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Media
and Religion

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Media and Religion

The association between communication media and religion extends back in time to the earliest telling of myths and the sketching of cave paintings. The committal of the Hebrew Bible to writing began millennia of associations between the Judeo-Christian tradition and communication. Johannes Gutenberg's decision to print the Bible as the first output of his press (using movable type) highlights this connection for the West, which already saw religious themes in its art, music, and manuscript tradition. That the first radio voice broadcast (on Christmas eve 1906) was a religious service strengthens the connection between media and religion for many Christian scholars. While the contemporary use of communication media and the output of communication products goes well beyond religious purposes, we still see an enormous output of religious material in almost all media today.

Communication scholars have taken note of this and have themselves produced an enormous literature on the topic. *Communication Research Trends* reviewed some of this material in 1995 (Volume 15, number 2): "Religion in the Mass Media" (http://cscc.scu.edu/trends). That issue examines the topic under four main headings: journalistic coverage of religion; religion on television in the United States, Great Britain, and Latin America; religious cinema; and public religion. Another indication of the scope of material comes in the thousand or so annotated bibliographical entries in Soukup's 1989 *Christian Communication*. The area continues to receive growing scholarly attention, fueled by the growth of religious broadcasting and cable television, the Internet, and scholarly religious groups like the Religious Communication Association (and its *Journal of Religious Communication*). The latter group promotes the study of religious communication broadly conceived, ranging from studies of religious rhetoric in the ancient world to examinations of current religious figures and their use of the media. It makes its back issues available online at http://www.cios.org/www/jcr/jcrtocs.htm.

The study of media and religion encompasses a wide variety of methods. Many of the works have a kind of documentary quality, simply recording what religious groups do with different media. A long tradition proposes audience studies: who watches or listens to religious broadcasts? Why? Journalists and their critics investigate news coverage of religion, seeking to explain lapses in coverage or apparent bias. Others take a content analytic approach, looking not just at news coverage but also at religious themes in film or television. Some seek to address policy questions and situate their studies in the relationship between religious groups and governmental oversight of communication. Some of the religiously based studies take a polemic tone, criticizing media content or proposing religious or moral guides to content.

This survey will examine three broad strands of communication research on media and religion. First, it will review some emerging frameworks for studying media and religion and see how current scholars situate the topic. Second, it will look at how people have studied the relation of different media to religion, focusing on journalism (especially the coverage of religion), the entertainment media (both the content and the critique), and the information media (primarily the Internet). Finally, this survey will examine the Christian reflection on media, occurring in what some term Communication Theology (Plude 2001: 3).

I. Frameworks for Studying Media and Religion

A. Religious Studies/Sociology of Religion

Hent de Vries, in introducing the essays in *Religion and Media* (de Vries and Weber 2001) proposes that the study of media and religion can help answer the question of the role of each in the public sphere. Rather than start with media studies as many other examinations of media and religion do, this collection begins with sociological and philosophical questions, rooted in critical theory and post-modernism. However, with this starting point, the various authors look at religion through the lens of communication. In his introduction, de Vries notes that, with the

rise of democracy and the increasing secularization of society, theorists have tried to account for the persistence of public religion.

> The relationship between religion and media sheds light on this paradox [the privatization of religion but with public consequences, like the Islamic revolution in Iran or the political role of liberation theology], which illustrates an increasingly complicated *negotiation* between the private and public spheres. Indeed, the mediatized return of the religious seems . . . its prime example. . ." (de Vries 2001: 17)

He extrapolates from Jacques Derrida's contribution to the volume (2001) that argues that communication media and religion are both mediations, both bridging the interior and exterior, though in different ways. Because both religion and the media connect cultural identity and personal identity, they each produce and highlight cultural difference, which is the condition for the political or public sphere (*ibid.*, p. 19-20).

The editors divide the volume into three major sections: theoretical contributions, historical and systematic accounts of "religion and mediatization," and anthropological studies. The theoretical studies draw heavily on European philosophical traditions as exemplified in the work of Kierkegaard, Derrida, Adorno, and Benjamin. In these essays the writers (Weber, Derrida, Koch) explore the concepts of mediation and mediatization, seeing religion as one kind of mediation and the rise of the mass media as another. Philosophically, they ask what happens to a society when something is interposed—between them and God, between them and each other, between them and the political class, and so on. What is the nature of this "in between"?

The historical accounts situate particular questions of communication as they shed light on religion. Three of them—all in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—provide a representative sample of the methodology. Haun Saussy (2001) explores the nature of information networks and the clash of media systems by reading a seventeenth century Chinese report of a discussion between Jesuit missionaries and the Chinese about printing systems. The Jesuits describe printing in Europe, the expense, the methods of government (and religious) control of printing and texts, and the circulation of ideas; the Chinese for their part marvel at the differences, for their block printing process is so simple that anyone can print anything. Each communication system has ties to the cultures'

respective religious systems and traditions; both cultures exercise a kind of centralized control, but in very different ways. The discussion, about printing on one level, addresses their understandings of religion. In his conclusion Saussy makes this explicit:

> The history of religions is, one could easily argue, the history of the media. The prohibition of idols; the periodic bouts of iconoclasm within Christianity; the mutual recognition of the three Peoples of the Book; the symbiosis of Protestantism and printing, radio, television, and other devices for "broadcasting" (a term inspired by the Parable of the Sower, which is also and originally a parable of mediatic address): there is certainly enough in these ruptures, these shifts from one vehicle to another, to suggest a history, not of doctrines, but of the relations between doctrine and its material or technical substructures. (Saussy 2001: 179-180)

The history thus identifies a point of contact between religion and media and suggests ways that current scholars might approach studying their contemporary interaction.

Burcht Pranger (2001) directs our attention to images, particularly the contrast between the Protestant reformers' rejection of images in favor of the biblical text and the Catholic use of images. Ironically, he writes, the Protestant textualism and its preaching demanded an evocation of scenes from the life of Christ while Catholic imagery needed the interpretive foundation of the biblical text. "The Christian faith, despite being a religion of the Book, is primarily known and communicated in a visual manner" (Pranger 2001: 187). To develop his theme, he turns to an analysis of Ignatius of Loyola's (1491-1554) Counter-Reformation development of the imaginative contemplation in his *Spiritual Exercises*, in which he asks retreatants to imagine as vividly as possible biblical and extra-biblical scenes (for example, hell). This use of imagery runs through later Catholicism and Catholic cultures, appearing, for example, in the works of James Joyce. Here again, communication patterns—in this instance, visual images—cannot be separated from religion.

The third historical work directs attention to Martin Luther. Manfred Schneider (2001) argues that Luther's theological revision of sacramental semiotics manifests an adjustment to the new information technology of print (Schneider 2001: 199). To show how this occurred he reviews the work of Harold Innis,

Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong as well as that of others in orality and literacy studies. "The metatheories of these intellectuals provided a belated media philosophy for the sacred texts by attaching the essence, the figure, the accessibility of the space of meaning to the words of God" (*ibid*., p. 201). He contrasts Jewish and Christian theories of signs and media, interpreting them in the light of Innis's work especially. These theories, largely manifest in sacramental theology, reflected the church practices used in holding a geographically scattered community together (what Innis terms "space-binding"). Luther, intuitively building on the shift of communication patterns introduced by the printing press, develops a different way to administer and bind a community together through space by appealing to the printed word and biblical text.

All three of these historical studies (as well as the others addressing television, cinema, and photography) discover something about religion by calling attention to media practices or media understandings. In so doing, they suggest a methodology for understanding the modern interaction between media and religion. The last section of *Religion and Media* (de Vries and Weber 2001) takes up this challenge. Consisting largely of anthropological studies, it turns away from the West and away from Christianity to examine how non-Judeo-Christian religions interact with media. Studies examine religious media practices in Indonesia, Japan, India, Iran, Australia, South Africa, and Venezuela. The media involved include newspapers, photography, the Internet, and indigenous art. These case studies help the reader to understand that the media-religion interaction does explain practices, even in non-western cultures, and helps to situate the important role of religion in the lives of people.

B. Philosophy/Theology

Catherine Pickstock's theological exploration, *After Writing* (1998), demonstrates the value of the general approach of Schneider (2001) in using a "media philosophy" or the metatheories of Ong and Derrida to re-read the history of theology and philosophy, exploring key texts and concepts. She proposes, according to her subtitle, "the liturgical consummation of philosophy"; to accomplish this she examines the role and impact of writing as it supplants an older oralism. She argues that writing, by leading to an exteriority and spatialization of language (and consequently of human reflection on experience), moves language into a self-referential trap and away from its liturgical sense— a non-self-referential effective means of expressing

praise. Examining the one communication medium of writing, she revisits questions of signification, particularly as the medieval theologians wrestled with them in their sacramental and Eucharistic theology.

The focus on the communication medium allows her to track how groups formed a (in this case, Christian) community and how they understood religion and the religious nature of that community's activities. In the larger sense, the use of the communication medium as analytic tool opens up a theory of semiotics, meaning, and signification. The approach suggests that those interested in media and religion can gain a deeper understanding of the historical development of key concepts by following the media and making explicit what so often remains implicit in their history. How people communicate carries through to affect every aspect of how they behave, especially in their public interactions, where historically religion holds a key place.

C. Cultural Studies

In the introduction to *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media* (Hoover and Clark 2002), Stewart Hoover argues that scholars should no longer treat media and religion as separate spheres or entities that influence one another. They are, he claims, more intricately connected. "A good deal of what goes on in the multiple relationships between religion and the media involves layered interconnections between religious symbols, interests, and meanings and the modern media sphere within which much of contemporary culture is made known" (Hoover 2002a: 1). The situation of contemporary religion in the United States is both more public and more private than in the past: more public in its use of and use by cultural industries and more private in its retreat from institutional churches to individual behaviors. Looking at the everyday experience of people, Stewart and his colleagues choose to focus on the religious practice of individuals, particularly where that practice involves the media. Both communication and religious studies scholars bring particular tools to the task:

> Among media scholars, attention has begun to focus on culture and questions of culture, opening up scope for consideration of those dimensions of life we traditionally have thought of as "religious." At the same time scholars of religion have begun investigating ways in which religion is done outside the boundaries of traditional faiths, doctrines, histories, and orders. (*ibid*., p. 2)

This results in a focus on meaning and the construction of meaning. How do people make (religious) meanings? How do they come to regard them as religious? How do they interact with the media to create these meanings?

Hoover encourages scholars to look at the convergences between media and religion rather than to apply pre-existing categories or to separate secular from sacred (*ibid*., pp. 3-4). He also cautions against an instrumental approach to media and religion, where communication becomes a tool for a religious group to apply to a given problem. Instead, he and his colleagues have tried "to see communication as something that arises out of the interactions between texts, producers, receivers, and the contexts wherein they reside" (*ibid*., p. 4). The goal of this general approach to studying media and religion, he writes, "is to describe in some detail moments and locations where we can see active the kind of religious, spiritual, transcendent, or meaning-centered practice that seems to be evolving with reference to, and in the context of, media culture" (*ibid*., p. 4). Hoover and his co-editor, Lynn Clark have assembled sixteen studies that examine media and religion in its various forms: images, television, the Internet, popular culture, individual performance, and so on. A number of these case studies appear throughout this survey; their importance lies more in their common methodology and approach than in any individual content.

Though neither exclusively nor directly concerned with the mass media, Jacques Grand'Maison, a Montreal-based sociologist and his colleagues carried out a seven-year field research project in Quebec (Grand'Maison 1992; 1993; Grand'Maison and Lefebvre 1994; 1995), which addressed questions of media and religion in ways similar to those proposed by Hoover. An "exploration of the cultural, social, moral and spiritual trends" in various age groups (Lefebvre 1998: 1), the qualitative research discovered the extent to which and the means whereby each group used the media to fulfill religious needs. Rather than looking at how the various groups used the media, the research team let their informants discuss various aspects of their lives and observed how they interpreted life events and ascribed meaning.

Lefebvre (1998) summarizes the religion and media aspects of the studies. In their interviews they noted a number of characteristics differentiating one group from another. For the teen group, "in this media universe, two religious trends are evident: relativism and pluralism (religious signs are all mixed up), and initiation rituals" (*ibid*., p. 9). The adolescents use the media available to them (video games, television, films) to make sense of the world. The world of these media celebrates subjectivism and provides simple "good vs. evil" rituals through which they make sense of the larger world while still clinging to a certain subjective relativism. The next older generation takes a different approach. "When young adults express meaning in the media, it is generally dramatic" (*ibid*., p. 9): this slightly older generation wrestles with themes of life and death, social integration, and spirituality through the media stories that surround them. For many of them, social meaning results from the dramatic form of television.

Using the films of Denis Arcand as examples of the adult (baby-boom) generation's attitudes toward faith, Lefebvre observes that they "demonstrated at least two trends: his nostalgia for the secure period of Christianity, when he was a child; and the schism between the life and words of Jesus—genuine, but sometimes crude and subversive, and the outdated institutional Church" (*ibid*., p. 10). Coupled with a resentment against the institutional church, these attitudes lead this adult generation to seek spiritual meaning outside the church, in various new age movements—which are themselves supported by media products ranging from videos to CDs. Finally, the older generations, those who grew up before World War II, have the most traditional relationship to the media in terms of religion. "The elites of the pre-war generation in Quebec have preserved the influence of established religion in the popular media" (*ibid*., p. 7), defending a strong Catholic presence in radio and television broadcasting.

Like Hoover and his colleagues, Grand'Maison and Lefebvre and their research group approach media and religion as a subset of a larger cultural shift. Rather than bringing a set of pre-existent categories to their data, they look to see how the people make religious meaning of their lives and then at the roles that the media play in that process.

D. Rhetorical Analysis and Content Analysis

A number of communication scholars have approached the intersection of religion and media (especially the broadcast media) through the tools of rhetorical analysis and criticism. This kind of close textual analysis—one that examines not only the spoken words, but also the visual style, the persuasive appeals, the nonverbal actions, and the overall presentation—

seeks to open up how these religious programs create meaning for their audiences through a construction of a symbolic world. Because the rhetorical analyst believes that the "world we perceive around us is constructed through symbolic interaction" (Lynch 1998: 12), the study of the structure, process, and content of the discourse allows us to understand how the programs create meaning and invite a response from their audiences.

Janice Peck, in presenting her study of the programs of the Rev. Jimmy Swaggert and the Rev. Pat Robertson, explains her method and goals in this way: "Beyond the primary goal of the book—to understand the meanings of evangelical television, its sociohistorical moorings, and its contemporary structure of appeal—a secondary aim is to create a bridge between rhetorical and sociological approaches to communication research without residing entirely in either camp" (Peck 1993: vii). Since most previous studies of televangelists in the United States followed the sociological approach, Peck decides to focus her project on meaning. Holding that the kind of revival preaching that characterizes American evangelicalism stems from a response to socioeconomic and cultural change (*ibid*., p. 15), she examines the meaning construction and persuasive strategies of the two evangelists as they work to help their audiences during a time of economic, political, and social change in America. The two ministers represent two divergent strands of evangelical theology: Robertson, the Christian broadcaster whose *700 Club* follows a talk show format, proclaims a "conversionist" theology of health and wealth, political activism, and Christian lifestyle that seeks to accommodate the wider culture. Swaggert, who presents himself as a "country preacher" on programs that resemble revival meetings, stands for a "dualist" theology that discourages contact with the world and political affairs, that condemns health-and-wealth preaching, and that advocates a separation from the world (*ibid*., pp. 149ff).

Peck argues that both of them use broadcasting as a way to maintain a symbol system that will encourage the faith of their followers (*ibid*., pp. 85-86). Her analysis of the form of the programs addresses the performances of each evangelist, their modes of address, the settings of the individual shows, the use of ritual, and the television framing devices they employ (*ibid*., chapters 8-9). Through this she demonstrates the conscious use of the intimacy of the television medium to create parasocial relationships between the evangelists and their audiences (*ibid*., pp. 100-102). Her overall

analysis allows her to find similarities between their quite different theological and broadcasting approaches and to direct attention to how they accomplish their effect, regardless of their content.

This same concern for *how* one communicates characterizes Theodor Adorno's recently translated *The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses* (2000). Though written as an analysis of the radio evangelist's mid-1930's era broadcasts, Adorno's work demonstrates contemporary relevance through its skillful explication of the rhetorical techniques used by Thomas, the Rev. Charles Coughlin, Hitler, and others—methods Adorno claims are common to fascist and anti-Semitic agitators. Adorno divides his analysis of the rhetorical devices into four categories: the evangelist's personal attitude towards his audience, his methods of persuasion, his use of religion and theology, and his ideology. By appearing as one of the audience, as a "messenger" or a "brother" rather than a leader, as an "indefatigable worker for the cause," Thomas gives the appearance of being an equal.

> He [Thomas] stresses the personal element, the similarity between himself and the audience, and the whole sphere of interest, as a sort of emotional compensation for the cold, self-alienated life of most people . . . The substitute for their isolation and loneliness is not solidarity, but obedience. (Adorno 2000: 27)

Adorno characterizes the method of persuasion as not logical but emotional, using associational transitions and connotational links (*ibid*., p. 34) and a sense of what he calls the "fait accompli" technique (*ibid*., p. 42). It adds up to a "strategy of terror" which the speaker uses to build up a sense of crisis and fear in the audience, so that they will go along with what the speaker proposes.

Adorno feels that Thomas's use of religion is simply another way to manipulate the audience's behavior, to move them from religious zeal to political partisanship (*ibid*., p. 75). Thomas's rhetorical arguments fit well into the theology of his audience, from a kind of apocalyptic sense of imminent destruction to an acceptance of predestination to an exploitation of gospel images like the judgment parable of the sheep and the goats. Because Christianity has historically contained an anti-Semitic strain, Thomas can more readily turn these theological categories against the Jews. "Fascist propaganda, by 'secularizing' Christian motives, perverts a great many of them into their opposite" (*ibid*., p. 76). The religious becomes the grounding for an increased "us vs. them" thinking that makes it all the

easier to recruit the audience to a political end. In his analysis of the ideological direction of Thomas's preaching, Adorno repeats his contention that the content is not as important as the method; however, Thomas will use political appeals to further rally the audience: anti-Communism, anti-administration (here, opposition to the policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt), anti-Semitism, and anti-foreign policy.

Though Adorno titles his extended essay a psychological analysis, it better fits the pattern of a rhetorical analysis, since he lays out the persuasive strategies of the speaker through a careful study of Thomas's texts. His is not so much a study of media and religion in general as a case study of how a skilled speaker can manipulate both religion and media. His is a look at the negative power exerted by the broadcast preacher.

Another rhetorical analysis looks to a contemporary of Thomas—Father Charles Coughlin, the radio priest of the Shrine of the Little Flower in Detroit. Michael Casey and Aimee Rowe (1996) examine his radio sermons between 1930 and 1936 to identify his rhetorical vision and persuasive strategies. Coughlin, too, appeared to many as a pro-fascist, anti-communist, and anti-Semitic propagandist who merged a political agenda with his religious vision. Casey and Rowe examine his sermons and note that he followed a "symbolic convergence" model (Casey and Rowe 1996: 38) and developed a key vision of "the exploitation of the many by a conspiracy" (*ibid*., p. 40). "He offered them [the listeners] a narrative with villains and heroes that seemed to make sense of the chaos and confusion caused by the desolation and poverty which accompanied the depression" (*ibid*.). His conspiracy theory blamed big interests like international bankers, industrialists, the government, the press, and President Roosevelt and cast against them the ordinary American citizen, their forebears, and Coughlin's own political party. The rhetorical vision worked, argue Casey and Rowe, because Coughlin offered the listeners a simple option: "Coughlin transformed the daily struggle of survival of his listeners into a cosmic struggle of good versus evil" (*ibid*., p. 45).

Christopher Lynch's rhetorical analysis of the television preaching of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen (1998) looks at the other, more positive side of broadcast preaching. He describes his project as "a close textual analysis of the messages of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, drawn from forty-two episodes of his popular television show *Life Is Worth Living* (1952-57). . . . By appealing to the mythos of American civil religion, he

showed his Catholic listeners how to survive in society and reassured others that Catholics were truly patriotic" (Lynch 1998: ix). Lynch situates Sheen's television preaching within the post-war history of the United States, within the religious suspicions of the day, and within the development of communication technology. Sheen was among the first television preachers, the first to have a regularly scheduled program, and the first to have a commercial sponsor (*ibid*., pp. 2-7).

Recruited by the DuMont Network so that its member stations could fulfill a federal mandate to carry public service religious programming, Sheen had wide latitude in creating the program. Rather than doing a narrowly Catholic program (the idea initially proposed for the show), Sheen chose to address "topics of moral living" that might appeal to a broader audience (*ibid*., p. 24). He also carefully helped to design the set, chose the theme music, and insisted on wearing ecclesiastical vestments rather than a simple black suit. Lynch notes that these devices served Sheen as a kind of "impression management" (*ibid*., p. 124) to help him negotiate conflicting audience demands of his identity and ministerial service. Lynch's rhetorical analysis also includes a careful consideration of Sheen's use of metaphors and themes in his speaking. These contributed, Lynch holds, to a kind of medieval morality play approach that bridged the gap between secular and religious viewers.

Lynch shows how Sheen managed an implicit plea for a public role for Catholics in American society at a time when many still suspected Catholics as foreigners pledged to support the Vatican over the United States. He could do this by couching his plea within a larger discussion of the role of religion in public life (*ibid*., chapter 3). Finally, using the technique of frame analysis, Lynch shows how Sheen moved from public topics to more private ones like the role of pain and suffering. Similarly, by using a framing of Mary as a role model, Sheen was also able to address questions of the family and of women.

Like Peck and Adorno, Lynch also shows how broadcast preaching works. His analysis of Sheen's metaphors, themes, and presentation calls attention to the religious content, something that Sheen managed to do while deflecting attention from himself. The rhetorical analysis approach allows the communication scholar to better understand how religion interacts with media and how the religious communicator constructs a common meaning with the audience.

II. Relation of Different Media to Religion: (1) Print

A. Print Media

Lawrence Babb and Susan Wadley's collection of essays, *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia* (1995), examines how various "new media" affect religion in India. Considering everything from religious posters and comic books to television and video, they and their contributors argue that the "new communications media have profoundly altered the circulation of symbols, including religious symbols, in South Asian societies" (Babb and Wadley 1995: 1). Whereas, prior to print, religious symbols tended to remain within very localized groups, their wider availability allowed them not only to spread geographically but also to transcend social boundaries. This "social mobility" has "disembedded" religious traditions from particular locations and from particular groups and castes and spread religious observances in new ways throughout India (*ibid.*, p. 3). In introducing several of the chapters that deal with print, Babb and Wadley explain the importance of these iconic symbols within South Asian society:

> Central to religious observance in the Hindu tradition is *darsan*, the auspicious seeing of a divine being. Given that fact, it is hardly surprising that the mechanical reproduction of pictures of deities (and other sacred entities) has become one of the most ubiquitous manifestations of modern religion in South Asia. (*ibid.*, p. 6)

H. Daniel Smith traces the design, content, production, and marketing of these religious images and explains how they evoke devotional responses (Smith 1995: 35-39). Stephen Inglis complements this treatment with a close study of one particular artist whose work carries great weight in India. Where in previous times, an artist might decorate a particular temple and be known in one village or city, the work today carries a much wider influence. In addition, one artist can affect the religious practice of a multitude: "The ubiquity, portability, and mobility of these images have drawn Hindus closer to one another in the ways they perceive the divine and have provided a more unified vision of the Hindu pantheon" (Inglis 1995: 67).

Another important print format for religion in India has been the comic book, particularly one long-running series, *Amar Chitra Katha* (an "immortal illustrated story"). Frances Pritchett (1995) describes the origin and history of the series, begun to teach children the religious tradition of India when the series' founder discovered that Indian children knew more about western religions and heroes than they did about their own culture. John S. Hawley (1995) examines the content of these comics. In addition to teaching religion, the series also covers famous individuals from India, stories of nationalism, and morality tales.

B. Journalism

Apart from Bible printing, the print form most associated with religion in the west is journalism. As reported in *Communication Research Trends* in 1995, this association has not always been a happy one, with religious leaders and even reporters themselves criticizing press coverage of religion. More recent scholarly attention asks how the news media have reported religion, why the news media report religion as they do, and what people expect of religion reporting.

The Practice of Reporting

As a way of situating the reporting of religion, Judith Buddenbaum and Debra Mason (2000) assembled a collection of news stories on religion from colonial to modern times in the United States. They describe their work as "an anthology of news stories that illustrates both the role of religion in shaping public opinion and the role of the media in spreading religious beliefs and opinion through society and in shaping people's opinions about religion" (Buddenbaum and Mason 2000: xiii). Sections include reporting on the Great Awakening; the role of religion in the American revolution; the nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism of parts of the press; the debate over the Mormon Church; the faith and science debates; the twentieth-century coverage of divisive issues like gays in the churches, liberation theology, the electronic church, and the religious right and politics. Buddenbaum and Mason introduce each section with a brief history and an explanation of the issues faced by the press.

In an attempt to shed some empirical light on one aspect of religion in the news, Robert Mowery (1995) compares the references to "God" in the January 1994 *New York Times* with those in the January 1954 *New York Times*. Most of the 1954 God references occurred

in a regular feature: Sunday and Monday summaries of sermons preached in the city's synagogues and churches (Mowery 1995: 86-87). In the more recent issues, "God" appears most often in quotes from sources (many of these, prayers like "God, help me!" from an accident victim) rather than in clergy voices. "God" also enters into substantive discussions when a story might cover faith in the modern world (*ibid.*, 86). The biggest difference appears to be in the decline in the number of clergy interviewed.

Mark Silk (1995) writes sympathetically of the difficulties that news media have with reporting religion, not the least of which are the seriousness with which Americans take religion and the fact that "religions are themselves systems of communication," designed "to facilitate the exchange of information between the mundane world and the realm of the sacred" (Silk 1995: 3). Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—unlike most other religious traditions—join religious knowledge (gained through divine revelation) to religious observance. Christianity especially focuses on communicating the Word of God; at the same time, it must guard against false prophets—those who would distort the message or mislead believers. Thus it treats those who speak of religious issues without authorization with suspicion.

Another difficulty of religious reporting is how to report "bad news" about churches—particularly scandal. The Christian churches themselves hold that spreading scandalous material harms the receivers as well as the reputation of the sinners. But the ideal of the press in the U.S. tends to run the other way, aiming for full disclosure. The news media's position is that revealing scandal works to purify society, leading to good. In some ways this is a theological dispute, with each side arguing that its approach holds more benefit for the community (*ibid.*, pp. 5-7). A final problem for reporting religion arises with the pluralism of religious institutions in the United States. For which audience (that is, which group of believers) should the news writer or editor aim the story? Even religious groups tend to aim for the lowest common denominator of belief in their own broadcasts. In support of his discussion of this dilemma, Silk rehearses the history of religious broadcasting, particularly the more recent experiences of the Faith & Values cable channel (*ibid.*, pp. 7-10).

To situate his treatment of religious news coverage, Silk recounts some of the history of the interactions between the news media and religion in the United States (*ibid.*, pp. 15-30). Much of the early his-

tory was dominated by the denominational press, papers published by just about every religious group. (For more on this, see the discussion by Olarsky, 1990, of key religious newspapers in the U.S.) The attitudes of the secular press towards religion were shaped in the mid-nineteenth century by James Gordon Bennet and the *New York Herald*, which inaugurated such features as the religion section and coverage of various religious groups. The papers also reported religious events and religious opinions and pronouncements. Silk also recounts how religion reporters at revival meetings often experienced the emotion of the meetings and could not keep to an ideal of objectivity. By the 1940s though, religion appeared more and more as just another news commodity. However, papers and news outlets wanted to cover religion without including religious controversy or doctrinal disagreements among churches—partly to avoid alienating any readers. The 1950-1970 period saw a growth in specialized religion reporters.

Silk explains the tenor and direction of religious news reporting by arguing that news organizations cover religion through the use of "topoi" or rhetorical categories that help to situate and explain the stories (Silk 1995: 50). Reporters do not limit the practice to religion, but apply it to other news beats as well—it allows them to quickly identify newsworthy stories and decide on the categories most helpful in reporting them. Quoting Peter Steinfels, the senior religion reporter for the *New York Times*, Silk notes that some of the topoi useful for religious stories include (1) the failings of religious leaders; (2) the struggles of ancient faiths with modern times; (3) religious scholarship, particularly if it challenges long-held beliefs; (4) interfaith harmony; (5) reactions to changes in biblical translation, church practices, and so on; and (6) the ordinariness of devoted church members (*ibid.*, pp. 53-54). Silk then examines religion reporting in practice by reviewing how journalists reported particular themes, among others: the good works of individuals and churches, tolerance, hypocrisy, declining church membership, and the belief in the supernatural.

Stewart Hoover's *Religion in the News* (1998) approaches the controversies over the coverage of religion by the secular press from a different angle. In addition to sketching the history of religious reporting and reviewing press policy, he situates the issue of reporting religion within the larger cultural attitudes to religion in the United States, asking "how the construction of religion in the media is embedded in a

broader understanding of American religious discourse" (Hoover 1998: 13). To better understand how this discourse affects religious news, he publishes data based on interviews with journalists as well as with their readers and listeners and supplements these with national survey data over a period of several years, exploring audience attitudes and preferences.

Despite the desire of religion reporters for a broader understanding of religion and its effect on daily events, the culturally "received view" of religion makes this difficult. Hoover identifies six factors from this "received view" that make reporting religion difficult: (1) a growing secularization has led to less news coverage of religion; (2) many regard religion as a private thing; (3) religion lies outside the realm of empirical data; (4) religion is too complex a subject; (5) religion is inherently controversial; and (6) the First Amendment separation of church and state leads some to conclude that religion should be separated from the rest of American life as well (*ibid.*, pp. 28-30). The decline of institutional religions, a heightened sense of personal autonomy in regards to religion, and the growth of new religious movements all confuse the situation even more. In reflecting on the practice of journalism, Hoover's sample of working journalists identified a number of other factors (mostly internal to their profession) that affect how religion gets reported. These include whether a news organization regards religion as "hard news" or as feature news; whether it sees religion as a local story or as a more universal one; whether there is a religious specialist on staff; whether the news organization runs religion stories only in special sections; and who does the reporting (*ibid.*, pp. 72-75).

Whatever the institutional pressures on reporting religion, Hoover's audience surveys demonstrate that people want religious news. He notes that "66% of respondents felt it was at least fairly important to them that newspapers cover religion" (*ibid.*, p. 116). The respondents also indicated that they wanted to see both local religious stories and the more universal religious stories. Hoover examines the survey results carefully and reports aggregate results as well as results sorted by gender, faith type, media preference, and so on. He also reports what may be an age-related finding:

> Those who are most outwardly religious are more embedded in print culture than those who are less involved. However, religious liberals and conservatives differ far less in terms of their reported media use. (*ibid.*, p. 136)

Hoover concludes by identifying a number of issues—or common grounds—where news professionals and their audiences might begin a discussion that could improve the reporting of religion. He lists them as topics. "Religion news is no longer only news about 'religions'" (*ibid.*, p. 193). "Religion needs to be understood substantively as well as functionally" (*ibid.*, p. 194). "Journalism needs to maintain an 'institutional memory' regarding religion" (*ibid.*, p. 195). "Religion needs to be understood as transcending the local and personal level" (*ibid.*). As he notes at the beginning of the volume, the American discourse about religion became sophisticated in the 1990s. He ends his discussion by posing as the final chapter title a choice for the news industry: "To *Be* the Discourse or Merely to *Cover* It."

In a more recent reflection, Hoover (2002b) returns to the subject and tries to situate the reporting of religion within the larger context of public and political discourse in the United States. He notes that religion had functioned as a *"mediating* institution—a place where private moral sentiment could be articulated as public discourse and public policy" (Hoover 2002b: 72). But with religious institutions declining and people more "autonomous in their exercise of faith" (*ibid.*, p. 74), this does not happen as easily. Journalists have a more difficult time in knowing how to treat religion, are more comfortable in characterizing it as personal faith and in reporting the "conflicting roles and images" for religion in society (*ibid.*, p. 83).

III. Relation of Different Media to Religion: (2) Broadcasting and Cinema

A. Broadcasting and Entertainment

Religious groups have used the broadcast media almost from their beginning for evangelization, teaching, and worship. At the same time these media, as well as the cinema, have found in religion a fruitful topic for their own programming. The research on this interaction encompasses reports on religious broadcasting; descriptions of religious uses of television, radio, and popular music; and a religious interpretation or critique of content in radio, television, and cinema. A great deal of this research addresses these media in

the United States: the nature of its commercial broadcasting system, the early requirements that holders of broadcast licenses provide free services to religious groups, the development of well-known "televangelists," and a continuing wide-spread interest in religion in American culture all help to account for the extent of research on U.S.-based media and religion.

Overviews

For a general introduction, Erickson's *Religious Radio and Television in the United States, 1921-1991* (1992) provides both a brief historical overview and a detailed look at key individuals, programs, and series. Arranged alphabetically, this reference work gives biographical sketches and program summaries. Ward (1994) presents an extended narrative history of evangelical broadcasting, more or less in chronological order, telling the stories of people and stations. He includes an appendix with biographical sketches of such important figures as Ben Armstrong, Paul Freed, Charles Fuller, Billy Graham, and Pat Robertson. Though good as a guide to evangelical broadcasting, he does not treat religious broadcasters from other traditions.

Television

Bobby Alexander examines televangelism through the lens of ritual, arguing that the audience for the television evangelists use their programs to fulfill social needs through the "ritual performances" of the programs (Alexander 1994: 3). He builds his case by a careful study of four programs: Jerry Falwell's "The Old Time Gospel Hour," Pat Robertson's "The 700 Club," Jimmy Swaggert's "The Jimmy Swaggert Show," and Jim and Tammy Bakker's "The PTL Club." In each instance he holds that both the ritual participation in the programs and the characteristics of that ritual participation (*ibid.*, pp. 65-70) connect the viewer to a deeper sense of community (*ibid.*, pp. 85-94) in an attempt to escape a social marginalization that these conservative evangelical Christians feel in the United States (*ibid.*, p. 42). In other words, participation in the programs "help[s] viewers legitimate or validate in their own eyes their religion, religious identity, and religious group in the face of threats and opposition by mainstream American society, which is highly secularized" (*ibid.*, p. 4). Alexander reports data from a survey of viewers in support of his hypothesis; however, he does acknowledge that the sample was non-random and self-selected, so it may not accurately represent all viewers of religious television.

Where many studies look at reasons for viewing religious television, a few more recent ones ask how

and why such viewing affects the audience. Lawrence Nadler, Jeffrey Courtright, and Marjorie Nadler (1996) test a research model to explain why people give money to televangelists. They hypothesize that relational development—the more the audience feels that they have a personal relationship with the televangelist—explains the willingness to donate (Nadler, Courtright and Nadler 1996: 48-49). A group of test subjects drawn from a student population viewed four different television evangelists and rated them according to various intimacy-based relational assessments: similarity/depth, immediacy/affection, and receptivity/trust. The researchers found a positive correlation between the intimacy measures and the willingness to respond to financial appeals.

> The stronger an audience member perceives a televangelist along these relational dimensions, the more he/she wants to watch the televangelist's program. As television viewing increases, the para-social relationship between the televangelist and the audience member can develop further. As this relationship progresses, the audience member may be more likely to purchase products from and contribute money to the televangelist. (*ibid.*, p. 55)

The researchers also found a connection between the self-presentation of the televangelists (composure, equality, and so on) and the audience members' reactions (*ibid.*, p. 56).

Barry Hollander (1998) investigates the extent to which viewing religious programming can influence a person's political views—that is, the effects of viewing on the audience member. To do this, he hypothesizes that religious television has a "priming effect" on its viewers; in other words, that the prior context will affect the interpretation of information received later. "Recent or frequently activated ideas come to mind more easily, making them more important in the processing of stimuli" (Hollander 1998: 69). Thus, those who watch religious programming will more likely use religion as a way to interpret and make political decisions. Using data from a randomly drawn national sample, Hollander did find such an effect: "The analysis reported here finds that exposure to such broadcasts can *prime* the importance of religion in the formation and maintenance of political attitudes, even when controlling for a host of demographic and political factors and, perhaps most important, the religiosity of respondents" (*ibid.*, p. 79). Interestingly, the priming effect appears strongest for Christian fundamentalists on the

issue of abortion and for Catholics on the issues of the death penalty and gay marriages (*ibid*.).

Asia

Studies of religion and television outside the United States take a more descriptive approach. In response to a parliamentary question, Zulkiple Ghani (1998) seeks to document the extent of Islamic religious messages on Malaysian television. Briefly recounting the history of television in Malaysia, he acknowledges that Malaysian television began as primarily an entertainment medium; after ten years the Religious and Dakwah Unit was established in 1973 to increase the number of Islamic programs (to 22 per week); these consisted primarily of prayer, reading from the Qu'ran, and question and answer shows (Ghani 1998: 4). In the intervening years, religious programming has increased and the responsibility for it has shifted to the *Pusat Islam* [Islamic Centre] of the Prime Minister's office. Ghani then describes the current programming and its scheduling. Some shows have a fixed schedule; others shift during the day, broadcast before or after popular shows in order to build an audience. The goals of the Islamic programming are to disseminate Islamic knowledge, spread information on Islamic activities, and dispense information on current issues beneficial to Muslims (*ibid*., pp. 12-13). Other programs continue with prayer and reading.

Ghani concludes his report with the results of an audience survey that includes viewing patterns, demographics, and attitudes towards the religious programming. Where the survey showed low viewership, Ghani notes four possible interpretations of the data: (1) "the format and content failed to attract viewers"; (2) "formats of speech, talk, and forums . . . discourage large numbers of adolescent viewers" and "offered less entertainment . . . suited to this group's taste"; (3) the "content of religious programmes might be too academic" for a wide audience; and (4) the programs are not promoted well enough (*ibid*., p. 35). He concludes optimistically: "The efficiency of religious programmes was proved by the fact that the majority of respondents in the surveys acknowledged that they had benefitted from the knowledge and information they gained from such programmes" (*ibid*. p. 37).

Television in India, a government-sponsored broadcasting operation, has not run programs as explicitly religious as the American television evangelists or the Malaysian Islamic instruction. However, Philip Lutgendorf (1995) reports that religion has a role as he examines the success of a serialized version of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Here he notes that the cultural context makes this kind of serial extremely popular.

More successful as religious television in India has been the use of video recordings. John Little (1995) documents their use among Hindu communities—particularly in the Swadhyaya movement—as a supplement to the oral tradition and the teaching of religious leaders. Hindu groups tape the instructions and then circulate the tapes throughout their communities, so that groups scattered across India and indeed the world can view the same instructions. "While these video-taped performances have proved to be valuable . . . in proselytizing, both in the Indian countryside and among Indian emigrants worldwide, the most significant feature of this movement's use of video is that it serves as the focal point for a form of group experience that is highly valued in certain Hindu religious traditions" (Little 1995: 255).

Africa

Launay (1997) has tracked the advent of television and the use of various media in one region of the Cote d'Ivoire since the early 1970s. While television has displaced some traditional activities with people staying at home to watch rather than participating in village life, the growth of access to electronic media has actually enriched the religious life of the villagers. Though there exist televised religious sermons (the program "Allahu Akbar!"), by far the greater interest came from cassette recordings of sermons. People listened to the taped sermons, either connected to special occasions like funerals or for entertainment, as a way of being both informed and entertained by the skill and speaking style of the cleric. Launay reports brisk sales or exchanges of tapes and their use in homes, shops, or even while driving. From the Muslim point of view, the cassette recordings have the advantage of being free from the government control and oversight applied to televised sermons. (Launay also includes a discussion of the uses of print media to support the religious practices of the people.)

B. Radio

Scholars continue to explore the history of religious radio. This survey has already discussed the recent English publication of Adorno's analysis of the mid-1930s radio addresses of Thomas (2000) and the content analysis of Coughlin's talks (Casey and Rowe, 1996). Donald Warren (1996) also looks back to that period with his biography of the controversial Father Charles Coughlin, whose radio career in the United States spanned the years from 1926 until his silencing

by the Catholic Church in 1942. Judging Coughlin the "first of America's media-created personalities to move from talk to direct political organization" (Warren 1996: 3), Warren sees him as the forerunner of a number of trends in contemporary radio and claims that "[t]wo significant radio phenomena, televangelism and political talk radio, stem back to him" (*ibid*., p. 2). Coughlin managed to combine a religious message with an increasingly political one and used his radio broadcasts first to back President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Depression-era policies and then to attack them, going so far as to organize a rival political party. Throughout the 1930s Coughlin's broadcasts became more and more anti-communist, pro-fascist, and anti-Semitic, a development that led to his disavowal by the Catholic Church. However, during his heyday, faced with the opposition of the established radio networks, Coughlin managed to organize his own network of independent stations to carry his program (*ibid*., p. 151), achieving a huge influence in the United States. In those early days of radio, Coughlin then helped to create a new kind of public figure and a new kind of public discourse. "He had sold his political, economic, and even religious ideas by means of modern merchandising techniques that rely on psychological identification and subliminal advertising approaches that are now basic to American consumer culture" (*ibid*., p. 3). Because he did not have access to Coughlin's papers, Warren tells the story of the "public" Coughlin, based on the documentary evidence of his career.

Dennis N. Voskuil (1990) outlines a larger history, examining the evangelical churches' use of radio from their early independent stations to their churches' exclusion by the networks in the implementation of the Federal Communication Commission's sustaining time rule to their use of paid-time broadcasting. He points out, "The story of religious broadcasting in America is largely a tale of how evangelicals eventually came to dominate the airwaves" (Voskuil 1990: 69-70). In telling his story he focuses on two stations: KFUO in St. Louis, run by Concordia Seminary of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, and WMBI, run by the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Voskuil argues that "Evangelical broadcasting contributed to the institutional growth and unity of the evangelical movement" (*ibid*., p. 91) and that the battles over sustaining time broadcasting helped unify and energize evangelicals. Whatever the causes, he notes that religious radio of all kinds is a strong force in contemporary America: "Only twelve of the religious stations licensed during the halcyon days of the twenties are still on the air today. Ironically, more than 1370 religious stations are on the air today. . ." (*ibid*., p. 73).

Howard Dorgan (1993) tells a different—and completely fascinating—story of religious broadcasting. He directs attention to the "Airwaves of Zion . . . a genre of locally produced live religious broadcasting that emanates from the AM stations of Appalachia; on Sundays these stations air a string of programs of preaching, singing, testifying, praising/glorifying, and other types of religious expression, all colored with a heavily provincial, fundamentalist, usually millenarian, 'Come to Jesus' evangelism" (Dorgan 1993: 3). Not connected to any institutional structures, these programs are produced by untrained preachers and singers and financed by enough free-will offerings to pay for the air time. The messages tend to be highly personal and emotional (*ibid*., pp. 3-6).

Noting that this particular genre of religious radio is dying out due to commercial pressures on the stations, a shift away from AM broadcasting in general, a changing audience, and the ageing of the preachers and singers (*ibid*., pp. 23-33), Dorgan provides a history of the genre and detailed case studies of four programs (out of dozens). On the basis of the case studies Dorgan concludes that each of these program ministries arose out of a sense of mission, which in turn proceeded from personal troubles that led the ministers to turn to Jesus. A spiritual optimism characterizes their mission such that they have a real passion to communicate it (*ibid*., pp. 201-207). Dorgan's work provides a look at a local religious phenomenon that has harnessed a devotional faith to a technology well suited to a semi-isolated rural population.

Almost at the other end of the spectrum (broadcast, organizational, institutional, and religious) lies station HVCJ (Holy See Vatican City Jesus)—Vatican Radio. Marilyn Matelski (1995) tells its story, setting her narrative in the context of changing leadership models in the Catholic Church as it moved from the station's opening in 1931 (with the equipment installed by Guglielmo Marconi himself) to the present day. In its first 60 years, the station developed from programming in seven languages shows "focused mainly on international missionary activity, church teachings, commenting on various Catholic lay groups, and religious oriented newscasts" to 337 hours of weekly programming in 34 languages (Matelski 1995: 24). Arguing that Vatican Radio was originally established to serve both religious and diplomatic ends, Matelski

shows how Popes Pius XI and Pius XII used it to overcome the limitations of the Lateran Treaty with Italy and to make the Vatican a more effective international force. During the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII made use of Vatican Radio to speak directly to Catholics around the world, encouraging more programming directed to Asia and Africa, a policy continued by Pope Paul VI. Towards the end of Paul VI's pontificate, Vatican Radio declined somewhat, suffering from conflicting lines of authority within the Vatican and problems of staffing (*ibid*., p. 121). Perhaps more significantly, because the recent papacy has had much greater access to secular media, Vatican Radio has also faced a certain confusion as to its mission (*ibid*., p. 122). It does provide coverage of papal travels, a regular news service, religious and devotional programs, and commentary.

C. Popular Music

Contemporary media align music most closely with radio broadcasting, though it does have a separate existence in various recording formats. On one level, music forms a part of almost all, if not all, religious practice. At the same time religious groups tend to shun mediated forms of music, particularly popular music forms, not only in their worship but also in day-to-day life, fearing a contagion of unsuitable themes and desires. (Gooch discusses this in terms of rap music and the African-American churches, but the same holds true for most other Christian groups as well, 1996: 232-33). Now, however, in the face of decades of suspicion of rock and roll and other contemporary genres on the part of religious groups, a number of researchers, ministers, and church members have argued for the religious quality and religious use of these forms. Three approaches characterize this work: an examination of the practices of popular music as they interact with religion (a kind of sociology of religion approach), an analysis of lyric content (a kind of musicology approach), and a music history approach—applied in particular to "Contemporary Christian rock."

Shan Sutton (2000) applies the first approach to fans of the rock group, The Grateful Dead, comparing their experiences to the sociological characteristics of a religion, noting what she terms "communal mystical experiences" (Sutton 2000: 110). Observing that interacting with the group featured the ritual processes of separation, liminality, and reincorporation that led to experiences of ineffability, transformation, and union, she acknowledges that this kind of fandom has the markings of a popular religion. "In my opinion, any ritual cul-minating in the attainment of mystical experience is fundamentally a religious ritual because its purpose is exposure to extraordinary reality" (*ibid*., p. 113). Jennifer Hartley (2000) makes a similar argument through an ethnographic study of a particular set of the group's fans. "A modern rock concert . . . is not so different from ancient Aboriginal rites in taking people out of their everyday experience and transporting them to the heights of social effervescence" (Hartley 2000: 151).

Several observers of Elvis Presley fans also describe his posthumous following as quasi-religious. Mark Gottdiener (1997) claims that celebrations of the "dead Elvis" have taken on religious overtones complete with stories, rituals, mimetic practices, and a signification system similar to religious signification. The "aura of Elvis invests all kinds of objects with a sacred glow" (Gottdiener 1997: 192). Erika Doss (2002) interviews fans who assure her that Elvis is not divine, is not the object of worship, and does not inspire a religion; at the same time she observes their appropriation of religious practices and their development of domestic shrines, prayer rooms, and pilgrimages. She explains this partly in a sociological observation: "As a religious people, Americans tend to treat things on religious terms, apply religious categories, and generally make a religion out of much of what is touched and understood" (Doss 2002: 67). In both cases popular music leads to religious-like activities.

In contrast to these U.S. experiences, the impact of recorded religious music in India acts to support traditional religion. Regula Quereshi traces the history of music in Qawwali, a kind of Islamic mysticism, and then describes the religious practices of the group. The advent of musical recordings of chants and their growing use throughout India is affecting religious practice through an impact on live performances, with the live performers imitating recorded models (Quereshi 1995: 161). Scott Marcus does a comparable study of the sociology of music in the Hindu community. This group has shown some resistance to recording religious songs lest they be sold (Marcus 1995: 169), fearing a commercialism that degrades the religious merit of singing. Where recorded religious music does thrive—as it does through cassette recordings—it does so as a means of religious teaching. "In a sense, the new cassette industry is fulfilling the same function as the wandering baba [a musician who travels from village to village singing devotional songs]: it is spreading aspects of Indian religious culture to new generations of Indian citizens" (*ibid*., p. 182).

The second approach looks not so much to the practices of music as to its content. In introducing a special issue of the *Journal of Theomusicology,* Jon Spencer describes this as a new area of study, one that examines the theological or religious aspects of music. He notes that this can be done in a purely descriptive fashion ("descriptions of the creators and consumers of music") or in a normative fashion ("an analysis of the same in comparison with the tenets of canonical authority") (Spencer 1992: 4). Among the many contributions devoted to Blues, Jazz, Soul, Rock, and Rap, is one by Andrew Greeley on Bruce Springsteen (1988/1992).

Greeley examines Springsteen's lyrics to conclude a trilogy of essays on the "Catholic imagination," in which he argues for the manifestation of a particular way of seeing the world characteristic of those raised in Catholic environments. Here he explores the link between the religious imagination and creative work. "Springsteen is a liturgist, I propose, because he correlates the self-communication of God in secular life with the overarching symbols/narratives of his/our tradition" (Greeley 1992: 233). Not limiting such correlation to Catholics, Greeley opens the door to an analysis of religion and popular music.

In a book adapted from a radio series Steve Turner presents a more sweeping overview of the religious history of rock music. Working his way chronologically, he identifies the impact of religion on popular music and so finds it unsurprising that rock music would show its religious roots in lyrics and rhythms.

> Early rock 'n' rollers like Elvis Presley and Little Richard were affected by the passion of Pentecostalism, and soul music grew directly out of black American gospel music. As the church lost it grip on young people in the 1960s, the appeal of the religiously primitive, the pagan, and the exotic grew. The Beatles looked east toward India, the Rolling Stones became fascinated with occultism, Van Morrison sang of nature mysticism, and Jim Morrison of the Doors flirted with shamanism. (Turner 1995: 12)

The presumption of his history of rock and roll music is that it manifests "a search for redemption" and that the musicians themselves led a kind of religious quest.

Kenneth Bielen more directly examines lyrics, highlighting and tracing biblical imagery. Like Turner, he expects a religious influence in popular music:

> Popular music is a forum for the discussion of God and religion in American culture. . . Whether the genre is contemporary hit radio,

> rap, new country, modern rock, rhythm and blues, adult contemporary, or alternative, recording artists reveal their posture toward spiritual matters in their lyrics. (Bielen 1999: ix)

Beginning in 1900 he examines the ways in which popular music lyrics lean on and borrow from the Bible, from outright biblical prayers and texts to images of heaven to a spiritual quest.

The third strand of research on music and religion lays out the history of "Christian rock." John Thompson writes a sympathetic history, explaining how it

> melds faith and culture. It is called Christian because of the message in the lyrics, or at least because of the faith backgrounds of the artists... It is full-on rock and roll with the volume and the syncopation and the downbeats and the noise... (Thompson 2000: ii)

Growing from the Jesus movement of the 1960s and the desire for a deeper connection, the initial Christian rock groups faced strong criticism from those who disapproved of typical rock and roll themes. Thompson defends them, invoking no less a figure than Martin Luther:

> Early Christian rockers found solace in the stories of an earlier culture shaker for Jesus, Martin Luther, who faced the same kind of attitudes in his day. In fact, when Luther came under fire for adapting bar tunes into hymns, he asked, "Why should the devil have all the good tunes?" (*ibid.,* p. 31)

Thompson traces the history in three waves: from the Jesus movement to the end of the 1970s, a period characterized by a lack of support from both church and music industry; a middle period of the 1980s, which saw evangelical Christian churches use Christian rock as a form of youth ministry and outreach; and a third wave of the 1990s, during which the genre grew in popularity and commercial success. Thompson tells the story in a fairly typical fashion, narrating an account of artists, bands, live shows, recordings, places, and promotions, introducing the reader to all of the main Christian rock groups.

William Romanowski tells the same story, paying more attention to the business side of the music. The aim of those promoting Christian music was to use rock music as a vehicle for ministry to youth, but the larger picture is one driven by business: "Evangelicalism was the rhetoric, business the reality" (Romanowski 1990: 144). Not so sure of the success of the outreach (judging the effectiveness of religious

lyrics a "naive assumption"), he does recognize the financial stakes that saw its growth to an $86 million business by the mid-1980s (*ibid*., pp. 150-154). (Eidenmuller, 1996, updates these figures, citing Christian music sales of over $200 million in 1994.) Part of this growth came as a result of the success of a number of cross-over artists, particularly Amy Grant who managed to top both the Christian and pop music charts with her "contemporary praise" music style. Another part of the growth came from the establishment and professionalization of Christian radio stations geared to play the music and the development of distribution networks to sell albums (Romanowski 1990: 155). Eventually this success led to the major record labels taking an interest and mainstream artists (that is, not Christian bands) targeting the market with "positive pop" or religious sounding lyrics (*ibid*., p. 164).

Michael Eidenmuller explores some of the claims for evangelism by rock music through applying empirical methods to analyze the audience for Christian rock. Using a purposive and nonrandom sample of adolescents and young adults in Florida, he found that "religious music listeners carefully attend to lyrics more frequently than listeners of nonreligious genres" (Eidenmuller 1996: 44). Such listeners also tend to agree with the religious outlook of the lyrics and, perhaps not surprisingly, attend church more frequently.

In another empirical study, Kathy McKee and Carol Pardun (1999) conducted focus groups with first-year college students to determine how they watched music videos. Selecting two videos for their subtle and not-so-subtle uses of religious imagery, they asked the participants to view them twice, once without sound and a second time with the sound. Asking whether the students would attend to the religious imagery and, if so, how they would interpret it out of context, they found that the students not only recognized the religious images, but actively tried to interpret their meaning. Interestingly the students focused much more on the religious images in the music videos than on other images of violence and sexuality. Some students also reported that they preferred *seeing* the video, that the sound distracted them from the images. Admitting that not all music viewing or listening is as purposive as in this study, McKee and Pardun suggest that long-term viewing and repeated exposure may have the same effect.

D. *Studying Religious Content*

Many have observed religious content or images in the products of popular culture, not only the lyrics or images of rock music but also in television and film content. Over ten years ago, both Quentin Schultze and Horace Newcomb proposed ways to consider the "religion in television" arguments. For Schultze, narrative holds the key. "Because television drama often functions in society as religious narrative functions in religious communities, we ought to interpret television drama as a sacred text for the culture viewing it" (Schultze 1990b: 15-16). Though not always specifically Christian, television narratives reinforce what Schultze terms "TV myths": that good will triumph over evil (*ibid*., p. 24), that "evil exists only in the hearts of a few evil people" (*ibid*., p. 25), and that "Godliness exists in the good and effective actions of individuals" (*ibid*., p. 26). With these myths, television drama constructs a wide range of narratives that reinforce the cultural belief system.

Newcomb warns that looking for religious meaning on television often consists of reading into the dramatic content:

> What counts for religion on television is as much a theological issue as it is an issue grounded in textual or narrative theory, in theories of communication, or in theories of ideology and media. One person's religious television is another's secular mess. (Newcomb 1990: 29)

He notes that the typical television producer tends to look to safe or inoffensive uses of religion, and to generic references to immanence or transcendence (*ibid*., pp. 34-35). Television might function as a morality play with some reference to God, but it equally might stay in the realm of the ordinary. This does not mean that people should not seek or find religious meaning, but that they should have an awareness of how they approach the task. "Certainly for the purposes of analysis and for the experiences of viewers, it makes a difference whether we find religious meaning in the social, cultural, and ideological structures regulating television, in the unique forms of its narrative strategies, or in the content of specific shows" (*ibid*., p. 33). In some ways, the search for religious meaning must be a theological issue; that vantage point will let people better understand exactly what they look for on television. Choosing to start with cultural structures or narrative strategies, for example, will lead one to different kinds of theological conclusions. And, one should be aware, the choice of starting point often emerges from a pre-existing theological commitment.

Michael Suman (1997) invites religious leaders, academics, and television professionals to wrestle with

these questions in an edited collection of papers from a UCLA conference on Religion and Prime Time Television. Not surprisingly in the light of Newcomb's cautions, the participants take widely divergent views, with some religious figures condemning television's secular visions and others finding good human and religious values in television's content, with television professionals resisting any kind of religious readings, and with scholars pointing out techniques of reading. Following a documentation approach, the collection does not attempt to resolve any of the issues; it does manage, though, to include non-Christian and non-Western religious views of television.

Accepting the necessity of a theological starting point, Walter Davis, Teresa Blythe, Gary Dreibelbis, Mark Scalese, Elizabeth Winsler, and Donald Ashburn (2001) propose a way to examine television "through the lens of faith." They first argue that television acts the same way in society as religion:

> A religion consists of four elements: a world view composed of a web of mutually reinforcing beliefs and values; a moral code; periodic public rituals; and a community of believers who practice these rituals. Television provides all four. (Davis *et al.*, 2001: xii)

Because of its religion-like nature, television proves a worthy subject for religious reflection.

They suggest several ways to accomplish this. First, they propose using different "lenses" through which to see television: its narrative patterns, its structural system, its semiotic or signification processes, its ideological or power relations, and its functions (*ibid*., p. xiv). Second, they offer a more fine-grained approach, what they call "fields of vision." These include units of analysis of the shot, the scene, the sub-plot, the episode, the genre, and the cultural context (*ibid*., p. xx). After understanding the elements of television and its mechanics, they pose questions for theological interpretation:

> How does this show depict the human condition? What view of good and evil is implied? What change is desired in this show? . . . Where and when does transcendence . . . occur? (*ibid*., p. xxi)

With the tools in place, they apply them to situation comedies, prime-time drama, fact-based programs, and commercials. Each section of the book takes one or more episodes of a number of shows and subjects them to the various "lenses" and "fields of vision" before asking the questions of theological interpretation. For example, under situation comedies they treat "Seinfeld," "The Simpsons," "Moesha," "Will and Grace," and "Ally McBeal." Among the prime-time dramas, they look at "Law and Order," "ER," "Beverly Hills 90210," "Touched By an Angel," and "The X-Files." As in most works of interpretation, uncovering theological meaning depends on the skill of the interpreter; here, however, Davis and his colleagues have tried to provide a step-by-step guide, even to the point of labeling the various "lenses" and "fields of vision" as they use them. Their hope is that their readers will learn and practice their method of analysis.

One genre of television that evokes a great deal of religious interest is science fiction. Gregory Peterson succinctly sums up the reasons for this: "By projecting our problems onto alien civilizations . . . science fiction can provide new ways of examining contemporary problems" (Peterson 1999: 70-71).

And, of the science fiction shows, none have generated as much discussion of religion as *Star Trek*, with its over 35-year life, franchised in various series. Influenced by the negative attitude towards organized religion of its creator and executive producer, Gene Roddenberry, the original *Star Trek* did not have much use for religion (Pearson, 1999: 14). However, after Roddenberry's death, religious issues took on greater importance, particularly in later series. "The need for moral and spiritual guidance and for a belief in something larger than ourselves . . . has been a recurring theme in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager*" (*ibid*., p. 25). In fact, Anne Pearson argues that such unavoidable religious questions as moral behavior and the meaning of life have not been absent from the shows, but rather treated in a non-religious context.

When the *Star Trek* shows do address religion, they tend to take one of five approaches: (1) technical achievement is "equated to godhead by less developed . . . people"; (2) religion is "a source of conflict and superstition"; (3) religion stands "in opposition to rationality and science"; (4) "religion principally belongs to the Other (Spock, Worf, Kira, Chakoty)"; and (5) "a religious world view and beliefs can . . . provide individuals with a legitimate source of guidance and strength which may not necessarily be incompatible with rationality and science" (*ibid*., pp. 28-29). The incompatibility of these approaches reflects the shifting attitudes of the show's 35 years.

Jennifer Porter and Darcee McLaren see this shift as natural, precisely because the show has deep roots in American culture:

> Although no single coherent approach to religion appears in *Star Trek*, the series is nevertheless variously reflective of, informed by, and critical of societal attitudes toward religion. The portrayal and treatment of religion in much of the *Star Trek* franchise is negative: religion is often presented as superstitious, outdated, and irrational. (Porter and McLaren 1999a: 2-3)

These attitudes, though, reflect the shifting debate in the United States. Roddenberry's death, the rise of explicitly religious discussion in politics and on television, and the growing acceptance of evangelical Christianity have all worked to make the religious question more acceptable on the series. Robert Asa (1999) makes this cultural connection much clearer with his close analysis of one early *Star Trek* episode that reflects the death of God debate among theologians in the late 1960s.

E. Film

Many of the approaches to religion and film follow the general method of studying religious content as outlined above. To give a sense of this approach, this survey will note a few such works. However, a broader literature exists, one so much larger that *Communication Research Trends* will devote a later issue to the topic of cinema (including cinema and religion) alone. For a sense of the general approaches, the reader may wish to refer to the online *Journal of Religion and Film*, located on the Internet at http://www.unomaha.edu/~wwwjrf/. Articles feature commentaries on particular films and directors, analyses of religious themes, investigations into the use of images, and interpretations of western and non-western religions in film.

Gerald Forshey takes a more historical approach to religion in film, telling the story of biblical spectaculars—that genre of sweeping pageants, larger-than-life events, and casts of thousands, based on biblical stories. They include films from the 1930s, *The Sign of the Cross* and *The Crusades*, through the 1970s—*The Ten Commandments, Samson and Delilah, Quo Vadis, The Robe*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Forshey argues that the genre had its origins in popular culture: "Religious spectaculars grew out of two popular artistic traditions—the spectacular stage melodrama and the popular quasi-religious novels of the nineteenth century" (Forshey 1992: 4). Given these origins, the studios

and the directors not surprisingly framed the films in terms of the particular cultural milieu in which they were made, such that the religious films of the late 1930s and 1940s had Nazi-like villains whereas those of the 1950s sought to free people from Stalinist repression. "Theological matters per se are never very close to the surface of these films," but the values "consistent with the values of American society" are (*ibid.*, p. 183). Forshey mixes a chronological survey with a thematic one so that he comments on films of particular periods as well as films based on the Hebrew Bible and on the life of Jesus in the New Testament.

In *Imaging the Divine*, Lloyd Baugh (1997) also combines the historical and thematic approaches, but focuses only on Jesus. He divides his study into two parts. First, he discusses films that tell the life of Jesus and traces these from the earliest days of the cinema to modern times, commenting on films that illustrate particular genres: the Hollywood gospel (*The King of Kings*), the musical (*Godspell*), the scandal films (*The Last Temptation of Christ*), and the classics (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*). Second, he examines Christ figures, characters in films (particularly "non-religious films") modeled on Christ. He groups these thematically: women *(La Strada, Babette's Feast)*, westerns (*Shane*), and even animals (*Au hasard Balthazar*) or by director, as in his studies of Kieslowski, Bresson, and Tarkovsky. Baugh provides a fairly detailed comment on each film so that the reader can easily see his criteria; in Part Two he also summarizes just what makes a film a "Christ film" or a character a "Christ figure." Unlike many religion and film books, he also includes a wide range of international films.

Brandon Scott (1994) approaches films from a more theological perspective, much as Davis and his colleagues (2001) attempt to view television "through the lens of faith." Scott, a New Testament scholar, comes to film as he would to parables, in a method modeled on listening to the storytelling in oral cultures, but one sensitive to what Ong terms our contemporary "secondary orality"—an oral form based in writing (Ong 1982). For Scott, contemporary communication forms like cinema require their own exegesis. He follows a method of setting various "American myths" against biblical stories and putting the two into a dialogue between the two cultures (Scott 1994: chapter 2). Some of the themes and filmic illustrations he traces are heroes (*Shane, Pale Rider, Witness*); moral isolation (the Dirty Harry movies); the poor (Horatio Alger films); and loss of innocence (*Apocalypse Now, Coming Home*). Scott does

not so much comment on or critique the films as think with them, inviting the reader into his dialogue between the ancient and the modern cultures. The question he wants to answer is, "How will the Christian gospel find expression in this new age?" (*ibid.*, p. ix).

The contributors to John May's *Image and Likeness* (1992) accept the principle that films, like literature, affect us. Quoting T. S. Eliot's 1936 essay on literature, May argues that authors and film makers try to influence us as whole human beings—neither they nor we compartmentalize entertainment and keep it separate from the rest of our lives. Therefore, one should look carefully at films for their religious vision—the "images, myths, ideas, or concepts" manifest in the films or in the film making techniques (May 1992: 4). May and his colleagues care not primarily for moral action or explicitly religious questions or theological language in film, but for story, "the way that the stories of the Jewish and Christian scriptures (the textual basis of American religious belief) relate to the stories that films tell" (*ibid.*, p. 5). The key approach distinguishing them from the other studies is the examination of the tools of cinema rather than the content alone. The "images, myths, ideas, or concepts" that interest them are those of the shot, the angle, the allusion, the movement of the film, for at this level the cinema exerts a powerful influence on its viewers. May, the editor, arranges the essays from the more generic to the more specific; he sets up four key sections: (1) studies of film composition, mise-en-scene, framing—fundamental attitudes *(City Lights, The Grapes of Wrath, High Noon, 2001: A Space Odyssey)*; (2) studies of visual allusions and the demonic heart *(Citizen Kane, Sunset Boulevard, The Godfather* series); (3) studies of movement and rebirth in film *(The Wizard of Oz, The Treasure of Sierra Madre, On the Waterfront, Ben-Hur)*; and (4) studies of film montage and transforming love *(Casablanca, Notorious, It's a Wonderful Life, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest)*.

Finally, Marsha Sinetar proposes a kind of media-education reading of film. Agreeing with May's assessment of the impact of film, she writes,

> Movies tell us what to think about ourselves. A collaborative art form, film represents the ideas and artistry of multiple psyches. . . . Whether we realize it or not, art presents us with a way to organize experience, especially as it relates to inner growth and problem solving. (Sinetar 1993: 27)

Rather than extensively commenting on particular films, she offers a method to teach her readers how to watch films and invites them into a kind of interactive viewing, by keeping a journal, noting responses to particular images or characters, discussing films with others, and so on.

IV. Relation of Different Media to Religion: (3) Digital Media

A. Information systems

The Internet in all its various incarnations (cyberspace, the World Wide Web, e-space, being online, and so on) supports a huge religious presence and allows communication scholars to watch as religion interacts with a new communication medium. In introducing their book, *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises*, Jeffrey K. Hadden and Douglas E. Cowan indicate the scope of religious materials available:

> There is scarcely a religious tradition, movement, group, or phenomenon absent entirely from the Net. From the Norse neopaganism of Ásatrú to Christian countercult refutations of it, from Tibetan Buddhist prayer bowls and thangka paintings to Wiccan scrying bowls that come

with easy-to-follow instructions, from a disenfranchised Catholic bishop exiled to a non-existent North African diocese to a cyber-monastery established exclusively for non-resident students of Zen, the only thing that seems crystal clear is that the presence of religion on the Internet will only expand . . . (Hadden and Cowan 2000a: 8)

The first problem facing researchers becomes simply figuring out what is online; the second, of course, is to begin to analyze it. Hadden and Cowan adapt a schema from Helland (2000) to guide initial research. "Religion online" refers to *"information about religion*: doctrine, polity, organization, and belief; service and opportunities for service; religious books and articles . . ." while "online religion" refers to material that "invites the visitor to *participate in* the

religious dimension of life via the Web; liturgy, prayer, ritual, meditation, and homiletics come together and function with the e-space itself acting as church, temple, synagogue, mosque, and grove" (Hadden and Cowan 2000a: 9). Researchers addressing questions of the Internet and religion also tend to combine two different activities (a challenge absent those studying religious broadcasting or religious film or even religious journalism): they study religion as it appears online and they use the Internet itself to study religion (*ibid*., 12).

There is no question that religion online and online religion attract people. Larsen cites these usage statistics: "Some 21% of Internet users, between 19 million and 20 million people, have looked for religious or spiritual information online." Online African-Americans are more likely than whites to look for religious information on the Internet (33% of online blacks have looked versus 20% of online whites); online women more commonly seek religious information than do online men (23% to 19%). The middle-aged web surfers are more likely than the younger or older users to seek religion online. The United States regional breakdown shows Southerners the largest percent of online religious seekers: 26% of online Southerners have sought religious material; 22% of Midwesterners; 20% of Westerners; and 14% of Northeastern users (Larsen 2000: 6).

Overviews

Durusau (1998) provides an initial guide to religion online, writing a general introduction to the Internet (including brief how-to manuals for navigating its less accessible reaches like listservs and ftp archives) and pointing to sources for biblical and religious studies. Lawrence (2002) highlights Islamic sites and guides the reader through the various branches of Islam as well as identifying the sponsoring groups for the sites. Zaleski (1997), a journalist wondering how cyberspace might change people's spiritual lives, couples explorations of Jewish, Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu web sites with interviews of the religious figures sponsoring them. In each case he asks about the content and the purpose of religion online. His explorations begin the move from cataloguing what religions do with this new media to explaining what the new media might do to the religions.

Islam

Bunt (2000a, 2000b) does the same kind of move from listing to explaining with Islam. During a project about authority and structures within Islamic communities, he noticed the growing role of the Internet and

began to track that role. In a chapter in Hadden and Cowan (Bunt 2000a), he catalogues Islamic leadership and teaching online, together with the tradition of pilgrimage and mystical expression so that he can better understand Islamic identity. His longer work (2000b) charts what the Islamic use of the Internet does to nature of Islamic authority and guidance; asks whether one can use the Internet to fulfill Islamic obligations; and investigates Islam and Islamic politics on the Internet. He finds the variety of Islam well represented online, with Sunni' sites, Shi'a sites, and Sufi sites. The same variety characterizes political groups, with sites devoted to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Malaysia, Singapore, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and dissident groups such as Hezbollah. Bunt notes that the proliferation of Islamic sites creates a kind of digital *minbar* (the mosque equivalent of a pulpit) and therefore allows wider dialogue and questions of teachers and, presumably, a better educated community; at the same time this may affect the authority of local teachers (Bunt 2000b: chapter 5). Acknowledging that his "introductory snapshot of Cyber Islamic Environments" is precisely that—introductory—he does see the use of the Internet as an evolutionary development in Islam, "stretching back to the initial Revelation received by Mohammad" (*ibid*., p. 143).

Christianity

Zaleski notes that in 1997 Christian web sites accounted for 80% of all web sites devoted to the five major world religions. He explains this by the fact that at that time North America (a largely Christian area) dominated the Web (Zaleski 1997: 100). Many of these Christian sites consist of documents and information, listings of church teachings, and explanations of doctrine. He focuses his overview on Roman Catholics who have wholeheartedly embraced the web as an information source. Ken Bedell, a contributor to Hadden and Cowan, explores mainline Protestant uses of the Internet. Based on a ten-month research project that included site surveys, online interviews, and focus groups with a non-representative sample, he draws four conclusions. "(1) People are eagerly adopting Internet solutions to communication problems of existing religious interest or commitments." In other words, church members will readily take up email and web surfing to contact churches or explore religious information. "(2) People think of religion as one of the topics that can be researched on the Internet. . . . (3) Current users of the Internet who are also interested in religion have an expectation that the Internet will play an important role

in religious life in the future" (Bedell 2000: 201). However, he also found that, at the time of his research, there was no evidence of the widespread use of the Internet to form new religious communities or even to support spiritual practices (*ibid*., p. 202).

New Religious Movements

Other researchers have taken up the debate about whether or not the Internet can foster the formation of new religious communities. Some dismiss claims for this kind of Internet use, while others propose to have found evidence, particularly in terms of non-traditional religious groups. Jean-François Mayer, writing in the same volume as Bedell, does tend to support him, noting that the Internet is not a proselytizing tool for new religious movements and does not promote communities of nontraditional groups, despite the attention and fear that such movements seem to have evoked. If anything, he says, the Internet has helped popularize the criticism of these movements (Mayer 2000: 249). After examining the evidence for cyber-conversions, he concludes that it is mixed at best (*ibid*., pp. 250-54): the Internet may serve a legitimizing purpose but recruiting to cults or other new religious movements works best through "existing social networks."

The Chinese government and Falun Gong seem to personify the debate over the creation of religious groups through the Internet and the recruitment of members. Stephen O'Leary reports that the government's campaign against this spiritual group takes up all of the criticisms directed against new religious movements: it is a superstitious doomsday cult, it creates social unrest, it brainwashes members, it seeks social control, and so on. He suggests, though, that "the Falun Gong story appears to be as much about technology as it is about religion; it offers a fascinating glimpse of an ancient religious tradition that is mutating rapidly as it makes the leap into cyberspace" (O'Leary 2000/2002: online). The group itself, as Mayer notes about other groups, uses the Internet to defend itself and to organize its members. O'Leary concludes, "the Falun Gong has used modern technology to its advantage, exploiting the Internet as a tool for teaching, organizing, and mobilizing its global membership, as well as for counteracting the propaganda with which the Chinese government has inundated the world." In this case the Internet provides a set of tools for the religious group, allowing it to withstand government pressure.

The Heaven's Gate sect's mass suicide in 1997 acted as a catalyst for the fears that new religious move-

ments would use the Internet to recruit and influence new members. W. G. Robinson discusses the group's history, its teachings, and its use of the Internet and then raises the key issue directly: "Despite the evidence that the cult was more about UFOs and marginalized or pop-culture religion than the Net and the Net was simply one of the means by which they conveyed information, the persistence of the public's fears as filtered through the mass media suggests that these claims deserve to be aired and taken seriously and addressed at least in part" (Robinson 1997: online). While she acknowledges that many of the group's ideas do resonate with cyberculture, she argues that the Internet served more to distribute the ideas than to cause them.

In a very different context, Jan Fernback finds that neo-pagan groups have successfully used the Internet to foster community and to create shared meaning through Internet rituals. Her examination of discussion groups demonstrates that, for her sample of neo-pagans at least, people can use the Internet to support religious practices. Comparing their practices to a theoretical description of ritual, Fernback concludes, "Clearly these participants are not merely performing the profane, instrumental ritual of logging on to these forums; the discursive community that forms around these groups directly addresses the legitimacy of religious poignancy derived from their ritual participation" (Fernback 2002: 267). She does not discount the fact that the members may also have offline religious rituals, but she affirms that the online world does support their spiritual practice.

David Nash finds similar community-based results in his investigation of freethought or atheistic groups online. Their use of the Internet in some ways mirrors their use of print media: they provide documents and information, using the Internet as a distribution medium (Nash 2002: 279-80). In this, they resemble many of the Christian sites; in fact, Nash notes that "freethinking Internet resources exist because Christian resources, too, exist" (*ibid*., p. 279). The freethinkers wish to challenge the Judeo-Christian world view wherever they encounter it. The Internet, however, benefits the group in a way that goes beyond print: it allows contact among members, no matter how scattered (*ibid*., p. 282). Though Nash uses the parallel to freethought use of print in the nineteenth century to illustrate the group's Internet use, the most striking thing he finds is the scope of public discourse: "The opportunity for this space [cyber-space] to take on new functions due to its blend of intimacy and distance also

holds out tantalizing prospects for altering the way discussions of theism, Christianity, atheism, and freethought could actually take place" (*ibid*., p. 282). He likens this to the first public discussions of atheism in Britain in the nineteenth century.

Analyzing Online Religion

Struck like many others by the sheer numbers of religious points of presence on the Internet, O'Leary (1996) proposes a theoretical model for understanding how online religion changes religious experience. Following Ong's cultural model of the effects of changing communication on human consciousness and organization—a change Ong traces through oral cultures to literate ones to ones dominated by printing to our contemporary secondary orality (Ong, 1982)— O'Leary argues that the move to cyberspace will result in religious changes equivalent to the impact of the printing press on the religious reformers in the sixteenth century. For O'Leary, this impact affected theology as much as it affected practice, reflected in the "communication culture" of Catholics and Protestants, the Catholics remaining close to the oral world and the Protestants rapidly adapting literate forms in their worship. "Whereas the Catholic liturgy presented and re-presented God's Word in a variety of sensual, formal, and aesthetic embodiments, the Word in Protestant liturgy is desiccated, information-oriented, approached through Scripture and sermon but most emphatically not in stained glass, statues, or in the taste of bread upon the tongue" (O'Leary 1996: 790). The theological equivalent of this practice meant that Catholics retained a performative sense of signs while Protestant theologians separated signifier and signified (*ibid*., p. 791).

O'Leary postulates a similar seismic shift in language and language use taking place in cyberspace. Contending that performative language has shifted from speech to writing, an argument he credits to the historical investigations of Brenda Danet (1997), he analyzes transcripts of online neopagan rituals to show how their use of language takes on performative elements and creates a religious space for their participants. O'Leary's model provides a way to classify online experience and to theorize a theological shift to accompany the communication shift.

Building on O'Leary's work, Brenda Brasher reviews not only how we might understand the phenomenon of Internet religion but also what it might do to us. She remains convinced that just as past media shifts affected religious practice, so too will this one:

"Like the Diaspora synagogues of Judaism after the Second Temple, like the cathedrals of medieval Latin Christianity, and like the Bibles of European Protestants, online religion is a form of new religious practice that possesses the capacity to transform the religious alternatives with which it now competes for human attention" (Brasher 2001: 23). She sees the Internet's hypertext format as a natural evolution from orality to the literacy of scrolls and codices to the secondary oralism of audio and video sources.

Brasher proposes a number of different ways to understand what the Internet does to religion: through the study of iconic representation, through the study of the repositioning of memory, through the study of personal connections, and through the study of religion and the popular imagination (chapter 2). Beginning with various web sites, she examines key Internet experiences that shape online religion: sacred time and the Internet's "perpetual persistence" (p. 52); virtual pilgrimages that allow seekers to search out spiritual goals without leaving home (p. 68); new debates about ethics and behavior and the need to establish online norms (p. 94); virtual shrines, places dedicated to the cult of celebrity, which blur the line between religion and entertainment (pp. 120, 137); and virtual prophets and the return of apocalyptic discourse. Her study continually asks what this new medium does to religion as religion seeks to harness its powers. By identifying key concepts (time, memory, place, discourse, and so on), she presents the possibility for a greater understanding of the phenomenon.

Lorne Dawson comes to analyze online religion through the sociology of the Internet. As a researcher, he identifies three challenges: "identification and measurement"—how many sites are there? Who uses them? Does religious use differ from general Internet use? and so on—"the systematic study of key substantive concerns" and a "theoretical and empirical exploration" (Dawson 2000: 26-28). Among the key concerns he names are identity formation and community (*ibid*., p. 31); identity concerns such as anonymity, creation of multiple identities, and self-disclosure (*ibid*., pp. 33-34); recruitment (*ibid*., pp. 42-43); control and its various manifestations in conflict resolution and authority (*ibid*., p. 43); and the mediation of religious experience (*ibid*., p. 44). His essay primarily lays out a research agenda and points to the places where the medium of the Internet may change the notion of religion.

Sara Horsfall provides initial empirical data on how five religious groups use the Internet (the Roman

Catholic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints [Mormons], the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, and Falun Gong). She classifies their Internet use into three categories: external communication, information sharing, and internal communication. External communication includes evangelical outreach; publicity or public relations; directories, addresses, and contact information; and legitimization through appearance on the Web (Horsfall 2000: 173-75). Information sharing consists of the publication of religious texts and materials; study aids; the Mormon genealogies; and the sale of materials (*ibid*., pp. 175-76). Internal communication refers to directories, addresses, and contact information; official dissemination of materials on policies or doctrine; discussion among members; published testimonies; education; and daily inspirations and prayers (*ibid*., pp. 176-79).

Based on this survey, she concludes that the Internet has changed religion in four areas. First, the vast array of published resources has an impact on the beliefs of members, making them better educated and with a greater access to religious materials (*ibid*., p.179). Second, the sense of the religious community has changed through a change in communication patterns (*ibid*., p. 180). Third, the available information has an effect on the experience or the subjective involvement of members (*ibid*., p. 180). Fourth, there has been some effect on ritual and ritual practice, though this effect is not as great as the first three (*ibid*., p. 181).

Elena Larsen, a research fellow with the Pew Charitable Trust, reports the results of a major survey of online congregations, *Wired Churches, Wired Temples* (2000). Rather than investigating individual users' approaches to online religion, she looks at congregations and how they use the Internet. Of the initial 20,000 congregational web sites located, people representing 1309 of them completed a survey that gathered data on their online history, sponsorship, goals, plans, and so on (Larsen 2000: 8). Though not based on a representative sample, the survey results do indicate that the Internet is fast becoming a part of congregational life. The survey found that congregations use the Internet "to strengthen the faith and spiritual growth of their members, evangelize and perform missions in their communities and around the world, and perform a wide variety of pious and practical activities for their congregations" (*ibid*., p. 2). While only a small percentage featured two-way communication (most hav-

ing static information displays), about a third wanted to add more dynamic features (*ibid*., pp. 3-4).

Between 80% and 90% of congregations reported using email to connect their members—"for fellowship and faith activities." About 80% regard this as a positive contribution to congregational life (*ibid*., p. 17). Not surprisingly those congregations reporting a higher percentage of "wired" members reported greater use of email (*ibid*., p. 18).

A subset of 471 rabbis and ministers completed a survey section on their professional use of the Internet (*ibid*., p. 4). This group reported high use of online resources: 81% used the Internet to find resources for worship; 77%, for Bible or Torah research; 72%, for finding devotional or educational resources; and 59%, for locating doctrinal information (*ibid*., p. 19). "One-third of respondents noted that they found some resources on line that they wish were available within their congregations" (*ibid*., p. 19). A number of ministers expect that more and more members will interact with them electronically.

Though Larsen does not discuss it at great length, the survey data indicate that the Internet usage by congregations builds on existing communities. Few of the surveyed churches and synagogues report gaining new members online; few report any purely online members. What the survey does show is the increasing use of the Internet by religious groups as an adjunct to current activities and plans.

Online Prayer

At least one church segment does make use of the Internet to support a particular kind of current church activity—to gather for prayer meetings. Acknowledging that it is one of several such groups, Ralph Schroeder reports on one group using a virtual reality/virtual world system to support the prayer group. He describes it in this way:

> There are now several Internet-based virtual reality (VR) systems in which many users can interact with each other via text windows in a three-dimensional computer-generated world. In these virtual worlds, users take the shape of avatars that can move around while maintaining a first-person perspective on the world. The avatars have a human-like appearance. . . (Schroeder 1998: online)

Charismatic and evangelical groups have made use of these virtual worlds to link far-flung people together for prayer meetings. Schroeder observes that these meetings tend to follow closely the pattern and style of

face-to-face prayer meetings, with leaders taking traditional roles and participants typing what they would otherwise speak. Unable to determine the motivation for these groups (except to join in prayer), Schroeder compares their prayer meetings to worship and finds that they do resemble key characteristics of worship: "participants feel that they are co-present, they do coordinate their 'voices' and their gestures . . . and they also focus their attention on the object of their worship" (Schroeder 1998: online).

B. Multimedia

Throughout the 1990s the American Bible Society sponsored a research and production project aimed at translating the Bible into multimedia forms. Originally modeled on an MTV-style visual and audio rhetoric, the project produced seven multimedia translations of Christian New Testament texts. Some of these featured musical performances of the religious text; others, dramatic readings; and still others, contemporary enactments of parables. During the life of the project, it explored various formats—videotape, CD-Rom, videodisc, and websites (http://www.new-mediabible.org)—for delivering the audiovisual translations. In addition to the production work, the research group also brought scholars together to reflect on past experience with such translation (in art, music, dance,

and film) and on its future possibilities. *From One Medium to Another* (Hodgson and Soukup 1997) gives a history of the project, the criteria and methodologies for translation, and a review of other attempts to "translate" a text not from one language to another but from one medium to another. Contributors examine, for example, how a film treatment preserves and changes a novel or how a particular work like Shakespeare's *Othello* can appear on stage, in film, and in a ballet.

A companion volume, *Fidelity and Translation: Communicating the Bible in New Media* (Soukup and Hodgson 1999), takes a more theoretical approach and asks which criteria guarantee the acceptance of such translation. Attempts to answer that question draw upon classical language practices, biblical criticism, historical and denominational models of biblical interpretation, translation theory, various models of the communication process, semiotics, and cultural studies. The various contributors to the volume agree that translation practices commonly involve different media, though few practitioners regard the practice as overly problematic. The biblical texts—because of the reverence in which they are held and because of their uses in churches and synagogues—call much greater attention to their translations and demand a more careful explication of the grounding and legitimacy of translation practices.

V. Communication Theology

Theology—the systematic reflection on religious experience—also provides an avenue through which to approach media and religion. On the one hand, some scholars focus attention first on language, interpersonal communication, or other kinds of interaction as the locus of theological understanding. Without this basis, they hold, one cannot move to the question of a theology of media. On the other hand, some look first to mass communication as the experiential basis for theological reflection, arguing that the media's structure or content either facilitates or hinders religious practice and knowledge. Both groups explore the religious meaning of the communication experience.

A. Language

In a work devoted to pastoral counseling, several writers examine how one can communicate about religious experience. There are, of course, different ways to speak about any spiritual experience. Herman

Andriessen maintains that "the key role is played by the everyday language" rather than the language of theology or that of psychology (Andriessen 1998: 53). Communication involves the whole of a person and everyday language is more likely to express that whole than is a specialized language. Tjeu van Knippenberg sees a complementarity among the languages of psychology, spirituality, and theology. Doing a kind of "conversation analysis" of the transcript from a spiritual direction session, he holds that people must learn to translate from one language register to another.

> Each of the languages connected to these disciplines aims, in its own way appropriately to express systematically what has become clear, or what is suspected or supposed. The clarity obtained is related to the amount of perceptibility. The more directly perceptible, the more empirically researchable, and so the more precisely translatable . . . (van Knippenberg 1998: 20)

Theological language aims for precision no less than other languages. Therefore the task of the pastoral counselor is to identify the language and help the one receiving direction to better perceive what is going on in his or her life. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger offers a third approach. Holding that these languages address different logical registers, she argues that they are not translatable. In this, she draws her model from the pattern of the declaration of the Council of Chalcedon about the two natures (divine and human) in the one person of Christ. Just as they are not confused nor mingled nor hierarchically ordered but distinct, on different levels (rather than on a continuum of nature), she holds that theological and psychological concepts function on different logical orders (Hunsinger 1998: 30-33). The value of this debate among these pastoral counselors lies in calling attention to the religious uses of language, the ways of speaking about the spiritual, and the linguistic or communication underpinnings for theology.

Stephen Pickard (1999) undertakes a similar task but on a greater scale. His analysis focuses on the human communication necessary for evangelism. Asking why evangelism and theology often stand opposed to one another, he uses Habermas's theory of communicative action to explore how a theology of communication might serve as the basis for evangelism. He uses critical theory—but one attuned to theology—to unmask the "systematically distorted communication" that can lead evangelism to encourage an individualistic faith rather than one promoting Christian community. Evangelism must become "the horizontal dimension" of the praise of God (Pickard 1999: 83). For Pickard the challenge of language lies in its use to create an authentic human community. Insofar as the Gospel proclamation seeks the same end, he asks how that proclamation becomes distorted and whether the theological discomfort with certain kinds of evangelism can help to identify what Habermas calls the communication patterns that "prevent genuine understanding between peoples" (*ibid*., p. 29). As with the pastoral counselors, here too language becomes the point of access to theology.

A concern for the practices of language also informs a debate about the role of dialogue in the church. Avery Dulles (2001) provides a summary of contemporary moves to dialogue within the Roman Catholic Church and notes the problems that have emerged from rival concepts of dialogue. If dialogue becomes a move away from claims to public truths to a privatization of belief, then it does not serve the role of building community. He wishes to restrict the uses of "dialogue" lest it lead to a privatized church. However, Dulles holds out hope. He believes that dialogue properly understood is a good thing, but to function well, it must be premised on truth and public action. At the same time, he warns that dialogue will not solve all problems nor will it automatically lead to consensus, particularly when some advocate ambiguity in the name of understanding. Aware of the complexity of the church, Dulles acknowledges that dialogue is one form of communication among others but holds that it cannot replace others. Ladislas Orsy (2001) is more optimistic. He acknowledges the debate between advocates of dialogue and advocates of more centralized authority in the church. For Orsy the debate rests on two visions of dialogue: one that sees dialogue as a tool to forge unity; another that sees it as a danger for identity. He suggests that dialogue itself can be used to clarify the meaning of the term. In his view, God also participates in the dialogue, as a source of reconciliation.

Finally, Herman Pottmeyer (2001) approaches this debate about dialogue from the perspective of an ecclesiology of communion, where the church is defined as the people of God, as a communion of believers. The characteristics of this community form the preconditions for dialogue: mutual esteem, reverence, harmony, and recognition of lawful diversity. He contrasts this with an institutional ecclesiology, which looks less at dialogue than at lawful teaching authority. One way to examine the possibilities for dialogue in the church lies in examining how the communion of believers historically came to receive doctrine. He argues that communion among the churches took place through mutual exchanges of information that led to a consensus. While this course leaves open the question of authority in dialogue, Pottmeyer suggests three guiding principles: (1) be aware of the audience; (2) be aware of the method used to reach a decision; and (3) be aware of the phrasing of the decision (Pottmeyer 2001: 42-43). All three of these theologians propose that the interactivity of language reveals something about the nature of the religious experience and community of the church.

B. Structures of Communication

Terrence Tilley and Angela Ann Zukowski (2001) propose a bridge between language and media by attending to narrative—language used for telling stories. They argue that narrative has an impact on a person's (or a culture's) religious sense. To support this position, they adapt what Ong (1982) writes about lit-

eracy reshaping the noetic experience of people. If literacy and electronic communication affect human consciousness, then literacy and electronic communication must also change people's way of thinking about religious experience. Part of this occurs through meaning making and the social role of language in creating communities of meaning. Tilley and Zukowski extend this to the ways that media systems constitute social systems through images, verbal and nonverbal communication, discourse systems, and so on. These too influence people's religious experiences.

They illustrate this case by examining narrative. Media shape our imaginations, even as to a basic concept like "communion" (influencing how we perceive that key theological term that Pottmeyer uses). And narrative plays a role here as in all contemporary media. People tell stories to make sense of the world and those stories then help to define themselves and their future. Tilley and Zukowski draw three conclusions: (1) the central vehicle of religious communication is not doctrines, morals, or rules, but stories that contextualize the images that in turn shape our perceptions. (2) The media in and through which the narrative is communicated shape the meaning of the narrative and hence of the social relations of individuals. (3) There is a theological significance to the point that the same words and images placed in different contexts do not have the same meanings. This is especially important when church leaders repeat theological terms: they don't have the same meaning in a sermon and on television, for example. Tilley and Zukowski warn that today's new technologies fit contemporary cultural realities and often leave theology behind, stressing, for example, individualism, relativism, and self-sufficiency rather than any religious communion.

Paul Soukup (2002) develops a similar theme by examining the communication structure of theological discourse, particularly as it shifts from the oral world of narrative to the more systematic world of writing and printing. Relying also on Ong (1982), he shows how the communication structure of theology directs it to particular themes and then proposes a kind of experiment to see what would happen if communication became a self-consciously chosen theological topic. To demonstrate this, he examines the theological concept of "salvation" in terms of the restoration of a blocked communication rather than in its traditional terms of sin and redemption.

Such attention to the structures of communication need not remain restricted to language structures.

Thomas Martin elaborates this argument for the cinema, attending to the role of images in human thought, religious studies, and film. He describes his project as one that "attempts to relate the film medium to religious studies by means of the spatial interpretation and orientation (the image, the sense of direction) that is common to both forms of reflection" (Martin 1991: x). Human beings dwell in space, and spatial arrangement is itself a kind of interpretation that guides human understanding, even of religion. Martin explores this structure, contrasting classical Greek philosophy's understanding of the imagination with that of the Christian (primarily Augustinian) understanding of the imagination. The differences between the two indicate differing relationships between the external world and the mind, differences that enter into ways that people interpret films through imaginative constructs (*ibid.*, p. 17). Martin is not primarily interested in interpreting specific films but in exploring how films work, how they have a theological significance.

C. Cultural Contexts

Another strand in the theological reflection on the experience of communication begins with an examination of culture. In introducing the work of the "Ethnic Roundtable" whose reflections on theological themes begin in the awareness of intercultural communication, Justo González emphasizes that all theology bears its cultural marks.

> The knowledge of Christ never comes to us apart from culture, or devoid of cultural baggage. Christ comes to us in the garb of Christianity; and Christianity, in all its various forms, already involves an inculturation of the faith. (González 1992: 30)

For González and the members of the Ethnic Roundtable, this means that any theology must actively attend to the cultural realities of all peoples. Theology in some ways rests on intercultural communication. In taking up this theme, others have explored the "cultural baggage" González mentions. For them, this baggage includes church structures and church modes of communication (White 2001) as well as the uses of the mass media in particular societies (Yeow, 1990).

Soukup, Francis Buckley, and David Robinson (2001) develop this latter point at length in an examination of the media culture in the United States. They argue that both the "old media" of television and the new digital media create the cultural context in which religious reflection takes place. These media dominate

people's time, supply the images and concepts that define their world, highlight events or areas of concern, and position them in society (Soukup, Buckley, and Robinson 2001: 368-71). Such a preponderance of media is itself a culture and as a culture influences how theology functions for most people except, they argue, theologians whose academic training keeps them in an older print culture. One task for theology is now to attend to its own cultural context in the United States.

Michael Budde is far less optimistic about the cultural context of communication for theology and Christian living in the contemporary United States. "The cumulative and interactive effects of global culture industries, the post-modern cultural ecology they shape and that shapes them, and the post-fordist political economy to which they are integral, threaten the capacity of the church to survive as a movement committed to a distinctive vision and practice rooted in Christ" (Budde 1997: 54). So powerful is this communication culture that the church fails to see it for what it is. Instead the church sees the media as agents for communication or as things people use rather than structures of understanding; naively, the church hopes to use the mass media for evangelization, as though it could counteract the immense power of the constant barrage of media messages (*ibid*., pp. 99-101). Budde proposes not a new theology but a new or alternative communication system, one that fosters discourse, storytelling, intensive Christian communities, a lifelong catechumenate or apprentice learning of faith, radical conversion, and smaller ecclesial structures (*ibid*., pp. 125-151).

In a kind of practical theology, Jeremiah O'Sullivan Ryan has searched for signs of transcendent mystery in the mass media, taking account of contemporary culture. Not as pessimistic as Budde, he also acknowledges the impact of old and new media in his book, *La búsqueda del misterio trascendente en los medios de masas* (1999). He begins his quest from the starting point of the distinction between "information" and "communication," suggested by Ong in an earlier issue of *Communication Research Trends* (Ong 1996). Communication involves interaction and meaning, whereas information is a prehuman phenomenon, such as a genetic code, that stimulates a response but not necessarily an interchange of meaning between knowing subjects. O'Sullivan concurs with Ong's recognition that a response to the vast growth of information technology that is not only meaningfully human but also transcendent requires us to move far beyond mere information (O'Sullivan 1999: 41).

Changes in information technology initiate social changes. Not all of them are good, and they pose many pastoral challenges for the Latin American church. First, they require a full realization of the massive impact of this new electronic and information revolution on the daily lives of the people in order to adapt to it through constructive and appropriate adjustments in their lives. Secondly, the church must make adequate use of the new technologies for evangelization. In fact, the future depends on the development of capacities for using them to proclaim the Gospel effectively (*ibid*., pp. 51-53).

After listing the major categories of new communication technologies, O'Sullivan considers how each might be put to pastoral uses by the Latin American church and the limits of their effectiveness. For example, the role of television content as a modern form of myth and folklore presents a special challenge to the church because the effects of the medium are much more than simple transmission. The fact of active audiences using the symbols and themes of television to construct their cultural worlds turns television into a collective ritual equivalent to a popular religion (*ibid*., pp. 102-103). Another quasi-religious aspect of TV is its "liminality"—placing its audiences in an in-between world, removed from daily routine—a state that anthropologist Victor Turner described as an important characteristic of the transition rituals or "rites of passage" found in the religious lives of most cultures (*ibid*., pp. 104-106).

Television therefore creates a new situation—religious as well as secular—to which the church must adapt:

> In conclusion, one of the most important challenges which confronts the Catholic Church *in the modern era* refers to the communication of its message in a form [that is] most attractive and comprehensible by the existing society . . . Television, more than the churches, has come to be the place where people encounter a vision of the world that reflects that which for them is of definitive value, and that justifies their conduct and manner of living. Television has monopolized not only our attention and our money, but even our souls. (*ibid*., p. 120)

The audiovisual media affect audiences by means of their own languages, which interact with human faculties in various ways and carry their own kinds of logic and conviction:

> Truth and credibility have today a different value in the culture of the word . . . In audiovisual cul-

ture, in the first place [what] is important is: "What is the form in which something is said?" "Who is the speaker?" "What is the relationship to him or her?" "Can I trust this person?" "Is he or she sympathetic?" "What [do they] want?" (*ibid*., p. 127)

These considerations present serious questions of moral relativity in the media, which the author explores (*ibid*., pp. 127-142).

After this theologically-led analysis, O'Sullivan turns to practical applications: the design of a pastoral plan for communication, the development of an ethic of social responsibility in the communication media, alternative communication paths, radio for education and development, and the urgency of audience education. In an epilogue, he summarizes the "era of communication and its socio-religious impact," paying particular attention to the challenge of new technologies for Latin America (*ibid*., pp. 231-238).

D. Theological Concepts

Many of the scholars who come to examine the communication media from the stance of theology bring a particular set of concepts to their work. Bernard Bonnot (2000b) identifies three key clusters of theological terms: (1) the Trinity—God is three persons in one Godhead, characterized by *communio*, and a self-communicating love; (2) creation and redemption—the world is the material self-communication of God and revelation is the intellectual or epistemological self-communication of God; and (3) the Incarnation—the becoming flesh of God's Word establishes a pattern for communication: the giving of the self in love. Bonnot claims that these clusters characterize the work of many of those engaged in "communication theology." He further argues that the communication theology perspective demands that communication experiences should be regarded as religious experience of God.

In a second essay, Bonnot (2000a) summarizes ten years of communication seminars at the annual meetings of the Catholic Theological Society of America. The first seminar reflected on the terms outlined in the preceding paragraph. The next focused on communication structures (Augustinian rhetoric and Thomistic texts), on the culture of communication, on the methods of communication, and on the models of church communication.

Another year the group examined the Trinity and contemporary Trinitarian theology in more detail, again attending to the self-communication of God. In 1999 the seminar's theme was ecclesial reception or how the church accepts a teaching or an interpretation. This seminar examined the role of the audience and contrasted a hierarchical model of communication with a communion model, or, in theological language, the *magisterium* (teaching office) in contrast to the *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faithful). The next year also took a pragmatic look at communication, turning to culture and theology. Using contemporary scholarly understandings of culture and communication, the seminar debated the identity of a religious group as a community of argument. If God communicates through cultural contests, then people should examine the church and culture, and how believers interact with societies.

Finally, the group addressed communication in terms of the arts (particularly music) and theology. In the history of theology, there have been three key forms: the Incarnate Word, the oral Word, and the written Word. In each of these music has a role: sung prayer in Judaism at the time of Jesus, musical oral performance, and music as supporting literate communication.

In contrast to the other approaches to media and religion, communication theology provides a more abstract set of concepts to situate the interaction of these two deeply human events. The religious quest and religious expression coexist at the deepest level of human understanding. It should not surprise anyone that they manifest themselves together, whether in word, image, printed page, song, narrative, or digital impulse. Communication theology attempts to understand what that coupling means.

Perspective

The authors reviewed in this survey collectively argue that media and religion should be studied together, whether one begins from the side of religion or from the side of the media. Individuals do employ the mass media to make sense of their lives; individuals do seek and express the transcendent through the tools available to them.

Such a conjoined study helps to situate people's media habits. It also helps to explain why religious groups move so quickly to employ the media. Most

people know the story of the televangelists in the United States quite well by now. Fewer know of the Hindu use of videorecording outlined by Little (1995) or the development of Islamic broadcasting that Ghani describes (1998). Similarly, Matelski's study of Vatican Radio (1995) stops short of the story of how the Vatican has moved into television production. The real story is that almost every religious group embraces communication media, limited perhaps only by the cost. And so it should come as no surprise to discover the massive online religious presence since the new digital media fall within the budgets of most groups.

The conjoined study of media and religion also sheds light on more painful issues. For example, it can help us to understand how and why religion appears in the media as it does. At a time when the U.S. news media seem to report almost daily on cases of clergy sexual abuse, Mark Silk's 1995 study of reporting on religious topics can help to situate this story. In his chapter on the *topos* of hypocrisy, Silk compares the press treatment of televangelist scandals to the clergy abuse cases first reported in the early 1990s. Such scandals garner media treatment, he writes, because they deal with public not private matters. These events are "an abuse of the faith of their followers and, by extension, of all believers. At bottom that is what the *topos* of religious hypocrisy is all about" (Silk 1995: 88). But the Catholic Church scandals are different. It's worth quoting Silk at length to see why:

> When the Assemblies of God had no trouble expelling Bakker and Swaggert, the Catholic Church waffled—first reacting defensively, then admitting the problem, then turning again to hardball legal tactics. The story also got tangled up in larger questions concerning the shortage of priests and the merits of clerical celibacy. That celibacy was the problem became a *topos* of its own—one that the prolific Andrew Greeley felt called upon to condemn in the pages of *Newsweek* as anti-Catholic bigotry. Priest abuse was, in short, not a simple and satisfying morality tale, but a complex and deeply troubling set of narratives about sex offenders and institutional failure. (*ibid*.)

Because the *topoi* available to reporters and editors are confused and conflicting, the story becomes all the more difficult to cover. Because the impact of the abuse is so devastating, the story also becomes one of loss of faith, of "the dark night of the soul" (*ibid*., 89).

The present crisis, coming some eight years after Silk's study, is slightly less difficult for the news media—because they have seen it before. But again, these stories also deal with confused larger questions, which the news media seem to have trouble sorting out: the initial abuse, the institutional failure to remove abusers, the ways that past cases were treated, the failure to turn cases over to the legal system (and whether or not an obligation existed to do so), the role of leadership in the Catholic Church, a clerical culture—and distracting stories like clerical celibacy again and gays among the clergy. Because these questions do not fit neatly into reporting categories, the news media and their audiences struggle to make sense of them. But no matter how it is covered, Silk would hold that the story serves the larger good of exposing scandal that it might be removed.

The study of media and religion, then, helps us to understand why and how a social force like religion interacts with the other dominant social force of our day—the communication media. The questions to which scholars now turn have to do with the effects that these interactions have on each institution and practice.

Acknowledgments

Afterword

By the Editor

The difficult and complex interaction between religion and the mass media has gained recent prominence in the United States—and spreading from there into other regions—because of two ongoing stories. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent "War on Terrorism," brought Islamic beliefs and practices to the forefront of media attention. At roughly the same time the climax of concerns about sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy focused media attention on the Church's deficiencies in dealing with the problem. It is unlikely that either of these religions—the two largest in the world—has ever been given such searching and sustained attention by the secular media.

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, this intensive scrutiny of the two faiths comes during a historical period in which media have saturated society with their influence, becoming in a very real sense the creators and shapers of the cultural milieux within which religions must function. Furthermore, as Father Soukup has pointed out above (citing Hoover 2002a: 1) media and religion have become intricately connected. It also comes at a time when changes are coming to light that have long been gestating within both the Islamic and Catholic communities. The pivotal event for Catholicism was the Second Vatican Council, of the early 1960s. No such definitive event can be cited as symbolic of the changes within Islam, but there have been many changes—most associated with the growing secularization and pluralization of the nation-states where Muslims live.

Both religions have experienced traumatic internal confrontations between conflicting interpretations of doctrines and practices often labeled as "liberal" and "conservative"—although such stereotyping conceals a variety of attitudes possibly as diverse as the numbers of individual believers involved. One, perhaps beneficial by-product of the media's fixation on the two religions may lie in the fact that reporters, sometimes finding inadequate new material in the ongoing stories, are driven further afield to write background articles on the less spectacular realms of doctrine and the more characteristic and normal practices of believers. Opportunities can thereby arise for longstanding misapprehensions about the religions to be corrected in the secular media and disseminated to a wide audience.

The general public can learn, for example, that jihad, for the vast majority of Muslims, means the spiritual struggle of believers to avoid sin, rather than carrying the connotations of bloody struggle against non-believers which cooption of the term by extremists has given it in recent years. They may also learn, through such journalistic excursions from the beaten path, that the vast majority of Catholic clergy are trustworthy and dedicated laborers in the vineyard, rather than child-abusing perverts, as a few isolated cases have seemed to suggest. The prominence all this media attention has given Islam and the Catholic Church has, if nothing else, brought them into sharp profile as distinctive institutions, standing out from the amorphous realm of personal "feeling" and public irrelevance to which the media have too frequently consigned religion in recent decades.

Several authors have been cited in the main text, above, saying that the communication and information revolution will inevitably bring about changes in religions—changes comparable to the revolution in Western Christianity occasioned, to a great degree, by the invention of moveable type and consequent mass-produced printing. One change that already is affecting both Islam and Catholicism is the rising potential for an informed and articulate laity to become more directly involved in matters hitherto reserved to the clergy or religious teachers. A suggestion of what could develop occurred in the Archdiocese of Boston when, in the wake of the archbishop's fumbled attempts to deal with the abusive priests issue, lay parish councils tried to form an archdiocese-wide council. Their effort was rejected by Cardinal Law, but the attempt itself suggests the depth of feeling on the part of some of the most loyal lay people in the archdiocese. Many Catholics interviewed by the media have been quoted as saying that their loyalty to the Church is unaffected by the crisis, but their confidence in the clergy to properly deal with the crisis has been considerably shaken. Agitation for a greater input by the laity in the appointment of pastors and even bishops also is growing.

In the case of Islam, the American mass media and many non-Muslims have made significant efforts to help overcome anti-Muslim reactions to the attacks of September 11th, and many fewer incidents of retaliation against Muslims have occurred than might have been expected. Religions may wish to escape the negative attentions of the media, but their life is so intimately entwined with the media that they cannot hope to do so. Their only recourse is to establish the best possible relations with journalists and to keep them fully informed about even the most embarrassing developments, ensuring at the same time that they have enough background information to judge the events fairly and in context.

Adorno's analysis (2000) of broadcasts by the 1930s radio evangelist Martin Luther Thomas, quoted earlier by Father Soukup, might shed some light both on how the media exacerbate extremism and how religious groups might counter those tendencies and their undesirable ramifications. According to Adorno, Thomas used religious rhetoric in a secular way to manipulate his hearers politically. This secular perversion of religion promoted behavior which was hate-filled and anything but religious. Similarly, the cooption of jihad by extremists, snatching it from its religious context to use for political ends, perverts the word's true meaning and generates criticism directed against the whole religion. Greater control over the use of terminology, especially by explaining its real meaning more fully to the general population, might prevent or at least limit such negative effects.

Tilley and Zukowski (2001), as cited by Soukup, have argued for the importance of narrative stories as a major channel of communication in the electronic age. In the mass media narratives usually take the form of fictional presentations. Religious groups that wish to enhance their presence in the public forum must adopt the means by which communication is conducted in that forum—means that usually employ fictional productions.

But there are pitfalls. Such productions, in a mass-market communication industry, necessarily are what Sinetar (1993: 27) called a collaborative art form, "the product of multiple psyches." As such they are bound to be a typical product of committees and never will achieve the perfection rigorist critics might want. But it is far better to be present in the media in an imperfect way than to be absent from it entirely. If narrative presence in the media is to be achieved, occasional theological flaws arising from some of the "multiple psyches" who have created the production simply have to be tolerated in the course of the narration.

In an American TV industry almost totally bereft of religiously-oriented fiction, high quality Catholic fiction has been driven off the air by hypersensitive Catholics simply because one series highlighted too sharply some of the ambiguities and shortcomings of parish and clerical life. Producers inevitably become "gun-shy" when such things happen, and subsequently refuse to present the religion in serious fictional narratives. The baby should not be thrown out with the bath water.

As is often said, "If it's not on TV, it doesn't exist!" From that perspective, imperfect religious fiction and possibly even news about scandals have a positive function. They reveal a living, breathing religious body, which can be loved even with its warts.

—W. E. Biernatzki, S.J., General Editor, CRT

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Book Reviews

Crovi Druetta, Delia (Coord.). *Comunicación y educación: Perspectiva latinoamericana* [Communication and Education: Latin American Perspective]. Mexico City: Instituto Latinoamericano de la Comunicación Educativa, 2001. Pp. 475. ISBN 968-5247-39-0 (pb.) n. p. (Contact: ILCE - Instituto Latinoamericano de la Comunicación Educativa, Calle del Puente No. 45, Col. Ejidos de Huipulco, Delegación Tlalpan, C.P. 14380, México D.F., Mexico.). In Spanish and Portuguese.

This book is based on papers presented in the workgroup on communication and education at the convention of ALAIC (Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación), the premier Latin American organization of communication researchers, held in Santiago, Chile, 26-29 April 2000.

The papers are grouped under four headings: 1. Educational communication and technological convergence: Toward a new paradigm? 2. Communication in educational institutions. 3. Communication media and technologies incorporated into educational programs. 4.. Professional theories and practices.

Some representative titles and their countries of origin among the twenty-four Spanish and Portuguese papers are:

"Technological convergence and education: Myths and realities" (Mexico).

"The role of communication media in knowledge management"(Chile).

"The new information technologies: Challenge for distance education" {Argentina).

"Multicultural education in the information society: Reflections from the Brazilian context" (Brazil).

"Discursive competencies and the integration of the student into the university environment" (Argentina).

"Constructing Communication: The case of boys and girls in a people's school" (Chile).

"Reading of daily newspapers by adolescents and youths" (Chile).

"Teaching editing at a distance: A didactic and communicational alternative" (Argentina).

"Concerning the didactic construction of social communication" (Argentina).

"Communication and education in the information society: An experience of better formation" (Chile).

Authors of the twenty-four papers represent Chile (8), Argentina (6), Brazil and Mexico (two each), and Peru, Venezuela, Spain, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay (one each).

—William E. Biernatzki, S.J.

von Feilitzen, Cecilia, and Catharina Bucht. *Outlooks on Children and Media: Child Rights, Media Trends, Media Research, Media Literacy, Child Participation, Declarations* (Children and Media Violence Yearbook 2001). Göteborg, Sweden: The UNESCO International Clearing-house on Children and Violence on the Screen/Nordicom/Göteborg University, 2001. Pp. 177. ISBN 91-89471-09-1, ISSN 1403-4700 (pb.) n. p. [Contact: NORDICOM, Göteborg University, Box 713, SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG, Sweden. Tel: +46 31 773 10 00; Fax: +46 31 773 46 55; e-mail: nordicom@nordicom.gu.se; web: www.nordicom.gu.se]

and

von Feilitzen, Cecilia. "Influences of Media Violence: A Brief Research Summary." A 17 page pamphlet distributed with the 2001 yearbook. Göteborg: UNESCO Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen/NORDICOM/ Göteborg University, 2001.

This is the fourth yearbook published by the UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen. The earlier yearbooks each concentrated on one topic, but this one deviates from that policy "to give a broad outline of children and media in the world, focusing on media literacy in the manifold sense of the word," as Ulla Carlsson, Director of the Clearing-house describes it in her preface (p. 5). The topics dealt with in the first three yearbooks are recapitulated and updated in the fourth.

Preliminary chapters review children's rights, as defined in international documents, and the demographics of children in the world, where they "are not a small minority group 'on the side,'" but 36 percent of the world's population (p. 9).

The twenty-two relatively brief chapters are too many to list, but a sampling includes such topics as,

"the changing media environment," "children's access to media," "examples of international meetings on children and media since 1990," "media education, literacy, communication," "influence of media violence," as well as discussions of electronic games and advertising. Appendices consist of a "Regional Summaries Country List" categorizing countries by level of development as shown in figure one of the demographic chapter (p. 9), a table of "Media in the World" by country, and "Income Classification of countries. An extensive list of references is included, as is a detailed "Register of Contents," in lieu of an index.

The supplementary pamphlet by von Feilitzen summarizes research findings to date on media violence. The author says,

> Here media violence primarily means depictions of visible, manifest, physical violence (and the threat of it) in moving images, i.e., murders, shootings, fights, etc. This is what research has chiefly focused on—and what is most often referred to in the public debate. We know less about influences of other forms . . . that are also represented in the media output. Furthermore, research has much more often concerned depictions of violence in entertainment, fiction and drama than in news and other factual contents. (p. 2)

Relatively little research has been done on Internet and video/computer games, but the incidence of violence on the Internet is increasing and studies suggest young people are very disturbed by it. The influence of electronic games is different from that of TV and cinema because the interactivity of the games requires greater involvement of the player. Rapid changes in game technology makes generalizations difficult.

Research on films and television suggests that portrayals of violence on those media can lead to imitation, but findings

> do not support the notion that media violence is the decisive cause of violence (and violent crimes) in society. Neither do most studies indicate that media violence is of no importance at all (p. 5).

Different kinds of violence may have different effects in different cultures, so "it is essential that each country performs its own research—the findings cannot be generalised too hastily" (p. 6). Fear inspired in children by media violence can have long term and hidden psychological effects (p. 8). Media violence also can cause

"erroneous conceptions of the violence in reality," such as a perception that there is greater danger in the environment than actually is the case, or overestimates of one's own strength and physical abilities, although research on this is sparse (p. 9).

Habituation can be induced by media with results such as desensitization to real violence or the suffering of others (p. 10). Constructive results also can be noted, such as democratic norms, but empirical research supporting this conclusion is lacking ((pp. 10-11). Group belonging and solidarity can be strengthened by experiencing violent media in some cases (pp. 11-12). Children's perceptions of their cultural and social environment can be skewed by media misrepresentations of, for example under-represented groups (p. 15). Differing economies, cultures and political systems can have considerable influence on the different effects violent portrayals may have in different countries (p. 16).

—WEB

Goad, Tom W. *Information Literacy and Workplace Performance*. Westport, CT/London: Quorum Books, 2002. Pp. xii, 232. ISBN 1-56720-454-6 (hb.) $64.95.

In his preface, the author says that, in a world where people seem constantly to be having to move from job to job, forced to learn new skills as they go, there is "one skill we can master to fulfill our workplace dreams, regardless of what we do . . . that skill is information literacy, which is being able to locate, access, select, and apply information" (p. ix). Goad emphasizes that this does not mean online information alone or libraries alone, or even the two in combination, but a broad front of information sources, and the information literate person will know all the relevant sources and all the ways to find the information, as well as "quickly choosing the most proficient one to use at any given time—in a time-compressed environment" (p. x).

The book's eleven chapters discuss information and knowledge as foundations for twenty-first century work, information literacy as the one skill needed and the components that constitute it, communicating in the digital age and how it integrates with older communication skills, exercising information power through thinking and action-taking skills, creativity, innovation and risk taking as steps to action, what computer literacy is and how it relates to information literacy, knowing the broader territory of subject matter literacy and cultural knowledge, learning how to learn, knowing about on-the-job helps. Chapter ten, "Humans Don't Live on Digits Alone: Placing Information Power in Context," emphasizes the too-often-neglected social, cultural and psychological context of a whole human life into which information skills need to be harmoniously integrated. Chapter eleven discusses how to maintain information power once one has acquired it.

There are an index and extensive endnotes, but no bibliography.

—WEB

Hueva, William. *Media and Resistance Politics: The Alternative Press in Namibia, 1960-1990*. Basel Namibia Studies Series 6. Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2001. Pp. xvi, 166. ISBN 3- 908193-10-9 (pb.) CHF 48 / £ 20 / NAM$125. (P. Schlettwein Publishing, Klosterberg 21, 4051 Basel, Switzerland; pspverlag@bluewin.ch; Africa Book Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden, London WC2 8JT, United Kingdom; africabooks@dial.pipex.com, with credit card payment)

Based on the author's Master's Thesis at The Department of Journalism and Media Studies of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, this study examines the counter-hegemonic role played by the alternative press in the movement of Namibia towards independence from South Africa's colonial rule in 1960 to 1990.

> This study traces the emergence of alternative means of communication by colonised Namibians during the last three decades of colonisation. It attempts to lay the groundwork for a historical-theoretical identity and understanding of the anti-apartheid publications (the alternative press) during this period. (p. 7)

The alternative press in Namibia consisted of four groups of publications: the nationalist press, the Church press, the community press, and the progressive independent press. For each group Hueva provides an historical context and identifies the key papers within each group. Some of the papers survived throughout the entire colonial period; others were forced out of existence; still others shifted towards a more independence-minded agenda as they voiced the opinions of the people and broke away from the South African economic domination.

The second part of the study examines the institutional character of the various papers: their ownership and control, the practices of the journalists working for them, and their target audiences and news sources. While each paper had its particular objectives, the alternative press as a group shared a number of functions

and challenges. Hueva provides case studies of different papers, drawing on published reports as well as interviews with various journalists associated with the papers. He also grounds the study in the realism of publishing: Part III examines the economics of the alternative press. Few of them managed much advertising support, since businesses did not want to risk the ire of the colonial powers or did not wish to associate with black-operated papers. This meant that the papers had to maintain a simple format (usually A4-sized paper), carefully target the relatively small literate (largely urban) populations, support themselves by sales, and rely on funding from various organizations. However, many of these restrictions actually allowed the papers to target their audiences much more specifically.

In the fourth part of his study, Hueva presents a content analysis of a sample of the papers. General themes included issues of housing, unemployment, health, labor, and legal issues. The papers existed to give a voice to the people of Namibia.

> The intellectuals invited their readers to write letters, so as to express their views and discuss the problems facing them. The letter page served as a "safety valve," and it was an important medium through which voices from within the oppressed communities could be heard. The letters were written in English, Afrikaans, and in the vernaculars. (p. 105)

The papers also published poems and personality profiles in order to give greater identity to the communities. Some included foreign news and sports, usually focusing on stories not covered by the mainstream press, like the various independence movements in Africa.

The book includes facsimile pages of each of the papers studied, a bibliography, a listing of acronyms, and an index of names, organizations, and places.

It is part of the Basel Namibia Studies Series of P. Schlettwein Publishing, a series that aims "to make research results on Namibia accessible and known to a new generation of Namibian readers in particular and to the international research community in general" (p. ix).

—Paul A. Soukup, S.J.

Inayatullah, Sohail, and Susan Leggett (Eds.). *Transforming Communication: Technology, Sustainability, and Future Generations* (Praeger Studies on the 21st Century). Westport, CT/London: Praeger, 2002. Pp. vi, 200. ISBN 0-275-96944-4 (hb.) $65.00; 0-275-97540-1 (pb.) $25.00; ISSN 1070-1850.

This book is an effort to see the recent technological developments of communication and their possible future development in the broader terms of "alternative renderings of what it means to communicate, who should be included in the communicative community, and what is to be the purpose of communication" (p. 1). Questions such as inclusiveness and the so-called "digital divide" underlie the papers, as does the realization, that, in Inayatullah's words,

> Communication...is far more than simply sending or receiving information through politically neutral channels. At issue is not only who sends and receives but also the social, gender, and civilisational context embedded in this process. (p. 2)

Our ability to create new systems, spaces and communities in the future remains uncertain. New technologies can make things better, but they also can make things worse. The same editor admits that, "perhaps instead we should envision an expanded communicative community, a gaia of civilisations, with worlds in prama, or dynamic or chaotic balance" (p. 8).

The book's nineteen authors and two editors represent a wide range of geographical and cultural backgrounds, including, but not limited to, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Finland, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Nigeria, and Indonesia, though most reside in or have institutional connections with Australia. Their papers are gathered under four headings, "Future Generations," "Communication Futures," "Technology, Women and Power," and "Sustainability and Future Generations."

Jérôme Bindé, looking at the ethics of future generations, is concerned that the contemporary "culture of impatience," with its seemingly permanent "logic of emergency," has ominous consequences (p. 41). To counter it we must rebuild a sense of time, "rehabilitating the long-term [which] means that social actors and decision-makers will have to stop tinkering with the present and start anticipating . . . The fate of future generations will increasingly depend on our ability to enrich the present with a long-term vision" (p. 42). In his estimation this will entail "a radical evolution in our understanding of several key concepts: responsibility, precaution, and heritage," orienting them all to the future (p. 42).

Paul Wildman and Bilyana Blomely emphasize that many sources should be drawn on in creating our approaches to the future, including the wisdom of indigenous cultures. They take as an example the "Magani Whirlpools" concept of the Torres Straits

Islanders. It "represents an empathetic and co-operative coming together of forces or people. These forces or people become part of a greater connected whole, in which the centre, or eye, is analogous to the centre or birth of a spiritual transformation." The resulting outcome, reconciliation, is used by the Torres Islanders "as a means of social support, community development and for mild forms of behavioral modification for youth. It is also used in times of whole community celebration" (p. 90).

In chapter thirteen, Frances Parker and Rahmi Sofiarini describe how landless rural women of Lombok Island, Indonesia, worked successfully, with help from NGOs and other outsiders, to overcome crushing poverty and create a sustainable future (pp. 134-47).

Goeff Holland, in the final chapter, asks, rhetorically, "Why consider future generations?" and "What has posterity ever done for us?" (p. 180). He has some difficulty answering those questions, but he finally does so positively. One dimension of the answer is found in the fact that,

> We have reached a watershed in human history defined principally by our technological capacity to exterminate ourselves. If we fail to exterminate ourselves, we are well-equipped to radically degrade the biosphere and the quality of life of future generations. (p. 183)

Another approach to the positive response that is so obviously necessary, if logically evasive, is taken from Thomas Sieger Derr who states plainly, "a society which fails to care for the future has lost its sense of purpose and thus its capacity to deal with the present" (p. 185). An index and biographical sketches of the editors and contributors are provided.

—WEB

Mariscal, Judith. *Unfinished Business: Telecommunications Reform in Mexico*. Westport, CT/London: Praeger, 2002. Pp. xx, 158. ISBN 0-275-97391-3 (hb.) $59.95.

This is an evaluation of the process of deregulation and privatization of the Mexican telecommunications industry during the period from 1990, when the national telephone company, Telmex, was privatized, and about 1997, when the ruling party, the PRI, lost its control of Congress and the political atmosphere consequently changed. The author's methodological perspective is that of political economy. Although the process was implemented relatively smoothly (p.

xviii), it did not fully achieve its goals. The author sketches a broad overview of its history as follows:

> Just as the Mexican industrialization process that was initiated in the mid-1940s was incomplete because it did not reach rural Mexico, telecommunications reform initiated in the 1990s has not extended the benefits of modernization to the population at large. Indeed, the modernization of the telephone system has not yet been distributed to the majority of Mexicans making the digital divide a crucial issue to resolve. Mexico still has a significantly low level of overall telephone penetration and its regional distribution, within the country, is extremely unequal. A second policy lesson is that telecommunications reform must provide direct incentives towards network expansion to unprofitable areas. (p. xiv)

Mariscal gives her study internationally comparative depth by describing telecommunication reform in the United States, New Zealand, and Brazil, contrasting "considerably different policy choices in telecommunications reforms with the objective of identifying how differences in political institutions and policy contexts led to different policy outcomes" (p. xiv). She chose telecommunications "as the focus of this research because of its critical importance to economic development . . . The information revolution represents the second major wave towards modernization" (p. xiii).

Worldwide technological change, outlined in chapter one, has eroded the government monopoly character of the industry while raising the importance and complexity of policy determination. "Countries that have allowed competition in this sector have experienced much faster network modernization, expansion, and rate cuts. The government, however, still has a role to play in securing a level playing field." (p. 23).

In chapter two, Mariscal provides "a political economy framework that examines the privatization and deregulation of the Mexican telecommunications sector" (p. 25). Policy outcomes, in historical context, are discussed in chapter three. Telecommunications reform in the three other countries, mentioned above, are detailed and evaluated in chapter four. In conclusion, chapter five first reviews universal changes affecting all countries then the national traits of Mexico and the other three countries, with an effort at "generalizing the argument" (pp. 137-139). She concludes that effective reform requires and open process. "An open public process limits the influence of narrow interests" (p. 140). In the Mexican case, the Salinas

government failed to recognize this factor, and consequently "neglected the objective of universal access and long-term consumer welfare" (ibid.)

A bibliography and index are included.

—WEB

Rodrigo Alsina, Miquel. *Comunicación intercultural* [Intercultural Communication]. Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial, 1999. Pp. 270. ISBN 84-7658-572-1 (pb) n.p. (Contact: Miquel Rodrigo I Alsina, Professor, Departament de Periodisme, Edifici I, Universität Autonoma de Barcelona, 08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona), Spain. Fax: +93 3 581 20 05.)

In a world characterized by the phenomenon of rapid globalization, intercultural communication skills have become not only desirable, but for many even essential. The widespread recognition of this developing need has created a demand for books clarifying the many ramifications of this complex area of communication studies.

Having outlined the need for intercultural communication studies in chapter one, Rodrigo goes on to describe the field in more detail, in chapter two, covering its characteristics, epistemological aspects, conceptual and terminological clarifications, and the role of the mass media.

In chapter three, he turns to interpersonal intercultural communication, both verbal and nonverbal. Chapter four is devoted to theories of intercultural communication, concentrating on three theoretical streams that seem especially cogent: a theory of anxiety and uncertainty; a theory of transcultural adaptation; and a theory of the construction of a third culture. Chapter five is an epilogue discussing some necessary critiques and the objectives of intercultural communication. A bibliography and both author and thematic indexes are included.

—WEB

Tolson, Andrew (Ed.). *Television Talk Shows: Discourse, Performance, Spectacle*. Mahwah, NJ/ London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. Pp. viii, 203. ISBN 0-8058-3746-9 (hb.) $49.95 (Special prepaid price: $27.50).

While the television talk show has not become as popular in Britain and elsewhere as it has in the United States, the editor nevertheless feels justified in calling it "ubiquitous" (p. 2). By skipping from channel to channel, a UK viewer can watch talk shows continuously on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with the exception of one hour from 2 to 3 p.m. Eight out of the eleven shows that account for this coverage are imported from the United States (pp. 2-3).

Tolson limits the term, "talk show" to shows "with certain key elements" in common:

> Crucially, they all feature groups of guests, not individual interviewees, and they all involve audience participation. . . . The studio audience is not only visible . . . but also it is given the opportunity to comment and intervene, not simply to respond. The host then typically acts as a mediator between the guests and the studio audience, often moving around studio spaces with a mobile microphone. It is this kind of talk show whose discursive dynamics we seek to explore in this volume, for of course, it is this kind of talk show that constitutes the talk show phenomenon. (p. 3)

Tolson says that, although there have been previous studies of talk shows, they have generally paid little attention to the actual talk produced on the shows (p. 3). On the other hand,

> A distinctive feature of this book is that it offers a systematic empirical study of the broadcast talk in talk shows. Thereby, we hope to illuminate how talk shows work as media experiences (p. 4)

Tolson, himself, discusses the academic debates about talk shows, in chapter one. Some see the shows as creating "a new kind of public forum that allows a diversity of voices to be heard," voices that might have been marginalized or suppressed in the classical "public sphere" as conceived of by Habermas, particularly the voices of women (p. 15). Others see them as "a therapy genre involving 'the creation of intimacy and... emotional self-disclosure'" (p. 19).

In chapter two, "Performing Talk," Louann Haarman, who teaches at Bologna University in Italy, "explores the structural and discursive features of the three principal types of daytime talk shows: the audience discussion show, the issue-oriented talk show centering on social problems in a personal perspective, and the trash talk show, where social and personal problems are presented as spectacle" (p. 31).

Chapter three deals with "the pursuit of conflict in the management of 'lay' and 'expert' discourses" on the British talk show "Kilroy," which follows an audience discussion format. The remaining chapters are "The Many Faces of *With Meni:* The History and Stories of One Israeli Talk Show," "'Has It Ever Happened to You?': Talk Show Stories as Mediated

Performance," "'It Makes It Okay to Cry': Two Types of 'Therapy Talk' in TV Talk Shows," "Confrontation as a Spectacle: The Argumentative Frame of the Ricki Lake Show," and "'I'm Out of It; You Guys Argue': Making an Issue of It on The Jerry Springer Show."

References, an Index and a list of Contributors are included. Tolson and all but two of the other contributors work in the U.K.

<div align="right">—WEB</div>

Wendt, Ronald F. *The Paradox of Empowerment: Suspended Power and the Possibility of Resistance.* Westport, CT/London: Praeger, 2001. Pp. xvii, 192. ISBN 0-275-97233-X (hb.) $58.00.

Although this is a work of social criticism, the author is quick to insist that, "*The Paradox of Empowerment* is a labor of love, not hate. It is a critical affirmation of the transformation of American Culture" (p. xi). In his foreword, Isaac E. Catt puts what he calls Wendt's "hybrid, synthetic theoretical approach" to a "communicology of postmodernity" in a sharper focus:

> If the broad theme of postmodern discourse theory is the issue of power, then the principal contribution of this book is to take us more deeply within power, as a conscious experience of persons. Wendt locates power where it is not supposed to be, in its binary opposite, in "empowerment." (p. xv)

Wendt summarizes his perspective in the introduction:

> A key premise for this book is that the world is not a perfect place to live. Certain social forces have had, are having, and will continue to have devastating effects on how we live. The predominant social force today is a hegemonic power dynamic supplied by transnational corporations. Under the guise of "participation," "democracy," and "empowerment," the transnationals are systematically disempowering employees and commodifying all other social realms, including higher education. The effect on our culture is bound to be both beneficial and detrimental, for thus is the nature of hegemonic forces; they contribute in a positive way and at the same time they warp and corrode. (p. 2)

The author carries his argument through ten chapters, grouped in four parts. In Part I, "A Theoretical Grounding and Stories of Organizational Double Binds," he first suggests a development "towards a critical-postmodern hermeneutics" that would avoid extremes of relativism, pluralism, and subjectivism, preferring "an 'oppositional' post-modernism . . . based on resistance, struggle, and social change" (p.11). He then goes on to develop a central theme: that "today's organizations are wrought with confusion, chaos, and unique predicaments often referred to as 'paradoxes'" (p. 19). Organizational paradoxes are statements or sets of statements "that are self-referential, contradictory, and trigger a vicious circle . . ; that is, statements that often confuse and frustrate organizational members because they create and sustain seemingly inescapable, lose-lose, double-bind situations" (pp. 19-20).

Double-binds especially affect women attempting to achieve empowerment in large organizations, as Wendt describes in Part II, "Double Binds Affecting Women Workers and the Aggressive-Timid Paradox." A no-win, double-bind situation frequently trapping political leaders and women workers alike is the "too aggressive-not aggressive enough paradox," treated in chapter five.

Part III, "Paradoxes in Corporate Lampoonery, the Notion of Corporate Consumption, and the Paradoxical Role of Technology," uses, in chapter six, critical and poststructuralist readings of the comic strip "Dilbert," which targets the irrationalities to be observed in the management of large organizations. In chapter seven, he turns to "The Corporate Consumption of Higher Education," to show how "the hegemonic corporate movement" has affected nearly all social sectors, not merely business institutions. Risking designation as a "Luddite," the author points out how computerization has a "dark side," which affects "how we think and what values are privileged over others" (p. 129). "Knowing that my students would revolt if I required any serious reading of them makes a course like the one I am envisioning (a critique of technology) almost impossible" (p. 128).

Part IV explores "The Possibility of Resistances" and offers "A Critical Reflection." In the latter consideration (chapter ten), Wendt returns to "the real world of daily struggles, resistance, and the negotiation of meanings . . . armed with new ideas and insights into hypercapitalism and our changing society" (p. 159). An "Epilogue: 2084–A Skeptic's Forecast" speculates on the worst-of-all-possible-worlds scenario in which people are incorporated into cyberspace by means of microchips implanted in their brains.

Notes, bibliography and an index are provided.

<div align="right">—WEB</div>