledge available through print meant that the history and traditions of one family or tribe which were passed on in the oral tradition were not the focus and became less important. People could read about other cultures, histories and traditions without knowing much about their own history and traditions. Hence a change is introduced which affects not only the dissemination of information but also the very structure and lifestyle of families and communities. It also created alternatives for many, as Eisenstein says:

Ultimately, gifted boys who might have become preachers simply became publicists instead. 'The preaching of sermons is speaking to a few of mankind,'

remarked Daniel Defoe, 'printing books is talking to the whole world' (1979: 316).

Print technology enabled an era of social change and brought about change through its ability to spread new ideas. The Protestant Reformation is an example of how new ideas, and the ability to circulate these ideas, brought about a massive change in the Church in Europe, which changed the structure of society and history.

> Between 1517 and 1520, Luther's thirty publications probably sold well over 300,000 copies... Altogether in relation to the spread of religious ideas it seems difficult to exaggerate the significance of the Press, without which a revolution of this magnitude could scarcely have been consummated... Lutheranism was from the first the child of the printed book, and through this vehicle Luther was able to make exact, standardized and eradicable impressions on the mind of Europe. For the first time in human history a great reading public judged the validity of revolutionary ideas through a mass-medium which used the vernacular languages together with the arts of journalism and the cartoonist (:303).

The printing press '...provided the "stroke of magic" by which an obscure theologian in Wittenberg managed to shake Saint Peter's throne.' (:310) Not only was Luther able to 'shake Peter's throne' with his ideas and the heterodoxy he perpetuated, but within the Catholic Church itself the press was used forcefully to bring about change. Liturgical texts could be written and published, which insisted on uniformity in liturgy - the Church was able to institute internal reforms through the power of the press. The writings of theologians like Thomas Aquinas (who had died in the 13th century), were now in print. Practices, like prayer and meditation, were now written down and widely available and were no longer just the property of convents and monasteries. The ability to have rules and uniformity became attainable over geographically large areas. Change was unstoppable and influenced European society on all levels.[7]

---

[7] Eisenstein in her two-volume work analyses much more broadly and deeply the changes that the printing press brought about in Europe but especially its impact on the Church. She covers the subject in much more detail than I can in this study. It is magisterial work and well worth consulting for further information. She also alludes to political, social and other changes in society and analyses just how much of a contribution the printing press made to the Reformation.

The battle between Protestantism and the Catholic Church was primarily theological in the beginning; however the battle was fought not in the great halls of theology, in convents and monasteries: the battle was fought in the printed word and the ability of the authors to persuade the masses not in eloquent sermons and lessons but through the power of the press, as books became more and more widely available. Eisenstein says:

> Gutenberg's invention probably contributed more to destroying Christian concord and inflaming religious warfare than any so-called arts of war ever did. Much of the turbulence of the new modern era, I think, may be traced to the fact that the writings of the Church fathers and the scriptures themselves could not continue to be transmitted in traditional ways. As a sacred heritage, Christianity could be protected against most forms of change. As a heritage that was transmitted by texts that involved the 'spreading of glad tidings,' Christianity was peculiarly vulnerable to the revolutionary effects of typography (:319).

The press had results that were unimaginable and closed the door, perhaps, on one world order and opened a new one which would have far reaching effects not only for the Church, culture and society but for the whole world.

> On the whole, it seems safe to conclude that all the problems associated with the disruption of Western Christendom will become less baffling if we approach them by respecting the order of events and put the advent of printing ahead of the Protestant revolt (:450).

2.3.3 The Development of Electronic Media

Print media[8] brought about a significant shift in history, but the advent of electronic media[9] re-directs history again. History has been driven[10] by the human ability to create complex technological devices which enable people to interact with each other, but also

---

[8] By 'print media' I refer to books, journals, magazines, newspapers and pamphlets.
[9] By 'electronic media' I refer to the telephone, radio, television, computers and the internet.
[10] Bard & Söderqvist title the first chapter in their book *Netocracy* 'Technology as the driving force of history'. This is an interesting read: they give an overview of how technology has continually driven history.

18

with the world they inhabit, and these devices shape their perceptions, lifestyles and priorities. However, these devices also shift culture and bring about changes which are as influential (and perhaps more so) than the shift brought about by the printing press. The print media made information widely available, but contained certain built-in restrictions. Electronic media continue to make information widely available, but remove more barriers, and hence make the dissemination and attainment of information easier.

Joshua Meyrowitz, in his book *No Sense of Place,* examines what he calls 'access codes' to print and electronic media. The ability to read, for example, required that one master the 'codes' of language, which was a built-in restriction:

> Reading and writing involve an abstract code of semantically meaningless symbols that must be memorised, internalised, and then forgotten – forgotten in the sense that when literate people read and write letters of the alphabet, they *hear words* rather than focus on the shape and form of the written symbols (Meyrowitz 1985: 75).

People do not automatically begin to read. It is, as Meyrowitz points out, a process which is slowly learnt. It requires practice and the mastering of a skill. There are also stages in proficiency and a sequence of development. This sequence is based on the increased ability to learn 'linguistic, grammatical and stylistic complexity' (:75). Readers read simple books and this empowers them and gives them the ability to read more complex works; it is a process. Meyrowitz goes on to point out that in any culture and writing system, even amongst highly literate people, only a small percentage reach the highest levels of reading and writing skills. Meyrowitz (:75) says that the skills needed to read and write affect access to print in two ways: communication through writing and reading books is automatically restricted to those who know the access code, i.e. those who can read and write. Communication through writing and reading is also further coded in the shape or organisation of the material. A complex medical journal, for example, would be less accessible than a novel; knowledge is compartmentalised in books and therefore readers are segregated according to the compartmentalisation of the knowledge.

Electronic media seem to remove such restrictions: television viewing, for example, involves access codes which need much less decoding. Television looks and sounds much more like reality (even though it is not) than do sentences and paragraphs. Meyrowitz says that even two year-old children find television accessible, and that television is often used as a 'baby-sitter'. He says that television's code of signals which produces facsimiles of everyday sights and sounds has basically one degree of complexity, and you essentially just have to know how to watch one television programme to be able to watch them all. You need not understand all you see and hear – like in real daily life – and you also need not be able to penetrate a complex arrangement of signs and symbols which you would have to in order to enter into and understand printed text. He says:

> It is not surprising the people of all ages, educational backgrounds, and income levels watch many of the same television programs. In recent years, for example, children have enjoyed the adult soap opera "Dallas," and adult viewers have found pleasure in a children's puppet show, "The Muppets." Indeed, in 1980, both of these programs were among the most popular shows in *all* age-groups in America, including ages two to eleven (:77).

Meyrowitz looks at other factors which a shift in technology brings about. He says, for example, that there is a relationship between a book and its message that need not always exist in electronic media. Thousands of totally unrelated messages can be received through one electronic device. The characteristics of electronic media do not vary according to changes in the characteristics of the message. A long book is heavier and fatter than a short book, while a television set stays the same regardless of the length or content. A person who owns a radio, telephone and television set need not borrow or buy specific messages (like one would get in a book which has a single focus, such as a book on cookery, for example), because 'Once these electronic media are in the home, the messages are able to flow constantly and indiscriminately' (:82). Meyrowitz alludes to the fact that cinema has now become more like a book, because a person has to physically go and make a concerted effort to see a film, and each film is like an independent physical reality. These days one could easily borrow a video of a film on

DVD. It is easier to restrict someone from a book or film than it is to restrict or control the continuous content feed on the television and radio. Television and radio may have social effects that cinema does not seem to have, because television and radio are so easily available.

Meyrowitz examines what he terms 'the association factor' (:83). A book is not merely information but also an artefact and possession. As such it serves not only as a channel to provide information but also as a symbol of the self and identity. Just as we choose clothes we choose books and so associate with the book that is appropriate for our projected image and sense of group affiliation. Books lie on coffee tables, next to beds and in other places in a home. A book is a belonging. The content on television does not belong; it is not a possession and does not lie on the coffee table. It, Meyrowitz says, is like stopping in a park to watch some people at a distance. One does not have to take it into one's home, place it amongst one's possessions and make it part of oneself. Watching television is even less of an affiliation than watching something in the park, because in the park one is doing something publicly - there is some sort of association - whereas watching television is a private act requiring no public commitment of any kind and expresses no support. It can, on the other hand, in a subtle way take possession of the home and unlike the book on the table it may go unnoticed.

Reading a book requires, to some extent, what Meyrowitz calls 'attendance' (:84). It demands personal commitment. When reading, a person has to look at the form of the letters and read the lines and paragraphs; you are working hard to receive the message. A television on the other hand just flickers away and requires no work or commitment from the person watching.

Unlike books, electronic media are able to reach a much larger number of people. Even bestsellers only reach a fraction of the audience that television shows are able to reach. It took forty years to sell twenty-one million copies of *Gone with the Wind*, but about fifty-five million people watched the first half of the movie on television in one sitting on a single evening. Perhaps the only book that is close to the universality of the television is the Bible (:85-86).

21

Meyrowitz outlines some of the subtle changes which take place in the movement from the typographic medium to the electronic medium and how they transform human habits, attitudes and culture.[11] Neil Postman, examining the impact of the television, agrees with Meyrowitz on the transformation that the electronic media introduce, he says:

> As the influence of print wanes, the content of politics, religion, education, and anything else that comprises public business must change and be recast in terms that are most suitable for television (1985: 8).

Postman says that he found intimations of the idea that forms of media favour particular kinds of content and therefore are capable of taking command of a culture. He then refers to the second commandment which prohibits the Israelites from making concrete images of anything. He concludes that perhaps the author of the Decalogue made a connection between the forms of human communication and the quality of the culture (:9).

The advent of the internet introduced another form of mass media, another means of distributing information around the globe which has affected the quality of our culture. This electronic development, springing up from the computer, may comprise the most comprehensive revolution of all:

> The internet is something completely new: a medium in which virtually anyone, after a relatively small investment in technical equipment, and with a few simple actions, can become both a producer and a consumer of text, images and sound. It is hard to think of anything more empowering: on the net we are all authors, publishers and producers; our freedom of expression is as good as total and potential audience limitless. There are oceans of every conceivable sort of information available at the touch of a button. The growth of his new medium has been unparalleled (Bard & Söderqvist 2002: 11).

---

[11] It is impossible, in this study, to outline the ideas of Meyrowitz adequately. However I highly recommend reading his work *No Sense of Place*, as it is a thorough and eye-opening study which makes a very interesting and important contribution on the effects that electronic media has on human social behaviour.

At first the computer was presented as something that would be able to think and some theorists, like Ray Kurzweil, believe that computers would eventually lead to the development of 'artificial intelligence' (AI)[12] that would exceed the intellectual potential of human beings.[13]

Other thinkers like Roger Penrose and Kurt Gödel dispute Kurzweil's position. Penrose and Gödel hold to the notion that the human mind is capable of transcending the confines of purely logical reasoning; computers use logical reasoning in the form of mathematics whereas, they claim, that the processes of mathematical thinking and by extension all thinking and conscious behaviour are carried out by non-computational means in the human subject.[14]

In May 1997 a parallel processing computer made history. 'Deep Blue' (as the computer was called) beat Gary Kasparov, the number one ranked chess champion who was considered the best player in the history of the game, in six games. Many believed that this was the beginning of 'artificial intelligence' and that the computer now had the capability of thinking and acting independently of a human being. Jonscher says that there was a sense that the computer:

---

[12] The notion of artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computers that can be taught to imitate the human capacity to think. The creed of strong AI is essentially twofold: (1) that it will eventually be possible to capture *all* aspects of human intelligence in computer form, and (2) that the human mind is, to all intents and purposes, just a computer program (Watts, F.N. Artificial Intelligence in Herrmann, R.L. *God, science and humility: Ten scientists consider humility theology.* (London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000), p 281.

[13] Ray Kurzweil is a strong advocate of 'artificial intelligence' (AI). He maintains that it is not only possible, but probable, that other elements of creation will develop consciousness along the same lines of that which human beings have. Therefore computers will be able to make their own decisions and it would be impossible for human beings to know what decisions they will make. Human beings will be at the mercy of computers and as society and the world become more and more complex so human beings would be more and more inclined to 'hand over' decision making to these machines because, he postulates, the machines will make better decisions than human beings can make. Eventually human beings will be incapable of make intelligent decisions, we will not be able to turn the machines off and therefore machines will effectively be in control – turning them off would amount to suicide. He states that human beings can gain near immortality by becoming one with robotic technology. For further reading: *The age of spiritual machines: How we will live, work and think in the new age of intelligent machines.* (London: Orion Business Books, 1999). Richards, J.W. (ed) *The evolution of mind in the twenty-first century. Are we spiritual machines: Ray Kurzweil vs. the critics of Strong AI.* (Washington DC: Discovery Institute, 2002).

[14] For further reading on this position which deals in detail with this subject: Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind.* (London: Vintage Publishers, 1995); The *Emperor's New Mind.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

23

…had finally triumphed in a contest that pitted it against human powers of thought. … the sense that the digital age had produced something which had been taught to *think* was palpable (1999: 123).

He says, however, that this was not so much a victory for the machine but rather a victory for the human subjects which designed and programmed the machine. Other theorists believe that computer technology is driving history into a 'post-human' environment and world; human beings will be superseded by computers and computers will be the dominant form of life on the planet. Human beings will be '…joining the dinosaurs as a species that once ruled the earth but is now obsolete, or hang on for a while longer by becoming machines themselves' (Hayles 1999: 283).[15]

It seems as if computer technology has not been heading in the direction of AI and the major developments have not been in this field either. Rather, computer technology is wiring the globe and communications has been the focal point of computer technology.

But it is the global, digital network that is most interesting aspect of this [technology] development. A new, dominant media technology means that a new world is evolving (Bard & Söderqvist 2002: 11).

Other pre-computer developments like the invention of the telephone in 1875 by Bell, the radio at the turn of the 19th century and the television by Baird in 1926 had far reaching effects. These, it can be said, ushered in the 'global village'. All of these technologies are analog technologies, meaning that the electrical currents in them are replicas or an analogy of the sounds and images they transmit. Jonscher points out that analog technologies are unable to process meaning and values from the content of the technology

With a digital system, unlike an analog one, you can actually work on the content or meaning of the information. The system can take in a word, study it and put

---

[15] Hayles offers an interesting discussion and critique on the proposed idea of becoming 'post human' in her book: *How we become post human. Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

out at the other end a different word, not just a faithful imitation or reproduction of the input word. … But the fact that digital systems can interpret content *at some level* – can examine it, process it and change it in accordance with the instructions of the user – is fundamental to their character and their significance. It is what makes them able to enhance the mental powers of their users (Jonscher 1999: 94-95).

Computers and the network called the internet have managed to 'synthesise' the media forms we have been acquainted with. As I have indicated above, some theorists believe that computer technology may lead us into a very different world order. Presently it seems as if computers are leading us into a new world order in communications. Text, sounds and pictures have been combined by our computing power and now are available on the internet for communication, information gathering and leisure. This has led to the emergence of what is called 'new media'.

2.3.4 The World of 'New Media'

Since the late 1980's the world of communications began to look different. The differences were not restricted to any one part or element of the communications world. Each medium may have changed at differing paces but there seems to be common agreement that the change in the 1980's was different to the changes that had happened before. Technology continually develops and changes, but it seems as if the nature of the change which happened in the late 1980's was just different to the rest. Lister et al. (2003: 10-11) list the following which are indicative of and associated with new media:

♦ *A shift from modernity to post-modernity:* deep and structural changes which took place in societies and economics from the 1960's onwards with correlative social changes. New media are seen as a key marker of such change.

♦ *Intensifying process of globalisation:* a dissolving of national states and boundaries in terms of trade, corporate organisation, customs and cultures, identities and beliefs, in which new media have been seen as a contributing element.

◆ *A replacement in the West of an industrial age of manufacturing by a 'post-industrial' information* age: a shift in employment, skill, investment and profit, in the production of material goods to service and information industries which many users of new media are seen to optimise.

◆ *A decentring of established and centralised geo-political orders*: the weakening of mechanisms of power and control from Western colonial centres, facilitated by the dispersed, boundary transgressing, networks of new communications media.

They say:

New media are caught up with and seen as part of these and other kinds of change (as both cause and effect), and the sense of 'new times' and 'new eras' which follow in their wake. In this sense, the emergence of 'new media' as some kind of epoch-making phenomena is seen as part of a much wider landscape of social, technological and cultural change; in short, as part of a new technoculture (:11).

Lister et al. provide a schema in an attempt to break down the term 'new media' into some manageable parts. They say that we take new media to mean:

◆ *New textual experiences:* new kinds of genre, textual form, entertainment, pleasure and patterns of media composition (computer games, hypertexts, special effects cinema).

◆ *New ways of representing the world:* media which, in ways that are not always clearly defined, offer new representational possibilities and experiences (as in immersive virtual environments, screen-based interactive multimedia).

◆ *New relationships between subjects (users and consumers) and media technologies:* changes in the use and reception of image and communication media in everyday life and in the meanings that are invested in media technologies.

◆ *New experiences of the relationship between embodiment, identity and community:* shifts in the personal and social experience of time, space and

26

place (on both local and global scales) which have implications for the ways in which we experience ourselves and our place in the world.

♦ *New conceptions of the biological body's relationship to technological media:* challenges to received distinctions between the human and artificial, nature and technology, body and (media as) technological prostheses, the real and the virtual.

♦ *New patterns of organisation and production:* wider realignments and integrations in media culture, industry, economy, access, ownership, control and regulation (:12).

They say that we, if we investigated any of the above, would soon find ourselves encountering a number of rapidly developing fields of technologically mediated production which would include:

♦ *Computer-mediated communications:* email, chat rooms, MUD's (multiple user dimension) and MOO's (multi-user object orientated), avatar-based communication forums, voice image transmissions, the web, and mobile telephony.

♦ *New ways of distributing and consuming* media texts characterised by interactivity and hypertext formats – the World Wide Web, CD-ROM, DVD, and the various platforms for computer games.

♦ *Virtual reality:* from simulated environments to fully immersive representational spaces.

♦ *A whole range of transformations and dislocations of established media* (in, for example, photography, animation, television, film and cinema) (:13).

Thus 'new media' are more than just technological developments, they bring about textual, conventional and cultural change. New media are also old media in the sense that they use combinations of new and old patterns. One also hears other words when new media is spoken about, words like 'digitality, interactivity, hypertextuality, dispersal and virtuality' (:13).

This is the world which now confronts us, a world in which things are developing and evolving rapidly through the mode and influence of new media. New media has 'opened' the world and any person can become a player on the global network – a 'giver' and 'receiver' to and of the world.

Like the library catalogues of old, search engines like 'Google'[16] now allow any person access to huge amounts of information on any conceivable topic at any time. Another such example is the online encyclopaedia 'Wikipedia', which attracts 160 million visitors a month and has 6 million articles in 250 languages.[17] 'Wikipedia' is a user-driven reference system which enables people to not only find information but contribute to the encyclopaedia. Information on many different topics is now simply available to whoever is connected to the World Wide Web. The restrictions or barriers imposed by older forms of information gathering (like the 'open hours' of a library or the manual library catalogue system) have been broken. Users now have access to information within minutes of an event taking place; faster in many cases even than television news stations are able to put a 'breaking news bulletin' together. The internet, besides making information available, brings another dimension to the world of communications. People can now interact with the information on the screen and, unlike television or radio, with the simple click of a mouse can select what they want and how or who they wish to interact with. Opposing views and alternatives are available at lightening speed with little effort. The stream of information provides unlimited news, views and alternatives. Few limitations or boundaries to the access of information seem to be in place. Jans (2002b) points out, for example, that both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or *Christians for the Cloning of Jesus* are only one mouse click's away from each other. The sudden and immediate availability of information on any subject is literally at the user's finger-tips. The users have the ability to, like a book and unlike television, control what they read. However, unlike a book, the whole world is open to them with vast amounts of

---

[16] 'Google' is a household name. For an interesting account on this extraordinary business, media and technology success, which can itself be the content of a study, see David A. Vise, *The Google Story*. (Chatham, Kent: MacKays of Chatham, 2005). Vise says that every day sixty four million people use Google in more than one hundred languages, running billions of searches.

[17] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/03/06/wwiki106.xml (Accessed 12 January 2008).

information that all comes through one screen. They can see, hear and interact with the world online on the screen before them.

2.4 The Transformative Power of Communications Technology

The development of technology, I have tried to indicate, has transformed the way people define themselves, relate to other people and perceive the world. Technological development has, throughout history, re-directed the social, political, economic and religious focus of human beings and society. Technological development has changed the environment, but also the experience of human personhood,[18] and has been a key factor in some of the major revolutions – like the industrial revolution – which have re-directed the course of human history. Our technological environment has developed in such a way that, for the most part, human beings 'format' their lives to the perceptions and demands this environment places on them which seems to be more apparent in an age of 'new media'.

Technological development occurs at an uneven pace. Something new is invented and may be updated or redesigned within a year. Human beings need time to adjust and adapt/adopt to the new technologies that are placed before them. Some of these technologies are, in a sense, complete in themselves says Jonscher (1999: 214). The telephone, invented in the late 19th century, was invented to allow conversation over a long distance. In this sense it is complete and final, this is its defining purpose. (Cellular telephones have taken this invention further now; they combine many functions and not just conversation over a long distance). Jonscher (:214) describes how, at a public lecture in 1981 in Massachusetts, a member of the audience rose and questioned a Bell representative as to why the telephone had not changed much in the last fifty years. The response was '…that another thing that has not changed in the last fifty years is the

---

[18] Du Toit (2004) describes the time we live in as 'the third axial period'. This period, he says, is being determined by increasingly explosive scientific and technological developments, as well as economic and cultural interpenetration and interaction, which is characterised by globalism, information technology, the market and technocracy which all change the cultural and physical environment. This in turn changes the experience of human personhood. Technoscience and the integrity of personhood in Africa and in the West: Facing our technoscientific environment in Du Toit, C.W. (ed.), *The integrity of the human person in an African context. Perspectives from science and religion.* (Pretoria: UNISA, 2004) pp 1-3.

29

distance from the ear to the mouth, nor the tone and intensity of our voices'. The same can be said of radio and televisions technologies. Radio and television revolutionised the access people had to information and developments around the world. Jonscher says that the '…TV was instrumental in introducing a new pattern of domestic life, whereby people typically began to spend hours each day in front of the set' (:215). The television also has completeness about it; the content of the channels may have changed significantly but the daily habits that people have fallen into since the beginnings of television remain the same.

There does not seem to be the same sense of completeness with digital communications technology. Once something has been converted into digital format it is digital and cannot change, but the capabilities of the digital format are constantly in flux – limitless bandwidth, memory capacity, processing speed and networking. It is conceivable and possible to be able to control all the appliances of a household with one computer: radio and television, burglar alarms, doors, refrigerators and ovens. Computers themselves have been used for various different tasks, and the more technology develops the more 'incomplete' its uses seem as we await a new development with new features and capabilities. Jonscher says that technology will lead us to a situation where you will be able to use a mobile phone to:

> Contact five travel agents in India who can book a beach holiday in Goa, and send them all a message asking them to give me quotes for a two-week stay in a three-star hotel. Also, when I get to my hotel room tonight I want to see *Les Enfants du Paradis* with English subtitles. Oh, and check my refrigerator at home for beer, and if there's none left, alert my car navigation system to give me the route to a supermarket which is open late tomorrow (:217).

There is a sense that computer technology is limitless and open-ended and will continue to grow, beyond what we thought its basic function was and is. This in turn will bring about further shifts in social, economic, political and religious affairs. Our very definition of human personhood, human capabilities and human destiny will also continue to be challenged and grow as we embrace the technology that is and continues to develop. The

message of Jesus Christ has not changed but, from the time of the early Church which used a predominantly oral means for proclaiming this message, we see a major shift in the environment in which this message is to be proclaimed today.

Jonscher says that 'Countless challenges will confront us as we learn to take advantage of this new networked world' (:216).[19] Perhaps the only way we can assess the advantages of technology and the way in which this technology can be used to proclaim the gospel is, to begin with, by considering the impact that technological development, especially in the form of the mass media, has had on human society and behaviour.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to sketch a broad introduction on the shift from oral means of communication to print and finally to electronic means. I have also attempted to highlight some of the characteristics of each of these periods and the way the means of communication influenced the lifestyle of society. I have paid special attention to the influence and power of electronic media, as well as attempting to show how electronic media have diversified and the impact it now has on society. Unlike other forms of media before the electronic ones, I have tried to draw out the things that set electronic media apart from the oral and print epochs. Electronic media develop rapidly, diversify rapidly and are open-ended. It combines a number of elements which can be found in oral and print media but presents them in a new way. I have suggested that we have, through the advent of electronic media, gone through a communications revolution.

---

[19] An interesting example of one such challenge is the recent controversy surrounding the online encyclopaedia 'Wikipedia'. One of the contributors, who claimed to be a professor of theology and canon law, was exposed as a 24-year-old college drop-out! He had made an estimated 20,000 Wikipedia entries. His biographical information was fake and, when recruited, no-one checked his credentials. The fake professor was exposed by a critic of the online encyclopaedia who knew his true identity and called *The New Yorker* magazine who had previously run an article on Wikipedia. This episode not only embarrassed Wikipedia but also called into question Wikipedia's reputation and accuracy. It shows one of the countless challenges which confront technological development. (For more on this controversy, see http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/03/06/wwiki106.xml. Accessed 12 January 2008).

In the next chapter I will outline the work of a number of theorists who have studied and written extensively on human communications and the power of the means of communication, specifically electronic media, and how this influences the attitudes, behaviours and lifestyles of human beings.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A REALISATION OF THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA ON HUMAN WORLDVIEW AND BEHAVIOUR

3.1 The Need for Critical Reflection

Electronic media impact on our interaction with the environment and our communications patterns, but also has an impact on the behaviour and lifestyle of society and the attitudes that develop as well as on the way people relate. Some of the impacts electronic technologies have are obvious, but others are more subtle and pervasive and have the power to re-shape and re-design human behaviours, lifestyles and societies. More and more of our daily life consists of interplay between ourselves, others and the technologies we interact with and use. These technologies enable us, empower us, extend us, but also limit us and cause certain reactions and patterns of behaviour which are not always obvious and go by largely unnoticed. It would be rather meaningless to negate electronic technologies or simply demonise them and long for 'the good old days' when life was shaped by different forces. A critical examination of these technologies enables a better understanding of their effects – the obvious and subtle effects – and also empowers us to direct and use the technologies we interact with in a positive and life-giving qualitative sense. The ability to reflect, the philosopher Socrates suggests in his reported remark 'the unexamined life is not worth living', helps us not only to use technologies more efficiently, but also lays a foundation for a better understanding of the powers of persuasion that are part of their very character.

French radical theoretician, Régis Debray, created a discipline which he called 'mediology'. Debray investigates how abstract ideas can become world-changing ideologies. He developed a new theory of the transmission of ideas through history. He claims that powerful ideas need intermediaries: a whole set of technologies and

environments that translate the input (ideas) into output (ideologies). Debray (Joscelyne[1]) says:

> I would make an analogy between what I call mediology and the strategy of the neurosciences. While the neurosciences are dedicated to overcoming the inherited duality between mind and brain, mediology tries to view history by hybridizing technology and culture. It focuses on the intersections between technology and intellectual life.

Debray would say that technologies of transmission (writing systems, printing presses, and computers) do not necessarily drive change in a predictably specified direction. A technology can lead to very different effects in different mediaspheres. For example, wood-block printing first developed in China but did not evolve into a movable type (presumably because it supported a calligraphic tradition). In Europe wood block printing appears to have led to the Gutenberg culture of typesetting and print shop. Hence context also influences technologies.

Various theorists have grappled with and attempted to assess the impact of technological development on all aspects of human life. In this chapter I will briefly present an overview of what some of these theorists say. Some are well known and others slightly less known. I hope that their ideas, which I now present, will help to uncover and underline some insights into the power of technology and the impact of communications technology, and hence create a basis for what follows.

---

[1]No date supplied. Interview by Andrew Joscelyne available at:
http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdebray1.htm (Accessed 13 March 2008).

3.2 Harold Adams Innis[2]

Harold Adams Innis, a political economist by training, extends the principles of economic monopolies to the study of information monopolies. He suggests 'that Western civilization has been profoundly influenced by communication and that marked changes in communications have had important implications' (Innis 1951: 3).

In his book *Empire and Communications* Innis argues that a shift in a single sensory component leads to a massive social shift with the introduction of technology. Innis says that the environments that are created by technological development are both a service and disservice to us that make sometimes weighty demands on our awareness and understanding. He looks at the development of economics and governance from the ancient world to the twentieth century in relation to the mode of communication and how a particular mode of communication brought about significant shifts economically and in government. He says:

> Monopolies of knowledge had developed and declined partly in relation to the medium of communication on which they were built and tended to alternate as they emphasised religion, decentralisation, and time, and force, centralisation and space (1972: 166).

Innis argues that different media have different potentialities for control and each has a built-in bias. The media adopted by a particular culture will shape the character of knowledge transmitted by that culture, not only in the original sending, but also in our eventual reception. A medium which requires a very special encoding or decoding skill is more likely to be exploited by an elite class which has the time and resources to access it. On the other hand, a medium that is very accessible to the common person tends to democratise a culture. In the case of the internet we can say that it does indeed

---

[2] Harold Adams Innis was born near Hamilton, Ontario in Canada in 1894. He studied political economy at the University of Chicago after the First World War and did his PhD on the Canadian Pacific Railway. His first book was about the early fur traders in Canada. From the end of the Second World War until his death in 1952 Innis studied the social history of communications, covering some 4000 years. From the thousand page manuscript he left behind when he died came his two pioneering works on communication: *Empire and Communications* and *The Bias of Communication*.

democratise a culture as it is generally very accessible. Internet cafes proliferate and hence make this medium extremely easy to access for reasonably small cost.[3]

Media, for Innis, bring about social change. He argues that a medium carries built into it a bias in the organisation and control of information and the way it is presented. He is of the view that technological development divides knowledge so that it is hopeless to expect a common point of view (:190). He sees control by the communications media (through things like the dividing up of knowledge) as a means through which social and political power is wielded and advanced. He suggests that in each of the major periods in human history communications have played a vital role in building up and breaking down old monopolies.

New media can break old monopolies. The medieval Church's monopoly over religious information was broken, for example, by the invention of the printing press. The printing press by-passed the Church and made the Bible and other religious writings widely available. The same contents in the Bible had different effects in different media and were used by the managers of these media to create a desired effect.

Innis also claims that the very medium of communication carries a bias either towards lasting a long time or travelling easily across great distances. Time and space are important for Innis and he, at great length, analyses the impact of both on culture and society and how communications media further aid these two concepts.[4]

---

[3] Martin Connell writing in *America*, April 5, 2004, pp 22-27 'Words without Flesh' reflects on the proliferation of computers in Argentina. He says that computers are everywhere and there is a *locutorio* on every street corner in Buenos Aires. He says that people cannot afford to buy personal computers but using them in internet cafes is cheap and a way in which the internet is made accessible to all – costing only 1.5 pesos an hour. Connell goes on to argue that computers and the internet are reviving a very old heresy – Gnosticism – a new denial of the importance of embodiment and physical inter-personal relationships. In South Africa we have not, as yet, seen the rise of internet cafes on a scale as large as this although they seem to be growing. Another interesting difference is that the cost of internet usage in internet cafes in South Africa is certainly much more still than that mentioned above. For a brief analysis of internet usage in South Africa see Chapter 5: 5.4 The Internet in South Africa.
[4] Innis gives an interesting analysis of both of these in his work *Bias of Communication.*

An empire or society, he argues, is generally concerned with duration within time or extension within space. Time-biased media, such as stone and clay, are durable and heavy. These are somewhat difficult to move and hence do not encourage territorial expansion. They do have a long life and therefore they do encourage the extension of empire over time and bring a sense of stability. Time-biased media aid in the development of social hierarchies (as was found in ancient Egypt where kings were mummified and therefore 'lived' for eternity through their mummification [:66]). Speech is a time-biased medium because it requires the relative stability of community for face-to-face contact. Knowledge passed down orally depends on a number of factors: lineage, transmission and ancestors, and has to be ratified by human contact. Innis writes of his own bias towards the oral tradition. He sees it as inherently more flexible and humanistic than the written tradition which, in contrast, he found more rigid and impersonal (1951: 190). Space-biased media are light and portable and can be transported over large distances. They are associated with secular and territorial societies and they facilitate the expansion of empire over space. Innis argues that the bias of a culture's dominant medium affects the degree of the culture's stability and conservatism as well as the culture's ability to take over and govern large amounts of territory. He cites as an example stone carvings which are, after all, difficult to revise and to move. In contrast, writings on papyrus enabled the Romans to maintain a large empire with centralised government that delegated authority to distant provinces. But papyrus also led to more social change and greater instability as knowledge was used over greater areas. Paper is such a medium - it is readily transported - but has a relatively short lifespan. This means that the message will travel fast but may not live as long as, for example, writing on clay. It does, however, allow for rapid expansion.

It is important to note how Empires use the media at their disposal with their built-in bias; if they do so effectively others come to know of their power and achievements. Innis argues that these biases influenced the rise and fall of empires from the Egyptians, Sumerians and Babylonians, to the twentieth century North American and European empires. He believed that stable societies were able to achieve a proper balance between time and space-biased communications media (:64).

Innis argued that change came from the margins of society, because people on the margins invariably developed their own media in reaction to the centre.[5] The new media allowed those on the periphery to develop and consolidate power, and ultimately to challenge the authority of the centre. Sudden extensions in communication, he argues, 'are reflected in cultural disturbances' (1951: 31). Latin written on parchment, the medium of the Christian Church, was attacked through the secular medium of vernaculars written on paper (:128).

Innis also outlines the importance of new media in the Second World War. These were used by armed forces during the war for propaganda purposes at home and against enemies. He says:

> In Germany moving pictures of battles were taken and shown in theatres almost immediately afterwards. The German people were given an impression of realism which compelled them to believe in the superiority of German arms; realism became not only most convincing but also with the collapse of the German front most disastrous. In some sense the problem of the German people is the problem of Western civilisation. As modern developments in communications have made for greater realism they have made for greater possibilities of delusion (1951: 82).

An analysis of the beginning of Gulf War II in 2003 might reveal the same possibilities of delusion which Innis refers to in our own times and context. The so-called 'war on terrorism' advocated by the President of the United States, George W. Bush, was swept

---

[5] The internet can be a way that people on the margins can communicate and spread the content they wish to communicate at rather low cost yet with great speed. The recent riots on the outskirts of Paris seem to have been engineered and coordinated on the internet. Another example is the recent peaceful pro-democracy marches in Burma in September 2007, during which the military opened fire on protesting monks. Images and news of such events are now transmitted around the world with the help of cellular telephones (which have cameras) and the internet. Unlike in 1988, when similar protests took place and the government reportedly killed more than 3000 protestors, news can now be transmitted (despite the government clamp-down on information) and others in the world informed and mobilized so that action can be taken for a peaceful democratic solution for the people of Burma. Hence we see examples of how people on the periphery can use the internet to mobilize others and co-ordinate action. See also the book by James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. (Yale University Press, 1990) regarding the "hidden transcripts" of subjugated minorities.

up in a media frenzy. Newspapers, radio, television news crews and the internet carried a huge volume of opinion and coverage as the events unfolded, and public opinion was shaped by these media. The media, for the most part, portrayed it as an act of justice and pulling a tyrant from power, although there were also minority voices who opposed the war.

Whatever the opinion on the nature of Saddam Hussein, it seems clear in retrospect that it was not just justice which drove Mr. Bush and his allies. However, at that time, the mass media tried to make the world believe that it was in the interest of world peace that drove Bush's decision to go to war. This is a somewhat slanted, if not deluded, state of reality. Justice and peace, making the world a safer place or saving the Iraqi people from the violence of Saddam Hussein were not the driving factors, and none of the above have actually been the outcomes other than the actual fall, capture and execution of Saddam Hussein. Iraq still remains a very unstable and troubled country a number of years after the mission of the American government and its allies. What we see is not always what we get.

Innis sees a dialectical relationship between society and technology – they mutually influence one another. He suggests that certain social forms and situations encourage the development of new kinds of media. These in turn react on society and cause change to take place. Innis is not a technological determinist and does not seem to say that technology drives social change (a point which might be easily argued in Borgmann's view below), but does think that considerable power is invested in communications technologies and therefore in monopolies of knowledge (which they create), which in turn shape culture. He says:

> ...it becomes extremely important to any civilisation, if it is not to succumb to the influence of this monopoly of knowledge, to make some critical survey and report. The conditions of freedom of thought are in danger of being destroyed by science, technology, and the mechanisation of knowledge, and with them, Western civilisation (:190).

3.3 Marshall McLuhan[6]

Marshall McLuhan is probably one of the most well-known scholars in the area of mass media and its impact on individuals and society. He is a 'medium theorist' who spent his life trying to understand the effects of technology as it related to popular culture, and how this in turn affected human beings and their relations with one another in communities. He believed that media do not only convey messages from one context to another, but rather create a context within themselves. McLuhan suggests that we tend to focus on the obvious and therefore miss the structural changes in our affairs which happen rather subtly over periods of time. He says that it is often in hindsight that we come to know and see some of the effects of the innovation or invention which were not obvious at the outset. McLuhan wants us to look beyond the obvious and seek the non-obvious changes or effects that are enabled, enhanced, accelerated or extended by the new invention or innovation. He says: 'it is only too typical that the "content" of any medium binds us to the character of the medium' (1964: 9) His dictum 'the medium is the message' (a derivative from his actual quote, which was "the medium is the massage") tells us that noticing change in our societal or cultural ground conditions indicates the presence of a new message, that is, the effects of the new medium. McLuhan was of the opinion 'that content grabs our attention to the detriment of our own understanding and even perception of the medium and all else around it' (Levinson 2001: 36).

McLuhan warned that 'we become what we behold' and therefore, according to Kappelman[7] we 'should reflect on the consuming desire of many average teenagers to be like Michael Jordan, Madonna or Britney Spears: a desire that has resulted in a culture of plastic surgery and drive-by shootings to obtain tennis shoes.'

---

[6] Marshall McLuhan was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1911. He did his PhD work in literature at Cambridge University in 1943 and became famous in the 1960's and '70's for his studies on the effects of mass media on thought and social behaviour. He was the director of the Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto. He died in 1980.

[7] No date is supplied. Article by Todd Kappelman available at:
http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/mcluhan.html (Accessed 5 January 2008).

McLuhan was concerned about how human beings extend themselves and wrote about this in *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*. An 'extension' occurs when an individual or society makes or uses something in a way that extends the range of the human body and mind in a fashion that is new. McLuhan says (:99) '...all technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems to increase power and speed'. This in turn brings about social change. For example, a car is an extension of the feet. It allows travel, like feet, but in a different way. McLuhan warns against such thinking, i.e. the assumption we make that a new medium is merely an extension or amplification of an older one. This causes us to underestimate the power of the new medium (perhaps in our context, the internet).

What McLuhan is trying to point out is that with every extension an amputation may occur. McLuhan wonders whether we are aware of the amputations, some of which could be dangerous yet go unnoticed. The extension is obvious, but what about the amputation, and what is the long lasting effect of the amputation? In the case of a motor car the amputation, one could say, is the fact the people are now unfit, there is little contact with the natural surroundings when one drives a car and cars also emit dangerous gases which have damaging effects on the environment and human beings. McLuhan was concerned with the subtle structural changes a new medium brings over a period of time which we may not have noticed in the beginning and yet ones which shape our world view and behaviour. Sometimes we look back, over a period of time, and notice some effects which we were unaware of from the outset.

McLuhan also distinguished between 'a hot medium' and 'a cool medium'. A hot medium is one in which one extends one single sense in a 'high definition' way. 'High definition' is a 'state of being well filled with data' (1964: 31). Hot media do not leave much to be filled in or completed by the listener; cool media indicates that little is given and much has to be filled in by the listener. He gives the example of a photograph as a hot medium – it is visually high definition. A telephone, on the other hand, is a cool medium of low definition in which much has to be filled in by the listener (:31).

McLuhan was also concerned with what he termed 'discarnate man' - which concerns itself with being everywhere at once. 'The human being on the air, on the phone (and now online) "has a very weak awareness of private identity," … "and has been relieved of all commitments to law and morals" ' (Levinson 2001: 57).

McLuhan saw the loss of personal identity and urban violence as a result of the amoral media state. He suggested that 'all the fantasy and violence of TV is a reminder that the violence of the real world is motivated by people questioning their lost identity' (:57). Levinson points out that what McLuhan said regarding television and identity really finds fulfilment in the online digital world '- where personal identity can indeed be easily jettisoned, albeit with no necessary increase in violence' (:58). Levinson, quoting Carpenter, says that 'electricity has made angels of us all' but goes on to qualify that this is 'not angels in the Sunday school sense'. Rather, this is 'spirit freed from flesh, capable of instant transportation anywhere' (:57). Besides violence, the internet does have the capability of doing just that: dissolving personal identity but also allowing people to build a fantasy identity (a good example of this might be a fantasy identity in chat rooms, on-line dating sites, Second Life avatars, etc.) which, in contemporary culture, is often constructed from fashions and images portrayed by the advertising giants who use the media in a powerful way to achieve their ends. Constructing yourself as 'kewl', and doing so in the image that is acceptable to society based on what the advertisers and so called 'celebrities' project, is enabled in a multi-media environment and enhanced by the ability to get whatever you want whenever you want online.

Albert Borgmann (whose works, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life. A Philosophical Inquiry* and *Holding On to Reality: The Nature of Information at the turn of the Millennium,* I look at in more detail below) suggests that what is more worrying is when people enter cyberspace and reduce themselves to the shallow, disjointed and cliché-ridden persona that can be mimicked by information technology and then become co-conspirators of their confusions about who is who. The digital world certainly does bring the ability to project and maintain a false identity which, although not immediately

obvious, must have an impact on the society which it subtly creates, one in which - we could argue - mistrust, violence, disjointedness and confusion would all be present.

McLuhan also noted that we look at the present through what he called a 'rear-view mirror' (Levinson 2001: 171). By this he means that older media become the content for newer media. Levinson explains:

> The telephone was first called the talking telegraph; the automobile the horseless carriage; the radio the wireless. In each of these cases the proximate effect of the rear-view mirror was to obscure some of the most important revolutionary functions of the new medium. Thus, although the telephone of course indeed talked, it was situated inside the home, a privatisation and personalisation of the telegraph that transformed family and business - not even hinted at in the label "talking," which can occur just as easily outside as inside the home. Although the automobile was horseless, this negative appellation said nothing specific about the combustible engine that would go on to make oil among the most precious and contested commodities in the twentieth century. Nor did the name "wireless" - although radio indeed had none - suggest in the slightest the simultaneous mass audience which radio would bring into being. … Thus, McLuhan's notion of old media becoming content for newer media, and therein becoming more visible to the point of being mistaken for the newer media, is but a rendition of the rear-view mirror, and its redirection of our gaze ahead to the just-passed (:174).

Levinson goes on to critique McLuhan's view and explain why it is difficult to see every new medium in the rear-view mirror of old media. He says that this closes our eyes to the ways in which new media are not like old media and do bring and start something new.

McLuhan developed a scientific basis for his thought around what he termed the *tetrad*. This allowed him to apply four laws to a wide spectrum of human work and thereby give us a tool for looking at our culture. Briefly, these are: first; what does it (the medium of

technology) extend? Second; what does it make obsolete? Third; what is retrieved? Fourth; what does the technology revert into if it is over-extended?

Levinson offers a clear example of how one may use this framework developed by McLuhan. Reflecting on radio, he says that radio extends the human voice and makes print as the primary means of mass media obsolete. It retrieves or recovers the town crier who made important announcements before print came into being and it, when extended to its limits, reverts into audio-visual television. Hence, Levinson says, the process ends but we see the next medium, television in this example, shifting into place. This process begins again, and when television is extended to its limits, we have the screen of the computer taking over (:189-90).

McLuhan offers some useful insights into communications media and also points to a number of other effects a change in media can have on society. He was concerned with not only what the new media may bring about but also what was/is lost in the shift from one dominant medium to another and how this subtly engineers social change and society.

3.4 Neil Postman[8]

Postman is concerned with how public discourse has become rather trivial and empty as technology has become more and more sophisticated. He critiques the culture of technology that has been created and the discourse that flows from this culture. Postman says that discourse was, during the time of the printing press, generally coherent, serious and rational and notes how, under the influence of television, it has become shrivelled and absurd (1985: 16). He points to the fact that his concern is not the aesthetics of literary criticism, but rather he prefers to focus on epistemology. He notes that we

---

[8] Neil Postman (1931-2003) was a communications theorist and head of the Department of Communications Arts and Sciences at New York University. He was a prolific and influential social critic and educator best known for his warning that an era of mass communications is stunting the minds of children — as well as adults. He was concerned with the impact of technology on culture and wrote a number of highly regarded and thought provoking books on this subject.

examine a culture not by 'its output of undisguised trivialities but by what it claims as significant' (:16). He is especially concerned with the power of machines, the technological world, over human beings. He examines the transformation of society from one that uses machines to one which is controlled by machines. He analyzes the effect this has on various areas of society – medical practice, politics and education.

Postman claims that we have moved from a 'technocracy' to a 'technopoly'. He describes a 'technocracy' as 'a society only loosely controlled by social custom and religious tradition and driven by an impulse to invent' (1993: 41). For Postman, a technopoly is a 'totalitarian technocracy' (:48). Postman says that in a technopoly religion, art, family, politics, history, truth, privacy and intelligence are all redefined by technology which eliminates all alternatives to itself (:48). He says that to every old world belief, habit or custom technology offers an alternative, and no reason to look for other alternative sources of fulfilment or creative purpose. He suggests, I believe, that we become addicted to technology and all that it offers while not even believing there can be an alternative:

> To prayer, the alternative is penicillin; to family roots, the alternative is mobility;
> to reading, the alternative is television; to restraint, the alternative is gratification;
> to sin, the alternative is psychotherapy; to political ideology, the alternative is
> popular appeal established through scientific polling. There is even an alternative
> to the painful riddle of death, as Freud called it. The riddle may be postponed
> through a longer life, and then perhaps solved altogether by cryogenics. At least,
> no one can easily think of a reason why not (:54).

Postman is concerned with the fact that our society, and our very understanding of what it means to be human, is being eroded before us by technopoly and we have not yet noticed this. He says that we live in a time when we have too much information, one in which we are unable to discern what is good for us and what is irrelevant and bad for us. He says that technopoly is a form of cultural AIDS – Anti-Information-Deficiency-Syndrome - and goes on to say:

… in a Technopoly there can be no transcendent fear of purpose or meaning, no cultural coherence. Information is dangerous when it has no place to go, when there is no theory to which it applies, no pattern in which it fits, when there is no higher purpose that it serves… Information without regulation can be lethal (:63).

Postman is concerned about the amount of information that is being made available in many different media with no limits. In his work *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994) he explores how 'childhood' is being lost by the onslaught of information available from many different media. The divisions and intimation processes that made society, more or less, able to distinguish between childhood and adulthood have been eroded by the mass media. He says that the adult secrets of sex and violence have become popular entertainment and have therefore succeeded in making these widely available to ten year olds. Postman believes that we have mistakenly thought that more information is best, information is crucial to everything and without information we are somehow impoverished. This may have been true, but he argues that with the advent of the technological mass media we have the opposite problem: we have too much information which has/is making all information irrelevant - we have lost our ability to judge between the important, the less important and the trivial, and hence all information now has become irrelevant.

Postman says that our defences against information have been broken down. Most societies have institutions and techniques which have, as their task, maintaining 'a balance between the old and the new, novelty and tradition, between meaning and conceptual disorder, and they do so by "destroying" unwanted information' (1993: 73). He says that social institutions do their work by sometimes just not allowing people access to information, and are concerned with the meaning of information. He uses the example of the court of law which could restrict and/or request certain information during a trial, and in doing this acts as a defence regulating the information which is circulated or not (perhaps we could add to this an institution like the family which, through the parents, also controls the information which enters the home). We cannot deny that the internet has brought a huge amount of information into the heart of the family, for

example. The internet, unlike television for example, does give a much wider scope and is less easily controllable than access to television. It is also generally accepted, for example, that public broadcasters (like the SABC in South Africa) exercise some discretion over the content they make available and at what times of the day certain content may be shown or not[9]. There are no such control mechanisms on the internet. Even the search engine filters can be overcome, and there are numerous search engines available, so that restrictions on one may not apply to another. Search engines are all dependent on the ingenuity of the user – child or adult - and it is up to the user to enable or disable restrictive features on search engines. Information, for Postman, has lost 'its use and therefore becomes a source of confusion rather than coherence' (1993: 73).

Postman is highly critical of our information age; he says:

> Information has become a source of garbage, not only incapable of answering the most fundamental questions but barely useful in providing coherent direction to the solution of mundane problems (:69).

He examines other potentially damaging effects a technopoly brings about. He says that technopolies experts tend to be ignorant of anything outside or unrelated to their specific field of expertise, and that these experts now also claim expertise not only in technological matters but over social, psychological and moral affairs. He says that we have experts in technology who now tell us how to raise children, how to influence people and how to make money, all based on some underlying technological basis. Hence we call in, and worse, always believe the experts who in turn rely more and more on some technological foundation, and not on their own knowledge and experience, which is sometimes to the detriment of individuals and society.[10] He points to the fact that more and more we subordinate the claims of our nature, our biology, our emotions and our

---

[9] This is open for debate but is the general expectation and bodies like the 'Broadcasting Complaints Commission' are assumed set some standard of control and hold broadcasters to this standard.

[10] In his book, *Technopoly. The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) Postman offers a very critical account of the direction medical technology in the USA has been moving. He offers some alarming statistics and examples. To totally trust the 'experts' might be a mistake because more and more the experts themselves are being controlled not by their own knowledge or gut feeling, but rather by the technology they surround themselves with and use.

47

spirituality to the sovereignty of computers. He says that computers now claim sovereignty over a whole range of human experience, and supports this claim by showing that computers can think better than human beings can (:111).

Postman goes further to say that there is an invisible and subtle shaping which takes place in and through technology. He cites the use of statistics as an example of this and also alludes to how this shapes public opinion (:134). He says that questions are asked and a yes or no answer is given, but the questions remain unexamined. Opinion, he notes, is not merely a momentary thing, but a process of thinking, and therefore the technological yes or no is not, necessarily, an accurate perception of what people are really thinking or feeling about something. Opinion is not something that can be located in people but rather is formed and shaped through thought. To think of opinion as a measurable thing, he suggests, is to falsify what opinion really is. Postman says that 'when statistics and computers are joined together, volumes of garbage are generated in public discourse' (:137).

Tradition too, Postman says, is an obstacle to technopoly, because it is an acknowledgement of the authority of symbols and makes relevant the narratives that give birth to them. The story of creation, in Genesis, is an example of such a traditional narrative. When symbols are eroded narrative is lost and this, for Postman, is as a consequence of technology. He says that cultures must have narratives, but technopoly overwhelms and negates these more meaningful stories and replaces them with another which has its:

> ...emphasis on progress without limits, rights without responsibilities, and technology without cost. The Technopoly story is without a moral center. It puts in its place efficiency, interest, and economic advance. It promises heaven on earth through the conveniences of sciences and technological progress. It casts aside all traditional narratives and symbols that suggest stability and orderliness, and tells, instead, of a life of skills, technical expertise, and the ecstasy of consumption (:179).

Postman describes himself as a 'loving resistance fighter'[11] and proposes ways in which people can counter technopoly. He emphasises the need for a good all-round education, not as many schools would have it today, but one that studies all subjects from a historical perspective. This he describes as a curriculum that goes 'back to the basics' (:199). He puts strong emphasis, in such a curriculum, on history and the classical arts and artistic expression and believes that this will help individuals to 'begin and sustain a serious conversation that will allow us to distance ourselves from that thought-world, [the technopolic thought-world] and then criticise and modify it' (:199).

3.5 Albert Borgmann[12]

Borgmann believes that our technology has led to a radical re-orientation of our lives. Borgmann (1984: 41) makes a distinction between 'things' (which have a *focus*) and 'devices'. He looks at the role of the fire-place or wood-burning oven in a pre-modern home as an illustration of this distinction. The family gathers around this source of heat to keep warm but also for discussion and entertainment. The fire itself must be tended regularly and to do so some skill is needed: knowing which wood burns best for the longest time and how properly to stoke the fire. These skills bring one in touch with the larger world of nature as one would have to go out and chop the wood with a few other people. Skill is passed on from one generation to the next, and because it is the sole source of heat and needed for cooking in the house, the fire-place creates the rhythm of life in the home. The need for regular maintenance determines what the family does: meal times, gathering together and the duties of each member. The fire-place, says Borgmann, is a 'focal thing'. A focal thing is found within a specific context and cannot be separated from that context. By producing one desired good, heat, it is done within a complex world of 'manifold engagement' – there are relationships with others and the wider world. The fire-place produces one desired good but it also offers subtler goods derived from the way it gathers the household and demands engagement with others and

---

[11] The last chapter in his book *Technopoly* is entitled 'The Loving Resistance Fighter' and contains his ideas on how technopoly can be, at least, critically analyzed (1993:181).
[12] Albert Borgmann is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Montana. He has written extensively on the relationship between technology, human life, Christianity and culture.

49

the wider world (like, for example, going out with others in the neighbourhood to chop wood; this not only brings you into contact with others but also into contact with nature).

A device, he says, like central heating 'procures mere warmth and disburdens us of all other elements' (:42). The machinery of a device makes no demand on our skill, strength or attention and it is less demanding by not making its presence felt. He says: 'In the progress of technology, the machinery of a device has therefore a tendency to become concealed or shrink' (:42). For Borgmann, devices become commodities and are important because of 'what a device is there for'. The emphasis lies on the 'commodious' way in which devices make goods and services available. 'The concealment of the machinery and the disburdening character of the device go hand in hand' (:44). What Borgmann is trying to say is that devices influence the way we experience our world and we may not even be aware of the fact that they are doing so and shaping our actions and lives. Richard Gaillardetz[13] offers an example of what devices do referring to the computer and internet:

> Computers and Internet search engines offer information but without the engagement with the larger world of persons and books demanded by the use of a library or bookstore. The sound entertainment system offers music without the musicians and instruments; the exercise treadmill offers us fitness without interaction with the larger world or the cultivation of any discernible skills (2000: 23).

Borgmann applies his 'thing/device' distinction to birth, marriage, death and meals. Food as another example, and one we are all familiar with in an era of 'ready-made-meals', helps us better understand his distinction. The preparation of food in a household can also be a 'thing'. To prepare a meal one has to leave the home to get the necessary raw materials at the market. This brings one into contact with others who have skills in the production of vegetables or meat. They can distinguish between different kinds of meat

---

[13] I am grateful to Richard Gaillardetz who, in his book, *Transforming our Days* (New York: Crossroad, 2000) first introduced me to the work of Albert Borgmann. Gaillardetz also offers a concise and very readable account of Borgmann's thought and his book is a good commentary on Christian life and technology.

and could probably tell how fresh the meat is by texture, colour and smell. It then brings different members of the family together in the kitchen in a social environment to prepare the meal, each having his/her own function in the production of the family meal. Once the meal is prepared its consumption takes place in a social and leisurely fashion in the gathered family setting (1984: 204-5).

A 'microwave meal', on the other hand, requires no engagement, no skill, few burdens, little time for preparation and by its very nature (i.e. the speed and convenience of preparation) does not facilitate leisurely social consumption. Food is so available and preparation so easy that eating is now squeezed around other activities:

> ... the gathering of the meal is shattered and disintegrates into snacks, TV dinners, bites that are grabbed to be eaten; and eating itself is scattered around televisions shows, late and early meetings, activities, overtime work, and other business. This is increasingly the normal condition of technological eating (1984: 204).

'What devices rob us of, Borgmann contends, are "focal practices" that are called for by these focal things' (Gaillardetz 2000: 23). Focal practices are routine ways in which we encounter and interact with our world in daily life. The family that prepares a meal or sits at the table together interacts and in doing so builds up meaningful relationships as they share their differing daily experiences. They communicate with each other. Focal 'things', like meals together, require some focal practices - like preparing the meal or engaging in conversation during the meal. Technology can enhance or reduce some key elements of what it means to be human and this in turn has an effect on the culture of a society.

Technology, Borgmann says, also promises us happiness and a rise in the standard of living – 'The promise of technology was really one of happiness though that was not always explicit' (1984:130). He says that because of the 'devices' we have, we have 'progressively divided and decomposed the fabric of our lives' (:124). He says that this is evident when we notice how the promise of technology has stripped the household of

51

substance and dignity and the resulting emptiness is filled with the consumption of commodities, especially the commodities of technology – 'devices'.

> One finds that during the twenty-five years after the Second World War, while the standard of living more than doubled, professed happiness declined rather steadily and significantly, and one finds that people in the technologically advanced countries are no happier than those in less-developed ones. This shows clearly that in technological societies happiness is not simply thought to be a higher consumption (:130).

Technology, Borgmann seems to be saying, creates in human beings the desire to have more or get more 'devices' which promise a higher standard of living and a higher sense of fulfilment and happiness. This is the trap; they do offer some satisfaction, but this satisfaction soon wanes and the desire for more increases again and hence another device (commodity) is hunted down. Nothing is of infinite value; everything has become a commodity which is to be used and disposed of as the subject feels and is moved. Technology has created an environment where, especially for the capitalist mindset, this has become the norm, a way of life. Many important dimensions of the human person seem to be slowly eroded and lost (and perhaps this goes largely unnoticed). The values of skill, initiative, responsibility and communication – to name a few – are eroded as more devices are produced that promise more happiness and fulfilment.

3.5.1 Religion and the Media

If an uncritical approach to technology is driving these subtle changes in people and society, religion and religious practice also become victims of the blind persuasive power of technology. There has been a tendency in Christianity to look down on the world of technology and not to take things like the mass media seriously. Robert White (1989: 582) describes Catholic culture as having a 'profound ambivalence' regarding the popular mass media. Catholics recognise that the media are extremely influential and yet there is also a tendency to 'dismiss the media as, at best, trivial or, more often as corrupting'. If this is the attitude that prevails then, it seems to me, religion will become a device or

commodity and people will dispose of it when they no longer need it. Christian faith and practice promise happiness, as do commodities, and so if technological devices can be dispensed of when they no longer are useful so too will Christian faith and practice. If this is the prevailing attitude, what could possibly make this different?

Demonising technology or attempting to reverse the times or retreating into a 'religious ghetto' mentality seems futile. Borgmann (1984: 220) says that trying to dismantle technology or the technological universe cannot be done. He advocates a restriction of the thing/device paradigm. He says that we need to restrain the paradigm, which is to 'restrict it to its proper sphere' (:220). Therefore technology reformed like this will no longer be the 'dominant way we take up with reality; rather it is a way of proceeding that we follow at certain times and up to a point, one that is left behind when we reach the threshold of our focal and final concerns' (:220). Borgmann advocates a conscious reflection on our lives and for us to identify and then cultivate important focal practices – those things and situations which bring meaning to our lives and relationships and offer us some depth in living our lives. By focusing on these focal practices, he suggests, the thing/device paradigm will be restrained. This will, of course, mean that we will need to reflect, discern and act on our reflections and discernment by making a conscious effort to cultivate focal practices. However, Borgmann suggests, doing this will not only restrain the blind and subtle shifts that technology brings about but will also enrich our lives. He says:

> Thus the role of technology remains invisible and unchallenged. The present proposal is to restrict the entire paradigm, both the machinery and the commodities, to the status of a means and let focal things and practices be our ends… Hence a radical reform, as said above, requires the recognition and the restraint of the device paradigm, a recognition that is guided by a focal concern (:220-221).

I intend to offer the communicative method and style of Ignatius Loyola as a means of re-focusing our lives and recovering the focal practices that have been lost, but also of helping us approach technology in a new way. I believe that the thing/device paradigm

can be restricted by an appropriate use of the theology of Ignatius Loyola, primarily in his *Spiritual Exercises.*

3.6 Paul Soukop[14]

Soukup (2003: 104) says that the method of communication plays a role along with the content of any communication. He goes on to say that the structure of communication has influenced how the Church does its thinking. Communication patterns help to shape what people know, or at least how people express and think about what they know (:105). Soukop argues 'that the form of theology influences the subject matter of theology' (1996: 55).

If communications form affects the way society thinks then it seems clear that theology will be affected. Soukop (2003: 108-109) points out that theology has been affected by the gradual shift from orality to literacy. In New Testament times proclamation was important and the collection of this proclamation in written form soon followed. The theology of the early Church was in part oral and in part written – St. Augustine delivered sermons but also wrote books which resembled these sermons or speeches. Thomas Aquinas uses text much more in an oral manner – questions and answers - but theology after this slowly becomes much more analytic and abstract. Books reach a wider audience but statements and doctrine start to take the form of not easily memorable formulae which are reasoned and lengthy and require a written text. Theology, therefore, moved from proclamation in a large assembly to the quiet, private reading and study of books.

Soukop says that another shift has taken place in communications structures which can be described in several ways (:109). First, written scripts have become orally performed

---

[14] Paul Soukop is a theologian working as Associate-Professor in the Department of Communications at the University of Santa Clara in California. He has written extensively on the role of the communications media (form) and how this sets the agenda for the direction and shift in doing and understanding theology today.

in things like film and television (referred to as 'secondary oral cultures'[15]) and hence there is a development, i.e. film, but also reverting back to an older style – that of orality. Second, there is a mixture of oral and written cultures. The second orality of the television and film culture mixes with the primary orality of an oral culture, but lacks the full characteristics of the primary oral culture; for example memory was important in the primary but is not as important in the secondary. Third, he says that secondary orality makes use of images along the lines of a literate model – they are, unlike the primary oral cultures, shown in a certain sequence which is guided by the flow of text. Hence, the concerns and methods of theology will change with the change in communicative structures. This does not deny the importance of the content of the Church's tradition, but it does tell us how the Church thinks and is thinking within the broader context of society. He says that the form of theology can be its danger, especially for those who do not know or understand the form (1996: 65). He then gives a short analysis, by way of example, of what the impact might be and what this could mean for theology and pastoral ministry today (:65-66).

He highlights the fact that contemporary communications forms have moved away from logic and analysis and that symbol, emotion and perspective have become more important. Theology, however, is still taught very much in the form of logic and analysis and therefore can be alienated from people's lives, because the form in which it is presented does not resonate with their daily life experience, and people struggle to integrate and understand how God is working in their daily lives and not merely just in abstract formulas and dogmas. This is not to say, he suggests, that our theological heritage is obsolete, but that serious reflection is needed so that we can come to an appreciation of the tradition and therefore be able to translate the tradition into new forms that can be understood better. He also says that we can expect theological content and method to change as communicative forms change. This can lead to a deepening of theological thought and a more effective theology in culture; he cites the power with which liberation theology transformed the lives of many people 'on the ground' because

---

[15] Soukop borrows this term and uses it to describe the emergence of television and film from Walter Ong, *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word.* (London, New York: Methuen, 1982).

they were able to make the connection between theological content and their daily life experience.

Soukop sees a number of directions theology needs to take in light of the development of theological form. He suggests that theology ought to recover its sensitivity to the analogical character of language. Theology has become more like linear scientific thought and by coming more analogical in character it takes advantage of our contemporary sensitivity to symbols. He says that scripture is a good starting point for this as it allows for 'multiple senses' i.e. an analytic and analogical reflection (:65). This is particularly interesting, and as I will try and show later, Ignatius of Loyola very much wants retreatants doing the *Spiritual Exercises* to use their imaginations and imagery in their treatment of the scriptures, in the light of their own life experiences.

Soukop also suggests that contemporary liturgy must be integrated with a congregation that has, due to the mode of communicative form in society, become an audience rather than a community which participates. Liturgists have, he admits, tried to bring in more action in the form of symbols, dance, music and drama, but we have to move beyond this into a form which will communicate with people today.

Christology can 'exploit Christ as the symbol of the new humanity in its teaching and proclamation' (:66). This is not to say that the Church's theological efforts and reflection should cease, but that the symbol of who and what Christ is can be used more effectively in a time and communications form that places high emphasis on the symbolic. He argues that the same can be said for the Church's Trinitarian theology. Rooted in the theology of the Trinity we already have the basis for communication as a relationship. He suggests that we use this analogy further, integrating the new knowledge we have about communication today.

In the ecclesiological realm the Church ought to include more specific considerations of dialogue as a communicative style which exhibits the current trend in communicative form. Multi-directional and participatory communication is the communicative form of

our times. This, he says, will also require a reflection on leadership and leadership roles based on communication.[16] In an internet world the leaders are those who create and manage the networks, a power shift takes place and hence creates many questions about power and leadership which the Church will be forced to examine.

Theology has also come to an appreciation of the fact that it needs to be embedded in a culture for it to be effective. The addition of communication as part of culture, he argues, adds another dimension to this understanding. He suggests that theology will benefit from reflecting on meditative forms of communication, as the very purpose of theology is to prepare and facilitate the proclamation of the Gospel. Soukop (:66) suggests that our theological treasures should be re-thought in the light of new communicative forms and says that we, like the householder, must bring out of the storeroom things both old and new (Matt 13:52).

Soukop, commenting on the work of Mark Edwards Jnr,[17] draws four parallel conclusions (based on the consequences of the publications of Luther) which we can see happening in our day through electronic media (2003: 120):

First, through the printing press religious disputes were like a propaganda war depending more on the popularity and skill of the communicator than on the theological principles. He says that in our day religious reflection takes place in the context of entertainment and news programming. He says that these have more appeal to people than dry documents

---

[16] In connection with leadership and authority issues, Richard Gaillardetz says that a common complaint of the Catholic right is that Catholic theologians see themselves as 'competing with' the college of bishops. Hence dissenting theologians are perceived as a 'threat'. This is a widely shared and repeated position within Church circles. He says that this is a gross exaggeration. He goes on, however, to explain why he thinks a far greater threat and competition to the magisterium of the Church is, what he calls, an 'e-magisterium'. He says that there is a huge proliferation of self-proclaimed 'Catholic' websites that often dispense, in the name of orthodoxy, highly questionable theological material. He uses the example of Sri-Lankan theologian Tissa Balasuriya who was accused of confusing the faithful, put under investigation and eventually excommunicated (and later readmitted to the Church!). Balasuyria is reported to only have sold about 750 copies of the work that was judged unorthodox when he was put under investigation. Many so-called orthodox and dangerously misleading 'Catholic' websites receive, probably, more 'hits' in a single day! The New E-Magesterium, *America*, May 6, 2000. Vol. 182 No. 16.

[17] *Printing, propaganda, and Martin Luther.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

and theological statements of belief and equally dry and boring homiletic reflections on the scriptures.

A second parallel he draws on is the separation of texts from a discourse community which allowed people to communicate without having the shared meanings and understandings. Today this becomes even more the case because people have no sense of place online. Soukop says 'The instant and indiscriminate communication media work against any kind of socialization into a community and make theological reflection all the harder' (:120).

A third parallel is that the printing press had both indirect and direct impact on people. Citing Edwards, he says that much of the communication of Luther's ideas came to people through what later researchers called 'the two-step flow of communication' – from the media to a leader and eventually to the people. Soukop says that today's media repeatedly demonstrate this process. He gives the example of Oprah Winfrey's daily talk show which recommends a book and the book becomes an instant best-seller. The same shows also address and talk about religious themes and theology, a forum frowned on by some theologians and considered insufficient, but one which is shaping people's opinions and knowledge on these issues much more than any document or homily perhaps could.

Finally Soukop points to the way in which the printing press, for example, undermined the Catholic position on hierarchy and democratised communication. Communications media carry in them an implicit message; today's communications technologies do that also and these messages do not always relate to the intended theological use of a communications medium.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the work and ideas of a number of theorists in communications. In concluding I attempt a brief evaluation and comparison of the theorists I have analysed.

Each of the theorists looks at the impact of communication technology from a different perspective. Innis looks at communications from an economic perspective. He thinks, like all the theorists, that technology has brought immense shifts to society which are both positive and negative. The theorists all suggest that there is a dialectical relationship between society and technology; therefore the one influences the other. Postman uses an epistemological approach, Borgmann a 'devices-focal things' approach, McLuhan a sociological approach and Soukop a theological approach. Innis argues, like Neil Postman and Albert Borgmann, that different media have the ability to control society and set the agenda for society and hence drive social change. Innis, working from his economic perspective, says that new media can break old media monopolies. These monopolies are monopolies of knowledge which in turn shape culture and give meaning. Postman argues along the same lines as Innis; he says that technology is the monopoly itself and as the monopoly gives no alternatives to itself. Innis thinks that the bias of a society towards one media or another influences the stability of that society and its ability to govern itself and a large territory. Postman would agree with this and say that there is so much information available now that we have lost the ability to discern and know what is good and bad for us; a sense of balance has been lost and so our society has become unstable. Postman argues that we have now got so much information that no information is relevant. Innis thinks that there is considerable power in communications technology to shape society but does not, like Postman, McLuhan and Borgmann say that technology drives social change.

Postman, calling himself a 'loving resistance fighter' has a rather more pessimistic view of technology and, like Borgmann, calls for a re-centring. Borgmann invites us to seek 'focal practices' whereas Postman wants to go 'back to basics'. Borgmann does not suggest 'going back' but would rather encourages ways of regaining focus and therefore transforming and redeeming technology. He says that technology seems to create in human beings the need for more; to get more 'devices'. Technology would have us believe that we can find happiness in having more devices. Borgmann argues that happiness will be found in being more centred, seeking wholeness, through 'focal practices'. Soukop suggests that both message and medium are important. He highlights

the fact that contemporary communications forms have moved away from logic and analysis and that symbol, emotion and perspective have become more important. Postman would agree with this analysis and therefore argues that as technology has developed public discourse has become more empty and trivial. Soukop does not see theological discourse as empty and trivial, but argues that if theological discourse and method do not change as technology does, then it could become empty and trivial. He makes suggestions, and is more optimistic like Borgmann, as to how theology needs to change as communications technologies change; for example he suggests that theology should be less linear and make use of contemporary symbols and that the Church's communicative form should be more like the communicative form of our own times – this is also what I attempt to argue in this thesis.

McLuhan, like the other theorists, is also interested in the dialectical relationship between society and technology, but focuses specifically on the effects of technology and how it related to popular culture and how this in turn affects human beings and the way they relate in community. McLuhan wants us to look beyond the obvious and seek the non-obvious subtle changes which are brought about by new inventions or innovations, a point which the theorists would all agree upon: new technology has brought change both subtle and unsubtle. McLuhan contends that noticing change in our societal or cultural ground conditions indicates the presence of a new message, that is, the effects of the new medium. He also sought to understand how human beings extend themselves by new innovations or inventions and what the effect of these extensions is on individuals and society. He warns that, unnoticed, some of these extensions could have dangerous affects, but is not as pessimistic as Postman seems to be.

McLuhan was worried about 'discarnate man' – being everywhere at once and therefore the loss of identity; the sense of having a centre. Postman would agree with McLuhan and this is strongly affirmed by Borgmann too who, in his suggestion of 'focal practices' tries to re-centre what technology has knocked off-balance in human beings.

I have tried to show that the communications media have a powerful impact on human beings, society and therefore theology. Most of the theorists I looked at are concerned with the hidden or subtle changes electronic media introduce and how these media manage to influence people's perceptions, worldview and actions often without them consciously being aware of this. There is power in the means of communication itself which, as many suggest, can be more persuasive than the actually content of the message which is being delivered. Many of the theorists are also concerned with just how much information is available and seem to suggest that more information which is more widely available may not always be to the advantage of society. They offer different ways of attempting to overcome the more negative effects of technology.

By presenting this I am attempting to make a case for a serious study of the means of communication (specifically the internet) in our times so as to develop a more acute awareness of the power, influence and persuasion electronic media have. Theological discussion and evangelisation are influenced by the media and theological perceptions are also shaped by electronic media in subtle ways which are not always apparent. These theorists help to uncover some of the subtleties of the electronic age we live in, and in doing so facilitate a sharper use of these media for the task of theological discussion and evangelisation. In the next chapter I will give an overview of the Church and the media, seeking specifically to understand the relationship between the Church and mass media, and how the Church understands the mass media and is using it in the task of evangelisation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE MASS COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

4.1 Media shifts Theology

We interpret and understand our culture and world through the media. A mass media culture has refocused and redefined our world. Technological advancement has enabled the media to become, what seems, the strongest force of persuasion in the universe. Soukop (1996: xi) points out: '… the media have largely replaced the Church as a source of meaning and as a universal interpreter of the world.'

Mass-media changes our culture but also causes a significant shift and focus in our theology; theology now needs to be lived and done in a rapidly changing and often confusing environment simply because of the sheer speed of change brought about. Soukop (:xi) notes that in the past theologians attempted to relate to and influence culture at one level through philosophy and on another level through art and music. Today philosophy continues to be the dialogue partner for theology although it no longer carries the same force it once did. He says:

> … popular arts – especially the novel, film and television [and the internet, we could add] – may be better dialogue partners for theology. To influence culture, theology first needs to know culture. Here the mass-media provide a window both on the communicative style and on key concerns (:xi).

H. Richard Niebuhr, in his work *Christ and Culture* (1951), looks at how Christians both impact on culture and are impacted on by it. Niebuhr outlines five ways Christians might react (and have reacted) to their cultural environment. Niebuhr sees the first two as extremes on a continuum with the next three falling between the two. He attempts to get Christians to think critically and reflectively on the environment in which they live so as

to achieve their purpose – salvation in Jesus Christ. His five ways are (Andriacco 2000: 35):

1. Christ against culture: Christians seek to separate themselves from the culture and its 'evil'. This could be seen in the approach of the early Christians like the writer Tertullian or novelist Leon Tolstoy. They take an exclusivist view or could perhaps even be called 'separatists'. Hence there is a gulf created between Christianity and culture. This approach can perhaps be summarised by calling it an 'us and them' outlook.

2. Christ of culture: In this approach Christ is identified with what is finest or best in human institutions of philosophy. Niebuhr calls Abelard, Thomas Jefferson and Immanuel Kant cultural Christians. It is a Gnostic approach in which the body and all physical matter are considered to be essentially evil.

3. Christ above culture: This approach places Christ far above culture – removed from culture. This is the approach one sees in Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and St. Thomas Aquinas. Niebuhr refers to them as synthesists.

4. Christ and culture in paradox: In this approach Christians live a faith life of tension between the demands of Christ and the demands of culture. This approach tends to emphasise the grace of God and sin in human beings. Law, in a Christian society, prevents sin from being as destructive as it might otherwise be. Saint Paul and Martin Luther seem to concretise this approach. Niebuhr would call them dualists.

5. Christ the transformer of culture: In this approach Niebuhr suggests that with Christ the Word entered culture. Christ is the converter and transformer of culture. This is the approach of Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Augustine, John Calvin and John Wesley. Niebuhr calls them conversionists.

Dan Andriacco (2000: 36) cites religion columnist Terry Mattingly who updates H. Richard Niebuhr's 'five ways' of responding to culture as:

63

1. *Burn the culture:* the separatist option

2. *"Baptise" the culture:* adopt modern trends by the test of truth – theology by opinion poll. The left, for example, may baptise the culture on sexual issues; the right may baptise the culture on economic and military issues.

3. *Photocopy the culture:* copy cultural trends but make them Christian – Christian radio, TV and video; Christian heavy metal and rap music; Christian self help books.

4. *Change the culture:* engage in social action, almost as if one could bring about the kingdom of God by signing up enough voters. This was the Christian right in the eighties and nineties and the Christian left in the sixties and seventies.

5. *Debate the culture:* take a missionary approach on the assumption that we live and work in a post-Christian culture.

The computer age causes us to re-think the relationship between Christ and culture precisely because computers, the internet and the multi-media environment they create are positioning people, communities, societies and nations into different relationships, understanding (and therefore self-understanding or lack of self-understanding!) with each other.

In this chapter I attempt broadly to sketch the Church's understanding of communication and the relationship between the Church and mass media. I begin by looking at the theological foundations of communication, rooted in God, and how this understanding has developed through salvation history. I then look at the documents that have been produced by the Roman Catholic Church, especially since Vatican II, on social communication. I finally focus on the internet and attempt to assess the effectiveness of the Church's response and engagement with modern communications media, specifically the internet.

4.2 God as Communicator

Christianity asserts that God created the world and is in relationship with the world and therefore continues to communicate with creation. God speaks to humanity in a personal and friendly way (Exodus 33: 11; John 15: 14-15). God revealed Godself to Moses as *YHWH, I am,* (Exodus 3: 14) and to the prophets, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ (John 3: 16). God has spoken to humanity throughout history, but it is specifically in and through God's Son that creation sees perfect communication – 'in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son' (Hebrews 1: 1-2).

Through and in Christ humanity hears and sees God in word and deed and is sent to preach the word and deed that is witnessed to all creation – to the ends of the earth (Matt 28: 18-20; Acts 1: 8). This is primarily a task of communicating and the resulting mission aims at enhancing or restoring communication between humanity and God (and within humanity) as did the patriarchs and prophets of old (Sogaard 1993: 3). God reveals Godself to make known that it is God's desire that all creation partake in God's divine nature. Communication is a God-given gift to creation made in God's image and likeness (Gen 1: 26). Human communication is a way that men and women participate in God's self-communication.[1] The Trinitarian life of God and the call to humanity to share in the communal life of the Trinity is a call to deep communication with the Creator and all creation.

In *Dei Verbum*[2] the Catholic Church outlines how God reveals Godself to all people of all times and in all places. This revelation has happened throughout the history of

---

[1] This was at the heart of Karl Rahner's theology: God is a God of self-gift and is continually giving Godself to us. We experience God, incompletely, in our human experience. We see echoes of Ignatius Loyola (whom I look at later) in this: God's gift of self – God's self-communication – pervades all human experience.

[2] *Dei Verbum* is the dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation which came from Vatican II in 1965. Its title 'The Word of God' indicates that it explores the sources of revelation and is foundational for the broad renewal of Catholic doctrine which took place at the Council. It deals with the nature of revelation itself, revelation from scripture (including inspiration and interpretation of scripture) and revelation and its transmission in tradition. See Flannery, A. (ed) *Vatican II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition*, volume 1. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), pp 750-765.

humanity, through the patriarchs and prophets, but is perfected in the incarnation of Jesus Christ the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary. God's revelation has been entrusted to the Church and it is the Church's task, now, in the power of the Spirit, to fill the hearts of all so that, as Paul says in the letter to the Thessalonians 3:1, 'the Word of God may speed on and triumph' (*DV* 26).

In *Dei Verbum* the Church says that the scriptures are the word of God and are intended for all people, and because God is speaking to people God needs to speak in a human fashion. If not, the intended reader could never read the word of God. In order to accomplish this objective, God worked through human authors. They were writing to a particular group, in a particular time, in a particular place, in a particular setting, in a particular language for a particular objective with their (the writers of scripture) particular background and with a particular style. In some cases, their message was a verbal message and only written down many years later. As a result, they wrote in various literary forms and languages.

The writers used the historical settings that they found themselves in and used the references and social conventions of their particular day, for only in that way could they deliver the Lord's message and have it understood and accepted by the people they were writing for. The writers also used the contemporary literary forms. These variations of literary forms, historical and cultural settings present a problem to us in our historical and cultural settings. *Dei Verbum* says that the interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express, and then express this in terms of the contemporary literary culture. *Dei Verbum* urges that in order to have a correct understanding of what the sacred writers wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer. Hence what *Dei Verbum* encourages is communicating God's word in a fashion which would be understood by all, but which would also be faithful to its original intention and purpose. Hence, *Dei Verbum,* in summary encourages faithfulness to the

texts but also acknowledges that new ways can and should be sought for the transmission of God's word.

4.3 Communication in the Early Church

For the early Church the Gospel was passed on in an oral culture. Babin (1991: 20) says that from the time of Christ until the fifteenth century three primary activities emerge in the communication of the good news: evangelisation, the catechumenate and immersion. Evangelisation, the first activity, was done by a proclamation of the message which was accompanied by signs capable of, Babin says, 'disturbing the hearts of the people and making them believe the message' (:20). This was characterised by the pre-eminence of communal life experienced through liturgy, stories and images and by the person doing the teaching. The second activity, the catechumenate, was a long period of initiation which was 'punctuated by symbolic and liturgical acts and instructions within the community' (:20). The third activity, immersion, was the 'bathing of the whole of life in a religious climate' (:20). To be understood was to be part of and to participate in. After the period of catechumenate, participation in the life of the community became central, expressed most fully in liturgical participation. Religious instruction was done in the liturgy and especially during the celebration of the great feasts:

> ... it gave form to the imagination. It expressed faith in habits and rites of participation. Catechesis by immersion did not encourage people to pray by thinking about what they were saying, but to function in a Church expressing faith through song and under the control of priests. It encouraged people to go on pilgrimages and be pious (:22).

This did not produce a strict intellectual structure but rather gave people a doctrine of life. Babin (:22) goes on to note that two particularly interesting methods were used in this form of catechesis, which seems to be similar to audiovisual methods used today. First, memorisation was important and was done by means of symbolic procedures in

conjunction with bodily procedures and in association with acts of life. Second, images were dramatically presented with the aim of producing a particular effect. He says that the symbolism of numbers and bodily gestures was used extensively in the memorisation process, and he notes how the number '7' goes back to Augustine and has served as the basis for a cult of numbers:

> ... "the twelve articles of faith, the ten commandments and their transgression", the seven capital sins, and the seven works of mercy. In addition, there were also short pieces of verse, incantatory formulas, and cantilenas (:22).

A large percentage of the population, which formed the mass of the flock, was educated about the faith through images:

> ...statues, stained-glass windows, crosses, altarpieces and so on. Buildings and cemeteries were full of such images, as well as living pictures, scenes played by people both inside and outside churches, especially on great liturgical feasts (:23).

Babin goes on to explain that three processes were used in the catechesis of immersion to stimulate public emotion. First, the scene was set. The faith was explained not merely through images, but also through dramatisation; people were made to laugh or weep. People were moved in faith, but their emotions were also incorporated and aroused. 'Vanity' for example, was burnt on a huge pile of rubbish with licentious images. Second, says Babin, is what can be called 'learning by salvation'. Three or four basic colours, one being the characteristic yellow-pink, are selected for their ability to stir feelings of 'optimism, good health and happiness'. Pilgrims did not buy images to 'make them think of' particular concepts but, rather, to bring them happiness and salvation. The same can be said of Lourdes[3] water today. Children are made to drink this water when they have sore throats, as it is believed that they will be healed. The special purpose of

---

[3] Lourdes is a small village in France where Catholics believe the Virgin Mary appeared to a young woman called Bernadette. At the place of apparition a miraculous spring appeared and the waters of this spring are believed to have healing powers.

images is to act on us through the emotion concealed in their form and colours. Third was 'learning by a conditioned environment'. Stained glass windows do not have an intellectual content, but are a 'vibration of light that unconsciously touches the emotions and resonates within the nervous system' (:24).

The oral tradition was built up over at least ten centuries. The difficulty was that there were many different interpretations and deviations. By the end of the Middle Ages, Babin (:24), says that there was an immense appetite for the divine, but this existed within a huge number of spiritual deviations and doctrinal vagueness. It was at this point that the printing press was invented in Europe.

4.4 The Advent of the Printing Press

> We should note the force, effect, and consequences of inventions which are nowhere more conspicuous than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, namely, printing, gunpowder and the compass. For these three have changed the appearance and state of the whole world (*Francis Bacon* in Eisenstein 1983: 12)

The printing press produced a new way of communicating the faith. The more print became widely available, the more potential there was for ideas and knowledge to be spread. The faith shifted from an era of dramatisation and images into linear print. Print enables the Church to impart doctrine and morals in a systematic method. Schools and seminaries are established and the same ideas and knowledge can be imparted in many locations because of the availability of texts. People, Babin (1991: 25) says, can now be instructed in a concrete and practical way by producing 'short and precise treatises'.

The printing press, as noted and examined in chapter two, drove the Protestant Reformation and had wide reaching effects on the content and form of the Catholic faith. Babin (:25) notes how the printing press was closely linked to the missionary movement.

Not widely known, he says, is that the first press was imported to the Philippines by Thomas Pinpin in 1593 to print the *Doctrina Christiana*. For four hundred years Christians learned their faith from this little book and therefore it would not be an exaggeration to say that this was one of the greatest ecclesiastical innovations of the period, a best-seller. Peter Canisius's *Catechism* appeared in 1554 and by the time he had died in 1597 some 233 editions had been published. Catechisms were published to regulate doctrine and establish discipline.

> The catechism, in its many different forms, as a means of teaching and learning about faith, flourished in an extraordinary way in the sixteenth century, and above all between 1529 (Luther's Catechism) and 1597 (Bellarmine's Catechism) (Babin 1991: 26).

The catechism enabled strictness in doctrine and a uniformity in knowledge. Logical notions and abstract knowledge were stressed in doctrine and everyone learnt and repeated the same formulas and hence uniformity was achieved. Up until this point the faithful had never be given a systematic religious formation. The importance of solidarity and participation in the community, especially in the liturgy, was now less important. What was now compulsory was the ability of the faithful to know the catechism by heart. This method of learning was spread throughout the world and no consideration was given to local culture and customs; uniformity seemed to be the most important aim. It is important to realise that the catechism was not only a new way of teaching and learning which was considered more systematic, but it also changed the very structure of communication. Babin says:

> ... at the beginning of the sixteenth century 'that another type of Christian is in the process of being born.' That new Christian was a Christian of uniform knowledge and practices, a replica of Christian teachers. He or she had been subject to formulas and was not a creative and mystical Christian; but a person could also be a Christian forceful in thinking, generous, devoted and faithful – an ideal Christian (:28).

The Church now had a new approach and pastoral programme, driven by the printing press. Several historians have critically attempted to evaluate the catechism. Alain Peyrefitte speaks of 'Roman sickness' and speaks of the cultural reform that resulted from the printing press:

> One catechism, one translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, and one truth, that of Trent. The human mind is called to go to sleep. Everything that moves is shot at (quoted in Babin 1991: 28).

The printing press shifts faith from a highly participatory and affectionate experience to a more rational analysis where distinction and formulas become the main focus. Faith, which was a living reality for many, now shifts into a cerebral activity. '... the living reality of faith had fled. The beautiful buildings were still there but the mystery had left them (: 29).

Babin (: 29) says that we cannot fail to recognise the revolution that took place despite the mistakes and excesses. However, we must also note the incredible courage of the prophets and saints who dared to give up a cultural system inherited from their ancestors and create a completely different system of communicating based on a new technology.

4.5 The Electronic Era

The advent of electronic media has brought another revolutionary shift in the way communication takes place. Postman (1985: 13) says '... our own tribe is undergoing a vast and trembling shift from the magic of writing to the magic of electronics.' The quick succession of audiovisual communication and data-processing media bring about new methods of communication but also restructure the content and effect of communication. Babin (1991: 30) outlines two crises which confront the Church as a result of the electronic media.

The first he describes as the *Gutenberg crisis*. By this he means the reaction of the 1950's against a notional and intellectual faith that lacked spiritual roots and personal force. The second he describes as the rapid penetration of the media and human studies into all areas of life which has led to the rapid de-structuring of faith's intellectual foundations. This has resulted in the rejection of dogmatic and cultic formulas which are no longer in tune with society linked to a search for religion that is fundamentally searching for meaning and for the absolute. Babin says that the faith of young people today is nourished not by dogma but by fundamental forms and impulses of the imagination (:30). He goes on to explain that for many young people faith has taken on a Dionysiac[4] foundation. People today rely on powerful visual and auditory sensations and search for 'everything at the same time'. Claude Santelli, a television producer, says 'Speaking the language of television is making people accept ideas through their emotions' (:32). From the linear and cerebral means introduced by the Gutenberg revolution we now seem, in our multi-media environment, to see once again the imaginative and emotional approach (unsystematic and non-dogmatic) being re-introduced. Electronic media has changed our communication system. Everything is affected by it – places, times, those addressed by it, those who are broadcasting, the methods, outcomes and the entire functioning of authority.

4.6 The Catholic Church and the Media

The Catholic Church, from the advent of the printing press, has been no stranger to the use of the media. The press was used as a tool in the Reformation. Eisenstein (1979: 318) relates:

> Although the new presses did much to invigorate religious piety and zeal, they also
> had the unfortunate consequence of setting churchmen at odds with each other. The

---

[4] Relating to the god Dionysius – of the sensual, spontaneous, and emotional aspects of human nature. Pearsall, J. (ed) *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. 10th Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p 404.

72

same winds of change which favoured evangelism and vernacular sermons also threatened prerogatives long held and cherished by conservative prelates.

The printing press was also used within the Church itself. Liturgical texts could be written and published which insisted on uniformity in liturgy. Theologians of past centuries such as Thomas Aquinas, had their works printed and were dispersed and used in colleges throughout Europe. Practices like prayer and meditation were written about and were now widely available and no longer just the property of convents and monasteries. The catechism was printed and travelled through the world and was the single most influential tool in the hand of the Church in the task of religious education.

It is interesting to note that the Vatican only established a Pontifical Commission which would be responsible for examining issues relating to media in 1948. Encyclical letters had been written on issues pertaining to media before this.[5] The Commission was set up by Pope Pius XII to examine films on religious or moral subjects and this small Commission was to begin a new phase in the history of the Church's pastoral and cultural activity. The Commission was to examine the education and pastoral problems of the audiovisual era which was just coming into being. The Church realised that action was necessary and they were to study the problems and issues raised by motion pictures as a whole and engage bishops and all believers in a response to the changed conditions of society.

The original council evolved into the Pontifical Commission for Cinema in 1952 and experts were recruited from various nations to look at and study pastoral problems related to the development of modern techniques in the entertainment world. In 1954 the name of the Commission was once again changed to the Pontifical Commission for the Cinema, Radio and Television. The Commission was enlarged and divided into three sections: films, radio, and television. Working groups were set up to prepare material required by

---

[5] *Divini Illius Magistri*, Pope Pius XI, 21 December, 1929 & *Vigilanti Cura,* Pope Pius XI, 29 June 1936.

Pope Pius XII for his address on *The Ideal Film* and his encyclical letter *Miranda Prorsus* on the motion picture, radio and television, published on the 8th September 1957.

On the 5th June 1960 a preparatory secretariat for the press and the entertainment world was set up within the Pontifical Commission's twelve preparatory organs for the Second Vatican Council. It was the task of this secretariat to identify the problems raised by the press and the audiovisual media. While recognizing the individual character of each sector, it was to assemble all this material into a single study which would leave room for future developments in which the different instruments of social communication, as they were called from then on, would find their proper place and receive due consideration within the Church's renewed ministry. On the 4th December 1963 the Council degree *Inter Mirifica* was promulgated. It was significant that Vatican II dedicated special and far-seeing attention to this sector. Without waiting for the end of the Council, Pope Paul VI, on the 2nd of April 1964, transformed the existing Commission into the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, responsible for dealing with the all the problems raised by the cinema, radio, television, and the daily and periodical press in relation to the interests of the Catholic Church. It was only on the 1st March 1989 that the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications became the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and therefore, an office of the Roman Curia in its own right. This was promulgated by Pope John Paul II in an apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus*[6]; Pope John Paul II says in *Pastor Bonus*:

> The Pontifical Council for Social Communications is involved in questions regarding the means of social communication, so that, also by these means, human progress and the message of salvation may benefit secular culture and mores (169).

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications has, since this time, been the body through which all documents and commentary on the Church and media have been released.

---

[6] Promulgated by John Paul II at the consistory on the 28th June 1988.

4.7 Social Communications from Vatican II

4.7.1 Inter Mirifica

Inter Mirifica was a short decree, predominantly pastoral in approach, which was issued by Vatican II. Ruszkowski (1989: 550) says that this decree 'institutionalises' social communications in the Church and therefore provides a solid foundation for all future development. In this decree the Church formally recognises social communications as a major concern for mission. Up until this point work in social communications had been spontaneous, scattered and unorganised. Ruszkowski (:549) comments that this decree caused a commotion and there was disappointment as some people had hoped for something more than just simple doctrinal statements. However *Inter Mirifica* ushered in a new era in social communications within the Catholic Church.

Inter Mirifica[7] recognises the power of the media to not only influence individuals but indeed the 'masses' and the whole of human society. The Decree acknowledges the ability of the media to be used for the benefit of humanity but also warns against the damaging effects media could unleash. It claims as the Church's 'birthright' to use any media which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and pastoral activity (3). It covers, briefly in chapter 1, issues such as the moral duty of the media, of Christians who receive and contribute to the media, issues regarding the availability and rights to information, the role of public opinion and the rights and duties of civil authorities in relation to social communications. In chapter 2 the Decree looks at the role of pastors, the responsibility of the media and their ability to present and promote ideas in accordance with Catholic doctrine and directives. The decree calls for laity, religious and clergy to be properly trained for the apostolate in social communications. The decree encourages involvement and use in social communications:

---

[7] All references to *Inter Mirifica* are from Flannery, A. (ed) *Vatican II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition*, volume 1. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992).

It would be shameful if by their inactivity Catholics allowed the word of God to be silenced or obstructed by the technical difficulties which these media present and by their admittedly enormous cost. For this reason the Council reminds them that they have the obligation to sustain and assist Catholic newspapers, periodicals and film projects, radio and television programs. For the main aim of all these is to propagate and defend the faith and to secure the permeation of society by Christian values (17).

The decree also encourages national Episcopal Conferences to set up structures in their regions and bishops in their diocese for work in social communications. A day is also to be set aside, yearly at the bishops' discretion, to make the Church's apostolate in the area of social communications more effective. The Decree closes clearly directing the publication of a pastoral instruction in social communications. It ends addressing all people of goodwill:

Further, it invites all men of good will, especially those who control the media, to use them solely for the good of humanity, for its fate becomes more and more dependant on their right use. The name of the Lord will thus be glorified by these modern inventions as it was in former times by the masterpieces of art; as the apostle said: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever" (Heb. 13:8) (24).

Ruszkowski (1989: 551ff) outlines three factors that indicate the full measure of the importance of this decree: first, social communications is established as an important concern of the Church. Second, together with other conciliar documents and *Communio et Progressio*, the Decree defines the institutional framework for the action by the Church on different levels within the area of social communications. Third, twenty-five years later it has been demonstrated that not only is the framework still valid, but it has began to bear fruit.[8]

---

[8] Ruszkowski goes on to illustrate this by listing a number of media initiatives, nationally and internationally, in the Church around the world in print, radio and television. For further reading: The Decree on the Means of Social Communication. Success or Failure of the Council? In: Latourelle, R. (ed) *Vatican II Assesment and Perpectives,* volume 3. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp 556-566.

4.7.2 Communio et Progressio

Communio et Progressio[9] was published in 1971 according to the direction of the Vatican II Decree *Inter Mirifica*. It defined specific applications of the norms set down in *Inter Mirifica*. It sets out doctrinal principles and basic guidelines in the area of mass media and communications. It was written not only for the Church but for all those involved in media. The document sought not only to deal with the means of communication but also to give an underlying explanation of the meaning of communication in salvation history and how perfect communication is only found and understood in Christ. In order to understand communication the document encourages, in Part I, first and foremost an understanding of what it means to be human and an understanding of the human situation with that of God who, in Christ, is the perfect communicator:

> Whoever wants to see the media take their allotted place in the history of Creation,
> in the Incarnation and Redemption, and to consider the morality that governs their
> use, must have a full and proper understanding of man (15).

Part II attempts to look at the contribution of mass media to the development of human society. The communications media are 'powerful instruments for progress' (21). Although acknowledging the positive elements of mass media in human society the document also cautions against the 'inherent dangers and difficulties' (21) which accompany the mass media. Some of these dangers and difficulties it cites are the ability to evaluate right from wrong in a competitive environment where an audience is important – does the media tell people the truth to hold them captive or rather tell them what they want to hear? Other inherent dangers and difficulties are monopolies – how does society ensure that monopolies do not control the media, therefore hindering dialogue? The document expresses other concerns:

---

[9] All references to *Communio et Progressio* are from Flannery, A. *Vatican II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition,* volume 1. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992).

How can one avoid allowing communications made indirectly and through machinery to weaken direct human contact - especially when these communications take the form of pictures and images? When the media invite men to escape into fantasy, what can be done to bring them back to present reality? How can one stop the media encouraging mental idleness and passivity? And how can one be certain that the incessant appeal to emotion does not sap reason? (21).

The document then continues to look at various aspects of the mass media. It looks first at issues relating to the formation of public opinion. It outlines how the mass media is able to influence public opinion and calls for freedom of speech for individuals and groups as long as the common good is not undermined or morality endangered. Attention is also drawn to the area of propaganda and the role propaganda campaigns might fulfil. In order for public opinion to be formed it is necessary that the public be given access to information. The document upholds the rights of people to be informed and to inform. There should be access to channels of news and people should have the freedom to communicate. The right to information, it states, is inseparable from freedom of communication (44).

The document then acknowledges the role of the media in education, culture and leisure. It examines the positive role that media can play in the areas of education, culture and leisure. Media can be at the service of humanity, recognising the 'products of genius, particularly in music, drama and literature' (52). For entertainment too, the media 'lightens the burden of daily problems and it occupies men's leisure' (52). It also warns against productions geared to the 'lowest cultural level' which would 'tend to debase the taste of those who have already attained a higher level' (53). It examines how the media influence different forms of expression, saying that they do not only communicate traditional artistic forms but also create new expressions. It looks at the role of expression in human life and the necessity of expression in artistic forms and these expressions do not only carry cultural benefit but also moral and religious benefits. The document then alludes to advertising and warns against advertising which devalues the human person.

There is then an in-depth examination of the proper conditions for the proper working of the media. It looks at the essential training that is needed for communicators and recipients. It encourages a deep understanding of the role of media, the need for a maturing knowledge and the development of the critical faculty of the person. It calls especially for the development of the critical faculty in children and reminds parents, educators, civil governments and the Church of their role to ensure that this happens so that children discover human values which lay the foundations for a good moral society.[10] It underlines the importance of communicators to be well educated in their field with a solid knowledge of human nature. It also looks at the opportunities and obligations that recipients and communicators have in the work of media. The last part of this section emphasises the importance of co-operation between citizens and civil authorities, between nations and finally 'between Christians, all believers and all men [people] of goodwill' (96).

The final part of this document takes an in-depth look at Catholics in the mass media. It examines the contribution of Catholics to the area of social communication. It describes how social communications contribute to the life of the Church in different areas: dialogue in the Church and dialogue between the Church and the world. It then examines how the means of social communications can be used for proclaiming the Good News.

Chapter III of Part III examines the different means of mass communication and the active role that Catholics play in these areas: the printed word, cinema, radio and television and the theatre. The last section examines the equipment, personnel and organisation of the communications media, especially in relation to the Church and within the Church. It sets up guidelines for dealing with the mass media and advises that national offices be setup in every country (169). It also advises the training of the faithful, lay and clergy in the area of social communications. It advises that all dioceses, episcopal

---

[10] Neil Postman, in his book *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) outlines the difficulties that uncritical and continuous media streaming can assert on society. He claims that children are stripped of their childhood when there is no critical discretion and boundaries as to what they are allowed to see, watch and hear through mass media.

conferences and the Holy See itself have an official, permanent spokesperson or press officer to issue news and give clear explanations (174). The document ends on a positive and welcoming note:

> The people of God walk in history. As they – who are, essentially, both communicators and recipients – advance with their times, they look forward with confidence and even enthusiasm to whatever the development of communications in a space age may have to offer (187).

Embedded in these documents, in the milieu of Vatican II, the Church begins to grapple formally with mass communication and the impact of modern technology on communication. However, like with many other documents from Vatican II, it seems as if the seriousness and implementation of such works have not been fully realised. It seems clear that *Communio et Progressio* did attempt a rather large and all-embracing overview of social communications and was able to grapple with very pertinent and important issues in the field. The Church, as Bernard Lonergan says, has a predisposition to arrive 'breathless and a little late' (Tobin 2000: x).

Another difficulty we face now is that the speed of technological development has been so rapid that a late arrival could have seriousness consequences on the effectiveness of the Church in a world where more and more choice abounds and human self-understanding is rapidly evolving. The internet is not only 'a tool' of communication (and perhaps the same could be said for other means of mass media) but is constructing our environment. Computer mediated communication is an invaluable pastoral instrument of proclamation, but it is also functioning as a powerful means of social change, not just in human behaviour but in the very perception of reality itself. Tobin notes the new pastoral challenge:

...the gradual *technologisation* of human experience and the emergence of not simply the technological mediation of that experience through the various media but of culture lived within the new social spaces created by technology (: iii).

White (1989: 582) explores the seemingly small effect the decrees and constitutions of the Council had on the Church. The Church was encouraged by *Inter Mirifica* to use the media to proclaim the gospel. The new world of mass media was not something to be avoided but embraced and used. Unfortunately bishops, pastors and religious have little sense of the impact mass media have on daily lives and little encouragement is given to use new forms of mass media as part of spiritual development. He says:

Media apostolates are rarely an integral part of planning in a diocese, parish or religious congregation, but depend on the sporadic initiative of individuals... The communication education of priests and other pastoral ministers in seminaries or in other theological and pastoral institutes is still inadequate or nonexistent; there is even evidence that the quality of homiletics or other communication training has actually *declined* since Vatican II (:582).

White says that neither *Inter Mirifica* or *Communio et Progressio* have managed to confront the roots of Catholic ambivalence towards the media. There are more Church-sponsored media initiatives and production facilities now than there were at any point in history before, but these have not really brought about a significant presence of the gospel message in the public media.

The major catalysts for communication in the Church, White seems to suggest, have not come from documents dealing with the media but rather the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the decrees on religious freedom, liturgy and other decrees that have influenced the development of the new theological orientations and structure of the Church. He says:

81

These movements in the Church emphasize more a new pattern of "communication" rather than specifically "media", but, indirectly, there is arising a new and more positive attitude toward the world of the popular mass media (:583).

The Church recognises the fact that the mass media have serious implications for the proclamation of the Gospel in thought and praxis. This demands a response which takes into consideration the new cyberspace where the human spirit now lives.

4.7.3 Aetatis Novae

The Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* was issued in 1992 (just before easy access to email and the internet), marking the 20th anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*. The document begins by acknowledging the change in technology which has taken place since Vatican II and the publication of *Communio et Progressio*, and says that due to this rapid change the Pontifical Council for Social Communications wants to reflect, again, on the pastoral implications of these new realities. It acknowledges that new media gives birth to 'new languages', which in turn have given birth to new possibilities for mission in the Church as well as highlighted some pastoral difficulties (2). The instruction also welcomes new and positive ventures in media-related ecumenical co-operation involving Catholics and other churches, as well as inter-religious co-operation (3).

Then the Instruction continues by drawing attention to just how much the media influence people and society on all levels and says that the media can be used either to 'proclaim the Gospel or reduce it to silence in human hearts' (4). It says that the media do not only define what people think but what they will think about and silence can be imposed on people and groups whom the media chose to ignore (4). It then alludes to the role media play in political and economic structures and acknowledges how much of the world's economic and political structures are intricately linked with modern communications media. The Instruction then goes on to analyse the different areas in which the Church sees the media as a service: in the service of persons and cultures, in

82

the service of dialogue with the world, in the service of human community and progress, in the service of ecclesial communion and in the service of new evangelisation.

The next section addresses challenges which new media put before the Church. It looks at the need for critical evaluation of the media, at the need for media to promote solidarity and integral development of persons and society, at the problems which arise from the policies and structures of the media as well as the rights to the defence of information and communications. It then goes on to examine pastoral priorities and responses to the world of mass media. It addresses the need to defend human cultures from domination and manipulation, especially those in developing nations. It also calls for the development and promotion of the Church's own media of social communications as well as the formation of Christian communicators and their pastoral care. The final part of the instruction deals with the need for pastoral planning. It looks at the responsibilities of bishops and at the urgency for a pastoral plan for social communicators. The document then offers, in an appendix, elements which could be incorporated into a plan for social communications.

Then the Instruction, in light of new media, highlights again much of what was already said in *Communio et Progressio*. It opens by saying:

> At the dawn of a new era, a vast expansion of human communications is profoundly influencing culture everywhere. Revolutionary technological changes are only part of what is happening. Nowhere today are people untouched by the impact of media upon religious and moral attitudes, political and social systems, and education (1).

Unfortunately, it seems, it is not the Catholic media which are producing this effect. There is a parallel in the use of media in the Church between the invention of the printing press and the development of new media. The Church did not engage and use the printing press until its own Counter-Reformation, some time after the invention of the press.

Other groups, like evangelical Christians and Muslims, do not seem to be as afraid of engaging with and using the media as the Catholic Church does. The Instruction, which attempts to deal with new media, still seems overall a vague attempt in the Church's willingness to engage with new media. No mention is made of virtual reality and the impact this seems to be making on people today. It is interesting here to note that the Church thinks primarily in terms of objective reality – God is an objective reality and hence it is from this reality that truth, moral right etc. are rooted and flow. God, or objective reality for the Church, is something 'outside' of our immediate experience. The internet demonstrates that virtual reality is the triumph of subjective reality – people themselves create what they deem to be true and real in cyberspace. Hence, in virtual reality truth can be found 'inside' the hypertexts they work with and not 'outside' of the user. The Church claims a single universal reality; virtual reality celebrates a multitude of realities. There is no reference to any of this which is rapidly changing our human landscape and self-understanding in this document.

The Instruction also often seems to use the word 'information' and the reader could wonder if the Church sees this as the primary task of new media. I would dispute this. New media and the internet specifically, are primarily communications networks and not data networks. Data, or information, was the original intention of those who created the web, but it has fast evolved. Pullinger says

> One thing is for certain – the function of the internet has already changed: originally a data network, it has literally reinvented to become a communications one (2001: 38).

He goes on to say that if the great Microsoft giant, Bill Gates, had anticipated this he would have led the company in this direction. He did not and had to turn the whole company around to meet this challenge to stay in business – the shift from a data system to a communications system. Although the Church does offer some understanding of the power of the media to shape people and society, it continually emphasises it as primarily

a means of moving information. Does this language (and hence the underlying assumptions and understanding) not act as an indicator that the Church does not fully understand and has not embraced the media environment we live in?

The end of the document gives guidelines for action, but a quick glance seems to suggest that little action has taken place. The Church, again, shows that it is able to write about the mass media and offer good theoretical foundations but that there is difficulty in transforming this into praxis and therefore does not see these media as an efficient means to be used.

Despite this, across the internet Christians are living their faith and sharing its contents – both active Christians and those who are removed from the Church community for whatever reason. The availability of information and the ability to share faith and thoughts with others in the virtual world means that people, who perhaps would ordinarily not attend a Church as such, are brought into contact with the Church in cyberspace. Tobin says:

> In *virtual* forums everywhere, through their disembodied yet virtual presence to each other, they are searching together, sharing together, in dialogue together, praying together, suffering together, comforting and experiencing each other in a truly human relational dynamic whereby that not so much take away information but experience it and live it directly within the boundaries of cyberspace, no longer alienated from its full efficacy. That is, they are not only talking about or exchanging information *about* God but *doing* God (2000: viii-ix).

There seems to be little acknowledgement of this by the Church in this Instruction and no immediate project to be present in cyberspace where people are engaging and exchanging thoughts and ideas.

4.8 The Evangelical Churches and the Mass Media

It is worth noting here that White (1989: 589) says that no churches have shown a greater zeal in the use of media – a zeal which was encouraged by *Inter Mirifica* - than the evangelical churches. He notes that they moved to use radio almost immediately in the 1920's and that this medium has grown steadily since then. Evangelical churches seem to have been open to and embraced popular culture much more enthusiastically and quicker than the Catholic Church. Revivalists borrowed the techniques of populist politicians, newspapers and advertisers to draw audiences. White goes on to explain that evangelical churches have a much more fluid approach to theology and non-institutionalised understanding of ecclesial organisation. Another factor is the ability of evangelical churches to raise enough money to fund such media. White (:589) notes that Catholics were rather encouraged to put their money into local parochial schools while evangelicals encouraged support of mass media.[11]

4.9 The Catholic Church and the Internet

4.9.1 The Church and the Internet

On 22nd February 2002[12] the Pontifical Council for Social Communications issued a document entitled *The Church and the Internet*. This was the first such work done on the internet and has, as its purpose, a consideration of the implications of the internet for

---

[11] South Africa is no stranger to this. A number of Evangelical Churches have run successful community radio stations and have been doing so for a number of years. The first Catholic radio station, *Radio Veritas,* was only launched in 1999. Yet there are a large number of Catholic schools in South Africa and the Church has put large financial resources into schools and educational institutes like St. John Vianney Seminary and St. Augustine College.

[12] A companion document was released the same day entitled *Ethics in Internet.* These documents should not be confused and are to be seen as complimenting each other. *The Church and the Internet* deals with the implications of the internet for religion, especially the Catholic Church. *Ethics in Internet* deals with the Catholic perspective of the ethical issues which surround the use of the internet and serves as a starting point for dialogue with those outside the Church i.e. other churches, society etc. What seems to me extraordinary is that this is the first official document on the internet issued by the Church – some 8-10 years *after* the internet started to become a household product!

religion and especially for the Catholic Church. The document affirms the use of mass media, recalling the words of the Vatican II that there are 'marvellous technical inventions'. It warns that a censorious attitude towards the mass media is not sufficient or appropriate. It states:

> Considering the media of social communication in this light, we see that they "contribute greatly to the enlargement and enrichment of men's minds and to the propagation and consolidation of the Kingdom of God (2).

The document then goes on to acknowledge that the internet is bringing about revolutionary changes in commerce, education, politics, journalism, the relationship of nation to nation and culture to culture – changes not just in how people communicate but in how they understand their lives.

The document gives a comprehensive and positive account of how the internet can be used by the Church. It recalls that communication is at the heart of the Trinitarian life of God which the human person is called and invited to be part of. It lists the benefits of the media and then looks at the peculiar yet powerful benefits of the internet.

> It offers people direct and immediate access to important religious and spiritual resources—great libraries and museums and places of worship, the teaching documents of the Magisterium, the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the religious wisdom of the ages. It has a remarkable capacity to overcome distance and isolation, bringing people into contact with like-minded persons of good will who join in virtual communities of faith to encourage and support one another. The Church can perform an important service to Catholics and non-Catholics alike by the selection and transmission of useful data in this medium (5).

Furthermore, it examines the way the internet can and is being used by the Church:

The Internet is relevant to many activities and programs of the Church—evangelization, including both re-evangelization and new evangelization and the traditional missionary work *ad gentes*, catechesis and other kinds of education, news and information, apologetics, governance and administration, and some forms of pastoral counselling and spiritual direction. Although the virtual reality of cyberspace cannot substitute for real interpersonal community, the incarnational reality of the sacraments and the liturgy, or the immediate and direct proclamation of the gospel, it can complement them, attract people to a fuller experience of the life of faith, and enrich the religious lives of users. It also provides the Church with a means for communicating with particular groups—young people and young adults, the elderly and home-bound, persons living in remote areas, the members of other religious bodies—who otherwise may be difficult to reach. A growing number of parishes, dioceses, religious congregations, and church-related institutions, programs, and organizations of all kinds now make effective use of the Internet for these and other purposes. Creative projects under Church sponsorship exist in some places on the national and regional levels. The Holy See has been active in this area for several years and is continuing to expand and develop its Internet presence. Church-related groups that have not yet taken steps to enter cyberspace are encouraged to look into the possibility of doing so at an early date. We strongly recommend the exchange of ideas and information about the Internet among those with experience in the field and those who are newcomers (5).

It does not however only see the internet as a helpful tool for communication with the wider world but also within the Church itself. It underlines the fact that information and communication is a two-way process and not merely from the top-down. It recalls the principle of two-way communication which was called for in *Aetatis Novae*, an idea rooted in Vatican II. The internet helps us realise this vision if we use it to its full potential. It is an instrument, the document says, that can be put to creative use in various aspects of administration and governance; it also opens up the field for expressing public opinion, consultation, meeting preparation and collaboration in various sectors: locally, nationally and internationally. The document also highlights opportunities that the internet might avail for education and ongoing training. It encourages continued research

and study into the development of an anthropology and theology of communication with specific reference to the internet. The document concludes with some recommendations and addresses itself to specific groups of persons: Church leaders, pastoral personnel, educators and catechists, parents, children, young people and finally to all persons of good will.

The document also explores some challenges which the internet may present to the Church. It first explores the fact that media can be hostile to the faith and disseminate ideas such as that there is no absolute truth. It is also concerned with the proliferation of hate speech and people on the 'hate sites' who attack religious and ethnic groups. It draws attention to websites called 'Catholic', which can be confusing and it does not distinguish between eccentric doctrinal interpretations, idiosyncratic devotional practices and ideological advocacy which bear the name 'Catholic' but are not an exposé of the authentic teaching of the Church (8). It also highlights the wide range of consumer products and services available on the internet, and cautions and discourages a spill-over effect which would approach the faith as a consumer product. Finally it warns of the virtual reality of cyberspace and sees it as 'worrying', as there can be no substitute for real presence and real community and shared presence in Eucharistic community.

4.9.2 Ethics in Internet

The Pontifical Council released a second document on the same day, 22 February 2002, entitled *Ethics in Internet*. This document was an attempt to set out the Catholic view of the internet so as to serve as a starting point for participation and dialogue within other sectors of society (2). The document begins by strongly suggesting that it is the human person and common good which are integral and this should never be forgotten or lost as the focus. It notes how the internet has been a driving force in globalisation, which has brought about sweeping social change (4). However, it urges that this new information technology be informed, used and guided by a 'resolute commitment to the practice of solidarity in the service of the common good...' (5). It underlines what was said in

Communio et Progressio: '…media have the ability to make every person everywhere a partner in the business of the human race' (5). It acknowledges the fact that the internet could, if not used properly, also widen the gap between rich and poor, those who have access and those who do not. It encourages society to make sure that this does not happen and that the internet is used to close this gap rather than widen it. The document then goes on to give a positive hopeful vision which captures the spirit in which the internet can be used to the advantage of all:

> This is an astonishing vision. The Internet can help make it real -- for individuals, groups, nations, and the human race -- only if it is used in light of clear, sound ethical principles, especially the virtue of solidarity. To do so will be to everyone's advantage, for "we know one thing today more than in the past: we will never be happy and at peace without one another, much less if some are against others". This will be an expression of that spirituality of communion which implies "the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God," along with the ability "to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing 'each other's burdens' (*Gal.* 6, 2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us" (5).

It continues by saying that the internet raises a number of ethical questions. There is recognition of the power of the internet in the document:

> It is instantaneous, immediate, worldwide, decentralized, interactive, endlessly expandable in contents and outreach, flexible and adaptable to a remarkable degree. It is egalitarian, in the sense that anyone with the necessary equipment and modest technical skill can be an active presence in cyberspace, declare his or her message to the world, and demand a hearing. It allows individuals to indulge in anonymity, role-playing, and fantasizing and also to enter into community with others and engage in sharing. According to users' tastes, it lends itself equally well to active participation and to passive absorption into "a narcissistic,

self-referential world of stimuli with near-narcotic effects" It can be used to break down the isolation of individuals and groups or to deepen it (7).

It also looks at some areas of concern in the ethical domain and then finally lists a number of recommendations and offers a conclusion. It attempts to measure the internet by its virtue of solidarity and service of the common good. It looks at issues like regulation, responsibility and protection and acknowledges that, because of its global character, this will take on the form of global co-operation and consensus.

There is an appreciation for the internet and its power:

> The Internet can make an enormously valuable contribution to human life. It can foster prosperity and peace, intellectual and aesthetic growth, mutual understanding among peoples and nations on a global scale (18).

There is acknowledgement that there are a number of concerns surrounding the usage of the internet and its impact on the vulnerable which needs to be reflected on and addressed. Hence, it seems clear, that the Church does acknowledge the internet as a powerful and influential tool. It also seems that the Church is positive about the role the internet can play and highlights legitimate concerns which require further reflection and analysis.

4.10 Challenging Issues Ahead

Amongst the issues which the internet puts before the Church is accessibility. The internet makes the Church, and all aspects of Church life, much more accessible. There is an immense access to information about the Church and Church life which is now available and people are free to exchange information and ideas based on internet access they have. It is interesting to note that there seems to be little analysis of the shift in

91

power that the internet has brought about because of this. The Church, a hierarchical structure, which has had power and influence over the lives of believers for centuries faces a new challenge. The internet now shifts power away from centralised authorities and puts power in the hands of those who use the internet – millions of people all over the world. Furthermore, power is in the hands of those who design, build and maintain these systems. There is no more 'gate-keeping' on the internet, previously the Church could control what the faithful had access to; the internet has made this almost impossible.

There is a need for devising a new system of guiding people and helping them discern the information before them. Although the documents do give a few guidelines there is no real sense that they are of help to those who are already on the internet. Bard & Söderqvist (2002: 82) say:

> What we lack today is not information, but overview and context. The unrelenting and ecstatic flow of information is unsorted and unstructured: it must be sifted, organised and interpreted against the background of a coherent world view if it is to be a source of knowledge and not confusion.

Another pressing issue which the Church will need to face and address is that of 'keeping people'. By this I mean the ability to 'hook' the user on the site so that their attention is 'grabbed' and a certain curiosity is aroused. Design and style, as two essential components, do not feature at all in these documents. The Vatican's website itself, for example, is rather boring and un-engaging. People dislike lengthy texts and tend not to read long text, only pages.[13] Ivereigh (2003: 31) describes the Vatican's site (which has not changed to the present!):

> Dan Chiasson, a young poet writing in a recent issue of the online magazine Slate (slate.msn.com), describes going into the Vatican site in search of the Pope's

---

[13] This can also be as a result of the television culture we live in, where visual stimuli and images have become very important.

Roman Triptych. He came up against "a handsome, oatmeal-coloured, faux-parchment affair, presided over by sad-eyed Byzantines staring out of the mosaics" which failed to deliver what he was looking for. The lesson is clear: the credibility of a website rests not on traditional authority but on its own integrity; if it fails to offer a reason to dwell there, the searcher simply bounces off.

Besides the ability to create curiosity by having an attractive home page it is harder to lead the user to explore the site further. Less and less people 'page through' the internet systematically. They click on links, open multiple pages and jump around from website to website making it more difficult to keep them on any one site for any length of time. The documents show little understanding of the 'choice culture' that the internet has ushered in or further exaggerated.

As I alluded to earlier: there also seems to be a need for a deepening of understanding. The internet is not merely a data network but has evolved into a communications network. Although the documents do mention communications, a reader cannot but help think that the Church still sees technological media, specifically the internet, as a 'big data bank'. I also cannot but help wonder if the Church, from the texts on the internet, really sees the internet as a malleable technology which those who participate in it shape by their participation. Castells says:

> … [The] Internet is a particularly malleable technology, susceptible of being deeply modified by its social practice, and leading to a whole range of potential social outcomes – to be discovered by experience, not proclaimed beforehand (2001:5).

The power to shape things is in the hands of those who use the internet – through experience. By participating, being present on the internet the Church contributes to giving it shape, directing it. By not being present and participating very little direction can be offered. This also impacts on the Church's ability to use this technology, not only

for evangelisation, but also to help bring about social change. People's minds and hearts can be engaged on the internet, their perceptions about social reality can be shaped and transformed, and meaning can be given to behaviour, and in so doing change can be affected. Not to be present and not to understand what absence means leaving both the Church and the world wide web poorer.

Hence, there is much work that still needs to be done by the Church in order to utilise the internet for the purpose of evangelisation. The documents lay a foundation for an understanding of the relationship between the Church and mass media. The documents on the internet discuss pertinent and important issues which those who run, use and control the world wide web should be paying attention to. However, it is now to the praxis to which attention needs to be given. How can the Church use the internet so as to have a formidable presence in cyberspace which would aid evangelisation?

There are a number of sites which have made an impact on the world wide web. Ivereigh says that these sites are a counter balance and foretastes of the power of the internet and what the Church can do with it:

> The Ignatian prayer site, sacredspace.ie … is a model of its kind, and has been used by millions. Many find dailygospel.org, which delivers a gospel reflection each day by email, a valuable way of clearing their desks for God. Or try newmediabible.org, where users "experience" Scriptures through mesmerising 12-minute videos with musical settings and voiceover (2003: 31).

4.11 Analysing the Response of the Catholic Church guided by Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* Approach

It might be helpful to return to Niebuhr (1951). It is simply impossible to select one of Niebuhr's five ways to give an analytical framework to evaluate how the Church has

responded to the media. The response more accurately represents all five approaches. There seems to be a real ambivalence in the Church's response to the mass media and this is perhaps evident in the fact that strands of all five of the Niebuhr ways are evident.

Niebuhr's first four approaches seem to reoccur over and over in the documents. The mass media are seen as something good, to be used, effectively and yet also something to be weary of. There is a strong sense of the *Christ against culture* and *Christ above culture* approach in all the documents.

Inter Mirifica acknowledges the ability of the media to be used for the benefit of humanity but also strongly warns against the damaging effects media can unleash – clearly underpinning the *Christ against culture* approach. It also encourages the use of media to propagate and defend the faith and to secure Christian values in society, indicating the *Christ and culture in paradox* approach.

The same themes and approaches seem to be evident throughout *Communio et Progressio*: the media have great potential but also damaging effects. In *Communio et Progressio* a further approach becomes evident. The document acknowledges the role of media in education, culture and leisure, saying that humanity can be served by this product of genius. The document here seems to advocate a *Christ above culture* approach, in which the cultural trends are simply copied and used for Christian ends. *Communio et Progressio* demonstrates a great knowledge of media – from its various forms to training of people for the role of communicators but lacks, like most of these documents, the ability to convert the theory to praxis. There is great difficulty in being able to use the approach of *Christ transforming culture* in which the Church is able to use the media to bring about conversion.

In *Aetatis Novae*, which came out just before easy access to the internet in 1992, surprisingly little is said about the emergence of the internet and email –. The document

95

seems to advocate the first four approaches that Niebuhr suggests, but does not go any further to seek a *Christ transforming culture* approach.

The two other documents which follow (the only two on the internet specifically!) follow very much the same pattern as their predecessors. There seems to be no deep-seated sense that the internet can be used as a tool for *Christ transforming culture*. Although the foundations are laid for reflection on the means of communication, little seems to have been done to ensure that theory in these documents have been put into praxis.

Where the Church should be in rejection or acceptance of the media culture has to be continually discerned. The answer to this will also change and will have to be renegotiated as technologies develop and contexts change. It does seem, unfortunately, from examining the documents of the Roman Catholic Church, that although much has been written on media (surprisingly little on the internet) the Church significantly lacks the ability to use the means of social communication effectively. There still seems to be an attitude of suspicion and ambivalence towards technologically-driven communication tools.

> … we have a marked tendency to cling to old beliefs despite the fact that they are at odds with known facts. The reason for this is simply that the old beliefs are just that, old and familiar, and we are therefore fond of them; they are part of what makes us mentally comfortable. This leads to intellectual sluggishness: we are prepared to make greater efforts to preserve the status quo in our heads than to learn new things. At the moment when we learn anything new we have to change our lives, albeit only very slightly. For this reason our capacity to move across the historical map is in practice minimal (Bard & Söderqvist 2002: 35).

Could the Church, still coming to terms with modernity perhaps, find it even more difficult to cross over into post-modernity and the networked world?

96

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to give a theological understanding of communication. I have given an overview of how the Church understands communication and has communicated, from the early Church to the present, using the media available at various historical junctures. I have then focussed on the Church and social communications since Vatican II. I have attempted to give an overview of what I consider to be the most important texts on social communications. I have also given an overview of the two documents released by the Church on the internet. It seems apparent that the Church has a rich and well-developed understanding of the mass media, including the internet, but it has, I suggest, not reached its full potential in putting this understanding into practice. This is becoming more and more important in our times, as technology develops at such speed that in order to be an effective and efficient presence in the mass media there is a strong need for praxis based on the already well-developed understanding. The ability of the Church to adapt to the changing environment and engage in this environment is one of the biggest challenges the Church faces. People's behaviour have changed and significant shifts in self-understanding and in society have taken place, which have been accelerated by the internet. The Church, in order to journey with other pilgrims and remain credible, needs to engage with this new media environment, not only by reflecting on the issues at stake, but also by being present where others are searching for information and meaning. I attempted to show, applying the five approaches of H. Richard Niebuhr, that the Church has not reached a point yet where the transformative powers of technology are being used to transform our culture with the message of the Gospel.

Using the mass media requires a certain ability to have a clear goal in mind, for our purposes evangelisation, and to be able to reach the 'target market'. In the next chapter I try to give a broad definition of evangelisation, look at the types of websites that can be used and then present my research findings on the so called 'target market'.

CHAPTER FIVE

USING THE INTERNET AS A TOOL FOR EVANGELISATION

5.1 Introduction

An article in *The Star* newspaper[1] poses the question 'Bored with your pastors ramblings? Select a peppier sermon online...' The article goes on to say that 17% of adults in a national poll viewed the local Church as essential in developing their faith. 'Sunday morning seems embarrassingly old-fashioned in an era when you can watch a video recreation of the last supper on your Palm or get scripture text messaged to your cell phone'. The Gospel has not changed but the method of delivery has and needs to be continually changed so that it is able to speak to the lives and reality of each new generation.

In this chapter I will first attempt a broad definition of evangelisation. I will give a brief outline of how the internet can be used for evangelisation. I will then look at the data I received from research surveys. It is important that evangelisation be kept as the focal point. The internet does have various other uses but, in my thesis, I seek its effectiveness primarily for the Church.

5.2 Defining Evangelisation

Evangelisation has two sides: to reveal God, but also to help people to combine faith and life and therefore to live the values of God's kingdom as revealed in the scriptures, but especially in the life and person of Jesus Christ. Yet, it is difficult to define 'evangelisation'. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*[2] Pope Paul VI says:

---

[1] *The Star* 3 June 2006 *Life etc.* 'Connecting with God' by Stephanie Simon
[2] This Apostolic Exhortation was born out of the October 1974 Synod of Bishops when looking at the challenging theme of evangelisation.

To evangelize: what meaning did this imperative have for Christ? It is certainly not easy to express in a complete synthesis the meaning, the content and the modes of evangelization as Jesus conceived it and put it into practice. In any case the attempt to make such a synthesis will never end (7).

He then attempts to define the essential elements of evangelisation by looking first at Jesus Christ – 'the evangeliser' - himself. He says:

As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes "the rest," which is "given in addition." Only the kingdom therefore is absolute and it makes everything else relative. The Lord will delight in describing in many ways the happiness of belonging to this kingdom (a paradoxical happiness which is made up of things that the world rejects) (8).

He continues:

This kingdom and this salvation, which are the key words of Jesus Christ's evangelization, are available to every human being as grace and mercy, and yet at the same time each individual must gain them by force -- they belong to the violent, says the Lord, through toil and suffering, through a life lived according to the Gospel, through abnegation and the cross, through the spirit of the beatitudes. But above all each individual gains them through a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls metanoia; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart (10).

Evangelisation, therefore, invites people to renewal, a 'metanoia' – profound change of mind and heart which enables the ones evangelised to see themselves, the community and indeed the world in a new way, through new lenses. Pope Paul VI also sees a profound link between Christ, the Church and evangelisation and looks at this in some detail in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (15-20).

Andriacco (2000: 43) offers a broad definition of evangelisation: 'an invitation into the life of Christ, an offer of companionship on the journey of faith'. This definition is helpful, I suggest, because many people hear the word 'evangelise' and equate it simply with conversion. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Pearsall 1999: 493) says that 'evangelise' is to convert, or seek to convert, someone to Christianity and preach the gospel. This does not capture the whole Christian understanding of evangelisation I would argue. Conversion is one of the central elements in evangelisation but this is not simply the only task of evangelisation. It is not simply a once-off event but, for the committed disciple of Christ, an ongoing process in which one seeks further to deepen the life of Christ within and in the very way of life that one lives. Pope Paul VI affirms this in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* when he says:

> '...it [evangelisation] must be patiently carried on during the course of history, in order to be realized fully on the day of the final coming of Christ, whose date is known to no one except the Father' (9).

and,

> Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it (17).

Evangelisation is therefore an ongoing process aimed at the transformation of the whole human being: spiritual, psychological, moral and intellectual. The process of evangelisation seeks to make the incarnate Christ visible in the lives of believers today through the witness, the way they live their lives, and hence is an ongoing invitation and process.

The end goal of evangelisation is union with Christ – helping the believer to live a life deeply rooted in God and directed towards the Kingdom of God. Embedded in this is the ability to help people, through the experience of their lives, to experience God – to see

God at work, God communicating with them, so that they can come 'to be saved and reach the full knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2: 4).

For the purposes of this study I use the word 'evangelisation' in the broadest sense. Evangelisation, I think, is not only about reaching the unreached or unbelievers. There are many believers who are still in need of evangelisation; by this I mean a deeper conversion to Christ and the Gospel. There is an invitation to all people, believers included, to seek a deeper attachment to Christ and to let go of their own will more and more. Christ, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prays 'let it be as you, not I, would have it' (Matt 26:39). Evangelisation, I think, is the ability to be like Christ in this sense: seeking the will of God and be willing to do God's will before all else. In this sense evangelisation is also a process – not something that happens once-off but an ongoing process. In a broader sense we seek evangelisation in issues of justice: that we want and strive for what is right to be done, we strive to treat others as God treats us. We could apply this to the ecological crisis (global warming) in our own times: we seek to have a change of heart so that we see the natural environment as something not only to be exploited, but respected and protected. We could also speak of evangelisation in the political arena: that politicians have a change of heart and therefore become people who really seek to serve those whom they govern. Therefore 'evangelisation', I would argue, is a dynamic word which takes on new meaning as we come to understand better how we can submit to God's will in all spheres of life.

I argue that the internet can be used as a tool for evangelisation. It may reach some who are not believers and bring them to belief, but I do not think that this is the only sense in which we can speak about evangelisation. I think that by helping to deepen the faith of believers and bringing them to a firmer commitment to Christ, and a fuller ownership and living of the values of Christ, the internet can be called a tool for evangelisation.

5.3 The Different uses of the Internet

Andriacco (2000: 108) argues that the internet can be used for different purposes. Not all of these purposes are necessarily directly for the task of evangelisation. He gives a broad window of the various types of uses of the internet which, it can be argued, in some way or another all contribute to the task of evangelisation but in themselves do not complete this task.

a) Informational: this is the inescapable element of any webpage, to offer information. This information may be used to educate, promote and advertise to various different audiences – members, potential members, community at large and customers for products. Andriacco says that these sites tend to be highly institutional and offer much information on the Church as a physical reality – structures, contacts and details. They offer very little information embodied in catechesis or doctrine and have little power to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:20)

b) Apologetic: websites which defend and explain the Catholic faith, helping people better to understand its teachings including the basis for them in scripture, the Early Church Fathers, and the documents of the Church. Apologetics does not just inform, it argues speaking to the mind for the sake of enlightenment and rationality.

c) Clearinghouse: websites which are gateways to a whole host of other sites with a common religious orientation. Such sites are used for networking or getting to the kind of site that you may be searching for or want to use for a certain purpose. New sites spring up all the time; a clearinghouse gives the user the ability to look at these and then select which one may be useful or helpful to them for their purposes.

d) Chaplaincy: a parish can be so oriented to taking care of its own community that there is little for the visitor who is not a member. By doing something like publishing the weekly bulletin online, it may offer a kind of virtual pastoral care for those who are seeking or using it as a means of finding out more when they seek pastoral care.

e) Spiritual: this is a component of many sites and the driving force for the existence of some. People are able to tap into some spiritual resources without having to look for someone to guide them or pay for books or the like.

f) Marketing: these exist to sell something and seek to answer the question 'what is in it for me?' What the Church believes is often not seen to be as important as what it is selling – good liturgy, fellowship and a host of other ministries. People choose a church community often based on the liturgy, fellowship and other ministries it offers over what it believes. The difficulty with this is that the message the Church preaches can be obscured by the marketing drive. Hence care should be taken that the focus is not the marketing but rather the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

g) *Evangelistic:* Christian evangelism is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, to invite people to share in the life of Christ. Many websites are not evangelistic in this sense but rather are a preparation for evangelisation. They share information, invite and reach out to people who perhaps have never really been into a church as such. This can be done in a remarkably broad range of ways. A question could be posed; images could be carefully chosen and used. If image has replaced words in our culture, then this kind of usage of image in some way replaces words and can also speak to the heart of the human person. Other sites could tell stories of evangelising power, or stories could be preserved and told, like those from the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Stories, like those of the saints, are not necessarily historically accurate or literal truth but rather tell truths like the parables Jesus told. These accounts transcend doctrine or easy explanation and have immense power to speak to the heart of the person reading them or hearing them.

The internet can be used for a variety of different purposes which all in some way or another contribute to the evangelisation process. Hence it is important that, first, the Church is clear on what kind of need it is trying to meet in cyberspace, and also what will be needed in terms of the type of site, for the internet to be effectively used. The design of the site and its contents will be dependant on what the goal of the site is, i.e. what is sought to be accomplished and also who the target of the site is. The Church faces stiff competition in

cyberspace – as she does everywhere else and hence, if she is going to be successful, needs to have clear understanding of goals and of those whom it is aimed at, which demands critical thought, review, reflection and listening.

Deeb says:

> The media, in particular, as a primary agent of globalisation… has caused a spirit of individualism and consumerism to become dominant. This has given rise to greater spontaneity and a search for personal freedom and responsibility, but in turn has caused many valued institutions, including religion, to be treated like consumer commodities (2000: 82).

A good sense of where people are and a well created cyber response to globalisation[3] can counter this trend that Deeb observes. If people are presented with alternatives, in a language that speaks to them, assists them and moves their hearts, perhaps religion will not be treated as a commodity, as Deeb suggests.

It is worth noting that in the 1930's the French theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin[4] predicted the emergence of the noosphere, a network linking humanity at a mental rather than physical level. He described the network partly in physical terms, but also in spiritual and philosophical terms and saw it as a force which would unify the world. He used the metaphor of a halo to describe how it would encircle the planet. He was not that concerned with the network for information or communication, but rather saw it as a further step in the process of human evolution, leading to a greater unity of mind, body and spirit where there would be a sharing of ideas, values, purposes and

---

[3] 'Globalisation' is the process by which the world is becoming more and more unified. It could also be described as the inter-dependence of countries on one another. It is a kind of international integration. Nations now need other nations to survive. Globalisation has advantages and disadvantages, for example, it is now easier to travel in Europe if you have an EU passport or EU Visa. You can enter into any country which is part of the EU. On the other hand globalization has the disadvantage that, if one countries economy collapses, it does and will affect others, especially those with whom it trades.

[4] Teilhard de Chardin's work on the noosphere and evolution and the 'membrane' which would surround the earth and how the internet could be this noosphere can be a subject of study in itself. Jennifer Cobb in *Cybergrace. The search for God in the digital world.* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1998) argues that cyberspace has a fundamental role to play in the ongoing evolution of soul and spirit through the universe and hence to greater unity.

resources across the planet. Teilhard de Chardin believed that this represented 'a new stage in evolution, one marked by the capacity for deep spiritual and intellectual experience' (Cobb 1998: 42). This movement to greater unity of mind, body and spirit seems to be what Paul attempts to explain in his letter to the Ephesians '...until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself' (Eph 4: 13). It is also for this unity which Jesus himself prays: 'May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you' (John 17: 21). The media therefore, and specifically the internet, which drive globalisation would also, in Teilhard de Chardin's view, be drawing humanity and creation into the unity which he saw and the oneness Jesus himself prays for.

I will now give a short analysis of internet usage in South Africa followed by a summary of the research I conducted. I attempt to understand better what it is people are seeking on the internet and what people think should be available on the internet so as to help them begin to realise this unity and hence facilitate the sharing of ideas, values, purpose and resources. I would also like to note, at this point, that the research I have conducted has only been done amongst those with access to the internet. For those (and this is a minority) who have access the internet is used widely. Many more people do not use the internet as they simply do not have access.

5.4 The Internet in South Africa

Before I present the research findings I would like to present a short analysis of internet usage in South Africa and consequently the context for this research. This analysis contains a few eye-opening figures for internet users in South Africa and also highlights some of the limitations of the research I undertook.

In 2005 the Link Centre at the Wits University School of Public and Development Management produced a research report entitled *Towards an African e-Index: Household and Individual ICT Access and Usage across 10 African Countries* edited by

Gillwald. These countries included: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The report found that although the South African telecommunications sector continued to grow above the national economic growth rate, it is not operating optimally, and is in fact very expensive. The report says that the success of the mobile telephone industry appears to have come at the cost of a 'data divide' between those with access to the internet and the benefits it provides, and those without access (:132). The report says that, in 2004, internet penetration seems to have reached a plateau, which is the standard path of technological adaption. In 2004 an estimated 6% of the population had internet access; that amounts to about 1,1 million people (:133). The report claims that the effective doubling of costs by Telkom, the telecommunications operator in South Africa, since privatisation has had a huge impact on the cost of internet services in South Africa. Compared to other low middle income countries, South Africa does not have a broadband market, because costs remain so high. The report notes that ADSL costs in South Africa are 139% higher than the average price of countries surveyed (:150). The report says that Telkom's pricing structure is excessive (:134).

The report claimed that there were only 981 collective access internet points in South Africa in 2004; these points included post offices, digital villages and telecentres. The report says:

> With fixed line prices so high, cyber cafés have not penetrated throughout the country, with two of South Africa's nine provinces without any commercial access points. The high price of fixed line access translates into an average cost per hour in commercial cyber cafés of around R27 (:134).

In Tanzania internet access in cyber cafés costs about 1500TSH[5] per hour, which amounts to about R8,79; in Lusaka, Zambia (which is considered to have an expensive telecommunications market) the cost is 6,000ZMK which is about R10,78; in the

---

[5] http://www.world66.com/africa/tanzania/internetcafes (Accessed 6 January 2008).

Copperbelt the price averages 18,000ZMK per hour which converts to about R32,34 (:187). Ethiopians pay on average Birr 0.20-0.35 a minute in cyber cafés, the charge per hour is on average US$2.1 which converts into R14.11 (:71). Connell (2004:22) says that, in Argentina, internet access costs about 1,5 pesos per hour which translates into about R3,20.

The report goes on to reveal that only 5.7% of South Africans have email addresses compared to 11.2% in Argentina, 7.28% in Turkey and 9.84% in Poland, which are also all classified as low middle-income countries. Uptake of the internet is much more limited than mobile phones and reflects the poor access that many South Africans have to the internet. The use of cyber cafés is low because of availability, cost and poor, slow equipment which makes the access slow and therefore more expensive (2005:146).

Most users have access to the internet at school or at work. The report claims that there is a common consensus that access to the internet is important for work and career purposes and that the most common users of the internet are younger people (:147). The report says

> ... South Africans value communications services and are willing to pay an extraordinary high price for them, pricing clearly remains an inhibiting factor, both with regard to ownership and usage (:148).

The report calls for a policy perspective in the telecommunications industry because, without one, it says that the new digital divide will develop further between those with access and those without to the internet (:148).

The low internet usage statistics are grounded in the perception that the internet is a high cost medium which is inefficient, and hence the report claims that Telkom's monopoly has negatively impacted on internet usage and the stagnant number of subscribers (:150). This, it says, has directly affected the fact that the mobile sector is so large and many more people have and use mobile phones.

It is therefore clear that internet access in South Africa is extremely expensive and therefore internet usage is low at present. This will probably only change when competition is introduced into the South African telecommunications market. It is interesting to note that internet costs are comparatively much higher than that of other African countries as well.

5.5 Research

5.5.1 Methodology

In order to collect data for the thesis I set up an anonymous questionnaire (see appendix 1 for the questionnaire). The people surveyed were a self-selected sample. I gave over 100 questionnaires out and it was difficult to get them back. 81 of the questionnaires were returned to me after I asked the respondents numerous times for their kind response. In some cases, the questionnaires were emailed to respondents and returned by email. Some of the email responses were the most difficult to get back!

The research which was done in an empirical manner[6]. By this I mean that the questionnaire was structured in such a way that a number (value) could be given to the questions. This was done even though a detailed statistical analysis was never intended or attempted. My main objective, albeit crude, was to gain some insight into what people thought and wanted on the internet as far as the Church (or religion in the case of non-Christian) was concerned. I wanted to get a feel for the general impression people had and the opinions they held on the subject. The results, therefore, can in no way be used statistically.

The demographics of those who completed the questionnaire can be seen in the table below:

---

[6] Based on my own personal observation through a questionnaire rather than theory or logic.

	Men	Women	Anonymous	
Responses:	41	37	3	**Total Responses** *81*
Average Age:	34.08	31.5	23.6	**Average Age** *29.72*
Youngest:	21	20	18	**Youngest Average** *19.66*
Oldest:	50	45	25	**Oldest Average** *40*

Participants were assured of confidentiality and could choose to be anonymous. There were no obvious differences between men and women except that, for the most part, women seem to take more time in answering and gave more comprehensive answers than did the men. When questions were left unanswered, it was the men for the most part who did not offer answers.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first on internet usage and the second on the Church and the internet.

The research in no way claims authority and is limited by a number of factors. The research was done in three major centres: Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Hence all those targeted had access to the internet. The number of those who participated in the research was small and so this is merely a sample of habits and attitudes concerning the internet and what people are thinking about the Church/religion and the internet.

5.5.2 Discussion of the Research Findings

5.5.2.1 Section A: Internet Usage

Questions 1-12 fell into Section A of the questionnaire.

96% of the respondents reported to have computers of their own from which they could access the internet. Over 50% of these also indicated that they had computers at work and hence had access to the internet from home and work, giving them almost 24 hour access to the internet. Those who did not have computers of their own said that they could access the internet either at work or at university. Only two respondents reported going to internet cafés for access to the internet. Of the group sampled, this shows that a high number of people have internet access at home and at work. A small percentage indicates that they go to internet cafés. This is interesting to note as internet cafés in places like South America can be found in abundance. Although growing, the phenomenon of internet cafés in South Africa is not as big as other places in the world. There are relatively few in South Africa and using one is certainly much more costly than in the USA, Europe and South America.

60% of respondents name as the most important value that the internet contributes to their lives, being in touch with family and friends. Other important values were (in order of highest ranking) seeking information, research, connecting with the world and entertainment. This seems to indicate that people are relating to and keeping in touch with others online. Hence the internet is facilitating relationships between people, but also helping people find some sort of meaning through information and research.

70% of the respondents indicated that they logged onto the internet 3 times and more on average a day. Of these only 40% claimed to spend 2 hours or more a day on the internet (this does not include email). 30% indicated that they spent 30 minutes or less online a day, and another 30% indicated that that spent around 1 hour a day online. I found this to be an interesting phenomenon – people are logging onto the internet 3 times a day or more on average. 40% claim to be spending 2 hours or more a day online. This suggests that people are certainly to be found online and that being online has become an important part of daily life.

80% of respondents indicated that they felt connected when they were online, 10% said that they were engaged. The remaining 10% indicated they used the internet to escape.

No respondents said that they were using the internet because they felt isolated or lonely. Hence many people, through being online, are experiencing being 'connected' (therefore being in relationships?) and feel that they are active participants in shaping the world by sharing information, socio-cultural, economic and political commonalities (could this be the process often referred to as 'globalisation'?[7])

Question number 7 produced some interesting results. 40% of respondents said that they did not give online relationships priority; 25% said that online relationships were a bit important and 25% said that these types of relationships were relatively important. 10% did not give an answer to this question. This is interesting as it indicates that, out of the sample group, people do see being online with others as 'relational'. Hence, being online is experienced as bringing people into relationship with others but little importance seems to be placed on online relationships.

85% of respondents said that they mostly go online for email, 10% used the internet mainly for research and 5% went to specific websites. Over 50% also indicated that they went online for news and information. 30% recorded that they go online for general surfing. 7% of respondents indicated that they used the internet for email, news/information, specific sites, research and general surfing.

It was interesting to note that 75% of the respondents indicate that they are self-taught in terms of internet usage. 20% claim to have been taught at university and the remaining 5% say that they acquired skills to use the internet at the work place. This affirms that the internet allows easy access and with relatively little or no skill people can open for themselves a new world of relationships, information, news and research. For this reason it is more likely that more and more people, even those with little to no formal education, will be found on the internet in increasing numbers.

40% of respondents said that they had Google as their homepage. 20% said that they had sites like hotmail, mweb or yahoo which enabled them to check their email. 35% listed

---

[7] See footnote 3, page 101.

company sites, news pages (like the *Mail & Guardian* and BBC) and others listed Facebook and personal sites like a bank for financial purposes. 5% said that they did not have a specific homepage and were not interested in having one. It is interesting that nobody in the sample group, made up of mixed gender, backgrounds and religious traditions, mentioned a religious site as a homepage. Is this because religion is not expected to be online? Religion is not what people seek online? Or that religious sites have not yet been able to use the internet as well as commerce and industry have?

The overwhelming answer to question 12 on the survey which asked "what was least helpful on the internet?" was answered by 80% of respondents. They said that they find an overwhelming amount of information on the internet, but struggle to know how reliable it is and where a searcher should even begin, there seems to be a sense of being overwhelmed. This would, I suspect, be a common problem for web users all over the world. Even in religious circles a site may claim to be 'orthodox'. How does one know that this is true and how does one verify the source? This will also prove to be an ongoing struggle and already is in the world of academia.

Numerous respondents also complained about pop-up windows and adverts. Some mentioned internet viruses and said that they found this to be the least helpful part of being an internet user.

Section A of the survey gives some idea of peoples attitudes, habits and uses of the internet. In Section B I attempt to gather information specifically on the Church and the internet.

5.5.2.2 Section B: The Church and the Internet

In this section of the questionnaire I tried to ascertain what respondents thought of the Church's use of the internet.

Respondents were first asked whether or not they thought the Church used the internet successfully; 80% responded no. 17% said yes and 3% said that they did not know. When asked to give a reason for their response many commented that very often church-based websites were unprofessional and lacked some sort of appeal; some respondents commented that there are lots of pages available but often they are not user friendly, containing terminology and concepts that are difficult to understand. One respondent said that the Church is unable to use the internet successfully because poor communities and countries don't have the infrastructure and it is too expensive when there is the ability to access the internet. Another respondent said that good web administrators are rare and would need to be remunerated for their efforts, and given the fact that the Church is often perceived as 'wanting things for free', it would be difficult to get a good administrator. Some commented that websites are expected to change and church websites are notorious for not being changed and updated. Another respondent felt that although the Church is on the internet to some degree, it never seems to use the latest technologies, there seems to be a 'phobia' to use what is new. One respondent was very critical of church websites that merely give information and afford the user no space to express opinions on a variety of faith-related issues. They pointed out that most churches are run by 'old' people who do not understand this technology and hence think that it is not important; they report a minister saying that this is a 'fashion' that will pass, and so getting the church on the web is a waste of time!

The 17% who thought the Church did use the internet well substantiated this by saying that there is much good theology, theological documents and related information online. One commented that everything they have searched for they found. Another commented that there were many Christian groups on the web and groups even within churches therefore they thought that the internet was being used well by the Church.

Overwhelmingly, respondents seemed to think that the Church had not realised the potential of the internet and that the church was not using the internet well.

97% of respondents said that they had used the internet for gathering information about the Church and 3% said that they had not. When asked which sites were most useful or their favourite, there was a great variety of sites, from local church community sites to more universal sites. A great number of youth sites were often mentioned, and sites which were interactive by nature, requiring something of the user, rather than just giving information.

When the respondents were asked if they use the internet for upliftment or prayer, 85% of respondents said no; 15% said yes. One of the respondents thought that this was a rather odd suggestion! This is interesting, as later I will look at two websites which are specifically designed to help people to pray, and they seem to have achieved great success.

A number of interesting suggestions were made on how the Church could use the internet better. A number of respondents said that church-based websites should be interactive and allow user participation; sites should not only just transmit information. This included having discussion forums, blogs and communities similar to Facebook online. Others suggested a place where people can go when they need help, a platform for people to seek guidance and even just discuss their faith with someone who is a 'faith professional'. Another respondent suggested that the internet could be used for advocacy work, fundraising and attempting to connect poor countries and communities with those who were richer and well resourced. A number or respondents said that there should be a safe place for people to chat about faith issues to other people of faith; this kind of site would have 'to be well administered and monitored though'. An overwhelming response to how the Church could better use the internet was that sites should be updated regularly and at relevant times, not just once a year. This is a criticism that surfaced in more than one question on the questionnaire. Another respondent said that the Church should find ways of using the internet for spiritual direction, helping people to combat loneliness and spreading information that would be 'relevant and useful to people's lives'. It is curious that in the first section of the questionnaire no respondent indicated that they went online

when feeling lonely, yet the assumption here is that people who are online are lonely and hence, they suggest, there needs to be a site that helps people deal with loneliness.

Most respondents who were involved in church work indicated that they did use the internet as a means of information, most saying that they found it useful and helpful for youth ministry.

60% of respondents felt that the internet could be used to establish a sense of community online; 40% said no. When asked why, a number said that interaction and frequency of interaction between community members would be increased if communities were able to communicate online. 60% of respondents felt that the internet could be used to enhance community life within the Church, while 30% said that they did not think it would. 10% said that they did not know if this would be the case. 98% of respondents think that community is built on personal communication, especially in important issues, and this would best be done in person.

When asked if involvement in chat rooms makes conversation easier the response was: 10% yes, 60% no, 20% said they have never been into a chat room and were not sure what it was and 10% did not answer the question. Linked to this, 85% of respondents said that they would not find it easy to do any sort of self-disclosure online and therefore answered no to the question; 2% said they might but it was doubtful; 12% did not answer the question and 1% said that they were unsure of what self-disclosure meant. Reasons given for this were that you do not know who you are talking to or who else has access to the information you are passing on; others said that they would be suspicious of the authenticity of the receiver of the self-disclosure. Another said that it would be difficult because communication would be more than information, and to really tell someone something important they would need to see them and their body language. Another respondent said that true self-disclosure could only take place in person.

80% of respondents felt that there was a difference between physically attending a Sunday church service and being with others online. 10% said that they did not see an

important difference and in fact would probably be more focused and less inclined to the distraction of having people around them in a building; 5% suggested that being with God is being with God, and if you chose to do that on the internet with others, it was the same as going to church or being alone in your bedroom. 5% did not answer the question. This suggests that people still see physical presence and community as best and prioritise this as the most fulfilling way to be in community.

At the end of the questionnaire one respondent made the following comment:

> This is a powerful tool that the Church ignores at her peril. It would be useful to know if religious type chat rooms would be used by youth. Since the youth are the ones who are slipping away from the Church we urgently need to look at what gets them. I would suspect that the internet is a really good thing. The other aspect of the whole thing is that poorly educated priests are now targets for any one with a computer who can challenge them on any aspect of theology and they need to be taught more than ever not to be arrogant when faced by conflicting information. Something priests are not good at.

5.6 Summary

A number of interesting details arise from the research sample. A summary of the key findings is:

1. People are using the internet for a number of hours a day and are hence spending time online. Having access to the internet and being online has thus become and important way of life for those who have access to the internet. as was suggested earlier, most people use the internet as a tool for communication.
2. The majority of people using the internet feel connected and engaged. There is a real sense that those who are on the internet are participating in shaping the world and building new relationships which were impossible before. (Could this be how individuals themselves are making globalisation a reality?)

116

3. The research suggests that some people see being connected to others and sharing with them through modems and cables to be a 'relationship'. Hence being online brings people into relationship and is redefining our social and psychological landscape.

4. Most people who participated in the research indicated that they were self-taught in the ways of the internet. This suggests just how easy access is. Little knowledge is needed beyond basic education for people to log on and use the internet for engagement with others. Hence it is more likely that many more people than ever before can participate in the affairs of the Church (and indeed of the world) with fairly little training. Hence everyone becomes a voice and has a platform to express themselves, as well as seek what they may not have had access to before they were engaged in cyberspace.

5. Most respondents report finding an overwhelming amount of information on the internet and not being quite sure where to begin a search. The question of the verification of information and its authenticity was also raised as a concern. This suggests a need for direction and discernment for those using the internet.

6. A large percentage of the respondents believe that the Church is not using the internet well, that there is a 'phobia' of technology, or that the Church dismisses the importance of technology and the role technology plays in people's everyday lives. Hence the majority response would be that the Church has not realised (or refuses to?) the potential of the internet. Where the internet is used, sites are often badly set up, badly managed and not updated, or allow very little participation from the user – it is a one-way street where the user is merely a passive recipient.

7. There is a sense in which being engaged online establishes a community – an online community. However most respondents explicitly said that they still thought an actual physical community should be a priority. An online community can be used as a vehicle to build a physical community, but a physical community should always be the priority seemed to be the general feeling.

8. Most respondents did not think that online self-disclosure was a good idea. There is suspicion of the authenticity of the other users online, and also a privacy/security factor.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to give a broad definition of the term 'evangelisation'. I think that it is important that evangelisation not merely be seen as conversion, but a much broader ongoing process to which not only non-Christians, but all Christians are continually being invited to. Evangelisation involves the whole human person and all the dimensions of the person. I then gave a broad window of the various types of uses which the internet offers for the evangelisation process. I argue that a clear goal and carefully constructed website which has listened attentively to the needs of its potential users can facilitate the evangelisation process. In the second part of this chapter I looked at internet usage in South Africa and did a small cost comparison with some other African countries. I then looked at the user profile of the internet by presenting my research findings. I first give an explanation of the research, clearly stating its limitations. I then present my findings in detail, providing an eight point summary as a conclusion.

In the following chapter I will propose an Ignatian Communications Model. I hope to show how this model can aid the Church in the use of the internet. I hope to suggest how the needs of users, revealed in the research, can be potentially met by using this model.

CHAPTER SIX

IGNATIUS LOYOLA AND COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 Ignatius Loyola and the Internet

In this chapter I will attempt to show that St. Ignatius Loyola, although born in the 15th century, offers us invaluable insights into effective communication. I will give a brief outline of his life; after this I will draw on his outlook to indicate what we can learn from him if we are to use the internet as a means of communication for evangelisation. I further suggest that it is possible to construct an 'Ignatian Communications Approach'.

6.2. The life of Ignatius Lopez de Loyola[1]

Iñigo López de Loyola, known as Ignatius Loyola in the English-speaking world, was born in 1491 in his family home of Loyola in the parish of Azpeitia in the Basque province of Guipúzcoa. He was the last of thirteen children. The 'new world' was about to be discovered; Columbus would set sail in 1492. Ignatius received the chivalric and academic education of his class.

At the age of about thirteen Ignatius was sent to Arévalo of Juan Velászquez de Cuéllar, chief treasurer of King Ferdinand of Aragon, where he was trained in the manners and skills appropriate for a courtier. When Velászquez died in 1517, Ignatius entered military service under Don Marique de Lara, duke of Nájera and viceroy of Navarre. In 1521 King Francis I of France opened the first phase of his long contest with the newly-elected emperor, Charles of Habsburg. French troops entered Spain on 20 May 1516 and Ignatius was at Pamplona defending it when he was struck by a cannonball. His right leg was shattered and his left badly damaged. Doctors, after many painful operations, were unable to prevent him from having a life-long limp.

---

[1] This is a brief account of the life of Ignatius de Loyola. For a more in-depth account consult the following: Dalmases, C. *Ignatius of Loyola*. (St. Louis University: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985); Caraman, P. *Ignatius Loyola*. (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., 1990); Purcell, M. *The First Jesuit St. Ignatius Loyola 1491-1556*. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1981).

It was during his time of recuperation in Loyola that Ignatius started reading, out of sheer desperation and boredom, the lives of the saints. In the castle, he was not able to get any of the tales of chivalry that he loved to read. He read *The Golden Legend* by Jacopo da Voraigne and the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony (O'Malley 1993: 24). The literature inspired him and he found himself thinking about living his life as some of the saints did. This he dreamt of against living his life as a chivalric hero. It was this movement, in dreams and fantasy, between the two opposing lifestyles that began Ignatius's conversion. After long consideration and carefully paying attention to his inner movements of agitation and serenity, Ignatius gradually came to the conviction that God was speaking to him and thus resolved to begin an entirely new life.

Once he was well enough, Ignatius set out for Jerusalem on pilgrimage. At Manresa Ignatius meditated on the life of Christ and discovered *The Imitation of Christ*, a book to which he remained devoted all his life. At the same time he gave himself up to a programme of prayer, fasting, self-flagellation, and other austerities that were extreme even for the sixteenth century. It was during this time that he began to use his religious experience to help others. He kept notes on the different religious experiences he had, which later formed the basis and were the beginnings of *The Spiritual Exercises*.[2]

His journey led him eventually to spend time in studies as he believed that there was a relationship between ministry and studies. In the autumn of 1524 he found himself in classes at Barcelona trying to learn Latin grammar with children. In the meantime he begged for food in the evenings and shared what he could with other vagrants in the streets. Later he attended lectures at the University of Alcala. The studies were influenced by the climate at the University of Paris and by aspects of the humanist movements of the Renaissance in Italy. In his free time he continued to beg for sustenance and lived with the vagrants on the streets, while also guiding a few people with the *Spiritual Exercises* and teaching catechism. In 1527/28 Ignatius moved to Paris for further studies and it was

---

[2] For more information on *The Spiritual Exercises* consult either William A Barry *Finding God in all Things – A companion to The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.* (Notre Dame IN: Ave Maria Press, 1991); Javier Melloni's *The Exercises of Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition.* (Bodmin: MPG Books Ltd., 2000); or John W. O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp 37-50.

in Paris he was soon joined by a few others who dressed in a similar way to him and followed the same style of life, which included the practice of receiving Communion every week. This was the early beginnings of what is known today as The Society of Jesus or Jesuits.[3] Ignatius, and his few companions, were often accused of heresy and brought before numerous ecclesiastical courts and tribunals. Finally, on the 27 September 1540, Ignatius and his companions received papal approval from Pope Paul III and the Society of Jesus was 'officially' born. On the Friday of Easter week, April 22, 1541, at the Church of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, the companions pronounced their vows in the newly formed Order.

6.3 Ignatius and Communication

Ignatius, from the beginning of his conversion, was already taking notes and having what he termed 'spiritual conversations' with others, hoping to learn from them in some instances, and bring others to conversion at other times. Hence, communication seemed to come naturally to him, and he was concerned about what was communicated to him by God and others, as well as the way he communicated with others. There are a number of events and characteristics from which we can learn more about his emphasis and understanding to construct an Ignatian Communications Model.

6.3.1 Ignatius the administrative consultant

Lambert (2000: 9) reminds us that Ignatius was of the Basque aristocracy. Ignatius had over ten years of formation at court which formed him profoundly and which was 'determined by values and usages of a courtly kind' (: 10). His first assignment was not as a soldier but as an administrative consultant for a city. Ignatius, Lambert points out (:10), should not only be viewed from the military barracks, but also as a man who learnt to move (and communicate) in the courtly world. He would, presumably, have had to learn about hierarchy, protocol, as well as (what we might call today) verbal and non-verbal communication.

---

[3] Members of the Society of Jesus are called Jesuits.

6.3.2 Choosing certain places for their symbolic richness

Ignatius, after his conversion, chose certain key places which he wished to visit in imitation of the saints before him, but also in imitation of Christ. He wanted to go to the Holy Land on pilgrimage to follow in the footsteps of Christ and walk on the land which Christ walked. He was a man for which symbol and engagement in those symbols was important. Not only did he believe that it would be a good exercise for him, but the symbolic significance of being at those places was important to him. The ability to engage in and be part of the world of the saints and Christ himself was significant. He believed that this would have an impact on his own life, and was willing to learn from the experiences he had as he embarked on visiting what he identified as 'key places'.

6.3.3 A 'place' in the heart of Rome

When setting up his new religious order, in the 1500's, Ignatius wanted a 'place' in the heart of Rome. He selected a place on the route of the papal procession from the Vatican to another papal palace. The visibility and access to others of the Society of Jesus was important to Ignatius. Ignatius operated very much by adapting and using what there was at his disposal[4] to further the mission he believed God called him to. Ignatius adapted early communications technologies for his purpose, in this case for increased communication.

One of the last things he did before he died was to write to the company from which he had just bought a printing press. As the Society of Jesus grew, more copies were needed of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius wanted to be able to print enough copies and thus wanted his own printing press. He was unhappy with the italic font, which he found ugly, and the company had not supplied enough vowels to set a whole book. Ignatius was

---

[4] In annotation 18 (Fleming 1996: 16) of *The Spiritual Exercises*, we see how concerned Ignatius was with adaptation, so that what is presented works. He writes '... the Spiritual Exercises have to be adapted to the dispositions of the persons who wish to receive them, that is, to their age, education, or ability, in order not to give to one who is uneducated or of little intelligence things he cannot bear of profit by.' This may not seem 'politically correct' today – references to the limitations of others – but Ignatius raises a valid point about our ability to adapt the means we have today so that people may profit from the message we want to proclaim.

always eager to adapt new ways of learning, which he experienced in the University of Paris, or new technologies, such as the printing press, to further his mission and the mission of the Society.

6.3.4 The way of Ignatius: 'Spiritual Conversations'

Ignatius often entered into what he called 'spiritual conversations' and urged his companions to do the same. He would often meet someone and begin talking to them. Slowly he would shift the conversation so that in the end they found themselves discussing things he would deem important for spiritual nourishment. Ignatius therefore saw the importance of dialogue and the ability to enter into dialogue with others. 'Enter by the door of the other' is a Spanish proverb that does well to capture the Ignatian communication model. Ignatius was willing to meet others where they were and, with a goal in mind, slowly steer them to talk about matters which were of God and salvation. He would listen attentively and with patience looking for the opportunity gently to steer the conversation to matters which he considered more urgent. He writes:

> In this way we can praise what is good in people, or agree with them in a single
> good matter, while we pass over the things that are bad with them. And since we
> win their love, we succeed better in our affairs. And while we go in by their door,
> we come out by our own (Lambert 2000: 58).

It seems clear Ignatius knew the need for dialogue and for good communicators to be willing to enter into dialogue, never losing sight of the focus and point of the dialogue. He had a willingness to enter into dialogue and wait for the opportune time gently to guide the other. There is a real sense in which he saw being present to and with others as an important task which could not be neglected. There was need to listen and engage with others.

6.3.5 The way of Ignatius: 'Write letters'

Ignatius established a communication system through letters. He wrote to Peter Favre (I, 236-38, Letter 58) explaining the plan and care which should be taken in writing letters (Young 1959: 63). He wanted them to write regularly and describe their spiritual activities. He complains about the neglect of this practice. We find in this the beginnings of the importance of communication in the Ignatian approach and the use of communication structures of his time for 'the greater glory of God' (:63). Ignatius writes:

'I exhort you, then, as I am bound to do for the greater glory of God our Lord, and I beg of you by His love and reverence to improve your writing and to conceive some esteem for it and a desire to edify your brethren and your neighbour by your letters. Be assured that the time you spend at it— it can be put down to my account—will be well spent in our Lord. It costs me an effort to write a principal letter twice, to give it some appearance of order, to say nothing of many sheets besides. Even this letter I have written twice with my own hand; how much more, then, should each member of the Society do likewise? You indeed have to write to one person only, but I to all. I can say in all truth that the other night we counted the letters that we were sending out to various places and found that the number reached two hundred and fifty. If some of you in the Society are busy, I am convinced that I am not less busy than any of you, and with less health than you. Up to the present I cannot praise a single one of you in this matter, though neither do I wish to find fault. If the copies of the letters from others which I send you seem to be arranged in some order and contain little that is superfluous, it is because, at no little loss of time, I have selected what is edifying, rearranging the very words they use and cutting out those that are irrelevant, so as to give all of you some pleasure in our Lord and edification for those who bear them for the first time. So, again I beg of you, by your love and reverence for the Divine Majesty, put your heart in this matter and get to work with all diligence; it will contribute so much for the spiritual progress and consolation of souls' (Young 1959: 63-64).

6.3.6 'Instructions for the Conference of Trent'

One of the key texts[5] which aid in analysing Ignatius' understanding of communication as well as his framework for communicating is a piece he wrote before the Council of Trent entitled 'Instructions for the Conference in Trent'.[6] The instruction was composed in the beginning of 1546 and written to Jay, Lainez and Salmerón, three Jesuits who were going to attend the Council and take part as theological *periti*.[7] An analysis of this instruction exposes the way Ignatius approached communication. Ignatius was conscious of style and, as Lambert (2000: 28) points out, the phrase 'our manner of proceeding' developed as Ignatius had paid close attention to the way in which things were done; no less in the area of communication.

The first part of the letter is written for 'dealing with others'. Ignatius saw the council as an event of extraordinary and intense communication and not as an occurrence in order to defend or deepen old truths and reject heresies. He recommends to the Jesuits who go to Trent not to take with them the latest theological lexicon but rather to pay attention to their manner of communication (Lambert 2000: 29).

The second part of the letter is headed 'in order to assist souls'. This section deals with the pastoral activities of Jesuits at the council. Ignatius seemed to believe that by doing pastoral work (and he mentions such things as visiting the sick in hospitals and confessions of the poor) theological discussions and decisions would be more credible and effective and provide greater interpretative support because of the concrete 'hands on' foundation.

---

[5] Lambert (2000: 28) sees this letter as a key text in trying to understand the Ignatian approach to communication.

[6] Lambert (2000: 28) points out that by "Conference in Trent" Ignatius actually means the famous Council of Trent. Trent was the nineteenth ecumenical council of the Church held from 1546 to 1563 and was the principal Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation. It was called "Trent" as it was held in the Italian City of Trent. It defined the canon of Scripture, Original Sin, justification, the seven sacraments etc. It was the primary influence on Catholic life until the pontificate of John XXIII from 1958 to 1963, see McBrien, R. *Catholicism.* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), p 1253.

[7] Theological 'specialists'

The third part of the letter deals with the Jesuits themselves 'in order the more to help one another'. Ignatius here proposes that the Jesuits have a daily report amongst themselves in which they consider how they observed each other and how they communicated in the daily meetings of the council. Hence, it seems, Ignatius wanted the Jesuits to assess and reflect on their communication procedure each day, noting what could be improved, what worked and did not work for them that day, so that they could be more effective in communication.

It seems, therefore, that Ignatius attempts to propose a format for effective communication in this letter. First, Ignatius wants the Jesuits to be aware of the power of communication, and importantly the way they actually go about communicating as the form (or manner) is crucial in the act of communicating effectively. Second, Ignatius insists on a firm foundation of experience which adds credibility. He wants theological discussions to be rooted not in principles and theories but in the needs of the people, to whom he believes the Church is sent on mission to assist and be with. He believed that the primary task of the church was to 'assist souls', and in order to do this a concrete experience of the conditions and circumstances of these 'souls' was necessary. Finally, Ignatius saw the absolute need for continued reflection on the way communication took place. Ignatius writes that faults in one another should be pointed out in order to help one another grow in charity and good influence all around. Besides these evaluation meetings, he also urges the examen[8] to be done twice daily so that there is ongoing reflection and evaluation of the work they are engaged in and of how it is affecting them.

6.3.7 The Spiritual Exercises[9]

The Spiritual Exercises are Ignatius's greatest work and legacy. If one simply tries to pick them up and read them they are boring and make no sense. However, when done

---

[8] The 'examen' or 'examination of consciousness' is a practice instituted by St. Ignatius Loyola. It is a method of sensitizing yourself to the presence of God through connecting the movements of the heart to the events of life.

[9] In this thesis I use David Fleming's translation of The Spiritual Exercises: *Draw me into your friendship*. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

with skilled guidance experience shows over and over again that they are a powerful instrument for change and growth. It is important to remember that these *Exercises* were the fruit of Ignatius's own personal experience. During his long convalescence at Loyola and later at Manresa, Ignatius made notes on his experience:

> ... reflecting upon it, sifting it, interpreting it; and this process continued in later years so that he continuously tried to understand his experience, and in particular those aspects of it that seemed to hold special significance for him at different times. (Lonsdale 2000: 127).

Later, Ignatius was said to be always seen carrying a sheath of notes with him, continually making new notes, adding and changing what he already had. It would also be true to say that *The Spiritual Exercises*, later, were a blend of his personal experience with his pastoral experience. *The Spiritual Exercises* are essentially a tool for communication. They initiate a plethora of dialogue: between the person making them (referred to as the 'exercitant') and the one directing them (the 'director'); the director and the text itself; between the exercitant and the essentials of Christian faith; between the exercitant and the 'signs of the times'; between the director and God; and ultimately (which is the purpose of these *Exercises*) the exercitant and God. Ignatius believed that God continually communicated with humanity – this is God's gift – and that humanity could come to know God and hear God's communication through the experiences of our lives.

The Spiritual Exercises are meditations and contemplations on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ignatius adds 'Ignatian material' and blends this in with the life of Christ. The material is organised into four 'weeks'. These 'weeks' are not the conventional weeks we are accustomed to i.e. seven chronological days, but rather are calculated by specific graces sought in prayer. The time is allocated according to the needs of the subject matter and there is no rigid pre-determined way of calculating these weeks. One of the key things to be remembered in the work of Ignatius is a sense of flexibility and the willingness to change and adapt if necessary.

The first week focuses on the purgative way, examining one's life and seeking forgiveness from God for the ways in which your life has not conformed to Christian life. The second week looks at the life of Christ, his early ministry and work and the exercitant is led to be with Christ in this time. An election or decision concerning one's state in life or a reform of one's life is also made at the end of the second week; this is deepened in the experience of weeks three and four. The third week looks at the passion and death of Christ. The exercitant is led through being with Christ through this experience. The fourth week is praying through the resurrection of Christ and the demands this makes for the Christian in the world today.

At the beginning of *The Spiritual Exercises,* Ignatius writes a number of annotations in order to help the director and directee understand what they are about to do.[10] *The Spiritual Exercises* can be described in essence as a tool for communication; they provide the space and focus for the person doing them to communicate with God, self and the director so to enable people to 'seek and find the Divine will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul' (*SpEx* 1). Ignatius wanted to help others to focus their lives through the use of these *Exercises* which were based on his own experience and helped him orientate his life and goals.

Ignatius wanted people to be moved in their hearts as he knew that in order for any real conversion to take place this was necessary. He says: 'For it is not knowing much, but realising and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul.' (*SpEx* 2) In the *Principle and Foundation* (at the beginning of *The Spiritual Exercises*) he says to people embarking on these exercises clearly that they should do what helps and leave what does not help:

> And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they
> may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created. From this it follows

---

[10] The brevity and conciseness of these annotations as well as his notes at the end of *The Spiritual Exercises* could also be examined as part of his communicative style and may also indicate how careful Ignatius was to communicate what was important and necessary.

that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it (*SpEx* 23).[11]

Ignatius also asks the one doing *The Spiritual Exercises* to take time to prepare each prayer time well and to reflect on the prayer after it has been done. He seems to realise that the actual act of communicating is itself not enough. For effective communication to take place many other considerations have to be made: preparation of time, place, method and the evaluation afterwards.

In a number of places, in his letters and in *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius repeats the necessity for being slow to speak but eager to listen, so that an effective and appropriate response could be made to whatever is at hand. He cautions the director of *The Spiritual Exercises*, in annotation fifteen, not to influence the directee towards one decision or another, but rather to let God act directly on the directee.

In his letter to the Jesuits attending the council of Trent he says:

> 'Anyone of ours should be slow to speak… Along with his reticence, he should rely on a readiness to listen, keeping quiet so as to sense and appreciate the positions, emotions and desires of those speaking. Then he will be better able to speak or to keep silent' (Munitiz & Endean 1996: 164).

6.4 Ignatius and the Imagination:

Ignatius knew the power of the imagination and throughout *The Spiritual Exercises* he proposes that the one doing them insert themselves into the various scenes they are using for a particular prayer period and see themselves as a participant. The use of the

---

[11] Fleming in his contemporary reading might make it clearer. He translates it as: 'Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me' (1996: 26-27).

imagination is key to the *The Spiritual Exercises*.[12] The narratives call to mind an event and the person doing *The Spiritual Exercises* is to make a mental representation of this event. This all takes place in the 'inner space'. Physical and social space has been substituted with inner space. Not only is the imagination important for Ignatius but again, we notice, the idea of symbol and the ability to engage in that symbol which in itself gives meaning – like his own pilgrimage to walk where Christ had walked.

Ignatius saw the power of the imagination and wants the one doing the *The Spiritual Exercises* to be mindful of their capacity to imagine, and he constantly reminds the exercitant to do just that. Ignatius wants the exercitant to use their imagination to imagine the life of Christ, but he also uses the imagination in a creative way himself by setting up two of the key meditations of *The Spiritual Exercises* in the imagination. These two, the Two Standards and Three Classes of People, not only use the imagination but also teach the exercitant to reflect on and discern the circumstance and context they find themselves in. Beaudoin (2003: 48) points out that we can determine two types of imagination being described by Ignatius. First, Ignatius wants the excercitant' to imagine themselves in a setting conducive to a particular meditation. These 'imagines' he calls 'compositions of place' or 'representations of place'. We can imagine settings such as being present with, for example, Jesus in the temple. We can also imagine abstract and invisible settings such as imaging our soul imprisoned in the body. At other times Ignatius is much more dramatic. In the second week he asks the exercitant to imagine Two Standards or opposing chiefs – Lucifer and Christ. He sets up the two leadership styles against each other (all in the imagination) of the one doing *The Spiritual Exercises* and tries to draw the exercitant into looking at the source of virtues and vice in their own life, how they come about and how they reveal themselves, and then wants to lead the exercitant to make a choice as to which leader should be followed for their own good and happiness, that is, so that they may do what they were created to do as is found in the *Principle and Foundation*.

---

[12] Prayer which uses images, thoughts, emotions and sensations to become aware of the presence of God is called 'kataphatic prayer' (the Ignatian tradition). Prayer which is imageless and does not encourage the use of the imagination is called 'apophatic prayer'.

Second Beaudoin (:51) describes how Ignatius uses the imagination in another way: through conversations. These conversations, called 'colloquies' are also used throughout *The Spiritual Exercises*. The exercitant imagines that they are talking directly to someone (very often these are biblical figures), sometimes in the biblical sense (as if they were part of the scene being imagined) or sometimes detached from it (applying principles from the text to a life situation of the one praying), but always in a very personal and detached way. Ignatius encourages the exercitant to speak to God, Jesus or the Trinity in a very personal way, as you would to a good friend.[13] In the first week Ignatius encourages the exercitant to talk to Jesus hanging on the cross while he is dying. He suggests that you ask Jesus about his life and death on earth; further he encourages the exercitant to ask: 'What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What will I do for Christ?' (*SpEx* 53). Finally he tells the one doing *The Spiritual Exercises* to gaze on Christ as he dies and involve oneself in the last moments of this dying man's life: 'As I look upon Jesus as he hangs upon the cross, I ponder whatever God may bring to my attention' (*SpEx* 53).

Ignatius hopes that by the end of *The Spiritual Exercises* the exercitant will be able, through the imagination, to perceive and experience God better. The continual practice of these imaginative exercises is part of the Ignatian discipline. Ignatius believed that to re-orientate and re-focus people one had to reshape their imagination. The imagination is a very powerful tool in 'getting to the heart'.

Beaudoin (2003: 51) has an interesting insight. He explains how, according to him, the most powerful tool and strategy of the branding economy[14] is the imagination. Without

---

[13] In annotation # 11 Ignatius says '...as one friend speaks to another, or a servant to his master: now asking some grace, now blaming oneself for some misdeed, now communicating one's affairs, and asking advice in them' (Fleming 1996: 48).

[14] By 'brand' I mean the label or mark on a product which distinguishes it and gives it its own identity. Beaudoin (2003:4) says: 'By focusing on branding, companies hope to make their logos into a "personality" – that is, a lifestyle, an image, an identity, or a set of values.' 'Brands should "emote a distinctive persona." This persona will, it is hoped, be taken on with verve by young consumers'. Brands therefore try 'hook' the consumer because of the identity they gain by using the brand. In order to do this branding companies use the imagination. 'If you wear X brand imagine what identity you will have'. They operate not only through the imagination but also by trying to develop an 'in-group' mentality. If you wear X brand you belong to or are associated with Y group and therefore you are considered part of a group, you have an identity.

being able to influence our imaginations the economy cannot shape our perceptions about self, others, relationships, investments, trust and our hope. This influence happens through the means of mass media – radio, television, the internet etc. Beaudoin does not say that the economy (or Ignatius!) controls our imaginations but that they are strongly encouraged by these in specific directions. He says that without the ability to shape our imaginations the economy would fail and branding would buckle, collapse and disintegrate. Beaudoin says:

> The branding economy shapes our imaginations with a potential power so formative of identity that it can only be called spiritual (2003: 51).

Social scientist Colin Campbell says that the 'economy is driven by a longing to experience in reality those pleasures created and enjoyed in the imagination' (Beaudoin 2003: 52)

For Ignatius the whole person, body and soul, should be drawn into *The Spiritual Exercises*. He speaks of 'spiritual poverty' and 'actual poverty', wanting the exercitant to be imagining living in both of these conditions. He has a holistic approach and realises that in order for people to change their lives and be transformed, the whole person needs to be involved. He sees and uses the imagination as a key tool for this process.

6.5 Ignatius and Community

Community is also important for Ignatius. He wants the exercitant to not only develop a relationship with God but also with the community which, in this case, is the Church. It is so important for Ignatius that, at the end of *The Spiritual Exercises*, he has set out guidelines called 'Guidelines for thinking with the Church today' (*SpEx* 352). Today, by identifying with a brand or as internet users, we participate in a community which is a group of people who have placed themselves within a common identity. Late at night, on the internet, people can meet each other in a virtual world (all of whom belong to the 'internet community') and they can, amongst other things, find a venue for sharing and searching for meaning. This venue can be more helpful and encouraging to them than any

132

'real' context to begin with. It also has the power to draw them into a 'real' context and relationship with others i.e. into a church community.

To return to the example that Beaudoin offers: by wearing branded clothing we purchase our way into clothing or music communities; by wearing certain sports logos we identify with and participate in the world of athletes or football players, and the promise of a new identity (like the one created in the imagination) is attained – or at least we are lead to believe that! Beaudoin (2003: 55) points out that on one cable television station's webpage you can, by clicking on 'community', participate in chat rooms which discuss different characters and their fashions and fashion sense. Much of this discussion, he says, is about the brands the characters are wearing and where they may have been purchased. The internet is the means by which fashion is highlighted and discussed. It is the vehicle which enables the movement between the brand owners and buyers to take place.

Ignatius, ultimately, wanted to get people do believe that it is only God who can be trusted absolutely and unconditionally. Only God satisfies our desires. The human will is important in *The Spiritual Exercises,* because it has the capacity to be touched and affected. The will has the capacity to make decisions, and hence Ignatius wants to get people to make a positive decision about the way they live their lives from the will. Beaudoin (:55) points out that this is the exact strategy of the branding world, to get people to ultimately trust their logo through the mass media. The brand not only fulfils the desires created in the imagination, but also gives the wearer a sense of 'new' identity, and the mass media is used to get people to believe in brands. People are focussed on the brand and their lives are 'directed' according to their focus. They will and choose the brand; they are touched in their affections and hence claim the brand.

In *The Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius is attempting to do just that. He wants to focus the exercitant in such a way that they live their lives according to what their focus is. They are, hopefully, given a new sense of identity and new sense of trust in their focus (which in the case of *The Spiritual Exercises*) on God.

133

6.6 Ignatius and Focal Practices

Albert Borgmann, in his book *Technology and the character of contemporary life* contends that, as an antidote to a technological 'take over' and therefore the disintegration of people by so many gadgets, it is important that we cultivate and maintain 'focal practices'. Such focal practices help maintain some degree of contact with the fabric of our lives; they help us see the broader picture and also focus us on what is important. They are antidotes to the disintegration that technological devices and development tend to cultivate.

In *The Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius is, I argue, attempting to do this. *The Spiritual Exercises* in themselves are a 'focal practice', but within their method there are numerous 'focal experiences' which helps the one engaging in them to do what is required successfully. In attempting to re-orientate their lives (especially those who make an election within *The Spiritual Exercises*) Ignatius is attempting to help people through a focal practice to live a life which is oriented towards God. Borgmann says that our lives have been radically re-orientated by technology (1984: 41); *The Spiritual Exercises* is a way which people can reclaim what has been lost by the technological re-orientation.

However, within *The Spiritual Exercises* themselves Ignatius offers a number of 'focal things' which the exercitant' is asked to do to help them enter into the process. Before each time of prayer, for example, Ignatius says that some sort of preparation should take place.[15] He pays attention to the place and posture[16] which the exercitant would take up and then offers a preparatory line of thought or prayer. He also insists that those doing

---

[15] Ignatius gives guidelines as to how one should prepare for prayer upon reaching the place where the prayer will take place (*SpEx* 75-67).

[16] In the 'First Week' of *The Spiritual Exercises* we see this clearly. In the additions Ignatius pays special attention to the surroundings or environment. He tries to help the exercitant focus by suggesting a thought pattern when waking and rising and also suggests a pattern of thought for the duration of the 'First Week' to keep focus. He deals with different postures for prayer. He goes on to suggest that, in keeping with the theme of the week (which examines sin), the exercitant mould a conducive environment for prayer in keeping with the subject matter – a darkened room, not to recite prayers in the room, not to eat or read in the room. He also advises that the exercitant not laugh and keep to themselves, not looking at others (*SpEx* 73-82).

The Spiritual Exercises keeping a review of their prayer.[17] *The Spiritual Exercises* are a communicative tool, amongst other things, and therefore what Ignatius is attempting to do is set up the context in which effective communication can take place between the exercitant and God, and it is for this reason that Ignatius pays special attention to detail within *The Spiritual Exercises* themself.

6.7 The Discernment of Spirits

At the end of *The Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius offers 'Guidelines for the Discernment of Spirits' (*SpEx* 313-327). The process of *The Spiritual Exercises* focuses on re-orientating one's life towards God and, linked to this, the ability to discern what it is that God is calling the one engaging in them to do. Hence discernment is an important part of *The Spiritual Exercises* because of the decision-making process the exercitant embarks on in *The Spiritual Exercises*.

Modern communications media affect the process of every individual discernment. As I have pointed out, the branding economy relies on the ability to convince people to decide to be loyal to a specific brand. People decide, through the power of advertising or fashion which uses as its delivery vehicle the mass media, to buy or use a certain brand. The cost of the product and its actually effectiveness is often secondary (in their decision-making process) to the power of persuasion modern communications media hold. Modern communications media form and shape our perceptions and often lay the background for the decisions we make. We live in a communications culture which affects our lives, whether we are aware of it or not. To reflect on what the mass media present and the methodologies we use to inform ourselves will make us more sensitive to the movements within us and the starting point of those movements. The key to discernment, for Ignatius, lies in the movements within us, because it is these inner movements that direct our attitudes and behaviours, and in the midst of these, Ignatius believes, God is communicating with us. It is, so to speak, 'what captures our imaginations' that directs

---

[17] He asks the exercitant to keep a review of their prayer. A quarter of an hour after the prayer he encourages the exercitant to examine the prayer and see where it went badly (and the causes of this) an where it went well (and the causes) so that one can learn from it for the future (*SpEx* 77).

135

what we decide to do and the way we live our lives. Ignatius wants to bring the individual to the point where they are sensitive about what it is that captures their imagination, but also why it captures the imagination and what the result of this may be.

In the guidelines for the second week on discernment (*SpEx* 328-336) Ignatius focuses us on the direction of our thoughts, noting whether they came from the good or evil spirit by the way and outcome of the way that we are being lead. He asks the exercitant to note how they feel; whether they are peaceful and quiet or feeling disturbed or restless. That which brings peace and quiet is from the good spirit, that which brings disquiet and a feeling of disturbance is from the evil spirit. By taking note of these inner movements in the soul, while exposing oneself to the mass media, we might better be able to determine how influenced where really are by the mass media, but also see through the endless products that are offered to us through the media. The answer is therefore not to disengage with the media, since as Borgmann (2003: 8) suggests, it is rather naïve to think that we should be doing this by rejecting technology or demonising them, but rather to pay attention to the reactions the media cause within us and the direction we allow the media to lead us: 'We can restrain it and must redeem it' (:8). The question before us, as Ignatius simply puts it: are we moving towards peace and tranquillity or are we disturbed, unsatisfied and restless? Are we being led, through the mass media, by the good spirit or by the bad spirit and how can we, by noting this movement within, redeem it?

6.8 Learning from Ignatius – An *Ignatian Communications Model*

Lambert (2000: 35) outlines three levels from which we could learn from Ignatius. The first is the importance of listening to the content of that which is being presented; the message and objective of what is being announced. Second, to listen for the feelings and emotions that the message being announced evokes in the other as well as being aware of the feelings and emotions evoked in the listener themself. Third is the 'willing' or actual intention; below a statement there can be many layers of meaning and intentions and it is the task of the listener first to hear these before responding.

There are, I would argue, a number of other important learnings we can gain from Ignatius Loyola. The communications media are to help[18] human beings reach their end. In Ignatian terms this is 'to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save his soul' (*SpEx* 23). Hence the media are part of 'other things on the face of the earth' (*SpEx* 23) which are created in order for humanity to reach its final destiny: God. Hence we should use the media in our own times, as Ignatius was willing to use the media in his time, to reach this final goal.

There are a number of things that we can learn from Ignatius Loyola to aid us in developing our use of the internet as a tool for evangelisation:

6.8.1 Choosing certain places and paying attention to detail

Ignatius carefully chose certain places for their symbolic importance. He believed that carefully selecting a place enabled him to engage in and be part of the world in which he sought to live and proclaim the gospel. He paid attention to details like the ability to be visible and giving easy access to others. The internet is a new place where people gather and hence it seems vital that the Church carefully select places where people are gathered, and places that are visible so that the Church is present. It is clear that Ignatius paid special attention to detail so that he could truly engage with others and so identified such key places which made this possible. The internet seems to be a key place today, a place where millions of people are visible and hence would be an important place for the Church to be present, embracing this technology and using it to its full potential. People are using the internet and, I suggest Ignatius would contend, that through their experience God will be communicating with them, revealing Godself, and drawing them closer to the full knowledge of the truth and hence becoming all in all.

The internet enables more discussion and greater scope for gathering information from a wide pool today, which could aid theological decisions and provide greater knowledge

---

[18] I assume, for the purposes of this argument, that communications media are to assist people, their purpose is to enable people and to help them reach their full potential. Ultimately they are to assist people of faith in establishing the reign of God.

and support for theological positions, which in turn may really be of benefit to those who seek God in an ever-changing and unstable world. Theologians today may be able to gain greater interpretative support and therefore accumulate greater insight into people, culture and society if they had better hands-on experience (as many of the liberation theologians have in South America) of the situations and context people find themselves in. The internet is a new 'place' where such insights and knowledge could be found, if it is used carefully.

6.8.2 Engagement, dialogue and persuasion

Spiritual conversations were, for Ignatius, an important tool. He was willing to engage with others through dialogue. He uses spiritual conversations to listen to others and then steer them towards God. He would listen carefully and then use an opportune time to re-direct the focus towards God. Ignatius would enter dialogue with a goal in mind. The internet offers a huge scope and opportunity for the Church to enter into dialogue with others, a dialogue if people are listened to well, which could move people towards God. The internet has an immensely powerful capacity to help the Church listen and engage with people and with the world. To miss this opportunity would be to miss being able to enter into 'spiritual conversations'. Ignatius used the power of persuasion to try to help others see things in a new and different way. The internet has the capability to help bring about a new way of seeing and understanding social reality, as well as influencing meaning and behaviour, because it has the power to reach so many people instantaneously.

6.8.3 The importance of being with others where they are

Ignatius prioritised being present to others and with others. Very often the Church is seen as aloof or 'separate from' people. People's descriptions of the Church often seem to indicate that they see the Church (and even the clergy) as something 'other'. Ignatius was present to others and spent time with others. The internet offers a huge capacity to be present to and journey with others in faith. A criticism could be levelled that 'virtual presence' does not replace 'real presence' with others. Indeed, but the opportunity to be

138

present to others online and hopefully draw them back into community and the 'real presence' cannot be dismissed. More and more people spend time everyday on the internet searching for answers to various questions. Not to be present seems to deny an opportunity to help them find answers and also denies the Church the opportunity to journey with them.

6.8.4 Use what is at your disposal

It is clear, throughout his life, that Ignatius used what was at his disposal. Right from his convalescence he used what was at his disposal – in this a case of the *Life of Christ,* which brought about his conversion. He used the printing press and wrote letters. He complains about the negligence of early Jesuits in not writing letters and hence using what was at their disposal to communicate over long distances. In *The Spiritual Exercises* he tells the one making them to use what helps and to disregard what does not help for the goal which is intended. It seems clear that using the internet would be very much encouraged by the Ignatian approach; not to use the internet would be to disregard what is at our disposal in our own times. Furthermore, it is the users of the internet who are its key producers. By not using the internet effectively an opportunity to be co-creators is missed.

> It is a proven lesson for the history of technology that users are key producers of the technology, by adapting it to their uses and values, and ultimately transforming the technology itself... New uses of the technology, as well as the actual modifications introduced in the technology, are communicated back to the whole world, in real time [in the case of the internet]. Thus, the timespan between the processes of learning by using and producing by using is extraordinarily shortened, with the result that we engage in a process of learning by producing, in a virtuous feedback between the diffusion of the technology and its enhancement (Castells 2001: 28).

139

Not to be engaged in the world of the internet would deprive the Church an opportunity, but would also mean that the Church will have no role to play in the constant production of technology, a missed opportunity to help direct this technology.

6.8.5 Conscious of style

Style was important for Ignatius; he was conscious of style captured in the phrase 'our manner of proceeding'. The way things are done carries inherent messages and communicates meaning. The fact the Church first addressed the internet in a document some ten years after internet was beginning to be widespread, carries an inherent message on the importance placed on this mode of communication. The style of the Church's presence on the internet also communicates messages. Ignatius would encourage us to take particular caution in the style we adopt in our use of media and the content we transmit. Style conveys messages and messages capture the imagination. Text alone on a website will not have the same impact as an interactive site where the user is engaged and interacting.

6.8.6 Review and adapt

A further insight from Ignatius is the willingness and ability constantly to be engaged in a process of review – to be open to what works and what does not work and hence engage accordingly. This is of utmost importance on the internet where the user and technology changes rapidly. In order to be effective, the ability to review, take stock and adapt accordingly is paramount. The website bustedhalo.com (which I will look at in more detail later) is a good example of this constant review and adaption process which probably underpins a good deal of the success they have experienced.

6.8.7 The heart is at the centre of conversion, the imagination captures the heart

Ignatius clearly believes that conversion takes place in the heart. Hence the internet, I suggest, could be used in such a way to help bring people to a conversion in the heart. The analysis that Beadouin (2003: 51ff) offers on the branding economy further helps to

understand what Ignatius means; those who do 'branding' know that they must do to capture the imaginations and hearts of their potential market. The internet should be used to capture people's imaginations as the branding economy does. Hence, the goal of our use of this medium should be to bring others to conversion, a change of heart, a conviction that they are invited and called to live the values of God's Kingdom in our world today. This will and can only happen when the medium is seen as a tool for this purpose. The medium itself is not the end but rather, from our perspective, the outcome that the medium can bring about if used effectively. Modern communications media, especially the internet, have also lessened the need for physical and social space. People now focus more on being connected and being able to communicate than on physical and social space. The internet engages people's imaginations. In Ignatius's worldview the imagination is an extremely powerful tool which, if used correctly, can bring about conversion. Hence the use of the imagination, which is exploited by our 'brand' culture, can bring people to conversion. The internet can play a vital role in cultivating the imagination and moving people towards conversion, if it is used as a tool for this.

6.8.8 Community

Community was important for Ignatius. He established a religious community, the Jesuits, as he saw just how important relationships with others were in order to have a relationship with God. The internet has great capacity to help people develop community. Internet users form a community and hence people, in cyber space, are brought into new relationships with one another. This is poignant on the website Facebook. People from all over the world, of all ages, are being networked as 'friends'. I suggest that this kind of technology can also be used to help develop and facilitate a relationship with God. The internet can be used as a vehicle to establish deep human bonds in community and therefore also a relationship with God.

6.8.9 The importance of focal practices

The Spiritual Exercises, I argue, is a focal practice and within it contains focal practices and experiences. The Church, by using the internet well, could apply the 'focal practice'

idea so that the values of the Kingdom of God are foremost in people's minds. A good web-based program which has the capacity to attract people and capture their imaginations can be used in the way Ignatius speaks of spiritual conversations: 'and while we go in by their door, we come out by our own' (Lambert 2000: 57).

A good example of how this is being done is the website Sacred Space which helps computer users have a short time of prayer every day and hence a focus for the day. I will examine this site in the next chapter.

6.8.10 Discernment

In *The Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius creates a framework for discernment. *The Church and the Internet* document clearly called for a discerning reflection and use of the internet. It deals first with the use of the internet to encourage a 'consumer' attitude to faith:

> One area for research concerns the suggestion that the wide range of choices regarding consumer products and services available on the Internet may have a spillover effect in regard to religion and encourage a 'consumer' approach to matters of faith. Data suggest that some visitors to religious web sites may be on a sort of shopping spree, picking and choosing elements of customized religious packages to suit their personal tastes. The "tendency on the part of some Catholics to be selective in their adherence" to the Church's teaching is a recognized problem in other contexts; more information is needed about whether and to what extent the problem is exacerbated by the Internet (9).

And again later, it calls for a spirit of discernment:

> Prudence is necessary in order clearly to see the implications—the potential for good and evil—in this new medium and to respond creatively to its challenges and opportunities (12).

In the 2002 document on *Internet Ethics* the Church again called for the responsible use of the mass media:

> Standing alongside issues that have to do with freedom of expression, the integrity and accuracy of news, and the sharing of ideas and information, is another set of concerns generated by libertarianism. The ideology of radical libertarianism is both mistaken and harmful -- not least, to legitimate free expression in the service of truth. The error lies in exalting freedom "to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values....In this way the inescapable claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and 'being at peace with oneself". There is no room for authentic community, the common good, and solidarity in this way of thinking (14).

Ignatius, the master of discernment, assists us to discern the right way and usage of the internet as a means of evangelisation. Hence it is important that we continually pay attention to the direction in which we are being led – by internal and external forces. The internet can be used to lead people by attempting to move them in the direction of the values of God's Kingdom – justice, peace, forgiveness and love. Ignatius urges us to seek the greater glory of God in all things; the internet can be used to help men and women of our own times, through their experience, to seek the greater glory of God.

6.8.11 Experience is important

Endean (2004: 29) says that Karl Rahner had the conviction, through all his works, that God is present in experience. Endean says that this seems to render all his works profoundly unitary, profoundly single. However this also gives an untidy account of God. If God speaks in our human experience then God must seem to be as unsystematic, chaotic and pluriform as we are, Endean suggests. If this is the case, and Ignatius urges us to seek God in all things, surely God is to be found in the vast and confusing world of cyberspace? The Church has the historical richness and tools in people, like Ignatius, to help others find God and God's greater glory through their experience.

143

Soukop (1989: 21) notes that the meditation on the Three Classes of People[19] suggests that we may resist changing old habits. Just as Ignatius wants people to see themselves and strive to change old habits which are not bringing the exercitant to freedom, peace and tranquillity, so too could we make an analysis of the media. Once we know and understand the power of the media better and understand how these media affect us, we can better examine our own willingness to change. Soukop says that the self-knowledge such a mediation or process offers us can help us to see a new dimension of the communicative process which we are called to engage in. This can be especially helpful for the Church which faces a world of new media. Old conventional methods of media may have lost their power with the growth of new media. Hence a meditation on the Three Classes of People may not only lead us to a new awareness of the power of these media but also help us to better understand where and why we may need to change in order to be more effective, and just how we can do this.

Often, as in the Enlightenment, the Church does seem to adopt a 'siege mentality' in which it is cautious, but even suspicious of, and discourages new developments. The Church must be discerning and cannot follow every fashion, but it must also be open to the possibilities that there is still much to be learnt and used in the task of evangelisation and preaching the reign of God's Kingdom. In the end, learning about and engaging with the media is ultimately to enable the Church better to minister to people, and hence a new awareness and willingness to change might be necessary if the Church is to be a powerful and successful minister to people in our times.

Soukop points out that the Two Standards[20] meditation could also be applied to the media world with its methodology, patterns and lures. He says:

---

[19]Ignatius asks the retreatant to make a meditation on how he/she relates to God the creator. He lays out 'three classes of men' or three categories of humility to try to sum up the three broad general areas on the spectrum of humility where he sees most people. The idea is to identify oneself on this spectrum in prayer and then seek to strive for a class where one is more free to serve God (*SpEx* 165-167).

[20] In this meditation Ignatius offers two opposing leaders and their strategies of leadership; one represents the way God does things, the other the way the evil one works. He asks the retreatant to look at both and choose which kind of leader would be best. The retreatant is then led to see how best they can follow this leader (*SpEx* 136-148).

This world seeks influence and power; it does not hesitate to manipulate desire, sexuality or emotion in order to hold its audience; it substitutes entertainment for thought or even living; it reduces everything to information commodities. In other words, it seeks riches, honors, and the pride of power (1989: 19).

Soukop says that on the other side we see Christ inviting us to follow him. The documents of the Church on communications provide us with a communications methodology based on the image of Christ. He says that key aspects of Christian communication are:

> ...its motive, content, equality, dialogical possibilities and appropriateness... The World Association for Christian Communication suggests four other characteristics for a communication taking Jesus as its model: Such interaction creates community, is participatory, liberates, and is prophetic. And so the Christ of the Two Standards invites us to communication which liberates, which reconciles, which identifies with others through love and which shares all things. (1989: 20).

6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to give an outline of what we can learn from St. Ignatius Loyola for effective communication. I gave a brief description of his life and then highlighted the special attention that Ignatius paid to the art of communication. I sought to draw from his own life and actions to show what we can learn if we are to use the internet as an effective tool for communications. I suggest an 'Ignatian Communications Model' which underlines his emphasis on: choosing key places of presence, listening and dialogue, paying attention to detail and the messages conveyed in this detail as well as style, being present to others, forming community, using what is at your disposal, constant openness to review, the heart as the centre of conversion and the powerful influence of the imagination when it is engaged and well directed.

In the following chapter I will examine two websites which have, I argue, successfully used an Ignatian Communications Model. I will give a description of each and then show how they have adhered to the Ignatian Communications Model I propose.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SUCCESSFUL USE OF THE INTERNET USING AN IGNATIAN COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

7.1 The Internet as a Tool for Evangelisation

The internet offers an opportunity for a new kind of evangelisation[1] to take place – a new way of making the incarnate Christ present in our world and drawing all people to God. In order to do this, however, those who seek to use the internet (in this case the Christian church) must, as Soukop indicates below, seek a clear understanding of the worldview of those whom this is aimed at: the media context in which they are already living and formed and the ability to shape the use of the internet (the medium) to meet the needs of the ones using this medium.

The Church should never be synonymous with culture and mass media. The Church should maintain a distance, but should use electronic media without becoming captive to the media culture. Hence, the Church should use the media to subvert the negative elements of electronic culture as Jesus used parables to challenge the oral culture of his time and the post-modern writers used books to challenge the print culture.

Soukup (1989: 22) says:

> Many questions – both empirical and theoretical – arise here. Spiritual directors and teachers need to learn how the media have influenced the particularities of our spirituality. For example, how different are contemporary images of God from those of classical Christian preaching and art? How have concepts of prayer changed? Do people now see God more as a partner in an interpersonal dialogue? Marshall McLuhan claimed that just adding a microphone on the altar profoundly

---

[1] I use the term evangelisation in the broad sense indicated earlier in Chapter 5: Evangelisation is an ongoing process aimed at the transformation of the whole human being: spiritual, psychological, moral and intellectual to the values of Jesus Christ. Evangelisation seeks to make the incarnate Christ visible in the lives of believers today by beliefs they confess and aspire to and by the very way they live their lives. It also helps believers to realise the unity that Jesus himself desired.

changed the liturgy. What else has the shift in communication done to the practice and sense of worship? Other concerns of ministry extend well beyond these. What impact has television had on sexuality morality? On business ethics? On human civility? (…) they are questions which impress on all of us the necessity of placing our discernment in communication at the service of our neighbour.

The move to neighbor further asks that we seriously attempt to turn away from any hint of dominance in our own dealings with others. Instead, following Christ, we need to learn how to enter into others' worlds, how to listen, and how to speak out of the context of *their* lives. The knowledge we gain out of discernment in communication patterns and habits will be the knowledge we give.

Jonscher (1999: 271) says that the digital revolution has provided an intriguing new toolkit for thinking through questions at any level. He gives a humorous example of just how multi-faceted the internet is. He explains that on a BBC interview on the afterlife a priest said that the afterlife will be like the internet: we will interact, have experiences and gain knowledge, but we will not physically be there in a physical space. He explained that now, with the help of the internet, we can understand how a soul can live on forever. The soul is pure form without matter, like the code in computers. Human beings are pure knowledge without a place in time or space, the flesh is just its temporary incarnation. A nice analogy – the afterlife as cyberspace: disembodied intelligence, dematerialised existence. The internet may be a toolkit for more than just evangelisation!

In previous chapters I have examined the powerful impact of the electronic media, specifically the internet, and the impact that it has on our lives as well as the way in which it shapes our world. I will now attempt to look at how the internet has been used and is being used by the Church. I will examine what I consider to be two successful websites. In both cases I suggest that the Ignatian Communications Model, which I proposed in the previous chapter, has been used. I also think that both the websites offered do, in many ways, realise much of what respondents said in my own research. I chose these websites because they are different but, it seems to me, both are being used for evangelisation in the broader sense.

Bustedhalo offers a discussion forum for young people who are searching and seeking information. It attempts to engage young people on different levels – spiritual direction, theological discussion, gives information and puts people in touch with other seekers. Sacred Space is more for a particular individual. There is not discussion or information. Sacred Space invites the user to pray and guides them through the prayer process. Hence, albeit that they are very different in approach, I think that both have the same goal and each its own method of reaching that goal.

7.2 An Analysis of Two Websites

7.2.1 Bustedhalo[2]

The website bustedhalo.com was born in 2000.[3] It was set-up by the leadership of the Paulist Congregation in the United States. The founders report that changes in society, cultural and religious attitudes led them to set up this site as an alternative outreach to young people. They also stress that one unfortunate feature they observed was the Church's role in alienating young adults and not helping them to feel part of the local Church - that is the local parish. They found that many young people who still identified themselves as Catholic never really entered parish life and only did so for sacramental ministry, searching for marriage and baptism. These they describe as 'moments of return' for the Church, and yet many young adults because of their lack of attendance find themselves turned away. They found that many times this was due to a personality clash with the priest or someone else, or otherwise there was some canonical or bureaucratic difficulty arising from the fact that they were not registered in the parish. In the past the Church looked with some complacency at young people, thinking that they would come back to the fold when they needed to get married or have children baptised. This can no longer be taken for granted. Research found that there were exceptions to this, but these were not all that big and very often were more like a 'neo-orthodox movement' whose membership is statistically small. The latter offers a kind of Catholic doctrinal purity as

---

[2] www.bustedhalo.com (Accessed 7 January 2008).
[3] Email communication with members of the Paulist team and Bill McGarvey, editor of bustedhalo.com, July – September 2007.

the solution to contemporary problems and they provide a disproportionate number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

The researchers who established bustedhalo.com were initially interested in a personality driven website (having a celebrity or some well know figure involved) with which people could identify and bond. They discovered that 50% of their research group were looking primarily for information online (something which was interesting in my own research as indicated in chapter 5) and not online relationships. They found that only a surprising 10% were looking for some sort of interaction on the web. Much of the content on the site is written by young adults – even the faith guides were written by young adults with the appropriate expertise.

Much time was spent, they report, packaging the product and finding a URL (Uniform Resource Locator) that would be attractive and become a household name. It was a lively group of young adults 'kidding' who suggested names and 'bustedhalo' was one such suggestion. This name, it seems, produced more of a reaction than any other name, and almost universally young people liked it and responded to the name. They found that this resonated with their experience and was not really associated with the Church. Informal surveys found that people over forty years of age gave a very different response – that bustedhalo sounded like Catholic guilt being used as a battering-ram. No one under forty gave them such a response, presumably because they had never had the same guilt-intensive preaching and teaching that the over forties had experienced. The site was launched by advertising on other sites – they wanted to reach beyond the limitations of the Church. An advert, depicting a priest, was placed on a satirical web newspaper called *The Onion*. This experiment boosted their hits to almost 2000 a day. The researchers claim that the real success was the type of person who hit on their site – the somewhat irreverent seeker-type who found it a safe place to discuss issues of faith with which they were struggling, free from the fear of judgement or retribution. They also found topics on the website which they did not expect a religious website to cover – politics, economics, sex and relationships, and so on.

They found that many seekers gravitated towards the bustedhalo discussion forum. This was not a chat-room, but a message board on which matters could be discussed and comments made. Several Paulist priests agreed to be online guides when needed, answering questions and offering guidance when they were asked. The discussion was free, and people could use this as sounding board for any issue they were seeking to understand better. A problem then developed, in that a number of 'activists' or 'neo-orthodox' groups/individuals thought they needed to defend the faith. They accused people of not being Catholic and seemed to be chasing people off the board. Management then decided to shut it down, draw up new conditions for participation, and then reopen it. Respectful dialogue seemingly grew between these two groups, and both were now able to talk about issues related to the church. This proved so successful that a 'Spiritual Smackdown Blog' was established where Catholics from the two groups could chat and debate for a month. Hence bustedhalo has become a place for heated and yet also constructive debate.

The Paulists appointed a specific priest to deal with questions and say that the visitor statistics confirm what was initially discovered: that young people primarily go to the web for information as there is a lack of religious literacy available for young adults. Many young adults today have no idea how to find out information about the Catholic Church and the tradition of the Church, and so turn to the web for help; bustedhalo gives them such an opportunity in a medium with which they are familiar.

Another problem that was encountered is that a lot of Catholic sources on the internet say that they are 'orthodox' and 'faithful to the magisterium' but are in fact run by ultra-conservatives who have their own agendas. Drawing on pre-Vatican II ideas, they make pointed negative comments about any Catholics open to contemporary ideas.

Bustedhalo is up to date and has a helpful range of responses. It is not just all information, but there are opportunities for interaction and some pastoral work. The managers of the site report that sometimes people write in about problems, and after some sort of response they will follow up on their initial writing. One such woman was

asking about the fate of unbaptised babies; it later turned out that she had had a miscarriage, and the online contact went on for months while the respondent tried to lead her to a place of healing and peace. They are quick to point out, though, that most of the time this kind of pastoral interaction does not take place.

Many young people do not attend church regularly, and when they do, have little or no way of expressing their own experience and feelings. There are very few forums for them to discuss how spirituality and life intersect. The discussion boards and magazine on bustedhalo are one of very few forums where this can take place. There has to be a place of real freedom where the issues which people acutely experience and grapple with can be discussed – in all spheres of life. As would be expected with young adults, sex and relationships, sexual orientation, dating and male-female differences were on the top of the list of priorities. Bustedhalo found that, eventually, they had to hire someone to deal with this area of human life, to write about it exclusively.

Later, another area of concern was added to the website – moral dilemmas. Controversial and difficult topics can now be analysed and discussed, so as to give young people a forum for discussion. After a few days, a moral theologian looks at the comments and writes or adds his or her thoughts to the mix. This is a way of helping young people deal with the dilemmas that they are facing in their lives. Bustedhalo is not yet five years old and continues to grow and develop.

7.2.1.1 Evaluating Bustedhalo

Bustedhalo.com shows a number of characteristics of the Ignatian Model of Communication. The site was carefully chosen; the creators noticed a 'gap' in the market and spent much time trying to package a URL; they wanted carefully to choose a place to be present to young people. For Ignatius the right place was paramount; he spent a considerable amount of time looking for the right place. They paid special attention to detail: they researched their 'target' audience and hence adapted the materials they were to offer accordingly. The creators of bustedhalo.com say that they specifically sought to

152

be present to young people who, for one reason or another, were alienated from the Church, by using what was at their disposal (in this case the internet). The site was also created in dialogue with young people, trying to assess their needs and wants. All of these indicate the application of clear Ignatian approaches to communication. It is also clear that bustedhalo.com paid special attention to style, and have a number of times revised what they do in order to be more effective. Paying attention to style and the ability to review and constantly adapt what is being done is also very much in line with an Ignatian way of proceeding. Another sign, I argue, of an Ignatian approach is that the creators and maintainers of the site are constantly in what I would term a 'process of discernment'. The establishment of the 'Smack-Down-Blog' and the forum for discussion on moral dilemmas, for which they later hired someone to deal with, indicates an ongoing process of discernment which helps bustedhalo.com be an effective tool for evangelisation.

My own research showed that people want to engage with and interact on the internet; bustedhalo.com has enabled this to take place by using blogs and discussion forums. By all accounts bustedhalo.com seems to have formed an online community which encourages interaction and participation in which everyone who wishes has a voice and can share their opinions. There is a sense of unity and also a very clear sense that bustedhalo.com is helping (young) people to identify God's presence in their lives and experience. People can, on this site, find some of the information that they are looking for, and they are ensured of the authenticity of the website. A large percentage of the respondents in my research were critical of church websites which were not up to date and relevant. Bustedhalo.com is updated regularly and is also content relevant to those it seeks to reach out to.

7.2.2 Sacred Space[4]

Sacred Space is a prayer website which has been very successful since its beginnings in 1999.[5] It was created by two Jesuits and is currently maintained by the Jesuit

---

[4] www.sacredspace.ie (Accessed 7 January 2008).

Communications Centre in Dublin, Ireland. The communications team at the Jesuit Communications Centre considered whether they could use the internet to help people pray. They began a trial unadvertised site and the reaction to this site was extremely positive. One of the Jesuits on the team explains that he notices that when people are comfortable and alert sitting in front of their computers they are used to screening out distractions and concentrating on what is on the screen. These conditions, coupled with a sense of privacy, actually make sitting in front of the computer an excellent place to pray.

Publicity was a major concern for the team when they decided to go live. They produced a press statement and sent it to various news desks and religious correspondents. They decided to launch the site at the beginning of Lent. In the first twenty four hours after the launch in February 1999, Sacred Space had two thousand people from all over the world click onto it.

Peter Scally, one of the creators of the site, told me that a number of those who clicked on became users. They got messages back from some regular users:

> A "stay-at-home Mom" emailed us from a village in Alaska, 35 miles north of the Arctic Circle, where the winter sun barely rises above the horizon. She told us that Sacred Space was a "light in the darkness" for her. A pensioner from Manchester, calling himself "a jaded, half-believing Catholic, beset with personal and financial difficulties", wrote to thank us, saying, "I cannot tell you how much light you have brought into my life."

For the whole duration of Lent they had ten thousand visiting the site every day from all over the globe. By December of 1999, numerous other language versions were made available – Irish, Spanish and Portuguese. Now there are over twenty languages available on the site.

---

[5] Information about this site was collected from an interview with Peter Scally in London in September 2006. I had email contact with him on: 4/4/2007, 26/9/2007 and 30/12/2007.

The site is updated daily and guides users through a ten-minute session of prayer centred on a passage from scripture – normally the scripture passage that corresponds with the liturgical readings of the day. The site simply tries to help people, no matter where they are, create a space in their daily lives for ten minutes to pray. Hence this site is not one which seeks to evangelise, but rather one which seeks to facilitate a relationship between the user and Jesus Christ, which will hopefully aid evangelisation. It is creative in that people, wherever they are, can log on daily and move through the guided process and questions which facilitate prayer.

The site itself gives a small explanation of what it is about. It says:

> It might seem strange to pray at your computer, in front of a screen, especially if there are other people around you, or distracting noises. But God is everywhere, all around us, constantly reaching out to us, even in the most unlikely situations. When we know this, and with a bit of practice, we can pray anywhere! The following pages will guide you through a session of prayer, in six stages, including preparing your body and mind, and culminating in reflection on a scripture passage chosen specially for the day. Although they are written in the first person -- "I" -- the prayers are for doing, rather than for reading out. Each stage is a kind of exercise or meditation aimed at helping you get in touch with God, and God's presence in your life (www.sacredspace.ie).

The counter on the Sacred Space homepage indicates that the site has received over 23 million visits since its inception. Most of this traffic has been engendered by word of mouth; this includes emails to other potential users.

Another indicator of the impact of Sacred Space is that it is one of the top search results returned by Google for the search term "prayer". This level of interest led an Australian publishing house, Michelle Anderson Publishing, to approach the Jesuits about bringing out a hard-copy version of the daily prayers. Currently, two other publishers of religious

books, Ave Maria Press and Veritas, also bring out annual volumes of *Sacred Space - The Prayer Book.*

Scally has gone on to create another website which also seeks to help people identify God in their daily experience and pray. Pray-as-you-go is an internet based way of allowing people to download 12 minute daily prayer sessions onto an iPod and in so doing take the prayer session with them to be used on the bus or during a tea break. Prayer sessions are produced in audio format. The session is made up of a scripture text, a simply guided meditation and some music. The creators take care to make sure that the session is not too wordy, but simple and directive. After the six-week trial period in 2006 over one hundred and seventy thousand prayer sessions had been downloaded. An estimated ten thousand people are using the pray-as-you-go downloads every day. Although this is not an internet based prayer like sacredspace, it does show how the internet can be used as a vehicle for prayer and evangelisation.

One user of pray-as-you-go reports:

> I wanted to take the time to tell you about what pray-as-you-go has meant to me.
> I found it through Sacred Space where I try to pray often, and I download it to
> my ipod to carry along for my walks or during the day when I need a spiritual
> refuge. But on a more serious note, I credit this with having lifted me out of my
> depression and having restored my faith. Quite recently, I had lost faith for a lot
> of reasons, too many to list here. I felt alone, frightened, and ready to call it
> quits, on not just faith but life. The more I tried to push the Lord away, the more
> I felt a small pull: a still, small voice drawing me back, not wanting to let me go.
> I ignored until I could not anymore. I had used Sacred Space and pray-as-you-go
> on and off before, even if I had to force myself to sit and do it, not really
> believing in it. This time was different. When I was looking for new music to
> download, I came across it in Podcasts, not once, but several times by "accident",
> it kept popping up and I felt the Lord pushing me to give us another chance. It
> has not been an easy journey, not for one with a stubborn and independent will.

But someone there should know, it has been more than just a daily blessing to me. It helped me respond to the Lord and quite literally saved my life. Many thanks to you all, and may God continue to bless this ministry and all who participate in it! (http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/who.htm).

It is another example of a creative use of technology which helps people experience God and hence come to be more deeply evangelised in their daily lives.

7.2.2.1 Evaluating Sacred Space

Sacred Space like bustedhalo.com has also been created with great care taken to choose the right space and style. It seeks, like Ignatius, to be present to people where they are and hence chooses a key place (and perhaps up until now an unlikely place!) to help people pray. Attention has been paid to detail; the site is simple and yet effective as each page invites the user to ponder a line or question and in so doing facilitates prayer. The site invites people to engage with God in prayer, it being the vehicle for prayer. This is very much an Ignatian approach, one he makes clear at the very beginning of *The Spiritual Exercises*, simply; what is most important is that the user deals directly with God and the internet (director) is simply a vehicle for this to take place. In doing so Sacred Space also opens the opportunity for conversion to take place in the heart - leading people to pray and hence communicate with God. Sacred Space also engages the imagination which is very much an Ignatian approach. Although people look at a computer screen, Sacred Space tries to use the imagination in the context of prayer; people engage with the screen and its contents but this facilitates the use of the imagination. Sacred Space is updated daily and, for those who use it daily, creates an online community; those who use Sacred Space for prayer everyday. Although self-disclosure online does not take place, those engaging in the prayer would also be working on a self-disclosure level in their prayer. Hence the internet is facilitating not only the mechanics of prayer, but also helping the user relate to God.

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show how two successful websites are underpinned by an Ignatian Communications Model. I presented a description of each website and then gave an evaluation of each trying to indicate what was specifically Ignatian in the creation and working of the sites. I also tried to show how my own research accords with the sites I examined.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

There is a popular story that tells how a Japanese soldier was found several decades after the end of the Second World War in an inaccessible part of the Asian jungle, where he had single-handedly carried on fighting on a small scale all those years. Perhaps he had been ordered to remain at his isolated post and had been exercising his duties to the fatherland with exemplary loyalty all those years, or perhaps he had simply been too frightened to venture into populated areas. But time had passed and no one had told him that peace had been declared. So the Second World War was still raging inside his head.

Bard & Sölderqvist (2002: 3) tell this story at the beginning of their book *Netocracy*. Interpreted differently, it does perhaps suggest that we (the Church), like the Japanese soldier, are at risk of being left behind if we do not find ways of engaging in and using the new media which are at our disposal to help others seek and experience God. Being faithful to the old or too frightened to engage in the new could leave the Church in an inaccessible state. I have, in this thesis, tried to look at the complex world we inhabit today and in which Christians are expected to live and proclaim the message of Jesus Christ.

I began by trying to show how communications technologies have extraordinary power to bring about transformation. I tried to indicate how communications technologies have brought about an evolution in society and have changed the way information is transmitted and disseminated. Family life, authority, economics and politics are all influenced and changed by the evolution of communications technologies. I indicated that although the Reformation (which changed the face of Europe and brought the whole of European society – and later the world - into new and different relationships with one another) was begun primarily as a theological battle, it was not fought in universities and monasteries, but in the printed word, and the ability of the authors to persuade the masses not in eloquent sermons but through the power of the communications technology of the

time: the printing press. The *Gutenberg Galaxy* unleashed a new power on the world in the fifteen century; the *Internet Galaxy* has unleashed a new power on the world in the twentieth century. I traced how electronic media have done away with access codes and removed restrictions, making the passage of information wider and freer than ever before. This has led to subtle changes in society which have transformed human ways of thinking and habits. The evolution of communications technologies has made multi-directional global communication as easy as the click of a mouse, and is hence also fuelling the process often referred to as globalisation. Communications technologies, as they evolve, also become more complex and evolve at a much more rapid rate, and there is therefore a limitless open-ended quality about this technology which will continue to impact and define social, economic, political and religious affairs.

I then proposed that because of the impact of electronic media, there is a need for ongoing critical reflection. Communications technologies impact human worldview and lifestyle; different relationships are created and forged, subtle and pervasive re-shaping and re-design takes place in society with constant power shifts, as these technologies change and develop. I studied the views of various theorists to seek some understanding of the power communications technologies have to form human behaviour and worldview. There is much power seated in the means of communication itself, which can be more persuasive than the actual message which is being delivered. I attempted to show that if an uncritical approach to communications technologies is driving subtle changes and shifts in society, then religion and religious practices will also become victims of the outcome of these changes. I attempt, by looking at these theorists, to better understand what is going on and also encourage a serious study of the means of communication in our own times, to develop a more acute awareness of their power but also their ability to help us in the task of evangelisation today.

The focus then shifts to the Church. I suggest that media shift theology, theology is not out of the scope and uninfluenced by the communications media. The context in which theology is done is changed, and hence influences the ways and outcomes of theological reflection and debate. Human communication is rooted in the communication in the

160

Trinity, the Trinitarian life of God, and the call to humanity to share in God's Trinitarian life is an invitation to humanity to communication with the creator and all creation. From the early Church onwards communication was important, and special attention was paid to how the gospel could be passed on. Religious instruction was carefully communicated using various methods, like images, so that people would be formed in the faith and so be evangelised. The printing press produced a new way of communicating and was used to communicate the faith. The Church wasted no time in the use of the press as a tool, not only within the Church, but also in the Reformation.

I then attempted to analyse the relationship between the Catholic Church and the communications media by looking at what the Church has said about the media in official documents and statements. Although the Church has a well developed theoretical and a good documentation foundation it seems, by all accounts, to have failed successfully to implement this work. I tried to show that there seems to be a rather sad ambivalence towards the communications media and technologies by the Church. I note that the internet, which by 1993 saw a rapid proliferation, never invoked any response by the Church until 2002, and even then it was in two rather short statements. I tried to show that people's behaviour and worldview has changed significantly and the Church has, for the most part, failed to adapt to this changing environment and to engage with people in this newly created world. This will be one of the biggest challenges the Church will have to face, as this is the playing field where stiff competition faces the Church.

I attempted to use a wide definition of evangelisation. I examined how different uses of the internet help in the task of evangelisation and, how different uses contribute to the ongoing process of evangelisation. In order to use the internet for the task of evangelisation I looked at internet usage in South Africa and compared this with some other African countries. I noted that the study was limited - amongst other things - because, although used widely amongst people surveyed with access, many more people do not even have access to the internet. This is made clear in the research analysing internet access in South Africa.

I then attempted to find out what people (internet users) are thinking. I did this by conducting a survey questionnaire to get the general impressions, attitudes and habits of those who are using the internet, which I presented and summarised.

I then presented an approach/model for communications and the use of the communications technologies at our disposal by using the life and works of St. Ignatius Loyola. I propose that Ignatius leaves the Church not just *The Spiritual Exercises*, but a model for communications. Although our media landscape is vastly different to his, I suggest that the principles that Ignatius used are relevant for us today and can help us in better understanding and using the technologies we have for the primary task of the Church: evangelisation. I examine some of Ignatius's own actions as well as his writings, most especially his *Spiritual Exercises*, as a way of trying to show that the Church, in any communications age, can embrace these technologies and use them if it follows the principles he uses. I finally selected two websites, Bustedhalo and Sacred Space, through which one can see the basic principles Ignatius uses at work. Both of these sites have had a degree of success and show that the task of evangelisation can be done (and done well) using the internet.

This does not mean that using the internet is not without difficulties. The first big problem, which I try to highlight in Chapter 5, is access to the world wide web. If the majority of people are excluded because they have no access to the internet, the internet is a useless tool for evangelisation. The use of the internet, for evangelisation, also confronts us with the problem of personal contact: at what point would personal contact be necessary? Is cyber contact enough or is it merely a 'spring-board' to personal contact? The internet challenges ecclesiological models. By its 'democratising' influence it calls into question traditional hierarchies and gives people the ability to seek information and therefore make decisions independently of traditional authorities like, for example, the clergy. Who then watches over and guides the actual content (belief) of the Church?

Other questions also arise. Is there a 'virtual world' and a 'real world'? Do we attach the same quality to the 'virtual world' as we do to the 'real world' and how does this change our sense of identity and, our understanding of human personhood? Another difficulty is the separation of time and space and the impact this has on communication. Could this change the meaning of communication and, impact on our understanding of those with whom we communicate? Because of the separation of time and space people can also pretend to be someone they are not; they can create a false identity. This can be very problematic and have an impact on the ability of people to trust and, ultimately, have faith. These are some of the problems which the internet gives rise to, problems which need to be thought through critically if the internet is going to be used as a tool. Although I argue for the use of the internet, it is not without its own problems which could become obstacles to the very task at hand – evangelisation.

What is the way forward for the Church in South Africa? As internet access grows in South Africa it would be, I suggest, good to begin seeking ways forward in the use of the internet. Many churches have websites, which are mainly informational, but there are few which are engaging and interactive. In as far as I am aware there has been no comprehensive study and research on the needs of Christians in South Africa, a study like the one undertaken by bustedhalo.com, which might be a good starting point, and also application of the communications model I have suggested. This would result in an immediate engagement between potential website creators in the Church and users, initiating dialogue, which is also part of the model I propose.

Perhaps the Christian community could assist in bringing internet access to those who do not have it. If Christian communities in South Africa pooled resources they could establish a network of internet cafés around the country which will draw people primarily to use the web, but could be used as a platform for evangelisation. The Church could lobby government and corporations in South Africa to help give more people access to the world wide web. This could also include exposing, what I would argue, is the unjust current system which is operated by Telkom. As I tried to indicate, Telkom seems largely

responsible for facilitating the digital divide by charging extraordinarily high prices and thus denying access to potential users in the South African population.

It would also be helpful if there could be a meeting with all those involved in websites in the Christian community. Often, work is duplicated and resources stretched. By meeting and seeking better ways of using the internet together, churches can pool their resources and, I would argue, be more resourceful and effective. A shared ecumenical website which seeks to address important common issues in South Africa could also be a possibility. The mostly unhelpful debates, I would suggest, about issues like abortion, same sex marriages, euthanasia, and the recent under 16's sexual offenses bill etc. could be addressed by churches together. This would not only pool resources but also create a larger platform and help unite many splintered yet same direction voices into one.

I have tried to show that significant power and paradigm shifts have taken place with the advent of technology like the internet. Because of this, theological content and its mode of transmission has also changed. It might be helpful to study this in our local context with the view to better transmitting theological content so that theological content, debate and ultimately belief do not lose some place of prominence on the agenda and in the public domain of South African society. I suggest that the right use of technology could aid in this endeavour.

The Jesuit Institute South Africa has spoken of a 'rapid-response' website on which current societal issues would be discussed and analysed from a Christian perspective in order to inform, educate, but most importantly enter into public debate. This is another way that the internet could be used to help people learn and engage in issues which are affecting South African society. I would recommend that this site be interactive, or have an interactive component, hence allowing users the opportunity to share their perspectives on cultural, social, ethical and political issues. One of the most popular websites in South Africa seems to be the ANC's[1] website on which there is a weekly column (*ANC Today. Online voice of the African National Congress.*) that the president

---

[1] http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/index.html (Accessed 14 January 2008).

164

writes. A 'rapid-response' could serve like the ANC site, which indicates that many people do look at the web in South Africa for information and viewpoints.

Churches always speak at some length about youth and youth ministry, a perennial problem for most I think! This could be an opportunity for developing a new kind of youth outreach, like bustedhalo.com, which looks specifically at issues that young people in South Africa face: HIV/AIDS, education, crime, alcohol and drug related issues, migrant-labour parents, single parent households and other family related matters. An online magazine for youth could become a possibility.

A local version of Sacred Space could be investigated in indigenous languages using indigenous symbols and phrases, thus not only providing a service to help people pray, but also moving the process of inculturation (conveying the Gospel message through local art, forms and languages) forward.

Churches could explore ways of using the technology we have at our disposal for their purposes. Although a significant portion of the population does not have internet access most South Africans seem to have cellular telephones. Are there ways that this technology can be used to reach people from a web-based portal? Such initiatives could be researched and developed.

In concluding I think that this study shows that the landscape of our world is changing as technology develops and thus every facet of human life is evolving, adapting and changing, no less our religious lives. Technology has brought us into a new communications era: what we are doing is not simply exchanging information, but exchanging our very selves, and in so doing shaping our own lives, the lives of others and the world we live in. Many more people now have a voice and the potential to contribute to the new world which is being born. Immense power shifts have taken place – those who create and manage the world wide web and those who use the world wide web bring a new power block into the world.

Technological advancement has brought many new challenges to society, and specifically the Church. I assert that this needs a response. I believe that the Church has not fully comprehended yet what these challenges may be and has been ambivalent, and even reluctant, to engage more fully in world of technology and specifically the internet. The Catholic Church has said little about the internet and yet, it seems, that it could provide a new and exciting tool in the mission of the Church. I do not think that the Church can use a 'wait and see' approach, as technology will continue to develop and shape society. Cobb (1998: 43) says 'When we live in a world splintered, our deepest selves become splintered as well'. By engaging with and in this technology a new platform arises for the Church to help people seek and identify in their own experience the living and true God and hence move towards unity and not splintering. I also show that this technology is malleable, it can be shaped and re-shaped, and therefore the Church needs to be engaged in this shaping so as to ensure that the common good is upheld, that the values of the kingdom of God are not left behind on a dark shelf but can be found where people are and therefore offered as the destination to those who seek.

Furthermore I suggest that the Church should not only engage in the internet, but have a model which helps and guides this engagement for the highest possible good to be attained.

Notwithstanding the challenges of the internet, the Church limits her own capacity for the task of making '...disciples of all nations' (Matt 28: 19) as well as helping the people of our own time to 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest... and you will find rest for you souls...' (Matt 11: 28-29), if the technology of our times is not embraced and used effectively.

REFERENCE LIST

Andriacco, D. 2000. *Screen Saved: Peril and promise of media ministry.* Cincinnati Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Bard, A. & Söderqvist, J. 2002. *NETOCRACY: The new power elite and life after capitalism.* London: Pearson Education.

Babin, P. 1991. *The New Era in Religious Communication.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Beaudoin, T. 2003. *Consuming Faith: Integrating who we are with what we buy.* Oxford: Sheed & Ward.

Beaudoin, T. 1998. *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Borgmann, A. 2003. *Power Failure: Christianity in the culture of technology.* Michigan: Brazos Press.

Borgmann, A. 1999. *Holding On to Reality: The Nature of Information at the turn of the Millennium.* Chicago: The Chicago University Press.

Borgmann, A. 1984. *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life. A Philosophical Inquiry.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Castells, M. 2004. *The Power of Identity.* 2nd ed. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.

Castells, M. 2001. *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the internet, business, and society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cobb, J. 1998. *CYBERGRACE: The search for God in the Digital World.* New York: Crown Publishers.

Connell, M. 2004. Words without flesh: The internet as a medium of an old heresy. *America*: April, 5

Debray, R. 1996. *Media Manifestos: on the technological transmission of cultural forms.* London: Verso.

de Fleur, M.L. 1970. *Theories of Mass Communication.* 2nd ed. New York: David Mackay and Co., Inc.

Dulles, A. 1987. *Models of the Church.* Dublin: Gill and Macmillian Ltd.

du Toit, C.W. (ed) 2004. *The Integrity of the Human Person in an African context: perspectives from science and religion.* Pretoria: University of South Africa.

du Toit, C.W. (ed) 2003. *Design, information and complexity in creation.* Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Dyrness, W.A. 2001. *Visual Faith: Art, theology, and worship in dialogue.* Michigan: Baker Academic.

Edwards, M. Jnr. 1994. *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Eisenstein, E.L. 1983. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Eisenstein, E.L. 1979. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Endean, P. 2004. *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flannery, A. 1992. *Vatican Council II. The conciliar and post conciliar documents New Revised Edition.* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press. 2v.

Fleming, D. 1996. *Draw me into your friendship. The Spiritual Exercises a literal translation and contemporary reading.* Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources.

Gaillardetz, R.R. 2000. *Transforming our Days.* New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.

Hammerman, J. 2000. *thelordismyshepherd.com: seeking God in cyberspace.* Florida: Simcha Press.

Hayes, M. 2007. *Googling God. The religious landscape of people in their 20s and 30s.* New York: Paulist Press.

Hayles, N.K. 1999. *How we become Post Human. Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Innis, H.A. 1951. *The Bias of Communication.* Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Innis, H.A. 1972. *Empire and Communications.* Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Ivens, M. 1998.   *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises.* Trowbridge: Cromwell
                       Press.

Ivereigh, A. 2003.   Church meets Google. *The Tablet* Vol. 257 no. 8484: pp 31-32.

Jans, J. 2002a.   *Dealing with Virtual Janus: Some cornerstones of internet
                       ethics.* Unpublished lecture presented at the Irish School of
                       Ecumenics, Dublin, November, 8 2002.

Jans, J. 2002b.   *E-vangelization: A theological reflection on the relation between
                       the internet and Christian faith.* Unpublished lecture presented at
                       St. Augustine College, Johannesburg, March, 10 2002.

Jonscher, C. 1999.   *Wiredlife: Who are we in the digital age?* London: Anchor.

Lambert, W. 2000.   *Directions for Communication: Discoveries with Ignatius Loyola.*
                       New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.

Latourelle, R.(ed) 1989. *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives.*
                       New York: Paulist Press. v3.

Levinson, P. 2001.   *Digital McLuhan: A guide to the information millennium.* London:
                       Routledge.

Lister, M. et al. 2003. *New Media: A critical introduction.* London: Routledge.

Lonergan, B.J.F. 1972. *Method in Theology.* New York: Herder and Herder.

Lonsdale, D. 2000.   *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An introduction to Ignatian Spirituality.*
                       London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.

McBrien, R.P. 1989.   *Catholicism.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

McLuhan, M. 1964.   *Understanding Media: The extensions of man.* London:
                      Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Meyrowitz, J. 1985.   *No Sense of Place: The impact of electronic media on
                      social behaviour.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Munitz, J. & Endean, P. 1996. *St. Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings.* London:
                      Penguin.

Nantais, D.E. 2004.   "Whatever!" Is not Ignatian Indifference: Jesuits and the
                      ministry to young adults. *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits,*
                      36/3 Fall: pp 2-38.

The New Jerusalem Bible. (Pocket ed.), 1990. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Niebuhr, H.R. 1951. *Christ & Culture.* San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Neuner, J. & Dupuis, J. 2001. *The Christian Faith.* Bangalore: Theological
                      Publications in India.

O'Malley, J. 1993.   *The First Jesuits.* Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University
                      Press.

Ong, W. 1996.   Information and/or communication: Interactions.
                      Communication Research Trends, 16 (3): pp 3-17.

Ong, W. 1982.   *Orality and Literacy: The technologizing of the word*
                      London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Pearsall, J. (ed) 1999. *Concise Oxford Dictionary.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Postman, N. 1994.   *The Disappearance of Childhood.* 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books.

Postman, N. 1993.   *Technopoly: The surrender of culture to technology.* New York: Vintage Books.

Postman, N. 1985.   *Amusing Ourselves to Death. Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business.* New York: Penguin.

Pullinger, D. 2001.   *Information Technology and Cyberspace – Extra Connected Living?* Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press.

Pye, R. 2005.   Sacred Space and Online Religious Communities. *The Way,* Vol 44. No 2. April 2005: pp 83-92.

Ruszkowski, A. 1989. The Decree on the Means of Social Communication. Success or Failure of the Council? in Latourelle, R. (ed) *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives. Volume 3,* 556-566. New York: Paulist Press.

Sigman, A. 2005.   *Remotely Controlled: How television is damaging our lives – and what we can do about it.* Chatham Kent: Mackays of Chatham.

Simon, S. 2006.   Connecting with God. *The Star* 3 June 2006 Life etc., p 3.

Sogaard, V. 1993.   *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the gospel.* California: William Carey Library.

Soukop, P.A. 2004.   Challenges for Evangelization in the Digital Age. Paper presented at the Continental Congress on the Church and Information Society, Monterrey, Mexico, April, 3 2003.

Soukop, P.A. 2003.   The Structure of Communication as a Challenge for Theology. *Teologia y Vida XLIVI* (2003): pp. 102-122.

Soukop, P.A. 2002.   The Context, Structure, and Content of Theology from a Communication Perspective. *Gregorianium 83*(1) (2002): pp 131-143.

Soukop, P.A. 2001.   Communication Theology as a Basis for Social Communication Formation. *Catholic International* 12 (4) (2001): pp 31-35.

Soukop, P. (ed) 1996. *Media, Culture and Catholicism.* Kansas City: Sheed & Ward.

Soukop, P.A. 1989.   Jesuit Response to the Communication Revolution. *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 21/3 May 1989: pp 1-25.

Soukop, P.A. 1986.   Communication, Cultural Form and Theology. *The Way Supplement* no. 57 (Autumn 1986): pp 77-89.

Soukup P. A., Buckley, F. J. & Robinson, D.C. 2001. The Influence of Information Technologies on Theology. *Theological Studies* 62, 2001: pp 366-377.

Tanner, K. 1997.   *Theories of culture. A new agenda for theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Vise, D.A. 2005.   *The Google Story.* Chatham Kent: Mackays of Chatham.

White, R. 1989.   Mass Media and Culture in Contemporary Catholicism. in Latourelle, R. (ed) *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives. Volume* 3, 580-611. New York: Paulist Press.

Woodrow, A. 1995.   *The Jesuits: A story of power.* London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Young, W.J. 1959.   *Letters of St. Ignatius Loyola.* Chicago: Loyola University Press.

THESES/ DISSERTATION REFERENCES

Deeb, M.L. 2000.   *Forms of ministry that can offer good news, and inspire commitment and moral leadership in post-apartheid South Africa amongst students at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg).* MA (Theology) thesis: University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg).

Tobin, R. 2000.   *Jesus Christ: The www. way. Emergent elements of an online Spirituality.* PhD thesis: All Hallows College, Dublin.

INTERVIEWS

McGarvey, B.   Email contact with McGarvey from July – September 2007 numerous times to discuss bustedhalo.com.

Paulist Young Adult Ministries. Had contact with the Paulist team in New York via email July – September 2007 to research bustedhalo.com.

Scally, P.   Spoke to Peter Scally in London re: Sacred Space in September 2007. We also had email communications on: 4/4/2007, 26/9/2007, 30/12/2007.

ONLINE REFERENCES

Bradley, R. 1997.   *Religion in Cyberspace. Building on the Past.* Lecture presented to the institute for thehistory of religions of Abo Akademii, Finland, University Turku. April, 23 1997. http://www.goethe.de/br/sap/macumba/bradleyl.htm (Accessed 7 June, 2005)

Fajardo, A.   *Internet in the Documents of the Church.* http://nuntia.cs.depaul.edu/webmissiology/church%20and%20internet.htm (Accessed 6 January 2008).

Fajardo, A.   *The Kingdom of God in Cyberspace: a theological paradigm for the use of the internet.* http://nuntia.cs.depaul.edu/webmissiology/ (Accessed 6 January 2008)

Fajardo, A   *History of the Internet.* http://nuntia.cs.depaul.edu/webmissiology/ (Accessed 6 January 2008)

Gillwald, A. 2005 (ed). *Towards an African e-Index: Household and Individual ICT Access and Usage across 10 African Countries.* [online], http://link.wits.ac.za/research/e-index.html (Accessed 14 January 2008)

Joscelyne, A.   *Debray on Technology.* [online], http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdebray1.htm (Accessed 13 March 2008)

Kappelman, T.   *Marshall McLuhan: "The medium is the message".* http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/mcluhan.html (Accessed 5 January 2008)

Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1992. *Aetatis Novae* [online], February, 22. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992 _aetatis_en.html (Accessed 10 January 2008)

Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002. *The Church and Internet* [online], February, 22. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228 _church-internet_en.html (Accessed 9 January 2008)

Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002. *Ethics in Internet* [online], February, 22. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228 _ethics-internet_en.html (Accessed 10 January 2008)

Pope Paul VI, 1975.   *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi* [online],
                December, 8 http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6evan.htm
                (Accessed 10 January 2008)

Pope John Paul II, 1988. *Pastor Bonus.* [online], June, 28
                http://www.ewtn.org/library/papaldoc/jp2pastr.htm
                (Accessed 12 January 2008)

Pope John Paul II, 1989.*The Church must learn to cope with computer culture* [online],
                Statement issued on World Communications Day, 27 May
                http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2COMPU.HTM
                (Accessed 10 January 2008)

Pope John Paul II, 1990. *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio.* [online], 7 December http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html (Accessed 10 January 2008)

ZENIT: 6 June 2005. *Church should use internet to evangelise.*

http://www.zenit.org/english/send_friend/index.phtml?sid=72142

(Accessed 6 June 2005)

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire on the *Internet*

Name:*	Occupation:	Age:

Gender:	F	M

PLEASE NOTE: This is an optional study and no person should feel coerced to continue answering the following questions if they are unwilling. All data will be treated with confidentiality and will be disposed of once this current study is complete. Respondents may withdraw from this study at any moment they wish. Selections from this questionnaire will only be used in an analysed form with other such data in the current research paper. There will be *no* compensation for interviewees.

SECTION A: Internet Usage

1. Do you have your own computer that is able to connect to the internet?

Yes	No

2. Where do you gain access to the internet? (if you do not have your own)

_____

3. What one important value, if any, does the internet contribute to your life?

_____

_____

4. How many times, on average, do you 'log on' a day?

1	2	3	3+

5. How long do you spend on the internet (not email) per day?

-30 mins	1 hr	2 hrs	2+ hrs

6. How do you feel when you are 'online'?

Connected	Engaged	Escaping	Isolated	Lonely

7. How much priority do you give to online relationships?

_____

* Optional

178

I have none	A bit important	Relatively important	The most important relationships I have

8. What do you mostly go online for?

Email	News/Information	Specific Sites	Research	General Surfing

9. Where did you learn to use the internet?

School	University	Work Place	Lessons	Self Taught

10. What is your favourite homepage? Why?

_____

11. What do you find most helpful on the internet?

_____

_____

12. What do you find least helpful on the internet?

_____

_____

SECTION B: The Church and the Internet

13. Do you think that the church uses the internet successfully?

Yes	No

Give a reason for your answer.

_____

_____

14. Do you use the internet for gathering information about the church?

Yes	No

Give a reason for your answer. Which site do you find helpful?

_____

15. Do you use the internet for spiritual upliftment? Prayer?

| Yes | No |

Give a reason for your answer. Which site do you find most helpful?

_____

_____

16. How do you think the church could better use the internet?

_____

_____

17. Do you think the internet is a helpful and effective tool for converting people to the Christian faith?

_____

_____

18. What do you think the internet's limitations are as a tool for converting people?

_____

_____

19. What possibilities do you think the internet offers people to interact on religious and spiritual matters? Have you done this?

_____

_____

20. Do you think Christians can establish a sense of community online?

| Yes | No |

What would the advantages be?

_____

_____

What would the disadvantages be?

_____

21. How far should and can the church encourage online community?

_____

_____

22. Do you think online involvement, such as 'chat rooms', makes conversation with others easier?

_____

_____

23. Do you think there is a difference between praying online and praying in community like at Sunday worship?

_____

_____

24. Would you find self-disclosure easier online or offline? Why?

_____

_____

25. Any other comments/observations:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It is appreciated -