









## ABSTRACT

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Finnish summary

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The study presents basic research into the recently formed field of studies on media and religion, and it generates universal descriptions and explanations as well as more operational models on religious media communication, for the first time in the field..

The source material is taken from various Christian traditions: the Roman Catholic church, the Mainline Protestant tradition, the Evangelical Protestant tradition, and Eastern Orthodoxy. The primary data is based on Internet-material as well as drawn from interviews of key persons in Finland, Italy, Russia and the USA. The scope and setting is exceptionally large in order to be able to provide comprehensive and valid data for theory construction.

The study is an inter-disciplinary effort that draws from the fields of sociology, media studies, cultural studies and theology. The study has a strong phenomenological orientation with an attempt to line up various traditions and case studies for comparison. The so called "snow-ball" method is used; it is used both to trace the borders of the phenomenon and to gather material as well. It is also important to note that a particular Internet-methodology has been introduced.

The study produces various descriptions, explanations and models, which together form a Religious Media Theory. The results show that religion and media technology are highly compatible, and that the most important factor in explaining religious media communication is the particular theological view of the given tradition. The second determining factor is the national setting, which determines the actual outlook of the system of religious media communication. The study also shows the connections of religious media theory to mainstream media theory. The overall systematics and levels of religious media communication are presented in one synthetic model.

Mediated religion is a counter-strategy of institutionalized Christian religion to secularization. Through mediated religion, institutions seek to re-establish their relevance and universal authority. In all traditions there is a high degree of convergence taking place as they each move to utilize and capitalize on the positive aspects of virtual religiosity and virtual religious communities. In the future, religion is moving towards becoming an increasingly technological phenomenon.

Key words: religious communication, religious media, media theory, religion, communication technology, community, modernization

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## PREFACE

This study on Religious Media Theory has filled my work life full time for almost five years. This came on the heels of another five years which I spent as a student studying for a master's degree. In reflection, it is incredible to me that all together, I have spent almost 10 years looking for the answer to one single question: Why do religious communities produce media?

Actually much of my life culminates in seeking the answer to this question. As a young man and a young Christian I had an opportunity to be involved in a high-tension inter-denominational and charismatic Bible-school. Among other skills and topics I was taught how to produce radio programs. This was in the mid-1980's, when private radio stations had just appeared in Finland, and the mediascape was for the first time open to religious programs.

The Bible school not only changed my life, but also directed my career to media. Very soon I started to edit their magazine, and produce all types of communications materials. After various media-related jobs, I began my studies as a new student of journalism in the Department of Communication at the University of Jyväskylä in August 1993.

So, this thesis project has been a personal project and the focus of my life for a great number of years. In addition to this being a scientific project, this has also been a project to build one's own identity, and place in the world. This is a story of how finding the answer to one single question took me through many somewhat troublesome years utilizing various methods, materials, journeys, and perspectives. This simple question actually found its origin already during my Bible school years, since I noticed that various Christian communities had strict views on how to communicate properly. This question proved to be a scientific question, even though it has gone through many transformations over the years.

While seeking an answer to this question I have seen my children grow from helpless babies to teenagers. While seeking an answer to this question I have found myself transformed from the energetic and omnipotent years of the mid-30's to the mature years of early middle-age.

And now, finally, the answer is at hand in this study. I am a bit surprised that the project now appears to be over. I am curious to see, what's next? Will there be another question to consume the next 10 years?

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As always, the finalizing of such an effort as a doctoral thesis is a combination of various factors, abilities and persons. It is not possible to mention all those who have participated in this project from the beginning. However, the inputs of some people were so important that without their contributions this work would never have appeared.

One major contribution came from the Finnish Cultural Fund, which financed my Religious Media Theory -project for three years. After that I was hired for two years as a researcher for the Graduate School of Cultural Integration and Dialogue, for which I am grateful..

I also want to thank professor Raimo Salokangas for his encouragement, patience and belief in me and my project. No doubt sometimes it was hard for him to understand my stubborn views and "theistic visions". Maybe the first test of his faith in my project came during the first winter in which I spent most of that winter actually building our home rather than focusing on deep investigations. But fortunately today both the house and the thesis have been completed.

I want to thank professor Heikki Luostarinen for his valuable advice and in-depth media theoretical benchmarking during the process. For the staff of the Communications Department at the University of Jyväskylä I owe a gratitude; I spent five years in this community, sometimes without recognizing the value of the academic community, and the freedom, the resources and the fellowship it provided.

To Heikki Kuutti I am grateful for his inspiring and encouraging friendship as a new member of the academic community. With research colleagues Turo Uskali and Mari Hankala it was inspiring to think about the challenges facing young researchers. Johanna Sumiala-Seppänen proved to be a challenging benchmarking discussant and oftentimes an opponent on matters of similar interest as mediated religion.

I am particularly grateful for the reviewers Hannele Koivunen, and Robert White, who have provided invaluable comments on the thesis.

Of those outside of the scientific community I particularly want to mention my friend Ilkka Kastepohja, who has followed my ways over the years in the research of religious communication, and who has been linked to my personal history, since the days of Bible school as my teacher on how to produce radio programs. In this project, he provided valuable practical help, particularly by assisting in arranging research trips to Russia. I want to thank Patrick Murphy for his wonderful friendship as well as an invaluable help during the process of finalizing the English language outlook of this study. I also thank Eila Murphy for her patience when Patrick was busy with the language of the thesis.

I want to mention a journalist and a friend Kalevi Hotanen, who has followed these years of progress during the project. He was the one who first taught me the journalistic skills. Also I want to thank Kari Turunen and Juha Mattila, my partners in our company Media Cabinet. They have been patiently waiting and carrying the responsibility of the company while I have been exercising my academic freedom.

During the three research trips in foreign countries, I had invaluable help and co-operation. I want to mention particularly Konstantin Andreev and his organization in Moscow, who provided me accommodation and an interpreter free of charge. Francis Gray brought me some international study literature and also provided other resources for the work. José María LaPorte provided friendship and help in Rome. Dmitry Mendeleev was wonderfully co-operative in Moscow at the Orthodox tv-centre in Ostankino. In the USA, Andrew and Juliet Quicke opened their home for me, and Andrew provided me important materials and information. Also, Larry and Jill Clark opened their home to me in Seattle for which I am grateful.

Without the kind co-operation of many communicators in various churches and communities this project would have been impossible. I want to thank Ingmar Lindqvist, Don Claudio Giuliani, Benedicta Idefelt, Viktor Maluchin, Evgeny Nedzelsky, Tony Bollen, John Matusiah, Fabio Pasqualetti, Eugeny Polischuk, Eric Shafer, Karl Stoll, Mark Woodland, Tim Dean, Maria Loukina, Paolo Naso, and Robert Neff, to mention some of them.

I want to express my gratitude to my family. My daughter Suvi and my son Samuel have given me real significance in my life. To my loving wife Tarja I want to give special recognition for being there for me during all of this project, patiently listening to all of my stories and problems, as well as for the times she was alone with the children while I was out exploring the world. Tarja, you have been a great support. And I want to express a word of comfort to all my friends who are tired of listening to the continuous story of my thesis project. Now that story has come to its end.

Finally, as a Christian, I believe that this project was possible, first of all, by the guidance and call given me by God. There must be a purpose for this project to be accomplished, and I wish that this study can contribute something to the ultimate reality, and by doing so, serve others. It has been an honour and privilege to seek the answer to this question, and to learn, and to experience things, and to meet the people without whom my life would have been less.

In Jyväskylä July 2003

Taisto Lehtikoinen

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ABSTRACT

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Goals and Perspectives

### 1.1.1 Relevance of the Topic - Why Study Religious Media?

Religion is a powerful motivator and one of the most important sources of meaning in world history and human culture. Historically, religious traditions are far more enduring than any known political, ideological, or even scientific thought. The fact remains that institutionally organized religions have not only been able to maintain and disseminate their influence for thousands of years, but they have been able to spread to new regions continuously. In various forms of culture throughout history, religious motivation and religious subjects have been very important. From the third century, through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, until the beginning of Reformation and Enlightenment, religion has been the most important factor influencing cultures within Europe.

But a quite common argument as to why religious communication as a research topic is so important, is that it's quite similar to *political communication* and *advertising* or *marketing* communication. The common denominators being persuasion and propaganda. If you look at these spheres of communication at the same time and from a very long distance, this obviously seems to be the case. This perspective embraces another assumption: these three spheres of communication are considered from the epistemology of journalism, which still enjoys the illusion of impartiality and objectivity and has, to a great extent, influenced communication studies as well. These three spheres differ from journalism in that the role of the sender is emphasized. The entire motivation behind advertising, political, and religious communication comes from the strategic goals of these sender-institutions. But there are additional differences. These spheres of communication (including journalism) have diverse cosmological and epistemological commitments as well as unique traditional, societal, historical and cultural characteristics. With such wide differences, one would not do justice by comparing any of these fields in a manner typical of mass media studies.

Of these fields, religious communication has been explored least. For example, journalism, marketing and promotions (PR-activities) have always been of vital interest. The explicit marginalization of religion by western societies has caused the study of religious communication to remain, for the most part, largely unexplored. Yet among religious institutions the use of media is of vital interest. And the ethical, normative and theoretical (mainly theological) reflections concerning mass communication, and its proper use, can be even more vital than what is seen coming from the secular spheres of communication.

Religion and media are in fact highly compatible in that religion has a high number of communicative goals as well as an important message to be mediated. However, a possible conflict arises between media culture and religious culture in that the mainstream media culture is sometimes strikingly different than the religious sub-culture which must seek creative and imaginative ways to build its audience.

Within religious institutions the ideology and motivation to use mass media communication are by far greater than the resources allocated. As a result, the communicative potential and overall dynamics of religion are important fields of study. Religion has usually a greater vision than it has the resources to communicate. This need for resources has somewhat spoiled the reputation of religious broadcasters globally in that they have been depicted as money begging televangelists. While it is true that religious media communication has a great lack of both financial and human resources, there remains no shortage of ideas theologically or ideologically as to why or how to communicate in an ethical or proper manner.

Until now, there has not been a systematic study which provides a basic understanding of mediated faith. While the research available is quite substantial, it is at the same time quite limited, since the majority deals for the most part with religious television programs produced by Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals within the USA. For this reason it has been very difficult to understand the overall dimensions and dynamics of religious media communication on a global level, simply because of the many negative, cultural, or contextual connotations characteristic of this geographically limited sample. If we use an old Finnish phrase, "It has been difficult to perceive the forest, because we have been too keen on observing the individual trees."

In everyday life, we don't often see the power or the quantity of religious media communication. This is because it is often taking place on a micro or "small media" level of communication. Within these grass roots types of communities, media is only one of many activities performed by religious institutions and it can be and often is a kind of built-in activity. But when we take another perspective, one more global or ecumenical in nature, we realize that religious media is a very vital and multi-faceted field of communications with tremendous plurality in form, content and goals. This kind of international and ecumenical perspective is indeed legitimized since Christianity has a universal message, which in and of itself must be communicated globally. By making this kind of analysis we can reveal something from deep within the true essence of Christianity as communicative ideology, dynamism and praxis. We can thus see how Christianity manifests itself in various media from various locations.

Religious media is among the growing fields of modern media, for example, in the USA the use of the Internet for religious purposes was known to be more common than e-banking.<sup>1</sup> Virtually every church, denomination and/or religious community has its own media for both internal and external communication. Within the USA, for example, there are approximately 1700 Christian radio and tv-stations<sup>2</sup>, and the Christian radio format is the third common of all formats (Campbell et al 2000, 123). For the mainstream public, religious media in the USA is mainly known because of the so called televangelists who have developed a rather successful format of electronic religion.

Every nation has a system of religious media communication unique in the context of that particular region. There is in fact every reason to believe that the significance of religious media will increase in the future. Given the so-called "secularization paradigm," which to some extent predicts that the participation or activities of individuals within religious institutions diminishes, religious organizations find it attractive to take their message to the public, rather than depending solely on people actually showing up at places of religious activity. While media is a sacred place of post-modern worship, religious institutions have willingly, yet fearfully, offered the opportunity to become virtually religious. Religion and religious experience is increasingly becoming a mediated experience through communication technology.

### 1.1.2 Theistic Tenets and Science

Religious Media Theory is a theistic project in that it emphasises the internal, transcendental, and revelational dynamics and aspects as a motivator of communication.<sup>3</sup> This revelation is explicated in theological terms, which discipline of theology presupposes the existence of God and relevant religious symbolic language through which we can discuss its transcendental entity and immanent presence (incarnation). Theistic tenets also assume implicit cohesion and teleology throughout history, which is directed by God. The individual is both self-conscious and freely active, but also has an individual responsibility. According to theism,

"The temporal course of events is not regarded as random sequence. It is believed to be plotted along a single line stretching from a definite beginning (creation) through an identifiable middle (incarnation) to an expected end (kingdom or redemption). Viewed in such ordered terms, history forms a purposeful process whose meaning can be coherently represented." (Taylor 1984, 7.)

The relationship between scientific and theological understanding can be seen in several ways. Some scholars believe science and theology are independent of one another and thus avoid the conflict between science and religion.

"Others think that science and theology can be integrated into one combined vision of the world. More modest is the claim there can be fruitful dialogue and consonance between science and theology. For or many decades the historiography of science and religion was dominated by the 'conflict thesis'", which asserted conflict between science and religion. (Byrne 1995, 434.)

For example, the quest between Darwinian evolution and creationism were seen as a symptom of it. However,

“the conflict thesis reveals itself, under close examination, to be an ideologically motivated myth which was read back, by late nineteenth-century rationalists and materialists into the history of science. Underlying the conflict thesis is the implausible picture of science and religion as monolithic systems of thought, which may then be thought of as in conflict, in harmony and so on.” (Byrne 1995, 434.)

According to the “integration view” (in contrast to the conflict view), scientific cosmology and religion can be integrated, because God provides the ultimate explanation and meaning for human perceptions. Take the characteristics of the world for example. The integration view provides a way to combine communication studies and theology, even though believing the integration view means that one cannot provide causal relationships between science and theology by referring to something as “God’s will” or “God’s guidance” or as originated by God. One must allow a dialogue, a close relationship, yet also a tension and modest differentiation of relevance.

“This could be part of an approach which recognizes the overall force of the notion of the unity of reason as it operates in science and theology, but allows a looser, family-resemblance interpretation of that unity. There is consonance and some overlap in scientific reason and theological reason but also difference of and irreducible kind.” (Byrne 1995, 440, 449.)

An important demarcation line between science and theology, and the possible integration or conflict stand between the two, is the question whether

“talk about the divine or God is meaningful as such; that is, with the question of atheism also among academic theology” (Jennings 1995, 895, 897).

In the context of this research, theism simply means recognizing the relevance of theological concepts as originator and motivator of religious communication, as well as the possibility of reference to transcendental meanings through immanent symbols. Even though one does not accept the integration view of theological and scientific language, one can still accept using religious discourse and language. As Wynn (1995, 420) puts it:

“(religious) language serves to express a person’s intentions (not just any intention will do: the intention should relate to some general policy of conduct). Second, the language of religious stories serves as a stimulus to moral action: by entertaining (not necessarily asserting) such stories, the believer is inspired to persevere in the moral life.”

In recent religion philosophical discussion, there are also those who support the classical concept of God (Wynn 1995, 430). Mark Wynn (1995, 416) describes the relevance of theistic notion compared to that of a positivist:

“In the tradition of natural theology, many philosophers have argued that the character of the empirical world overall affords good evidence for the belief that God exists. If any of these arguments should prove to work, we would be able to verify the claims of theism not merely in principle but with reference to known empirical facts, so meeting the condition of cognitively significant discourse imposed by the positivists. Any such argument will take the form of first, identifying certain facts

and second, arguing that these facts are best understood in theistic terms. So any dispute regarding such an argument may accordingly relate to the former or the latter approach: the sceptic may doubt whether the supposed fact really is a fact, or may allow the fact but question the theist's interpretation of its significance. The positivist complaint against the theist is in effect that disputes between theist and atheist do not (at least do not any longer) turn upon disagreements of the first kind. Both sides agree upon the 'facts', in the sense of agreeing that the world is comprised of this and not that range of empirical phenomena. If that is so, the positivists urge, then surely the claim that there is (or is not) a God is not anchored in the nature of empirical reality, and is therefore meaningless."

From a philosophy of science viewpoint, my commitments in this study are idealist, which means that I believe there is a primacy of principles and ideas which determine the materialist sphere. As a conclusion one can state that the theological approach can be seen as one version of an idealist perspective, thus a legitimate one.

### **1.1.3 Relevance of the Perspective and scope at Hand in this Study**

Religious Media Theory is a multi-faceted proposition, and it has connections to various theoretical, methodological and research traditions. As McQuail states, (Preface, 1994) there cannot be a solid definition of what we mean by concept "media theory", since the field is in constant change. In Chapter 1.4 there is a description of how this study links to other research, theory, and various other approaches.

The existing research data and theory available on religion and the media is certainly a vital field of study. Yet until now a proper "road map," showing the connections of the various orientations to the entire phenomenon, has been lacking. The scope and the focus of this study is to present a kind of meta-perspective, one which embraces the various approaches. In a sense, this is a study on the various study approaches to religion and the media. From this meta-theoretical perspective, we approach the subject utilizing the following three aspects:

- 1) functional sociological theory,
- 2) theological normative origin of communications ideology and dynamics,
- 3) and real-world national and systemic determinants of the actual configuration of religious media (media system approach).

It is the intention of this study to perhaps open a new door in our understanding of how sociological, cultural, theological, spiritual and communitarian dynamics work together in determining and shaping religious media communication as we know it today. While religious mass media communication is an inspiring field of study, and to a great extent unexplored from a theoretical and universal perspective, my scope is to present a kind of abstract and internationally relevant framework of considering "religion as a media theory".

There has been also previous work with this orientation, but my intention is to make this theoretical orientation more explicit using the concept of "religious media theory". Also the scope and comparative settings are the largest when compared to previous attempts. For previous efforts of those attempting to describe or model religious media communication see Chapter 1.6.7.

There is a wide range of research available on religious communication from various perspectives (see Chapters 1.6 - 1.7), but yet a more synthetical and comparative approach has been lacking. There is no proper sociological or theological contextualization on what constitutes religious media activities. Previous research has been mostly limited to certain well-defined traditions and theoretical strands. There is every reason to believe that mediated religious activities will grow by number and importance. This creates a great need to understand the traditional institutional perspectives of religious communication, which still serve as the *prima causa*, primary reason, for religious communication. For example, from a pure culturalist perspective we cannot properly understand the real-life determinants of religious media.

Even though previous research is of high quality, it has not been able to properly indicate how the theology and the tradition of the various Christian communities actually influence and determine religious communication. Also there remains a lack of clear understanding of exactly how, or to what extent, religious communication is influenced through the national media system or as a result of legislation. Religious media has been treated as an anomaly, which does not properly fit into mainstream media nor media theory. Not only that, but it has also been seen as suspect from the "pure religion" side. What remains is an instrumental perspective on religious media: as a source of propaganda from mainstream media, and as a vehicle of promotions from religious communicators. None of these approaches have been able to reveal the unique characteristics and increased significance of mediation (and medialization) in the sphere of religion. This study builds bridges in various directions, enabling connections which have been absent. It also sets up the possibility of a very holistic and systematic understanding on mediated faith: its determinants and mechanisms.

My goal is basically to study the communicative dynamics of Christian traditions in such a way as to ascertain which dynamics might have led to their use of mass media for communicative purposes. This study also examines the basic dimensions affecting religious media communication whether they be internal, basically depending on the tradition and community itself, or external, coming from the surrounding media system, culture and society in general. Here we can apply some perspective adopted from the study of religion (as presented in Lott 1988, 158-161).

The methodology and points of interest in Lott's study of religion can be described (in a very generalized way) as polarization between "hard" and "soft" methodologies. A researcher can be interested in "the official" or external manifestations of religion, such as scriptures, doctrines, creeds, and formulations. This implies a "positivistic" attitude on the issue, and it takes the perspective of the official "cognoscenti", of the elite, to the front, and is often information about the *desired* state of affairs, not about present grass roots reality.

Another option, in this map of loosely defined polarities between hard and soft methodology and points of interest, is the "soft" end of the continuum. Here a researcher is more interested in inner feelings and the dynamics of the given tradition, the mental and emotional states, as well as social structuring, cultural forms, and mental processes - the unseen forces that affect outer behaviour. The researcher must also decide how much weight to give to the outer factors of tra-

dition (history, culture, society etc.) and how much weight to assign the internal factors (both cognitive and spiritual substance). There are again polarities between “anti-religious reductionism” (to reduce religion only to a function of external factors, largely a Durkheimian sociologist view, see for example Durkheim 1980; Wilkens et al. 2000, 319-320) versus relying on the (transcendental) self-revelation and self-definition of the tradition. Even though I don’t go far into the philosophy of science, I want to clarify definitions and set foundations on how to treat the various components of the phenomenon.

*First*, as religion studies suggest (Lott 1988, 183) we should understand the intentions of the tradition and the internal meanings, which traditions give to what they do and believe. As applied in the context of media communication, why do particular communities perform mediated communication? And what is the internal reasoning or logic that leads to the use of media? On the other hand, what external factors may have restricted, enabled, or shaped religious media communication to be what it is today?

*Secondly*, there is also the possibility of comparison between the various traditions (Lott 1988, 190). Through comparison we cannot only identify the universal characteristics of religious communication, but we can also extrapolate particular aspects and various cultural, national, or traditional factors, which might affect the use of religious media communication. When performing comparison, an important epistemological notion can function as a glue when comparing various traditions in particular cases. Namely, it is crucial to separate the immanent and the transcendent:

“...faith differs in form, but not in kind... God gives us faith, our century our belief” (Smith in Lott 1988, 193).

In other words, a particular culture determines the beliefs we hold about the transcendence. This possibility of universality, which also transcends the limitations of time (history) and space (location, culture), is an important link to establishing the universality of Religious Media Theory.

It means that it is possible to distinguish between the form and the content of the belief.<sup>4</sup> Because religious institutions and traditions are treated as *sui generis*, they represent a starting point of analysis (as without religious institutions there would be no religious media communication) whose perspective also dominates when performing research as well as reporting the corresponding results. The goal, to a large extent, is to reflect the perspective of the communities on the issue. This means the themes and perspectives, which conventionally dominate research, such as questions about ideology, hegemony and power, should be treated as secondary issues. Religion is not seen here as an agent of the dominant ideology or hegemony (for example Lull 1995, 33) nor as a Durkheimian functional glue of the society (Durkheim 1980). In this sense the analysis moves on a societal micro-level, where the perspective of a given institution is dominant. The basic horizon is to understand mediated communication by Christian religious institutions as a response strategy to the challenge of the modern era (both modern and post-modern) and secular cosmology (which has hegemonic position in the mainstream society and culture).

At the core of this study is the religious institution. Why? Because if we take a systemic perspective on media, and religious media in particular, religious institutions inevitably rise to the top. When talking about religious institutions, three points or questions must be considered. *First*, for what purposes are religious media texts produced by religious institutions? *Secondly*, is it so that only religious institutions can produce the religious symbols and ensure the continuity of religious symbols and meanings, even as religion transforms itself into a more cultural form? And *third*, religious traditions have a high degree of tendency to form communities, which inevitably means institutionalized and even bureaucratic structures are representing the core of religious communities. Even though the origins of religion require neither community nor institution, the maintenance of religion, does require a community media with particular religious institution at its core.

Given the division of Beyer (Beyer 1994, 225-226) on approaches to religion being systemic or cultural, one can distinguish contemporary media research on religious media from this frame of reference. This particular study provides a systemic approach to religious media.<sup>5</sup>

At this moment in time, the culturalist approach is gathering momentum. An important example is Johanna Sumiala-Seppänen's approach (2001) to the Finnish religious tv-program and identity construction from a culturalist perspective. The current "Media, Religion and Culture" -research paradigm is also an important indication of this tendency (For more on this paradigm, see Chapter 1.7.1). Despite of a huge body of research a basic systemic study on the subject has not been available. My work is intended to be such an effort. Basically my study sees religious media communication as being a major reaction of institutional religion against the pressures of modernization, secularization and globalization.

The thesis should be evaluated on the basis of its results; does it serve as a road map to a religion and media relationship? Does it provide reasonable descriptions and explanations on communications dynamics of various Christian traditions and their actualization in various national cases? Does it provide a believable explanation as to the causes of religious media? Is it able to make sense of the often "conflicting dimensions" of religious media communication? Does it show in a plausible way a connection between theology and the tradition of a community when it comes to its particular communications goals and means? Is it able to construct models that seem to describe and analyze various dimensions of mediated religion? Can it construct a believable link between religious communication and mainstream media theory? Does Religious Media Theory have the ability to predict possible directions that particular religious communities might travel as they strive to communicate? Can Religious Media Theory explain, as much as possible, the various real world configurations of religious communication? When actual forms of religious communication are analyzed, using the Religious Media Theory approach, is it likely that an empirical case can be explained utilizing its concepts (normative or descriptive dimension, the connection with particular religious tradition etc.)?

Religious Media Theory is "a grandiose schema", and there is the danger of being too wide in scope, which would jeopardize the ability to make a proper contribution to any particular research question. Yet the benefit of a grand scheme

is to open up a wide horizon to the phenomenon of mediated religion to such a degree that with further more detailed analysis, and carefully detailed premises, proper conclusions would be forthcoming. This study sets to the front the basic questions and dynamics of mediated religion in such a way, that it is possible to check the direction of one's own research project.

This study does not follow the perspective of any previous research, since the goal is an attempt to build a basic reader on the topic. Again, it does not *link* with previous research, rather it *incorporates* them into itself.

At the same time, there is still something which *does not* belong in the scope of this endeavor. This study does not include audience research, since it requires quite the opposite of an institutional approach. The area of contemporary ritual studies, mostly the perspective of functional religion, remains outside the scope of this study. The media ritualism approach is linked to more operational settings, for example, when presenting a process of mediated religion. In this setting ritualism has an instrumental role and it is not treated as a research perspective as such. This study holds a political rather than a semiotic orientation which would concentrate on the symbolic aspects. Religious media communication, in this study, looks at the politics of expanding and maintaining the community of faith. Various discourses and symbols serve as tools in this basic ultimate attempt.

This study is divided into four main chapters, "1 - Introduction", "2 - The Challenge of Modernization and Secularization", "3 - Internal Rationale and Empirical Cases of Religious Media Communication", and "4 - Religious Media Theory".

Chapter 1, lays out the methodological foundation of the research as well as defines the concepts, the scope, and the perspective for viewing religious media as a topic of research. The goal of this chapter is to provide both the context and the tools needed to understand the research as a whole.

Chapter 2 provides the macro-level contextualization of the socio-historical process of modernization and secularization and the new role of religion. This chapter provides a loose framework of the basic reaction strategies of religion. It is largely based on Niklas Luhmann's model of the functional differentiation of societies.

Chapter 3 presents the empirical core of the project, from which much of the theoretical conclusions and models are drawn or verified. This chapter explores the four most important Christian traditions from four national settings in order to describe the use of media by Christianity. The primary perspective is that of theology.

Chapter 4, titled "Religious Media Theory", is the concluding and most theoretical chapter. It presents various models and theoretical propositions and includes basically the systematized and synthesized results of the research.

#### 1.1.4 Goals of the Study

This study has both the strengths and weaknesses of any typical interdisciplinary project. It can well reflect the structure and logics of a phenomenon itself, yet it cannot give a deep vertical contribution into any particular sub-approach.

For this reason, there might be the danger of it being ignored. However, strategically, this study is placed with the hopes that it fulfils the need for a proper contextualization and modelling. Again, it is more of a basic reader of the field, which should be seen as an attempt to systematize the phenomenon. This study seeks to show even a reader unfamiliar with the field of religion and media a map with which to navigate. Most of the contribution of this study lies within the systematic and comparative analysis between countries and religious traditions. From this unique setting, it is my intention to have generated comprehensive and solid systematics and models of religious media communication. The most important criteria for evaluating this work will be to observe how innovative and/or useful this new approach might be, and how universal its claims might prove to be.

Due to the size of this endeavour, in some places the connection between empirical primary data and the theoretical conclusions and/or models may appear somewhat thin or weak. However, keep in mind it is necessary to use an exceptionally high degree of abstraction in order to make or keep various national and institutional cases comparable. There also has been limited time in which to verify the induction processes to use empirical data to generate models. These models, basically present in the final Chapter 4, are also based on theoretical knowledge of the subject and a synthesis within the various levels of mainstream publicity and relationship of religion to it (see for example Chapter 4.4 "The Model: the Web of Religious Media Communication"). This model is one of the keys to the results of this study: it brings the ability to include all kinds of religious media communication efforts from various levels. This model has been born as a direct result of the demanding synthesis necessary to carry out this particular research process. It is a heuristic synthesis, which corresponds to our empirical understanding of the media system.

Briefly, the goal of the study is not only to provide insight for the logics of religious institutions when they mediate their message, but also to provide the external framework, which conditions the process of mediated faith.<sup>6</sup> The study should also establish a universal horizon and systematics incorporating both internal and external factors that determine mediated religion. Following is a list of the goals of this study:

- To systematize the topic from a global and ecumenical perspective.
- To consider various types of explanations for the vitality and communicative dynamics of religion: the sociological viewpoint (basically linked with globalization, modernization and secularization), culturalist viewpoint (mainly what kind of production and reception mechanism is there for mediated religion) and the theological viewpoint (the goals of communication, the role and content of revelation and its relationship with the tradition, also the internal logics of the community).
- To present general, social, legislative, cultural and media system determinants<sup>7</sup> of religious media communication (the system of religious media communication to be verified in various national contexts).
- To reveal the predominant communication ideology of a particular tradition (ideology has connections to both theology and tradition and to praxis

- of communication).
- To normalize relationships between mainstream-media and religious communication by showing that religion is not “only” propaganda or fundraising, but genuine, significant, and a vital sphere of communication.
  - To systematize and model the production process of religious media.
  - To generate a systematic Religious Media Theory as a basic model on the subject.
  - To show the differences and similarities between various traditions, and systems of religious media communication in different national contexts using the comparative method.
  - To increase the self-understanding and the reflection of religious communicators as well as the awareness of media professionals, communications scholars and theologians concerning religious media communication.
  - To show the significance and the role of religious media communication within the context of a wider societal and ideological framework.
  - To help religious communicators with various traditions to better understand and respect the unique communication ideologies of each community.
  - To systematize the study from a multi-scientific perspective by following the logics of the phenomenon itself. In so doing, the outcome should set the stage for a fuller understanding of global religious communication from a sociological, cultural, theological, and media perspective.
  - To show that religious communication is a legitimate, professional sphere of communication to be considered along the same lines as, for example, journalism, or one of many other public service ideologies.

In the end, this study attempts to come closer to real-world communications practices (mainstream media practices) and related needs. It does this by presenting a set of dimensions on how to evaluate the overall quality of religious communication. This could build a definitive bridge for utilizing the systematical and theoretical applications of this study from a realistic operational perspective, in that it could enable these concepts to be incorporated into real life practices. Those who are so inclined should find the precepts of this study of the relationship between mainstream media theory and this new-found Religious Media Theory to be challenging.

There is all reason to believe that religious experience and belief will in the future become more and more of a mediated phenomenon. The history of both religion and the media shows the inseparable connection each has with one another. Religion has always been very eager to utilize innovations of communications technology to spread its message. New media, in and of themselves, also have very important and crucial implications for world-view understanding and the actualization of religious faith. There is great agreement among scholars that new innovations of communications media will challenge us with new visions of religion and faith. In light of these realities, it becomes important to understand the contextualization of this effort. It remains to be seen how religious institutions have, and will react to the seemingly unavoidable developments the future holds in the world of media, and specifically, Religious Media Communication.

## 1.2 Definitions

### 1.2.1 Defining Religion

What do we understand of the concept of religion, particularly from the context of this study? First, we should look at some more general definitions of religion in order to draw a more operational definition usable in this context.

There is no universal agreement on the concept of religion. But there is universal agreement among scholars that religion is a universal phenomenon, simply because there is religion found in every culture (Honko 1971, 16; Honko et al 1975, 49; Pentikäinen 1986, 13). Man is thus defined as *homo religiosus*, religious man (for example Lott 1988, 40). The problem in defining religion is that there are so many *different* religions in the world that it is difficult (or even impossible) to find a common ground for a *substantial* definition (see for example Spiro 1986, 56-60; Sihvo 1982, 28-29).

“Neither there is agreement on what counts as religion: how different aspects of religiosity (membership affiliation, beliefs, ritual and non-ritual practices, experiences, doctrinal knowledge, and their behavioural and ethical effects) should be measured, ranked and compared”. (Casanova 1994, 26.)

One perspective, the so called *functional* definition of religion, asserts that

“every system of belief, the purpose of which is to provide the ultimate meaning of life, must be considered as religious.” (for example Greeley 1982, 9-10; Spiro 1986, 55; Sihvo 1982, 28-29; Geertz 1986; Lott 1988, 156-157).

Thus, if any phenomena (any ideology, hobby etc.) plays a role of ultimate value and is sacred in one’s life, it becomes a (de facto) religion. Hope is universal and a deeply human dimension, which must be renewed at times and for that (functional) religion is needed (Greeley 1986, 12, 15). The concept of a functional religion is a somewhat useful concept, because it provides a broad framework for understanding the demand for religion or for religious-like meanings, as well as for a supply of religion (particular substantial religions and religious traditions). But the limitation of the concept of a functional religion is that it is very difficult, or even impossible to define, since phenomena are considered as religious, and in that way virtually everything can fulfil a “religious function”.<sup>8</sup>

I have chosen a substantial and institutional definition of religion and religiosity. I speak here of religion as being explicitly a Christian institution (which can vary from small cell-group to global Catholic church). The concept of institution refers to organization of authority, leadership, decision-making and demarcation. Institution does not need to be officially established, but it usually is. The amount or the dimensions of religiosity are mainly understood from the perspective of commitment. The more committed a person is, the more active and the more extensive the participation in activities provided by the institution. Those who are more committed become the “actual community” by participating in the activities of the particular institution. Those who are less committed tend to belong to the “virtual community” which surrounds every religious institution and

is created and maintained by media of communications. The perspective of this research is thus dedicated to Christianity, because it is more relevant in the context of western liberal democracies and global Western culture. Within the context of a major societal and political system (liberal democracy), which utilizes a modern and multi-faceted media technology, Christianity, as one of the main elements of the global Western culture, overlaps in a significant way. Western assumptions about society, culture, media and religion tend to penetrate other cultures as well. This happens at its best through globalization and at its worst through cultural imperialism. And that is why, for other cultures and faiths, it is also fruitful to know something about western religious media, because it is available through global media to most parts of the world.

One could also consider the relationship between Islam and media as an object of analysis in a similar manner. But due to the already wide scope of this study, it is not possible to include other religions. However, there will be references to Islam and Judaism when necessary. The main points of interest, in the case of Islam, would be the cultural and societal differences inherent within the Islamic states. This is a very unique environment for media, as compared to the secular West.<sup>9</sup> The case of Orthodox Judaism represents a different challenge altogether since the Orthodox Jewish communities in Israel have their own newspapers and radio stations, and as a result they separate themselves totally from the mainstream media. As far as religious news organizations, many have an in-house rabbi to consult on the orthodoxy of communication in the media. (Cohen 1999).

Even though the focus of this study is on institutional Christianity, it may hold some relevance for other faiths, especially in terms of the various dimensions of religious tradition (details of which will follow), and to what extent these dimensions are present in mediated religion.

### 1.2.2 Dimensions of a Religious Tradition

One solution to the problem of defining religion is provided by Eric J. Lott (1988, 15-37). While not meant to provide a formal definition, Lott does consider a number of basic and typical dimensions common to all religious tradition(s), even though emphasized in a number of ways by the various traditions. His classification (that of religious studies, partly adopted from Ninian Smart) is important for this research, because these dimensions have direct implications for mediated religion as they are crucial and inseparable components of it. Lott lists and describes the dimensions of religious tradition as follows:

1) *The ritual dimension* - religious rituals are

“repeated cultic acts by which the tradition is transmitted and continually re-established, and by which that tradition’s adherents participate in its life”.

Different types of ritual are for example sacrifice, initiation, reciting sacred words, observing sacred times, celebrating sacred festivals, congregating at sacred places, bearing sacred marks etc. The meanings of different rituals must be studied in the context of the purpose and goals of the tradition and the ritual in question.

- 2) *The mythic dimension* is normally found closely interrelated with ritual, and it often provides the meaning for religious action "whether in a formal ritual context or in broader life-context". It therefore overlaps to some extent with the doctrinal dimension. Myths are often stories about religious heroes, demons, cultic figures etc., and function of them is to structure and reinforce world-view of both religion and individual.
- 3) *The doctrinal dimension* will be found in every tradition even if in minimally articulated form. Doctrine carries the cognitive side of the tradition and includes norms (to perform certain rituals, for example) and incentives to perform it. It thus describes the effects of the ritual. Doctrine also responds and mediates between the tradition and its changing environment. This assimilation means necessarily some degree of re-interpretation. In the context of Christianity this assimilation or contextualization part deals primarily with questions of modernization and conservative and liberal theologies as well as using modern media.
- 4) *The social dimension* - some form of institutionalized community life is typical for religious traditions. There are two polarities in interpreting the role of community in religion. On the other extreme one may consider religion solely as individualistic matter without need to any institution and thus community. Or one can see religion totally "in terms of fulfilling of basically social needs". Neither polarity is sufficient - religion must not to be reduced only to its social and communal aspect neither to individual beliefs.  
 Religious community has double-function and direction: as inner "community as a sacred society" and community's interaction with the wider human community. Partly people or laity are mediators between the sacred world and the profane world. The inner community is integrated with its common religious life of ritual action, mythic imagery, doctrinally expressed faith, ethical commitment to share common life-perceptions and life-patterns. There is also ways of internal organization within the community, which establishes institution at the core of the community. Some individuals have more influence and power within the internal structure of the community, they belong to the elite of it.
- 5) *The ethical dimension* - it has crucial reference to the traditions transcendent dimensions or at least to its religious doctrines. Ethics must not be reduced only to cognitive rules. Ethical rules may be interpreted as values in more modernist terms. Religious values and ethics must not and cannot be reduced to the adaptation of the material environment nor to regulation "of a religious community in order that its life together function smoothly and amicably", but ethical life is patterned according to a peculiar vision of the universe.
- 6) *The experiential dimension*. It can vary according to "authenticity", which can be defined as a variable of different norms: the degree of personal faith, commitment, intensity of devotion, understanding, etc. Usually it is said among all religions that "true religious experience cannot be measured by outward terms", which means that often the experience of the inner spiritual life is emphasized. But there are often legendary style stories about

those who have made outstanding progress towards the perceived goal of life. This implies anyway that there are differences between the commitment, knowledge etc. of an individual in relation to the *Sacred Focus* of the tradition.

- 7) *These dimensions are deeply interconnected* and interdependent upon other parts of the tradition as a whole. When analyzing any dimension of part of the tradition, it must be kept in mind this deep holistic perspective.
- 8) *Each six dimensions function as a dynamic process*, which means that besides of continuity there is also continual change, innovation and “mutations”. The tradition must be re-interpreted constantly.
- 9) *The symbolist character of religion*. In every tradition there are sacred symbols, even in the times of violent iconoclasm or puritanism. Icons, archetypal images, symbolic gestures, dramatic actions, imaginative narrative etc. are there. There are also some key-symbols: one core-symbol of a cluster of inter-related symbols. So, we can say that religion is culturally structured symbol-system.

The precise role of any given symbol in communicating meaning to participants in a religion is complex. No single or simple meaning can be assumed of any one symbol, and from time to time some symbols seem to lose their signifying potency. Some central symbols may also need to be re-interpreted. Immanent religious symbols signify radically to transcendental (Beyer 1994). Re-interpretation of religious symbols can also be radical, which means that religious meanings are emptied from explicitly religious symbols (such as sin, sanctify, bless), and are used in purely secular context, for example in political rhetorics. This “emptying” of religious meanings has been seen as a sign of secularization (for example Schement et al. 1997, 267). Also consumerism exploits very much religious symbols and myths: products are “salvific, redemptive, purifying etc.” (Slinger 1993, 201-204; Sölle 1993, 223-234; Murdock 1997, 98-99). But interpretation of symbols and religious meanings can also go in another direction. Secular symbols can be given religious meanings, which ability is one of the signs of vitality of religious traditions. Protestant Evangelicals are, for example, masters in re-sacralizing secular symbols.

- 10) *The aspect of cultural form of religious life* - the aesthetic in various forms: art, poetry, music, gesture, drama, dance, etc. Some puritanian traditions reject aesthetics, because it is seen as frivolous. There are also theological reasons not to use imagery: it contains the risk of blasphemy “by trying to compare the Incomparable to some finite creature”. Religious aesthetics has a value in itself, and it can be taken as “an expression of sheer creativity, or of joy in the beautiful”, they do not necessarily carry any other meaning (or message) than which is present in the form itself. But also some religious aesthetics have very detailed religious meanings in them: they are not only emotionally and aesthetically expressive, but they “also point to the Lord”.
- 11) *The central role of some sacred object or sacred Focus*. The participant of the tradition seeks to be part of this sacred Focus. Some are closer to that end than others, which means that there is room in every religion for some kind of religious elite, either charismatic or other kind of by nature. Religious tradi-

tions typically assume that some participants are more authentically related to the sacred Focus of the tradition's life than are others. If we put it in trivial words: they are closer to God and holier than others.

Religion is essentially and dominantly about immanence/transcendence - polarities and relationship. Religion is a way to communicate between humans (and immanent) and the transcendent. Transcendent gives a meaningful context to the immanent.

"The central religious paradox lies in the fact that the transcendent can only be communicated in immanent terms and this by definition: communication on the basis of meaning is always immanent, even when the subject of communication is the transcendent. Religion, therefore, operates with sacred symbols, ones which always point radically beyond themselves. It deals simultaneously with the immanent and the transcendent." (Beyer 1994, 5-6.)

Every religion necessarily needs to be

"incarnated in culture and clothing itself in social institutions and traditions, if it is to exert a permanent influence on human life and behaviour" (Dawson 1948, 54).

There is a tension between the external functional deterministic and the internal, revelation-centered and autonomous understanding of religion. The first leads to the universal and the latter to the particular definitions of religion. In the first concept the focus is on the common and shared aspects of different religions. In the latter the core of theology and tradition of the particular faith community are emphasized. For example, Christianity sees itself often as a radically unique religion compared to anything else (for example Hendrik Kreamer in Ahonen 1992, 27).

Within Christianity, for example, a long history of the particular tradition is often presented as a cosmological and epistemological premise on the superiority of the particular tradition in the nation. This means that tradition would be, at best, a force for providing security and perspective to post-modern, rapidly changing currents. At worst, religious tradition isolates religion and it becomes a fruitless and irrelevant mummy, which falls out of touch with modern culture.

The basic characteristic and dimension of religion is to look after and maintain the truth. Caring for truth is best met if it has societal or cultural power and authority over individuals. The unholy alliance with social power and religion is best understood from this perspective.

### 1.2.3 Definition of Christianity

The scope of this research is, as mentioned earlier, to present Christian "universality in particularity", the common communicative dynamics of Christianity as well as its particular variations. The key point is then, how to define Christianity.

I rely on the conventional and traditional definition of Christianity in the sense that there is common agreement on which particular churches, denominations and movements can be put under the title of being Christian, and those which cannot. At the core of such ecumenical definitions are the ecumenical creeds themselves, the Nicene Creed being the most important, because it is widely accepted by the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and most of the Reformed

churches (MEE 97).

Particularly the previous Apostle's creed has become a statement of faith, which summarizes the main points of the Christian belief common to all Christians. The term "creed" is never applied to statements of faith associated with specific denominations. The latter is often referred to as the "confession" of a particular denomination. "A 'creed' has come to be recognized as a concise format. And it is a universally accepted and authorized statement of the main points of Christian faith", which every Christian is bound to accept. (McGrath 1999, 16-17.) Ecumenical creeds thus constitute the objective core of Christianity and the basis of "Root-Christianity". An explanation on the concept "Root-Christianity" follows:

First of all, the word "Root" is adapted from the famous concept of "Root Paradigm", which is applied to illustrate the dominating narrative and mythology in a particular cultural context. Biernatzki (1993, 125-136) applies the Root Paradigm -analysis (developed by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner) in the context of media studies. The basic idea is that in every culture there are several Root Paradigms, and the success of certain movements or media contents can be explained by the fact that they appeal to some of the Root Paradigms present in a particular cultural context (129). A dominant religion, such as Christianity, creates a strong Root Paradigm to culture, which was established through the cognitive and ritual components of several centuries (135). Simultaneously, culture reinforces Root Paradigm continuously and accommodates it in the circumstances of a new era.

From the context of "Root-Christianity" this idea is applied in the sense that there are common cognitive, ritual and mythic elements of Christianity which give a basic motivation to all Christian denominations. Atonement, salvation, sin etc. Theological concepts are common to all denominations, and form the "great story of all Christianity". Root-Christianity refers to the Christian traditional, biblical, doctrinal and ritual historical stream of ideology, which has its unique dynamics, as well as reference to faith. Root-Christianity represents all the potential variations of Christianity, which now are empirically seen in the various denominations and institutions. A concept of Root-Christianity is needed to explain the institutional, theological and practical variations which exist today. A concept of "Root-Christianity" is needed to express the core beliefs, which form the common foundation of the Christian religion.

It is necessary, from a comparative approach, to assume that there is a common cosmological core such as this found in all Christian traditions. Otherwise it would not be possible to talk about "Christian communications dynamics", but only the narrower denominational concepts could be used instead.<sup>10</sup> The most important points deal with the universality and the expansion dynamics of Christianity. The expansion and the maintaining are compatible concepts within the cosmological nature of media (which can be used for both purposes) as well as the theoretical dimensions which systematize the religious communications dynamics and the empirical outcomes of this dynamism.

One can garner support for such a concept as Root-Christianity from within the modern ecumenical movement, which seeks "unity in diversity" among Christian denominations. Such a unity could be required and necessary for communi-

cative reasons:

“Unity of Christians is to be sought for the sake of mission, so that a united church may be the ‘visible sacrament’ of the ‘saving unity’ to which God calls the whole human race.” Particularly through bilateral discussions between denominations “a notable degree of convergence is evident”. This would support the argument about the common objective ground (Root-Christianity) among Christian traditions. (BEMCT 1999, 140-144.)

This research is an ecumenical effort, and I use traditional Christian concepts in ways so as not to problematize them from the perspective of different traditions. I rather take them for granted as a common basis for faith, motivation and action (on unity of different variations of Christianity see for example Houlden 1995, 164-165). But what is the relationship between common Root-Christianity and the particular denominations?

Here we come again to the relationship between the universal and the particular, and the relationship between the comparative versus the ethnographic approach. I assume that all the various Christian traditions (particularly those present in the context of this research) use and require communications for various functions. These functions are at both the sociological and the theological levels (ecumenically speaking) and they are similar from tradition to tradition. But various traditions may have significant differences on a more ideological or practical level, such as on how they internally justify communications, and what they perceive to be the proper form and proper content of communication. These differences are significant, and can be traced back to differences in history, context, theology and tradition. This means that the very basic ideas of Root-Christianity, such as communicating the universal and salvific gospel of Jesus Christ to all, or the idea of Christian community, union, and salvation, for example, have different interpretations in different contexts. So, to understand how these universal ideas are mediated in particular traditions and contexts, we must later look at the particularities of the traditions and the communities more carefully (see Chapter 3). Otherwise we cannot understand the enormous variety of communicative actions present in Christianity, specifically the “universality in particularity”.

#### 1.2.4 The Definition of Religious Media Communication

Dance and Larson (1976, 171-192) have found 126 definitions of communication used in different contexts. (Cited from Chesebro et al, 1996, 177.) This means communication is a rather diversified and unstable field of research. I also present my own *definition of religious media communication* relevant to the goals, scope and content of this study.

I define religious media communication from an institutional perspective (for general levels or different possibilities of defining religious media, see Linderman 1996, 81-82). In doing so, it is my intention to avoid demarcation debates about whether a particular media text is religious or not, which will be the result if the definition is related to media texts. This would, in addition, also mean the use of content analysis for media texts.

There is also the possibility of a functional definition, which is linked mostly with the meaning making process of the audience side. This means ritual use of media and uses and gratifications of media texts. However, these previous approaches and definitions can say nothing on the dynamics of the agents, which almost solely produce the explicit religious media texts - the religious institutions. According to my definition,

Religious media communication is communication performed by an institution (which can be a church, a revival movement, a publisher, or any other religiously inspired agent, including individual persons) in order to promote or reflect beliefs, teachings, values or the goals of a particular Christian tradition, institution, community or any Christian identity in general.

Crucial here is the goal to *promote or reflect*. This implies a positive religious contribution to the environment. Another important aspect is the involvement of the *religiously inspired agent*. According to this definition, a newspaper article on the religious community is *not* religious communication, but rather it is communication (journalism) *about* religion. To clarify - when a religious institution sends a press release to media – the constructing and sending of the media release is *religious communication* (because it is done by a religious institution and the goal is to promote or reflect the religious convictions or actions of that institution). But when a newspaper publishes news, which is based on this press release, the message is then transformed into *news about religion*.

Even this “journalism-about-religion” type of media content often has grass roots connections to institutional religion. Namely journalists or producers of this “journalism-about-religion” type of media content have connections to religious institutions and/or a personal religious conviction. This personal belief can be a factor of professionalism: one has knowledge about religious life and its problematics. It becomes analytical in the case of a sports reporter who might be a former sportsman or sportswoman: a writer has a lot of knowledge and connections in that field (see on individuals on religious media theory, Chapter 3.2.2. In such a case where an explicitly religious institution communicates secular messages, the crux is whether its goal is derived from religious conviction, doctrine or theology. Public service religious programs are religious communication in a sense that they *reflect* religious faith traditions, but are not necessarily created to promote them.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, there are various agents of communication. These various operators can be divided into nine categories. They are

- 1) churches,
- 2) denominations,
- 3) international and/or denominational media organizations,
- 4) revival movements or communities,
- 5) independent religious organizations, including para-church organizations, media missions organizations and media ministries,
- 6) dioceses,
- 7) congregations,
- 8) companies linked with an institution or religious tradition,
- 9) individuals (For a closer description of these agents, see Chapter 3.2.2).

This institutional definition, with its extensions at various levels, leads to a rather large understanding of religious media communication, which reflects the huge diversity and dynamics included in institutional religious communication. This diversity is also treated from a macro-level perspective, which is basically derived from the internal motivations and goals of the communicators themselves. These goals can be reduced to quite clear and yet not too diversified religious communications dynamics. I argue that this entire communications praxis is generated by a holistic body of communications dynamics, which can be called Religious Media Theory.

The institutional definition is also very relevant, because a law-like empirical fact, taken from the context of broadcast media, is that explicitly religious programs are always produced by a religious institution, or a coalition of them. If the religious programs are not directly produced by religious institutions, but for example by a public service broadcasting corporation, this law-like connection with institution remains valid. For example, the BBC World Service has its own unit for religious programs, which is made up of professional communicators and journalists. But even this formally independent arrangement has a connection to religious institutions. BBC has an advisory board for its religious programs, which consists of representatives of the most influential religious traditions, and includes others outside Christianity. This shows that religious programs have a connection to religious institutions, and this finding thus strengthens the empiric and theoretical relevance of the institutional definition.

It appears the institutional and substantial definitions of religious media are connected from the perspective that one can assume that when a religious institution is involved with media production, the content will reflect the media theology of the institution. Thus my *first premise*: in the production of religious media communication, religious institutions are always involved. My *second premise*: religious institution always has its own goals (which can be crystallized to the concept of media theology) when involved with the media. Media theology (Normative Religious Media Theory) reflects the goals of the institution to some extent. Religious media communication is always based on the communications theology of the institutions which is actualized both by means (which media and media forms and genres are used) and content (what kind of meanings are communicated).

The advantage of this approach is that it makes all varieties of religious institution as well as their communicative activities symmetrical for analysis. If one would seek only a particular type of religious communication by form or content, there would be serious difficulties in comparing very different Christian traditions. However, when one assumes institution as the starting point, this symmetrical analysis becomes possible.

### 1.3 Different Aspects of Religious Media Theory

The definition of religious media theory is multi-faceted. This means, that "Religious Media Theory" is at the same time both the starting point of this study and

a result of it. The assumption behind this scope is that it should be possible to systematize the phenomenon of religious media communication as has been accomplished in the field of mainstream media with the various aspects of “media theory” and “ethics of communication”. This means that it is not possible to present one single definition of “Religious Media Theory” in this work, since the entire concept includes both the descriptions of various aspects of religious media theory and/or the emphasis on normative media theory.

I use the concept Religious Media Theory to emphasize the holistic character of religiously motivated communication. Religious values and goals are very closely and powerfully linked to the relationship and the attitude of Christian tradition to the media. The concept Religious Media Theory is a theoretical and ideal typical construction on the common characteristics of Christian traditions as communicators. So, we can say that Religious Media Theory is present everywhere and nowhere. The fragments of this holistic communications dynamic are found where ever religion uses media, but not as a systematized and coherent model. This is the case also when it comes to all normative thought on media in culture and society (McQuail 1994, 122).

Religious Media Theory is a presentation on the contexts (limitations and possibilities) and processes of religious media communication. It is also a presentation on the communication ideologies of the most important Christian traditions. The results of this research are thus multi-layered and multi-faceted, which means it is possible to present the theory as one single body (as for example McQuail states, 1994, 132-133). The name of the entire volume is “Religious Media Theory”, which means that the entire work establishes Religious Media Theory as a whole. However, the work will present the synthesis (presented mainly in Chapter 4) concerning this issue at a particular level of abstraction.

As McQuail says (Preface, 1994), there is a continuing process of rethinking mass communication theory going on. This means it is not possible to present solid and durable definitions and classifications of the body of media theory. The meanings given to the concept “media theory” also vary depending on the opinions and commitments of a particular person. Religious Media Theory emphasizes communications dynamics, which cause the whole range of various religious texts, religious media, and various religious agents to operate in a modern mediascape. Of particular concern are the motives of religious communication, which are actualized on a more concrete level through forms and opportunities of religious media communications, both unique and structural in particular contexts.

Religious Media Theory has both descriptive and normative aspects when observed from both an internal or an external perspective. In the following, I will cover the differences and include the scope of the various dimensions.

Religious Media Theory has three aspects:

- 1) Normative Religious Media Theory
- 2) Descriptive Religious Media Theory
- 3) Media Ritualism and Functional Religion in the Media.

### 1.3.1 Religious Media Theory as Normative

There are two dimensions under the title normative religious media theory: the external and the internal. McQuail defines normative theory as a “broader social philosophy or ideology of a given society” which sets certain expectations and limitations to the media (McQuail 1994, 4).

“Normative media theory still has a rather uncertain and contested position within the field of ‘communication science’, partly because it leads inevitably into questions of ideology, politics, law or ethics...” (McQuail 1994, 122.)

This is really the case when we are talking about religious media. In some cases and issues, religious media communication is no radically different than mainstream communication. This means that this study is not always focusing on presenting radical differences, but rather on how religious institutions perceive media, and whether their perceptions are consistent or inconsistent with mainstream thought.

#### 1.3.1.1 Internal Normative Religious Media Theory

Within the religious community there is a very common and comprehensive body of ethical thought concerning both religious and secular media. But like any other normative thought on media in society and culture (McQuail 1994, 122), religious thought on media has been neither organized nor systematized. It is basically implicit and borders on tacit knowledge, yet it becomes apparent through analysis.

Internal Normative Religious Media Theory expresses the normative and theologically based thinking of institutions on proper or correct ways of using media. Equivalent in nature to other (secular) press theories, these media ideologies can be found in the official statements of these institutions wherein lie the explicit goals and/or limitations expressed in their communication ideology. Ideologies are crystallized as unique and specific ideal-types in the case of each tradition.

Normative expressions of media theory can be found in key documents or even secondary literature which institutions use to define or describe their work or purpose, and they are not usually gathered under any particular sub-title. Normative expressions are such things as communications doctrines of churches, operative communications ideologies or instructions, media and communications theology, or perhaps thought on how media should or should not be used by religion, professional ethics (mostly journalistic), or within the specific obligations of the tradition. These explicit normative notions can also be found through interviews with appropriate communications leaders and personnel within these institutions. Internal normative theories are presented in Chapter 3.

#### 1.3.1.2 External Normative Religious Media Theory

External Normative Religious Media Theory refers to the external enabling and limiting norms set by a given society. Such phenomena include things like legis-

lation on religion, public service legislation or conditions, legislation on the freedom of speech of religion, or other general laws regulating the media, and possible special notions on religious media as well as moral limits and cultural tastes.

Religious media tends to be a positive, conservative and constructive force, especially when it comes to issues of law and order, or when promoting traditional moral values. Religious media would then by default support social and cultural values and policies consistent with its own particular religious tradition. In this way, it can be seen to ally with established social powers. This is the case especially with mainline churches, which have close or well-established relationships with government. This ally relationship between mainline churches and the government carries over into the arena of public service broadcasting. This was the case (earlier) in the USA, and remains valid today in Russia, Italy and Finland. Communication in these situations then is often traditional and conservative in both content and form.

In McQuail's classification (1994, 149), religious media can also promote autonomy and support the identity of the Christian communities that form a minority. Religious media is then seen as an opponent to the established governmental or major religious order, especially when promoting its own particular beliefs on moral issues facing individuals within a given society or in respect to society as a whole. Religious media may perform critique, but a more important function or normative mission should be to produce shared meanings and/or definitions about reality in such a way as to construct the community identity on the basis of reference to the transcendence. Basically, religious media is very compatible with most comprehensive ethical and normative standards of mainstream media (standards listed, for example by McQuail 1994, 125-126; 145-153).

There are no particular (positive) expectations from society in terms of religious media communication. Rather it is a matter of relative freedom and established regulations which enables religious institutions to communicate what they want. The relevant normative external matters concerning religious media communication may be found under such titles as "communication policy", "media law" or "professional ethics" (listed by McQuail 1994, 122).

External pressure on religious media is usually seen when there are conflicts between established ideology and religion within the society, or when there is anti-social behaviour or scandals involving religious communicators. Examples of external norms to religious media communication can be seen in the following:

- In the USA: the recent initiative to restrict the religious content and intensity of religious broadcasting<sup>12</sup>
- In Finland: In the Law on Yleisradio (Finnish Public service broadcasting company) which states that devotional programs must be broadcasted.<sup>13</sup>
- In Russia: limitations on new religious movements to prevent them from trying to influence through media, (see regulations set by the Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation 2001) and the tendency for the government to give national broadcast time to the Russian Orthodox Church.
- In Italy: public service religious programs on RAI channels.

The relationship between religious media and the more general normative media theory as far as theorizing and media ethics (for example matters of freedom and authority, individualism and communalism) is extensively covered in Chapter 4. Some reference is also found in Chapter 3, particularly in each national case.

### **1.3.2 Religious Media Theory as Descriptive**

#### **1.3.2.1 The National System of Religious Media Communication**

This dimension describes the societal, cultural, and media system framework and determinants which either enable or limit religious communications dynamics to be actualized. These are not normative elements, but structural and derived from an empirical study of religious media communication. I describe the actual empirical outlook and combination of the system of religious media communication in the given context. Particular cases have been contextualized to illustrate special characteristics in context. A total systematization is not possible, due to a lack of resources, nor is it necessary in order to get a reliable picture on the phenomenon (For more systematic description of the system of religious media communication, see Chapter 3.4). National cases are presented as empirical samples, which verify the systematic and theoretical models.

#### **1.3.2.2 Religious Media Theory as Systematized Models**

Utilizing inductive analysis of the given empirical material and other theoretical understanding, I offer various models and theoretical constructions on religious media communication (see Chapter 4).

#### **1.3.2.3 Religious Media Theory as Media Ritualism and the Culturalist Perspective**

The third dimension of Religious Media Theory relates to the user (audience) side of religious and other media. This dimension is not in the core of this study, but is needed in order to shed light on the religiously related way of meaning making in the modern media environment. The culturalist perspective, in general, is interested in meaning making and negotiation processes among the audience, as well as the functions of the media in social life and culture (for example McQuail 1994, 4). The culturalist theory explains the significance and process of meaning making and ritualism in mediated religion. This will be a model to explain the demand and cultural significance, as well as a mechanism of community formation and identification. This dimension, which can be called "functional religious media theory", comes close to audience research (see Chapter 1.7.2 on functional religion). This audience perspective is beyond the scope of this study, because it would need a quite heavy methodology and change of perspective, which is not possible in this context.

## 1.4 Position of this Study in the Field of Media Studies

As a systematizing attempt, Religious Media Theory has the great ability to generate synthesis combining various perspectives. This means that fields and research projects, which are not normally connected, can be brought together as components producing a wider picture of the phenomenon. An example of such synthesis is taking results of cultivation analysis as components of a model of religious media communication in order to understand interaction between religious culture and mainstream culture. Religious Media Theory is linked to several research traditions and other branches of science, which connections I will introduce.

*The first* research tradition is the so-called “media ritualism” developed mainly by James Carey (1992). It sees mediated communication as primarily a practice that generates shared values, not as a transmission of information. This view on communication builds a bridge between religion and media as it sees ritualism as being at the core of both media and religion. This is an important theoretical contribution, which is used more as a foundation for this project rather than being methodologically applied.<sup>14</sup>

Carey sees communication primarily as a temporal factor of maintaining community.

“When defined as ritual, communication is linked with such terms as sharing together, participation, joining together, companionship and having common faith. This definition is based on the common root of the concepts community, communion and communication. When communication is defined as ritual, crucial is not spreading the messages over space but maintenance of society in time, not transmission of information but presenting common beliefs.” (Carey in Pietilä 1997, 288; also Carey 1992, 18.)

The ritual model of communication has strong implications for communications policy (ritual model stresses the shared experience instead of transmission of messages) as well as conceptualization and the perception of media (for example, news is mostly important because it has certain patterned and interval form, as well as content changes, yet it is not important). For example, news business (and media in general) can be compared with the worship service, in that both stress “liturgy and ceremony” instead of informational content. While frequent, news ritually reinforces the world as an understandable and meaningful entity. (Pietilä 1997, 289-290.)

*The second* field or approach is to understand inner logic and the norms of religious media communication. The autonomy of religious institution is stressed here as the epistemological basis of this analysis. Theology is here the main discipline of explanation. This perspective explains the goals of the mediated communication of religious institutions of the various Christian traditions. Traditional components are also important elements, but they are understood primarily in terms of theology.<sup>15</sup> Theology is the starting point of religious media communication, and it would not exist without the transcendental revelation, which is expressed and interpreted in theological terms. Theology thus builds a bridge between the transcendental and immanent.

*The third* perspective is related to the overall sociological context in which religious communication takes place and by which it is thus enabled and limited. This is purely a sociological approach. An analysis model of Niklas Luhmann (1995) on separation between the social system and the environment is applied here. This basically functional model of Luhmann is an analysis of a modern, functionally differentiated model of society and the role of religion in it. This model connects religious media communication in a wider context and helps us to see its sociological and historical background. Interesting in Luhmann's model is that it enables both seeing society as a functional system and the autonomy of subsystems in relation to the environment and other sub-systems. This happens through the concept of self-reflection, which means that a sub-system (such as religion) adjusts itself to the environment with its own terms, for example, when using religious media communication, the particular religious institution sees its change as a proper means of adjustment. This adjustment is contingent, which means that input from outside the sub-system does not have a causally determining relation to the sub-system. The sub-system is genuinely autonomous and conditioned at the same time. The Luhmannian view does not assume religion as a functionally originated and determined sub-system. It is rather a descriptive model, which shows the dynamics of society and the functional relationships between its different parts. Luhmannian epistemology is based on *understanding* relationships between the environment and the sub-system in such a way as to not see them as deterministic forces.

Religious Media Theory as a macro-model of religious media communication is based on Luhmannian sociology to a great extent. Luhmann's theory helps to explain religious media communication from the perspective of a sociological modernization process, which generates (sociologically speaking) the core dynamics of religious media communication. My study on Religious Media Theory concentrates heavily on the institutional perspective of religious media communication, but it also points out the structural determinants of religious media communication. I assume the primary causes of religious media communication as being in the agent (which is relatively autonomous), but external social and cultural factors shape the form, amount and (to some measure) the content of mediated faith (about structure - agency -problematics see for example Lull 1995, 168-169).

*The fourth perspective* shows this research has functional elements, particularly from the perspective of religious communities. Sometimes religious media is seen more as problematic or dysfunctional (for example, religious broadcasting in some of its extremist forms in the USA) rather than as serving any positive function in society. Religious media is a marginalized issue in modern Western societies, comparable with other grass roots phenomena and movements. This study also has something in common with PR-studies, but it is methodologically as well as philosophically more established. On the operational level, religious media communication, of course, is an explicitly functional issue. It is functional for the community in all the ways it establishes and enables the community to survive and prosper in the surrounding environment (about functionalist assumptions and orientation in media studies for example Pietilä 1997, 204-213). My assumption about the role of mediated religious communication is functional in

the sense that media communication serves some function from the perspective of community. Namely, if media communication served no function for the community, this would be perceived and it would cease. Therefore, the implications of adopting such a functionalist approach are that I should be able to show how the institutions, which use media, are more successful than those that don't. This being the case, there should be ways of objectively defining effective religious media communication. On the contrary, those who do not utilize media, should have problems or at the very least they should be less successful in those areas, than others who use media for fulfilling those functions. The functionalist claims of Religious Media Theory should not necessarily be empirically verified (which would lead to a totally new research with different scope and setting), yet they can be understood as a fruitful classification to interpret and understand exactly how religious media communication enables the fulfillment of the functional necessities (Pietilä 1997, 213). We can then, in principle, avoid taking this research in a more empirically tested direction, due to the lack of resources and the unique nature and scope of this project.

*Fifth*, the concept of Religious Media Theory has connections to the ideas of John Dewey as far as putting primacy on community and communication as a basic function of the community without which community would not exist (about the significance of Dewey see Pietilä 1997, 126-127). This research is also committed to the McLuhanian (1966) notion of modern media as an "extension of man" by the applied slogan "Media is extension of a community" in the case of religious media. With the analytical polarities (individual and community) one can understand mediated religion from both sender side (community, more precisely, institution) and receiver side (individual, functional religion). Other religious traditions are more community-centered (Catholics), while others are more individualistic (Protestants). The ultimate reason for all religious media is to extend the influence of religious institution; to generate some kind of virtual community.

Religiosity is seen as a basic need in this study, which can be fulfilled implicitly with functional religion or substantially with explicit religion (institutional religious media supply). The functionalist tradition is criticized, because it reduces media supply to "accounts of simplistic, mechanistic, individualistic, mental activity" (Lull 1995, 96). From the perspective of Religious Media Theory, this is not a problem, because individuals are the main locus of influence and the consumers of religious media. Religious media is not (in a general sense) a societal or cultural power, but it represents a relevant supply of religion for individuals.

*Sixth*, this study incorporates structuralist elements in that many crucial aspects of the phenomenon of religious media seem to be structured with dualist polarities along which the actual configuration of the empirical phenomenon is found (about structuralism see for example Crapo 1993, 42-43; on polarities of religious media communication, see Chapter 3.3.5).

Also, in Western theology, for example (as well as in other disciplines too), it is common to present and describe the nature of reality with binary polarities (Taylor 1984, 8-9). In the analysis of religious media communication the structuralist cosmology and method seem to fit exceptionally well. This is why I am com-

mitted to this particular method of using polarities, rather than, for example, the narrative method. In religious media communication, the empirical expression of the phenomenon often lies in various forms between the two opposing polarities. For example, in communication one can put stress on either the internal revelation of the community, or on the outer context or culture (contextualization) towards which the communication is directed. This tension between polarities forms a crucial role in the communications dynamics of Christianity. For example, tension between the “saved” and “unsaved” is a critical motivator of communication where as evangelism is necessary in order to reach the unsaved so that they might become saved. On a more general level, the Evangelical Protestant tradition is often seen as forming yet another pole when comparing other Christian traditions and applying its respective communications views, strategies, or practises.

#### 1.4.1 Ethnographic vs. Comparative Approach

There has been little done in the field of religious media from the comparative perspective. One worth mentioning is the comparative project of Alf Linderman who made a study comparing American and Swedish religious television (Linderman 1993;1996).

Between the polarities of the ethnographic case utilizing -emphasis and comparative generalization -emphasis, my attempt is closer to the comparative approach, but I also try to understand what motivates particular religious communities to use media. Is it mainly a case of meeting the internal goals of a particular religious institution? If so, what are these goals and in what ways are these goals of the community and the media compatible with each other?<sup>16</sup>

A solution for this tension between the comparative versus ethnographic method is that on some general level I will present an ethnographic description of each national case and the religious media communication of each tradition. These ethnographies are not necessarily symmetrical, in that each case is unique and only studied in terms of the source material and the individual characteristics which set them apart from others. For example, the case of the Roman Catholic Church is based more on primary sources, while the interpretation of the normative media theory of mainline Protestants is more based on interpretation and secondary sources. The emphasis is thus leaning towards a comparative approach, and this emphasis also has research political legitimation. Namely, there are already a substantial number of national ethnographies and others concerned with the media communication of each tradition. This means there is a greater need for the comparative rather than an ethnographic project, of which there has been a great lack.

Yet on the other hand there remains something, which builds a cosmological bridge when attempting to legitimize the comparative approach. Namely, religious tradition tends to be universal, at least at the level of cognitive content. This means there are certain universal concepts and points of reference, which we can study in their various particular settings. I have tried to trace both the “ideal culture” and the “real culture” (On the concept of ideal culture - or theory - as goal and real culture of praxis of ideal values, see Crapo 1993, 31) lying within

religious media culture. Theology and official media ideology present the “ideal culture,” while media organizations, media products, media texts and media professionals present “the real culture”. In studying various Christian traditions, there is the possibility of using “emic analysis”, which concentrates on both the internal experience of the community and the culture. Another option is to use “etic analysis”, which “creates a model of a culture by using cross-culturally (universally) valid categories.” (Crapo 1993, 41.) I have chosen to change the emphasis within various chapters to provide a dynamic and multi-perspective picture of the phenomenon of religious media communication. Even so there remains an emphasis on the comparative approach using method and interpretation, simply because such an understanding is lacking in the study of religious media today. The comparative approach is thus a political choice legitimized by the needs of the discipline, as well as the limitations of the resources: the comparative method being much more economical to perform than the alternative of using extensive ethnographic narratives.

This study does not fit precisely in any particular category of philosophy of science, yet does include characteristics from many fields. Rather, this study is closer to phenomenology, which stresses direct observations on the study of a topic. The goal of this method is to both understand and describe the object of this study. The assumption being that concepts reflect reality and perceptions - reality can thus be reached through observation, and the concepts give some level of accuracy. Phenomenology stresses the common experience and ability to identify with all people with each ones situation. (Bernard 1994, 14.)

Assuming the universal ability of empathy means that even in cases that are not compatible or comparable with each other (in strictly ethnographic sense), it is possible to still consider the comparison, because the sufficient cosmological connection between them can be shown through human empathy.

In constructing a common platform in order to understand a wide range of traditions and various cases, a common language is needed. Ecumenism provides such a common platform in this study because it enables us to understand the selected cases of religious media communication from a shared perspective.

Without a theoretical framework, ethnographic epistemology easily remains as an empty description, thereby producing countless particular cases without any clear connection. This leads to atomism rather than a much needed holistic view on the subject.

Thus, anthropological functionalism and ethnography polarize researchers who must formulate their position based on individual cases and the goals of each project. In this study, I am stressing the anthropological nature of the project. Predominantly, I see religious media communication as a globally unified phenomenon in essence, yet it may be essentially independent and atomistic by nature. As a result, solutions for improving religious media communication may need to be independently recognized, or may simply remain inexplicable from the dynamism of modern society and its modern media culture. The “universal vs. particular” tension is again here, and one must choose to emphasize one or the other in any analysis. I have chosen to emphasize the universal.

From the perspective of ethnography, with my universalist-anthropological methodology I agree I cannot satisfactorily trace and interpret the goals or

activities of the various traditions. It is one thing to be a devout Russian orthodox, and yet another to be a devoted American Evangelical, even though both are Christians and devout in their religiosity. If the requirements of ethnography would be taken more seriously, the method would produce, from the perspective of the research, too many irrelevant results: the particular would get too much attention without a possibility to compare and systematize (on methodology of ethnography see for example Englund 1994, 196-218). On the other hand, my study has ethnographic elements from two positions (according to interpretative ethnography by Clifford Geertz (1973):

*First*, for Geertz, culture

“is not located in the heads of the people but becomes visible in public symbols”. For Geertz, culture is public, because “the representatives of culture interpret and mediate to each other and future generations through public symbols their world view, values and ethos”. (Ruohonen & Laitila 1994, 122-124.)

Even though views of Geertz have been criticized, because of the reduction of mental processes, his concepts fit very well with my study. Religion has aimed at public issues, and these can be transmitted over time and space, only through public religious symbols. The concept of a “public” is also a political issue: opponents of religion have tried to reduce religion into being a private matter, which in effect would mean to take away its cultural character. On the other hand, religion has always tried to make itself as visible and predominant as possible within the culture through publicity. This strive of religion to renew itself explains, to a large extent, the diversity and multiplicity of religion, and also points to its controversial social and cultural dimensions. An example of those controversies is the imagined or real will of mainstream society and culture to limit public presence of religion and thus its influence.

*Secondly*, there is a connection in my study to Geertzian ethnography. According to Geertz, the goal of ethnography is to *interpret* self-description and self-expression of the research object. According to Geertz, making anthropology is comparative to “an attempt to read manuscript, which is of foreign language and fragmented, difficult to understand, and inconsistent”. (Originally in Geertz 1973, Ruohonen et al. 1994, 122-123.) What is then this common language, which is thought to unite various Christian traditions and cases? The interpretation of particular “languages” is then seen as being the language of ecumenism. It means the concepts, expressions and the goals are interpreted as being comparable with each other. And where such a concept does not exist, it will be articulated, or in fact the content will be articulated. For example, in the Russian orthodox tradition there is no concept of evangelism. The Orthodox intention of disseminating Christian message is thus interpreted to mean “evangelism” even though such a concept may not be used. I call this process of interpretation an “ecumenical filter”, which is similar to what is used in comparable anthropology. The Evangelical tradition is in many cases presented as another pole when using the comparative method. This happens mainly for two reasons.

*First*, the Evangelical view of communication forms a very strong alternative and yet a minority view of religious communication when compared to the more established churches. *Second*, the Evangelical view has had considerable

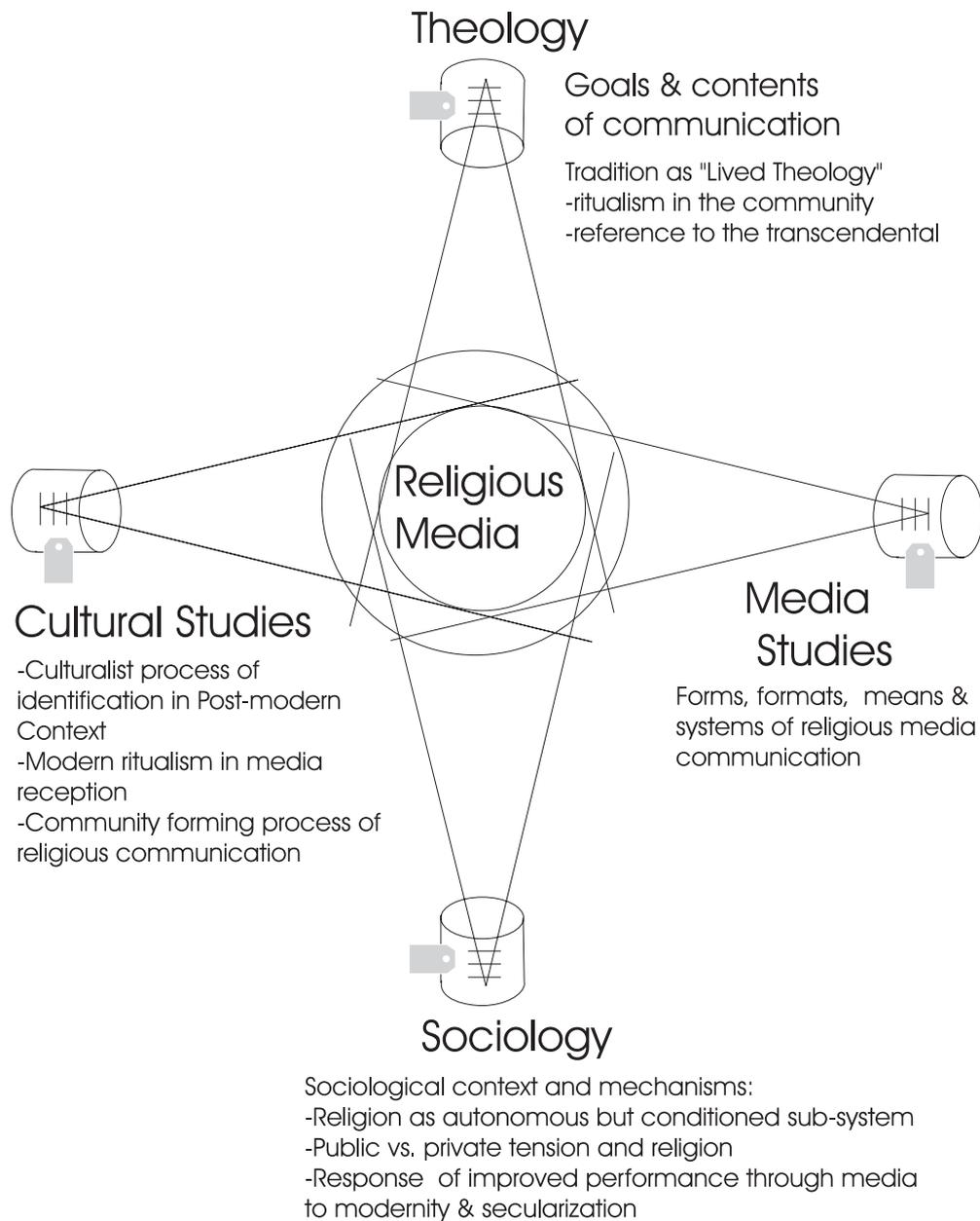
success in forming a virtual religion, a strategy that other traditions are following at the moment (On related mediated ministry and virtual religious communities, see Chapter 4).

#### **1.4.2 Relationship Between Different Disciplines and Concepts**

This study connects to various research traditions and orientations in the field of religion and media. Explicitly it connects more closely to previous attempts, to model and form a “general Christian media theory,” by Sogaard (1986), Ellens (Emmanuel 1999, 156-160), and White (according to Martínez-de-Toda 1999, Emmanuel 1999, 161-165). At the moment, the dominant paradigm in religion and media studies is the culturalist approach from the perspective of functional religion. This Religious Media Theory study connects well to this tradition, since despite a very different cosmology, methodology, and scope, there is a huge need to understand the context and determinants, as well as the system of (institutional) religious media communication. It is so that these previous factors are determinants of a more culturalist analysis. It is my opinion that the Media, Religion and Culture -research paradigm (see Chapter 1.7.1), necessarily needs the contextualization presented in this work, since otherwise it may well disintegrate into various special questions, topics and perspectives. Religious Media Theory provides a general framework whereby one can build on individual research interests or particular agendas by recognizing how they relate to the field in general, to the phenomenon itself, as well as to additional perspectives and research themes.

Religious media communication is analyzed in this study from various perspectives in order to make as systematic a picture as possible. For this reason I include assumptions, perspectives and concepts of the various disciplines. It is my intention to shed light on this phenomenon from basically four perspectives; theology, media studies, sociology and cultural studies. The use of these perspectives also requires clarification; what is the scope of these perspectives, what kind of explanations do they perform, and what are the relationships of these explanations with one another.

## the Multi-Disciplinary Perspective to Religious Media



PICTURE 1 illustrates the perspectives provided by various disciplines to religious media communication. The picture also describes the type of explanation to which each perspective is specialized.

The four perspectives applied are those of cultural studies (more precisely media ritualism), sociology (systemic theory), theology and media studies; the latter having predominance over the others. Each perspective is basically applied in individual chapters and each is easily recognized as separate parts of the study. The perspectives should reflect the logics of the phenomenon itself, since they

were chosen for the purposes of bringing about a systematic, yet holistic way of understanding. These respective goals, perspectives and disciplines are:

- 1) Understanding the sender motivation: theology
- 2) Understanding the relationship between a media system and religion: media studies
- 3) Understanding macro-level social context & process: sociology
- 4) Understanding the processes of meaning generation and community formation: cultural studies, ritualism.

*First*, explicit communications dynamics and goals cannot be understood without *theological perspective*, because the internal rationale for communication is formed and expressed in theological language, with a theological perspective and utilizing theological goals. The expressions are, to a large extent, normative, and in fact form the core of a Normative Religious Media Theory. If this study were limited to cultural studies, communication studies, or even sociological analysis, the theological realism could not be reached. Theological expressions are real, at least in their consequences: they generate the communications dynamics of the institution.

As I have noted earlier, the main direction of the analysis and the explanation comes from within the community and flows toward the context. This means the religious traditions and communities are assumed to be autonomous in nature, to a large extent, particularly in the case of communication. To communicate or not to communicate is a free choice. Examples of both orientations are found in real world cases (for example televangelists vs. the Amish -community). Also the agents can decide the content of the communication. The communication dynamics are at the core of interest, and can only be expressed in terms of theology. Here I use “emic analysis”, which describes the rationale of communication from inside of the community.

Of course the community, as well as tradition, is formed by much more than cognitive theological beliefs and knowledge. There are mythic beliefs, religious experiences, rituals, social relationships, etc. (see Chapter 1.2.2, dimensions of religious tradition). These other dimensions of religious tradition and community can also be mediated through modern media, and are thus very relevant topics for the content of religious media. But when the core essence and scope of this research remains centred on both the motifs of communications and the factors that shape communication, it becomes apparent that we can focus on two concepts: theology and tradition.<sup>17</sup>

In this setting, I use the concept of tradition as a separate and practical reflection or aspect of cognitive theology. This is, of course, very reductionist and an incomplete definition, yet for the very limited application purposes of this study a reductionist approach is justified.

Theological perspective is used here to mean using the language of theology. In doing so, I assume the concept of a theological religion-related language (for example when using God, Jesus, Gospel, salvation, etc.) is both relevant and legitimate (see theistic view on science, Chapter 1.1.2). Even though one might reject the universality and objectivity of such language, it does serve as an “emic-

kind of description" in the spirit of ethnographic ethics in that it shows how communities themselves understand their motivation and activities. So, theological language can be justified from three perspectives:

- 1) in keeping theology as valid as such (as an objective description and expression of the existing transcendental dimension),
- 2) understanding it as ethnographic self-expression, or
- 3) taking it as true in its consequences.

This latter concept means that theological expressions are legitimate in their consequences because communities are motivated by such concepts, and the outcomes of activities generated in this way exist in an objective sense, so that as motivators they are legitimate. This latter concept becomes an epistemological solution provided by symbolic realism.

*The second* perspective is that of the media studies, because modern media enables and limits the ways in which the communications dynamics of communities are actualized. Various media are not analyzed separately, because for the scope and goals of this study it is not necessary. For both methodological and theoretical reasons the main emphasis is on electronic media: Broadcasting and Internet (see Chapter 1.5.2). From the perspective of media studies it is relevant to ask why religion and media are so compatible, what forms does religious media take and why, and how are the systematics of "the system of religious media communication" established within individual countries. The perspective of media studies is dominant in this study, because the systematics of Religious Media Theory (final chapter) are presented utilizing the concepts and perspectives of media studies.

*The third* perspective seeks to reveal the sociological forces and contexts (sociology) that both enable and limit religious media communication. Sociological perspective is mostly seen as macro-level unintended with a functional explanation for the question, "Why are religious institutions so massively involved with the use of modern media?" The primacy is in the autonomous religious institution, but there are also sociologically revealed determining forces that put pressure on religion to establish and maintain its symbolic universality in the post-modern context by using modern media. Or to put it another way: religious media communication is seen as a performance strategy and response to the challenge of sociological modernization and secularization of the environment of religion.

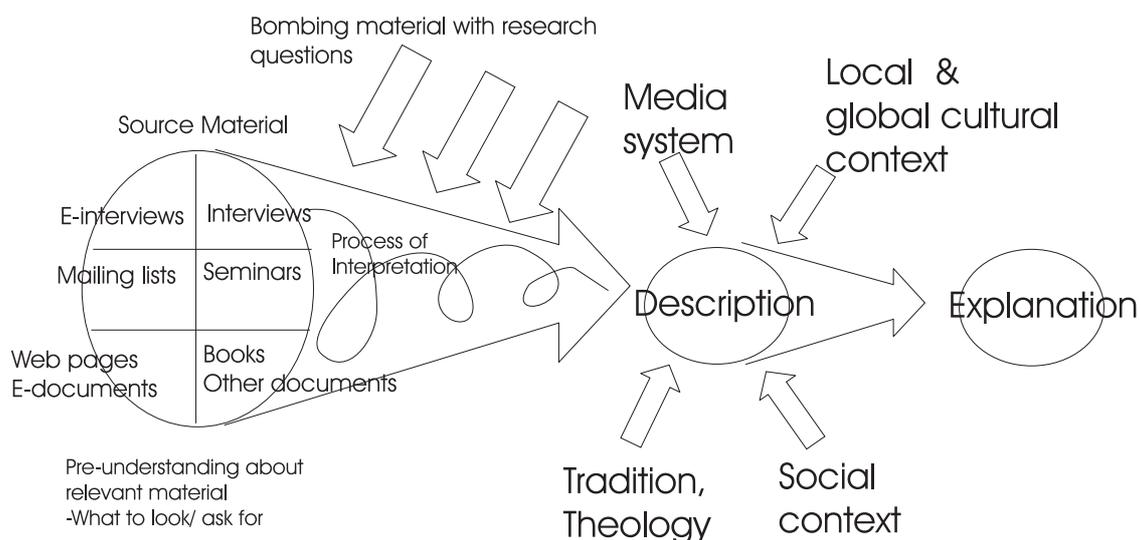
*Fourthly*, a cultural studies perspective is applied, when addressing the mechanisms of ritualism, individual identification, community formation, and meaning making in the context of post-modern culture. Culturalist orientation is found in the modeling portion of Chapter 4. The culturalist perspective doesn't play a very significant role here, but it is a necessary component for the entire project. (For more on the culturalist approach to mediated religion, see for example Hoover & Lundby 1997.)

## 1.5 Operationalizations on the Research Process

There are five phases to this analysis:

- 1) defining the relevant cases,
- 2) extracting the empirical data,
- 3) describing the system of religious media communication in each particular traditional and national context while providing explanations of both external and internal factors that shape religious media communication within each country and within each tradition,
- 4) presenting the communications vision and praxis of each tradition,
- 5) presenting analysis and synthesis on the entire phenomenon from a macro-level perspective.

### Methodological Model of the Research Process



PICTURE 2 illustrates the various phases as well as the empirical contexts of the research process.

### 1.5.1 The Setting of this Research - The Method of the Significant Traditions

The goal and scope of this study is to present models with as large a relevance as possible. As earlier stated, there is a substantial body of research available within the Christian traditions of appropriate countries, yet almost no comparative research exists. For this reason, we do not know which characteristics, found in Christian communication, are bound to particular cultural contexts or traditions, and which characteristics are universal, or common in all Christian traditions. It is the dynamics common in all Christian traditions, those dynamics that boost and motivate Christian communication everywhere, which can be seen as expressions of "Root-Christianity". The comparative method provides yet another im-

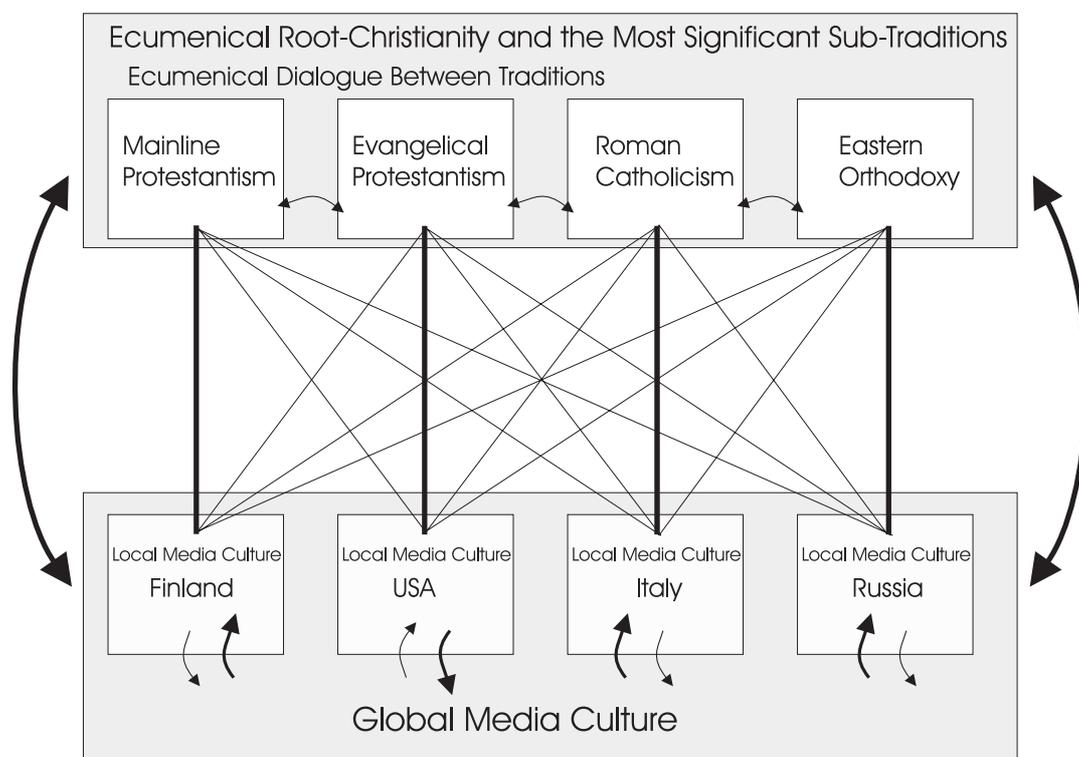
portant dimension. When making comparisons between systems of religious media communication in various countries, we can show how various contextual factors have influenced the formation of Christian communications as we know it today (for facts about both external normative and the descriptive level, see “Different Aspects of Religious Media Theory”, Chapter 1.3). The comparative method reveals both the differences and the similarities in communications between various traditions whether dependent or independent in context. So in principle, we can say which characteristics in communications of particular traditions are context-bound, and which are universal. This should reveal the basic systematics of the phenomenon.

This study is ecumenical by cosmology. In other words, it respects the various traditions and various interpretations of Christianity. And yet, it seeks to find the core of Christian communicative dynamics through explanations derived from tradition and theology. The other goal is to highlight the communicative differences, which exist within a wide variety of Christian traditions. I include an overview of various Christian traditions and their unique media theories. This study therefore has dual ambitions:

- 1) To present an overall systematic picture of religious media communication; and
- 2) To show the rich diversity within the field of religious media communication.

Because the scope of the study is both systematic and international, the implications of the study should be more general, theoretical, and abstract in nature, rather than empirical and particular. This, in turn, allows to include different variations of religious media communication. The only limitation being the limited resources available to appropriately cover the subject. In completing this study a major question has therefore been how to operationalize this setting? I have developed a methodological solution to solve this problem, which I call “the Method of the Significant Traditions”. Here I will present the dimensions of this method.

## The Research Setting and Respective Traditions and Countries



PICTURE 3 illustrates the research setting in particular countries and among the four Christian traditions and their respective interaction.

From the almost countless richness of various Christian churches, denominations and sects I have had to limit myself to a chosen number of traditions. Christianity can be broken down into four significantly large traditions. These four traditions reflect the traditional and theological orientations of the majority of Christianity as a whole. One can follow these traditions globally in a number of various national and cultural settings, and these traditions can be traced by their significance, which refers to the actual number of followers and thus their position and influence in a particular culture and society. These four significant traditions are:

- 1) Roman Catholicism, and
- 2) The (Russian) Orthodox Church, which represents both the old traditional churches from times of the Church fathers and the division of the Roman Empire. This was the first separation of Christianity.

The second split, namely the Reformation and birth of Protestantism, is covered in this study by setting focus on

- 3) Liberal mainline Protestant churches. Liberalism here refers to theological affiliation whereby their theology has been assimilated to form a modernist worldview and political democracy, and

- 4) The fourth significant tradition is Protestant evangelicalism, which presents both conservative and revivalist movements and denominations, for example the Pentecostals and Charismatics.

From these traditions empirical samples are chosen for analysis and induction.

Respectively for the four significant traditions I have included four countries which form the contextual basis for the analysis. Also, the countries have been chosen for methodological reasons. In these particular countries, all of these traditions have hegemonic position when compared to other Christian traditions: Catholicism in Italy, Lutheranism in Finland, Orthodoxy in Russia, Evangelicalism in the USA<sup>18</sup>. Although hegemonic position and the tradition must be epistemologically separated, hegemonic position ensures the religious communication dynamics of a particular tradition will manifest itself when given as good a structural opportunity as possible. As Casanova puts it (1994, 9),

“the public character of any religion is primarily determined by the particular structural location of that religion between state and society”.

### 1.5.2 The Relevance of Electronic Media for Religious Communication

As an empirical material and case, this research, for the most part, utilizes electronic media and more precisely, broadcasting, or broadcast media. Here I present reasons for this emphasis, even though the analysis, in principle, covers all manner of media of communications, which are basically actualizations of the common communicative dynamics of Christianity.

More emphasis is put on religious broadcast media, because it has more clearly defined characteristics when compared to mainstream media. Actually, the characteristics and problematics of religious media itself are more clearly recognized in electronic media, and although religious print media is important, it targets, for the most part, the Christian community.

Broadcast media is also of interest because broadcasting has some unique characteristics, which are very useful and suitable for religious institutions. The primary issue is electronic media is often used to reach (evangelize, to use a theological term) those who are not active or committed Christians. For this reason broadcast media is considered as a “real mass media” unlike Christian magazines, literature, tape, or video ministry which are primarily targeted to the religious community itself. Religious communication should be analyzed on the basis of mass communication and audience, which means popular culture. Broadcast media is nowadays considered to be the most significant mass media, and it is the media of popular culture and the locus of post-modern culture. In other words the opinions of religious communicators in the field of broadcast media are the most relevant in analyzing the relationship between religious communication and the mass audience. Broadcast media is capable of presenting a wide range of religious activities, including live rituals such as prayer, worship services (which can help to promote a sense of community), and testimonies or illustrations (which bring about a religious pathos). Broadcast media (and elec-

tronic media in general incl. Internet) is capable of transmitting tacit religious information, which cannot be mediated through print media. Broadcast media includes a wide variety of frames of uses of modern media, for example public service religious broadcasts.

Electronic media is a very relevant field of research when considering any study on global religious media theory. The most influential of religious formats (usually originating from the U.S.) used in broadcast media are distributed globally. Religious broadcasting thus follows the logic of mainstream media by utilizing *global religious media formats*, which are of course a very important research topic.

Broadcast media has garnered more attention traditionally because of the assumed political use of media by U.S. rightist televangelists. I argue that most scientific interest towards religious broadcasting comes from this political aspect. Broadcast media has always been seen as a more effective political weapon than print media. And, in the case of religious broadcasting, the goals of media communication of any given Christian institution are usually explicitly presented.

While it can be said that electronic media is more unstable than print media, both in terms of technology and content, it is a very good methodological indicator of the innovative and modernist orientation of religious institution. An example of this orientation would be a religious institutions' eager acceptance of the Internet, which has become the fastest growing religious media, due in part to the fact that it is totally open and fits well the communication dynamics of religion. Classical media (broadcasting & print) have a "gate keeper", which means the media content is selected and thereby filtered according to editorial standards. This same type of authority does not always exist on the Internet, which is also a very affordable and easily applicable technology. While participation in electronic media, especially broadcasting, is a crucial indicator of the motivation and creative potential of the institution, as well as its willingness to allocate resources for it, it also shows the position of communication within the communication ideology of the institution. Of every type of media, broadcasting takes more when it comes to financial and personnel resources. Therefore, when an institution has decided to get involved in religious broadcasting, it is an expression of its strong motivation and commitment to mass communication. Broadcast media production has a very high status among Christian institutions, and to participate in the broadcasting arena becomes a way of building self-respect (an identity construction, if you will) at the very least.

Electronic (broadcast) media is technologically connected to the official nation state in terms of regulations, allocation or distribution of television channels, and limited radio frequencies. This means the road to utilizing broadcast media means adhering to some kind of legitimate policy. These policies influence all possible actors in the field of broadcast communication, including religion. In this way, the communications policies of government can be seen as a methodological measurement of the relationship between a certain religious tradition and government. The allocation of communication resources thereby shows something of the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of the official communication policy in relation to certain religious institution. If hegemonic religious tradition is close to government, it is probably allocated radio frequencies more easily than insti-

tutions that are not. Another indicator of this official nation-religion connection can be seen in the area of public broadcasting. If a religious community has been given access to religious programming through public broadcasting, it is a clear indicator of official position within the super-structure or civil religion of the nation state (on the concept of civil religion see for example Wimberley et al, 1998).

### 1.5.3 Methodology

In mass communication research, the prevailing trend is “methodological individualism and particularism” in contrast to the “methodological uniformism” of, for example, such disciplines as psychology and the natural sciences. There are no strict guidelines as to what kind of methods or perspectives are to be used. It becomes virtually the “goal of the researcher” as to which methods and theories are chosen.

Even though there are some dominating theoretical and methodological perspectives (such as content analysis, quantitative audience research, critical discourse analysis, to mention some of them), very often multiple perspectives are used whereby various methodologies can be applied simultaneously. There is only one way to legitimize using this theoretical and methodological pluralism in the same project, and that is to be prepared to argue one’s decisions as effectively as possible in light of the goal of the research. There are three critical questions which must be answered when applying multiple perspectives and methods:

- 1) How to integrate various perspectives in such a way that the results are coherent enough?
- 2) How to handle situations where various perspectives and methods provide contradictory results to the same question (usually because of their different science philosophical background and epistemology), meaning what is considered as a relevant result? This includes how much explanation should exist when clarifying contradictory findings, and which results should one emphasize as representing the final key to the interpretation of the results?
- 3) And finally, how is the connection between the method and the result of the method to be verified? This problem is particularly striking when applying qualitative research, where results are, more or less dependent on the interpretations of the researcher in analysing interviews provided by sources.

There are no universal answers to these questions, but each solution depends on the researcher him/herself in relation to the project at hand. The reason being that methodological discussion, which takes place among scholars specialized in methodology, is not very fruitful, because such methods must always be judged with respect to the goals of the research at hand. Therefore, it is not possible to draw appropriate conclusions derived from particular methods and theories without the proper context and without considering the commitments and decisions of the particular researcher involved in the project.

The “hard” side of this study is concentration on the theology of the tradition, which is cognitive and mostly printed information. It is available from secondary literature and to some extent from official community documents. The scope and setting of this study, however, limits the use of such official document sources. First, as Lott states (1988), concentrating on official documents oftentimes provides very much the perspective of the elite, which is often the desired state, and does not necessarily present praxis or mediating perspective between the outer factors and the institution. Neither do documents provide necessarily the inner logics of the community, but describe rather the cognitive and doctrinal side of the institution.

Because of the international scope and setting of this study, there would have also arisen too many difficulties in tracing relevant documents from all the communities involved. The task would have been virtually impossible due to the lack of information where such documents could be found and due to language interpretation problems, particularly with the Russian and the Italian languages. The final factor, which restricts the use of documents, is that particularly in Evangelical communities there are very few, and in most cases no written documents available on the ideology of their media communication. Most of the communities in question are basically based on the primacy of face-to-face oral communication.

Due to these practical limitations, as well as the scope of the research, the solution is to concentrate on interviewing key persons in the media-related organizations of the given institutions. Such key persons are typically at the managerial or executive level, which means the religious institution authorizes them, but at the same time they must be legitimized by a community of media professionals as well as their audience. This means they provide the necessary mediation function between the elite, inner logics, and goals of the community, as well as the restrictions of the outside secular mainstream community. In this way, the interviews have provided the crucial information concerning the communication strategies, goals and solutions that are at the core of understanding mediated faith. Their opinions are also relevant, because of their managerial positions. Their ideas diffuse, as more or less normative, to the more operational levels of organization and thus have sometimes more or sometimes less influence on the actual institutional media texts as well. This means that by interviewing key persons one can gather information, to some extent, from both “normative culture” and “real culture” in the given communications organism within the tradition. More precisely, the methodological premises of this study are as follows:

- 1) Methodology is based on so called “snowball –method.”  
It is methodologically important to describe how the snowball method has been applied to this study. I will present this under the title “Growth of the Snowball.”
- 2) The sources are primarily based on the contextualization received from the media professionals in the traditions and countries in question
- 3) The most important source material comes from interviews for the following reasons:

- The contextualization of religious communication is impossible otherwise.
- On an operational level the performance of religious communication and tradition always depends on the personal communicative attitudes and comprehensions of media professionals.

This causes the problem of which conceptions are individual and which form the common ground of tradition within that community? Choosing interviewees with authority position diminishes the significance of this problem since individual opinions of the authorized persons tend to also become the official views of the institution and vice versa.

The problem still exists however that media managers and professionals in the leading positions may still have very different opinions. This is the case, for example, with the Finnish Lutheran Church media seminar, where top media related persons of the institution were asked to form a common media strategy for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The concepts of goals and the methods offered to reach the goals were very different. This came as a result of the various theological backgrounds and strands present at the Church. Yet still, it is possible to say there is a loose official communications ideology dominant over other the more individual or marginal(ized) views of communication strategies offered in that particular community. Various empirical cases are never systematic and exhaustive but exemplary and unique in their cosmology as individual samples.

#### **1.5.4 The Growth of the Snowball**

This so-called “snowball method” is part of the qualitative methodology (for example Alasuutari 1993). It is useful in tracing new fields of study, which a researcher could be either totally or partially unfamiliar with. The idea of the snowball method is very simple. One starts from one point to ask research questions from the research material and interviewees. The Snowball can also be rolled through documented material and on the Internet. This method is very crucial to the scope of my study. The idea is to begin asking questions about the communicative opinions (goals and norms of communicators) from the material. The Snowball method fits especially well when using Internet-material, particularly Web pages, because there are usually many links to related sites. Empirically speaking, it is very interesting that the links pages are usually (and almost always) gathered and edited according to: a) similar interests, and b) similar opinions of the Web-page administrators. So in this way the Web linking to other documents in fact creates a path along which one can roll the snowball.

Links are a very reliable method in operationalizing the snowball method on the Web (see also “Nethodology”, Chapter 1.5.6), because according to my observations, links always form a somewhat hermetic community with similar interests and to some extent a similar world-view. The borders of faith communities and/or religious traditions are usually drawn very sharply on the Internet. One must also consider the orientation of the Web-site: the purpose and goal of the site and background of the administrator (on source critical notes concerning

the Internet see Chapter 1.5.6).

I have included the description on how the snowball method has been applied, and how the relevant cases have been traced. A more detailed description of the process for each country is presented in a chart in appendixes 3-5.

But while the snowball method has some advantages, it is not without its problems. The biggest one may be the fact that despite ecumenical efforts, the major traditions of Christianity put forth and applied in this study still remain far from each other in the real world. Or to put it another way, they do not have much in common on an operational level. Their communicative opinions vary so much that the communicators of each tradition rarely link their Web-pages to the pages of other traditions. This observation strengthens the hypothesis and a priori construction of this research: that these four traditions are the most significant ones and that they have differences enough to be considered as having separate religious media theories (see Chapters 3.3.1 - 3.3.4).

Given this strict separation of traditions one must deduce another problem. Namely the horizon of religious communicators is usually very limited to that of their own institution. Individual traditions do not have much information about the communicative activities of other churches or media organizations. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to trust the opinions or information given by one communicator concerning the communicative activities of another tradition. One must rely on facts provided by the tradition or institution in question. But on the other hand, you can use some facts gather in this way as a source material: if a communicator knows a particular communicative activity of another institution, it can show this communicative activity as being very significant on a national scale (for example Christian Radio Dei is well known to all churches in Finland). Or it can perhaps tell something of the ecumenical orientation of the person being interviewed, however that should be deduced when contextualizing the position of any particular interviewee in question.

### 1.5.5 Carrying out Interviews

The key source types are informants from which information is gathered through interviews.

Religious communicators are key to the issue of religious media communication. It is they who mediate the goals and the tradition of the institution into the media culture that carries the message to the audience. Their views on how religious media communication is performed in their institution are thus very relevant. In addition, the interview as a method has several advantages:

- There is always the possibility to ask additional questions, because one can contact the same person later.
- Document sources are important, but they are far from the operational level, which is, in turn, important for a media cultural approach, which this study essentially is.
- Official goals need to be interpreted and assimilated to fit particular situations, which means official documents do not show much about the actual system of religious media communication in a particular given

context.

- Interviews provide tacit and unofficial information, which is not available through document sources.
- Document sources are always difficult to find and contextualize within the entire institution, particularly in the case of foreign countries.
- The interview is a crucial part of the so-called “snowball method”. The snowball method is almost the only possible method available to use when doing intervention -type explorations in a foreign context. The intervention-method is somewhat similar to the work of a correspondent in a foreign country. One must be able to understand crucial information and be able to contextualize it. Therefore, the only possibly option is to rely on informants, as journalism itself does.

Another option, rather than these exploratory types of interviews, would be that of considering the official communications documents of the church and the media culture in each country. Because there are several countries to cover, this method becomes impossible due to time constraints, language problems, limitations in accessing crucial documents and basically huge amounts of work and expense.

Heavy reliance on informants through interviews brings up three critical source issues:

- 1) The researcher is dependent on the reliability and openness of the informants. A counter-strategy is to attempt a source-critique. Consider how, when and why a particular informant would have reason for not telling the truth. Also, using several informants diminishes the weight of any single informant.
- 2) Language problems can create misunderstanding. I have utilized the services of competent interpreters in those countries where the language was foreign to me. (Italy, Russia). The danger of misunderstanding however is always there. The significance of misunderstanding however, is smaller, because one doesn't need to look after detailed information, but rather can focus on broader lines of questioning and goals. With this in mind, misinterpretations or misunderstanding are less likely to occur because one is not distracted by the interesting details that interpreters tend to omit. Also, during discussion one can more easily recognize, when an informant doesn't understand a question properly. A researcher can always continue a line of questioning when answers aren't clear.
- 3) The significance of any information provided during interviews must be evaluated against the informant's position in the institution. The position of the institution is then in turn evaluated against the mosaic matrix of religious communication of that particular tradition. In other words, what is the power status of the person and their view and subsequent implications to (see picture 4) the community as a whole (for example hegemonic official vs. oppositional marginalized, liberal vs. conservative).

In this study, a semi-structured interview was used as the main method of information gathering. Certain crucial topics were chosen to understand the relevant activities and the goals of the informant. The lengths of the interviews and number of topics covered varied depending on the time available, the nature of the institution in question, and on the position of the person within the institution. A semi-structured interview was the best method for gathering the information in these cases, because with this method, informants could, to some extent, define themselves the direction the discussion would take, whereby topics not otherwise considered might surface as being crucial. This means the various aspects of religious media communication received proportional weight in relationship to each other. Interviews were usually performed only once, and I attempted to interview several informants within each tradition.

On the other hand, the intervention-type of information gathering interview was a proper method for tracing the borders of the phenomenon. This was crucial, for example, for getting an overall picture of the Russian Orthodox system of communication, because there was very little previous information available. Through the semi-structured interview, both systematically achieved aspects as well as various ad hoc dimensional characteristics of the Russian Orthodox church were uncovered (About types of interview as method of information gathering see for example Bernard 1994, 208-288). The main topics covered through the interview sessions were:

- the basic characteristics, the goals, and the means of communication
- the volume of communication activities as well as the resources
- the most urgent challenges, problems and plans
- the relationship with other communities
- the present communication situation; how satisfied one is with it, and
- the history

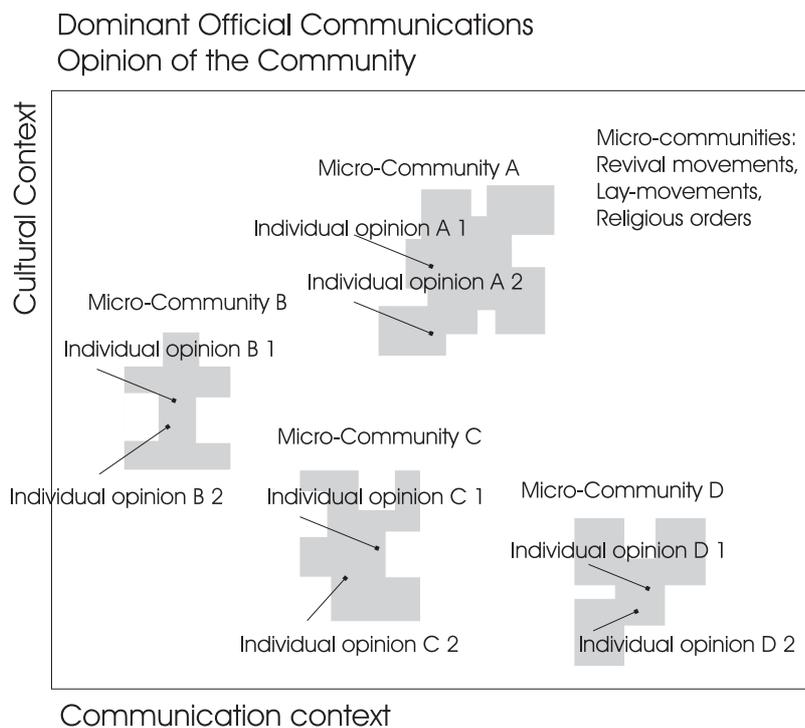
More detailed questions are in Appendix 1. Topics covered and questions presented had considerable variation depending on both the context and the professional status of the interviewee. The list of questions is to be seen as directional, not as a detailed description on matters covered.

In choosing interviewees the following contextualizing factors were used:

- 1) Position of a person within the official power structure of the institution.
  - Significance of the position.
  - Use as a specialist or authority.
  - Possible oppositional set-up, which is often the case with revival movements within churches
  - Does he or she have relationship with or does he or she belong to any micro-community (for example religious order, revival movement) within the institution? (This might influence his/ her opinions and might then steer the answers in a certain direction) These connections are legitimate, but should be known in order to establish proper source critique, analysis and contextualization.

- Type of institution: hierarchical or based on spiritual aspiration and vision, or charisma.
- 2) Professional and educational background
    - General education. (Theology, etc.)
    - Degree and type of education in the field of communications.
    - Professional history: which media, what kind of occupations.
  - 3) The availability. How one can recognize and contact the persons for possible interview.
  - 4) The method cannot be totally symmetrical because of the mosaic nature of religious communities. This means that since the communities vary by size and tradition, the key personnel cannot be recognized mechanically by certain tight criteria applied to every community. The three criteria presented earlier must be applied creatively ad-hoc in every case.

## The Mosaic of Religious Communication



According to different theological, cultural, traditional, communicational factors the opinions about communication vary a lot. This cause unsystematic discontinuities within the tradition. Then mirco-communities cause also micro-level theories about media.

PICTURE 4 illustrates the fact that each Christian community is fragmented in that they hold differing views on communications inside the community. The views of various sub-groups must be evaluated from the more general perspective of the entire community.

Informants are usually program or communication managers. Because they have received their position from within a religious institution it means they are respected and trusted by this institution. And this means in turn that these persons are loyal to the institution, and that they apply the norms and standards accepted by the community. This is the methodological assumption behind the selection of the interviewees.

The recordings of and notes taken during the interviews are available through the author of this study. The key themes in interviews were to identify the goals and views of the communicator being interviewed as well as those of the representative organization. Factual information of each media organization was obtained. (For example, size, programming, history, etc.) On the basis of open discussions and interviews, the relevant portions were selected for use in this study and sometimes quoted. Much of the information garnered from the interviews remains implicit or "tacit knowledge." This information can be found within the structure of this study without any clear connection to any informant. References are made however, when the answers illustrate a very important or an explicitly normative characteristic of a particular media activity, or when the interviewee has been particularly influential in the field.

### 1.5.6 Methodology

The Internet is used here as a methodological tool for finding information, defining the scope, and gathering the material for this study. Because Christian communication is a global issue, the Internet, as a global media, can be used as an analytical tool as well. I use the term "methodology" to describe the role of the Internet in this research. The Internet is used basically in the following ways.

- 1) The Internet serves as an operational tool in finding material (both electronic and printed). One basic document on Catholic communication was only discovered after making a search via the Internet through the American and European continents, and was finally found in Asia through the publisher.
- 2) The Internet gives a preliminary picture of the field of religious communication.
- 3) The Internet virtually creates hermetic religious communities through its Web links. (with whom do they link each other) –Thus the borders of religious communities are clearly seen.
- 4) The Internet is a tool for information, discussion, and for testing the ideas via email.
- 5) The Internet is used to analyze the significance of particular religious institutions as agents of communication.
- 6) The Internet can be used as an operational tool for applying the snowball method: once the material, communities and links start to repeat themselves the saturation point has been reached and all relevant material available on the Internet is found
- 7) There is always a supply of virtual material from actual conferences, lectures, documents etc., only available through the Web.

In my study, the Internet has been invaluable for three reasons:

- 1) *It defined and narrowed* the search for material and institutions which are considered relevant to the study. It supports the method of the significant tradition. To be significant an institution should have a credible presence on the Internet in terms of resources (well made), quantity (significant amount of material) and quality (relevant, designed for the Web). The Internet played a source critical role in this study: it defined and characterized the material.
- 2) *It played a strategic role*. This is relative to narrowing the search, but refers mainly to the Internet as being a powerfully strategic tool for taking aim and targeting only the most relevant materials and institutions. The Internet-strategy, combined with other types of documents and interviews, makes the source material very rich. If the Internet would have been the only source of material for this type of systematic research, it would not have been enough. But the virtual material is supported by literature, other types of documents, and interviews on every relevant national context. This combination should give a strong empirical basis for the study. This basic global study on a field as large as religious communication would not have been possible without the use of the Internet to define the borders of the study. The scope of this study is international, global, and systematic. For these reasons it could not have been mastered without utilizing the “definitive role of the Internet”.
- 3) *Operational significance* is the third important use of the Internet. This study would not have been possible without the Internet, because it would have been impossible to initially make and then to maintain all the valuable and necessary international contacts. E-mail has been the main tool of communication. The internet itself has provided huge amounts of important material (documents, conference information, etc.) which is not even available in any other form, or would have been very difficult and/or expensive to obtain. However, there exists a quite critical attitude towards relying heavily on the Internet and electronic source material within the scientific community. The main problems, when considering the use of Internet material, usually deal with the credibility (incl. the quality of information, authority and manipulation), the stability, the availability and the copyright of the electronic material. (Lehtonen 1997<sup>19</sup>; Suominen 1999<sup>20</sup>) The solutions used in this study are presented in the chapters that follow. Here, I present the basis of methodology, and the reliability of using Internet material. One can say that overall source critical principles (both internal and external source critiques) are also relevant when utilizing electronic documents.

In this study I have used a form of reference style based on the “Columbia Guide to Online Style” by the Columbia University Press, which calls it “the Scientific Style” (Taylor & Walker 1998, electronic document). This “Scientific Style” is the basis for the use of the Internet referencing, which is applied here. The details are taken from Lehtonen 1997 (electronic document), who provides several detailed examples of applying the style in various situations. As a guide for assessing the accuracy of Internet material I have used Alison Cooke’s “Authoritative Guide to

Evaluating Information on the Internet" (1999).

In the context of this research, we have basically three kinds of source critical questions which are valid also in the context of the Internet. *First*, how authoritative is the material and the producer who is claiming to be authoritative? *Second*, are the texts really what they claim to be? For example, are the media communication goals of a particular religious institution really stated within its authoritative texts? And finally, *the third* problem that can exist in every research operation performed in a more or less unknown environment, is namely, what kind of weight and contextualization should we give to material? In other words, to what extent is it authoritative and relevant? Perhaps some of the most important areas in considering Internet material, in the context of this study, are those that follow

- In what ways can Internet-material be distorted or misleading?
- What are the possible benefits or motives, which might motivate someone to forge or fake material concerning religious communication?
- What would be the consequences of using incorrect source material in the research?
- For what purposes are Internet resources used in the research?
- In which ways can use of Internet material distort the research process as a whole?

As a critical notion, I must first submit that existing Internet material (especially WWW-pages) is mainly produced in the USA and in English. From the other language sources, Russian and Italian, the material is not used, simply because I speak neither language. This means the American material easily dominates. The American case tends to be over weighted in the research of religious communication anyway, and unfortunately my research makes no exception. But to my advantage, when comparing to other international research on the topic, is that within the setting of my study, the concepts, tools and perspectives are such that they diminish the weight of the American case, and give a proper perspective to the comparative analysis between cases in various national contexts. The problem then is that the use of Internet does not support my otherwise non-American perspective on the study. Unfortunately, I did not have enough research resources available to perform an extensive Internet search and analysis in the Italian or Russian contexts. On the other hand, one can argue that, for example in Russia, neither the overall infrastructure, the level of telecommunications, nor the standards of living are as developed in such a way that the Internet would be a medium with similar significance when compared to the Western context. And in the case of Italy, it is so solely a Catholic country that information is rather easy to gather in traditional ways; it was possible to visit key places and carry out quality interviews in Rome. Also, the Vatican offers a wealth of official documents on communication, which are available also in English. And, many catholic Websites are linked to Italy, because the headquarters of many global Catholic religious orders are in that country (for example Radio Maria, Salesian fathers, St. Pauline and St. Pauline Daughters).

On the other hand, global operators in the field of religious media usually provide material in English. This means the English language is not an expres-

sion of American dominance, but rather is a symptom and expression of a global (media) culture, which really does exist in the core of the research. From this perspective, the quantitative dominance of English material is not seriously distorting the results or the interpretation of the research. The American centeredness of the Internet has also another benefit. Namely the Internet remains a very useful tool in tracing American religious communication, because of its de-centralized and diversified nature across the various denominations. In addition to that, the strategic benefit for using electronic information gathering can be seen clearly in the case of the Catholic church.

The other, strictly operational, category is finding contact information for the relevant institutions. This means email addresses, street addresses, links, contextualization, etc. This instrumental information is invaluable to the overall process of information gathering when considering one must find, but one must contact the relevant organizations, and set up interviews there as well.

### 1.5.7 Rational Method and Research of Religion

Religion connotes something that is irrational, a world of unsystematic beliefs, and supernatural causes. This leads us to ask a serious question, "How can one apply rational goals-means-actions-ends -analysis to religious matters, and in this case to religious communication?" Does it provide a reliable method of understanding religious motivations and actions?

First, we should consider, "What is the actual meaning of "being rational," or more precisely, "acting rationally"? For example, Peter Riggs presents an important scientific philosophical definition of rationality (Riggs 1994, 52, 177):

"An action is rational if the individual performing the action has reasons for believing that the action will bring about (or assist in bringing to fruition) his or her aim (whatever that aim may be). To... act against them is irrational...An action may not be fully rational but may not be irrational either if there are reasons, subjective ones, for doing it. The action is then a-rational."

Riggs gives an even more exact concept of "instrumental rationality" for cases when the goals of a player are not necessarily rational (which means that the goal of a player cannot be expressed or defined in terms of reasonableness or unreasonableness or truth or falsity of the beliefs of the player).

"In such means-ends accounts of rationality, the aim is given and an action is rational if, on the available information, or even the agent's belief, this action optimizes reaching the goal." (Riggs 1994, 177.)

Let's have an example. As previously indicated, the core of Christian communication is: 1) Disseminating, and 2) Maintaining Christian faith. We have seen that modern media is a very consistent phenomenon with these goals and motivations, because media has the potential to promote fulfilment of these goals. Then, according to rational reasoning, after noticing this potential of modern media for religion, religious institutions should consider how they could actualize this potential. In other words, in which ways media should be used within their institution. This reasoning follows the rules of instrumental rationality. After accepting the premise 1 (Christian institution should disseminate and/or maintain faith)

and premise 2 (media boosts for those goals), one should come to the conclusion: our institution must utilize media.

Until now, the thinking follows the lines of rational reasoning. From this point we move towards more operational and concrete statements and plans: which media religious institutions should be involved, how much resource can be provided, what kind of media texts and meanings should be produced, what kind of micro-goals should be set to different media activities of religious institutions, and even, which media activities should even be performed and which are not so important or effective. Maybe the most important and biggest question is in what ways (both media and content) can an institution reach its goals in being 1. *effective*, 2. *ethical* and 3. *consistent within the tradition and in keeping with the identity of the religious community* in question? There are then three goals and spheres of premises included in the instrumental rationality reasoning process. Notice these are internal factors within religious institutions which have been deduced from the nature of the institutions and their theology. The principle of instrumental rationality is an important implicit principle underlying religious communication and my analysis of it.

## 1.6 Previous Research

There is no specific example or consistent model when analysing the religious functions and contents of media. The field can rather be called a wide esseistic ground to common interest instead of a systematic one. As Michael Traber (In Emmanuel 1999, xiv) says, there is a great deal of theorizing about media within Christian institutions. Most of it is practically oriented normative thinking with theological flavour about how to promote or spread Christianity. Biernatzki (1978, 36) suggests something like the “sociology of communication research,” in topics and approaches relevant to religious communication research. I have included a brief overview on the perspectives and topics explicitly related to religious media communication research.

Hoover & Lundby (1997, 3-14) and Clark & Hoover (1997, 15-36) represent extensive articles on previous research and trends on the topic. This research would be located within the category of a *meso-level*, which means the analyzing of religious institutions and their practices (Hoover et al. 1997, 6). Hoover & Lundby (1997, 9-10) list limitations of previous approaches that concentrate too much on institutional practices and ignore cultural dimensions. The other distortion is seeing relationship between religion and media as having a dualistic or antagonistic relationship. Media is seen as a threat to “authentic” religion. The approaches have not allowed “convergence between religion and media within contemporary culture”.

An important watershed in the research on media and religion was a new approach originated by the early 1990’s (Clark & Hoover 1997, 21-22). Several major studies were presented as well as a prestigious Freedom Forum Media Studies Center sponsored conference in 1993 on issues of media and religion. Also, the ABC television network hired its first religious reporter in 1993.

The critical cultural studies approach has tended to see religion, particularly institutional church, as a hegemonic component to preserve dominant capitalistic hegemony (Gramsci in Clark & Hoover 1997, 23). One direction for religion and media studies is ritual studies, an approach applied recently for example by Johanna Sumiala-Seppänen (2001). In contemporary research, one can find publications and projects concentrating on each stage of the process of mediated religion: on the producer, the text, and the audience being the latest emphasis (see for example Mitchell 2000, 157-162).

According to Stewart Hoover the predominant scholar of the field, historically, research on media and religion has concentrated on the “effects” that each other had on each other. Research and writings on televangelism continued this tradition in the 1970’s. “Studies on the construction or treatment of religion and religious themes per se in entertainment and journalism have followed the same line.” Religious groups have also been involved in “media activism” of all sorts, for example media literacy and media advocacy efforts. Even the classical thinkers and grand theorists such as Walter Ong, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman and Pierre Babin have concentrated too much on this antagonist dualism and on texts and production without ability to say much about consumption, reception, or meaning-making and contemporary religion. (Hoover 20.7.1999.)

On the other end of the continuum one can recognize an emphasis on meaning-making or receptor –orientation. Take the utilization of the consumerist approach to religion and religious communication (for example Cimino et al. 1998). In this “postdenominational era, the “pick and choose” approach represents the totally individualistic approach as in contrast to the institutional and authority-related producer approach. The marketplace of religion does no longer mean *choosing one* of the various denominations, but rather choosing simultaneously something *from all* the religions and denominations.

According to Jeffrey H. Mahan (1999), the relationship between popular culture (and media) and religion has been analyzed from four different perspectives:

- 1) Religion in Popular Culture –the ways in which religious symbols are presented in secular popular culture
- 2) Popular culture in Religion - how popular cultural symbols, ideologies and mechanism affect religious communities, and can be seen, for example, as uses of popular music styles, marketing techniques, modern media, etc. The question here is whether popular culture transforms religion into something else than religion (as goes for example Neil Postman’s argument that television transforms everything - also religion - into entertainment, Postman 1986, 83-88). Does the presence of popular symbols mean that the phenomenon is no more religion but rather popular culture, and marketing product instead of presenting the Gospel? Religion also borrows secular symbols and transforms them to carry religious meanings, as the Evangelicals do. According to Mahan (1999), this field has been studied the least of these four perspectives.

- 3) Popular culture as religion - Analyzes religious functions (through ritual media use) in sports and television and other ritualized habits of popular culture. This perspective implies the basis of functional religion.
- 4) Religion and Popular Culture in Dialogue -means that popular culture and religions evaluate each other critically, if needed. For example television and computer violence are under the ethical scrutiny of churchmen. Religious voices thus participate in ethical discussion in an ethical social arena, which is not directly religious. For example, mainstream churches have given into discussion on media ethics.

The 1990's provided two new openings in the research of religious media communication. *First*, in 1992, the prestigious American Freedom Forum Institute, which is specialized in issues of freedom of speech, published a survey on the relationships between journalism and religion. The interest had sifted from televangelism to the new consideration of relationships between institutions of media and religion. Part of this continuum can be seen in books written on the relationship between the news media and religion (for example Hoover 1998; Buddenbaum 1996).

*Second*, a new era in the research of media and religion started in 1993, when the first so-called Media, Religion and Culture -conference was arranged at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. Conferences are usually arranged every third year, and normally bring together from 200 to 300 researchers, mostly from Anglo-American and the Catholic world. This new era from 1993 on can even be as a paradigmatic shift, because the new consideration has moved the focus along from the (critical) analysis of televangelism to more general processes of religion and media. The basic idea came to be the idea of the so-called "functional religiosity of the media". It means that use of media have implicitly religious functions, which are generated through ritual consumption of the media. Ritual use of media may be watching tv or reading the newspaper at breakfast. (For more on functional religiosity and Media, Religion and Culture -tradition see Chapters 1.7.1-1.7.2.

The MRC-paradigm is more closely and mostly related to a general cultural studies approach, and not so much to that of a critical cultural studies orientation. At the moment, the predominant scholars in the field are Stewart Hoover, Lynn Schofield Clark, Gregor Goethals, Robert White, Peter Horsfield and Paul Soukup. Many of them are both theologians as well as communication scholars. For a review on the issues and literature of religion and the media see also Biernatzki (1995) and Soukup (1991).

### 1.6.1 Historical Approach

History of religious broadcasting has been one major approach, particularly the history of U.S. religious broadcasting (see for example Hoover 1988; Moore 1994; Linderman 1993; Bruce 1990; Sweet et al. 1993; Elvy 1986; partially Peck 1993; Ellens 1974), but also, for example in Finland (Lehikoinen 1998, 9-10). A historical approach means the study has taken a perspective which follows the historical development of religious broadcasting, rather than the use of a systematical or

theoretical framework. The idea of a historical review is one of the most important approaches in the study of religious media, because the essence of Christianity has been to adapt a particular historical setting and in this case one which has followed the process of the utilization of communications technologies and media systems. The most predominant and explicated work on the relationship between religion and communications technologies is that of Leonard I Sweet's (1993) "Communication and Change in American Religious History". In his work, Sweet analyzes the connections between different phases of religious movements and their relationship between available communications technologies of a particular era. Sweet's work has a strong media-ecological orientation. Social context and structures are rarely studied. The predominant works on this structural perspective are those of Hoover (1988, 115-153), and Bruce (1990).

### **1.6.2 Esseistic Normative Contributions to the Relationship Between Media and Religion**

The current trend of studies brings esseistic, philosophical and theological (often critical and thus normative) contributions to the topic. Examples of the classical works in this category are, for example William Kuhn's *The Electronic Gospel* (1969), Malcolm Muggeridge's "Christ and the Media" (1977), Martin E. Marty's "The Improper Opinion" (1961), and Malcolm Boyd's "Crisis in Communication" (1957). Marshall McLuhan's mediaecological ideas (primarily McLuhan 1966; 1967) are often cited, and form almost solely the basis of media philosophical thought in the field of Christian media. Other important media philosophers relevant to religious media are Walter Ong, Neil Postman, Jacques Ellul, William Fore, and Pierre Babin, Franz-Joseph Eilers, Robert White, Michael Traber, and Cees Hamelink (Hamelink for example 1975).

### **1.6.3 The Evangelical Cognitive and Psychological Marketing View**

Particularly within Protestant Evangelical circles the main interest in religious media (in addition to theological and practical consideration on the Biblical "Jesus style" communication) has been research to study the effects of the media. Because of the goals of the Evangelistic culture and their communication efforts, a grand narrative, so to speak, is religious conversion and evangelism in order to generate conversion. Thus, Evangelical research in media has been mainly interested in this dimension of effectivity.

In the context of modern media, the direct effects of conversion have usually been questioned. Modern media is seen as a very different platform of communication than, for example, a meeting of a religious community. An understanding of modern media culture has increased dramatically among the Evangelical community over time. Here the effects or results of religious media communication are not seen solely in terms of religious conversion, but as a long term process, during which a consciousness and an attitude of the audience (individuals) is transferred from the negative and ignorance, to the positive and conversion (see for example Sogaard 1993, 63-75; Engel 1979, 63-87; Cope 1995, 156 ). This process of cognitive and attitude change is described in terms of "the

Spiritual Decision Process" (Engel 1979, 63; Sogaard 1993, 63). As a leading authority of "Evangelical Communication Studies" in 1980's and 1990's, and the former Chairman of the Communications Department of the leading Evangelical College, Wheaton College, James F. Engel has written extensively on how to apply results of communications science, particularly from the perspective of effectivity and gaining results in Christian communication (see for example Engel 1976, 1979, 1980 and 1988). After the Second World War, Evangelicals willingly applied secular models of persuasive and even manipulative communication and marketing in order to win the world for Christ according to the Great Commission (Schultze 1992, 22-23). A more extensive description on the combination (mostly formulated by Engel 1979) of Maslowian psychology of needs and Evangelical theology as normative media theory, see Chapters 1.6.3 and 3.3.3.3.

#### **1.6.4 Jesus Style Communications**

One branch of Christian thought on communication is to try to find Biblical or Jesus-ways of communication (for example Chima 1999, 19-20; Emmanuel 1999, 74-81). These models are seen as more or less normative when it comes to contents, forms and styles, and attitudes of Christian communications. The common idea is that Jesus is seen as the perfect communicator, and sometimes he is seen as a "perfect journalist and news" in his strict attitude and courage for truth (Peralta et al 1998, 86-111) or a perfect example of any other particular field of communication.

Particular dimensions, which are famous in a Jesus style communication paradigm are his use of parables (narrative) as an effective form of communication. Also his attitude towards sinners and ordinary people is seen as an important model (for example Engel 1976, 33-40). In the personality of Jesus the divine perfect goal and message of communication met the corrupt human condition and managed to dialogue with humans. Jesus is thus a perfect example of a divine-human, transcendental-immanent encounter.

The way Jesus communicated has also been analyzed in terms of communications psychology and has been said to be "audiovisual style" (Babin 1991, 65).

When talking about Jesus as a communicator, an important notion is that he did not fit into one format of communication. He did unordinary things and he was sometimes unclear and non-conventional (Babin 1991, 71). This means that we cannot find only one Jesus-format, at least not seen as inseparable from particular traditional and theological context.

#### **1.6.5 Speech Communication and Persuasion Studies**

In the field of speech communication and interpersonal communication, religious communication (religious elements of public discourse, rhetoric of sermons etc.) has almost always been seen as a very relevant topic of research. Religious speech has inspired researchers to a great extent. For example in the annual conference of National Communications Association (NCA) in Seattle 2000, there were more papers on religious communication than, for example, on television (NCA 2000). The National Communications Association has a religious division, the indepen-

dent Religious Communications Association (different than MRC study commission), which meets during NCA conventions.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.6.6 Audience Research

There has been some research on the effects and audiences of religious broadcasting (see for example Hoover 1990, 109-129; Linderman 1996, 148-212; Horsfield 1984, 126-137; Kim 1986 on reception study of religious television). Cultivation analysis has been performed on members of religious communities to analyze the assumed mainstreaming effect of mainstream media to religious individuals (Hoover 1988, 241-242; 1990, 136-137; Shanahan et al. 1999, 83-99; Morgan et al. 1990, 13-30; Umble 1990, 141-155). There is some research on the audience size of religious television (presented in Linderman 1996, 93-96), but the problem is that the estimates are not consistent due to the various methods and definitions. The highest estimates of audience ratings show 50 per cent (130 million) of total tv-viewers watch religious television, while the lowest finds only five percent (10 to 20 million) watch religious television (Hoover 1988, 63; Linderman 1996, 94).<sup>22</sup> Also the top-viewed single programs have been rated (Linderman 1996, 95; Steinmetz 1987, 14-15). The top syndicated religious programs were watched by 21 per cent of the audience (at least six minutes) in two weeks, while the rating doubled when the period was a whole month (Steinmetz 1987, 14-15).

The effects of religious television have been considered from two perspectives: individual audience members, and on the perspective of the society in general. There are various works done on these types of effects (listed in for example Linderman 1996, 96-100), but the two conclusions seem to have much in common. The actual effects as tools of evangelism are usually considered as poor, but paradoxically the "electronic church," as a tool of political (conservative rightist) mobilization, is usually considered as "significant". This inconsistency between the conclusions is striking, and would need further discussion.

Applying uses and gratification analysis on religious television Kim (1986) shows that the main reasons for watching religious television are not for entertainment and information, but those of parasocial interaction and belief system maintenance - thus community building. These are the unique motifs of religious television compared to secular media gratifications (Kim 1986, 244). The importance of audience research, especially in the area of Christian audiovisual media is stressed particularly in Evangelical circles. For this reason, some instructions have been published on how to do an audience research (see for example Engel 1980). Some communication ministries also perform audience research regularly.

### 1.6.7 Previous Descriptive Media Theory and Modelling Approaches

Biernatzki (1978, 4-7) has found a typology of Christian communications with three functions or goals. They are 1. Christian enculturation (or catechesis, to teach Christian morality and culture, social rules of the Christian community), 2. Christian evangelization (proclamation of the Gospel, also through mass media), 3. Christian leavening ("subtle, long-term influence of the Church on the values and norms of the secular cultures of the world so that they gradually come to

resemble Christian values and norms".) According to Biernatzki, the most important arena of influence is television, because, of all these functions, television has predominant effects and role. Viggo Sogaard has explicitly used the term "Christian Communication Theory" (Sogaard 1986, 64) in order to distinguish Christian communication from any other purpose of communicating. Basically it means to take into account a spiritual dimension (thus theology in cognitive terms) in the communication process (Sogaard 1986, 77).

To build normative models of Christian communication or apply secular ones to fit religious ends of communication has been carried out since the 1970's, particularly in the USA. These models are at best systematic approaches similar to PR, or propaganda studies (for example applications of Congruence theory). An example of such a model is Kraft's Ten Basic Principles applied into Christian communication (in Sogaard 1986, 95-98).<sup>23</sup> At worst, these models are collections of theological anecdotes and single findings of communications studies (for example Butler & Smith Principles in Sogaard 1986, 98-99). Other models listed by Sogaard (1986, 100-107) apply the relationship between theology and communication studies in different ways. Common in all these models is the increased emphasis on the active audience approach and the holistic understanding of the communications process.

These approaches are like macro-models for Christian normative theory. They do not say much about the particular combination of theological and community goals of communication. Common for all these normative considerations were dependency on the Holy Spirit, receptor orientation, person-centeredness (Jesus example), process orientation, incarnation as ideal model of communication, concern about the effects, and inculturation. None of these models can fully include all these dimensions, but they are rather useful in various settings (Sogaard 1986, 138-140).

In recent decades, there has been a continuing tendency between religious communicators and scholars to move towards a deeper understanding of the audience, rather than the monological and propagandist models dominant in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Emmanuel 1999, 165).

The example presented by Sogaard (1986) shows that results of theological understanding and results of contemporary communications research seem to be difficult, if not impossible to combine. The biggest problem is to demarcate; at which point does the theological analysis "incarnate" and relate into the communication theory. It seems that such a synthesis is either emphasized more towards theology (see Chapter 3.1 "Communication and Theology") or towards communication studies, while theology is seen as subordinate to the communications approach. My solution for the dilemma is to give theology a particular role as normative cause in the whole issue of religious media communication, while the communication studies approach reflects more the structures and cultural forms of the phenomenon.

One of the latest approaches to communication theory on religion can be seen in Dominic Emmanuel's work (1999) in which he presents various theoretical and modeling (normative) approaches to religious media. Harold Ellens (1974) has listed different models of religious broadcasting on a descriptive basis in order to make models on the various styles of religious broadcasters. These models

use metaphors and Biblical concepts to illustrate what particular broadcasters have been doing. Ellens' models are an important attempt to try to systematize approaches in particular cases, but yet they lack a more general theoretical framework from which the concepts would be derived and to which they could provide some deeper reflection on the systematics of religious media communication. Ellens' models reflect on particular religious formats, but his work also relies heavily on the historical approach. Ellens has found four predominant models in religious broadcasting in America, which are (according to interpretation of Emmanuel 1999, 156-160):

- 1) The Pulpit model (the preacher is the program)
- 2) Mighty Acts of God -model (supernatural encounter with God)
- 3) Instructional model (teaching, documentary, drama)
- 4) Leaven model (religious spots)

Robert White (in Martínez-de-Toda 1999) has distinguished four levels of religious communication:

- 1) The indirect communication between God (the transcendent, the ultimate mystery) and the person through signs, symbols, prayers, rituals and the paradox.
- 2) To show to others that God is telling them something through specific symbols (spiritual direction).
- 3) To teach the basics of religious instruction and the signifying symbols through which God communicates to us.
- 4) To teach how theology is rational.

Robert White has also developed something which is called "Universal models of religious broadcasting" (Emmanuel 1999, 161- 165). The four institutionalized models are:

- 1) Religious broadcasting as part of the public sphere
- 2) Religious broadcasting of revivalist evangelical movements
- 3) Religious broadcasting controlled by, and serving the needs of, an institutional church
- 4) Religious broadcasting as 'alternative' media and protagonist of social change.

*The first* model is related to public service religious broadcasting, which sees religion from a cultural perspective as a component of supply for the common good. Religious proselytizing is ruled out in this model. This model sees Christ in culture rather than above or in opposition to it (For various "Christ and Culture -settings" see Chapter 3.1.5.2). (Emmanuel 1999, 161.)

*The second* model is of the predominant televangelism, uses of mass media to seek converts and present the public role of Evangelical Christianity.

*The third* model implies an idea that established churches can have their own broad- and narrowcasting systems. Programming is heavily concentrated on the traditions of a particular church. The goal is to support local congregations as a pastoral tool. (White in Emmanuel 1999, 163.)

*The fourth* model is religious media as ‘alternative media’ as protagonist of social change and redemption of the oppressed and poor. The model includes audience participation on production. The contents emphasized are popular movements or criticism of the powerful, the local and national emphasis on music, and grassroots Christian communities and their popular religious piety. (White in Emmanuel 1999, 164.) The fourth model comes close to liberation theology, but primarily it is a communitarian approach to both religious and mainstream media (see communitarian approach, Chapter 4.5.1).

White’s models are closest to the goals of this research, while he distinguishes a more systematic typology in relation to mass media, various Christian traditions and institutions and authority (vs. grass roots involvement). My approach follows the direction opened by White, rather than that of Ellens.

### **1.6.8 Televangelism Reconsidered - a Scandal of Misbehaviour, Misinterpretation and Misconceptualization**

The best known case of religious media communication is the phenomenon usually called “televangelism” or “electronic church” in the USA.<sup>24</sup> Virtually all mainstream media research on religious media from the 80’s is about televangelism, and is usually concerned with its negative religio-political and financial struggles. But televangelism has ceased to be an inspiring topic since then, and it is outdated at the moment. The interest in televangelism was also huge because of the implications that televangelists had a political agenda, too. But televangelism was also analyzed, from a sociological point of view, as being an interesting case of the new “mediated society”. This came about because of the televangelist’s ability to generate mediated communities.

By the end of the decade, following 1980, there was a considerable boom of academic doctoral dissertations in (mostly theological) colleges and universities on religious media communication. This coincided with the end of the golden era of televangelists, and fuelled interest towards theological analysis of the topic with attention to the contributions of communications theory. This research was oriented towards questions of how to apply mass media for Christian communication and to develop systematic models of Christian communication (Christian media theory; see for example Sogaard 1986, Jørgensen 1986, with special reference to theology of communication). The main attention of the thesis was dedicated to televangelism (Kim 1986 and Frankl 1984) and the mainline churches use of broadcasting (Steinmetz 1987).

William F. Fore has been one of the leading critics of the genre (Hoover 1988, 63). Fore performed an extensive critical analysis of both the secular televised world-view and that of televangelists as compared to the original (mainline understanding of) Christian world view (see for example Fore 1990a, 135-146; 1990b, 51-71). The conflicts are obvious, and Fore sees televangelism as a part of the continuum of commercial television in the spirit of Neil Postman and others. Fore has also criticized television as a medium in general from the perspective of Christianity (1987; 1993, 55-65)

More recently, the alternative of presenting a more understanding view on televangelism has arisen. At the beginning this was somewhat rare, but later when

the ritual approach became predominant and the critical tide was proven to be unfruitful, the whole paradigm changed. Examples of reconsideration in understanding the uses of televangelism as a genuine religious ritualism; identity and communalism were found for example in Hoover 1988, 98-114, 154-177, 207-245; Goethals 1981 (tv as ritual); Alexander 1994 63-94; 1997, 194-208). The previous societal and historical deterministic explanations have been transformed into more cultural explanations and analysis (Hoover 1997, 295). The new, more communitarian approach on televangelism was also an outcome of both the moral and political (and financial as an outcome of those) crises facing televangelists, who then turned more towards community construction (being shepherds for their own flocks) rather than activism (Alexander 1994, 157).

Some understanding of televangelists was provided by Thorndike (1987, 174-177) for example, in his recognizing the internal differences of the concept (not all are money-begging, reactionary right-wing fundamentalists) as well as recognizing that televangelists provide the only means of religion for those who cannot attend a local community church. The growth of televangelism can also be seen as a sign of successful strategies and practices. Televangelism and religious television should not be used synonymously because a plurality exists (Bruce 1990, 40).

A shift of paradigm from the critical perspective took place in Alexander's approach to televangelism as a ritual search for community (Alexander 1994).

"The electronic churches may be criticized because of their message, but they have fully understood that there can be no program unless it expresses the life of the Christian community and returns the viewers to that community." (Babin 1991, 196.)

On the contrary, mainline churches have largely failed to understand the significance of identification and community while emphasizing doctrinal orthodoxy and the ethics of communication (see "Failure of Mainline Protestantism in Television", Chapter 3.3.2.2).

But yet, few scholars have defended televangelism or the electronic church. The most predominant work is that of Ben Armstrong's "the Electric church" (1979). This positive approach is understandable, because Armstrong served as Executive Secretary of the National Religious Broadcasters, the predominant media organization of the Evangelical community. Some additional, single comments by major Evangelical broadcasters have been briefly cited: more as anecdotes or as elements of serious discussion in the works to reveal the rationale and arguments of televangelists (see for example Abelman et al. 1985, 99). There are also some findings that disprove the argument that religious television has a significant content of overt political activism (Abelman et al. 1985, 109).

Televangelism has mainly been analyzed from a sociological perspective (Thorndike 1987 saw electric church as an outcome of the evangelical anxiety and frustration in the face of secularization and modernization, for example page 177), with a critical-theological approach (or in combination of the two, for example Horsfield 1984), and by methods of content analysis (for example Abelman et al. 1985; Lloyd 1988)

On the effects on actual church attendance of the electronic church, there is contradictory evidence. According to a nation-wide survey (Gaddy et al 1985,

123-148) people who frequently watch religious television, attend less church services. These results would seem to support a so called “functional similarity” hypothesis, which means that religious television is a substitute for attending to church (Gaddy et al. 1985, 128). There are also counter-arguments - if not evidence. (Evidence for this research is shown in Armstrong 1979, 154-155). The answer for this criticism is that people who participate in program production are active people of local congregations as well as active church attendants. It is also likely that the core of the audience of religious programs consists of those who are already active in their local community. Religious broadcasters also urge their audience to participate within local communities. Religious television thus reaches also those who cannot or will not attend services in the actual Christian communities (see about the relationship between actual institution and mediated ministry, Chapter 4.3.2).

## 1.7 Today’s Tendencies, Perspectives and Contexts

During the last two decades religion has, in a manner of speaking, popped up as a fruitful field of communication research of its own. This has become possible because of the paradigmatic diversity that occurs within the field of communications research. Earlier, the Marxist orientation that religion was not a relevant topic at all was the leading position held particularly in European Communication Studies. If religion was mentioned, it was seen as a part of the Western, hegemonic superstructure identified with political conservatism and capitalism. In the United States the main interest was directed towards commercial influencing and political propaganda, or at least as a loose framework of orientation.

The manifesto of the “new research on religion and media” proposed by the Media, Religion and Culture -paradigm is found from the article of Hoover and Venturelli (1996, 251-265). It states that traditionally the relationship between the sacred and the secular has been understood from the conventional dichotomical views of Durkheim, Marx and Weber from the perspective of secularization paradigm in the modernist spirit. This has been the approach of communication studies as well. What Hoover and Venturelli suggest (1996, 255) is that secularization is a transformation in religious consciousness rather than an extra-religious consciousness. This means that the sacred and the secular are to be understood as interlaced, rather than polarities opposing one another. The public place of religiousness (not so much of religion, but religiousness) is modern media and ritual use of it. For example many studies of televangelism can be said to show that televangelism is an example of this overlapping or multi-dimensionality of the two spheres (Hoover & Venturelli 1996, 257, 259). A multi-dimensional approach provides ways of understanding and analyzing religion in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives, which can be read to the texts simultaneously. It means that there is no inherently secular or sacred communication, but rather that these dimensions are interlaced with each other. But it does not mean that the dichotomical method would not be useful in showing the dynamics between various dimensions or layers of communication.

José Martínez-de-Toda has listed the characteristics of “new religiosity through media” (1999):

- 1) The new religiosity gets away from rigid dogmas.
- 2) There are new meanings for old (religious) words
- 3) Deism (God as a superior non-contributing power) and pantheism are increasing.
- 4) Certain components of institutional religion are favoured (God, religiousness), others not (institutional form, Jesus).
- 5) Differences in spirituality depend on generational differences more than anything else.
- 6) The old and new religiosities are strictly different. The former was based on duty and morality, new religiosity is concentrating on pleasure and voluntarism.
- 7) Religion is more about spirituality than doctrine.
- 8) Lack of adult (authority) models of youth generates a double crisis of belief and otherness.

As noted earlier, from the late 80's to early 90's we have testified to the rise of a new paradigm related to the communication studies of religion. The main event occurred in 1993, when the first international scientific conference entitled *Media, Religion and Culture* was held at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. Since then conferences have been arranged in 1996, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and in 1999 at the University of Edinburgh. These conferences have brought together numerous scholars and researchers from around the world who were interested in media and religion. Among those attending were respected scholars representing mainstream communications research, for example Robert White, Gregor Goethals, Gabriel Bar-Haim, Knut Lundby, Clifford Christians, Jesús Martín-Barbero, Cees Hamelink, Janice Peck, Stewart Hoover, Lynn Schofield Clark, Peter Horsfield, and Frances Forde Plude.

Based on the *Media, Religion and Culture* conference in Uppsala in 1996, there was a book entitled *"Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture"* (Hoover and Lundby 1997) published by Sage. It rapidly became very famous and can be seen as a kind of paradigmatic statement for this field of study. The four core issues of the International Study Commission on Media, Religion and Culture are the following ones:<sup>25</sup>

- 1) In what ways can we say that the media have come to occupy the spaces traditionally occupied by religion?
- 2) What is the relationship of religious authority to modes of symbolic practice?
- 3) How must we re-think the relationship between religion and the media?
- 4) What does this new situation imply about epistemology?

For example the MRC Conference in Edinburgh was sponsored by various Christian organizations, which means unofficially that the paradigm is closely linked to mainline Christianity. Nowadays, the connections of the study commission with the Roman Catholic tradition are presented more explicitly.<sup>26</sup> The MRC study commission has also reached a more established position within mainstream media research. It has gained the status of its own division in the annual

conferences of International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). The Media, Religion and Culture Study Commission is a loose organizing structure, which also maintains a discussion group on the Internet.<sup>27</sup>

### 1.7.1 The Premises of the Media, Religion and Culture Paradigm

The key premises of the Media, Religion and Culture -paradigm can be listed in the following.

- 1) The media is seen as a very important field in post-modern society where people get information and models for their values and beliefs.
- 2) "Religious" is a more relevant concept than "religion". It means that postmodern 'tutti-frutti' religion is present in a media culture context. Institutionalized religion (Christianity) has only a marginal role from this perspective.
- 3) Religion in the media is found both through narrative and content analysis.
- 4) It does not have any systematic model of the religious nature of modern media.
- 5) The MRC does not have a common methodology and mostly it is a loose media philosophic construction and based on the writings of, for example, Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong and other media philosophers.
- 6) The MRC warmly welcomes any theological research or analysis of media, because through theological concepts the awareness of modern media reaches religious institutions. The MRC is unofficially closely linked to religious institutions through personal contacts and the backgrounds of persons involved. Officially the MRC does not represent the views of any faith group, though it has a cosmology compatible with mainline Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant.
- 7) It has a quite stable worldview and any major "threat" to religious order seems to be the development of media technology and the change of culture, which change brings with it. That change is implicitly seen as negative, and as a threat to religious (Christian) institutions.

Stability is provided by implicit and functional religion, which is always there and merely finds new ways of expression. Orientation towards implicit religious functions of media culture is two-sided: on the one hand it implicitly creates stability, on the other hand it is mainly seen as a threat towards institutionalized (traditional) religion: in this sense paradigm represents even an epistemology of functionalist sociology (Martin & Nakayama 1999, 3-4).

The paradigmatic characteristics of the Media, Religion and Culture study commission can be listed as follows:

- it uses theology and theological context in communication studies
- it builds bridges between cultural studies, communication studies and theology
- it basically assumes that human nature takes religion a priori

- the paradigm implies concern about the crisis of institutional Christianity
- the paradigm recognizes convergence between religion and media
- the research goals are to identify implicit religious meanings of the secular media which can then be used among religious organizations for media education and as elements of teaching
- the methodology is eclectic, but encourages strongly interpretative and narrative based research
- the theological analysis of secular media is also applied in various ways, also from the basis of Biblical or practical theology
- the most important research topic is still explicitly religious communication or communication of religious institutions
- it is heavily interested in media ethics and values
- it tries to show the implicitly religious nature of secular media and media texts
- it has received some positive feedback among mainstream communications research: some of the most important books are published by prestigious scientific publishers such as Sage Publications.
- paradigm is mainly a kind of loose network of media philosophers, theologians, educators and communications researchers
- paradigm encourages all kind of media research linked to religion, provided that it has some kind of "ethnographic ethics" (it means that it understands religion from its own standpoints as an epistemological system) yet it is open to critical tones as well
- paradigm has some critical emphasis but mainly towards values and moral of secular media and propagandist religious communication
- paradigm has a strong connotation of moral and values because of a close but yet unofficial relationship with institutional Christianity
- in principle it is open to religions other than Christianity, but because the participants and the world view is that of Christianity, in practice, participants from other religions are few, and those few come from 'other Abrahamic faiths' such as Judaism, Islam and new religious movements such as Mormons
- terminology comes from cultural studies and theology and it is close to everyday language – the research questions are quite open as well
- it has not provided much empirical study, but is concentrated within loose essays and conferencing on the field
- it is still in its early stages and has just begun to crystallize its basic strategy and argumentation

The persons involved use a lot of energy to show the implications of modern media to religion and to reveal the religious nature of modern media. The basis is a broad and functional definition about religion.

### 1.7.2 The Relationship Between Functional Religion and Substantial Religion

The concept of functional religion comes close to modern culturalist communications research, which uses the concepts of ritual and myth to explain the use and interpretation of media texts of wide range (for example Real 1996).

“All experiences of media culture in varying degrees entail active ritual participation and mythical perception” (Real 1996, 89).

What is the relationship between functional religion and substantial religion? Shortly it is a functional relationship, which transcends the cosmological horizons of these two spheres. Substantial religion fulfils the religious functions of media culture. This functional relationship binds these levels of analysis strongly together.

Functional religion is clearly an audience or interpreter’s category, while substantial is the position or intention taken by the author or producer. Functional religiosity is the broadest level of religion and religiousness. A substantial level of religion can be included in functional religion and any further institutional level is built on the substantial level. These two positions, functional and substantial, meet each other in media text. The mediated text bridges the gap between these two cosmological views. Function implies there is a need or desire that needs to be met; with a substance that has some aspects capable of fulfilling that need. Substantial religion is designed for fulfilling a human religious function. In principle, substantial religion can be functional religion as well. Then substance and function meet in text, which succeed to produce relevant (religious) meanings to the co-author or interpreter. When a person accepts the preferred reading, or even to some extent negotiated reading of the text (about the reception theory of media texts see for example Real 1996, 92-108), we may say that producer and co-author have to some extent agreed with the meaning of the text. We can then argue that theological reception has occurred.

Because religion has been marginalized in mainstream media, religion has defined mainstream media as having a functionally religious arena. Because of this, religion must be taken into account in the field of functional religion (in the media as well). Functional religion is thus an emancipatory project of mainline churches to become more relevant and more credible in the field of media.

The concept of functional religion is very useful in the analysis of ritual and implicit religious aspects of modern media. But there are some tensions left in the relationship between “substantial religion” and the functional, “ritually mediated” religion. Namely, a functional understanding about religion bears an idea that the core of religion lies in the functions, whether individual, cultural or social, which it fulfils. It means that primacy is in the need of (any kind of) religion, not on religious content (which particular religion or what does it teach). It means that in principle it is the same whether one has moderate beliefs of liberal Protestantism or those holding a militant interpretation of Islam, because they both serve the same function. There is thus, a tension between religious substance and religious function.

The starting point of a functional view of religion is “homo religiosus”, which means that religiousness and the fulfilling of that function, is the source of reli-

gion, not anything which is outside of man (see for example Turner in Bocoock et al. 1985, 238-239). The related concept to functional religion is "symbolic realism". It is a metaphysical solution, how to "take religion seriously" in contemporary society without need to deal with religious truth claims (Turner in Bocoock et al. 1985, 238). This means that religious is taken as objectively true in its consequences: namely in worship, its morals, spirituality, in what it means and causes to individuals, communities, culture and the whole society. This is a way of legitimizing religion again, but without the transcendental truth-connection. But on the contrary, this means that religious practice or institution becomes "god" and the object of belief instead of the transcendental entity that is behind it. This ironically leads to the repetition of a Durkheimian reductionist view in a new form (Turner in Bocoock et al. 1985, 239).

There can be, however, a theistic bridge between the functional and substantial definitions of religion. Namely, when we understand that human religiosity has its divine origin in the creation of man, and is to be fulfilled in the relationship with (Christian) God and the transcendental. This means that human religiosity is a framework and determining structure for the "marketplace of religion". However, the need can be ultimately met only in relation to a Christian God and through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther describes human religiosity with the expression:

"Man seeks God, but one's own seeking takes oneself away from God" (in Ahonen 1992, 84).

So called "human religiosity" or "functional religiosity" leads Christians to seek proper contextualization in order to make the Gospel accessible to the understanding of the transcendental in that particular context (Ahonen 1992, 85).

## NOTES

- 1 Report about use of Internet by religion in the USA downloadable from site <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/index.asp>. Page read 13.8.2001.
- 2 <http://www.nr.org/CC/article/0,,PTID308778|CHID568026|CIID1424136,00.html>. Page read 2.12.2002.
- 3 See for example theistic communication theory -effort in speech communication by Fred Fitch, 26.11.1999.
- 4 I assume this in a very general level without deeper epistemological studies). The core content of faith remains, even though the manifestation (form) may vary from context to context.
- 5 On different approaches to religious media see for example Lundby 4.6.1986.
- 6 I use the concept "faith", because religious communication is always an expression of the ultimate faith of the community, it is not merely cognitive beliefs, but mixed with ritual and mystic elements as such.
- 7 On determination I mean shaping, enabling and limiting relationship of the environment to the sub-system, which has contingent relationship to the environment.

- <sup>8</sup> About such a critique see for example Luhmann 1984, 11; see also relationship between substantial and functional religion, Chapter 1.7.2.
- <sup>9</sup> More about Islam and media, for example Mowlana 21.7.1999; 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> I cannot present here an extensive theological definition of Root-Christianity, but as a practical and methodological definition I assume that what is common are the common theological entities and conceptions in relation to salvation, redemption, sin, the gospel, and the transcendental, for example.
- <sup>11</sup> All communication reflects its implicit discourse and values and in this sense, there is no such thing as “providing pure information”, but certain worldview is always referred to. In this sense publicity itself (even though “only neutral and informational”) is seen as an important goal for religious institution.
- <sup>12</sup> Churches Curse Broadcast ruling, <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,33479,00.html>. Page read 11.1.2000.
- <sup>13</sup> [http://www.yle.fi/yleista/pelis\\_ylelaki.shtml](http://www.yle.fi/yleista/pelis_ylelaki.shtml). Page read 29.11.2002.
- <sup>14</sup> A limitation of the media ritualism approach is that it concentrates on a rather static state of affairs, and it is not so much able to explain change, which is an important dimension of mediated communication. It means that when new information is transferred, it generates change in mental states and in action. This cannot easily be explained through the ritualistic view. In brief: the ritual model is applied to generate common epistemological ground in which to speak about mainstream media and religious media in the same analysis. Ritualism also explains the operational mechanisms of communication.
- <sup>15</sup> Tradition of Christian communities can be understood as a form of “lived theology or fixed theology” which means that theology is seen as the primary determinate of characteristics of religious communities.
- <sup>16</sup> An analogous approach to mine has been performed for example by Peter Beyer (1994) who analyzed the universal systematics of globalization and religious reactions to it even among different religious traditions: conservative and liberal Christianity, political, revolutionary Islam in Iran and religious Zionism in Israel. In these strikingly different cases he found similar dynamics in action. Still Beyer could write a wonderful and detailed ethnography of these cases simultaneously showing the universal mechanism of globalization at work.
- <sup>17</sup> I am bound to use the concept of tradition in two very distinct ways. In a very general sense the concept refers to the kind of macro-level phenomenon, which is, for example, the Catholic tradition as a whole. In this sense, the concept of tradition includes also theology. In a more narrow sense, which I use here, religious community can be at some level of analysis divided into cognitive theology (as official teaching of the elite or “cognoscenti” of the community) and into tradition of the community as “lived theology”, as the “real culture” in contrast to “ideal culture” (see for example Crapo 1993, 31). In fact, there is no common agreement or description about the relation-

ship between theology and tradition of the community (see for example McGrath 1999).

<sup>18</sup> The special case is the USA, which historically has not had a system of state religion, but rather a free marketplace of religion. So hegemony or dominance should be understood in different terms in this case. There is a wide agreement that evangelical Protestant communities are the most vital and growing part of Christianity in the USA. It might thus be said to have "hegemonic position" in a sense.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.hit.fi/~lehtonen/intlviitx.html>. Page read 25.11.1999.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.utu.fi/hum/historia/kh/iopas/ongelmat.html>. Page read 25.11.1999.

<sup>21</sup> See the Web-page of Religious Communications Association, <http://gcc.bradley.edu/com/faculty/lamoureux/rsca/>. Page read 21.3.2002.

<sup>22</sup> On problems in methodology and reliability in measuring the audience of religious television as well of an overall significance of such ratings, see Hoover 1988 63-72; 1990, 109-129.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of such models can be found from Sogaard (1986, 95-107).

<sup>24</sup> Even though limited, the case of American televangelism has relevance as the most important and illustrative case of religious media communication for both methodology and theory. On the global relevance of the American case of televangelism, see Hoover1997, 290-291). Televangelism is a unique outcome and US configuration of the more general systematics of religious media communication (analyzed more extensively in Chapters 1.6.8. and 3.4).

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.jmcommunications.com/english/commissionindex.html>. Page read 29.11.2002.

<sup>26</sup> The network is now called "International Catholic Fellowship for Research in Media, Religion and Culture". <http://www.jmcommunications.com> Page read 17.09.2002

<sup>27</sup> Listserv in the address: <http://www.jmcommunications.com/english/commissionindex.html>. Page read 17.09.2002

## **2 THE CHALLENGE OF SECULARIZATION AND MODERNIZATION**

Proper understanding of religious media communication from a sociological and historical perspective requires an introduction and a framework. Religion in the West is strongly influenced by processes that we know as modernization and secularization. Religion has gradually eroded from its previous hegemonic position to one of a mere functional sub-system within the society. But the intention for universal authority and resulted communication dynamics remains. In this contemporary context, religion seeks creative new means of re-establishing or increasing its relevance through media performance. Forces, dynamics and processes of Luhmannian differentiation of modern societies helps to explain the phenomenon called religious media communication from a sociological perspective. We will now look at the processes and response strategies of religion. This chapter provides a basic understanding of the influence that modernization and secularization have on religion, as well as the basic sociological dynamics of Christianity today. This overall context is further operationalized in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 deals with religious communities themselves (reflection basically with language of theology in particular empirical cases), as well as in contexts of particular nation states as religious media systems. Chapter 4 provides synthesis from the perspective of the sub-system of media itself (with approach of media studies).

### **2.1 The Modernization and Secularization Process and Religion**

The phenomenon, which we know as “modernization”, is predominantly a Western phenomenon. Modernization in this context consists of the overlapping dimensions of Western Christianity with its separation of spiritual and secular authority and individualism (see for example Huntington1998). Actually, the Protestant Reformation played a destructive role in the collapse of the hegemony of Christendom, because by destroying the unity of Christendom, it opened the doors

for competing churches and competing religious systems and truths. Since Reformation, the unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church required the definition “Roman Catholic” to distinguish it from competing churches. Then with the rise of the modern nation state, the churches attempted to reproduce the model of Christendom at the national level, and all the territorial national churches fell under control of the Absolutist State. The principle *cuius regio eius religio* soon turned into the principle of religious tolerance and neutrality towards privatized religion, as the liberal state’s preferred form of religion. (Casanova 1994, 21-22.)

Separation between the “temporal sword” and the “spiritual sword” presented by Luther led to the polarization of religious and secular powers. Luther’s conclusion between the relationship of spiritual and societal powers was that “The City of God requires Civil Society”. After this, political configurations to the solutions between spiritual and earthly powers varied from Caesaro-Papism to secularism and everything between. Religious freedom and plurality are secularist answers to the problem of religion. A pluralist and secular state establishes

“the marketplace of religion” in which “every sect is a moral and political check upon its neighbor. In this setting, peaceful competition exists”. (Keané 2000, 10-12.)

In principle, religion and state relationships can be structured along the two polarities. Namely, the state is either neutral, between the various sects, (because nowadays all religions are virtually sects) or there is an established religion and the state persecutes other religions on behalf of the established religion. This is the case for example in Georgia, Ukraine and Belarussia, and maybe in Russia to some extent (Hirst 2000, 105-107). This would mean a return to the dominant status religion held in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was a time of religious wars, because all groups had claims of universal authority. Nowadays most religious groups accept the co-existence of other groups and claim authority only over their own members, seeking for themselves only the common rights needed to propagate doctrine and seek converts (see the Marketplace of Religion, Chapter 2.7). Paradoxically, the established churches have probably suffered the most from the processes of secularization, since the secular state does not need them anymore, and individuals are free to go elsewhere to satisfy their religious needs. (Casanova 1994, 21-22.)

In medieval times, the conflict between the church and the new-found autonomous science and its methods was crystallized in the trial of Galileo. The conflict was not about scientific substance itself, but about the autonomy of “the Book of Nature as a legitimate, separate but yet equal epistemological way to God, along with the Book of Revelation.” This attempt by Galileo, Kepler, and Newton had differing amounts of success within various contexts. This period of Newtonian Enlightenment lasted, in Anglo-Saxon countries, until the crisis generated by Darwin’s thesis in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Upon its arrival in the European continent, this scientific enterprise became not only radical but militant with its goal to replace a religious world-view with a scientific one. This conflict led to the emergence of various militant secularist movements dedicated to battling “ignorance and religious superstition”. Comtean or Spencerian positivism was also taken as an official state ideology in some countries. In the Soviet Union secularism went to its extremist position with official atheist ideology and war

against religion by the state. Historically, Enlightenment and secularization vary within continental boundaries and within various countries in particular. (Casanova 1994, 24-25.)

Intellectual secularity is linked with the invention of the historical and cultural character of consciousness and this led to the dominance of particularity and subjectivity promoted by Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. They started to see religion (and God) as a result of environment, a subjective construction (for example Taylor 1984, 4). This notion has led to atheist cosmology and epistemology of science and to the current particular vs. universal, subjective vs. objective-debate. When emphasis is put on the constructive subject, it inevitably leads to institutional secularization, because no institution can present claims of universal truth.

But there are also examples that secularization as a sociological issue is not a single-directional process. Namely, for example in the USA, there are conservative religious communities that have gained both popularity and influence, while liberal groups have lost members (for example Keskitalo 1999, 250). Also in contemporary Russia there have been signs of religious revitalization if not outright revival (see Chapter 3.4.6). In former Soviet societies and in China there are major religious revivals (Casanova 1994, 27), as well as in some Latin American countries. These examples point to the need for a not too radical interpretation of the disappearance of institutional religion. One can thus suggest that the Weberian concept of secularization as a one-directional process, which leaves no room for transcendental religion, has therefore been disproven.

As a concept, secularization can be understood in three ways.<sup>1</sup> The concept can mean:

- 1) A differentiation of secular spheres from religious norms and institutions,
- 2) A decline of religious beliefs and practices and,
- 3) A marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere, and the loss of public relevance (Casanova 1994, 211).

There is a wide agreement about sociological secularization and the erosion of the public significance of institutional religion, particularly Christianity (see for example Casanova 1994, 6; Keane 2000, 5). Secularization is usually considered as a positive trend, which would, according to proponents of the secularist paradigm, provide a positive substitute for God and free humans to a more rational life and thereby meet their earthly experiences more realistically. For many dogmatic "secularists", secularism equals democracy, and no secularism equals no democracy - secularism is seen as societally very positive and an inevitable trend (Keane 2000, 5-6).

In the process of modernization Christian hope, as expressed in eschatology, was transformed and interpreted into concepts and a mentality of secular modernity. Human progress became a synonym for the hope of the society. In this sense, scientific humanism was an aggression towards Christianity, and in the case of conflict with the Roman Catholic church, for example, it has never officially reconciled itself with Protestant Reformation nor with Enlightenment. (Houlden 1995, 890.)

Secularization has certainly generated freedom and autonomy from religious authority. But it has also generated crisis of meaning and morals. Modernization makes life of the individual more and more insecure and unstable (for example Crapo 193, 332). There is no agreement that sociological secularization linked with modernization and globalization would also mean individual secularization. On the contrary, the modern and postmodern eras have testified to a huge increase in various religious or quasi-religious movements. And there has been a rise of demand for syncretist religiously inspired beliefs, which can be called neo-paganism, rather than secularization (for example Newbiggin in Keskitalo 1999, 246). Given that religiosity is a fundamental need and aspect of human life (whether in atheist reductionist or theistic form), there is no ground for argument of overall and individual secularization. In particular, ritualistic religiosity without cognitive object of belief is vital and increasing (Bocock 1985, 208).

Paradoxically, modernization has created problems that it has not been able to solve by itself. For example biogenetics, transplant surgery, and cloning. All are issues in which religion has been able (among very few others) to generate expertise. This has led others, within the sub-systems of society, to at least be willing to consider the religious view on these controversial matters, even though they do not necessarily agree on the conclusions (Crouch 2000, 93).

As a result, there is a search for new integration of culture and religion. Historically this connection has proven to be crucial for any community to survive. There are no theoretical reasons why new synthesis would not be possible between the scientific secular world-view and transcendental religion (Dawson 1948, 217-218). Also, Émile Durkheim (with otherwise a view of religion which can be thought of as being reductionist) recognized the need for "the sacred and profane", without which separation no society can survive (Durkheim 1980). As a basis for society, some kind of religious values should be legitimized: for example the Ten Commandments form a relevant value basis for dominantly Christian societies (Keskitalo 1999, 254). An institutional religious challenger for secular society can be seen in political Islam, which is increasing its influence even within Western societies, for example in Great Britain. The British press has advised Muslims to assimilate into Western society in all ways, excluding religion, which they were told should be kept private instead. Even so, this implies a misinterpretation of Islam, which in and of itself cannot separate public from private. Islam views religion and contemporary life as one entity. This causes Islam to inevitably maintain a public political movement. Religious and political authority are seen as inseparable. (Keskitalo 1999, 258-266.)

If secularization is taken for granted as an irreversible functionalist process, then one can refute all attempts of privatized religions to make public contributions on the basis of their personal religious morality. Religious communities can also resist differentiation and marginalization, yet this approach seems doomed to failure in the present historical context. For example, the most powerful religious institution, the Roman Catholic church, has surrendered in front of the secularization process. (Casanova 1994, 212-213, 221-223.) But this does not mean communities cannot challenge and react to the process of secularization by utilizing the various strategies presented in this study. Religious media must be understood basically as an attempt to try to re-establish public relevance in a privatized, secularized and functionally differentiated society.

### 2.1.1 Liberal and Conservative Response Strategies of Religion

The decline of the public role of religion is an essential component of the overall secularization trend. In political studies it has been argued that religion should be guaranteed a legitimate private role so that everyone would have freedom for religious worship - in private. The secularist project well succeeded to replace religion from the public but instead generated a state of "existential uncertainty" which leaves room for return of the sacred. Religious institutions will continue to play a crucial role in society, especially in times of personal crisis. And a contemporary rebirth of God in public discourse has taken place through protest in two ways. *The first* way is the social gospel, by which God becomes the God of minorities, the poor and the oppressed. *The second* option is to emphasize an other-worldly religion (being born-again, committed etc.). This other-worldly religion becomes public through public witness, crusades, public-spectacles, miracles, etc. (Keane 2000, 9, 12.)

As noted, of all religions, Christianity has been affected the most through modernization. This modernization process has caused the question of response or accommodation to become very central in all Christian traditions. In the Christian context, there are virtually two strategic directions of theological orientation, which stress either the sacred tradition and revelation (conservative theology) or the cosmological and contextual assimilation of the tradition to the modern human condition (liberal theology). These orientations transcend all major Christian traditions. Both liberal and conservative strategies have options of social mobilization in separate social (but religiously motivated) movements. The classical problem of religious performance happens when religiously motivated performance movements seek institutionalization as a measurement of their success; they tend to transform to mere institutions in a particular functional area and lose their religious content, because movements need to submit to the values of other functional subsystems to some extent (Beyer 1994, 107).

One can express the division between liberal and conservative also as tension between the transcendental and the immanent. Christianity is about the incarnation of transcendental into immanent. So, either one must not be ignored. Conservatives tend to emphasize the transcendental and its universal and authoritative nature over immanent. Liberals, in turn, tend to emphasize how the transcendental is to be adapted into the language of the immanent so that it could be as communicative and as relevant to humans as possible. So, the problem with conservatism is that it tends to have lots of religion but little relevance to modern society. Liberalism tends to have a lot in common to modern society, but little religious energy behind it. The split between conservatives and liberals is also visible and very relevant to mediated religious communication. Both conservatives and liberals strive to establish the new public relevance of religion, but they have very different opinions on how it should be done.

There are three key cosmological strategies through which Christianity has reacted to the challenge of modernity. They are *theological liberalism*, *theological fundamentalism* and *theological conservatism*. The previous two (liberalism and fundamentalism), against common belief, are actually related to each other. According to Wilbert R. Schenk (in Ahonen 2000, 198-199) both fundamentalism and liberal-

ism are attempts to escape from the healthy tension between faith and culture. The problem of theological liberalism is that it interprets the work of God in the world as immanent phenomena, which is internal and integral to culture. It also believes that God's Kingdom comes on earth through human progress. This uncritical (technological) optimism transforms Christianity only into general ethics and development. The liberal bias is total identification with culture. Fundamentalistic bias on the other hand is that it isolates itself to old cultural forms and gives them status as transcendental revelation. Fundamentalism is both defensive reaction towards change, and aggressive struggle for change towards religious values. Paradoxically, fundamentalists can also be innovative in utilizing modern instruments, and the success of American fundamentalists is mostly due to the effective utilization of electronic media.

Fundamentalists actually do the same as liberals: they try to prove credibility of the Bible by human rationality, but they are often bound with traditional cultural forms, which they see as the closest immanent estimate of "the transcendental good" (Beyer 1994, 138). Even though culture and the gospel must assimilate, to some extent, there must be a tension remaining between the two. This is because Christianity is a universal phenomenon, beyond culture, and so is identity of a Christian. Faith can be put into a genuine cultural form, but it can also lead to renewal of culture. (Ahonen 2000, 199-201.)

As performance options to modernization, globalization and secularization, both liberal and conservative options are as likely. But which option appears depends on the multiple factors of each particular case (Beyer 1994, 138). As an evaluation of success, one can summarize that the conservative option can gain more public influence, but is limited to particular national cases. In turn, the liberal option has a greater chance of becoming institutionalized in a global culture, since it is compatible with universal human values. (Beyer 1994, 204.) Let us look at both options more closely.

### **2.1.2 Liberal Option**

Liberal strategy or liberal theology can be caricatured as an attempt to "secularize theology" by reducing the sacral character of Jesus, which is called demythologizing and liberation from sacral tradition (Lott 1988, 71). It emphasizes the cosmological and epistemological this-worldliness of Christianity and reinterprets its language and world-view to those of modernity. The followers of the liberal option are ecumenical and tolerant, and see equal possibilities of salvation even in other religions. The liberal option addresses few specifically religious demands or information. This means that a liberal religion may gain much acceptance but little commitment, and it is relatively easy to substitute with secular sources. Religious function is individualized and concentrates on the positive sides of God. The minimal demands of liberal religion exclude very few and make religious benefits almost automatic. This has generated the problem of defining the core content of liberal religion and leads to a social gospel as a primary means of performance embedded in, for example, social or political liberation movements. This should prove to the society, that liberal religion leads to significant religious performance and thus relevance. The liberal option refers to

communitarian past of religion as talking about the “community” as a whole, and talking about humanity and globality as a community. Liberation theology is part of the liberal solution. The critics of liberation theology accuse them of having lost specifically religious solutions, and having provided economic and political solutions that are not relevant, either from a political or economic perspective nor from a religious perspective (bad religion, bad policy, bad economics, the common problem of applied religion). Liberation theologians have relied on other than religious sources, for example the Marxist analysis and dependency theory. But for the liberal option, mobilization of their adherents becomes a constant and serious problem. Under pluralism, adherents of liberal religion may not follow their leaders in their performance maneuvers. (Beyer 1994, 87-89.)

The key concepts of liberal religion are “peace and justice”, which indicate that liberal religion has totally accepted the core values of modernity - equality, progress, human rights, individual and collective self-determination, tolerance and even celebrity of diversity, etc. Peace implies the existence of community - globally speaking, world community, which includes all people. Liberal religion is, to a large extent, pro-systemic and it interprets religious concepts in a secular, global language. An example of such transformation is the use of the concept *metanoia*, which means religious conversion and a “change of a heart”. From a liberal perspective, this term refers to global problems of injustice in the global system. In the agenda of World Council of Churches (WCC) there lies the task of pursuing social justice throughout the world. WCC has started to emphasize theology of creation<sup>2</sup> as a central component of its official religious mandate. (Beyer 1994, 209-210, 211-213.)

The problem with the liberal performance option is that secular agents can provide equivalent services (humanitarian aid etc.). And even if the religious performance option succeeds in mobilization, the success tends to fade away, when secular options become available.<sup>3</sup> What could be particularly successful here is for liberals to welcome this outcome, since their goals are to address and solve certain social problems, “not to enforce particular religious norms”. (Beyer 1994, 156.)

It is difficult to say what is the liberal ideal. It seems that on one hand, liberals are happy with secular society and they do not want to establish a theocracy. But on the other hand, they see the lack of religious ethics and the social injustice in secular society. Certainly, liberals have difficulties in making clear, what is the ideal state for them, and what role religion should play in that ideal. For a liberal there is no particular religious theory of society, there is only “a just society” according to the tenets of the social gospel.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion one can say that a liberal religion can offer significant organizational, ideological, and motivational resources that are primarily religious, but are also non-religious, and people can use this to conceptualize “residual” problems and mobilize in order to deal with them. But usually, the results of a liberal religion are seen as rather limited due to the modern functional differentiation of society, and depending on the particular attitude of a religious sub-system (Christian community).

“The temples and the synagogues, the churches and the holy places, however, are not going to be filled to overflowing as a result. The problem of liberal religion

still is that the problems it points are real enough, but religious solutions do not attract more than another minor group of voluntary adherents". (Beyer 1994, 157, 226.)

### 2.1.3 Conservative Option

From a conservative perspective, the solution to the problem of marginalization of Christianity is to proclaim it as universal absolute truth. Criticism towards conservative religion is that claims of universality by Christianity are ignorant, arrogant or dogmatic. The conservative answer to this criticism is that also the modern rationalist world-view is committed with some particular tradition and world-view (with modernist and liberalist one) and is vulnerable to criticism as such. Most often, criticism towards conservatives comes from the circles who have adopted a modernist world-view and naively keep it only as a matter of "pure facts". If the church is going to be a missionary church, in the Western context, it must call this public conception of a contemporary culture into question. The enemy is "the dogma of autonomous reason" by modernity, which, according to conservatives, has also cheated liberal theologians. (Keskitalo 1999, 235-236.)

The core ontological and epistemological commitment of conservative theology is crystallized in Karl Barth's statement that all Christian theology must be committed to the revelation of God-in-Christ (Lott 1988, 70). Paradoxically, the conservative option is making religion the most visible today, since it is a crucial part of the modernization process. The conservative option reasserts the traditional view of the transcendence, since society ("the world") is going in the direction of evil. This means, that the conservative option does not have a problem with the transcendent, but with the trends of contemporary culture and social structure. The conservative religion contradicts modern social structures, usually when it seeks personal holism and commitment instead of functional differentiation. (Beyer 1994, 90.)

The conservative ideal is theocracy, where religious establishment is also involved in political and social issues. The second best option is a status of state religion, and the worse option is that of a persecuted minority position. Conservatives thus want to make religious rules authoritative to all society and to all individuals. In the Catholic tradition, the ideal conservative option can be expressed as

"the thesis', the ideal situation, which could only be an established church in a confessional state. The church as the depositor of divine truth could not accept the notion that error has the same rights as truth"(Casanova 1994, 182).

The second best option, the antithesis, was to accommodate itself to particular national conditions. The conservative strategies to resist the modernist erosion of world-view are cultural separatism, building alternative institutions (such as Christian schools), partial accommodation, and also claims of superiority. But in every case some form and extent of accommodation is required (Peck 1993, 74).

The liberal and secular arguments of a modern secularist liberal state may also work for conservative religious groups. Namely, it is not possible, for example, to deny Christian fundamentalists to argue for creationism to be taught in public schools. If the government would deny this, it would reveal the hidden

authoritarian and value-committed (namely anti-religion values) nature of liberal state (see for example Hirst 2000, 104-105). Conservative religious groups must thus be free to advocate their message also in the name of liberal pluralism.

In the case of the New Christian Right (NCR), a conservative religion tried to influence (and still tries) other instrumental sub-systems, such as legislation, politics and education (and media by using religious media). They said that they are not against science, but “against the too strong differentiation of scientific and religious rationalities and the effective subordination of the latter to the former”. The conservative fear is that liberal Christianity tries to gain religious performance by subordinating religious truth to the rationality of other institutional spheres. Instead, contemporary religious conservatives have found again the 19th century evangelical ideal of a holistic religious approach, which means asserting religious solutions to non-religious problems through religious performance. (Beyer 1994, 116-117.)

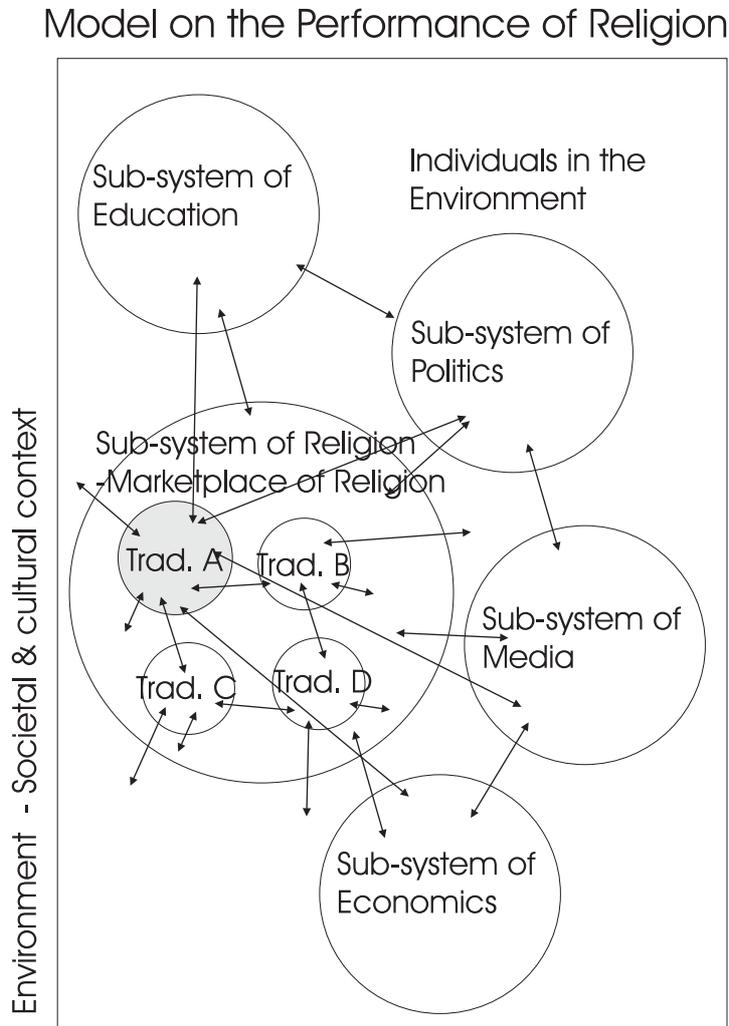
For the conservative option, media is also crucial. For example the evangelical effort to establish universality is to promote religious revival: religious claims thus gain universality through quantitative growth of the movement in religious revivals: evangelism is a tool for that. When revival occurs, using both religious and secular media to report on revival can magnify its influence. There are live radio and tv-broadcasts, webcasting, reporting via the Christian press, and even coverage from the mainstream media. This is also a strategy in establishing the universal claims of revival: because virtually everyone in the community comes to know about the revival, at least while revival is on the agenda, the mainstream audience becomes submitted to the cosmology of religion by following news on the revival. (For example a Charismatic revival in the Finnish town of Nokia, which gained international publicity. Another example is a Charismatic revival in Toronto, where there were live webcasts from Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship congregation.<sup>5</sup>

In short, conservative strategy is to generate a link between modern problems and established religious answers. In such a way, traditional religious solutions become substantiated through claimed performance validity within the differentiated sub-systems.

## **2.2 The Luhmannian Model of Differentiation of Societies and Performance of Religion through Media**

The Niklas Luhmann model on differentiation of societies into functional sub-systems lays the foundation for religious performance as well. This chapter shows the overall systematics of differentiated society and how the role of religion becomes established in it. The model shows how both autonomy and performance of religious community, in relation to other sub-systems, is possible.

## 2.2.1 Luhmannian Modernization and Differentiation of Society



PICTURE 5 illustrates the fact that the Niklas Luhmann model, on the differentiation of societies into functional sub-systems, lays the foundation for religious performance as well. This chapter shows the overall systematics of differentiated society and how the role of religion becomes established in it. The model shows how both autonomy and performance of religious community, in relation to other sub-systems, is possible.

Niklas Luhmann presents, in his universal and totalizing theory of social systems, the functionalist perspective<sup>6</sup> to modernization and differentiation of societies. Luhmann sees social exchange and differentiation as a matter of communication. (Beyer<sup>7</sup> in Luhmann 1984, x-xi.) Luhmann divides social reality into two spheres: the environment (which means the whole universe of opportunities) and the system (which is functionally differentiated from the environment and other systems). Luhmann argues that functional global structures are what establish the foundation of a modern global society to be perceived as a single society, a

“global village”. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxxii.)

For functional social theory the differentiation between system and the environment is crucial. Actually, the final rationale and reference of all functional analysis lies in the difference between system and environment. The concept of the environment is not a residual category, but constitutive for a system. The environment is rather a pre-requisite of system identity, since identity is possible only through difference. Everything that belongs to a system is also part of the environment of other systems. (Luhmann 1995, 176-177.)

Social systems are more dependent on some forms of input over others (elements in the environment), because different factors influence the output and performance of the system more than others. Autonomy of system means that system can choose, using its own concepts (religious), how it perceives and interprets its dependency on the environment. (Luhmann 1995, 204.)

Territorial system boundaries are one type of meaning-constituted boundaries. But system is increasingly changing to become more symbolically rather than spatially constituted. If one wants to extend system boundaries, one must include a new kind of symbolic language. System boundaries are thus extended through inclusive communication. (Luhmann 1995, 195.) This is the performance-oriented dilemma: to be more inclusive, but not to lose exclusivity, meaning the identity of a sub-system.

When Luhmann insists on the significance of autopoietic character of sub-systems (which means that sub-systems do not directly relate to the environment or other sub-systems but are autonomous and contingent), the serious epistemological question arises: “how knowledge of an external world is possible under the conditions of autopoietic closure”. Luhmann insists that the question is inseparable from the socio-historical conditions under which it arises. (Luhmann 1995, xxxiv-xxxv.)

The starting point is the difference between system and the environment. Without difference there would not be self-reference. In this sense boundary maintenance is system maintenance. (Luhmann 1995, 16-17.) Further system/environment-differentiation can be differentiated within systems. The entire system then acquires the function of an “internal environment” for these sub-systems, indeed, for each subsystem in its own specific way.

System boundaries consist of possibilities to refer to “something beyond” and the transcendence. Boundary lines reduce complexity of the environment and help to mediate along with the relevant characteristics of other systems. It might be unclear, where the borders actually are, yet the separation can be understood as an analytical definition, but it still has its real-life equivalents. The actual difference (demarcation) between system and environment can be made analytically, but separation is not absolute, yet it is perceived in relation to the system. (Luhmann 1995, 28-30, 178-179, 182).

In the case of Christian sub-systems, a branch of theology, namely ecclesiology is specialized to this problem of demarcation between the church and the “world”. Systems have to adapt to the environment in order to survive, and the environment can also be adapted to the system. (Luhmann 1995, 30-34.)

Individuals belong simultaneously to sub-systems, but act as independent individuals. Every individual stands out as belonging to the environment. Sys-

tems tend to over-emphasize similarities between environment and a particular system, as well as relevance of the perspective, world-view and symbols provided by the system. In modern society, the individual is the ultimate judge on the relevance of a system and the communicative forms through which the system can establish relationship with the individual. (Luhmann 1995, 179, 188, 468.)

### 2.2.2 A System

Every sub-system can relate to other sub-systems and environment in three ways. *First*, a subsystem can relate to the society as a whole on the basis of its function. *Second*, it can relate to the other subsystems of the society on the basis of what Luhmann calls performance. *Third*, a subsystem can have a relation to itself (reflection). How these three potential relationships are actualized thus depends on the state of differentiation of the society. In segmentary societies, such as in the Middle Ages, all three orientations are identical, which means that the society is a holistic and large version of the sub-system. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxxiii.)

In analyzing modern societies, Luhmann sees each functional subsystem, including religion, has these three relationships that can interfere with each other (function, performance and reflection). *The function can only be fulfilled to the extent that performance for the other subsystems is adequate* (italics mine). This comes as a result of the interdependency of the subsystems. For example, for a political subsystem to have the ability to be able to perform binding decisions for the whole society, it must ensure that it has the support of the other subsystems. It must thus take into account political interests, educational interests, family interests, religious interests, etc. These interests represent the other functional spheres of society and their particular needs. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxxiii-xxxiv.)

The self-referential autonomy was established in the 17th or 18th centuries. Prior to that, all society was one holistic system, which needed God for every task to succeed. The primary mode of reference was thus not self-reference but other-reference, reference to the transcendental. (Luhmann 1995, 461.)

### 2.2.3 Reflection and Autonomy of Systems

Self-reference is an important concept, which means adjustment of the system to the environment. This feature of self-reference is the basis of the construction of systems, and of their distinction from the environment. The meaning of communication is always self-referential, because meaning is meaningful only with reference to other meaning: social systems are in this sense closed (from the environment and other systems). (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxiv-xxv.)

The circularity of meaning in self-reference establishes the autonomy of the system, because otherwise the input from the environment would necessarily mean a corresponding response in the system. There would be no contingency: every possibility in the environment would have a corresponding possibility in the system. But because systems react to everything only in their own terms, only meaningful occurrences in the world are found relevant. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxv.)

The fundamental circularity of meaning through self-reference allows the social system to build an identity. These constant aspects, which are not subject to change after the evaluating of the environmental input, establish the identity of the system. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxv-xxvi.)

Luhmann sees this self-reference of systems as crucial and defining features of modern society, and sees that the importance of self-reference is growing. Another aspect, followed by increased self-reference, is increasing differentiation. To increase their ability to reflect the increased complexity of the environment better, systems develop sub-systems to be able to make more precise self-referential selections. In differentiated social system and in a differentiated society, the communications relevant in one sub-system need not become directly relevant in the other sub-systems, because the subsystems are relatively independent of one another. Changes in environment, the particular sub-system, or the rest of society, do not need to be accommodated in all sectors of the society in the same way. Systems are related to other systems with different degrees of dependency: one system is more important to another system, than another one. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxvii; Luhmann 1995, 444, 446.)

#### 2.2.4 Role of Communication in the Model

Communication is contingent (neither impossible nor necessary) in Luhmannian systems model. Communication is needed mostly for system reproduction. Communication thus includes two kinds of relevant events: those that enforce the aspects that were also “before,” and those that reflect situations “after”. The former establish identity of the system, the latter ensures particularity and uniqueness of every communicative event. (Luhmann 1995, xliii.)

Crucial to Luhmann’s theory of social systems are the particular symbols of communication that separate different sub-systems from each other, and make it difficult to cut across the borders of the systems. His idea about symbols of communication is called “communications media.” It is way of “assuring the successful transmission of selections using symbolic codes that are applicable in a great many situations and for a great many different communications.” (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xl.)

Examples of such media are truth, love, money and political power. Communications media of a particular system works through binary schemata (for example right/wrong, true/false, faith/doubt, etc). Luhmann argues that the difficulty of religion to articulate its media “faith” has consequences for the adjustment of a religious system to modern society. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xl-xli.)

The functional theoretical approach recognizes three potential critical points for the success or failure of communication from and between sub-systems (Luhmann 1995, 158-159). *The first* critical dimension is how various sub-systems and members of them understand the messages sent by other systems. This is critical, because each sub-system has its own specialized language and symbols and meanings, which must be made accessible to other systems, and popularized or adapted to the symbol system of other systems.

*The second* critical point is how to physically reach others who are not members of the particular sender-system. The problem lies in spatial and temporal

extension (Luhmann 1995, 158), for which reason media technologies are crucial extensions of religious communities. *The third* critical point is success, which means to what extent the receivers of the message see the sender as legitimate and authoritative towards the sub-system in question.

The solutions to these three crucial points have been developed (Luhmann 1995, 160-162). The solution for the first problem is the common and shared language. The second solution is that technological media can be seen as an "extension of man and community". Traditionally, the solution to the third problem has been to try various persuasion techniques, including education, rhetoric, etc. But the functional solution to the third problem is the development of a "symbolically generalized communication media", which is functionally adequate to the particular problem in question. This media functions as a form of selection and motivation, and shows the themes relevant to the audience. Examples of such symbolic media are truth (media of science), money (media of economic sub-system), power, law, faith, art, ethics, etc. These basic media function as a strategic help for choice for the individuals and other sub-systems to direct themselves towards the given sub-system, when needed. (Luhmann 1995,161.) For religion, this means a re-working of its media of faith and a commitment to be more differentiated and specific for various sub-systems: universality must be operationalized to particularities of each sub-system to gain relevance among them.

Differentiation of societies, or social evolution, is to a large extent, driven by development of communications technology. The Invention of writing opened a vast sphere in which communications could now take place, and this in turn made it possible for new types of symbols to be developed. The introduction of print multiplied this to a new level. Luhmann's system variation (includes function, performance and reflection) is based on successful communication. (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xliii.) Differentiation of media technology enables more diversified symbol systems, which causes change in media of sub-systems (in Luhmannian sense), which increases diversity and differentiation and causes changes in mental space and mentality of society. Here media ecologists like Walter Ong, Marshall McLuhan, and Neil Postman become relevant. Changes in media technology and the following changes in the society represent a kind of media deterministic view. Increase of diversity of media technology has respective effects on social structures. The main effect of new communications technologies has been increased functional differentiation of society. Media technology is thus an inseparable part of the modernization process.

### **2.2.5 Religion in the Model**

Religion must be seen as an autonomous sphere of life (*sui generis*) from within both society and culture even though the context inevitably influences both form and content of religion in a given society. But there is a major dispute about the ontological status of religion varying from the materialist and capitalist analysis of Marx and Engels (in Bocock<sup>8</sup> et al. 1985, 11-20; Thompson in Bocock et al. 1985, 129) to the culture reductionist functional analysis of Durkheim (in Bocock et al. 1985, 41-58). On the other end of the continuum, when deciding one's attitude

towards religion, it is the “revelational approach,” which sees the cosmology of religion as originating from the transcendental realm as a divine revelation. This assumption leads us to the discussion about which of the claimed divine revelations is the true one and leads us to a serious inspection of internal religious claims. It means that what really matters, is the substance of the religion, not the mere form or possible ritual functions of it (see for example B. S. Turner in Boccock et al. 1985, 238-239).

A purely reductionist approach cannot do justice to the relative autonomy of religious symbolism and values, but rather it finds in religion only expressions and functions of the surrounding materialist, sociological and cultural context (Boccock et al. 1985, 8). This leads to an analysis where, for example, American televangelists are mainly seen as propagators of Western capitalism and hegemony without understanding their religious message, intention or context. On the other hand, without recognizing sociological and cultural aspects in a given religious tradition, our understanding and analyses would be seriously flawed. Keeping only the cultural aspects of religion as divine revelation would lead to particularist idolatry.

Historically, religion operates in community, which makes a close connection with community culture and religion. But religion, in addition to being a cultural phenomenon, is also systemic by nature. Because of this analysis, religion must follow a double-track: one that identifies with certain parts of culture, and the other a functional sub-system on its own. The main types of consideration are thus collective identities as well as compatibility of religious communities with the dominant structures of a global society. (Beyer 1994, 62-63, 67.)

Christianity has been successful throughout history in transforming itself from a local cult to a universal religion. It has effectively been able to identify forms of institutional organization with geographical ways of political organization by forming respective parishes and dioceses (Luhmann 1984, 33-37, 45). The development of modern media technology is challenging the conventional, regional and hierarchical ways of organization. Religious institutions are more and more transformed into mediated virtual communities utilizing network rather than hierarchical structure (see Chapters 4.3.2 and 4.3.3). Transformation requires the re-specifying and diversifying of a particular medium of religion, as well as a theological reflection to maintain identity within a religious sub-system. In a highly complex society, the function of religion can only be fulfilled with the help of a communications medium that can cope with special requirements. For this purpose, a theology of communication is needed in order to cope with modern matters and technologies of communication.

In a rapidly changing environment, religion must deal with the problems of reflection and identity articulation. According to sociologist Talcott Parsons, one newly established media-concept of religion (in the Luhmannian sense) is commitment. The well being of religion thus faces threats from two directions: inflation and deflation. Inflation occurs, when the requirements of religion are so arbitrary and abstract, that one cannot perform proper choices. Deflation occurs, when religious norms are so tight, that they do not leave room for personal decisions and selections. For example, a liberal civil religion would be inflationary, and a fundamentalist theology, in turn, would be deflationary.

Another way of defining the borders of the religious system is to develop a branch of theology called ecclesiology, which is specialized to define borders and the nature of Christian community. Themes such as “the church and the world” and “the church and the society” (or “Christ and culture”) have their origin here. To articulate this relationship, dual schemata are used. Examples are: here/beyond, corporate body/organization, above/below, and internal/external. A classical ecclesiological solution has been to consider the organization itself as sacred. (Luhmann 1984, 73-75.) (Beyer in Luhmann 1984, xxxvii.)

According to Luhmann, Religion is organized around the concept of revelation.

“The dogma of revelation serves as a co-ordinating generalization (media in the Luhmannian model). It combines 1) a universally available authorship (God) with 2) widely applicable and interpretable contents whose rationality and interpretability are guaranteed, and 3) with the actual appearance of a possibility in the form 4) of a particular historical event which is 5) immediately clear because it is particular and which 6) cannot be changed by any given society because it is historically unique.”

Because revelation is bound to history, there is a constant need to re-interpret the revelation to maintain its relevance and communicativity. There is thus a continuous process and discussion on what has actually been revealed, as well as what is the proper way to understand transcendental revelation. Rituals are needed to ensure the continuous relevance and endurance of revelation. Revelation also serves as a point of demarcation. The acceptance of a total revelation is totally different than a “mere belief in existence of God”. Revelation was thus operationalized as creeds, which allowed universal recruitment of anyone accepting a particular creed, regardless of nationality, sex, status, etc. (Luhmann 1984, 90-91.)

The dilemma of how religious communities react to change and modernization has often been explicated in terms of accommodation or maintenance. Should the religious community heavily adapt to the environment, or should it concentrate more tightly on the basic tenets of faith and “let the world go its way”? These two alternatives may cause the church to split into factions.

“The alternative of accommodation or non-accommodation is thereby superseded by the search for dogmatic structures that achieve both more accommodation and more maintenance at a higher level of abstraction.” (Luhmann 1984, 97.)

Thus, accommodation and maintenance should be interlaced. Separating form and content in communication would be one possible solution. Communication would be accommodated through adaptation of media formats to modern culture, but not through content, which would remain adherent to traditional revelation and dogma. In *Religious Media Theory*, the core concerns are the strategic and operational processes and degrees of accommodation appropriate in adapting to the sub-system of modern media.

## 2.2.6 The Future of Religion - Systemic or Cultural?

In his wonderful work, *Religion and Globalization*, Peter Beyer (1994, 225-226) raises the question, should religion be treated as systemic or as culture in es-

sence. Or, we could argue that religion has previously and predominantly been better understood as a system and as an institution. Religion has even previously been seen as a kind of holistic super-system, which through modern functional differentiation has been diminished to the role of a “mere system”. But the ongoing erosion of the influence (and even perceived relevance) of systemic religion has forced us to ask whether religion in general should be better understood as a cultural supply and component. Even religion stresses its very nature as a resource for other domains and functional sub-systems. In this debate, those who favor the endurance of a functional role of religion, use concepts of “substantial religion” as an indication of particular religious tradition and respective institutions and communities. Then it also becomes relevant to talk about religious supply, since there are institutions specialized in this area (religious functions).

Those who believe in a gradual erosion of systemic religion prefer concepts and logics of functional religion: that religion mainly becomes a resource and component for other sub-systems. In this case, religious supply is not crucial, since religion provides crucial components suitable for particular sub-systems or raw materials of an individual’s identity. This would unquestionably diminish the role of religious communities, since a uniting authority structure is not present. The dilemma remains that through mediated performance the erosion of religion may increase, since the authority structure is not present in a mediated religion. This encourages the process of religion to the level of becoming a mere cultural resource.<sup>9</sup> Influence of religion has always been partly based on performance, which now occurs within the context of highly specialized and secularized sub-systems. As Beyer puts it (1994, 225),

“nonetheless, the pressure to take that route to public influence does not mean that religion’s primary social manifestation is now or will increasingly be as cultural resource rather than societal system”

One can say then that both approaches, systemic and cultural, are possible, relevant, and legitimate. The increased interest, or even shift, in media studies towards cultural studies, which might be considered as a mere social systemic approach (which one could say with some level of accepted inaccuracy) has generated a new interest towards religious media communication. When religion is seen as a cultural resource (to use expression of Beyer, 1994), it has gained more relevance even in the media, which for the most part is a secular phenomena, and one in which globalization and secularization are seen in their very crystallized forms. The concept of a functional religion is thus an acceptable trend, and serves as a new concept to both understanding and analyzing religion as a cultural resource.

Peter Beyer predicts (1994, 226-227) that systemic (and thus institutional) form of religion will survive to some extent, but people will also become religious in a cultural way. The market economy model of religion will increase its relevance, thus people are selecting religious supply and they in fact “consume from various suppliers of religion”. But in the foreseeable future, there will be both systemic and cultural forms of religion in a more contingent and less self-evident environment. Different types of religions can fulfill the functions of reli-

gion (sociologically). This basis of demand (function) for religion establishes the sociological “marketplace of religion”, where different suppliers of religious communication compete against each other through the technology of media in order to gain more followers, more influence, and a greater market share.

### 2.2.7 The Marketplace of Religion

“Religious affiliation is encouraged by free market of faiths. Those who want a high-tension sectarian religion can easily find it - those who wish only a vague, generalized sense of hope and fellowship, as offered by low-tension denominations, have several to choose from...

Pluralism is the natural state of religious economy, and even the limited success of Christianity in achieving a religious monopoly depended on the coercive power of the state. Hence, unless a massive cultural shift enables a new religion to gain an exclusive franchise, no one religion will ever again even appear to be universal.” (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 312, 455.)

Stark & Bainbridge (1985) provide an economy of religion - a mechanistic model of exchange of benefits - benefits that are worldly, religious, or individual. This explains the vitality of religious plurality, revivalism, sect-formation and religious innovation.

But what then is the relationship between a previously described religion as a cultural resource and rational choice –approach, with the latter setting the ontological basis for the “marketplace of religion” approach? If the rational choice -approach is applied, it outdates the culturalist approach, because marketplace cosmology assumes that one can perform better or worse, so one can judge on the performance of each tradition. It means that there are certain (objective) criteria for evaluating the success of each tradition. Contingency should, in this respect, mean that one is free to choose either a successful or a losing strategy. Contingency means competition. The competition takes place between both mainstream culture and other religions, and between traditions themselves over hegemony in the marketplace of religion. To some extent, one could then make judgements on the performance of various traditions. However, this would call for a somewhat different approach. Yet some judgements can be made especially in those cases when mediated communication can be seen as a crucial part of the strategy of the tradition. This can also happen when one sees that media has generated certain benefits. In this way the influence and relevance of a particular tradition would diminish without utilizing the strategic use of media to enhance performance.

The theories of the “marketplace of religion” assume that it is possible to evaluate some movements as “superior to others”. This itself is a rather controversial position, since it does not take into account religious values and ethics. The only criteria are the utilitarian and pragmatic success of a movement. And yet, these theories usually do not (and even cannot) provide criteria for a successful religious supplier in the marketplace. These models must thus be seen as heuristic tools in evaluating the overall re-shaping of the religious sphere in a particular context.

Homogeneity of society suppresses sect-formation. But secularized churches leave room for new movements. Those that offer a superior product will grow. Winners in the marketplace of religion cannot be predicted, but one can give

directions as to which movements to consider as innovative and advantageous to potential survivors (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 504-505). Revivals still occur and they are generated by secularization, which promotes religious innovation because of the diminishing role of the tradition (Stark & Bainbridge 1987, 307-311). Religious orders and revival movements within churches provide an official and legitimate means of religious dissent and sect movement (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 114-116). They establish the marketplace of religion inside the dominating churches.

The emergences of new communications technologies have direct consequences to the marketplace of religion. It has been argued (quite reasonably) that new communications technologies boost religious diversity. For example, the invention of print technology has been seen as a crucial component for the effective dissemination of the Reformation tenets and thus the establishment of Protestant Christianity (for example Eisenstein 1979). Also, the success of Evangelicals in the USA is at least partly based on their ability to utilize new forms of electronic communication in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see for example Chapter 1.6.1).

There exists a genuine and contingent struggle for dominance in religious media communication. For example, Finke and Stark analyzed the decline of the Congregational, Episcopalian and Presbyterian denominations between the years 1776-1850. They found mechanisms within their communication strategies that explained the decline. They were unable to adapt to the free competition of the marketplace of religion and religious freedom.<sup>10</sup> This means that the ability to accommodate oneself in the emerging mediascape is a crucial component of success within the contemporary marketplace of religion. Through effective mediated religion, community can gain significant strategic advantages when compared to other faith communities.

## **2.2.8 Function and Performance – The Dilemma of Religion**

The Luhmannian assumption is that religion plays in two separate but closely related fields: a purely religious service and the ensuing implications for other non-religious social action. In this context, function refers to pure religious communication, variously called the aspect of devotion and worship, the healing of souls, the search for enlightenment and salvation. Function is the pure “sacred” communication involving the transcendent and the unique role, which religious institutions claim for themselves, and one which forms the basis of their autonomy in modern society. Religious performance in contrast, occurs when religion is “applied” to problems generated in other systems but not solved there, or simply not addressed elsewhere. Religion must have far-reaching consequences outside of its adherents. The vitality of the religious organization itself, as well as that of individual religiosity are crucial. The religious institution must not limit its message to its followers and its organization, but also to others. It must ask for public legitimacy so that religious norms and the values of the movement become collectively obligatory. The religious movement implies that “religion offers a (universal) service that is necessary for everyone”. Examples of problems generated by others, but met by religion, are economic poverty, political oppres-

sion, familial estrangement, environmental degradation and personal identity. Through performance relations, religion establishes its importance for the "profane" aspects of life; but in the process, non-religious concerns impinge upon pure religiousness, demonstrating the fact that other societal concerns condition the autonomy of religious action. (Beyer 1994, 79, 80.)

The functional problem of religion in the modern world is actually a performance problem. According to Peter Beyer (1994, 80), the solution for religion lies with improving performance of religion, not in mere religious function, commitment, or practice. The problem is that religion itself is a holistic issue - it is totalizing and encompassing. Religion can try to perform better by claiming morals over various sub-systems, and it can succeed, provided that in the given society morality is kept as "a privileged form of social regulation". But modern society does not favor morality, but rather suffers lack of it. (Beyer 1994, 81-82.)

Religious professionals face the dilemma of contemporary society: how to assert religious influence without the old solution (which may seem outdated) or by reasserting it (which carries a risk of losing the tradition)? Possible solutions to the problem might be found in either the liberal or the conservative option. Regardless of which option is taken, public influence of religion will be found in the direction of religious performance; while action concentrating on religious function will continue, with certain expectations, to be the domain of a privatized, highly pluralistic religiosity. (Beyer 1994, 86.)

Performance of religion is often seen in terms of "diakonia" to include problems generated, but not solved, within other sub-systems, as well as providing a means of relief for suffering individuals. But performance of religion can include all kinds of forms, including political and social activism (such as liberation theology in Latin America). But any religious performance must be accepted by the sub-system towards which it is directed. This means, that religious performance must, to some extent, accommodate itself to the demands of a particular sub-system. This may lead to effective performance, but also to accusations of erosion or transformation of religion into the politics of economics etc. But, for sure, function and performance must be interlaced to some extent in modern society. (Beyer 1984, xxxvi-xxxvii.)

Religiously based (or any ideologically based) social movements often want to branch out from their functionally based backgrounds in order to gain more influence (perform better). This brings with it the risk of losing the commitment of the religious core group. This is a typical problem of most social movements in reconciling pure function and applied performance. Religious social movements are often particularistic (conservative option) and holistic by nature (they want to influence in every other social sub-system). In the context of privatized religion, religion has difficulties in translating functional strength and vitality into public performance. As soon as religious leaders step outside their sphere,

"they are judged by the criteria of other systems: in spite and because of being grounded in religion, Pat Robertson failed as a politician and creationism failed as science" (Beyer 1994, 30, 32, 132.)

In a Nicaraguan case, the Catholic church resisted the Marxist-Sandinista regime on the basis of religious function (through statements of the Pope and bishops)

and not through performance (the Catholic political movement participated in the government). In this case, performance was possible only from a solid religious foundation. (Beyer 1994, 152.) This example shows that very often there is tension between a religious system and a social movement as extension of performance. In the context of media, for example, this can be seen in the tension, which exists between church type institutions and media ministries. The previous represents religious function, and the latter religious performance through media (see for example Chapter 4.3.2).

The problem with religion as a way of communication lies basically in its holistic nature and must be realized from within the context of powerful, instrumentally specialized systems. This means that religious answers to particular problems of particular sub-systems often take the form of social movements. This, in turn, means there is usually a tension between functional institutions of religion (such as church bodies) and social movements targeted for improved performance of religion. Movements use the same resources in religious communities as do the functional religious institutions, but are organized around single performance issues. (Beyer 1994, 148.)

The Iranian Islamic revolution showed that public religious influence through performance is possible today. All variations, of combining religious function with performance, from the liberal to the conservative option were present in the Iranian case. In the end it was the conservative option that won the contest for political power. The Iranian Muslim clerics managed to enhance the performance capacity of the system in order to increase the public influence of religion. In this case, the American New Christian Right -proponents managed, but the Iranian Muslim clerics managed far better. (Beyer 1994, 160, 171, 182-183.)

In the case of the state of Israel and Zionism, there were many versions of Zionism, mostly of a secular nationalist variety. Finally, *historical conditions* allowed the creation of a sovereign state in which the various views were able to compete in the performance. Secular Zionism succeeded, and the state of Israel was not founded on a religious basis. (Beyer 1994, 189.)

It is obvious that religion is far better a mobilizing than a functional force in running the society, and after the first stage of such a mobilization, religious affiliation may lose its significance when functioning within the system. The Iranian religious republic has moderated and given ground to other functional systems. Moderation of religious influence has probably favored the success of the religious state of Iran. Other functional sub-systems free from direct religious control have also been able to perform religious functions better. (Beyer 1994, 183.)

### **2.2.9 Mediated Publicity as Performance of Religion**

Religions usually strive for status as a public religion, and the position of any given religion, as being both public and hegemonic, reflects its power, cultural status, and influence in any given community. Secularization, functional differentiation, and privatization are all forces that work against this public role. The three primary spheres where Christianity wants to exercise its public dynamics in the modern world are politics, education and the media. It is with these spheres

that the main ideological and symbolic battles will take place. There is thus an ongoing tension between the liberal state and religious groups, even though the intensity varies. (Hirst 2000, 107-109.)

Religious media is primarily used for the community itself (function, reflection), but also for outsiders and society in general to show and exercise symbolic power (hegemony) over others within a given society. Modern media is very important for religious performance, because through it religion can boost its influence to a far greater extent than through simply concentrating on its function. Religious media is then to be understood primarily in terms of performance. Media is an important way of influencing any given community. This means that words have become a political act *sui generis*, as such. Religious groups do not have any other forum for their universal efforts and claims than through religious media. Through media religious faith is not only reinforced, but it also is a place to seek converts and new supporters.

According to Berger and Luckmann, functionally oriented institutional differentiation has led to a relatively greater isolation of individual forms of dominant social structure. In this sense, institutional religion has problems gaining relevance with individuals. However, one dominant religion is required (in the Durkheimian sense) to serve as a provider of basic values essential for the integration of a society. Here the concept of civil religion is required. Public religion provides religious values that most people can agree on. Private religion keeps non-generalizable concepts as private matters. The problem in the discussion between public and private religion is that at what level of generalization does it become difficult or impossible to embody religious values in the specialized institutions of a modern secular society? Beyer sees the key issue as being whether religion can assert public influence in a global society as a societal system or only as a cultural resource for other systems? (Beyer 1994, 73-74.)

For the most part, secularization means privatized decision-making in religious issues as well as the decline of public relevance of religious agents (Beyer 1994, 78). But on the basis of secular and liberal conceptions of society and the public, religion as a normative tradition has a right to public normative contribution. Religious communities must follow the rules of public debate, and through it they can exercise their moral views. But if a community opens to public debate, it must allow public arguments to influence the community itself in the spirit of open dialogue. This means that public contributions inevitably change religious communities, which thus put themselves into the process of mutual change and re-interpretation of the tradition. (Casanova 1994, 203, 205, 207.)

In a modern society, various systems struggle for performance, relevance, and hegemony mainly in and through mediated publicity. Religion is no exception in this respect. Various other sub-systems utilize religion as a cultural resource for better performance (to gain legitimation, the use of religious symbols as powerful signs in marketing or advertising etc.). Religion, respectively, tries to utilize and penetrate the sub-system of media to improve its relevance and legitimacy to the public.

Among scholars there is an agreement of privatization of religion as a result of the modernization process. Traditional religion is not definitive for the society as a whole, but can still direct the lives of individuals and sub-groups. Basic

social structures in modern society favor a voluntary and individualistic religion, but do not make impossible the renewed public authority of religion. Public influence means that religion becomes a source of collective obligation,

“such that deviation from specific religious norms will bring in its wake negative consequences for adherents and non-adherents alike; and collective action in the name of these norms becomes legitimate.” (Beyer 1994, 71.)

Public influence is possible for religion, when it makes itself indispensable for other social sub-systems in modern society, for example, by providing crucial ethical and moral norms, which other sub-systems cannot derive from any other source (Beyer 1994, 70-72).

A religion that either by doctrine or by cultural tradition has a public communal identity will resist the pressure to become isolated on individual matters of belief. But to survive in this accommodation, religion must maintain a vital and dynamic profile and vision as a religion of private salvation. Otherwise religion cannot stand the pressures of privatization, if it has suffered a serious decline by secularization (meaning that its core beliefs have been secularized). (Casanova 1994, 224.)

Christianity as a religion has strived for public and universal authority as well as for relevance to individuals. Christianity can reach both goals, being both public and private at the same time, through modern media. Because religious faith has been marginalized in public life, symbolically Christianity can re-claim its public relevance through both religious and secular media. Religion can also target non-committed individuals through public media by providing religiously based solutions to the problems of life. Because of these options of improved performance through media, religious media has become increasingly important. It can serve as a tool to strike-back for renewed claims of public, religious, political and cultural relevance.

Religious communication takes its energy and legitimation paradoxically from secularization by being a primary channel to challenge secularization on a societal level by trying to maintain the public role of religion through media communication. Without the secularization process, religious communication would dominate, having more resources, and religious discourse, if not hegemonic, would at least be much more relevant in the public sphere. Religious media communication is the challenger of secularization in the struggle over public symbols and discourses as well as relevance, and authority.

As operational tools for mediated performance, each Christian institution has its own public relations and communications departments, which try to make their view and discourse visible through the media. This means that a given community can wield symbolic power and hegemonic influence on a given issue at a given time, as their discourse is mediated through the media. This is a new kind of symbolic struggle between religions through media. There is a constant tension between liberals and conservatives over who wields the power to define true religion. This contest, to a large extent, is happening through religious media communication, and is a very important component of the performance of a given religious community struggling to define itself through media communication. The more effective the communication, the more established this particu-

lar definition will be. And the more established whatever level of public position it has in any given community, the better its public role is actualized. And when the hegemony and legitimation of any ideology or system is revealed through the acceptance of its mainstream publicity, we can then say that a given religious tradition is a part of the civil religion of that society (if positive publicity). In the case of significant negative publicity, we can say that this belief system is seen as significant challenger to the hegemonic value system, or it represents a considerable deviation from it (On different possible positions of religious communities in the mainstream publicity, see Chapter 4.4.2.2).

According to the principles of performance, when utilizing media as a tool for performance, mediated religion must, to some extent, accommodate itself to the demands of contemporary media culture. But the ways and the amounts of accommodation remain to be judged by the community itself (according to the principle of self-reflection. The particular normative media theories of each community are presented in Chapter 3). Religious media has some basic strategies (predominant goals and ways of communication) and various sub-strategies (in context to particular media and context) to perform this goal. Religion must accommodate itself to mainstream media theories. Media is a very important part of the contest over symbolic and actual influence, maintenance and the expansion of religious communities. Religious media is a unique system of religious performance, since it has unique formats ranging from devotional religious programs to Christian radio station formats. Through mediated religion, religious institutions challenge all the basic assumptions of modernization and secularization: public discourse and relevance of religion, the low level of worship service attendance, and the overall decrease of the authority of religious communities. Improved performance of religion through media is targeted in the following directions:

- *towards individuals*, who do not participate in religious activities: media ritualism (as the minimal effect), religious affiliation (civil religion) in the middle, and religious conversion as the ultimate goal
- *towards society*: to symbolically express and maintain authority and relevance of religious discourse and values, to propose religious authority on matters of social ethics, to influence the political system, legislation, societal institutions, etc.
- *towards culture*: -symbolic influence, authority over symbols and interpretations, and religious symbols as a resource for culture to maintain the tradition
- *towards other sub-systems*: ethical and moral authority within other sub-systems reached through media
- *towards other religious communities* in the marketplace of religion: struggle and dialogue on religious truths, competition.

The following chapters will cover the dynamics of religious media communication extensively and more precisely. The presentation follows the logics of Luhmannian functional systemic modeling in the sense that the internal rationale (reflection) of religious community is presented first. Normativity and description will be interlaced, because it is impossible to distinguish between explicit

normative thought and the influence of the tradition or the environment as a whole.

I will also introduce respective empirical cases on the system of religious media communication in the national context. In the following chapter religion may speak with its own internal normative rationale and voice (that of theology as a form of self-reference and reflection). In the final chapter 4, the synthesis of media as a tool for religious performance is presented in a more systematic way. The connections to normative media theories, particularly those to the communitarian theory are presented with the conclusion.

## NOTES

- 1 On the levels and processes of secularization see for example Dobbelaere 1998, 452-456.
- 2 Theology of creation implies unity of the world because of the creation event.
- 3 For example in the case of Brazil, the Catholic church pioneered there as an emancipatory societal power towards social inequality and poverty. But when reforms were performed, religious intensity and enthusiasm in the issue were replaced by political and secular institutions.
- 4 On the intellectual history of the social gospel see Wilkens et al 2000, 286-289.
- 5 <http://www.tacf.org/>. Page read 29.11.2002.
- 6 Here functionalism is understood as a descriptive macro-model. The core of religious institutions and communities is ethical and moral as well as the transcendental. This means that communitarian and functionalist views are compatible, because normativity is the core nature of religion, and it is mediated (functionally) in the modern environment and media system. Thus, values and ethics come from religion, which means that the functional model actually performs a way that maintains legitimacy for religion, and does not mean value-neutrality of the functionalistic approach in this context.
- 7 Beyer is a translator of the volume and has a long introduction to Luhmann's work.
- 8 In Bocock et al 1985 original works of Marx and Engels and Durkheim are partly reprinted.
- 9 On the study religion, religiosity and religious media from cultural, and thus a functional religiosity perspective, see Chapter 1.7.2 on functional religion.
- 10 Horsfield in <http://vic.uca.org.au/ecrp/mnediaritual.html>. Page read 8.12.1999.

### 3 INTERNAL RATIONALE & EMPIRICAL CASES OF RELIGIOUS MEDIA COMMUNICATION

In chapter 2, we established the systemic model of society and how religion fits into that picture. We also learned the role and significance of mediated communication for religion as an important performance strategy. Crucial for the Luhmannian sociological model is contingency: religious media communication does not exist (in systemic form) without religious institutions that are treated *sui generis*, as autonomous institutions. The autonomy of religious institutions is articulated in a way that the primary reason, *prima causa*, of religious communication is religious institution itself. Namely, without religious institution, there would be no respective religious media communication. At the core of religious institution, as well as media communication, is transcendental revelation, and theology that interprets the revelation. Interpretation is the task of the religious elite within the institution. The discourse and symbol system of internal reflection of religious community (sub-system) is theology. In this chapter theological discourse is accepted as a legitimate way of normative thought on communications issues.

In this chapter we will consider the internal rationale and views on communication of the four most significant Christian traditions. We will also see later how these traditions relate to real world empirical settings in various countries and how their strategic positions in the national marketplace of religion influences their communication (System of Religious Media Communication, see Chapter 3.4)

But first of all, we begin with the similarities of Christian communication in general. In Chapter 3.1, the relationship between communication (studies) and theology is addressed and the branches of theology relevant to communication are covered. The goal of this chapter is to show how theological thought relates to the communication of religious institutions. In Chapter 3.2 the normative religious media theories of each tradition are presented and to some extent analyzed. Chapter 3.3 verifies and describes the characteristics of the system of religious media communication in each national case and the role of each particular Christian tradition.

Two important notions must be taken into consideration in order to understand this section. *First*, according to the Luhmannian thesis of religious performance, religion must to some extent accommodate a particular sphere of performance, and in this case, within the media system. This means that religious media communication is in tension from both religion and the media system: it must be religious enough to be legitimate in the face of the religious community, but it must also fulfil certain demands of professional media culture to be able to gain acceptance in the media system and with the audience. The various normative religious media theories must be considered as forming the core structure of the phenomenon of religious media communication. A number of solutions to handle this tension are found among the various traditions.

*Secondly*, because of the mediated performance, the nature of (mediated) the religious community is also transformed. Either intended or unintended, religious media communication will generate a new type of religious community, a virtual one, which exists only through mediated religion. The theme of the virtual community will be covered more extensively in Chapter 4.

### 3.1 Communication and Theology

All Christian communication must be in some way theologically legitimized (theological quality, see dimensions of quality of mediated religion, Chapter 4.5.3), because theology represents the ultimate communicated content and the dynamics of the Christian community. Theology thus tends to be over-emphasized in both content and forms (tradition) of Christian communication. The combination of theology and communication produces a countless number of individual configurations (cases) in religious communication. The most important characteristics are presented in the case of each Christian tradition.<sup>1</sup> This section is about presenting in a more concentrated way, how particular specialized areas of theology influence and are reflected in media communication, and to what manner of considerations they might lead. Derek Weber defines the concept of theology:

It is “an attempt to engage intellectually and verbally with the ultimate reality, with the mystery which underlies the whole life” (Weber 1991, 75 in Turner 1999, 19).

Bausch gives to theology even more narrative based definition:

“When you reflect on the story, make associations, and draw conclusions, you have a theology... Theology is a putting of pieces together and discovering richer conclusions than might first be grasped. Theology arises because there is always more to the story than even the tellers realise or intend. Time and hindsight often reveal deeper and richer motifs to stories. Theology grabs on to this and draws it out. Theology is rooted in and flows from the story.” (Bausch in Turner 1999, 19)

William Fore (1987, 38) as a theologian considers every movement that requires serious thought, because these are all attempts to “deal honestly and lucidly with the way things are, so as to help people understand what life is all about”. For him theology is “a statement that tries to make sense out of our lives”.

“By definition, theology and culture always need each other. Theology draws its terms, questions, and basic materials from the culture in which it finds itself, and culture’s own questions, needs, desires, and depths of meaning are influenced by theology (or theologies) that are both theorized and practiced in that particular culture. All culture therefore has a theological character.” (Beaudoin 1998, 176)

The theological dimension is only one level of analysis of specific media content. It is a point of view that comes quite close to that of cultural anthropology. Theological analysis looks at the meaning embedded in media content. Theological analysis and discourse analysis would probably show quite similar results, but theology always wants to throw the final question of ultimate meaning (which is consistent with the theistic cosmology of it). Theology as well as religion studies, which in media context would come quite close to theological analysis, always want to ask what is the big “Why” in when analyzing particular story. Religious studies might be more limited to analysing the various elements and aspects of the content, which would then be considered to have religious meaning.

Of course theological analysis has an implicit supposition, that of the ultimate structure of the universum of meaning. It is theocentric and connotes order, peace and final solution. This would be a serious problem if it would not be so obvious to us. The situation is similar with, for example, feminist or Marxist oriented communication studies: both have ideological commitments behind them that determine the topics of interest, concepts and the conclusions drawn from the material. But nobody questions their significance as a “serious science”. The same status must be granted to theological media analysis.

Christian communication is ultimately about the incarnation of the World of God into immanent realms (see for example Jørgensen 1986).<sup>2</sup> Kerygma, the historical documentation of revelation in Scripture, is an instrument of incarnation. Incarnation ultimately crystallizes the mystery of Christian communication: that the divine and transcendental is communicated through immanent symbols. The ultimate example of this being the incarnation and thus the communication of Jesus. Also the Scripture and sacraments (as well as tradition in some denominations) resemble the sacred forms of incarnation. But the “massified and popularized” version of incarnation is present in Christian media communication.

Tracing the uneasy relationship between communication studies and theology is difficult, since both are large and interdisciplinary approaches (White in Soukup 1991, 12). The working definition, to distinguish between the two fields and to characterize their relationships with each other, is that communication studies seeks to describe and analyse how communication occurs, while theology is interested in the meanings communicated (see for example Fore 1987, 38). Usually, theological analysis is something related to normative ways of communication or contents of communication, and is thus related to ethics of communication. The other crucial aspect of theology, in this definition, is that it has transcendental referent. This means it uses theistic concepts, which link theology to Christian tradition.

What then is the relationship between theology and tradition, since the entire study could be understood in terms of Communications theology? In this context, theology is about explicit cognitive norms or descriptions of communication, since the tradition includes things like ritual, spirituality, religious practice, tacit knowledge, etc. Tradition is a larger concept and includes theology too

(see dimensions of religious tradition, Chapter 1.2.2). In this context, we concentrate on theological dimension as an explicit normative contribution to media communication.

A wide spectrum of theological analysis and reasoning has been amassed on matters of communication in community building, evangelism and ethics of communication. Paul A. Soukup has found, in his bibliography of theology and communications (1991, 21), that the theological analysis of communication falls into four categories:

- 1) Religious self-understanding (the theological description of the communications process, etc.)
- 2) Proper Christian attitudes towards communications media (for example television)
- 3) Christian use of communication and the appropriate communications strategies of the church, and
- 4) Communications ethics.

The relationships between communication and theology can be structured into more than 50 sub-categories (see Soukup 1991, 22), but there are some sub-categories in which this relationship is the most relevant and explicit when compared to others. Those fields are Ecclesiology, Theology of Incarnation (Christology), Moral Theology and Communication Ethics, (Pastoral) Parish Communication, and Evangelisation (listed by Soukup 1991, 23).

In each Christian tradition and theology, there is an explicit or implicit view of these fields, which establishes a major portion of the unique configuration of the communications theology of that particular tradition.

Theological analysis of communication has not always been so successful, and Soukup (1991, 71) lists the weaknesses and problems of theological communications research. One weakness is that scholars seem to be isolated in their own sub-groups of like-mindedness, and they are usually unaware of what others are doing. This leads to a situation where similar ideas are presented over and over again without any clear development or dialogue. Another problem is that the uses of theological concepts in communications vary to a large degree: some use Biblical proof-texts to solve communications problems; some do not even define what theology means in their analysis. Often the positions and approaches as well as perceived effects are unclear. The topic lacks systematization, clear definitions, and methodology.

A list of single research questions appearing again and again is listed by Soukup (1991, 71). The classical questions concerning theological communications research are (among other not so relevant questions in this study):

- How does revelation; or divine-human communication take place?
- Are media themselves good or bad or only in relation to specific uses?
- Is there optimal (effective) Christian communication?
- What is normative for Christian communication (normative Christian media theory)?
- Can similar methodological guidelines be applied to both communications research and theology?
- What constitutes religious communications; what makes it religious?

- How can one derive norms of communication from Scriptures to shed light on particular types of church communication (to be regarded as Biblical ways of communication)?
- What attitude should Christians have towards media in general and which positions are appropriate in the Christ and Culture debate?
- What are the values of various theological starting points (Ecclesiology, Christology, Trinitarian Theology etc. and their relationships with each other)?

A serious question (according to Soukup 1991, 77) for research concerning the field of theology and media is to consider a holistic approach on, "Why do the churches do what they do in the realm of communication"? This means combining the tradition, the theology and the praxis of communication which might be predominant in a particular community. This is exactly what I am doing in this study.

The motivators of communication theology have been two-sided: positive and negative. On one hand the goal has been to tell what is good Christian communication, and on the other hand what is not good. In the USA, communications theology has largely developed against the perceived bias of Evangelical televangelists. Using theological language in communication also helps Christian communities to understand communication better.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between theology and communications research can be illustrated on the basis of what kind of relationship do the two have with each other: There are three possible positions between them, which are:

- 1) the theological analysis of communication.
- 2) the formulation of theological issues from the perspective of communication studies (communication theology).
- 3) the two are equal partners and equally applied to communications matters in dialogue with each other.

These possible choices lead in very different directions. *First*, a theological analysis of communication is usually performed from within theological faculties, colleges, or among faith communities. Primarily, this means applying theological concepts and asking questions that are not usually relevant to communications scholars. But, in principle, theological analysis can be applied to any single issue and it is as relevant as any other approach (Kim 1999, 31).

A theological analysis to media can be *descriptive* or *critical*. One type of theological analysis of media is content analysis, which tries to trace the theological nature of the media text in question. This can be done by pointing out certain themes, words or expressions considered to be an example of religious or theological orientation. The alternative is to be more narrative based and try to find the theological significance or "meta-message" of the whole text. For example, news programs, or movies (such as Pulp Fiction, Schindler's list, Disney's Beauty and the Beast) may have a theological message. In this case, the word "God" or any other explicit religious term is not needed as a prerequisite, and the text can still be said to have theological value (Kim 1999, 27-32).

Another example of descriptive analysis can be seen in Morris' theological analysis of news (Morris 1993, 137-146) where he addresses the ways in which modern media challenges theology. He states that the enormous supply of disasters and other negative news challenge Christian apologetics to face the question: Why does God allow such things happen? Structurally, media challenges religion very seriously, because it provides counter-evidence against the existence of God (evil in the media). It also provides tremendous amounts of alternative explanation (other world-views and religions). The key here is to convince "the public that God's love is at work in history". News not only forces us to ask the ultimate questions about the meaning of existence on one hand, but it also provides us with the opportunity to give at least some kind of explanation on the other hand. In this sense, journalists are doing religious work by providing a balanced view of the world around and thereby generating order out of chaos. (Morris 1993, 137-146.)

Television in particular is the main storyteller in post-modern mainstream culture, which means that television can be seen as having a major religious and even theological role in our mind-set. Television is "mass religion expressed in popular forms" (Turner 1999, 19). An important by-product of either explicitly or implicitly applied religious media content is that it generates "God-talk" (Mitchell 1999, 5): an agenda for religious and spiritual questions.

A critical theological analysis on media is provided, for example, by Jeanne Cover (1993, 209-219). Cover asserts that the illusion of freedom provided by media is freedom to choose material goods. In particular, advertising has taken on religious symbols to legitimize itself as a secular quasi-religion of today. In the media, violence is accepted, if it brings success. The main ideology of media is consumerism. Media becomes the locus of our corporate sin. Cover will find the solution to the oppression performed by media in her critical analysis and social theology of liberation applied to media. (1993, 215-216, 219.)

*The second* possible approach between theology and communication is something that can be called "Communication Theology". There is agreement that "sound communication theology" (Coleiro 1999) should be developed, but nobody knows how to do it or what it would be. For example, *Aetatis Novae*, one of the official Catholic church documents concerning communications, urges the development of a theology of communication,

"...so that theology itself may be more communicative, more successful in disclosing Gospel values and applying them to the contemporary realities of the human condition..." (Eilers 1997, 126.)

Theology of communication seems to mean an attempt to make theology more communicative. But basically, "communication theology" is a project to develop a particular branch of theology, which sees theology particularly in terms of communication. For example, sin is "lack of communication" etc. Communication theology would thus be a particularistic theology as, for example, liberation theology, feminist theology, etc.<sup>4</sup> The project, to develop a particular theology of communication, is led primarily by professor Frances Forde Plude at Notre Dame College (Plude 1999). From an Evangelical perspective, scientific knowledge on communication has been applied to promote theological goals, and the process

of communication has been added to include a spiritual dimension (see Maslowian hierarchy of needs as basis of evangelical theory on the process of religious communication, Chapters 1.6.3 and 3.3.3.3). The religious effect of communication has been interpreted as being a spiritual and transcendental process, not to be taken in immanent terms only (see for example Sogaard 1993, 11-26; 54-76).

Narrative theology can be said to be a form of communication and theology-discussion. Narrative theology is based on the fact Scriptures “tell stories about God, just as much as it makes doctrinal or theological statements” (McGrath 1999, 200). Often systematic theology gives us an idea, “as if revelation were some kind of data bank” from which God provides us some ideas.

“The gospel is not primarily about a set of ethical principles; it is about the effect of encounter with God upon the lives of individuals and the histories of nations” (McGrath 1999, 203).

Narrative theology recognizes the relationship between our *life story* and its relationship with *God’s story*. In this sense, forms of communications rise to the front and become important by combining content as part of the significant narrative, or the form. Narrative communication theology thus celebrates unity of form and content.

*The third* approach to the relationship between theology and communication sees communication research and theology as equal partners, which can be applied simultaneously and brought into dialogue with each other. This is the most difficult approach, since it is difficult to make theological and communications research concepts compatible in such a way as to dialogue with each other (Haikarainen 2000, 26). The possible solution is that each, theology and communication, have their own sphere of relevance and analysis in the same research project (as is done in this study). For other applications of this approach, see for example Coleiro 1997; 1999.

### 3.1.1 Jesus as a Model of Communication

Among all Christian traditions Jesus is seen as the “perfect communicator”, and Jesus’s style of communication is constantly sought as an ideal form of communication (on Jesus style communication, see Chapter 1.6.4; 3.1.1). However, we cannot get a theology-free picture about Jesus as a communicator, and to understand his methods of communication would take a rather comprehensive work on its own. Yet, both liberals and conservatives alike use Jesus as an example of effective and pure communication. Liberals say that Jesus did not manipulate or persuade. Conservatives stress his effective style of communication and his commandment to preach the gospel to the whole world. There hardly is a final one and only answer to the question in which ways we should imitate Jesus’s style of communication. But anyway, tradition and ideals on Jesus as the Perfect Communicator (for example Eilers 1997, 76) strongly influence Christian communication. Briefly, we will concentrate on a few points that are evident on Jesus as communicator.

Jesus did not use technological means of communication. His communication was preaching, teaching, and discussion - interpersonal communication. He used mainly a method of parables, which can be translated to the language of communications studies: his message was mediated mostly through parables, narratives and his works of miracles. To what extent was his communication dialogical or non-persuasive, as some scholars of Christian communication have proposed, is a good question. For sure, he was a founder of a world religion, which means that he had a certain goal through which he came to establish a community of followers. This could not be done without goal-oriented communication.

What Jesus did was to very clearly describe the eternal benefits of following him, the temporal problems of being a disciple and finally the eternal consequences of not believing his teachings. He also presented revelation about the kingdom of God.

The assumed "Jesus-style" communication (whatever that means) as well as Biblical tradition of communication in general establishes an important and unique layer of Christian communication formats. For example, it is still common to use Biblical parables, which is a unique style of Christian communication. Another important communicative convention is the use of Bible verses.

### 3.1.2 Soteriology, Salvation and Communication

Religious communication can be crystallized to be simply a matter of "mediating salvation". Particular views on salvation, to a great extent, explain both the motivation and the content of communication. For this reason, we now need to look at different theological models of salvation in order to understand how they influence the media communication of the tradition.

In Christian communication, particularly in missions, "soteriological motif"<sup>5</sup> has always been as important as the desire to mediate salvation to all. The concept of salvation itself has been understood in different terms, and even in the Bible, for example, Luke stresses the social aspects of salvation. Paul, on the other hand, emphasizes the process of salvation, saying that salvation only begins in this life with reconciliation in Jesus Christ, but is fulfilled in the life to come. Salvation still has both social and political consequences in addition to spiritual and individual results. Throughout history, the "horizontal aspect" of salvation (charity, education, medical help) has diminished while the "vertical aspect," or dimension of salvation (preaching, the sacraments, church attendance, etc.) has been favoured. The horizontal aspect is needed only to "draw people toward the church where they might get access to salvation proper". (Bosch 1992, 393-395.)

Theologians had to find their way between the two extremes:

"Pelagianism, which emphasizes so much the self-sufficiency of nature that it effectively submerges the transcendental, supernatural dimension of salvation; and the extreme right of some branches of Protestantism, which emphasize so much the self-sufficiency of grace (*sola gratia*) that the dimension of human freedom and co-operation in salvation is effectively submerged."

For Catholics,

“the history of the world is, at the same time, the history of salvation. It means also that authentic human progress in the struggle for justice, peace, freedom, human rights, and so forth, is part of the movement of, and toward, the reign of God... grace transforms not only persons but the whole created order.”<sup>6</sup> (McBrien 1994, 181, 183, 197.)

The Catholic conception of grace and salvation is thus far more multi-layered and processual by nature than the Protestant. For the Protestant, salvation is an instant and unique act which, for liberals, happens even through infant baptism (this is the extremist inclusive theological position in soteriology) when a child is taken to be a member of the Christian church and thus becomes a member of the Kingdom of God. For Evangelical Protestants, salvation is an instant event, but requires a conscious conversion and the decision to “accept Christ as one’s personal saviour” (the born-again experience).

In understanding salvation, the pendulum has swung from vertical exclusivism to a relativizing inclusivism of the “horizontal salvation” of the social gospel. Understanding salvation too much as being purely secular, the worldly and social interpretation easily leads to relativism and even seeing good works as a way to salvation. Salvation should be seen as a holistic issue where both vertical and horizontal dimensions are closely and inseparably linked, where salvation must not be separated from its Biblical foundation. Salvation comes only through repentance and a personal faith commitment. (Bosch 1992, 397-400.)

Salvation is the central concern of religion, and it is closely linked with communication between the perfect transcendental and the imperfect and immanent human condition (Lott 1988, 55). In modern missiology, contextualization and receptor-orientation have been emphasized to make sure that the Christian gospel (and thus salvation message) is addressed to specific situations (McGrath 1999, 412). A concept of salvation is also crucial for communication in a sense that it tells what are the “only but necessary” requirements for salvation. Is the mere belief in God, or even being a devout member of another religion enough? Or is the exclusivity of a sole faith in Christ a necessity as is seen as the only way to salvation in Protestantism? The particular view on salvation has direct and intimate consequences as far as religious communication. Our message and formats used are very different depending on our view on salvation.

The Orthodox Church believes that each individual must come into a personal relationship with Christ in order to be saved, yet they believe that such a relationship comes more through birth than rebirth, and through regular sacramental living. A person who has been born into the church has started “theosis”, a process of “becoming acceptable to God” and ultimately coming into eternal communion with him. Through infant baptism, the mass, the Eucharist, the icons and other services of the Church, the individual comes into a fuller realization of this divine communion through the process of *theosis* (deification). (Witte 1999, 22; Elliott & Deyneka 1999, 211; Ware 1997, 231-238.)

For the Orthodox, salvation is thus a continuous process, not a one-time conversion experience, as is the case for Catholics as well. According to Ortho-

dox theology, people under spiritual protection of the Orthodox church are not any more legitimate targets of evangelism, whether one is a practicing Orthodox or not. Only the Orthodox Church can evangelize these people first. This means, for example, that the Russian Orthodox Church is complaining not only about the activities of foreign missionaries, but simply the presence of them.

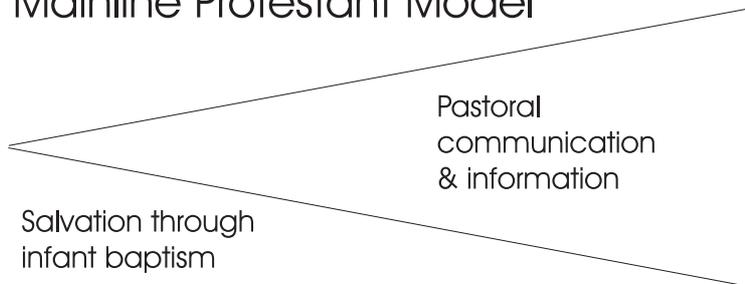
For Evangelicals, evangelism and mission are simply a sacred duty. Since the only but necessary pre-requisite for salvation is conversion, every person (whether baptized or not) and every location (whether Christian church is present or not) is a legitimate target and area of evangelism and mission (Witte 1999, 21; Elliott & Deyneka 1999, 213-214).

Induced from these different theologies of salvation, we can find three models of communication, which are:

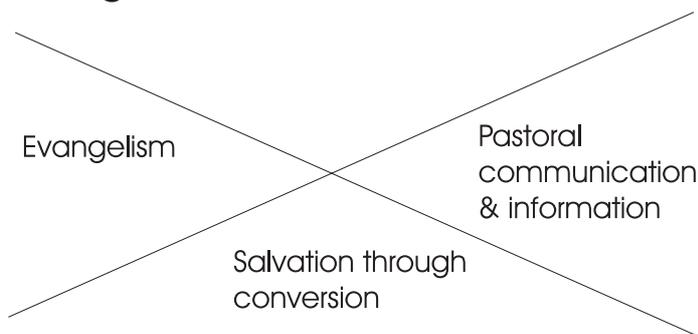
- 1) *You are already saved -model*: salvation actually takes place in the infant baptism, there is no need for evangelism, because all the members of the church are already saved. Instead, there is emphasis on pastoral and informative communication, because all are already members, they must be informed on the issues of the church. The predominant model among the mainline Protestant communities combined with inclusive ecclesiology.
- 2) *You must be saved -model*: you are saved only after hearing and receiving the salvific gospel message. There is a great emphasis on evangelism, because other kinds of information are not relevant if person is not saved yet. The main message is how one can be saved; there is only a small need for pastoral communication or information: the predominant model in Evangelical communities combined with exclusive ecclesiology. Community membership is granted only through explicit conversion.
- 3) *You are saved through sanctification (theosis) -model*: Salvation is not an instant event, but rather a lifetime process of sanctification (the concept of theosis used in Orthodox theology). Faith in Christ and good works are both elements of salvation. This means that evangelism (in more general and holistic terms than in the Protestant context), liturgy, and pastoral communication occur simultaneously. The task of evangelism is to create faith, and

## Models of Salvation and Horizons of Christian Communication

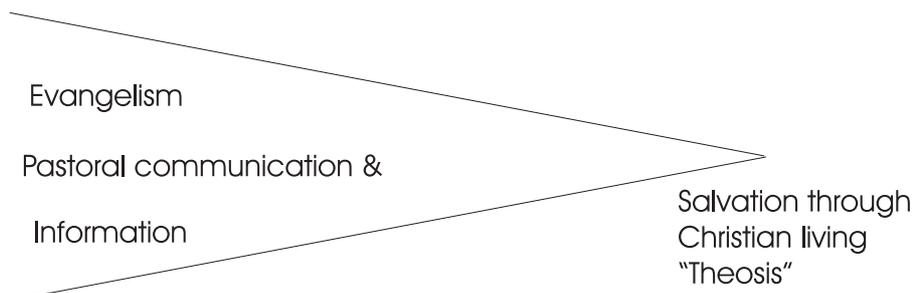
### Mainline Protestant Model



### Evangelical Protestant Model



### Catholic & Orthodox Model



PICTURE 6 illustrates how a particular view on salvation influences religious communication.

pastoral communication directs one towards a moral life and good works. This model is predominant in the Catholic, as well as the Orthodox traditions.

### 3.1.3 Evangelism and Communication

Among all Christian traditions, the concept of Evangelism in the Greek language is *euangelizesthai* meaning preaching, (Ahonen 2000, 271) and is commonly used in the context of religious media communication. It is a very important part of the communication dynamics of Christian communities, particularly that of the Evangelical Protestant tradition. Official Catholic documents also confirm the connection between media and evangelism.

“Along with traditional means such as witness of life, catechetics, personal contact, popular piety, the liturgy and similar celebrations, the use of media is now essential in evangelization and catechesis... The media of social communications can and should be instruments of the church in the Church’s program of re-evangelization and new evangelization in the contemporary world.” (Aetatis Novae in Eilers 1997, 127.)

Also the later authoritative Church document “*Communio et Progressio*” confirms the role of media in evangelism:

“The latest media of social communication are indispensable means for evangelization, and for enlightening the minds and hearts of men. They also contribute towards co-operation in furthering human progress by a Christian leavening of the social order.” (Eilers 1997, 108.)

The religious communities desire to evangelize is one of the primary reasons and motivations behind the use of media by the religious community. Oftentimes evangelism and mass media are linked with the tempting assumption that through mass media, evangelism can be done quickly and effectively due to reaching big masses for the Gospel (for example Bosch 1997, 151, 153; Bluck 1989, 65). Or, on the other hand when institutions, for theological or other reasons, want to communicate something other than evangelism, evangelism is still there, as a negation: “we do not want to do direct evangelism, but something else”. So, it seems that the whole issue about communicating the content of the faith of the community, in some way, is linked with evangelism either directly or indirectly.

The concept of evangelism was for a long time without use or attention, but was virtually revived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Protestant mission movements started to talk about “the evangelization of the world in this generation” (Bosch 1992, 409). In the concept of evangelism can be found all the different goals and means (forms of communication), as well as concepts of the churches concerning the gospel and how to communicate it (Ahonen 2000, 2711). David J. Bosch (in Ahonen 2000, 271) says that there are more than ten different interpretations of evangelism, which can be divided into four main categories. Usually, they are different versions of the relationship between concepts of mission and evangelism (Ahonen 2000, 271; Also Bosch 1997, 151-154). Barrett (in Bosch 1992, 409) has found 79 definitions of evangelism. Broadly speaking, controversy is found in two areas: the relationship between the concepts “mission” and “evangelism”, and the “scope, or range of evangelism”. The concept of mission is used, when talking about communicating to “not yet Christians,” and the concept of evangelism is used when talking about “no longer Christians” (Bosch 1992, 410).

There is also tension between seeing evangelism as being narrow and being only one type of ministry, or holistic and understanding every aspect of the church as being evangelism (see for example Bosch 1992, 412). There are some points,

where some agreement exists, even though it is not shared by all, (according to Bosch 1992, 411-420), which are:

- 1) That evangelism does aim at a response: to repent and to believe the gospel, turning from sin and to God.
- 2) That evangelism is always an invitation, not psychological comfort, nor scaring people with the horrors of hell.
- 3) That the one who evangelizes is a witness, not a judge. We should not divide people into "the saved" and into "the lost". As Newbigin (Bosch 1992, 413) puts it, "I can never be so confident of the purity and authenticity of my witness that I can know that the person who rejects my witness has rejected Jesus".
- 4) That evangelism, as a separate ministry, is needed, because evangelism is not included in all that the church does and says.
- 5) That holistic comprehension about the relationship between social service and oral proclamation is involved: they cannot and must not be separated.
- 6) That the words and works of an evangelizing institution should be synchronized; the community and individual who evangelizes should live in repentance.
- 7) That evangelism offers "transcendent and eschatological salvation, which begins in this life, but is fulfilled in eternity".
- 8) That evangelism is not proselytism and a tool for extracting church power and influence.
- 9) That evangelism does not equal quantitative church growth or extension. This is rather a classical notion about evangelism, both in Catholic and Protestant circles. "The theology of harvest" has been privileged over "the theology of seed-sowing". The goal in evangelism should not be the church, but the coming of God's Kingdom.
- 10) That to distinguish evangelism and membership recruitment is not to suggest that they are not disconnected. The connection between God's Kingdom and the empirical Christian institution should not be cut, because without institution there is no evangelism. Numerical growth of the church cannot be the only indicator of successful evangelism, but numerical growth is a by-product of evangelism.
- 11) That genuine evangelism has personal dimension: "only people can be addressed and only people can respond". The Christian gospel necessarily emphasizes personal responsibility and personal decision.
- 12) That a free and responsible individual is an outcome of the gospel. Christian conception about the individual does not, however, mean that individuals become isolated from the community (as the Enlightenment has thought).
- 13) That authentic evangelism is always contextual.

The so called social gospel, the horizontal dimension of salvation predominant among liberal Christianity, sees evangelism in terms of secular processes of communication and social change. Religious words and expressions are used as legitimizing ideology of parallel activities to those of secular organizations for example in humanitarian aid, social work and communication. For example, the

ecumenical mission conference of Bangkok was accused of being more interested in the immanent social and temporal influence of salvation rather than that of sin and guilt (critique by David J. Bosch in Ahonen 1992, 38-39). If one emphasizes too much "the corporate nature of humanity and the Lordship of Christ over all of life", there is a danger "to neglect the need for personal transformation and the impact of the transcendent on life." One "can then reduce their understanding and practice of mission to social involvement (social gospel) of particular sort." (BEMCT 1999, 382.)

Even though there has been an attempt to avoid all kinds of dichotomical thought between the spiritual and social, there is still a large gap between the understanding of evangelism as personal spiritual conversion and social gospel. Particularly the Evangelical community criticized the ecumenical movement and the Catholic church of liberalism, but is itself more moderate than the fundamentalists. The so called "evangelical left" is seeking to establish a more holistic definition of evangelism and includes both individual and social aspects of the gospel.

Evangelicals have organized themselves globally in the so-called Lausanne Movement, according to the conference that was held in Lausanne in 1974. It presents common ground on the concept of evangelism. The Lausanne-movement is an organization, in addition to churches (inter-denominational), not an inter-church organization (as ecumenism is). The Lausanne-movement is concentrated more on operational questions and the strategic planning of evangelism (Ahonen 1992, 65). Among Evangelicals, the common perception of the concept of evangelism and the relationship between spiritual and social is that social change is an outcome of spiritual conversion of individuals. Holistic in this perception is that Evangelicals recognize there is need for "service and to fight for a more human and just society". But the dispute is whether such social dimension is "in addition to, or an outcome of evangelism, or a crucial component of evangelism". For example, Billy Graham sees "evangelism as oral proclamation must always have primacy". (Ahonen 2000, 58-59.)

This "primacy on proclamation" formulation has also been criticized among Evangelicals. Many groups see that both word and service are different aspects of the same coin. This holistic understanding can be legitimized by saying that there are circumstances where only service or only proclamation is possible. Or that evangelism and social action are linked in a way that there is a distinction that must be made, even though the two are "distinct but equal partners". According to evangelical theologian John R. Stott, instead of polarization we must accept specialization, because as we are the body of Christ, God gives us different gifts of grace for different tasks (in Ahonen 1992, 61-62.)

The so-called "Manila Manifesto" (1989) by the Lausanne movement emphasizes more social justice and a holistic concept of evangelism, even though "eternal destiny of man is seen primary than immanent welfare" if we should choose between them. (Ahonen 1992, 61).

The biggest difference between the Lausanne-movement and Ecumenical theology of mission is in integration of oral proclamation and social action. In the Ecumenical movement oral proclamation and social action are seen more as equal partners; Evangelicals tend to give primacy to proclamation (Ahonen 1992, 63). The Manila Manifesto stresses that "worship and testimony are inseparable" and

that the “local congregation has primary responsibility for spreading the gospel” (in Ahonen 1992, 65).

The Lausanne Committee is also involved in communications, as is their counter-partner the World Council of Churches, but in terms of missions and evangelism (see for example Gray 1989: *Radio In Mission*), and not in terms of explicit media ethics as in the WCC.

It has been argued (in Ahonen 1992) that the tension between the “social gospel” and the “proclamation of gospel” would be insignificant in practical life, because proclaiming and social service should be so intertwined that they are virtually inseparable. So, if one must choose between the “social well being of man” and the “eternal destiny of man”, the latter would of course have primacy, but such a choice does not need to be made in real life.<sup>7</sup>

Evangelism can also be understood in terms of symbolic realism, which means that there is not so much need to assimilate to the culture of the receiver, because the word of God will communicate anyway to receiver. This notion does not see much relevance in adaptation of language and style. It thus legitimizes, for example, broadcasts of worship services as evangelism or direct preaching. The Orthodox conception of evangelism as mediation of church tradition, as well as evangelical preaching, belong to this category of symbolic realism. The problem with this view is that it is an empirical fact that this conception means loss of audience.

As a conclusion on the theme of evangelism and communication one can say that the concept of evangelism is a powerful motivator to use mass media. There is no agreement among Christian churches and communities on whether or not, and how, one can use media as an effective tool for evangelism. The dominant conception is (particularly in liberal circles) that mass media is not a proper tool for evangelism, but rather for so called pre-evangelism, where the basic concepts, information and the positive attitude of the Christian faith are established. Rather, evangelism should happen in connection with actual communities or individual Christians. This can happen by calling people to participate, for example, in evangelistic meetings in churches. Pessimism towards the possibilities of media as a tool for evangelism is mainly derived from the perceived poor effects of such attempts. In this sense the effects of religious media follow the same principles as the effects of media in general.

On the other hand there is empirical data, particularly in the context of radio and tv-missions, that show substantive amounts of conversions and media effects particularly in the context of the so-called third world, in the Middle-East, the former Soviet Union, Asia and in Africa. Also in Latin America it is reported that revivalist Evangelical groups use media, particularly radio and tv, effectively to spread their message (see for example Martín-Barbero 1997, 109). The most important point is that both the liberal and the conservative concepts of evangelism highly motivate communities to use media. For personal evangelism, media, in principle, is a well suited tool, because media consumption is usually an individual activity. Media is also seen as a powerful tool in reaching audiences larger than minority religious communities. On the social gospel -side, media is seen as compatible, because the mainstream media, mainly journalism, is often concerned with social issues. This means that the social gospel and mainstream media ideology are highly compatible, and a high quality level of journalism can be seen as a direct extension of the social gospel (see mainline Protes-

tant media theory, Chapter 3.3.2).

### 3.1.4 Pastoral Communication

There is no clear definition of what constitutes pastoral communication, and it seems that virtually everything can be counted as pastoral communication, despite its clearly evangelistic functions (see for example Trampiets 1989, 153-169). Thus, most of the communication goals and motivations of religious communities can be seen as pastoral. This being the case, then it is a matter of selecting the media and the appropriate message to fulfil any particular pastoral goal. This provides ground for operative planning, for which purpose there is plenty of instructional literature among religious communities (see for example Nash 1995). Pastoral communication, counselling and care of the flock are important dimensions and ways of utilizing media. This includes teaching and instructions of faith for living. Pastoral communication is probably seen as the main challenge in the mainline church's use of modern media. For example, in Roman Catholic pastoral communication, one should be able to communicate Scripture, Liturgy, Theology and Magisterium. The traditional and devotional practices are predominantly in textual form (Leavitt 1996, 73, 79). A goal is to increase use of narratives in pastoral communications. (For an example of extensive analysis and instructions on pastoral communication in the Catholic context see Zukowski 1996, 171-190).

### 3.1.5 Ecclesiology and Communication

Ecclesiology<sup>8</sup> is a branch of theology, which is very relevant in a discussion on religious communication. Ecclesiology seeks to give theoretical explanation and justification to historical Christian institutions. As ecclesiology is about the nature and borders of Christian community, it has become more pressing to define these borders in times of virtual religion and virtual religious ministries and communities (on new nature of religious community, see Chapter 4.3.3).<sup>9</sup>

Ecclesiology seeks to give theoretical explanation and justification to historical Christian institutions. Ecclesiology connects to normative media theories of particular Christian traditions in basically three ways. *First*, the inclusive vs. exclusive ecclesiology is an important distinction. Inclusive communication assumes the wide audience to already be members of the community. Respectively, exclusive ecclesiology leads to a polarized communication to two very different audiences: those who are community members (expressed in explicit religious commitment) and those who are outsiders and thus targets of evangelism.

*The second connection* of ecclesiology to communication can be seen in the different ecclesiological models presented by Avery Dulles, since there are respective compatible styles and a media of communication for each ecclesiological model. The *third* connection is provided by Richard Niebuhr's "Christ and Culture" -approach, which can be seen as one type of ecclesiology. His "Christ and Culture" models reflect a different orientation and relationship of Christian communities to the surrounding secular culture. These models are also relevant, particularly for orientation on how to use religious and secular symbol systems in religious communication, and how explicit or implicit could, or should religious

communication be.

Traditionally, ecclesiology can be seen to exist along two strands. *First* is the inclusive strand, which sees the Christian community, and/or the church, to be open to all the people who are just willing to belong to it. State churches are of this type, and membership is granted on the basis of infant baptism. In this type of ecclesiology, it is impossible to make a connection between the moral life and commitment of an individual and membership in the Christian community, because membership in the church is granted on the basis of formal membership. This view is predominant in mainline churches as well as in the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox church.

The *second*, the exclusive view, or strand, sees ecclesia as a more restricted “community of the saints”. This notion requires a personal commitment to Christian faith and a will to live according to Christian moral standards. This is the view of the Christian community as the “community of the selected ones” set apart from the world.

In either case religious community always has some kind of institutional core, meaning that there is either formal or informal structure of authority and performance. In ecclesiology, hierarchical structure can be legitimized if not by articulating its divine origin, at least by addressing its divine presence and legitimation. The opposite ecclesiological view to that of divine origin is that of a general priesthood of believers founded on baptism. The church can also exist as a sacrament, when it on the whole is “an effective symbol that communicates what it symbolizes and is taken up into the divine salvific self-communication”. The Second Vatican Council image on the church as a community of communion is balanced with the more institutional view of the church as “*societas perfecta hierarchica*”. The basis of communion is unity with Christ and each other through baptism. (BEMCT 1999, 133.)

Historically, ecclesiology is almost solely “real world ecclesiology” (in comparison to ecclesiology on virtual communities, see Chapter 4.3.3), which means that it sees the actual church institution as representing the only true type of community. Ecclesia is not only cognitive information or concepts: it is also fellowship, spirituality, sacraments and moral authority. These are all dimensions difficult to perform in cases of mediated religious virtual community. None can recognize whether an individual is committed to the core beliefs of the community. In particular, the teaching of sacred beliefs and morals need submission under authority. These requirements are difficult to meet in a mediated community, which is eclectic by nature and stresses a freedom of the audience to give meanings to authoritative media texts (on authority in Christianity see for example BEMCT 1999, 21; more detailed analysis of virtual religious community, see Chapters 4.3.2; 4.3.3).

### 3.1.5.1 Dulles’s Ecclesiological Models and Communication

Avery Dulles, as a most important theologian, studied the connections of ecclesiology and communication. He suggests that each understanding of the church (ecclesiological model) has an equivalent partner as a “preferred model of communication”. These formulations by Avery Dulles on the relationships between different models of the church (ecclesiology) and communications have

been the major contribution to evaluating the role of communications and media for Christian churches. For example, Zukowski (1994, 169-178) analyzes the implications of ecclesiological models for all church communication. J.B. Metz has formulated a three (competing) typology of ecclesiology (in Stetter et al 1999, 17) almost corresponding to that of Dulles. The models of ecclesiology and the models of communication are inseparable, and the previous determines the latter. One can thus say that there are communications models that are compatible with particular (competing) ecclesiologies (for example Soukup 1991, 75-76; 2001).<sup>10</sup>

Avery Dulles's "five ecclesiological models" show the classic relationship between ecclesiology and communication (for example Dulles 1988, 110-131). These models have been applied particularly to the Catholic communities (see for example Soukup 1996a, vii-xviii; Stetter et al 1999, 16-17; Thorn 1996, 82, 96-98; Coleiro 1997). Dulles has analyzed the various ecclesiological models, which can be found in the Second Vatican Council documents (Dulles 1988; also according to Thorn 1996, 97-99). The various ecclesiological models, and compatible models of communication are:

- 1) *The Hierarchical model*: the church is seen primarily as a hierarchical institution (most visibly in the case of Roman Catholic Church), where emphasis is on the transmission of official statements from the Pope, from the bishops, Magisterium, etc. Emphasis is on the sender and the system of communication. The compatible media are the traditional media of the hierarchy: decrees, encyclicals, pastoral letters, seminary training, sermons, etc. This model is predominant in the Catholic church, but important also among all hierarchical church structures, for example, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.
- 2) *The Herald model*: the emphasis is on the Church's task to proclaim the saving Gospel, the Good News, which is the primary content where both hierarchy and laity are communicators. The desired response is conversion. The proper result of the Word communicated in the two previous models is "submission and faith" (Dulles 1988, 114). The compatible media are mass media (primarily in pre-evangelization). The Herald model is predominant in Evangelical communities.
- 3) *The Sacramental model* assumes that religious communication occurs not only through words, but also through symbols, persons and events. The emphasis is on how Christ's presence is reflected through the lives of Christians and the Church, which stresses the communicative power and significance of the liturgy. The compatible media is, for example, the broadcasting of ecclesiastic events, papal journeys, worship services, etc., which signify the spiritual power and meanings of the church. This model is particularly important for the Eastern Orthodox tradition, which is basically very tradition and liturgy centred, which means that the sacramentality is also its essence in media communication.
- 4) *The Church as the community and communion –model*: the emphasis is on the dialogue between community members and the common witness as a primary means of communication and fellowship on the order of social relationships. The compatible media are media of laity and the small media (for example Internet, low-power radio stations, leaflets etc.), which promote

plurality of voices, dialogue and discussion - even confrontation. The dialogical model may also increase the diversity and fragmentation of the church, which makes it a potential risk. Interactive and grass-roots media, like the Internet, is a suitable media for this purpose. This is the most communitarian model and it is essential for all communities, since grass roots involvement is important for all religions. This model may have lack of support from the side of the community elite, because grass roots communication may generate a threat to authority structures.

- 5) *The "secular-dialogical model"*: this implies that the Church can enter into dialogue with the secular world and even with other religions in which God is mysteriously working. The goal is not so much to convert, but to learn and give a joint human witness of common human, and religious values. The compatible media are journalistic media, which promote a call for radical social change as well as dialogical relationships between the church, the world, and other religions. The core message is a call for social justice. The danger in this model is that the pressures against the teachings of the church from outside may be presented without an understanding of the Catholic tradition. The gospel message must still be presented to honest seekers in a simple and yet attractive way. Effective communication must not be elevated into an absolute status, but it must be evaluated and negotiated from the perspective of Gospel values (Dulles 1988, 130-131). The Church's contribution to mainstream media and journalism is a proper way of performing this model. The secular-dialogical model is the most predominant in main-line Protestant traditions, since their main emphasis is in dialogue and ethical contribution to mainstream media and society.

### 3.1.5.2 Niebuhr's Christ and Culture Approach

In Paul Tillich's words, (in Brown 1995, 319) "Religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion". This means that revelation requires cultural forms, which means that it is important to ask how divine revelation communicates culturally, and how the particular religious message is conditioned by the modes of communication (media). Having interest in both content and form, theology can make its contribution to culture and media as well (Brown 1995, 320-321). The various attitudes of Christian communities towards the surrounding socio-cultural environment are often called the different "Christ and culture - paradigms" (according to H. Richard Niebuhr's classic study "Christ and Culture", 1951). The overall attitude of a religious community towards culture also has important consequences for the religious media use of that particular community. The models are visible in orientation (isolation vs. accommodation), in how they value secular media (as intrinsically evil and even demonized or just as ethically biased), and in choosing which symbol system they primarily use (primarily religious symbols, since they represent the true Christian revelation vs. dominance of secular themes and symbols, since they also reflect divine revelation according to natural theology).

These models are also compatible, to some extent, to what Niebuhr states on the development of denominationalism, since his model is for the most part concerned with the tension between the religious movement and the environment.

“From a theological standpoint it can be said that, in the degree to which religious truths or realities accommodate themselves to human expression, they are precisely to that extent ‘inculturated’” (Brown 1995, 315).

The five paradigms on culture according to Brown are (Brown 1995, 316; Marsh 1997, 24-28):

- 1) *Christ against culture*: The church and the world are aliens to each other. The values of the Christian story are independent of culture; theology is a critique of culture and theology cannot be the subject of cultural scrutiny itself. The Gospel is a particular story generated and transmitted exclusively by the Christian community. This view leads to a parallel and “unpolluted” system of religious media, as in the case of the Evangelicals. Nowadays, the evangelical community (largely in USA) has transformed their “Christ against Culture” paradigm to a “Christ-in-conquest-over-culture” approach, since they utilize forms of secular mainstream culture and give religious meanings to it, for example, by providing religious films and other mass market products. This is not to be interpreted as secularization and a lowering of the tension of evangelicalism, but as a new approach and new phase in the historical development of Evangelicalism in the USA.<sup>11</sup>
- 2) *Christ of (within) Culture*: Identifying Christ with the best that culture already produces means inculturation of Christianity into Enlightenment rationalism, which assumes that truths (also Christian) can be provided by reason without particular revelation. This is a theology of cultural accommodation and means that Christian values, doctrines and values can be subordinated to cultural substitutes. From this perspective, “Christ serves only to enhance culture and beauty”. (Brown 1995, 316-317.) This approach sees the Christian story as being only a particular story predominant in the Christian community that can be either true or not; it is just a narrative relevant in that particular context (Marsh 1997, 26). This might be primarily a mainline Protestant or liberal Catholic orientation in communication.
- 3) *Christ above Culture*: Temporal artifacts and human culture are good as such, but perfected only in relation with God through Jesus Christ. This is a mediating position between the Christ against Culture and the Christ of Culture approaches. Culture and theology must be understood to be in dialogue. Culture poses the human condition, and theology provides the Christian perfection and answer. “A mutually critical dialog has to occur”, otherwise theology sells itself too cheaply (Marsh 1997, 27). This means that both secular and sacred can contribute to each other, and it means, for example, that communication studies and theological studies are relevant to each other, as well as faith and reason can have fruitful dialogue.
- 4) *Christ and culture in paradoxical tension*: Instead of expecting grace to accomplish cultural constructs, cultures are seen as “worthless in their present, sinful condition. Only then, miraculously, does God allow human activity and creativity to work (in largely hidden ways) for God’s ultimate glory” (Brown 1995, 317). For example Martin Luther used this approach by adopting secular tunes for church use.
- 5) *Christ the transformer of culture*: Christ is the transformer or converter of cultural values, since there is a radical distinction between “God’s work in Christ

and man’s work in culture”. Culture is (in Augustinian words) “perverted good, not... intrinsically evil” (Brown 1995, 318).

### 3.2 General Notes and Similarities in Religious Media Communication

#### 3.2.1 Introduction to Actual Cases

PICTURE 7 shows how the research setting is operationalized on an empirical level and gives a sample, what kind of respective organization of communication is involved.

## The Four Communicative Traditions Operationalized



The common main motivator of communication (on the level of Root-Christianity) is the Great Commission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 19, 20, the New King James Version)

This obligation means there are two dimensions of communication compatible with mass media: to expand and to maintain Christian religion. This is the common basis for all Christian traditions. But there are several interpretations of this obligation to communication, as well as various strategies and operational ideologies of communication. In a nutshell, the communication dynamics (which basically means the goals) are driven by the following goals for media use:

- 1) Evangelism,
- 2) Pastoral Teaching,
- 3) Informing,
- 4) To reach or maintain relevance and influence (and hegemony) in a given socio-cultural context or on issues,
- 5) To produce spirituality, or religious experience through media. These goals are common to all traditions, but present in different configurations.

My method in this study is to build ideal types and models, as well as to use a method of polarities (which means that models do not exist in pure forms in real world settings). This means, that the normative media theories of Christian traditions are described by presenting their distinctive and predominant characteristics, which separate them from other communities. There may be, of course, some overlap, but the predominant model should describe the primary differences present in this particular community. For example, there is the role of the Pope and Church hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church, the predominance of communications ethics and dialogue in mainline Protestant communities, the primacy of media evangelism among evangelicals, and the emphasis on liturgy and tradition in Eastern Orthodox communication.

In the cases of all traditions, religious media should be understood as an extension of the community. The performance of religious media should not be evaluated against mainstream media (in terms of audiences, resources or effects), since its rationale lies in the “spill over effect”. Namely, the audience of religious media is always bigger than those who participate in the religious services of actual institutions. This diminishing amount of church-attendance is attributed overall to the modernization and secularization processes against which religious media is a reaction and a performance strategy of religion.

Virtually all denominations of the Christian faith in countries around the world split into two almost opposing parties: the liberal and the conservative. In most cases the liberals hold an established position, while the conservatives form a very strong and vital opposition to them. The situation is genuinely contingent, and in some cases (for example in USA, see for example Hoover 1988, 42-43) it is so that the conservatives are growing in numbers and liberals are losing members. The case of the Russian Orthodox Church is interesting, since the ROC is the only established hegemonic church in which the conservatives are in power, while in the West the liberals not only set the agenda, but the official theology and

ideology of communication as well.

Common to all traditions is the fact that each must strive to maintain public influence & relevance in mainstream society at some level. And every tradition wants to “monopolize”, in a sense, the definition and creed of Christianity. In most cases each individual denomination communicates as if it alone has the only true interpretation of Christianity, and usually ignores the interpretations of other traditions. This effort to monopolize Christianity is common to every tradition more or less. This monopolizing represents one form or strategy of universalism and competition in the marketplace of religion. Traditions are more willing to extend ecumenical co-operation or networking, usually in the case where they hold a minority position in any given context. Networking and ecumenism are typical, and a beneficial strategy for any community that finds itself otherwise in a minority setting.

A classical issue facing religious communicators (in reaching the mainstream audience) is when communication should be specifically religious, and when it should be more general or value-oriented. And which media should be specifically denominational and when should one operate with the secular or ecumenical media (more on this problematics, for example John Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications<sup>12</sup>). Within the dynamics of all Christian traditions there is a tension of separation (from the secular world) and accommodation (to the cultural and social context with the Christian message and contribution). The new innovation to accommodate through content is developing a “therapeutic ethos,” rather than simply keeping to traditional religious language and concepts. This strategy is mostly used by liberal mainline Christianity (see for example Peck 1997, 227-245; Sumiala-Seppänen 2001), but it is also used somewhat by conservatives (Bruce 1990, 88-90). This concept of equalizing the religious state of mind with happiness and material success is called “prosperity gospel”. The mainliners use the same strategy, but take it in a different direction by substituting such words as “sin” for “weakness,” etc.

The Normative Religious Media Theory of a particular community may be based on an officially formulated media theology, or the doctrine of communications of the church. It may also take the form of a loose communications program of the church (for example “Communicative Church; in Finnish “Kommunikoiwaan kirkkoon, kirkon viestinnän periaateohjelma” by the Lutheran Church of Finland, 1992; and “Church of Dialogue”, in Finnish “Vuoropuhelun kirkko”, 2002). Normative religious media theory may also be diversified and unofficial by nature. For example, this is the case with Evangelicalism, which does not have a common official written conception about the use of media. Instead, it has a loose but quite widely spread and similar operational strategy about how and why to use media.

Evangelical tradition and communication are also sometimes presented in the context of other traditions. There are two reasons for this. *First*, Evangelicalism can be seen as a an opposite view (polarity) in terms of content, form, and communications strategies in comparison to more established churches. This means that Evangelicalism represents the other pole in the method of polarities. The intention is not to favour evangelicals or keep them as an ideal, but to clarify the various performance options (as is the case in the chapter on the “Failure of

Mainline Protestantism in Television”, Chapter 3.3.2.2). *Second*, in some cases one must recognize that the evangelical strategy has been successful, at least in utilitarian terms, for example in the USA. The Evangelical media is also a part of the globalization process that in Russia has brought tension particularly in the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Protestants.

### **3.2.2 The Various Agents of Religious Communication**

There are organizational similarities among Christian traditions. Namely, Christian traditions are usually organized within similar structures hierarchically and bureaucratically. There are, of course, differences of organization depending, for example, on the size of the community. The following illustration shows all the various communications agents related to the communications processes, and to some extent there are autonomous operators within the particular traditions. The official institutional communication is thus only one aspect of mediated communication within a tradition. I list here various levels and agents of Christian communication, and give some basic definitions and descriptions of the communicative agents in question. These descriptions are meant to clarify and systematize the various operators, and their relationships with each other.

PICTURE 8 shows the various agents of religious media communication.



the institutional perspective, and are based on their parochial legitimacy in a particular context. The reasoning behind these communications is usually based on the Bible, and the messages are theologically more sophisticated and globally oriented than those coming from smaller denominations. In addition to the communications dynamics, which arise from Biblical Root-Christianity, there are additional documents and instructions that are related to particular mediums and formats of religious communication (for example on the goals of devotional programs, current affairs programs etc.). When churches become large enough to become influential and hegemonic, they perceive it to be important to have presence in the media. This is to ensure their position and relevance in society. Their aim is to remain either constant or to put themselves in position to increase in society. Thus these large churches try to soften secularization, the diminishing of the institutional position of the church in society, and the loss of members as well, by adopting passive or defensive strategies. The churches strive to ensure their privileged access to, for example, public service media, and to mainstream news media. Mainline churches have in fact sought a platform of common media ethics, particularly within the ecumenical movement (Haikarainen 2000).

- 2) *Denominations* communicate, because they are so small - minority communities (while churches communicate, because they are so big). Since they are minorities, they usually do not have significant position in the society or the culture, and their public image in the community is very limited. Because of this lack of knowledge among the general population, the image of a given minority or particular denomination may be negative. And since the resources of these particular minorities or denominations in question, are limited, their ability to build contacts or relationships with the mainstream community are impaired. Thus, they perceive media visibility as a cost-effective tool for gaining exposure. If a community succeeds in getting positive news visibility in the media, it is a great stepping stone for participating in other activities of the community. Note the communications dynamics of denominations, in addition to their strategic minority position in the society, is often based on conservative and evangelical theology.
- 3) *International denominational or ecumenical media organizations*. Within each tradition there are international organizations related to issues of media. Such institutions are, for example, the Catholic UNDA, the OCIC, and the UCIP, the mainline Protestant (and ecumenical) WACC, the Evangelical ICMC, and the Orthodox International Association of Orthodox Journalists<sup>13</sup>.
- 4) *Religious movements* are important communicators inside particular traditions.
  - *Revival movements* seek to support religious revival through media coverage for the most part. And more established revival movements inside churches have their own media systems, and oftentimes media activities or campaigns related to missions, teaching or evangelism.
  - *Religious orders*, some in the Catholic church are particularly dedicated to ministry in media. It is their "charism", their special task. (See Chapter 3.3.1.6 on more detailed description on religious orders in the me-

dia.)

- *Brotherhoods* in the Russian Orthodox tradition use media as a crucial part of their ministry. They have their own publications, newspapers and radio-stations. The most significant brotherhood in the media is the Radonezh community. (See Chapter 3.4.6.5)

- 5) *Independent Religious Organizations: Para-church Organizations, Media Missions Organizations, and Media Ministries.* These types of organizations use media in very different ways compared to churches and denominations. Their explicit goals are to use media in order to create an audience committed to their message. In a sense, the “virtual community” is created. These organizations are independent from denominational institutions and structures, and thus they can move along in their own vision of religious communication. These types of organizations can be found among all Christian traditions. Media ministries have succeeded in developing a form of mediated religion, which can operate solely from the modern electronic media platform, and without the need for a geographical organization. The communications dynamics of Media Ministries are usually based on Evangelical theology and tradition (even though there are also, for example, Catholic conservative media ministries such as Mother Angelica in the USA). Media ministries and para-church organizations are children of the media age, because without modern electronic media they could not exist. Media ministries are often built around charismatic leaders (in both a secular and religious sense of the concept).

Another sub-type is the mission organization, which uses media as a global tool for disseminating the Christian message. “Media mission” organizations usually form a separate sub-type among other mission organizations. The basic difference, when compared to media ministries, is that the financial and other resources are gathered from Christian communities from among the sender-countries, not from the audience, which is the target of evangelism. Examples of such media mission organizations are FEBC and Trans World Radio.

- 6) *Dioceses.* In some countries dioceses are important communicative agents, particularly in countries which have a large geographical area, or which have large populations (for example the USA, Italy, or Russia). Dioceses may use regional electronic media to air their own programs, and they may publish their own weeklies or monthlies. Dioceses also have press offices.

- 7) *Congregations.* By being a local entity of the church, the congregation is the core organization in providing religious services to the local community. A congregation may broadcast worship services or other spiritual events to those who cannot participate in the activities of the congregation.

The primary use and significance of the media in this case is to inform about the events of the congregation. For example in Finland, there is a particular section in the local newspaper once a week for “congregational notices”. In Finland, virtually every urban Lutheran congregation typically has its own “parish weekly” which is distributed freely to every household in a given area. A co-ordination of activities between the central church body and the

local congregation is needed. The congregation in this way promotes the activities of its own geographical area, and the church body informs about national events. There is some overlap, because local congregations may, for example, sponsor regional or national media projects, or the national body or diocese may donate money to congregations for their individual local communications activities.

- 8) *Companies linked with particular religious tradition.* It is likely that religious publishers produce the majority of religious communications. Within each tradition, there can usually be found a huge number of independent publishing houses. These may be run or owned by the particular religious body, or they may be independent. The communications dynamics of the publishers, or other these types of media organizations are based on the mission to promote the identity of the tradition. The biggest portion of Christian radio and tv-stations, as well as publishers, are independent. As far as the content of their productions, they are based on the theology and teaching of the tradition. The commitment these media organizations have to their tradition is usually significant, at least on the level of supporting key persons within companies.
- 9) *Individuals.* In a big way, the vitality of the Evangelical media is largely based on evangelistic vision and the enthusiasm of individuals. In areas where financial resources are limited, a voluntary labour force, as well as individual donations, may be needed. The promotion of Christianity from within both Christian and secular media is often based on an individual's convictions or calling. In practice, this may mean something as anonymous as writing to the reader's section in the newspapers, or it may be as committed as finding work in religious media or in the department of religious affairs in the secular media. One gains expertise or gains entrance into the field of religious communication, usually, on the basis of personal conviction and mission. "Individualism as media theory" also means that every individual has their own personal view on how media should be used by religion. This view is more or less compatible with the normative media theory of the tradition, thus the individual deviations may be significant. One important channel, which supports the individual religious communication dynamic, is the so-called reader's section in newspapers where readers can voice their opinions. These writings form a significant content type in that section. It is here that the grass roots popularized religious voice and values get publicity, and it thus has an important symbolic significance, not only for these Finnish religious communities in particular, but for the entire secular community and the promotion of religion as well.

### 3.3 Normative Media Theories of the Four Christian Traditions

I will now cover the four Christian traditions and their respective views on mediated communication. The traditions are presented in the following order:

- 1) Roman Catholic,
- 2) Mainline Protestant,
- 3) Evangelical Protestant, and
- 4) Eastern Orthodox.

Each of these traditions has their own dominant and characteristic normative views on how mediated communication should be performed. Each tradition maintains a unique ideal type as well as real life empirical case characteristics with respective communicative agents and structures representing the various possibilities of mediated religious communication. The normative media view, which has developed within each tradition, is a consummation of historical processes, theological views and societal contexts. Primary considerations are how each tradition basically sees the possibilities and limitations of media use within the religion, and, what their strategies are for establishing relevance, influence, and hegemony in the marketplace of religion, and in society in general. The four traditions thus hold unique ideal types that are contingent on the performance strategies within each religion.

The descriptions of each normative religious media theory are not symmetrical, but rather reflect the characteristics of a particular community as well as the available sources and the limitations of the research process itself. Difference in structure is not a problem however, since a certain degree of ethnographic self-understanding of each tradition is required in the description of each case (on ethnographic vs. comparative method see Chapter 1.4.1). Also, the level and the degree of generalization vary in individual cases. For proper contextualization within each normative theory, I begin by presenting some background on each case.

Prior to this study, and in comparison to the other traditions, my knowledge of *Roman Catholic* media theory has been somewhat limited. For this reason, I've utilized a considerable amount of resources in tracing Catholic media theory. This accounts for the depth of the analysis as being more descriptive rather than explanatory and synthetical. A deeper level of analysis is reached, for example, in the case of the Mainline Protestant tradition, with which I have been more familiar. In the description portion of this tradition it is apparent the sources are numerous. This domination of primary sources (basically church documents on communication) is, for the most part, due to the nature of the Catholic religion itself, in that official church documents are regarded as an important normative source (far more important than in Protestant churches). As a result, the primary sources of normative Catholic media theory in this study are based on the church documents themselves. Within the Catholic tradition there is also a significant body of literature concerning communications issues that are partially reflected here as well.

*The case of the Mainline Protestant* media theory is different, albeit by scope, than the Catholic one, since the concept "Mainline Protestant" is a synthesis, and reflects the communication views of various Protestant churches, rather than that of an entity as in the case of the Roman Catholic theory. This attests to the fact that the text is more abstract and more synthetical than in the Catholic case. The Mainline Protestant theory is thus an ecumenical construct, largely based on second-

ary literature found particularly among the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) as being the communications views of the ecumenical body of Mainline Protestant communications. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland and the USA are used as empirical case samples of this orientation. When Mainline Protestant and Evangelical Protestant views are compared, this comparison can be linked to a well-known dispute concerning core issues that are very relevant when considering communications. This comparison is present for example when considering Mainline Protestant's efforts in religious television. This kind of comparative method should make it easier to see the differences between the two (competing) versions of Protestantism.

*As for Evangelical Protestant media theory*, it is also largely based on research literature and the interviews. Particularly in the case of the Evangelicals, there is a large body of research literature that concentrates, for the most part, on televangelism from a critical perspective. Other than that, the Evangelical communities are often rather small in number and predominantly oral, which means in many cases that there are no written documents on communication. However, there is a widely accepted "tacit knowledge" and view on the significance of mass media for evangelism. The touch on Evangelicals is rather ethnographic, which means the Evangelical voice is let to speak with its own discourse, which is rare because of the dominant critical orientation of previous research towards Evangelical communications activities.

*The case of Eastern Orthodox media theory* faces a limitation of a different type. Because freedom for Orthodox Christianity in Russia is a relatively new experience, there has not been sufficient time to produce normative thought on media, especially as it is known in the West. For this reason there are very few sources available, and the emphasis has been placed on interviews and few available documents (such as the paper of Antoine Niviere in the Conference on Orthodox Journalistic ethics, 17.5.1999, entitled "The Ethics and Morality of the Orthodox Communication").

### 3.3.1 Roman Catholic Theory

The Roman Catholic Church is presented first, because it represents the classical case of monolithic church structure and its holistic and hegemonic position in the society. Nowadays, the Catholic church has changed considerably as far as its societal position and internal official teaching on its relationship with the surrounding society, culture and media. Yet the Catholic church remains the most important single body in religious media communications, and it also represents an important example on the shift from conservatism to liberalism, and the respective struggles of these two parties. This means that Catholicism is a very diverse and pluralist community even though under one authoritative hierarchy and confession. This deep division between right and left, or conservative and liberal Catholicism is obvious also in the Catholic media (McBrien 1994, 8-9).

Roman Catholic theory is characterized by the hierarchical communication on one hand, and the so called "Catholic imagination" on the other. This makes it a dualistic theory. The Roman Catholic communication theory is the most difficult to characterize, since it virtually includes the crucial components of all the

other communicative views. There is a danger of over-simplification in presenting Roman Catholic theory, and for this reason a rather extensive description is presented on both the overall characteristics of Catholicism and its communications-related aspects. It can be said that the basic characteristic of Roman Catholic media theory is the emphasis on the Church institution and authority, as well as the emphasis on global presence.

The Roman Catholic Church, as a global organization, is very hierarchical, and could hardly survive as a homogeneous church body if it were any other way. From the perspective of communications, this global and hierarchical nature, when added to the supremacy of the Pope, puts forth great challenges and provides ground for various types of communicative activities. The Catholic church must be able to communicate its official teachings and statements as well as instructions and news on current affairs to the world-wide church body. The church faces a double or triple challenge in trying to negotiate between its global style of organization in various particular national contexts: at the same time attempting to maintain its local relevance, while keeping its authoritative nature, and yet not accommodating too much in local values. For this reason, official documents of the church (Catechism, pontifical documents and encyclicals, Magisterium, pontifical speeches, and statements of the bishops) are of significant importance. Grass roots popular spirituality is also very vital to the Catholic tradition, which has substantial implications for the Catholic system of communication.

The Roman Catholic Church is a very relevant starting point for considering the communications ideology of Christian traditions, because the Catholic church has the most developed and systematized thought on communications and media. Also, the Mainline Protestant churches have adopted some elements of the Catholic traditions views on communications.

### 3.3.1.1 Basic Dimensions of Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church is similar, yet different than any other church. Roman Catholicism can be characterized as having elements common to any other Christian church, yet in a certain "unique configuration of characteristics" (McBrien 1994, 9, 1200-1201). But the distinctive characteristics of Catholicism are the "Petrine Ministry" or Papacy, and principles of sacramentality (the belief that God operates through the immanent and visible - not so that visible symbolizes transcendent, but immanent and visible actually mediates the transcendental). Sacramentality and the principle of mediation are thus related: God uses signs and instruments to communicate grace, *not only to symbolize, but to cause divine effect* (italics mine). Because of the mediation, the role of the priest is also much more visible than in the Protestant traditions. The role of the priest is not limited to being a mediator between God and the human person, but also to mediate between individuals and the community of faith (McBrien 1994, 12). A unique principle of Catholicism is also the principle of communion. It means that the significance of the community is valued much higher than in Protestant circles. And maybe the final unique characteristic of Catholicism, relevant to this study, might be the significance of the tradition and church hierarchy. In combining the

principles of mediation and communion, the Roman Catholic tradition's role of authority is much more binding than is usually found among Protestant Christian tradition.

The role of church tradition is greater and far more explicit for Catholics than for Protestants. Catholics also see the Scriptures as a result of tradition, and thus recognize the authoritative nature of the tradition of the church (McBrien 1994, 14). The Scriptures, the tradition and the Magisterium must all be considered together and in dialogue.<sup>14</sup>

From the perspective of communications, it is important to look at some characteristics of Catholicism. First, the principles of mediation and sacramentality imply that one can see spirituality in all material, which means that all reality is sacred (McBrien 1994, 10). For Catholicism, this means it is very natural and easy to contribute, for example, to issues of nature conservation. The church can, for example, declare a river, that is going to be dammed up, to be holy, and for that reason it cannot be dammed. This natural theology means that all creation is holy, because of the divine event of creation. Natural theology also legitimizes the authoritative ethical and religious statements of the church concerning societal and cultural issues. Within the Roman Catholic tradition, official documents, pontifical encyclicals, pastoral letters of the bishops, and other writings have an important role. In modern society, the Catholic church exercises its public influence and relevance through different types of "public speech acts" by speaking on controversial issues (Casanova 1994, 184). These public speeches are usually exercised through the episcopal speeches and pastoral letters of the bishops, which are targeted (through the media) both to members of the church and to the wider public audience (Casanova 1994, 187-188). And when practising such public ethical speech the church needs the help of media. It is customary for the mainstream media to report the statements of Catholic bishops. The perspectives and opinions presented by the media may contrast, but in most cases the mainstream media is very interested in what the Catholic church says, and they present the views of the bishops accurately.<sup>15</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church has reacted to modernity by establishing a parallel system of cultural values such as those seen: in Catholic schools and universities, political parties, the Catholic media, the system of moral evaluation of the secular media, thomistic philosophy, as a reaction against shifting paradigms of science, etc. (White 1986, 11-12). After World War II, the Catholic church opened itself to new (liberal) theologies, which recognized God as working in and through popular secular cultures and not separate or above them. Also, the secular media, for example film, can be seen to include religious imagination and inspiration. (White 1986, 12.)

The Second Vatican Council (held during 1962-1965) was held as the turning point of the Roman Catholic Church from a conservative, isolationist, monological and primarily hierarchical theology and institution, towards that of a liberal, participatory, dialogical and primarily communitarian theology and agenda. The Second Vatican Council was a triumph for reformers of the church, and it was significant in that so many reforms happened simultaneously (Broomé 1993, 293). The Second Vatican council was an ending point for scholastic thought that began in the Middle Ages. The church also turned its face, not its back as

before, towards other churches and even to other religions, and ecumenical thought became officially predominant (Broomé 1993, 293-296).

The results of the Second Vatican council were crystallized in sixteen documents. The authority of the documents varies in a sense that some are more authoritative, dogmatic "constitutions", and others less authoritative "decrees" and "declarations". Constitutions are related to the very essence of Christian faith. "Decrees and declarations are directed at practical questions or specific pastoral concerns". (McBrien 1994, 666.) The Second Vatican council also made its contribution to modern media in the form of the Conciliar "Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication", *Inter Mirifica*.

### 3.3.1.2 Roman Catholic Church as Communicator

Maybe the best known gift of the Roman Catholic Church, to the sphere of communication, is the concept of propaganda. The concept was first used by a committee of cardinals (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, founded in 1622 by Pope Gregory) of the Catholic Church who were responsible for foreign missions. The concept of propaganda itself comes from the Latin word "propagare", and originally meant propagating the gospel and establishing the Church in non-Christian countries. (Mowlana 21.7.1999; Jowett et al. 1986, 15; Broomé 1993, 179-182.)

Propaganda was also a reaction against the Reformists successful use of the modern media of that time: printing. The Ministry of Propaganda had its own printing resources, where it printed Bibles, Catechisms, and other products in all the languages of that time (Broomé 1993, 179-180). But the Roman Catholic Church has changed its communication concepts tremendously from the days of propaganda. Mass media, particularly print, was used by the Catholic church from the very beginning for pastoral purposes, and particularly for missions. The Post-Reformation Council of Trent put together a decree on "printing" and how to use it for the Catholic church. The Second Vatican Council made a second decree on relationships between modern media and the church (Leavitt 1996, 67). Later Pope Paul VI exhorted to use mass media (particularly electronic media this time) as a tool for evangelism. (Eilers 1997, 76-77).

Within the Catholic community, the views on communication differ very much from the institutional promoting view of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross and Discipline of Institutional Communication, to the liberal dialogical and critical view of the Pontifical Salesian University's Communications Department. In practice, the Roman Catholic communications operations hierarchical and instrumental view on communication still heavily dominates over views that support dialogue ideals.<sup>16</sup>

Since the Roman Catholic Church is global, it is very heterogeneous in nature even though official church documents and the official hierarchy maintain it as one single organization. The heterogeneity is not only due to the split between liberals and conservatives, but also because of the other differences of opinion on communications. For example, as a result of the Marquette Seminary in the U.S., 17 various goals and purposes were found for church communication (Thorn 1985, 34-36). When asked about priorities and preferred challenges in church communication, 14 various projects received support among as many individual

notions (Thorn 1985, 37-39).<sup>17</sup> The same diversity is also present among Mainline Protestant churches.

The Catholic Church has shifted itself from one of direct conservative theology of communication to a more liberal, plural and complex theology of communication. The new

“emphasis on the symbolic, imaginative dimension in religious discourse points up the importance of mythic conceptions of history, narrative, parable, paradox and ritual for the organization of meaning in the assent of faith” (White 1986, 15).

The Catholic church, as a whole, is still seeking new ways of religious communications compatible with statements from the Second Vatican council. A revitalization has basically taken place among grass roots Catholic social movements, such as the Charismatic renewal, and the marriage encounter, and this has enabled a new expressive and participatory form of communication. At the moment, dialogical orientation forms the predominant official communications ideology of the Church. (White 1986, 12-17.)

As noted, today the thoughts and practices of communication remain very diverse within the Roman Catholic Church with its various attitudes and positions (see for example Soukup 1996a, vii-xviii). Catholic communication can be distinguished by the polarities of “propositional Catholicism” (leaning towards authoritative, institutional and transcendental) and “imaginative Catholicism” (leaning towards Catholic imagination, immanent and communitarian) (Greeley 1996, 22-23). The communications views expressed in official church documents are even in conflict with one another, but recently along with the *Communio et Progressio*; a positive dialogical communicative tendency has begun to dominate.

The Protestant dialectical imagination leans towards the transcendental, while the Catholic analogical imagination leans towards the immanent (Greeley 1996, 22). In the Catholic tradition there is something that is called the “Catholic imagination”, and this refers to the use of analogies in communication. Catholic imagination means a way of understanding the divine-human encounter and is expressed by the phrase of “similarity-in-difference”. Catholic imagination is seen in its full flavour in Catholic film, because it gives freedom to the symbolism, sacramentalism and aesthetics of Catholic creativity (for example Ortiz 1999). The roots of Catholic imagination can be traced back to Catholic theology, which in its Christology (about the person of Jesus Christ) and sacramental theology unites divine and human as one entity in opposition to the Protestant concepts that make a sharp distinction between human and God. According to Catholic understanding, divine things can be celebrated through aesthetic expression, such as can be seen in film: “The disclosure of the divine within the ordinary is an assumption of the Catholic imagination... being radically open to the world and therefore accepting that existence can be both beautiful and degraded.” (Ortiz 1999; McBrien 1994, 15.)

The concept of “Catholic imagination” reflects the orientation of liberal Catholics. Andrew Greeley summarizes this distinction, (from the perspective of liberals, in Ortiz 1999):

"...a religious tradition which commits itself to analogy has to be open to all possible metaphors, there are bound to be confrontations between two sections of the Church: the traditional hierarchy which seeks to uphold 'Catholic values' and to prevent contamination from worldly ones, and the Church which, because of its identity within and incarnational and sacramental theology, sees its place in the midst of contemporary culture, seeking to read 'the signs of the times'."

An example of this contradiction is the reception of the film "Priest", which has been condemned by conservative U.S. Cardinal John O'Connor "as viciously anti-Catholic as anything that has ever rotted on the silver screen" (in Ortiz 1999). Yet the official Catholic organization, the O.C.I.C., recognized the importance of the film in the Berlin Film Festival, and scheduled it for screening in Catholic parishes throughout Germany and even had the national bishops' media office arrange discussions and seminars on the film (Ortiz 1999). The multi-layered nature of Catholic communications is expressed by José María La Porte:<sup>18</sup>

"One thing is to communicate the faith in itself, and other thing is to communicate the sense which the faith gives you (Christian perspective)... The faith makes you to live in a specific way and to create specific Christian culture."

A rather common program policy present in media run by official church bodies adheres to the concept of "Christian humanism", which follows Christian inspiration without being too aggressively religious.<sup>19</sup> This is the program policy put forth by the liberal Catholic wing.

When discussing official church documents on communication, the conservatives rely on *Inter Mirifica* (which is more normative with the instrumental approach to media) while the liberals stress the communitarian and dialogical approach of *Communio et Progressio*.<sup>20</sup> The *Communio et Progressio* represents an entirely different approach to the top-down hierarchical ecclesiology model. It takes church as a communion or community with horizontal orientation.<sup>21</sup>

The unique configuration of communication issues put forth by Catholic Communication (Catholic media theory) is crystallized by Catholic communications theologian and theorist Paul A. Soukup (2000). Soukup lists seven various dimensions within the configuration of Catholic communications that establish the core characteristics of Roman Catholic communication theology.

- 1) *Incarnational Theology* implies that creation is good, which means that God communicates "from within history, from within human culture, from within human language". It is linked to sacramental principle, which means, *first* that

"communication and communication products can reflect God's self-communication in the incarnation, and should be taken seriously. *Second*, the Catholic church presumes a goodness in communication media. *Third*, the Church will look for images of the divine in human communication. *Fourth*, the Church holds Christ's incarnation up as a model for all communication."

- 2) *Sacramental Theology* means that, first,

"Catholics typically have no difficulty in seeing God's action mediated through the things of this world... second, Catholics seem generally comfortable with all manner of symbolic expression... third, the sacramental principle cultivates a sensitivity to aesthetic as revelatory of God."

- 3) *Inculturation* means that Christians should adapt to local culture. And God speaks to every culture in its own familiar language.

“The Church and its teachers must make every effort to understand cultures, both the culture of the Scriptures and contemporary culture, and the Church cannot water down the Gospel in order to make it acceptable to present-day cultures.”

- 4) *Personalism* emphasizes “the role and centrality of the human person”. It is a philosophy that emphasizes “primacy of personal categories... meaning rather than efficacy, of understanding rather than explanation”.
- 5) *Analogical predication* means using analogues and seeing “similarity-in-difference”, which means allowing theologians to have understanding of the world from the perspective that “the dissimilarities between God and world are as great as the similarities”. This understanding fuels something that is called “Catholic imagination”. Greeley (in Soukup 200) puts it:

“Like all symbol and narrative systems, the Catholic imaginative tradition is dense, polyvalent, multi-layered. Its logic is poetic rather than deductive’... For communication this means that narrative will hold a certain priority over analysis.”

The difference between Protestant thought and Catholic religious communication (Catholic imagination) is seen when comparing the television series of “Nothing Sacred”, which represents typical Catholic use of television, compared to the Evangelical classical tv-program the “700 Club” (on format of 700 Club see Chapter 4.3.1).

- 6) *Iconic vs. uniconic expressions* are both found in the Catholic church. The iconic expression is predominant. As a result of this sacramental understanding of images, Catholics have taken a critical stance towards television, because images are seen as having powerful effects.
- 7) *Culture* - when using the classical Richard Niebuhr distinction, which shows the various positions of Christian communities in relation to the surrounding culture, the Catholic stance would be (according to Soukup 2000) that of “Christ above Culture” (see Chapter 3.1.5.2). This model represents a synthesis between the natural and the supernatural, and this position flows from the Church’s understanding of the Incarnation.

### 3.3.1.3 The Principal Church Documents on Communications

Official Catholic church documents concerning communications and mass media form the normative basis of Catholic media theory. The most important ones are *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio*.<sup>22</sup> Patrick Casserly<sup>23</sup>, the officer of the Pontifical Council of Social Communications, comments on the overall significance of official church documents concerning mass media:

“Most of the texts are to encourage and inspire and to make people to take media seriously, work with the media and generally to put forward media as an important element for the work of the church.”

There are several types of official documents on “social communications” with varying levels of authority. The most authoritative document on communication

within the Catholic church is the document on communication from the Second Vatican Council, *Inter Mirifica* (1963). On the second level of authority are the pastoral instructions and respective communications related pastoral instructions called *Communio et Progressio* (1971), which to a large extent interprets and extends the message of *Inter Mirifica*. Then comes the Pontifical encyclicals, followed by the the speeches of the Pope, and finally the statements of the bishops.<sup>24</sup>

It was the Pope who established a particular thematic day dedicated to communications entitled “World Communications Day”. It was celebrated for the first time in 1967. The Pope can also contribute to media issues with his exhortations as Pope Paul VI did in the “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” (“On the Evangelization of the Modern World” in 1975). The Pope recognized the significance of mass media in evangelism by saying,

“they enable the Good News to reach millions of people... In them she (the Church) finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit.”<sup>25</sup>

### 3.3.1.3.1 *Inter Mirifica* - the Decree of the Second Vatican Council

*Inter Mirifica* was released on December 4, 1963. It was among the two earliest documents of the Second Vatican Council. The document, in principle, is the most authoritative of the official documents concerning mass media and communications, because it is a Conciliar Decree. However, it has been criticized as too negative and unprofessional, and it has been overshadowed by the more well-known and respected *Communio et Progressio* (1971), which was actually initiated by *Inter Mirifica* and is in a sense an extension of it. However, as a Conciliar document, *Inter Mirifica* has several positive points: (Eilers 1997, 56-59)

- 1) *Inter Mirifica* was the first document ever from the ecumenical councils concerning mass media, and as a conciliar document it has the highest authority when compared, for example, to contributions of the Pope (Eilers 1997, 57).
- 2) With this council decree, the new concept concerning mass media was introduced. The concept of “Social Communications” is officially used when dealing with communications and mass media by the Roman Catholic Church.
- 3) *Inter Mirifica* introduces a “World Day of Communications”, which is a day specialized to the issues of social communications. On that day, the Pope delivers a message as a contribution of the Church to some particular aspects of Social communications. The World Day of Communications has been celebrated since 1967.
- 4) The council decree also proposes and establishes “an overall office for the instruments of social communication at the Vatican” as well as extends the national film offices to include all “means of social communications”. “The Vatican Council ‘decides and ordains’ that national offices for the press, cinema, radio and television, be established everywhere and properly supported. The main task of these offices should be the unification of efforts and the formation of consciences and encouragement for Catholics in this

field.” (Eilers 1997, 58.)

- 5) Inter Mirifica also stresses professional training of church personnel and lay people as well as media education.
- 6) It lays the foundation for more detailed pastoral instruction to be produced with the help of experts. This instruction became true in the *Communio et Progressio* which was released in 1971.

The starting point, legitimation and motivation of the use of mass media as instruments of the church, is established in Christ Jesus’s effort to “bring salvation to all men”. The Catholic church is then obliged to preach the gospel, and this task involves also employing “the means of social communications to announce the good news of salvation, and to teach men how to use them properly”. (Eilers 1997, 60.)

“It is the *Church’s birthright* (italics original) to use and own any of these media which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for pastoral activity. Pastors of souls have the task of instructing and directing the faithful how to use these media in a way that will ensure their own salvation and perfection and that of all mankind.” (Eilers 1997, 60.)

Within the content of the secular media and in its publication of news, “the moral law and the legitimate rights and dignity of man should be upheld”. Also,

“The Council proclaims that all must accept the absolute primacy of the objective moral order (Christian universalism). It alone is superior to and is capable of harmonizing all forms of human activity”. (Eilers 1997, 61.)

The new terminology concerning mass media and communications was created in Inter Mirifica. The expression “Social Communications” was meant to be more inclusive and holistic and to extend to all kinds of communication “as a process between and among humans” (Eilers 1997, 57). This dimension is one that more conventional concepts such as “audiovisual media”, “mass media”, or “mass communication” could not express properly. The more concrete expression, media of communications, was changed to the “instruments of social communication”. This new terminology was accepted by the council without further discussion, and these concepts are now widely used in official church documents.

In everyday usage, “social communications” as a concept is much more difficult and has not gained as much influence as the inventors anticipated. The concept “social communications” very soon became interpreted as mass media. As Patrick Casserly, an officer of Pontifical Council of Social Communications puts it: <sup>26</sup>

“So, to some extent it was not successful title, because it was not consistently followed through, and in various levels there was failure to continue with the concept social communication as much broader communication than mass media, because it became increasingly limited to mass media: broadcasting, cinema... but we still have the title social communication, and only in few cases outside church it has become to use... in very few cases. In Portugal, for example, the ministry of the media is called ministry of social communication, because in the country there is much influence of the Catholic church. In Italy the concept is also used to mean mass media. I do not know, what is going to happen in the future... because already there is a tendency to move away from the concept, if possible.”

Basically, *Inter Mirifica* saw mass media as an instrument for the church, and one which is appropriate to proclaim its message. Patrick Casserly crystallizes the orientation of *Inter Mirifica*:<sup>27</sup>

“I think that where is the *Inter Mirifica* approach does not see the media as entirely positively. The second major document, which is *Communio et Progressio*, does take a more optimistic view. And presents also a different theological approach, which is rather far from the hierarchical model, but is the model of *communio*, communion. Which is a different approach to the top down- hierarchical model. It is much more horizontal model of communication.”

### 3.3.1.3.2 *Communio et Progressio* - the Basis of Communitarian Media Theory

The “*Communio et Progressio*” (“unity” or “community and development”) is usually seen as the “Magna Charta” of Christian communication, and it is regarded as one of the most positive church documents on social communication (Eilers 1997, 71). The *Communio et Progressio* is a direct result of the proposals of the Second Vatican Council to elaborate further the more specific themes in social communications. *Communio et Progressio* is a “Pastoral instruction for the Application of the Decree of the Second Vatican Council on The Means of Social Communication” (*Inter Mirifica*) and was published on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1971. The author of the document was the newly established (by the Pope) Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication. (Eilers 1997, 69.)

*Communio et Progressio* is a product of a collegiate process and even though it is not a Pontifical document, it was approved by Pope Paul VI, and thus is an authoritative and genuine church document. *Communio et Progressio* has a more general beginning, where it establishes the theological foundation of the contribution of communications media to human progress. It does not address so much “the rights and obligations” of the church, but puts more emphasis on personal responsibility. (Eilers 1997, 70-71.)

In terms of modern communications research, *Communio et Progressio* addresses the role of mediation in the community and the identity building process. The principle idea of *Communio et Progressio* is “to seek the progress of mankind” through the use of communications media. Modern media technologies are seen as “indispensable to the smooth functioning of modern society”... These technical advances have the high purpose of bringing men into closer contact with one another. By passing on knowledge of their common fears and hopes, they help men to resolve them.” Technical progress is seen as positive, and as helping to bring co-operation of humans as co-workers of God in the work of creation and the subsequent conservation of the earth. “In the Christian faith, the unity and brotherhood of man are the chief aims of all communication and these find their source and model in the central mystery of the eternal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who live a single divine life.” (Eilers 1997, 74-75.)

*Communio et Progressio* sees proper communication as a dialogue, and media as tools for all the people to participate in that dialogue:

“This interchange creates the proper conditions for that mutual and sympathetic understanding which leads to universal progress”,

says *Communio et Progressio* (in Eilers 1997, 78). Special interest is put on the role of media in the progress of developing countries. Media are seen as powerful instruments for progress. *Communio et Progressio*, for the first time, refuses to blame the morals of media, but sees media from a contextual perspective as being linked with other spheres of life and the attitudes of men. *Communio et Progressio* offers a holistic, theologically based, and contextual picture of the role of the media in the development and positive change in society. It itself is a consistent normative media theory, and cannot be analysed in full depth in this study. *Communio et Progressio* purports public opinion to be “an essential expression of human nature organized in a society”. This view necessitates freedom of speech and ideas.

“In order that men may usefully cooperate and further improve the life of the community, there must be freedom to assess and compare differing views which seem to have weight and validity. Within this free interplay of opinion there exists a process of give and take, of acceptance or rejection, of compromise and compilation. And within this same process, the more valid ideas can gain ground so that a consensus that will lead to common action becomes possible.” (Eilers 1997, 80.)

This contribution sees free dialogue as the preferred model of communication even though it does not deny totally the possibility of persuasion and propaganda, but describes the circumstances when persuasion is acceptable.

Eilers writes,

“...a propaganda campaign... is justified only when it serves the truth, when its objectives and methods accord with the dignity of man and when it promotes cases that are in the public interest. These causes may concern either individuals or groups, one’s own country or the world at large.” (Eilers 1997, 80-81.)

*Communio et Progressio* also includes a kind of legitimation of the Catholic mediated “virtual community” (Eilers 1997, 102-103):

“The modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel, of allowing Christians even when they are far away to share in sacred rites and worship and in ecclesiastical functions. In this way they can bind the Christian community closer together and invite everyone to participate in the intimate life of the Church. Of course, the mode of presentation has to suit the special nature of the medium being used. The media are not the same as a church pulpit.”

*Communio et Progressio* takes a very positive stand in terms of the contribution of communications media to human progress. One must ask whether such an optimism is still relevant, because it would seem to be based on a belief in technological development. Mostly it is believed that this optimism of the *Communio et Progressio* to still be relevant, because positive processes are actually the core of communications.<sup>28</sup> Also positive contributions of communications media to the community building process is even more recognized from within mainstream communications studies. *Communio et Progressio* actually forms the ideological basis of the “Communitarian Media Theory”.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3.1.4 The System of Catholic Communication

The global character of the Catholic church in turn requires global structures of communication. There are several levels and organizations of communication starting from the Vatican and ending at the level of the local diocese or parish. We will now look at the Catholic system of communication.<sup>30</sup>

The highest single body of communication in the church hierarchy is the Pontifical council of Social Communications, which was founded during the Second Vatican Council. The initial title was the Commission for the means (instruments) of Social Communications by Pope Paul VI with "Motu Proprio In Fructibus Multis" in April 1964. Since June 28 1988, the institution was called the (Pontifical) Council for the means (instruments) of Social Communications" according to terminology of Inter Mirifica (Eilers 1997, 58). Now it is simply called the "Pontifical Council of Social Communications."<sup>31</sup>

The Pontifical Council of Social Communications has two principal roles. *The first* is to advise the Pope on matters of social communications. This functions as an instructional role in communications policy for the Church as a whole. *The second* role is to co-operate with international Catholic media organizations (cinema, press, and broadcasting) and extends to bishop's conferences on the regional or the national level. The Pontifical Council of Social Communications has contacts with the bishops at least every five years, when every bishop must visit Rome. There are also regional conferences on communication and the Council attends with the role of an advisor.

The Pontifical Council of Social Communications also has a more operational responsibility in Church communication. It maintains the Vatican library on films, video and audio mostly dealing with the papacy, the Catholic church and religion. The Council also serves as a co-operative body to accredit journalists to the Vatican. The Council provides uplink and downlink facilities to tv companies, which for example broadcast Pontifical ceremonies (there are about 50-60 tv-networks which broadcast these events on a regular basis).

The staff consists of 20 permanent members (10 officers, 10 support staff), and an advisory council with 35 consulting members from various parts of the world of which 18 are cardinals or bishops. The council produces official church documents on various communications issues, such as ethics in advertizing, the Internet, etc. Members of the Pontifical Council of Social Communications also represent the Holy See in various societal and international secular connections as being an expert, for example, as in its participation on the steering committee on mass media and human rights issues of the Council of Europe.

The second level of the Catholic system of communications is formed by international Catholic organizations for particular media. The International Catholic organization for film is the OCIC (Office Catholique International du Cinema)<sup>32</sup>, and the UNDA<sup>33</sup> is an organization for broadcasting, while the UCIP<sup>34</sup> is the "International Catholic Union of the Press". There is also participation on both regional and national levels as seen in the regional or national offices of social communications that are frequently directed by bishops. The *Communio et Progressio* describes the role of these national offices (Eilers 1997, 110):

“The national episcopal commission for social communications or the delegated bishop is in charge of the direction of all the activities of the national offices. They are to lay down general guidelines for the development of the apostolate of social communications on the national level. They will keep in touch with the other national episcopal commissions and collaborate with the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications.”<sup>35</sup>

For each country there is also a national office of Catholic communication, which produces Pastoral Communications plans for that particular country.<sup>36</sup> The National office of Catholic communication also serves as a co-ordinating body for various national Catholic communicative agents.

### 3.3.1.5 The Pope Format

The Roman Catholic Church has a unique and globally legitimate media person compared to any other religion - the Pope. The Pope symbolizes and characterizes the whole church in all that he does. The Pope also gets media coverage in countries with very low Catholic populations and in doing so he utilizes an important tool of global presence and thus promotes the image of the Catholic church.<sup>37</sup>

The central Pontifical pastoral tool of communication is pastoral visitation. Particularly the pastoral trips of the Pope fulfill the classical rhetorical and narrative conventions (the Palace when meeting with political leaders, Conquest when arriving to particular country, kissing the ground, the Coronation, and the Triumph). Pope John Paul II has been a charismatic media figure, who has developed the characteristics of a narrative hero (Guizzardi 1986, 221-222). The success of the Pope in the media serves the Catholic church immensely, because the Pope is the ultimate symbol of global relevance and authority of the Roman Catholic Church. No other religious community in the world has such a visible and charismatic leader.

The Pope also plays an important role in the “media ecology of Catholic religious broadcasting”. Vatican radio is clearly concentrating on the role and personality of the Pope and the global perspective and nature of the Catholic Church. The respective “Pope format” of Vatican radio strongly supports the global presence and authority of the Pope. The primary task of Vatican radio is to report all the speeches, trips, and receptions of the Pope, as well as the decisions of the Holy See and Roman Curia (government of the state of Vatican).<sup>38</sup> The “Pope format” appears to be very attractive globally, and the transmissions of Vatican radio are re-broadcast globally through local radio stations as well as through the Internet.

The mediascape around Vatican radio changed considerably after the collapse of Communism as a world power. Previously, Vatican radio enjoyed a kind of state of monopoly in communist countries as religion was more or less banned and it was virtually the only medium of religious supply. Still, for example in the Vietnamese language, explicit religious teaching is being broadcast, because the government does not allow local religious communication. But today, there is usually an increasing competition on the national level between different media with religious supply. The central key to the continuous success of Vatican radio is its ability to not only maintain, but to further develop their broadcasts around

the Pope format. The global media presence of the Pope is also promoted from within the Pontifical Council of Social communications as well as by other media within the church hierarchy.

### 3.3.1.6 Religious Orders in the Media and Catholic Media Ministries

Within the Catholic tradition there are religious orders that have “charism” of mass media.<sup>39</sup> Such communities concentrate either totally or in a significant way to minister and reach people through communications media. The most significant such a religious order the *Society of St. Paul*.<sup>40</sup>

Their activities concentrate only to media in 28 countries and in various branches of media as listed on their web-site (editorial and bookstores, journalism, cinematography, television, radio, audiovisual, multimedia, telematics, centers of studies, research, formation, and animation). The Society of StPauls publishes the very popular Italian magazine “Famiglia Cristiana,” which has a circulation of 700,000 and which is one of the biggest magazines in Italy.<sup>41</sup> *StPaul’s Daughters*<sup>42</sup> is an important media-related religious order for women who specialize in media education. An example of their work can be found from the Pauline Center for Media Studies.<sup>43</sup> The third most significant media-related religious order is the *Salesians of Don Bosco*.<sup>44</sup> The Salesians have a presence in 128 countries, which makes it the third largest Catholic religious order in the world. Their main charism is the education of particularly poor children, while their communications component concentrates especially on the training of community media.<sup>45</sup> Salesians publish an internationally distributed youth magazine “Primavera” (the Spring).<sup>46</sup> Social communications, as an academic discipline, is taught by the faculty of Social communications at Salesian University in Rome.<sup>47</sup> The fourth media-related religious order would be the *Jesuits*, who are responsible for running Vatican Radio, but whose main charism is education.<sup>48</sup> The Jesuits also produce radio programs in some locations, for example they produce a radio program entitled “the Sacred Heart” from the state of Missouri, in the USA.<sup>49</sup> Many notable scholars in media and religious communication have a Jesuit background (for example Paul Soukup and Robert White). Also the *Franciscans* have successfully contributed to religious broadcasting in the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia with their religious spots (Ellens 1974, 130-133).

There are religious orders within the Catholic tradition that are active in media, and who submit to the official views of the Catholic church, yet they also have their own particular inclinations. As an example, Salesians University tends to be critical towards the traditional approach of the hierarchical communication of the Church.<sup>50</sup> Paulinos have a very developed media ideology and the Daughters of St Paul concentrate on media education. Religious orders work in co-operation with institutional bodies of social communications. Official Roman Catholic communicators have started to utilize more independent Catholic media producers. For example in the USA the National Bishop’s Conference has more of a role in developing projects and financing them. And the particular media ministries can do the operational work.<sup>51</sup>

The Catholic church has also had its own “televangelists”. The American Archbishop, Fulton Sheen, has been the most successful. Sheen had a unique appeal. He could attract 6000 letters per day from his radio and television audience.

He was first on air in 1928, and remained until the 1960's. His "Life is Worth Living" is the only television show that could compete against popular comedian Milton Berle's Tuesday night Texaco show and win. (Erickson 1990, 169.) Another Catholic star was Father John Bertolucci; a Charismatic priest who has been characterized as a Catholic Billy Graham (Elvy 1986, 102-103). The biggest contemporary name in Catholic broadcasting is Mother Angelica, a Franciscan with a tremendously everyday type of look without the glamour of televangelists (Elvy 1986, 103-104). Mother Angelica has her own television network, which is known as the Eternal World Television Network (EWTN). Mother Angelica is usually identified as a conservative Catholic (Elvy 1986, 105). She started EWTN in 1981 (without approval of the official church structures) as the first denominational television station. In 1990, the station was running 24 hours with a staff of 95 and already by 1980 it reached one million households. (Erickson 1990, 122-123.) But EWTN cannot be seen in Italy on the cable networks, because it lacks the official approval of the Catholic church.

Mother Angelica is a very well known and powerful figure in Catholic communications, but she does not have any ecclesiastical status (Catoir 1994, 210). Often in the Catholic context, the most successful religious broadcasters are those of independent religious orders or ministries such as Paulists, Marianists, Franciscans, Redemptorists, Christophers, and other highly motivated diocesan communications teams. In the case of the Paulists, they have hired Hollywood directors for their productions. (Elvy 1986, 100.)

As a conclusion, one can say that there is room for independent media ministries within the Catholic church, which has spawned the likes of Mother Angelica or other Catholic charismatic figures who have often provided a number of conservative Catholics rather than liberals (for example Elvy 1990, 50-51).

### 3.3.2 Mainline Protestant Theory

Mainline Protestantism as a concept refers to established Protestant churches with a long historical tradition (for example in Italy these traditions are called as "historical Protestant" in comparison to "Evangelical Protestantism", which is a rather recent movement) and usually a liberal orientation in theology. The concept of "Mainline Protestantism" is used particularly in the USA, and the concept refers to Protestant churches belonging to the National Council of Churches. Mainline churches have about 50 million members in the USA.<sup>52</sup> Mainline Protestantism is particularly influential in Scandinavian countries (in its Lutheran form), and many American Protestant churches have Scandinavian origin as well. Lutheranism is thus used as an empirical example on mainline Protestant thought and orientation on communications issues.<sup>53</sup> Another possible concept would be to talk about liberal Protestantism (for example McGrath 1999, 572; BEMCT 1999, 476-531). This would however emphasize too much the liberal vs. conservative theology debate. Mainline Protestant media theory is here presented as a synthetic ecumenical construction, since it is not possible to cover all major mainline Protestant denominations.<sup>54</sup> However, the implications and connections of the branch of thought, which is here constructed as "Mainline Protestant Normative Religious Media Theory", have direct implications to various churches. The theory serves

as a more general normative basis for communications strategies of each particular church: see for example the recent communications strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland "Vuoropuhelun kirkko" (2002).<sup>55</sup>

Because of mainline Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology, mainline churches see participation in mainstream public dialogue as the most important form of public communication. Because of the close social and cultural connections and positions within mainstream society, mainline churches feel comfortable being in intimate relationship with the mainstream's media discourse. For mainline Protestants, mainstream publicity is far more important than for Evangelicals, because mainliners see the relevance of Christianity mostly in terms of public relevance (membership statistics, education of religion in public schools etc.). Mainliners do not emphasize personal conversion (because infant baptism or church membership is enough, and not even that is required, but other religions may also save). Because of the primacy of the public role of mainline churches in society, mainline Protestant communication concentrates most often on ethical matters and dialogical forms of communication as well as communicating the tradition itself through devotional programs. And forms of communication relevant to other sub-cultures, particularly young people, are sought.<sup>56</sup>

A mainline Christian question on communication is

"How can Christian communities contribute to 'public cultural truth' that is reached through public dialogue?"

Mainline deduction on the direction of influence goes: public media → public cultural truth → individual cultivation. In comparison, the Evangelical direction of influence goes: public media → individual audience member's conversion → transformed individuals transform the public.

Because of the separation of the public sphere into the secular and religious arenas made by Protestant theology, mainline communication theorists and communicators also make a respective distinction between social and political matters and explicitly religious matters. Religious discourse is usually not to be used because of its "unrelevance and inability to communicate to the secular public". It means that religious symbols and language are easily adapted to a secular form. So, communication of mainline churches is not necessarily recognized as religious at all, because of the lack of explicitly religious discourse. Due to this separation, mainline communication can gain some relevance from within mainstream society. The dilemma of mainline Protestant communication is that it has two very different audiences: the wider public audience (often as nominal church members) and the churchgoing active audience. When dealing with the explicitly religious sphere, religious language and conventions, such as liturgy or devotional formats, are used. Then the media contents are targeted to the "churchgoing audience", because they seek the religious functions of the media as well as are familiar with the religious terminology and conventions.

The solution for the public presence of mainline Protestant churches is to try to participate in ethical discussions and debates of mainstream society, usually from a critical position. Ethical strategy is a very suitable one, because the church can rely on its theology and tradition, and trained theologians are professionals in ethical discussion. From the side of mainstream society, such contribu-

tion is also welcome, because in a functionally differentiated society, no other institution is specialized in ethical matters as much as the public church institution. The other option is providing public rituals in celebrations or in a crisis such as a terrorist attack (as was the case on September 11<sup>th</sup>, when memorial services were held in churches throughout the Western world to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attack in the USA).

In international discussion, ethical themes have been largely related to issues concerning developing countries, and how to utilize suitable communications technologies for their needs (For example, Haikarainen 2000, 182-191). Mainline Protestant churches have also contributed critically towards the morality of the mainstream media (see for example Christians et al 1981). Criticism is also presented toward the tendency of mass media to consider faith as irrelevant and invisible to the media (Christians et al 1981, 27). Mainline Protestant churches are actively involved in media education and media literacy programs as well as in different media advocacy groups in order to lobby media and perform media criticism (Horsfield 1984, 72).

Mainliners usually see Evangelical communication as being too persuasive and superficial. Typical for mainliners is the "media ethicism" they want for the medium itself and the forms used (in addition to content) to be ethically and theologically reasoned. This is one of the motives behind mainliners feeling so uncomfortable with televangelism. One of the biggest differences in communication views between Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants is that the Catholics are actually very active in maintaining their own radio and tv-stations which they run, more or less, according to Catholic principles. During the research process of this study, I did not find a single Christian radio or tv-station run by a mainline Protestant church. The very few broadcast organizations in which a mainline church is involved are basically for mission purposes (Elvy 1990, 54).

Mainline churches are involved in ecumenical efforts, such as the Odyssey Network. They also buy some airtime from local radio and tv-stations. But basically, mainline Protestant churches have put their trust on a single system of public communication: public service broadcasting. This tendency is the same both in the USA and Europe. Mainline communicators very strongly defend public service religious programming (see for example McLeish 1997, 1-22), and also present the Biblical legitimation of public service religious programs (examples of such a Biblical reasoning, see Dean 1997, 87-103; Elvy 1990; 1991).

For mainline Protestant churches, for example in the USA, radio is more of an important medium than television. The significance of the Internet has also increased among mainline Churches, and there has been a constant and significant increase in hits to Church-web-pages.<sup>57</sup> And there is also an increased emphasis on, and resources put towards developing Internet-services at both the church and parish levels.<sup>58</sup>

Particularly in the USA, mainline Protestant churches have developed professional media supply and management services, such as spokespeople and placement services, because it is strategically very important for them to voice their ethical contributions via the media, which is the strength of mainline churches.<sup>59</sup>

Eric Shafer, the communications director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America puts it this way:

“We train people here to be comfortable talking with the media, and we try to look, who is an expert in the staff (on the current topic). At this case a hired person makes the contact with the media, and she says that I have these people in the ELCA, who can speak about these issues... And she watches issues in the world and in the church and tries to connect them. For example we recently had a big conference on cloning... well, she had a full day, because all the media are interested in cloning. That weekend while these people were here, they were on the phone all the time giving radio interviews... We see it as a double plus, besides that we get the religious perspective out, we can say that we are presenting the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.”

The Mainline concept of the relationship between evangelism and the media is the most similar to the view presented by Eric Shafer:<sup>60</sup>

“Lutheran Vesper (devotional radio program) is certainly evangelism, for offering the Lutheran perspective to problems, and people can say that is what they think about divorce... The basic premise on the (current) advertising project, which we call the ELCA-identity project, is to set out the name of the church positively. We did a national survey a few years ago, and found that the majority of Americans did not know what the word Lutheran means. So, our first goal is just to set the name out positively... So that is the purpose of the project. It is evangelistic, but more indirectly. To set our name out positively. And when a pastor comes and knocks on the door, people say that ‘Oh, yes, I saw your ads.’ It is indirect evangelism, because media cannot do direct evangelism, I do not believe. It (media) is more like fertilizing the garden.”

The main motivator of Christian communication, within mainline Protestant communities, is the idea about universal human values, which is compatible with mainstream thought on social ethics. Persuasion is usually rejected as a communication style, and the emphasis is instead on dialogical communication and an effort to remain relevant in ethical matters on both the individual and particularly on the societal level. Mainline Protestant involvement in electronic media is problematic, because the primary media cultural form in mainline Protestantism is that of print. In mainline communication, the premises adopted from journalism are usually dominant (the idea to communicate in a moderate and non-propagandist way).

The main strength of mainline Protestantism is its compatibility with human values articulated in mainstream society and thus relevant in the secular debate about values, ethics and responsibility, in arenas like the United Nations. The challenge for mainline Protestantism is that as an institutionalized and bureaucratic religion it has difficulties in utilizing individual religious dynamics. Another challenge for mainline church communication is the internal heterogeneity of any mainline church. Every church consists of several, often competing, revival movements and sub-groups, which have their own distinct ideas concerning the goals and directions of religious communication and furthermore these individual groups within the church may even disagree about the nature of the church itself.<sup>61</sup> As a result it is almost impossible to build a sharp-clear image that would accurately represent the entire church. In an attempt to make a synthesis on these various views and commitments churches arrange conferences or symposiums where they seek to find common ground or agreement on the means and goals of communication.<sup>62</sup>

The liberal theology predominant in mainline Protestantism makes it very difficult to trace the degree of commitment individuals are willing to show towards the community. In fact, the matter of commitment is not even relevant, because the only prerequisite for proper religiosity, from the perspective of the mainline Protestant institution, is nominal membership in the church. Conceptually there is no other way to define or show an individual's commitment to the church. This pre-requisite establishes a high degree of inclusivism and plurality within the church. It actually establishes the marketplace of religion inside the church and it is a critical factor to consider when one is trying, for example, to explain why mainline Protestant churches are so predominant in Scandinavia. Even though religious commitment is low, the numbers of nominal membership remain high. This nominal membership measurement of commitment mechanism has direct implications for the importance of media communications within mainline Protestant churches.

The hegemonic version of mainline Protestantism is found in Finland. Parish media is needed because approximately 85 per cent of the inhabitants of a given geographical location are members of the Evangelical Lutheran church and pay church-tax. This means that according to the tenets of democracy, the congregational administrations and church activities should be both proper and visible to the tax-paying public. Even though the majority of the population nominally belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, less than 10 per cent of the population participates in worship services regularly. In this situation the use of media to communicate provides at least some kind of link or connection to the church.<sup>63</sup> One of the greatest challenges for mainline Protestant media communication is to bridge the gap between high nominal membership and low church-attendance.

### 3.3.2.1 World Association of Christian Communication (WACC)

The World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) is a Protestant ecumenical organization that deals in communications matters. The WACC (related to the World Council of Churches) has published normative documents equivalent to the Catholic *Communio et Progressio*.<sup>64</sup> The basic norms are called "the five principles of Christian communication" (Emmanuel 1999, 82-86). These five principles of Christian communication are derived from the communicative activities of Jesus and are listed by the WACC as follows (WACC 1990; also in Emmanuel 1999, 85-86):

- 1) Communication creates community, which means that Christian communication should be open and inclusive rather than unidirectional and exclusive.
- 2) Communication is participatory: it is a two-way process and challenges the authoritarian structures of the society.
- 3) Communication liberates.
- 4) Communication supports and develops cultures: it is against cultural imperialism in a global society.
- 5) Communication is prophetic: it challenges falsehood and authorities and serves the truth.

A more strategic agenda of the WACC, which covers communication and community, has been known as the Manila Declaration (1990). The implementation of communication studies proposed by the WACC is presented in the Seoul Manifesto (WACC 1990). Other strategic propositions and statements are presented, for example, in the "Statements on Communication by the World Association for Christian Communication." The WACC is the main locus of development and maintenance of normative thought on media among mainline Protestant churches, and those ideas are effectively disseminated through publications, seminars and conferences. A basic normative standard of communication quality often used among liberal mainline churches is known as the International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism drawn up by UNESCO (Traber and Nordenstreng 1993). This work has also been called the "New World Information and Communication Order". (Bibliography cited from McQuail 1994, 125.)

The WACC is associated with mainstream communications research through its co-publishing of the popular research series "Communication and Human Values." The WACC has also co-operated with UNESCO on issues of global communications ethics and rights for information. The WACC has also been involved in charting universal values of human life similar to all religions and cultures, which can also be used as a basis of communication ethics (Nordenstreng et al. 1998, 264). Predominant Christian communicators and scholars, such as Cees Hamelink, Clifford Christians, and Michael Traber have been involved in the mainstream discussion of global media ethics (Christians 2000, 28-31).

As noted, mainline Churches also contributed significantly to the Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO (Haikarainen 2000, 142-150). The leader of WACC, Seán MacBride, was also the leader of the special UNESCO commission on global communications policy and ethics. The report of the commission is called "Many Voices, One World" (1980), and it was published in co-operation with WACC. This connection is one example of the centrality of mainline churches on the subject of global media ethics. The contributions of churches on communications ethics have been balancing between rationalistic natural-philosophical (so called natural law) norms on one hand and the particular motivation which is based on Christian faith on the other (Haikarainen 2000, 181). The WACC strongly supports and propagates the communitarian media theory and community media (see for example Hoover 1993, 275-286).

Mainline churches have made their contributions to the ethical discussion of mainstream communications studies. For example, the classic "Four Theories of the Press" was partly contributed by the US. Council of Churches (Siebert et al. 1956). And individual experts from both Protestant and Catholic churches have been used as experts in ethical issues in both the United Nations and the European Union. How significant these contributions from the churches have been remains an unanswered question. However, it should be understood as a prophetic contribution to talk for the truth, simply because speaking out has value in itself, regardless of the impact on the community.

### **3.3.2.2 Failure of Mainline Protestantism in Television**

While mainline Protestant churches have made significant contributions to the global communication ethical debate, religious communication via television has

not been among the strengths of mainline churches. It is not an over-interpretation to state that mainline Protestant churches have often failed in their religious use of television (see for example Bruce 1990, 40-48; Steinmetz 1987; Hadden 1991, 228-229). There are several reasons for "mainline failure", and these arise mainly from the internal character of mainline Protestant beliefs and practices themselves (Bruce 1990 40-41; Steinmetz 1987). The reasons for "mainline failure" are many, at least when compared to Evangelical entrepreneurs.<sup>65</sup> Partly, the question concerns Evangelical success, rather than so much of a mainline failure itself.

The constant problem with mainline Protestantism is the lack of sacred objects and symbols, which could be used for popular piety. Mainline Protestantism has not only rejected traditional Catholic imagery, but is also critical towards Evangelical religious imagery, which mainliners see only as an indication of consumeristic religion. But the problem is mainliners have not been able to produce their own popular religious symbolism. This can be interpreted as one component leading to a decline of mainline Protestant churches.<sup>66</sup>

Mainline churches have chosen not to compete with the electronic church using the same weapons of popularized religion (which would not probably have been successful anyway), but have not found any other successful way of doing that either (Hoover 1988, 236-239). Mainline churches in the USA have had their joint venture to create a values and religion oriented tv-channel, the Odyssey Network. For the mainliners, the Odyssey Network has largely been a reaction to Evangelical dominance in television.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately from the very beginning it had problems with financing, partly because of the respective problems of the mainline churches themselves. Later, the Henderson-Hallmark company (the creator of the Muppet Show) was called to help. In the beginning, the channel was called the "Odyssey Network" and operated as a full service family-friendly and moderately religious channel. Today the secular and explicitly religious programs are strictly separated. Now the religious supply is available almost solely on Sundays.<sup>68</sup> The name of the channel has changed to the Hallmark Channel, and the concept of the channel has been transformed to a non-religious, family friendly, entertainment type format.

The Roman Catholic church has had similar experiences on television: from an ambitious start to a somehow watered down end. In Portugal, the Catholic church started a commercial tv-station, which was initially intended to portray a "Christian-humanist" program policy without too much emphasis on religious content.<sup>69</sup> But later the channel was forced to give up its Christian program policy, and due to financial issues it became a regular commercial station. The ownership also changed. So the pattern was in some ways similar to that of the Odyssey Channel.

Financing massive communications projects is in most cases a major challenge for mainline churches. The mainline style of organization along with its hierarchical structure makes it difficult to make binding decisions on communications, particularly in financial matters. And still, they would have difficulties in defining who to appoint as the "media person" among the many equal priests. The Evangelical style of organization, as free entrepreneurships and media ministries, is much more effective financially in the media world. (Hadden 1994, 228-229.)

Particularly in the USA, mainliners have suffered as a result of diminished public service opportunities; this is a process which they actually brought upon themselves when they tried to ban Evangelicals from the public service airwaves. Evangelicals reacted by purchasing airtime. Soon network operators found it more profitable to sell airtime to Evangelicals, than to give it away for free to mainliners. (Moore 1994.)

Steve Bruce (1990, 42-48) has listed the weaknesses of mainline Protestant electronic communications in the USA. There are number of mainline and ecumenical production weaknesses. Mainline programs are targeted for too heterogeneous an audience, which is an indication of poor programming policy. But Bruce sees the crux of mainline failure as originating from the epistemology of the belief system itself: the Evangelical faith is dogmatic and authoritarian, while its respective mainline version becomes ambiguous by the epistemological status of its propositions, it tends to favor relativism. This has predominant consequences in the use of television. Mainline religion is more sensible to alternative world-views and perspectives, which leaves it with an unclear profile (also Steinmetz 1987). The Evangelical's simplistic version is better tailored for electronic media.

"The narrow, well-defined product of the conservatives - 'Ye must be born again' - carries better than the hesitation of liberalism" (Bruce 1990, 43).<sup>70</sup>

Evangelicals are also free from suspicion of the technology, while the liberals hold television in particular with suspicion. Liberals stress more the idea that God's truth is found through interaction (dialogue) between people and things, not as a single literal revelation as the Evangelicals do. For example, liberals interpret stories of miracles in the Bible in different ways, hence modern man does not believe in miracles. Conservatives on the other hand just preach miracles and pray for them. Evangelicals also have

"an almost magical view of the ability of Scripture to act, to work independent of the interests of the reader" (Bruce 1990, 44).

This frees up much time and energy spent on exegesis and interpretation of the religious message for modern language, and gives more time into preaching and communicating, and it also generates more faith from one's efforts without the liberal hesitation with the symbols:

"If the Evangelical Protestant wishes to 'do something evangelistic', he tries to convert people to his values and beliefs; the liberal activist can only be active in secular causes." (Bruce 1990, 45.)

Mainline liberal activities in the media may be seen as Christian values, inspired media criticism, and media ethics. Yet the goal of the Evangelical preacher is clear: to not only evangelize, but to mobilize to evangelize in order to save souls. Conservatives can also interpret their degree of evangelistic success through the donations that come as a result of their programs. "The more money being raised, the more air-time being bought, the more 'souls being saved.'" Thus, there is a direct feedback mechanism concerning the mobilization and the evangelization

goals and the effects gained. Liberals cannot generate this kind of operational connection between their (various and uncertain) goals and actual audience participation. Conservatives are more willing to act than liberals.

“The singularity of conservative purpose produces a much more unified support than that attracted by the diffuseness of liberal Protestantism” (Bruce 1990, 45-46).

Mainline communications efforts relate more to (ecumenical) a public service form of religious programming, or as a means of providing the informational and expertise needs of mainstream media.<sup>71</sup> In their attempts to inform, raise up, and contribute to ethical issues, the problem is that even in the programs they produce, they rarely handle topics which are related to the mainline church’s world-view or religious perspective. Mainliners would rather do something that is “not a religious program but a program about religion”, as for example the Odyssey-program earlier characterized. It means that the journalists and producers who are working with mainline media do not necessarily have loyalties to the mainline church, or at least they do not show their loyalties. As a result of these practices,

“many ‘religious’ network programs, to which the mainline churches have access, provide little meaningful exposure. The mainline church is only one voice in a multitude of religious segments.”

The religious programs with “round table” discussion format seemed to favor the mainline churches attempts to express themselves (Steinmetz 1987, 45-46).

But still, mainline Protestantism holds great potential in the area of new vital theological strands as well as expertise on ethical matters. Mainline Protestantism is a sleeping giant that has the ability and will to re-interpret, while still maintaining its tradition as being relevant in a modern context. Marvin D. Steinmetz (1987, 93-99) makes some recommendations for the mainline use of television. He says that mainliners should not avoid preaching, nor even fund-raising, but perform them more softly than televangelists.

“Preaching is the single most effective tool for teaching and inspiration, as well as fostering identity. Without preaching it is questionable whether there is a viable ministry at all.”

Neither should mainline churches give away so much of the religious substance of religious programs on the networks, but stand for more integrity. Mainline churches should also train network moderators in religious sensibilities so they might be better understood. In brief: the churches should find their message again, develop new styles and new issues enabling them to contribute with a new-found mission and style. (Steinmetz 1987, 91-98.)

At the same time, mainline churches are successfully involved in mainstream broadcasting in many countries, particularly in Europe.<sup>72</sup> It is possible for mainline broadcasting to survive, but it requires a financial base, which could come from either public service broadcasting corporations, or perhaps with strong support from a particular religious institution. It seems that in a market-financed situation mainline religious communication will not survive, because it is too

religious for the mainline audience, yet not religious enough for a religious audience. Another strategic option could entail the creation of joint ecumenical ventures to produce, for example, a radio or tv-channel on an ecumenical basis. However, the ecumenical experiences are usually not so encouraging from the perspective of stability and success of the particular format (see for example experience in South Africa (Wanless 1999, 288). Successful religious communication requires a clearly defined audience to be served with a media supply which can meet its identification needs. Ecumenism, as a strategy, is usually successful only in cases where a particular community is in a minority setting and thus, is in need of allies to increase its strategic significance (on different strategies in religious communication, see Chapter 3.4.7).

### 3.3.2.3 Communicative Dialogical Theory

Mainline Protestant theory and Roman Catholic theory are somewhat similar with their emphasis on the dialogical approach and mutual communicativity between the church and the environment, and the transcendental and the immanent. Basically, the dialogical approach has been developed in the Catholic church, and later it disseminated into mainline Protestant circles, for the most part, through the influence of the WACC. The similarity between the Catholic and mainline Protestant approach comes as a result of having influential Catholics within the WACC, who have in part brought this approach to the Protestant circles.<sup>73</sup>

According to dialogical communicative theory, the Church should avoid authoritarian, monological communication, and the giving of ready-made answers. Instead, through dialogue, the Church should help people to see the value of one's own truths. Rather, ethically proper ways should be

“considered... through which statements about Christian faith and ethics are brought into common discussion and debate” (Kommunikoivaan kirkkoon 1992, 5).

Internationally, within the mainline Protestant as well as the Catholic church and ecumenical circles, predominant normative media theory can be called “communicative dialogical theory”. This theory mostly characterizes the mainline Protestant normative theory of communication. This view is reflected, for example, in the Communications Strategy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland whose goal is to “make communicativity to be an issue committed by the whole church” (Kirkon viestintästrategia 1.11.1999). This principle of dialogue has been established again in the recent communications strategy “Vuoropuhelun kirkko”<sup>74</sup> (2002) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

Christian communication can be interpreted and analyzed as dialogue (for example Brooks 1983, 82-97). Dialogue is used as a motivating slogan and as a direction of Christian communication (for example Malone 1985, 26-27). Far more rare is to define, what dialogue actually means. The Dialogical model of communication has been officially accepted by the World Council of Churches (Haikarainen 2000, 193-201).

Mainline Protestant communicative media theory seeks to further an equal and free flow of communication (free from information capitalism), with free community formation, particularly in the third world. According to the theory, Chris-

tian communication should be “an act of love which deliberates those who participate in it” (Arthur 1993, 277). It also exhorts Church institutions to emancipate themselves from the oppressing structures of society, and to stop identifying with them.

The communicative dialogical media theory originates from the World Council of Churches, and it is based on the communitarian media theory and the democratic press theory and “public journalism” approaches, which have been in the works since the 1960’s. Communicative theory assumes religious communication to be largely identical to the goals and practices of “mainstream journalism”. Communicative dialogical theory has much in common with so called liberation theology, which identifies religious deliberation with improvement of the social circumstances of the poor. The emphasis, in this communicative dialogical theory, is on immanent social issues, not on the transcendental (Bluck 1989, 5). According to the communicative dialogical view, this makes media evangelism impossible, since the secular audience does not even understand religious language. One should thus emphasize the ethically proper means of Christian communication (Bluck 1989, 65, 71):

“Are the methods used in religious communication in line with what we teach on absolute love, forgiveness, acceptance, justice and servanthood? ... Evangelism cannot occur in a way that someone is from above determining the discussion with authority. But when speaker or sender commits oneself with risk on that one loses control and lets the receivers to form dialogue, even to reject it, then ‘Christian communication occurs’.”

Michael Traber (in Emmanuel 1999, xiv) says

“Christian communication primarily refers to content rather than to form and style. There is no such thing as Christian journalism or Christian broadcast technique”.

Rather, he says, it is a question about an approach on how to orient towards the audience: by respect, and reverence. True communication produces communities of equality, and participatory (dialogical) communication gives people an experience of human dignity, communitarianism and richness of life (Arthur 1993, 279). Freedom of speech is interpreted and expressed in terms of the welfare of the community; freedom of speech must support realization of human rights. The theory opposes cultural imperialism and is promotes communication that respects local cultures. Lies and half-truths are a big threat to communication, and they must be prophetically revealed. It is through communication, a unique gift of God, that societies and individuals can become more human (Arthur 1993, 282).

In this context, media ecology means supporting original ethnocentric communication rather than cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism contaminates cultural ethos (Arthur 1993, 283-284). A positive response to this can be found in the ecumenical project entitled “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation”. The central issue is that the Churches should make their own media democratic. Crucial genres for religious communication are “open texts”, such as documentary, current affairs, and other journalistic genres, which consider religion in a neutral manner. They expand very much the communicativity of religious media texts. According to communicative dialogical theory, “true religious communication”

results in an ethically high quality of communication (for example Shepperson & Tomaselli 1997, 218-222; Arthur 1993, 177-197). This same theory criticizes televangelists for their cultural imperialism and authoritarianism. The recommended themes of religious communication are themes of societal injustice and other social problems. Genuine religious communication is always democratic, and it is mutual communication (Arthur 1993, 219-220). Logically, religion is not explicitly any particular topic of communication, but in principle any media text can be religious - if it is just merely "communicative". This means that the audience of the media text does not necessarily recognize the text as "religious". Neither should the church give (authoritarian) answers, but media texts should be open and allow discussion, dialogue, and freedom to expose different views and opinions. Religious communication is not only communication of religious communities, but can be, for example, high quality journalism. This means it is relevant to analyze secular media theologically, since the quality of mass media is a central religious issue. This all adds up to religion being seen in settings in which it is not explicitly present (like in tv-news, Morris 1993, 137-146; in soap operas, Simpson 1993, 101-111; and in advertisements, Slinger 1993, 199-207; Sölle 1993, 223-234).

The communicative dialogical view is optimistic as to media technology and its significance to democratization (Tomaselli & Shepherson 1997; Arthur 1993, 277, 284). The theory emphasizes the importance of alternative media and the ease of adaptation along with the use of new communications technologies. The utilization of new communications technologies (desktop publishing, Internet, video etc.) comes so easily, that they are seen as tools of emancipation in grass roots communities (Arthur 1993, 277, 284).

A distinct emphasis is placed on the re-formation of the Christian message within each individual cultural and historical setting. Communicative dialogical theory is particularly critical towards the implicit ideology of media: how commercial media and media technologies influence the Christian message. The theological concern is to keep the religious message "pure" and coming forth as truth within each cultural, historical and individual setting. The communicative dialogical theory is the "Frankfurt School of communications" of the Churches, because of its critical approach and Marxist orientation.

The communicative dialogical view is a crucial part of the adaptation strategy of liberal mainline churches, which is carried out by adopting secular meanings to religious concepts, which is the classical mechanism of secularization (for example Peck 1997, 233). On an operational level the communicative dialogical view seeks to modernize religious language through the use of secular, neutral concepts. The threat or problem that arises from this media theory is the relativization of the cosmological core of religion, which is the great threat of liberal religion in general (Peck 1997, 238). Using rational language also cannot well express the mythical root paradigms of a culture (Biernatzki 1993, 131). Communicative dialogical theory is a dissent from the Christian tradition of communication as proclamation, in which the message is a message presented with authority (Forrester 1993, 70).

### 3.3.2.4 Habermasian Discourse Theory as Religious Media Theory

In the communications modeling of churches the Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action has been particularly important (along with thoughts of Martin Buber). Mainline Protestant media ethics and mainstream media theory have commonalities, particularly when it comes to the dialogical ethics presented by Habermas and Freire. Habermasian discourse ethics has dominated the media ethics literature of the 1990s (Christians 2000, 36). The Habermasian concept of public communication has been very popular among liberal mainline churches, including the Catholics. The dialogical model of communication has been accepted as the ideal of church communication and the denominator of the official communications policy of the churches. Probably the most significant work in recent times on the dialogical model of communication is that of Dominic Emmanuel, "Challenges of Christian Communication and Broadcasting" (1999.) The work traces the triumph of dialogical communication, visible for example, in the ecumenical movement and in inter-religious dialogue (Emmanuel 1999, 35-54). The single most important occasion for the dialogical model was the Second Vatican Council, which turned the Catholic "monologue into dialogue" (for example Emmanuel 1999, 1). Theology of communication and theory of communicative action converge around the same idea: that of a universally just society (community), "where human beings accord equal status to each other as partners in dialogue" (Emmanuel 1999, 68). Several theologians thus have found that communicative action provides a valuable set of instruments for theology. Habermas has also been criticized for excluding religion, but others have applied Habermasian conceptions to proclamation of the gospel by seeing it

"as a communicative process and analyses the preaching of the gospel (which is essentially inter-subjective) as communicative action" (Emmanuel 1999, 69-70).

As is previously stated, dialogue is seen as a contemporary normative ideal of mainline Christian communication (for example Forrester 1993, 67-73). This means Christians should favor media, that enables the dialogical method and is not one-directional (as mass media are). From this premise, it follows that mass media is not seen as a proper tool for genuine Christian (dialogical) communication, but suitable only for "pre-evangelism" or dissemination of information (Fore 1993). Since the truth is personal, we should relate to truth in a personal way, through dialogue with the truth (Forrester 1993, 76). The Western world-view is dualistic (mind-body etc.), but the dialogical worldview is trinitarian, which means that it includes the spirit that is a locus of interpretation and meaning, and communication thus rests on interpretation, not on discourse (Christians 1997, 10-11).

The Habermasian normative communication theory of, "ideal speech situation/ act," is based on the idea of equal dialogical partners free of domination, who can reach a rational consensus on shared truth through free dialogue. The concept of truth refers here to honesty and even self-criticism by dialogical partners. In the context of mass media, Habermasian theory on consensus through dialogue does not become true, but it remains as a relevant goal for social discussion performed through media in the context of democratic liberal ideals. (Nordenstreng et al 1998, 261-262.)

The universally grounded norms for human action seem to include three universal principles, which are (according to Abel in Christians et al. 1997, x)

“orientation towards shared truth, authentic expression free of delusion, and social justice”.

Another scholar who applies the dialogical model of communication is Martin Buber, even though his emphasis is on relationship, when he stresses that ontologically, human relationships have primacy, not individuals per se (Christians 1997, 8; Emmanuel 1999, 101-106). Paulo Freire has a Latin American theology of liberation as a starting point towards liberation of the oppressed through dialogue. Also, alternative grass roots movements and communities can be seen to be included into this branch of communication ethics. (Nordenstreng et al. 1998, 262.)

The criticism and concern towards Habermasian theory are directed basically at two points:

- 1) How can one ensure that the interests (and discourses) of the marginalized (without administrative power) “will become part of generalizable interests”.
- 2) The other critical question, presented by Foucault, is whether such an entity as the “autonomous citizen who can participate rational discourse” ever exists (Christians 2000, 37)? Habermasian theory is based on a kind of “tabula rasa” assumption that one is free to accept the common consensus as a basis for one’s own beliefs and actions.

It also remains an open question, how Christian revelation and human condition can merge “through fusion of horizons” (to use Gadamer’s concept in Emmanuel 1999, 121-123). How should transcendental revelation “fuse into individual’s personal views and beliefs”, even though Habermas himself did not include religion, or gave too little attention to it. For example Fred Fitch (1999) has criticized the basic assumptions of Habermasian communicative action.

According to Fitch (1999), one of the problems with the Habermasian dialogical model is the religious world-view, which is closed in a sense that it is mythic and not open to dialogue as such. Another crucial point is how to link the divine origin of the world, the historical acts, and the revelation of God (propositional speech) with dialogical human communication. Also, discourses vary between particular religious communities. According to, William J. Myer, a Protestant theologian,

“Habermas simply reinforces the view that religion is merely a matter of private utility and not of public truth or validity” (Fitch 1999).

A Roman Catholic theologian, Helmut Peukert, gives a positive view of Habermas by stating that,

“theory of communicative action (is) essential to modern theology because in it there is a central convergence to the problems of philosophy, science, social action theory and theology” (Fitch 1999).

Peukert says, that by using Habermasian categories, the unfinished project of Christianity, namely “an ethics based upon intersubjectivity” can be reached (Fitch 1999). This is possible, because according to Peukert, “God is intersubjectively mediated” (Fitch 1999).

The most important criticism towards Habermas, from a theistic perspective, is against the notion of the inter-subjectivity of the truth (Fitch 1999). Divine truth cannot be reached through rational argumentation nor dialogue, but through faith. Nor can communicative action include personal evil, which is essential to the Christian faith. Fitch concludes (1999):

“The Habermasian premises of communicative action are essentially incompatible with theism and Christianity.”

Paul Soukup<sup>75</sup> comes just to the opposite conclusion. He thinks that:

“In genuine dialogue we would come into the clear conclusion on what is sin: it is doing adultery, killing etc. So, we would end up with the divine truth and revelation.”

Problematic, for the dialogical theory, is the notion that probably in the case of dialogue, modernity will win in cases of all religious traditions (Casanova 1994, 234). The dialogical theory of communication is not sufficient for the understanding of community communication, since the Habermasian ideal of communication is libertarian and individualistic by nature, rather than a communitarian model, because community always requires a concept of authority. In addition to Habermasian discourse ethics, strands of communitarian ethics of communication have become more significant (Haikarainen 2000, 38).

### 3.3.3 Evangelical Protestant Theory

#### 3.3.3.1 General Characteristics of Protestant Evangelicalism

The common characteristics of Protestant Evangelicalism can be crystallized into the following notions (McGrath 1999, 121-122; BEMCT 1999, 183-188):

- 1) It recognizes the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.
- 2) It sees the uniqueness of redemption through the death of Christ upon the cross.
- 3) It sees the need for personal conversion. Evangelicalism stresses personal experience or “internal faith”, rather than sacramentalism. It believes in the need and the possibility of human transformation through faith.
- 4) It sees the necessity, propriety, and urgency of evangelism.

Revivalism, premillennialism (expecting the physical return of Christ to the earth), and the holiness-tradition formed important components of the cosmology of Evangelicalism (Peck 1993, 70). Historically, Evangelicalism has not been committed to any particular theory of the Church (ecclesiology, see Chapter 3.1.5). It is thus not a denomination in and of itself, but rather a trend within mainstream

denominations. Evangelicalism is thus a kind of grass roots ecumenical movement. Evangelicalism places itself between fundamentalism and liberalism (McGrath 1999, 124).

Fundamentalism is to be seen as a reaction of some churches to the rise of secularism. In a nutshell, Evangelicalism is more open to intellectual debate, to various cultural strands (for example use of popular culture in Christian cultural expression), and does so with a not so dogmatic of an attitude as fundamentalism usually does (McGrath 1999, 123-124). These two currents overlap, and might be difficult to distinguish in their real-life expressions. Fundamentalism is more sectarian, but Evangelicalism on the other hand celebrates visibility in mainstream publicity. Billy Graham has been internationally the most visible Evangelical figure, with an extremely positive reputation, but with virtually only one message: the classical Gospel of individual salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Billy Graham was also the first figure to carry a nationally televised evangelistic crusade in America in 1957 (Ward 1994, 90).

Protestant Evangelicalism has enjoyed a steady and significant growth, particularly in the USA, but also in Latin America and Russia. The substantial use of mass media is usually seen as a crucial component to the success of Evangelicalism, particularly in Latin America, where Evangelical television has been seen to support local Evangelical groups in spreading their influence ( Martín-Barbero 1997).

Evangelical Protestantism is a counter-case, in many ways, when comparing to mainline Protestantism. Evangelicalism has been largely misunderstood and criticized - also by contemporary sociologists - and has not been seen as a legitimate communicative world-view (Warner in Peck 1993, 53). Evangelicalism is based on an individual faith commitment, the necessity of conversion, and exclusive Christian community. Evangelicalism gets its fuel basically from the grass roots level, because it does not usually have institutional status in any society, but rather it exists as a minority community with a not-always-so-good reputation in the eyes of mainstream society. This means that the communications dynamics are very different in mainline Protestantism. Many evangelical communities are still predominantly oral communities, and because of that, they seldom have, for example, official written documents on goals of the communication. In Evangelicalism, the hegemonic theological position is usually that of conservative theology, if not fundamentalism. This opens doors to taking seriously religious obligations and promises related to communications in the Bible.

The International Evangelical media organization is called ICMC (International Christian Media Commission), which is equivalent to the WACC of mainline churches. The vision and the statement of faith of the ICMC is based on the so-called Lausanne Committee<sup>76</sup> statements of faith and the Manila Manifesto. The ICMC promotes Christians in arts and media through "publishing information, coordinating research and training and organizing strategic gatherings".<sup>77</sup>

The research body specialized in audience research as part of the ICMC was called ICRE (International Communications Research for Evangelism) and is now known as InterSearch, and the body specialized to training is the ICTI (International Communication Training Institute). The European organization of Evangelical broadcasters is called Fellowship of European Broadcasters, or FEB. It has several functions including working to unite and promote Christian broadcasting, for example, within the European Union.<sup>78</sup>

### 3.3.3.2 The Cultural and Communicative Dynamics of Evangelicalism<sup>79</sup>

The re-formation of (American) evangelicalism can be seen as a response strategy to the modernization process. The challenge of modernism was the world-view of progress, rationalization and bureaucratization, with a separation of meaning (belief, religion) and being (scientific world-view). This process of modernization is a product of technological development. Evangelicals tried to heal, maintain and re-establish the connection between religious symbols and actual world-view in a reaction to the modernist challenge. (See for example Peck 1993, 55-57, 64-65, 71; Frankl 1987, 143-145.)

Evangelicals, with their huge body of religious symbolic “stuff”, as the Evangelicals themselves say, provide a means of reflecting one’s religious identity, and this is one of the crucial components (in addition to evangelical media) for the survival and expansion of the Evangelical culture. Because Evangelical communities are exclusive, it is relatively easy to mobilize committed members to perform any given task as requested by the leadership of the community. This exclusivism, on the other hand, is important part in actualizing the communicative potential of evangelicalism; the non-saved must be evangelized through media. Individual religious entrepreneurship is more or less encouraged. This means that individual Christians can also launch their own media activities to spread the salvific Gospel message. Ethical debate is irrelevant for Evangelicals, because Evangelical theory assumes that the Gospel of God can change any person, regardless of one’s ethical state of mind. The gospel is the same for “saints and sinners”. Receiving the gospel is an act of faith, not that of an ethical consideration or debate. Because, according to the Evangelical tenet, the spiritual life of an individual starts from the act of conversion, it is irrelevant to pastor or provide spiritual teaching for an unconverted public.

For evangelicals, the gospel is the supreme story -

“the story that changes lives and takes infinite and unique expression in every Christian’s experience - and it is always being translated or interpreted.” (Blumhofer 1997, 141.)

Evangelicals believe that the gospel can be expressed through dance, drama, and art: not only through text. The Gospel is thus a very dynamic and creative concept. According to Peter Horsfield (1984, 18-20), the major reason for the successful marriage of evangelicals and television is a theological one. Evangelical theology is dualistic (to be saved or not), which makes it compatible with, for example, computer-based mailing lists that disseminate information from evangelical tv-ministries asking for donations. Evangelicals also have a more utilitarian attitude towards technology; the morality of the technology lies in the user of the technology and his purposes, not in problematizing the technology itself.

Evangelicals were also more willing to adapt their message to the demands of television, unlike mainliners, whose constant worry is about the theological compatibility of their message and the modern media. Evangelical theology also stresses significance of the individual as a social unit, which is very much of a compatible approach with television. Evangelical theology is simple and stereotypical;

“It places great emphasis on the experiential and emotional aspects of religious faith, making it more appealing and engaging to television viewers than other more mystical or conceptual expressions of Christianity” (Horsfield 1984, 19).

Evangelicals have always stressed more of a dramatic change and interventions from God, which is compatible with the “sensationalism” of television. Evangelicals had no difficulty in adapting to the glamorous world of television. American Evangelicals learned very soon, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rules of the marketplace of culture. They started to package and re-format traditional revivalist religious content into attractive wrappings of both modern, and later, postmodern cultural products. An inter-penetration of American religion and commercial popular culture was the key to success.<sup>80</sup> (Moore 1994, 241, 243.)

The Evangelical mission and communications technology have been very compatible throughout the history of modernization, first in the form of printed literature to promote religious revivalism, and later with the electronic media starting with telegraphy (for example Schement et al 1996, 272).

Evangelicals are anti-traditionalists, they either have a remarkable disinterest in religious tradition, or they even see tradition as harmful. They are strongly future oriented. Evangelicals tend to popularize their religious culture, in part by creating emotional messages for a popular audience. Evangelicalism is individualistic, and it is also often organized around significant charismatic individuals. (Schultze 1996, 68-69.)

Evangelicals have very easily adopted the forms of contemporary electronic media culture and have substituted secular content with their religious message. Particularly in American revivalist evangelicalism oral proclamation is very important. Traditional and conservative revivalist speech and discourse has been effectively adapted as the primary content of the electronic church. Evangelical communications dynamics are not about official theological formulations and analysis, but genuine religious dynamics for communicating salvation. This is part of the explanation of why Evangelicalism is growing: it has maintained its relevance with mainstream symbol language and can create ever-renewing Evangelical Christian popular culture (for example Noll 1994, 68).

Evangelicals have been able to use media for various functions such as evangelism, mobilization, fund raising, etc (Schultze 1996, 61). Evangelicals have an optimistic view of the effects of religious media, and a pessimistic view about the morals of mainstream media. For both concepts, they believe in a powerful media assumption of both good and bad. Evangelicals think the secular media threatens their beliefs and values (Schultze 1996, 65).<sup>81</sup> Evangelicals tend to criticize the immorality (Schultze 1996, 67), while mainstream churches criticize the ethics and poor performance of the media on social and aesthetic issues. The Evangelical critique on media is a personalistic moralistic approach. The pri-

mary use and motivation for evangelical media is evangelism (Schultze 1996, 63; Lehtikoinen 1998).

It is common for Evangelicals to be in conflict with mainline denominations, public service ideology, and mainstream journalism. This basically happens because of two characteristics of Evangelicalism. *First*, one cannot be an Evangelical Christian without a personal conversion: the so-called “born-again experience”. This is a very personal commitment to Christ and Christian morality. This means that the Gospel and the necessity of the conversion are the only message and effect to be sought, which the Evangelicals see as being relevant for public communication. The conversion is the root-paradigm of Evangelicalism, and the whole movement is organized around it - it is a crucial part of both the Evangelical community, and individual identity. So, when other churches handle Christian public service or religious programs in ways other than for promoting religious substance or evangelism, Evangelicals feel uncomfortable, and they see it as a wasted communications opportunity to preach the Gospel.

*Secondly*, a tension is created between mainstream media and Evangelicals, because Evangelicalism does not recognize the modern separation of private and the public spheres, and the respective religious and secular spheres. The worldview of Evangelicals is holistic and theistic. They demand God’s rule over both public and private spheres. This means that the Gospel is as relevant message for the wider public audience (and even more relevant, because they are just those who need salvation) than for the Christian community itself. To put it in a very simplistic manner, Evangelicals basically want to communicate the same message in the same way for all the people publicly.<sup>82</sup> This may be seen as a naive concept, but it is also behind the huge communications dynamics of Evangelicalism. For Evangelicals, all channels, locations, and people are legitimate for evangelism. This has caused serious tensions, particularly in Russia, between the Russian Orthodox Church and Evangelical communities.

The simplistic and utilitarian nature of Evangelical theology and practice has made Evangelical religion very much compatible with media logic and the readiness to utilize media technology (Altheide & Snow 1991, 209-216). Evangelicals are far more comfortable with forms of commercial television. Their ideology as well as ethos is linked with popular culture: that of ordinary people without a high culture background. A certain degree of amateurism is crucial for Evangelical media theory, since people first must have a motivation to preach the Gospel, and only after attaining that can they seek ways of actually doing it. And then they enter the world of media, without necessarily understanding the business.<sup>83</sup> The problems with Evangelical communication are its emphasis on persuasion and proselytism, and its heavy use of religious discourse and lack of understanding of the audience’s needs. Even though there is usually criticism on the effects of the so-called electronic church, there is some evidence that religious electronic media can have strategic significance as a crucial component of religious revivalism. In Latin America, the electronic church has been an important tool for massive Protestant (mainly Pentecostal) revivals. Through media, particularly radio, but also with tv, these movements take worship from the church to homes. These churches are now in tune with the popular masses in Latin America. Martín-Barbero (1997, 109-110) writes:

"The electronic church has a far more profound meaning than most people suspect. It is not simply that some churches have used a variety of media and genres to reach many new sectors of public life. Rather, in my opinion, the significance is that some churches have been able to transform radio and television into a new, fundamental 'mediation' for the religious experience. That is, the medium is not simply a physical amplification of the voice, but rather adds a quite new dimension to religious contact, religious celebration, and personal religious experience."

"Television... is finding ways not only to broadcast religious worship but to intensify and magnify the religious experience itself"... this Protestant tradition (Pentecostals) has understood that the media are a way to re-enchant the world. The media are the way to transform the everyday life of the people into magic."

The Evangelical media is often criticized in that it does not reach non-Christians, but is just preaching to the choir. But there are empirical samples, which seem to prove something else.<sup>84</sup> Evangelical media logic is based on the "spill-over-assumption", which means that the mass audience always contains non-converted individuals (so called seekers) who will, under the mediated exposition of the gospel message, convert to Christianity. This assumption also has empirical evidence, even though it is clear that the vast majority of the audience of religious media is already converted. For example, according to the estimates of the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) radio mission's audience, about 25-30 per cent of the audience are non-Christians.<sup>85</sup>

The Evangelical's labor for public relevance is paradoxically achieved through a vital public entrepreneurship in the media, but the main targets of the media are individuals. The Evangelical electronic church and televangelism are easily mis-interpreted, because they are analyzed as a public contribution to mainline society, which is not the case. Evangelism is virtually the only communicative ideology behind their activity in the media; direct political efforts for mainstream society are rare. When a political aspect is striking, it is targeted to re-enforce and mobilize the Evangelical community. Evangelical communication is an attempt to influence individuals through public means of evangelism, and an attempt to teach those who are the committed ones.

Literally, there is a huge variety of interpretation as to what "preaching the gospel" actually means. The flexibility of the concept of "the Gospel" and that of "evangelism" means that Christian media does not need to be entirely one of explicitly religious content, but the function of evangelism can be seen to be achieved through various formats, and not only through preaching. For example, a contemporary 100% Christian FM music station (Spirit 105,3 KCMS) in Seattle, Washington, USA, can be said to perform an evangelistic function. Tony Bollen<sup>86</sup> sees its mission as follows:

"There are different philosophies in Christian radio whether it is mainly Evangelical or whether it is more edification. My personal opinion is that Christian radio is to build up the body of Christ. My number one goal of this radio station is to encourage believers. Maybe they are new believers, they can be anything from the mature to very immature. And along with that we have the gospel presented in a way that somebody that just happens on a radio dial, might be attracted to the church life."

A variety of emphasis and layers of Evangelical communications can still be interpreted in terms of evangelism, because according to the "Spiritual decision making process," or the process of religious conversion, there are different levels

and stages in the same process of conversion. The Evangelical theory assumes that the “felt needs” of the individual must be encountered in different phases of the process, through different forms, and with various content. This theory is covered in the following.

### 3.3.3.3 The Maslowian Psychology of Needs and Theology as a Theoretical Basis

The leading Evangelical communications theoretician, James F. Engel (1979, 109-128; also Brooks 1983, 100-104) applies psychological concepts of the Maslowian hierarchy of needs as the basis of Christian communication. Hierarchy of needs is however applied to the Christian worldview and communications. Engel classifies the needs into two categories: felt needs and real needs. The Maslowian needs are primarily considered as “felt needs”. “People will not listen to the gospel message and respond unless it speaks to *felt needs*” (Engel 1979, 117, italics original). This means that people do not usually perceive the real needs of human life revealed in the Scripture (meaning spiritual needs). Felt need reflects an emotional feeling... *Felt need cannot be ministered to unless underlying belief patterns are changed to bring them into accord with scriptural reality.* (Engel 1979, 118, italics original.)

Felt need is, for example, a life situation or location in the “spiritual decision making process” of an individual. This means that in order to get in touch with underlying spiritual “*real need*” (concept *deep need* is also used), the surface of *felt need* must be met with relevant communicative contents and forms. Communication should thus originate from the perspective of the felt needs of the audience, and it should bring them into dialogue with Scriptural answers to felt needs as self-discovery and response (Jørgensen 1986, 268).<sup>87</sup> If communication is successful, the spiritual process goes further with different steps of increased commitment (Brooks 1983, 107; Engel 1979, 183, 207; Sogaard 1993, 63-68).

Brooks (1983, 103-105) provides an interesting application of this basically Evangelical innovation of the Christian communications theory based on the Maslowian hierarchy of needs and a Biblical view of human nature. With these concepts, one can plan the communicative message as the following example shows (Brooks 1983, 104-105):

- 1) Doctrinal truth: God is omnipresent and loving
- 2) Specifically expressed: ‘You will leave me alone; and yet I am not alone’
- 3) Communication form: Stories of solitaries
- 4) Interests to be contacted: Other people’s lives
- 5) Felt need to be addressed: Loneliness
- 6) Deep need to be reached: To be assured of ultimate significance

This model provides both a theoretical framework and ways of practical application for religious communication. Also, models of group communication and behavioral sciences are applied from the Christian perspective. The main perspective of Engel’s works is effectivity and mainly applying principles of the Mass Communication Research audience research paradigm (usually known as

MCR-paradigm) to Christian communication along with principles of psychology and marketing research (religious conversion being in the core of considerations), while also having a significant theological review on the topic (for example Engel 1979).

The felt need -deep need -processual normative model seems to be able to utilize elements of uses and gratifications research, because (secular) motifs of uses can be interpreted as being implications of (real and religious) deep needs. Thus motifs, for use expressed and found in uses and gratifications analysis, can be legitimately fulfilled through communication, because meeting those needs opens doors for the satisfaction of religious deep needs. Thus, processual direction enables the use of different types of (not so religious) content, because content is an important and thus legitimate part of the "whole communications process" (understood as evangelism), which leads to conversion and reinforcement of Christian life and morality when completed (pastoral communication). The process approach ensures the diversity of Christian communication as expressed by its goals, form and content; all evangelism does not need to be direct preaching for repentance. This model actually establishes the diversity and vitality of Evangelical communication by providing the intensive motivation and goal (evangelism), while still allowing a diversity of form and content.

There is also a mediating position between the communicative dialogical theory of the mainline churches and the Evangelical theory utilizing direct evangelism. The so-called "Evangelical left" has converged towards mainline Protestant theory in their relationship between the gospel, individual, society and publicity. Moderate Evangelicals recognize the need for evangelism, but they distinguish between "explicit and implicit" Christian communication.<sup>88</sup> Explicit Christian communication means classical evangelism: concentrating on evangelism, conversion, and the teaching of principles of Christian life. Implicit Christian communication, by contrast, is (Gray 2000, Chapter 1):

"...indirect and low-key and settles for making a long-term impact. It is programming made by people holding a Christian worldview. The overall intent is to uphold Kingdom values but this is not so stated. Biblical references are usually omitted and little if any reference is made to Christian belief in itself."

According to Gray, implicit Christian communication is often overlooked and not appreciated by (Evangelical) Christian communicators. Implicit communication is needed to attract those, who seek gratification of their own needs from Christian broadcasting - "not a system of dogma and belief".<sup>89</sup> Using "implicit Christian communication" ensures a larger audience, for example, for broadcast missions organizations. For example, FEBC officially recognizes the importance of differentiation of programming and broadcasting content. In their booklet, "Radio Programming Roles: FEBC Perspectives," they recognize 14 different roles which radio can have in missions, and only some of them are considered as "direct evangelism" (Gray et al. 1997). Evangelical media can also contribute in the political arena, for example, in 1986 an FEBC radio station in Manila, Philippines covered the revolution that took place when President Marcos was driven from power. FEBC's local radio station reported on the revolution while it was going on<sup>90</sup>. Evangelicalism can also have an explicitly societal public role.

### 3.3.4 Eastern Orthodox Theory

The Eastern Orthodox media theory is the final empirical sample in our typology of normative religious media theories. The case of Eastern Orthodoxy is very much apart from that of its Western counterparts: Roman Catholicism, mainline Protestantism and Evangelical Protestantism. The Orthodox theory crystallizes the final option as a reaction to modernization, that of traditionalism and authoritarianism.<sup>91</sup>

The Orthodox Christian concept of relationships between church and state, religion and nationality, is a very holistic one, which forms a unique combination of nationalism and religiosity with regard to religious and national authorities. For various reasons, Eastern Orthodox media theory is presented very well in the case of the Russian Orthodox church (see particularly the Chapter 3.4.6.5 on “Russian Orthodox Mediated Performance” ). As a result of the unique oneness of nation and Orthodox Christianity, Eastern Orthodoxy is always organized in real life along national and ethnic borders. For example, in the USA, there are various Eastern Orthodox Churches which exist according to ethnic borders, such as the Russian Orthodox church abroad, or the Greek Orthodox church of the USA, etc. Thus it seems that Orthodox media theory must be combined to some extent with a particular nationality. Christian media theories are most obvious, when they can be analyzed in situations where particular traditions have hegemonic position over other traditions. There are only a few possible options for that consideration in regard to Eastern Orthodoxy holding a hegemonic position over other Christian traditions. Those possible countries are Greece, Belarussia, Ukraine, Serbia, and Russia. Eastern Orthodoxy is considered a universal church (even to the extent that Orthodoxy also teaches that outside of the Church, there is no salvation), and the unity of the church is the ideal, even though it is split into several national and ethnic minority churches “living in diaspora” outside of traditional Orthodox lands (canonical territories) without hegemonic position, like for example, in the USA or Finland (Ware 1997, 172-191, 247). The biggest of the Orthodox churches is the Russian Orthodox Church with 100-150 million followers (Ware 1997, 6). The Orthodox world is split into autonomous national churches, which seek unity and even unification (Ware 1997, 171-191). The mentality of Western Orthodox churches is on a very different level than that of their Eastern counterparts, since the Western church resides in a highly secularized environment, and is not able to establish the traditional Orthodox “trinity” between nationality, state and religion.

Of the national cases, the Russian is far more relevant and interesting for various reasons. In Russia, Eastern Orthodoxy has a history of centuries of dominance and virtual unity with the state. But since the Bolshevick revolution in October of 1917, Orthodoxy suffered for 70 years as a martyr to militant atheist communism. By 1988, freedom was granted, to some extent, again in the millennium celebration of the presence of Orthodoxy in Russia. By the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, Western style religious freedom was introduced, which in effect established a total free marketplace of religion in Russia. From almost total destruction and oppression, the Russian Orthodox church was forced to face a total competition from other Christian traditions and other religions. The dimen-

sions of unity of state and Church, and the authority and universalism of the church was thus put to test against a free marketplace of ideas and religions generated by globalization and modern liberalism. It appears the Eastern Orthodox answer (and thus Russian answer) with regard to this dilemma is unique when compared to the solutions generated by Western Churches and social philosophers. In the case of Russia, we find a laboratory of confrontation of anti-modern or traditional concepts of an authoritarian society (even though being nominally democratic), with its tendency towards an authoritarian or state-controlled media system, and its tendency towards a traditional alliance of state and church. All are against what is valued as modern in the West: a democratic liberal society, freedom of the Press, plurality of voices, and mutual freedom and respect between religions.

### 3.3.4.1 The Characteristics of Eastern Orthodox Faith

Eastern Orthodoxy is basically “a finished product” of the first seven ecumenical councils, which means that they can largely avoid the theological disputation present in the West since Reformation. Eastern Orthodoxy is thus essentially an expression of the joy of the Resurrection, and it has not developed as much theologically as Western Christianity. At the core of the Orthodox faith is the belief in the omnipresence of the vertical transcendental dimension.

“The Orthodox have a historical rather than a rational theology, believing that they live in the last days when it is important to celebrate and beautify rather than to articulate or argue. Orthodoxy generated one of the most intense inward directed forms of mystical theology in all of Christian history.” (Billington 1999, 58-60.)

The core of the Orthodox church is tradition, based on the Bible, with Creeds, icons, the Canons, service books, church fathers, and the first seven ecumenical councils. Timothy Ware writes,

“Orthodox Christians of today see themselves as heirs and guardians to a rich inheritance received from the past, and they believe that it is their duty to transmit this inheritance unimpaired to the future.”

This means that the Tradition, for the most part, is considered as unchanging. This characteristic of Eastern Orthodoxy also generates some problems, recognized by the community itself. Namely this easily leads to “theology of repetition”, in which all the attention is put to preservation; hence innovation and adaptation to the environment might suffer. It also may lead to the inability to critically evaluate past mistakes, or to demarcate between “human tradition” (free for inspection) and “the Tradition” (divine and inerrant). The danger of ultimate traditionalism is especially great, because of this lean backwards. (Ware 1997, 196-198.)

The particularity of Eastern Orthodoxy is its reliance on icons, which have very deep theological significance. Icons, signify God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ, and, imply that all creation is essentially good, created by God. When an Orthodox, for example, kisses an icon, one does not worship the icon as such, but symbolizes the deification, sacramentality, redemption, and glorification of all creatures. (Ware 1997, 30-34., 206-207)<sup>92</sup>

Orthodox Christianity is essentially a liturgical church, which celebrates divine handed down mysteries of faith in the spirit of “Lex orandi lex credendi” (the measure of prayer is the measure of your faith) (Ware 1997, 204-205). Doctrine is understood in the context of liturgy (the concept “orthodoxy” signifies both right belief and right worship). Orthodox religion sees humans first of all as liturgical creatures for which reason “worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second”. (Ware 1997, 266.) The Orthodox church is also a hierarchical church with strict authority structure. But on the other hand, it stresses communitarianism, spirituality, and the spiritual gifts (Ware 1997, 248-250). Eastern Orthodox theory is characterized by the predominance of liturgy and tradition in their communications. Orthodox media theory is also ultimately instrumental; it promotes the Orthodox faith and culture.

The Orthodox attitude towards ecumenism and the World Council of Churches is somewhat ambivalent and critical (Ware 1997, 322-324). This means that modernist Western thought on Christian communication has had little influence over contemporary Eastern Orthodoxy. The Eastern Orthodox tradition stresses the unity of tradition and theology, and it celebrates that in liturgy. The devotional forms and practices thus shape theological thought, when liturgy has de-facto primacy. Worship and theological reflection are linked organically through liturgy. (McGrath 1999, 222-223.)

### 3.3.4.2 Eastern Orthodox Media Theory

This centrality of tradition and liturgy is very visible in the communications practices of the Eastern Orthodox church. Traditional symbols (which are also linked with liturgy) are the core of all Orthodox communication. The orthodox view on communication could be even called “liturgical church context” (Lehikoinen 1997;1998). The Orthodox view shows considerable rejection of the modern forms and formats of communication, but concentrates on liturgy and tradition as the source for the content of communication.

The case of Eastern Orthodox Christianity is documented the least (even though with a considerable length) in this research. This is for two reasons. *First*, there are limitations on the research process (few contacts, language problems, a lack of resources). *Secondly*, because of the historical situation in Eastern Europe, where the Orthodox church resides for the most part, there has not been a developed thought on the relationship between mass media and Orthodoxy, since religion was not allowed access to public communication during the Soviet era. The Russian Orthodox church has been busy re-covering its basic infrastructures, and time and energy have not been available for normative communicative thought until recently. The single most important area of contribution can be found in the Chapters on Mass media in the Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church (Appendix II). Western Orthodox Churches have not had the resources, nor a need for official or Pan-Orthodox thought on mass media, because they have been minority churches in all other countries with the exception of Greece where the Orthodox church has had privileged hegemonic access to mainstream media anyway. After the liberation from communism, the need for Orthodox media theory became obvious, since the Orthodox communications dynamic as a whole was finally released. Previously, there were only a few titles available on the

Orthodox view of media (for example Makkonen 1992). The instrumental view and orientation of normative Orthodox media theory to media is visible in the title of the following reference: "Do radio and television serve the Church?" (Makkonen 1992).

What is the essence of the Orthodox communications dynamic and what are the contents of Orthodox communications, which in effect make this "Orthodox media theory" unique? The Orthodox communications dynamic is based on "Orthodox universalism", which is understood as maintenance of the Orthodox faith in its "canonical territory". Since one becomes an Orthodox Christian by baptism and not through conversion per definitionem, evangelism is neither the primary motivator, nor the form of communications. In the Orthodox tradition, conversion is also possible, but Orthodoxy tries to generate conversion more through "catechesis; education and theological enlightenment" than through proclamation and the Gospel formula (Lukina et al 1996, 18). Instead, "Orthodox Evangelism" is different, more holistic, aesthetical, and symbolic, but not totally without the moralist dimension. David Moser has crystallized the basic characteristics and particularities of "Orthodox evangelism":<sup>93</sup>

"Orthodox evangelism must center on the Church - the beauty of the building, the beauty of the services, the frequency and availability of the services. Orthodox evangelism is served by beautiful icons, gold onion domes and crosses... rising against the sky, the smell of incense, the pious and holy singing of the services. Orthodox evangelism is served by our visibility as Orthodox Christians in the world -the clothing of the clergy... the sign of the cross as we pray at each juncture of our lives - beginning and ending a task, eating and finishing a meal, starting and ending a trip, etc. Orthodox evangelism is keeping the fast without excuses or compromises. Orthodox evangelism is setting our priorities to forgo the allures of the world in order to be at divine services whenever they are held..."

Orthodox communication can be divided into two categories. *First*, information on church-related issues, and *secondly*, from the mediation of the Orthodox tradition as a whole. This means that Orthodox programs have a very strong traditional flavour. For example, the only type of music is vocal Orthodox church music in addition to some use of classical music.<sup>94</sup>

In broadcasting, the predominant content is the church tradition, the Orthodox calendar, the lives of the saints, the liturgy, prayers, worship, and sermons. Contemporary music or narratives are usually not used. The liturgy is also a primary component of Eastern Orthodox webcasting. Theological reflection and interpretation to contemporary situations are not very common, but might be increasing (for example popular tv-program of Metropolitan Kirill in Russian national channel ORT). Sometimes (very seldom) even rock-music can be used, for example, when a popular rock stars in Russia converted to Orthodoxy.<sup>95</sup> The unique characteristics of Orthodox media theory can be crystallized in the following citation from Orthodox program producers of local parish programs in central Finland:<sup>96</sup>

"We try to find a perspective on the topic through which we can present, what the Church and the millennial tradition teach. This is a typical way of presenting things in the whole Church. The priest always checks the current date from the Church calendar and looks, what the Church teaches, and then develops (a sermon or a program) out of this starting point in a way that there is something personal also.

Many times some programs have been such that we have read traditional wisdom or biographies of the Saints and old stories which have taken place hundreds of years ago. I think that for a busy person in the contemporary stressful world, it is a relaxing moment to hear something like this."

In Orthodox liturgical media theory, the speciality is in using "over-sensual" effects to generate a sense of the sacred (such as noise of incense tools, steps in a church, the mass etc.). But still, programs also have cognitive elements and information from the Orthodox perspective, but they must be hidden to the programs and not too explicit.

"Our goal is that the Orthodox program also provides information through which an individual can become interested in the Orthodox tradition... Direct proselytism and propaganda are unknown things for Orthodox communicators."<sup>97</sup>

### 3.3.4.3 Eastern Orthodoxy on Mainstream Media

There is little published on the relationship between the Eastern Orthodox faith and mass media. The first significant contribution to mass media of the world's largest Eastern Orthodox Community is the recently approved social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church (2000; Appendix II). It has a particular chapter on "Church and mass media", which can be considered as an Orthodox "Inter Mirifica", a basic document on mass media and Eastern Orthodox religion. It defines the proper moral and the authoritative relationships between mass media and the Church as well as the rights of Orthodox Christianity to be positively visible in the mass media. The setting is clearly that the media should be submissive to Church authority, and this ultimately means that the solving of a possible conflict between a particular media or communicator might mean a boycott or even punishment by the church. The Social doctrine on the relationship between the Church and mass media presents a strikingly different position than that of Western mainline churches. The case of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is very interesting, because it is the only hegemonic church in which conservative orientation is predominant. And, it is the only conventional church using traditional hegemonic and authoritarian strategy as a way of solving the conflict between mainstream society, mainstream media, and the Church (See the chapter in the Appendix II on Church and mass media that deals with the social doctrine of the ROC as a whole).

The Orthodox understanding of communications ethics, and particularly that of journalism, was discussed in a conference of Orthodox journalists held in Greece from 17-23 May, 1999. The conference was arranged by SYNDESMOS, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth. Several topics relevant to Orthodox media theory were brought to the discussion. The task-list of the conference focused on the following themes for discussion:<sup>98</sup>

- 1) Orthodox ethics and ethos of journalism
- 2) Relations between loyalty to the Church and journalistic impartiality
- 3) Covering world events from an Orthodox perspective
- 4) Covering church affairs outside one's own Church.

The more operational aims of the conference were:

- 1) to bridge the gap between ecclesiastical and secular journalists resulting in mutual enrichment,
- 2) to create an organization of Orthodox journalists
- 3) to stimulate a real exchange between the archives of Orthodox newspapers, tv/radio stations, websites and press agencies around the world,
- 4) to promote in-depth study of: Orthodox journalistic ethics, Orthodox journalistic ethos, and Orthodox view of the journalistic profession, and journalistic coverage of events taking place in Orthodox countries,
- 5) to initiate the compilation of a directory of Orthodox journalists, tv/radio stations, web-sites and press agencies around the world,
- 6) to lay foundations for a Pan-Orthodox press agency,
- 7) to discuss information about the Orthodox Church on the Internet
- 8) to articulate the voice of Orthodox journalism, both in traditionally Orthodox countries and elsewhere,
- 9) to help ecclesiastical journalists improve their professional skills.

In this SYNDESMOS conference covering the Orthodox ethics of journalism, a more moderate approach was used to reflect relationships between mass media and Eastern Orthodoxy. The normative orientation of Service Orthodoxe de Presse (SOP) from France, presented by Antoine Niviere, resembles the media ethics of liberal Western Churches: <sup>99</sup>

“...the purpose of SOP is to find an Orthodox perspective which is relevant to contemporary (not to that of the past) Orthodox men and women and which meets their expectations and gives ‘here and now’ answers on the situation of contemporary world... In this way, the goal of SOP remains to be... dissemination of healthy, peaceful, non-political and constructive information and theological thought ‘for the life of the world’. This editorial policy has been, and will also be in the future, an object of sometimes heavy criticism, but as an editorial policy this feels to be the only ‘Orthodox’ way.”

Orthodox communicators are primarily oriented to the Pan-Orthodox context, and they seldom have ecumenical contacts. Orthodox communicators recognize that the social and cultural contexts of Orthodox communication have covered a broad spectrum ranging from totalitarian atheism to Western secularism. This forces the question, “What is thus in common in Orthodox communication, if anything?” The starting point is ecclesiology, which means the “nature of the Church” must be the starting point of Orthodox communication.<sup>100</sup>

Niviere says, the problems for Orthodox communication are in the polarities, where Orthodoxy has a hegemonic position in the society (like in Greece or Russia) on one hand, and where anti-Christian and anti-Orthodox reporting is dominant on the other (in Western context). In the first case, there is a danger of Christianity being reduced to only a superficial shell without connection to genuine life with the Gospel. In the other extreme, the danger is in demonizing mass media as an enemy of the Church. However, Antoine Niviere introduces a third option, which fits between the dangers or polarities. His goal is to promote a universal Orthodox vision without need for specific identification to any particular nation or culture, and do it with the intention to present all the relevant objective facts of any Orthodox Church. In this way, the SOP provides a channel for all

groups, within the Orthodox community, to have their voice heard. This theory could be called *Pan-Orthodox pluralism* (concept mine). Orthodox communication gets its direction from the light of Revelation, and the Orthodox journalist sees phenomenon with both a human and a divine eye. The Church is called to talk to this world, "...so that the World would believe", and not to isolate Herself from dialogue.

"And in this service for the Church, Orthodox journalists must do their part... We give testimony on the treasures of the common memory of the Church, even though we are talking to the contemporary world."

One of the crucial problems and challenges of the Church is to use language that is both relevant and understandable to ordinary people. There is a danger in Orthodox reporting that it reflects only the perspective of hierarchical structures and remains irrelevant for genuine Church life among the people. Contemporary individuals are interested in

"social and political issues, finances and economy, culture, ethics and aspects of existence... The Orthodox faith has a contribution to all these issues, and it cannot be without presenting it... Otherwise there is a danger that the Orthodox Church will be reduced only to aesthetical envelope",

which does not challenge outsiders to take the inner life of the Church seriously.<sup>101</sup>

The challenges for Orthodox communication also exist within the body of the Church itself. Too often Church officials do not want openness. There are also tensions inside the Church concerning issues of fundamentalism and ecumenism, or in relation to Western Christianity. The hope for a renewal of Orthodox communication rests on the younger generation of communicators. The challenge is also to generate joint efforts, such as shared databases, for resources for Orthodox communicators. These kind of joint resources support the realization of a universal Pan-Orthodox image to the world. Both Catholic and Protestant churches have already established such resources and even organizations for themselves.<sup>102</sup> Along these lines, there is currently a Pan-Orthodox system of Orthodox media being developed. Within the Orthodox tradition, for example, there are radio stations<sup>103</sup>, news agencies<sup>104</sup>, and *Orthodox news sources -links lists*<sup>105</sup>. The International association of Orthodox Journalists was established in May of 2000, as an outcome of SYNDESMOS –the conference of Orthodox media personnel in Greece.<sup>106</sup> Also, the association for Orthodox journalists in Russia was formed in the beginning of the year 2000.<sup>107</sup> "This is the first step towards creation of a unified mass media holding of the Russian Orthodox church", according to the head of the Moscow Patriarchate publishing house.<sup>108</sup>

The quality problems of Orthodox communication are polarized. Sometimes, Orthodox news agencies only disseminate the official and bureaucratic statements of the Churches. On other occasions, they simply re-produce the press releases of the big news agencies, which present Orthodox issues without an Orthodox flavor or perspective. The crucial point is that Church communications is not merely a dissemination of objective facts and ideas, but it is a pastoral ministry. For this reason, the Church must not only select the issues to publish, but it must contextualize the information with an Orthodox perspective. The Church must not produce information in a way, which lowers the Church to a level of being

only one institution among others. The Church must represent the body of Christ, and be a source for morals and meaning of life.<sup>109</sup>

All Church communication must be directed to disseminate information, which would generate consideration and evaluation of the deep questions of life. The ultimate concern is eschatological, since Orthodox Christianity waits for the return of Christ, As Niviere puts it, "This vision encourages us to build God's Kingdom in and around us." As a famous Russian Orthodox theologian, who was martyred in Stalin's concentration camps once said, "'Orthodoxy shows but does not testify about itself'... 'Our task is to show, what is the most beautiful, pure and holiest in this faith... Ultimately we have the only one story to be told to the world: Christ is risen.'"<sup>110</sup>

### 3.3.5 Conclusions on Normative Religious Media Theories

Previously presented normative religious media theories are an extension of particular religious communities and an expression of the various normative and other determining factors influencing public contribution through mediated communication. The basic solutions in religious communications are chosen in terms of form and content. A particular religious communication can be either basically modern or basically traditional in both form and content. To put it another way, each Christian tradition has basically chosen a predominant combination of form and content that emphasizes either a traditional or a modern foundation. The danger is that this formula provides too simplistic of a picture of this complicated topic. However, the predominant characteristics can be noted.

*Roman Catholicism* basically utilizes modern forms of communication, but depending on liberal or conservative orientation, it can fluctuate between modern or traditional. Unique to Roman Catholic theory are the rich imagery of traditional Catholic symbols and the importance of institutional communication by the church hierarchy.

*Mainline Protestantism* utilizes both modern form and modern content: combining a primacy of journalistic approach with liberal theology and ethical emphasis.

*Evangelical Protestantism* utilizes modern form, but traditional content: applying forms and symbols of the modern electronic media culture to communicate conservative religious meanings.

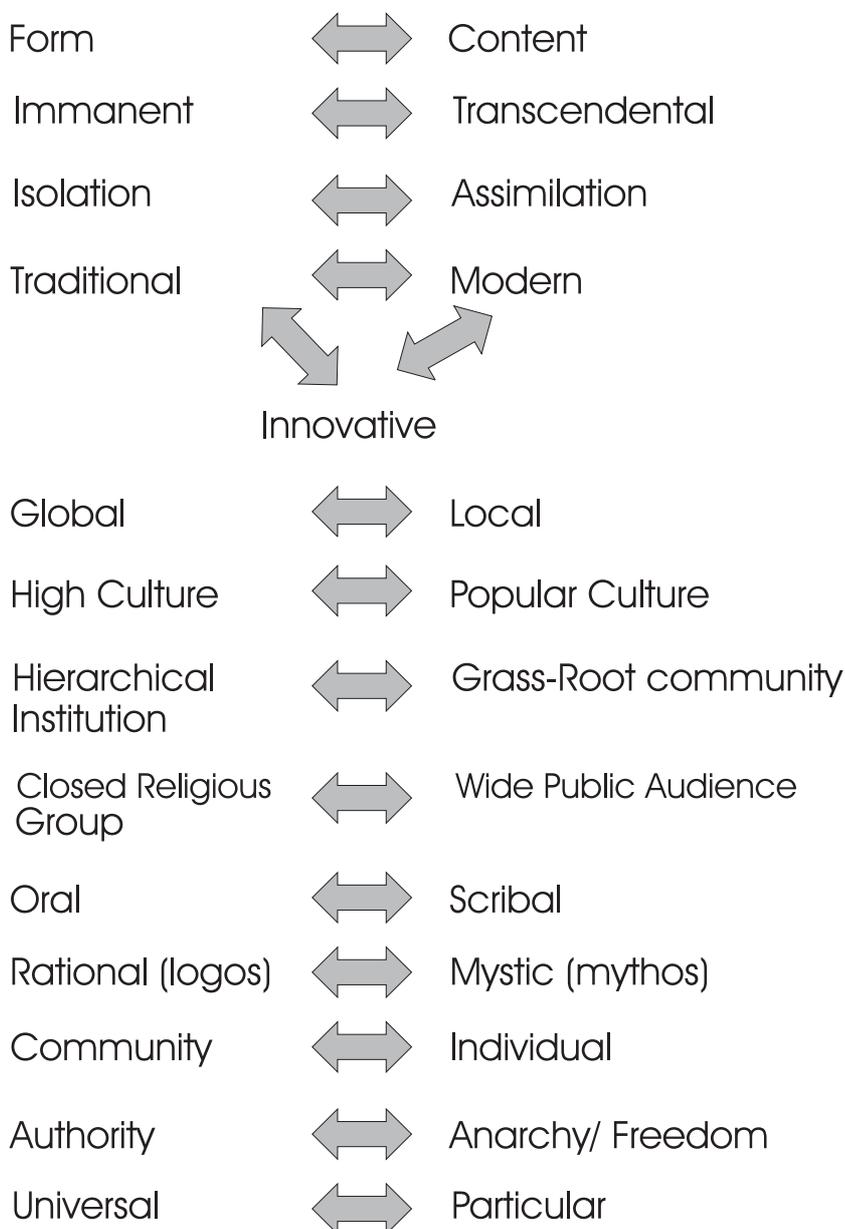
*Eastern Orthodoxy* is predominantly a communicator of a tradition in both form and content: form is derived from church liturgy and devotions are often used, while church tradition is also used as mediated content.

Christian communication operates between several dichotomies and tensions as it moves towards relevant religious communication. The structure of religious communication is dualistic, and primarily, it is the following polarities that can be found.

PICTURE 9 shows the various structural polarities between which tensions religious communication must actualize itself in communications activities.

Characteristic of religious communication in all settings is that actual communications texts are in fact representative of a negotiation process between several

## Polarities in Religious Communication



polarities. Religious communication is thus in constant tension and pushed from different directions: the most important of these being the immanent vs. transcendental dimensions. The religious message is about crossing the boundary between immanent and transcendental. There must be a proper relationship between the transcendental and the immanent. The appropriate relationship between the two in a particular communications occasion is a matter of theologically evaluating the communications profile of a particular community. Neither polarity should be chosen in its ultimate form, but rather this constant tension between the two should be maintained.

There are probably plenty of successful religious media formats that are successful in fulfilling both the goals of the producing institution or agent, as well as the religious needs and motives of the audience. It may be that the solutions to finding effective ways of religious communication lie in the level of format. Even though one can develop external components for evaluating the quality of religious media communication, the ultimate decision on how to emphasize the various dimensions in an evaluative model (On dimensions of quality of religious communication, see Chapter 4.5.3) remains primarily as an internal issue, and must be performed by the community itself. This is because both the internal and external judgements of religious media communication are, to some extent, conflicting, and can be objective only on matters of technical or professional quality. Another area of possible objective evaluation lies in the comprehension of the media text, at some level, or perhaps on how exclusive or inclusive the given media text is to an observer outside the community.

As a conclusion, one can say that possibilities of a universal and objective evaluation of particular normative media theories are limited. One can conclude that the so called "effective communication" (meaning utilitarian and pragmatic use of persuasion techniques) must not be elevated into absolute status, but communication must be evaluated from the perspective of Gospel values (Dulles 1988, 131).

### 3.4 The System of Religious Media Communication

In the previous chapter, we traced the dominant characteristics of the normative views of mass media among the particular Christian traditions. Now we will look at how these communications dynamics and normative media theories are actualized within each particular national system of religious media communication. In the following cases each tradition and thus, each normative media theory will in turn have a hegemonic position. And, respectively, there are cases, when they are in minority positions. This reveals the basic dimensions of how each communications dynamic will be actualized: given as open an opportunity as possible (hegemonic position of the tradition). In turn, when a particular community is in a minority position, we will find ways of showing accommodation to this setting. These national cases should thus reveal an important aspect of religious media communication: that of the significance of the societal and cultural factors.

The Russian Orthodox church is a special case, not only because it reveals the unity of Eastern Orthodox thought within a particular nationality, but because it also represents an important theoretical option as a response strategy to modernity.

There are basically two goals for this chapter. The first, as previously stated, is to show how particular normative views on media are actualized by each tradition in each national case. The second goal is to verify the existence of "the System of Religious Media Communication". It has been generally acknowledged, that there are certain "sub-systems" among the national media, such as the commercial, the mainstream media, the political media, etc. (Hiebert et al. 2000, 55-

57). But the existence of a particular religious media system has not been recognized. This study seeks to present evidence that a media systems paradigm and approach is also relevant in the case of religious media supply (and consumption).

The topics that are taken into account in each national case vary, depending on the particular characteristics, and the religious situation within the country. The religious media system model will be established on two levels. *First*, the religious media system will be constructed as a whole: as a macro-level summative model expressing the overall organizational design of all religious communications activities. This constitutes the “mediated marketplace of religion”. *The second* level of the model is to observe the communications system of the particular tradition. The scale of the latter varies considerably depending on the situation within the tradition and within the particular country (hegemonic vs. minority). There is also external global input to the national religious media systems.

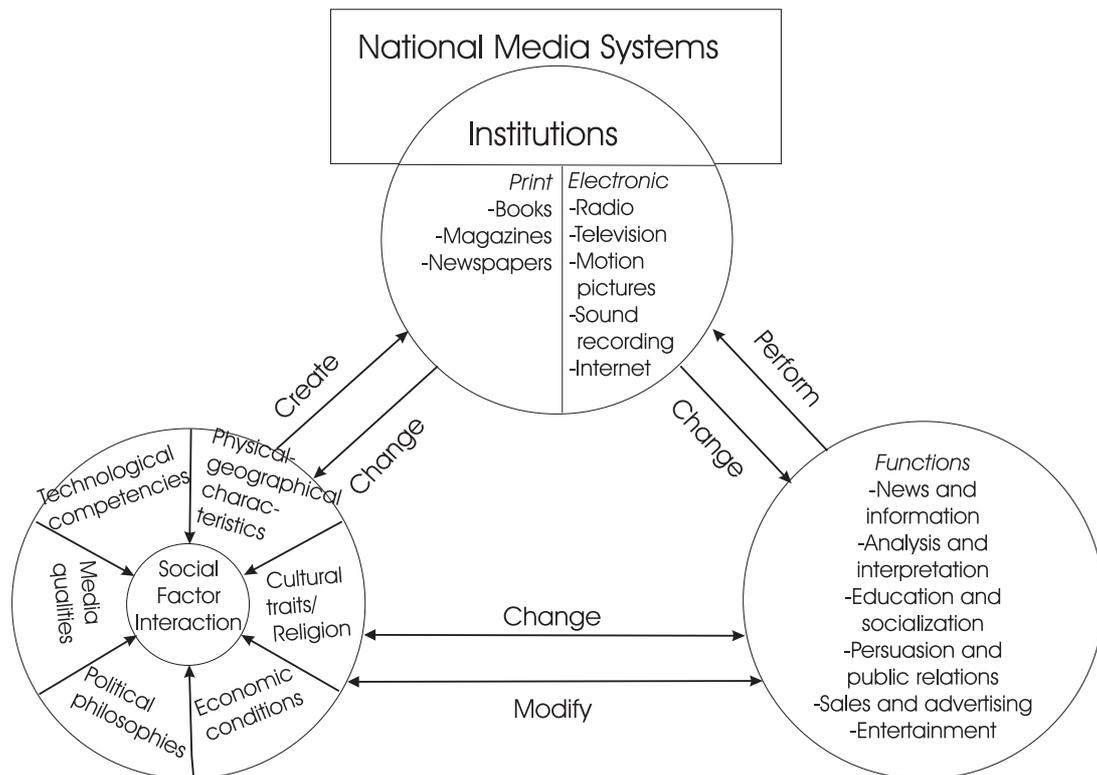
The goal of this chapter is not only to verify the existence of a religious media system, but also to recognize it as being both relevant and a legitimate field of communication. This chapter also helps to understand the various facets of a religious media system. This chapter concentrates mostly on the external environmental factors and its limiting and yet enabling power to affect mediated religious performance. At the end of this chapter there is a synthesis of possible strategic options, which religious traditions can choose in order to strengthen their media performance.<sup>111</sup>

### 3.4.1 The Media Systems Paradigm

The Media Systems Paradigm, as a general approach, was introduced by Hiebert, Ungurait and Bohn in 1974 (adopted here from Hiebert et al. 2000). It not only illustrates the factors which establish a national media system, but it shows how relationships, between these various elements, influence its structure (Hiebert et al 2000, 43). The original paradigm depicted three circles representing:

- 1) social factors or natural forces essential to the creation of
- 2) media institutions (print and electronic) that
- 3) perform certain functions for the society (news and information, analysis and interpretation, education and socialization, persuasion and public relations, sales and advertising, and entertainment). These three circles, however, interact and to some extent influence, modify, or change each other. (Hiebert et al. 2000, 43.)

## The Media System Paradigm



PICTURE 10 illustrates the Media System Paradigm by Hiebert, Ungurait and Bohm. The model is slightly modified to include the religious media system.

The respective social factors and natural forces that influence a national media system are (according to Hiebert et al. 2000, 43-45):

- 1) **Political Philosophy**: such as communism, capitalism, religious fundamentalism, liberalism, etc.
- 2) **Economic conditions**: countries can be divided into media and information rich, and poor. In media poor countries, media are probably more controlled by the establishment of the society.
- 3) **Technological competencies**: this is a very important factor. A country without sophisticated technology has more often a state-owned and controlled media system. In technology-wealthy nations, different groups can establish their own alternative media, such as the Internet.
- 4) **Physical and Geographical Characteristics**: such as location of landscape, distances, etc.

- 5) Cultural Traits: such as languages, traditions, social norms, values, and attitudes. These factors have particular influence on the media content.
- 6) Media Qualities: for example literacy is required for print media, etc.

Hiebert et al. (2000, 55-57) lists seven types of sub-systems of national media: commercial media, professional media, public media, government media, political media, organizational media and individualized media. The more developed the society is, the more strong and competitive the media system. No sub-system or operator can claim monopoly in publicity anymore, but instead they are forced to face competition, "in the communication marketplace to achieve the desired results". The functionalist definition of a comprehensive mass media system can thus be crystallized (Hiebert et al. 2000, 57, italics original):

*"A variety of sources of communication, for a variety of purposes, can use various media to produce a variety of content aimed at various target audiences to achieve a variety of results, as demonstrated by various kinds of feedback that in turn, affect the way the original source of communication continues to produce messages."*

However, Hiebert et al., fail to recognize one important and growing media system: the religious media system. When resources (both financial and personnel) make it possible to generate religious communications dynamics in such a way as to utilize the external abilities needed to communicate; the outcome will be the actual system of religious media communication. This means that several internal and external requirements must be fulfilled.<sup>112</sup>

In the context of this study, various national systems of religious media communication are presented to verify relevance and legitimacy of such a systemic approach to religious media. This means that various cases are not symmetrical, but unique characteristics are highlighted. For example the case of Russian system of religious media is presented with considerable length because of its theoretical importance as an empirical landscape of various theoretical dimensions and phenomena (such as tension between globalization and local culture and religion, tension between libertarian and authoritarian argument, and significance of media for religious dissemination and maintenance).

Within the national media system, the following dimensions are relevant to the emergence of religious media.

*Within the media system:*

- relationship between public service and commercial media
- relationships between electronic media and print media in the media culture (for example which one is predominant as the principal means of media consumption)
- willingness of the secular media to co-operate with religious institutions

*Relationship between religion and the state:*

- official or de-facto official religion of the state
- relationships between public service corporation, state and religion

- intervention of the state to religious activities/ communities
- legislation: freedom of speech, freedom of publishing, freedom of religion The freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion is defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>113</sup> The legislation concerning freedom of religion and public communication is usually based on constitution, see, for example, the Constitution of Finland, sections 11 and 12 <sup>114</sup>, and the Constitution of the USA (First Amendment on religion and freedom of speech).<sup>115</sup>

*Economy:*

- financial development of society, level of individual income
- degree of development of infrastructure (communications networks etc.)
- taxation, possible tax-reductions on donations to religious institutions, a means of financing of religion (for example through income tax)

When constructing external normative religious media theory (in social context: religious media communication), historical explanations seem to be common and probably the most important type of explanation. For example, the uniqueness of the American system of religious broadcasting is usually analyzed from a historical perspective by describing the historical development of religion in general and religious media in particular (for example Horsfield 1984; Moore 1994; Linderman 1996, 89-92; Casanova 1994). Peter Horsfield (1984, 12), as the most important example, applies systematic explanation in his analysis of religious television in the USA. For example, in the case of American religious media communication, the most important explanatory factors would be:

- predominance and vitality of Evangelical Protestant communities
- system of private media production
- well developed financial system, which makes it possible for individuals and families to invest in media technology
- American mentality of free marketplace of ideas and products
- liberal legislation on media
- one country consisting of same culture, language and religious affiliations provides an economics of scale for religious media production

In each country, a system of religious media communication is constructed of the same systematics using different factors, but these factors exist in the very unique configuration within each national case. This study is an effort to trace the basis and most important systematics of phenomenon. For example American religious television is a unique configuration of previously mentioned systematics. The unique characteristics of an individual national setting are analyzed through the most typical cases in any given setting.

The systemic nature of religious media communication can be seen, for example, in the context of broadcast media, particularly in the USA. The core of the system is its network structure of religious broadcasting, which has been seen as

the final state of maturation of a religious broadcast media (Ward 1994, 91-109). The structure of religious networks is based on highly diversified roles and a synergy of independent national ministries (for example Focus on the Family), religious networks (for example Salem Communications, Moody Broadcasting Network, TBN), local Christian radio and tv-stations, and the audience. The dynamics of the system of religious broadcasting enables unique bases for financing religious broadcasting. The basis of the system consists of the following factors:

- 1.) *Private and liberal media system:* ability to start, own and sell radio and tv-stations relatively freely, for example, as compared to the European or Russian models.
- 2.) *The significance of the Protestant Evangelical religion* and particularly the significant role of Inter-denominational religious ministries, which seek ways to get their message across to as wide an audience as possible. Religious networks and private stations provide a means for ministries to gain influence, popularity, and legitimation among the religious Evangelical audience. Through this functional system, they can appeal for supporters and donations to enable their ministries financially. Ministries in turn are important customers of both religious networks and private local stations. Clear differentiation of roles is crucial for the smooth functioning of the whole system. Examples of such roles are:
  - 1) particular ministry and its need to gain access to religious audience,
  - 2) religious broadcasting network which can effectively disseminate a ministry's national or global message,
  - 3) individual radio and tv-stations which actually have established relationship with the audience.

The financial foundation of the system is usually based on donations from the audience to individual ministries or derives sustenance through advertising. Similar systemic characters are seen for example in Italy (Catholic satellite radio Blusat) and in Finland (Radio Dei). In Russia, denominations and religious ministries also buy time from both the secular and the religious broadcast media, even though the purchases are smaller in comparison to the USA.

The countries in this study represent varying degrees of public religious activity and individual belief. The USA and Italy represent countries with high church attendance, a high degree of faith in the Church as the final source for answers to individual spiritual needs, a high number of people who define themselves as religious persons, a high degree of people who have received religious upbringing and are strong in their faith or belief in God, and they often regard God as an important part of their lives. Respectively, the other two countries, Finland and Russia, are low in all of these indicators. This distinction forms one framework for public presence and the relevance of religion as carried through mass media.<sup>116</sup> From the perspective of media systems, the principal distinction must be made between the American model and the European model of broadcasting. In Russia, the scenery is somewhat complex, but it has the characteristics

of both the strong national state channels and the free independent channels, but with mainly a regional system of broadcasting.

### 3.4.2 The U.S. Model and European Model in Comparison

Several social factors shape and determine the System of Religious Media Communication, and considering those we start from such a thing as taxation. Namely in the U.S. where there are tax-reductions for donations to non-profit or charity organizations. This explains much of the success of televangelists in fundraising, since they are organized as non-profit organizations, as is the majority of religious electronic media participants. Also, in the U.S. culture there is the heritage of the so-called third sector, which means that charity organizations have many such responsibilities, where for example in Europe these are performed by governments. This financial motivation has made fund raising a very common and understandable part of the culture, a resource that is especially vital among religious communities. On the contrary, in some European countries a particular church (perhaps the State Church) with very close ties to the official state may qualify for taxation rights to fund its organization. Another major difference between the U.S. and European systems of religious broadcasting is that European public service broadcasting corporations very often finance the broadcasts or religious programming of the mainline churches and denominations. Such symbiosis does not exist in the U.S. From its beginning, religious broadcasting in the U.S. has had to survive on its own in terms of funding. With close to 70 years of fund raising experience, religious organizations have learned to fund themselves effectively. In this manner, the U.S. system of religious broadcasting is quite analogous to the U.S. film and tv-industry, which mainly, for historical reasons, has had superiority in promoting their products commercially as compared to their European counterparts.<sup>117</sup>

In the American system, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations favour religious broadcasters by allowing them to use airtime for fundraising without strict regulations. Also, many other restrictions such as balancing controversial issues do not apply to religious channels or networks. Paid-time programs can also be counted as "public service" programming for religious stations. All together these decisions have favoured independent Evangelical broadcasters over mainline producers. (Bruce 1990, 53.)

The American phenomenon of televangelism has not been possible in Europe due to the unique configuration and systematics involved in the American system of religious communication. In Europe, the predominant systems of both electronic media and religion are based on monolithic single-authority systems of public service broadcasting and the hegemonic state church and their alliance. For example, in Britain it was not possible to sell airtime or launch religious radio and television stations until recently. And the British have not been allowed to use airtime for fundraising or to collect mailing addresses, both of which form the economic basis of televangelism.<sup>118</sup>

Religion in broadcasting in Europe has always been defined from the perspective of "something for the public good, rather than for the benefit of particular groups" as stated by the BBC (Shegog 1990, 336-337). In Europe, both the quan-

tity of imported religious programs and the number of religious programs presented (both imported and domestic) have equaled more than around 1-2 per cent of the total supply of broadcasting (see for example Shegog 1990, 329-335). And, those 1-2 per cent have almost totally belonged to the category of “public service religion”. This system has clearly favoured the established mainline churches compared to Evangelicalism (Shegog 1990, 336).

One difference between the American and European mediascape of religious broadcasting is such that in Europe (for example in Scandinavia) the volumes of religious broadcasting are split. The established hegemonic mainline churches produce about half of the programming and the other half is produced more or less by Evangelical denominations and groups (according to Scandinavian figures, Linderman 1993, 39-41; Lehtikoinen 1997; 1998). The European tradition of regulation for religious programs has favoured mainline churches and caused serious problems for America’s Evangelical broadcast ministries when they have tried to penetrate the European marketplace of religion.<sup>119</sup>

“For a long time we have had an international version of our flagship program 700 Club, which they design so that it would be less news and politics from America and more stories and information. That program we could not get into Europe, and just recently we have, but we had to completely re-design it for Europe, because there are so many specific guidelines which you can or cannot say, how to present things.”

Because of the globalization process, the European model of a predominantly public service broadcasting system is converging towards the U.S.-model which embraces both private and competitive operators. This convergence is strongly evident in the case of religious broadcasting as well (Linderman 1993, 1-2; 1996, 79-82). Also, in Europe independent and non-established religious groups have more easily accessed the world of broadcasting via various alternative technologies, for example the Internet, digital satellite-tv and commercial media in general.

American religious broadcasters continue to play an important role in Europe, and other parts of the world as well. Through satellite technology, their channels and formats are seen all around and are strongly influencing religious media culture in other settings. For American religious broadcasters, the effort to broadcast internationally is an expression of the motivation to evangelize the whole world. It is also easier to ask for donations in the USA, because one can legitimize one’s efforts in terms of evangelism and missions (Linderman 1993, 48). The major trends in European religious broadcasting are the same as in USA: commercialization of the production process and the mainline churches loss of preferential status (Linderman 1993, 57-58). International operations are very common among the major players of the religious broadcast media in the USA. American media ministries are networking with local communities instead of acting directly themselves.<sup>120</sup> American Evangelical broadcasters are carrying out many operations outside the USA, particularly in Eastern Europe and in Russia (Elvy 1990, 62-64, 67). In conclusion, one can summarize that the success of religious television and imported American programming in Europe depends largely on four factors (Shegog 1990, 228):

- 1) Availability of an extensive cable or satellite distribution system to Europe, and the ability to gain financial support.

- 2) The strength of national government policies to protect the cultural sovereignty of each country.
- 3) How successfully European religious bodies can compete against American televangelists, namely some European religious bodies have considerable financial resources, as for example the Lutherans.
- 4) Probably the most significant is the appeal of American religious television.

### **3.4.3 USA - the Wonderland of Religious Media**

In the USA, there is no established state-affiliated religion, but several denominations which compete more or less freely in the marketplace of religion. The majority of the population belongs to the Protestant denomination (62 million, 23 per cent), but the numbers of Catholics have been increasing lately giving them a considerable share of the population (56 million, 21 per cent). Various types of Evangelical Protestants join together totalling 50 million followers and form about 25 per cent of the population. The fundamentalist denominations also have a large number of followers. The largest Protestant denominations are Baptists, Methodists, and different types of Pentecostals and Charismatics. And there are also significant numbers of Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox communities in the USA. (Barrett et al. 2001, 772-783.)

The vitality of American religiosity and institutional Christianity is striking for a European visitor. The story of religion in the USA from the 18th Century is rather a story of growth rather than one of decline. Religious activity is much higher in the USA, than in any other Western country. Forty per cent attend a place of worship on a typical weekend. Nine out of ten express a belief in God, while eight in ten believe in the New Testament miracles, and expect to meet their maker on the Day of Judgment. Americans are also far more censorious of "sin" than Europeans. Popular evangelist Billy Graham has been voted as "the most admired man in America", and has been a friend of almost every American president since Eisenhower (along with Pope John Paul II and Rev. Jesse Jackson). In a Gallup poll in 1980, 19 per cent of the national sample claimed to be "born again" Christians, and in the South the average figure was 33 per cent. (Perkin 2000, 79-82.) Religion-related topics remain at the top of the country's political agenda, for example, the anti-abortion and the anti-evolution debates.

#### **3.4.3.1 U.S. Dominance of Evangelical Media Industry**

The American religious media scene was very much dominated at first by fundamentalists, and later by Evangelicals after the transition from fundamentalism took place around the 1940's. The second great movement, whose era ceased by 1989, was the so-called New Christian Right and Moral Majority (Noll 1994, 170-171). The current president, George W. Bush, has close ties with conservative Christianity, but Christianity, as a political movement on its own, has lost its energy to the failure of Pat Robertson in his strive for presidency (Perkin 2000, 84).<sup>121</sup> Even so, the Evangelical electronic media shows a still increasing vitality, an indication of which is the record number of religious radio and tv-stations on-air in 1999, when there were a total of 1731 radio and tv-stations carrying Chris-

tian programs.<sup>122</sup> The future digitalization of radio and television poses a threat to the industry of religious broadcasting, since all operators cannot afford the costs of digitalization.<sup>123</sup>

In the history of religious broadcasting within the USA, the mainline churches were in fact those who were on air first (for example Moore 1994, 231-232). But very soon the independent Evangelical ministers and denominations took over, because they

“were principled market men who asked for no subsidies from the government or from media. They sold religion the old-fashioned way, except that they took full advance of technology” (Moore 1994, 236).

The weapons of liberal Protestants were subsidies from the government and prohibition. And when “liberal Protestant moralists gave up battling, they ceased to be creative innovators in the marketplace of culture” (Moore 1994, 236).

Mainline Protestants made a strategic mistake when they counted on the public service “sustaining time slot” and refused to pay for airtime. Mainline Protestants were also opposed to the idea of Evangelical groups receiving sustaining airtime, or even paying for airtime in general. This appeared to be the starting point of the decline of mainline Protestant broadcasting. Because Evangelicals could not get free sustaining time, they started to pay for airtime. Soon, secular broadcasters realized that it is more profitable to sell airtime than to give sustaining time. In 1960, the Federal Communications Commission ruled that radio and tv-stations did not have to “give” time to religious groups in order to meet their public service obligations (Moore 1994, 245). Through this mechanism, the mainliners had virtually shot themselves in the foot, because mainliners had all the sustaining time and Evangelicals were already running their ministries on the basis of paid time. And the mainliner’s attempts to ban Evangelicals from the networks caused strong counter-reactions from the Evangelical side, for example, the launching in 1942 of the Evangelical’s own broadcast organization, the National Religious Broadcasters (Moore 1994, 246-247; Gerbner and Hoover in Horsfield 1984, ix-x; Hoover 1984, 21-23).

The religious airwaves are now dominated by the evangelicals who, from the very beginning, saw broadcast technology as God’s gift making it possible to fulfil the Great Commission. Yet, from the beginning of broadcasting, they had to fight for their position against both the secular media and liberal Protestant broadcasters. Only gradually did the balance of power shift to the evangelicals. One reason for the vitality and even growth of evangelical broadcasting has been the relatively recently established academic broadcasting programs of evangelical universities. In these proselytizing traditions, the students launch new Christian radio and tv-stations. An essential pre-requisite for growth is the push for Evangelical broadcasters to gain more sponsorship and advertising revenue. At the moment, the significance of free sustaining time has diminished to only five per cent of all religious broadcast time, since most of the religious radio broadcasts are sent through non-profit religious stations. (Hadden 1991, 225-230.)

This unique system of electronic church is based on the characteristics of American religiosity and the media system: it has the characteristics of both, but is not reducible to either of them. The social origins of American televangelism

are a unique blend of social structures, social relationships, messages of urban revivalism, and the television industry. Also, the non-profit status of religious broadcasters benefits them in terms of operational costs, because donations to them are tax-deductible. Neither are they restricted by any limitations on using airtime for fundraising, nor by other limitations which restrict (for example non-partisan handling of controversial issues) commercial broadcasters as set forth by the National Association of Broadcasters. (Frankl 1987, 130, 143-144.)

Within the landscape of the American religious communication system, there has been a constant tension between national authorities and Evangelical broadcasters. Every now and then, the government has attempted to impose restrictions on religious broadcasting (see for example the attempt to regulate Christian radio stations into giving at least half of their broadcast time to "general educational" programming).<sup>124</sup> Another area of tension has not been between religious broadcasters and the society in general, but has come from among the Christian communities themselves. From the perspective of the Evangelical broadcasters, mainline churches have made constant attempts to monopolize religious broadcasting by putting it under the umbrella of the National Council of Churches. It was feared such a move would mean an end to independent media ministries. The evangelical National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) have worked to promote an Evangelical perspective, often in opposition to the view of mainline churches (see for example Ward 1994, 16, 60, 88; Stoll 21.11.2000).

The NRB has now some 1300 organizations and hundreds of individual members. Their mission is to

- 1) keep the airwaves open to the Gospel,
- 2) to provide education to improve the quality of religious broadcasting,
- 3) and to provide opportunities to network with others in the field.

The most important single ministry of the NRB is the annual convention, in which 5000 people gather together. For religious broadcasters, the NRB also provides a common base of ethics to increase accountability within the industry.<sup>125</sup>

The American system of religious networks is a unique structural characteristic of the U.S. system of religious broadcasting. The national ministries, with their need to gain access to a wide national audience, are a very important source of income (in addition to donations or local advertisements and programs) for local radio and tv-stations. Another resource is the supply of Evangelical newspapers and magazines, which is based again on independent ministries, and forms the core of the Evangelical press supply. There are large circulations for supporters of particular ministries.<sup>126</sup> In the USA, there is also considerable income derived from the marketing of religious books and other items, mainly Evangelical, which has been a considerably significant business (see for example Campbell et al. 2000, 322-323; Moore 1994, 252-255).

Religious radio is the most predominant branch of mediated religion in the USA right now. In 1998, of all radio formats, religious formats altogether (Religious, Gospel, and Christian formats) form the third most popular format listed by the number of stations (Campbell et al 2000, 123). The significance of religious radio has thus increased compared to 1987. This might be an indication of considerable change in the religious media culture of the USA: from tv to radio. One

factor in this renaissance of religious radio is the vitality and convergence of religious music with its mainstream musical style (Campbell et al. 2000, 85). This kind of convergence between “sacred and the secular” has generated a huge potential audience for respective radio formats including Christian heavy metal.

In the American system of radio, the difference between a commercial or a non-commercial radio license (Campbell et al. 2000, 126- 128) is a significant factor in shaping religious radio. There are 40 Catholic radio stations in the USA. Salem Communications is a major commercial network in Christian radio. Salem Communications owns 85 radio stations and has some 1600 affiliates.<sup>127</sup> The company is also involved in other Christian media, for example, Internet portals. Salem Communications can be found in the Nasdaq stock exchange. The non-profit equivalent to Salem Communications in radio is the Moody Broadcasting Network, which owns 35 stations and has some 360 affiliated stations throughout USA.<sup>128</sup>

In television, the major networks are the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and the Catholic Eternal World Television Network (EWTN). Other syndicated producers are Cornerstone Television, InTouch Ministries, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association with its own film-production center. There has been considerable growth in Evangelical media, in all its spheres, since the Evangelical community itself began to expand. There has also been a process of re-structuring going on within the American religious television industry, and, for example, the nature of the CBN has been transformed from a network to a mere program producer around their flagship program the 700 Club. Now, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) has in a sense taken the place previously held by CBN.<sup>129</sup>

The American system of religious media is a highly developed niche-market, in which each media type and particular brand and format has its own well-defined “ecological locker” and market share. A new current is the rise of the “Evangelical Blockbuster”, religious films made in contemporary style. These are often big budget films with apocalyptic evangelizing messages.<sup>130</sup> This innovative style of marketing utilizes a considerable amount of grass roots enthusiasm from Evangelical communities, and it is applied as a marketing strategy.

Perhaps one of the strongest attributes of the American system of religious media is its professional character as an industry. For example, the network structure in both radio and tv, as well as program syndication, have enabled them to produce a very effective system of religious communication in terms of cost effectiveness, and coverage.<sup>131</sup> This kind of network and/or syndication structure is also seen globally in other developed religious media systems, for example in Italy (Blusat)<sup>132</sup> and in Finland (Radio Dei), even though on a much smaller scale.

### 3.4.3.2 The Eastern Orthodox Media System in the USA

An important case study, the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), is a minority community in the USA. It utilizes the Internet effectively as a strategic communications media. The case is presented to give some balance to the American landscape of mediated religion. Evangelical broadcasting is not the only component of the American system of religious media.

The USA has several distinct Orthodox churches according to ethnic boundaries. There has been an attempt to form the national Orthodox Church of America, which covers several churches, but some, like the Greek Orthodox Church, are not under the jurisdiction of the OCA. Particularly, the OCA is gaining significant growth (growth of 5,6 per cents in 1999), for example, due to a special church planting program in which during the past 30 years 175 new parishes have been established.<sup>133</sup>

In the USA, Orthodox media communication consists of radio programs such as the OCA's "Hour of Orthodoxy", the Antiochian ACORN network, the Greek participation in the VISN cable television network, and the partnership of OCA with the Odyssey Network. The Orthodox Christian Network also has a national radio program called "Come Receive the Light". This program is still extending its audience to various cities including Boston as one of the most recent examples.<sup>134</sup> The Orthodox tradition is also making itself visible by utilizing spot programs randomly, such as a series on the history of the Orthodox tradition carried on the Discovery channel.<sup>135</sup>

The various Orthodox Churches of America have few radio programs in total. Usually they are produced locally and consist of Orthodox liturgy. The broadcast times may be marginal, such as 6 o'clock in the morning. The Orthodox format consists of liturgical music, sermons, discussion, and Orthodox church music. Sometimes Orthodox programs are produced in ethnic languages such as Greek, which means that these programs do not attract a non-Orthodox audience.<sup>136</sup> There is also web-casting from Orthodox communities, and the main content (in addition to information) is either divine liturgy or Orthodox church music.<sup>137</sup>

The OCA's strategic emphasis is on Web-communication. For reasons mentioned earlier, the OCA has found religious broadcasting to be neither cost-effective, nor a suitable tool for Orthodox communication. Instead, the OCA chooses to emphasize Internet-communication, which is perceived as an effective way of providing information to those seeking a church, or for those seeking to establish new relationships. The Communications director of the OCA, John Matusiah, clarifies the strategic advantages of Web-communication:<sup>138</sup>

"We try to answer email-requests within 24hours. We get 200-300 emails per week. There are people who are looking for information about the Orthodox church. We put effort to web- sites. The web is more effective and not so expensive than broadcasting... OCA is hosting parish web-sites free of charge. Web-sites of parishes are informational: it provides information and directions about the parish. It is one of the primary media. 20 families have joined our parishes from other locations, because our web pages have appeared when they do search about things in their new neighbourhood. Also non-Orthodox people have joined us. When a person makes a search with the name of the town, the search engine lists the Orthodox church as search result. As a result, non-churched have joined (the church). We have very positive experience about the web."

### 3.4.4 Italy - Dominance of Catholic Communication

There are about 57 million inhabitants of Italy. Roman Catholicism is the de facto state religion and the sole source of civil religion with 283 dioceses, 30,000 parishes, and a 97 per cent membership rate. The predominant characteristic of Ital-

ian media culture is low circulation and readership of newspapers. (Barrett et al 2001, 396-402.)

Until 1970, broadcasting in Italy was a state monopoly with three channels of the RAI. In 1976, private broadcasting was allowed, and this led to a huge expansion of stations (1,500 by 1982). The speciality of the Italian broadcasting system is that one man, Silvio Berlusconi, being also prime minister of Italy, reaches an audience of 44.5% (by 1993) with his private national tv-channels. State channel RAI respectively has the other half, 46%, of the audience. In Italy, there is thus a unique duopoly (at least indirectly) of broadcasting (Herman et al. 1997, 170-171). The predominance of television is typical for the Italian media system, but television is usually regarded as having poor quality. Due to the heavy amount of traffic and the low quality of television, radio is a very important medium, and radio hosts are very popular and influential among the prevailing audience.

#### 3.4.4.1 Catholic Media System in Italy

In the Italian system of religious media, the Catholic media is very strong. The *Avvenire*, with a circulation of about 100,000, is among the top newspapers in Italy. The paper is owned and operated by the Catholic bishop's conference of Italy. In the field of magazines, the *Famiglia Cristiana* (owned by StPaul's religious order) is the largest of all magazines with a circulation of 700,000 per week. In Italy, there are about 250 Catholic local or regional radio stations, and 50 Catholic tv-stations. The diocesan press is also strong with virtually all dioceses owning newspapers, which are sold or distributed in local parishes with circulations of 20,000 copies on the average. There are also local Catholic newspapers with circulations of 15,000-20,000 copies.<sup>139</sup>

Catholic radio stations are of two types, approximately 50% - 50% by number of the stations. One type are more ecclesial devotional radio stations,

"which broadcast the mass, prayers, hymns and contents which refer to real life of the dioceses and the church, and not much more".<sup>140</sup>

The other type are more commercial enterprises, but with a strong Catholic inspiration at all levels. These commercial stations are more significant in terms of the audience. Commercial radio stations, belonging to the "Blusat 2000 -syndication," are reaching about 2,5 million listeners per day, which makes them all together the 8th largest in Italy. The conservative and devotional radio, *Radio Maria*<sup>141</sup>, with its sharp clear devotional format, has 1,7 million listeners per day, and they are among the top 20 radio stations of the 3,000-4,000 radio stations in Italy.<sup>142</sup>

Historically, the Roman Catholic church has had a very close relationship with the political powers that be in Italy. The Christian Democratic Party enjoyed political power for most of the entire post-war era. But, by the end of the 1990's, the party was destroyed because of charges of corruption and other misbehavior. This break down and ensuing split of the Christian Democratic Party caused the Roman Catholic church to lose its fortress position in the political elite of the country. The church saw its social significance diminish drastically. This crisis had its consequences for the religious media in a sense that by the end

of the 1990's the Catholic church decided to compensate for its loss of social/political influence by starting new media activities, thus the creation of Radio Blusat and others. Catholic satellite-tv, SAT2000, was the most important addition. The communications director of the Catholic bishop's conference in Italy, don Claudio Giuliadori, describes the reasons for starting a satellite tv-channel:<sup>143</sup>

"There were two reasons for launching tv-channel. First, In Italy until 5-6 years ago, presence of in politics presence of Christian Democratic Party was very strong. This gave them a lot of attention, they managed to get some attention by the media. This party was government party for 40 years in Italy. Now it break down, and it is divided to different spheres of culture, politics etc. so, now we cannot get that much attention any more. And when Catholic church was in the news, it was treated in political way not in a way that the church wanted. It is better to have our own channel, not as an alternative but for interaction. Because now, when they give news in national news, they cannot say something completely different than in SAT2000 says. SAT2000 does not have wide audience, but it has the right audience, it has key persons as an audience, they watch SAT2000, and they cannot give totally different view than SAT2000, because there is a picture what really happened. So that is a good help as a national television."

Another significant Catholic tv-station, in addition to SAT2000, is the more Pope-oriented Telepace, which broadcasts, for example the masses of the Pope in St Peter's Church. Public service religious broadcasting on the national tv-channel RAI One and Two is important for the Catholic church:<sup>144</sup>

According to Giuliadori,

"RAI is very important, because they let us go with the channel 1 with bigger audience, and they do mass on Sunday morning and after the mass they have 45 minutes program where they explain all the activities of the church. And the program has the audience about 2 million people, so it is very important."

As noted earlier, the Roman Catholic church has a very large and effective media system. But the goal for that system is not to create virtual religiosity as a substitute for actual church attendance, rather the goal is to activate those non-active members of the Catholic church so they will begin to attend the church meetings. Participation within the actual community is the ideal, which cannot be replaced by a mediated religious experience.<sup>145</sup>

Giuliadori said,

"In Italy we are not aimed to create virtual community. In Italy there is a visible (and physical) community: the church and the sacrament, it is something that is physical."

#### 3.4.4.2 Protestant Media Communication in Italy

Protestant Christianity is very marginal in Italy with only 400,000 members distributed throughout several denominations and movements. Of older mainline denominations, the largest is the Waldensians with 30,000 members and 300 parishes. Of all Protestant communities, the Pentecostals and Charismatics gather the largest number of followers - about 300.000 (Barrett et al. 2001, 397-403.)

Mainline Protestants (or rather known in Italy as historical Protestant denominations) consist of the following denominations in Italy: the Waldensians (with 300 parishes), the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Methodists, and some free

independent churches, which all together account for some 50-60,000 members.<sup>146</sup> The Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) also has some members from the newer traditions such as the Salvation Army, the Baptist Union, and the Union of Free Pentecostal Churches among others.<sup>147</sup>

Historical Protestants have had their own religious radio program on RAI since 1951 with regular programs since 1954, but these were aired very early at 7:35 on Sunday Mornings. Tv-broadcasts started in 1973. Nowadays they have both radio and tv- programs on RAI channels, with the tv-broadcasts coming late Sunday evenings (Maiocchi 1991, 101- 103). The television program is called "Protestantesimo" and the radio program is "Culto Radio". Both the radio and television broadcasts of the Protestant Federation typically reach an audience of between 800,000 - 1,5 million listeners/viewers.<sup>148</sup> The FCEI also carries a news agency called "Evangelical News". This agency spreads information from the Protestant churches and the ecumenical movement to the press, radio, and the Tv-agencies.<sup>149</sup> Particularly in the news bulletins, the FCEI sometimes voices harsh criticism, for example, on the subject of the too close relationship between the state of Italy and the Catholic Church.<sup>150</sup> The communications strategy of historical Protestants in Italy is to promote religious pluralism, since in the largely Catholic-dominated country, the mainstream public does not easily recognize the existence of other religious traditions. For this reason, historical Protestants are ready to ally with other religions, particularly with Islam, as this will also give a boost to their demand for pluralism.

The particular programming goals of Protestant television are

- 1) pluralism of Christianity rather than the monolithic voice of the Catholic church,
- 2) social and political awareness,
- 3) ecumenism,
- 4) global responsibility,
- 5) spirituality.

The programs are also very much involved in social and humanitarian aid, and particularly with helping the poor. The programs are not evangelistic per se, but information in the spirit of public tv.<sup>151</sup>

The broadcast opportunities offered on RAI channels are of great benefit to an otherwise tiny mainline Protestant community, since through RAI channels they have access to mainstream publicity, which would otherwise be impossible. The FCEI is not satisfied with the mainstream journalists treatment of Protestant churches, since the religion reporters, "Vaticanists" are "ignorant and arrogant" towards minority communities, according to FCEI communicator Paolo Naso.<sup>152</sup> For this reason it is clear that access to RAI religious programs and to the wider audience is the single most important publicity operation available for the Protestant minority, since it reaches a large audience through a respected medium. It seems that historically Protestants have been able to gain strategic success in relation to their size. For example, 300,000-400,000 people address part of their taxes to the Waldensian church, which has only 30,000 members. Due to effective communications, many more people are seeing the Waldensian community as a historical and legitimate part of Italian society, and these people are willing to support this community financially.

Evangelical Protestants are only 1-2% of the entire population of the country. The greatest body of Evangelicals are the Pentecostals (with about 150,000 members) who have formed an organization called "Assemblee di Dio in Italia" (A.D.I.).<sup>153</sup> There are another 150,000 Pentecostals who do not belong to ADI. And there are 20-30,000 members who belong to Charismatic churches. In addition, there are smaller churches like the Brethren, the Baptists, the Free Churches and other smaller denominations.

The Evangelical Protestants are divided amongst themselves and as a result they cannot combine resources. For example, working together through media, it is possible they could have a much greater impact on society. Protestant Evangelicals and Catholics do not usually dialogue, neither do they have cooperation. This leaves the Evangelical Protestants to form their own sub-cultures apart from mainstream society and Italian culture. The growth of Evangelical Protestantism has been very significant in Italy during the last 50 years, and many other denominations now also have a presence in Italy.<sup>154</sup>

When local broadcast licenses were released in the 1980's around 150 Protestant Evangelical radio stations were launched, but several were forced to close by 1990 "due to lack of funds, personnel, and programming". There are about 60-80 Evangelical Protestant radio stations left, and several of them are struggling to survive.<sup>155</sup> There are several radio stations, particularly in Sicily, where there are many Pentecostal churches.<sup>156</sup> However, the impact of the Evangelical media on mainstream society is marginal.<sup>157</sup> In the web, there are Evangelical Web-sites to generate the feeling of community and networking.<sup>158</sup> The Internet is also utilized among Italian Evangelicals for evangelizing Italians.<sup>159</sup>

American Protestant Evangelical influence is significant in Italian religious life as well as in the Christian media. Particularly in recent decades, a significant number of American missionaries have planted churches and other ministries in Italy. Evangelicals have utilized media to a considerable degree in mission and for evangelism in Italy. This has been accomplished through the use of tracts and advertizing campaigns, as well as the distribution of evangelistic magazines and radio broadcasting.<sup>160</sup> The American presence is still significant through religious tv, but particularly through the Internet material provided by American Evangelical ministries in the Italian language for Italians.<sup>161</sup>

American Evangelical tv-channels are available on the cable-tv-networks in the larger cities, for example, the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) is seen in 36 cities (Barrett et al 2001, 401). TBN seems to be well known among Evangelical Christians. Popular tv-shows also make a parody of the style of televangelists, which means televangelists are also somewhat familiar to the mainstream culture.

### **3.4.5 Finland - Coping with High Membership but Low Attendance**

Finland (population 5,2 million people) also has a history of state religion: 85 per cent of the population belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The Lutheran church has taxation rights on its members, which means that it is an exceptionally well-resourced church with various societal services as well.

The Finnish speciality in religious communication is that the Evangelical Lutheran Church has a special position in regard to other religious communities. *First*, there is an exceptionally high membership rate among the population. *Second*, the Evangelical Lutheran Church enjoys privilege (in addition to Orthodox Church) of taxation rights on its members. And *third*, local congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church are ruled according to democratic principles. In each congregation there is democratically elected "Parish Council" that has the highest authority in parish administration. These tax-fundings and democratic administrations means that the majority of the population pays church-tax and thus has the right to know how this money is used. This "Democratic Tax-Payer argument" is one of the main determinators of parish communications of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The Finnish dilemma of religion is high nominal membership, but very low regular church attendance. Looking at an international comparison - about four per cent of the population attend services regularly (Barrett et al. 2001, 277-278). Instead, public service religious radio and tv-broadcasts and worship services are rather popular. This means that a large portion of participation in worship services in Finland is mediated attendance through radio and television church services, particularly among the older generations (for example Lehtikoinen 1997; Nieminen 1999; Sumiala-Seppänen 2001). The most important medium within the Finnish system of religious media communication has typically been religious weeklies and book publishing. Also, traditionally, the significance of public service devotional programming has been exceptionally high, particularly until the emergence of the local radio stations in 1985, which were also allowed to broadcast religious programming.

Civil religion in Finland is dominated by a Lutheran mentality and views on religion. Sometimes, Evangelical Christianity gains visibility in the press through conversion stories of Finnish celebrities. In the Finnish media, the total religious output is estimated to be only about 1-2 per cent of the entire content. For the most part it is news about current or upcoming events of local congregations or church hierarchies.

The distinctive feature of Finnish media culture is the exceptionally high rate of newspaper readership, which also has its links to the system of religious media. In addition to the significance of religious broadcasts, the Christian press is very vital in Finland (compared to size of the population and religious activity in general). The Finnish Lutheran congregational press is particularly influential. There are about 100 parish papers published monthly, at the very least, and these are distributed for free to every household in the geographical area of a particular congregation. These papers are a performance strategy to bridge the gap between high membership and low attendance. Congregational papers also fulfil the communications needs generated by the fact that the funding comes from a church-tax, which gives the public the right to know how the funds are being used.

In Finland, there is also a vital body of Christian book publishers and denominational weeklies. In recent years, there has been a considerable change in Finnish religious media culture, a gradual shifting from the high penetration of print media, towards that of an electronic media, or more specifically towards

independent Christian radio and the Internet. Christian book publishing and weeklies have suffered a considerable decline of circulation. Launched in 1997, Christian radio station Radio Dei has become a major inter-denominational media in Finland. It has also enlarged its area of listenership to almost every major city in Finland. In addition, virtually every Christian movement is putting more and more resources behind Internet communication, and Lutheran congregational Web-sites have reached rather high ratings on both content and quality.

The Orthodox church of Finland is another state-affiliated church with about 50,000 members. Orthodox Christianity has a very good reputation and high visibility in the mainstream media, particularly during Easter time. Press releases on the Orthodox church of Finland are provided by the Orthodox communication center.<sup>162</sup>

There are also a significant number of revival movements within respective institutions and media inside the Lutheran tradition. Among evangelical denominations (other than Lutheran), the largest groups are the Pentecostals (about 50,000 members), the Free Church of Finland (about 13,000 members), and the 7th day Adventists (about 8,000 members). The Catholic community is very small in Finland, and it has about 8,700 members consisting of one diocese and five parishes. The important voice of Catholicism to the Finnish mass audience happens via press releases produced by the Catholic communication center, which finds its way mainly to the pages of the Christian press.<sup>163</sup> Vatican radio also broadcasts in Finnish.

One special characteristic of Finnish religious media culture has been the absence of American Evangelical broadcasters. Finnish religious media culture has been very much formed by domestic input, basically that of Lutheranism. Also, foreign revival movements have usually acclimatized themselves to the local Finnish religious culture. American evangelical broadcasters have existed mostly as role models to demand an American style of freedom for religious broadcasting. The mini-radio drama format of the Lutheran Hour Ministries has been the most significant American religious program (even though localized by Finnish partner). More recently, some American religious radio programs have become available through Radio Dei.

By 1985, due to the introduction of independent local radio station licenses, Lutheran congregations, as well as evangelical communities, rapidly established their own program supply to local radio stations. In 1996, there were about 100 Christian radio programs on local Finnish commercial radio stations (Lehikoinen 1997). Half of the programs were produced by Lutheran congregations and half by the evangelical communities. Due to the rapid specialization of radio to particular tight formats and audience segments, the amount of Christian programs is probably smaller nowadays. The emergence of religious format radio, Radio Dei, has succeeded in attracting a considerable amount of production from communities willing to produce their own programs for a semi-national Christian audience. Religious television in Finland, outside of the public service programming, consists of only a few individual agents, basically operating on small cable networks with a low level of viewership. Nowadays, several evangelical satellite channels are also viewable in Finland (for example TBN Europe, and several Channels of God Network among others).

### 3.4.6 Russia - the Battlefield of Antagonistic Forces of Modernization

#### 3.4.6.1 The Russian Media System

The case of Russia is presented the most extensively, since it provides an important theoretical case of encounter of global trends of media culture and religion with a particular Russian and Orthodox mentality and values. Russia provides the most significant contemporary laboratory of tensions between libertarian vs. authoritarian, as well as universal vs. particular arguments. There has also previously been very little information on the Russian case in the West, and for that reason I also present a description at considerable length.

The contemporary Russian ambivalence between authoritarian nationalism, liberal democracy and a market economy is very much visible in the Russian media landscape, since all of these elements and tendencies are very much present and constantly in struggle with one another (Nordenstreng et al 2001). The Russian media system has gone through a very rapid change from Soviet authoritarian theory through liberalized freedom towards a state controlled media system (Zassoursky 2001, 73-91). The polarization of media scenery means a strict separation between the state-controlled media system (instrumental media model) and the commercial media, and particularly the significance of the Internet as a free medium (Zassoursky 2001, 87; Zassoursky, Y 2001, 182-183).<sup>164</sup>

Russians are mostly a "watching nation" instead of a "reading nation", since Russians trust television more than the print media, and the penetration of tv-sets is very high. Also, the television supply is usually free, in contrast to newspapers that citizens cannot necessarily afford. Newspapers and other print media also suffer because of the poor conditions, the lack of transportation, and the overall weakness of the infrastructure. Another unique characteristic is the significance of regional and local media production and consumption. (Vartanova 2001, 24-37, 45.) Russians watch television 3-3,5 hours a day. There are 12 national tv-channels and 800 regional and local tv-stations around Russia. The most popular tv-channels are state-controlled: ORT, NTV, RTR and TV-6. Cable-networks and satellite distribution is rather insignificant in Russia. (Vartanova 2001, 40-42, 50-51.)

Radio is a very popular medium today, unlike during the Soviet times. Music is more popular than information. The state-run national radio stations, Radio Rossii (audience share 40%) and Mayak (audience share 28%) are the most popular of nine national radio stations in total (Vartanova 2001, 52-55). Regional and local commercial radio stations and others with specialized formats, including religious stations like Radonezh, are also popular. Nowadays, 21% of the local advertising revenue goes to local radio stations (Vartanova 2001, 56). The Internet is also a very popular and a very rapidly growing medium in Russia, and it constitutes an important forum of freedom of speech and counter-culture, since the state control is very high on the other electronic media. Limited Internet-penetration is caused by the poor telecommunications infrastructure. The Internet is also an important platform for religious information. (Vartanova 2001, 57-63; Zassoursky 2001, 87; Zassoursky, Y 2001, 186.)

Religious freedom also means the freedom to propagate and receive religious information (Gunn 1999, 254). This means that the freedom to publicly present religious matters is related to the larger freedom of expression. In Russia, the 1997 law on religions restricted religious freedom to certain religions based on a particular hierarchy of religions (Gunn 1999, 252-254). The current media laws are a serious threat to freedom of speech, which also influences public religious communication. Mass media regulation has turned towards the government's efforts to generate a legal basis for state control (Richter 2001, 125). Complicating the issue is the fact that different regions of the Russian federation can have their own media regulations (in addition to state licensing policy), for example, the license fees for new radio and tv stations (Richter 2001, 133; 146-154).

While the "Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation" recognizes rights to "entertain and popularize religious and other beliefs and to act in accordance with them", it also includes notions about the possible threats to "information security" in the "spiritual sphere", and the negative effects of "the operation of religious associations preaching religious fundamentalism, as well as totalitarian religious cults". Accordingly, one of the basic methods

"of ensuring the information security of the Russian Federation in the spiritual sphere (is)... to combat negative influence of religious organizations and missionaries."<sup>165</sup>

It is not clear, which are those "totalitarian cults", or when and in which ways they might cause negative effects, or how the state might combat them and who would make the demarcation. This official doctrine does represent a potential threat to freedom of speech for (foreign) religious organizations and communities. The legislative basis for public religious communication was established through the Freedom of Religion (1990) and through the Law on Mass Media (1992) (Loukina et al 1996, 5). Further restrictions to operations of non-Russian religious communicators have been put forth through legislation which has mainly restricted Protestant broadcasting.<sup>166</sup>

### 3.4.6.2 Religion and the Media in Russia

With the collapse of the USSR, the forcefully maintained religious vacuum, which had created a huge demand for religion, began to wane as the Russian Orthodox Church and "foreign religious movements" responded to the new freedom. The case of Russian religious life has also shown interesting counter-evidence against general theories of secularization (Kääriäinen & Furman 2000a, 68). Many prophesied of a huge religious revival in Russian society, which partly became true and partly not. The religious activity of Russians today is low comparing it internationally, for example, in terms of church attendance (Kääriäinen & Furman 2000a, 28-75). In terms of religious identity, 75 % are said to be Orthodox, 4 % Muslims, 1 % Catholics, and 1 % Protestants, while 4 % said that they are not religious at all. There are over 8000 Russian Orthodox congregations, 100 Lutheran congregations with 170,000 members (of various types), and Roman Catholics with 186 congregations and 1.3 million followers. Various Evangelical bodies (7th day Adventists, Pentecostals and Charismatics) also have a significant presence in

Russia, even though they are small in numbers (about 1,4 million Protestants) compared to the population of 147 million. (Barrett et al. 2001, 623-629.)

Orthodoxy is overwhelmingly popular among Russians, and this has been the main achievement of the Russian Orthodox Church, while church attendance and other religious activities, as well as knowledge on religion, are still at a low level (Kääriäinen & Furman 2000a, 28-75; Heino 2000, 289-304). This means that the ROC, as well as other religions, must find ways to increase the religious knowledge of the masses. Mass media seems to be almost the only possible option for all parties involved in the marketplace of religion.

Media has had an important role in the re-establishment of religion in Russia. As a result, the media activities of the ROC has enabled it to establish itself again as a powerful and almost monopolistic component of public civil religion (Kääriäinen & Furman 2000a, 64, 67). In this regard, some conservative newspapers, as well as state-controlled tv-channels, have been crucial in providing this assistance and making religion popular (for example Agadjanian 2000, 251-253). The relationship between media and the ROC has often culminated into questions of "foreign religions", of which the liberal media has been even defending in the name of freedom, democracy and liberalism. The liberal press has visibly reported positively on, for example, the Adventist humanitarian aid campaigns in prisons and the launching of orphanages, etc. (Kulakov 1999, 162). The liberal media welcomes non-Orthodox religions, since the healthy competition of faith forces the ROC clergy to improve themselves. The Liberal media sharply criticizes the privileges of the ROC, and it defends minority religions that are under pressure from both the state and the ROC by saying,

"the only true totalitarian sect in this country is the Orthodox Church itself".  
(Agadjanian 2000, 259-265.)

In the Russian context, the concept "liberal media" or "liberal press" reflects the attitude of the portion of media which favours Western-style democracy and pluralism. The counter-pole is the "conservative media," which basically prefers the unique nationalistic Russian model in which the Russian Orthodox Church has to have certain privileges according to conservative thought.

Among the Russian elite, it is just the media elite who are the most interested in religious matters, but who give the least support, and who have the least trust in the ROC elite and vice versa (Kääriäinen & Furman 2000b, 117). The media favours freedom of speech, and particularly the liberal media does not support the strong efforts of the ROC to deprive other religions and thereby gain favoured position themselves (Kääriäinen 2000b, 117-118). The solution for the ROC does not lie in elimination of the competition, but in improving its own performance, an area in which it appears to have largely failed. The chasm between potential and reality is too wide, since the resources and experience are very limited when compared to the huge needy flock of Russian people (Walters 1999, 48-49).

Even though religions other than the ROC have few followers in Russia, people have a conception about other traditions as well. There cannot be any other source of information on a scale larger than that of mass media. These attitudes of the public reflect attitudes of the ROC to other religions, since among

Christian churches the Catholic church and the Lutherans (considered as so called historical churches in Russia) are seen the most positively, while the actively proselytizing religions such as the Pentecostals and Baptists are valued more negatively, because they form the biggest threat to the ROC (Kääriäinen & Furman 2000a, 56, 64; 2000b, 96). In public discourse, religions other than the ROC have often been labelled negatively as “sects”. (Agadjanian 2000, 259). Such conservative media, that support the Slavic Orthodox ideology, include the national tv-channels, as well as the newspapers *Moskovskaya Pravda*, *Vechernyaya Moskva* and the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Zassoursky 2001, 81). The *Moscowskij Komsomolskaja* is considered to be anti-Orthodox by ROC officials.<sup>167</sup>

It is no surprise that the huge presence of religion in the Russian media, particularly in the beginning of the 1990's (particularly that of ROC), does not correlate with individual religiosity, which is still on a low level even though it is increasing. Public religion thus has a different function than that of individual religiosity, and that is often the formation of civil religion, and in the case of Russia, re-establishing the traditional ideocratic tradition, “the rule of an official consensual idea”. As Agadjanian (2000, 251-278) puts it:

“Official ideology was viewed as the only way to guarantee the order both in minds and in society. The state seems to be unable to maintain the social order unless it is supported by an ideological order that is proclaimed as the state's official credo, - whether it be a pre-Petrine ‘Third Rome’, post-Petrine imperial, 19th century ‘autocracy-Orthodoxy- nationality’ or post-revolutionary communist idea.”

Prior to the beginning of the 1990's public religious communication was not allowed. A very limited amount of print publishing was possible in the ROC, but usually for official purposes and under the strict control of the communist system (Loukina et al 1996, 5). Before the 1990's, the major source of religious communication was underground grass roots activities. Additional input came from a supply of foreign operators, such as international media mission organizations. These groups were not only Protestants (such as HCJB, IBRA-radio, FEBC, etc.) and Catholics (Vatican Radio), but also consisted of Orthodox broadcasters and publishers of Christian literature to Russia.<sup>168</sup> During the Soviet era, international radio ministries were able to draw a significant number of “isolated radio believers”.<sup>169</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and established freedom, the unique characteristics of the Russian system of religious media made it possible for Protestant entrepreneurs to very quickly take a firm hold of religious broadcasting within Russia. According to a survey of religious programs on national radio channels (Lukina et al 1996), of about half of the 25 nationally broadcast Christian programs, a majority were either non-denominational or explicitly Protestant, while only six programs were explicitly Orthodox. Half of the programs were domestic and half were foreign and/ or joint-productions.<sup>170</sup> (Loukina et al 1996, 14-17.)

Looking at statistics from the religious affiliation in Russia, which shows that only about one per cent of the population of Russia belongs to any Protestant denomination, we can see that religious broadcasting represents the single most significant and visible means of establishing a public Evangelical Protestant presence in Russia. For evangelicals, broadcasting has played a strategic role

in “conquering Russia for Christ”, and it has probably played a significant role in the conversion of individuals. Almost without exception, Evangelical Broadcasters in Russia report huge amounts of audience feedback, contacts, counseling and conversions.<sup>171</sup>

In Russia, the tension between the traditional vs. contemporary, the popular forms and the contents of faith might be even higher than in the Western context, because of the predominance of traditional Orthodoxy. For radio stations, the balancing between tradition, modern style, and content is one of the most important challenges.<sup>172</sup> Evangelical para-church organizations in broadcasting may have a role in promoting unity between Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox, since they are open for all denominations.<sup>173</sup> In many radio stations, all these denominations broadcast together, and Catholics and Protestants are more willing to co-operate, since they both hold minority positions in Russia.

International, basically American Evangelical formats (such as Billy Graham sermons, Focus on the Family by James Dobson, 700 Club, CNB Christian news, and short-program format of the Lutheran Hour Ministries International have also found their way into Russia. In the Russian system of religious media, the various partnering roles are not yet formed, but they are rapidly under way towards that end. Such roles include that of financier, distributor, producer, partner, etc. These roles form the basis of the Western highly developed systems of religious electronic networks (see U.S. system of religious media, Chapter 3.4.3).

The legislation (the 1998 law) limiting the freedom of new religions in general and in the mass media in particular forced Protestant groups to draw back from the initial positions they held in national radio. This new law was strategically designed to favour Orthodox broadcasting. The Protestant programs were either transformed into cultural, ethical or social common interest programs, or they moved to regional channels.<sup>174</sup> Some Evangelical programs are still aired on the national channels, for example, the mini-programs of the Lutheran Hour Ministries Russia, which are broadcast on Radio Mayak.<sup>175</sup>

At Lomonosov State University there is an ecumenical institute training journalists in religion and religious media. The lecturers are mainly Orthodox, but Catholics are also involved. Students of the institution produce programs for the ecumenical radio station which has its studio in the same building.<sup>176</sup> The journalist training serves the interests of the ROC by providing it with competent journalists to cover the matters of the church (Kulakov 1999, 156; Loukina 3.10.2000). The poor quality of professionalism of journalists in religious matters is one of the biggest problems facing church-media relationships in Russia.<sup>177</sup>

### **3.4.6.3 Evangelical Media Communication in Russia**

One can metaphorically say that when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, the prayers of Western Evangelical Christians were answered dramatically. During the era of militant atheist communism, religion, as well as religious activities, evangelism and missions were illegal and dangerous. Even so, missions were carried out in the Soviet Union and to present-day Russia. Bibles and religious literature were smuggled into the country, and international radio stations broadcast religious programs to Russia despite the jamming of the airwaves. All these

activities served as a seed for Protestant Churches, which survived and even grew underground. When total freedom came in 1990, the Iron curtain was not there to hold back the Evangelical dynamics of evangelism and mission any more. What followed was an instant entering into the country to utilize all kinds of opportunities to evangelize Russians. Mass media, particularly religious broadcasting, played an important role from the very beginning in establishing Evangelical Protestantism on a large scale in Russia.<sup>178</sup>

The Protestants were keen to utilize the mass media for evangelism and missions. Para-church movements and media ministries purchased air time on major radio and tv-channels and introduced American televangelists to Russian society and homes. Western ministries had the financial resources and the experience, which the ROC was lacking (Berman 1999, 279; Ware 1997, 163). The instant and widespread visibility of American televangelism was probably one of the components that generated such an open hostility and negative reaction from the ROC. When Evangelicals were present on the tv, they were symbolically conquering the land and converting Russia to a new faith. Among the Evangelical media ministries, there were also moderates, who tried to be sensitive to the cultural values of the Russians (Kulakov 1999, 157).

Many para-church ministries were in Russia first, since they could react rapidly to new opportunities, and they provided, for example, supporting ministries through the air-waves and through Christian publishing and distribution (Elliott & Deyneka 1999, 200-201, 204-205). Protestant broadcasting was one of the most significant new ministries in post-Soviet regions (Elliott & Deyneka 1999, 205). Newly established Protestant broadcasters received huge numbers of letters and feedback from their religious radio and tv-broadcasts. Religious broadcasting also proved to be effective in Russia in terms of conversions. (For example Elliott & Deyneka 1999, 209; also Andreev 3.10.2000; Haukka 3.10.2000; Wiens 5.10.2000.)

To ensure the "openness of airwaves for the Gospel" Evangelical broadcasters have launched a Russian version of the National Religious Broadcasters which has proven in the USA to be an important, useful and effective organization. The main goals of the NRB are to educate and to protect freedom of speech issues within Evangelical communities, and historically it was founded because of the perceived threats from mainline churches and the state. The setting is actually very similar in contemporary Russia: uncertainties from the government and hostility from the ROC.

NRB Russia (founded in 1998, first meeting of Evangelical broadcasters was in 1997 in St. Petersburg) arranges annual conferences, and they gather several hundreds of religious broadcasters and programmers from around Russia, as well as from partnering organizations and denominations from the West. The NRB Russia 2000 conference from October 3-5th had 500 participants with close to 100 member institutions. NRB Russia has established a college (opened in 23.8.1999) for Christian broadcasting in partnership with Western Evangelical broadcasters and other organizations.<sup>179</sup> In NRB Russia conferences there are workshops on Christian broadcasting, as well as excellence awards in Christian broadcasting. The Christian Broadcasters of Russia arrange an annual conference in Moscow with a conference format equal to the annual conference of the Na-

tional Religious Broadcasters of the USA. The annual Christian Broadcasters of Russia -conference served as a mediator between Western global evangelicalism and eastern Russian context. Several plenarists as well as other participants were from international Evangelical media ministries, primarily American.<sup>180</sup> Evangelical media values and habits were assimilated into Russian Christian (media) culture, formats and operations.

The evangelicals appeared early on in the Russian broadcasting landscape, but were later forced to concentrate more on regional channels due to eventual development of Orthodox productions and also because of the newly revised media regulations.<sup>181</sup> Even so, the Evangelical broadcasters were able to launch their work in the regions successfully.<sup>182</sup> Evangelicals face the same problems as Orthodox communicators: lack of finances and lack of equipment. For this reason, the institutions who have either Western partners or who are receiving support from the West are in better position. For example, the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), which was one of the pioneers in Russia already during the Soviet era, has now chosen the strategy of launching local radio stations, and has decreased dramatically the broadcasts to Russia from abroad.<sup>183</sup> In the year 2000, FEBC had 12 of their own stations in the biggest cities, and were seeking to launch many more. A global media ministry, the Lutheran Hour Ministries, uses a media strategy in Russia consisting of three components:

- 1) airtime on the national radio channel Mayak for short programs with feedback opportunity,
- 2) tv-time on regional tv-channels to show evangelistic films, mainly produced in USA, and localized in Russia,
- 3) local video clubs of volunteers, who show evangelistic videos in hospitals, churches, etc., and invite people to join the Lutheran congregations. This has proved to be a very cost-effective combination.<sup>184</sup>

For the Evangelical broadcasters, the crucial challenge and strategy lies in their ability to establish co-operation with local Christian communities. Thus, a measurement of success might be how well they are able to channel interest in Evangelical broadcasts into conversions, membership and activity in local congregations, be they Evangelical or otherwise.<sup>185</sup> In Russia, the Evangelicals have a relative freedom to work in the media. In some post-Soviet countries the situation may be different; for example the Belarussia Orthodox church uses mainstream media as a tool of propaganda against Evangelical communities.<sup>186</sup>

The 1997 restrictions on foreign religious movements working in Russia seem to have had little impact on Evangelical broadcasting. On the contrary, it has generated new alliances and networking instead. Those organizations that have worked in Russia for less than 15 years are now forced to partner with organizations older than that.<sup>187</sup> Evangelical Broadcasting is very much connected to Western partners, even though their significance is diminishing. Russians are shifting to be more actors, and the role of Western agencies is moving to funding and product syndication. The Russians themselves are doing the national production, distribution and are also increasingly moving into fund-raising. The role of Western operators is increasingly more that of consultant and facility provider. In Evangelical media activities, the emphasis is on local co-operation and net-

working as well as getting licenses for local radio and tv broadcasting. The bureaucracy of obtaining licenses, as well as the high fees of the licenses themselves is a big problem and an obstacle that inhibits the growth of Evangelical radio stations.<sup>188</sup>

#### **3.4.6.4 Catholic Media Communication in Russia**

The Roman Catholic church in Russia is small, but well-established with 160 parishes, its own media, a seminary, various religious orders, charities, and etc. (Witte 1999, 15). For Catholics, the electronic media is a tool to re-establish their membership and presence in Russia. Nowadays, there are 500,000 Catholics in Russia, and according to future estimates, the whole potential of Russian Catholics is about 3.5 million if they are to reach the level of the forefathers (Filatov & Vorontsova 1999, 103). In this regard, it is very reasonable as to why Catholics are also present in Russian religious radio. And while it is true that within the ROC of all denominations the Catholics are tolerated the most, there is still a serious tension between the churches (Filatov & Vorontsova 1999, 93-107).

The most well established location for Catholics in Russia is St. Petersburg, where there are two parishes, a seminary, an Academy, a Catholic college, and a Catholic radio station, Radio Maria. Radio Maria seeks to enlarge its signal to cover other cities around Russia through satellite distribution.<sup>189</sup> Catholics have adapted well into the Russian religious media culture by giving airtime for Orthodox programs and by allowing about half of their programs to somehow exhibit Orthodox influence. In Russia, Radio Maria calls itself "a Christian Radio", when in Poland for example, it is more strictly called "the Catholic voice in your home".<sup>190</sup> And programs of the Historical Protestants, mainly those of the Lutheran church, are also broadcast.

Catholics are also present on the independent ecumenical Church-Social radio Channel at Lomonosov State University, which is an Orthodox affiliated radio station. There is one hour of Catholic broadcasting each day of the week. The goals of the program are to serve the needs of the Catholic minority, and then to build bridges between the Catholic and Orthodox cultures. It is also intended to provide correct information on Catholicism to the Orthodox audience.<sup>191</sup> The primary goal and strategy of Catholic media communications is to provide correct information and to build grass roots relationships with Orthodox individuals and communities.

#### **3.4.6.5 Russian Orthodox Mediated Performance**

##### **3.4.6.5.1 The Media System of the Russian Orthodox Church**

The emerging freedom and the establishment of a "free marketplace of religion," even though with support of the state emphasis on Orthodoxy, has brought on domestic competition. Because Orthodoxy is so much a popular part of Russian civil religion, virtually all publishers (also non-religious publishers) have titles on Orthodox religiosity. Also, several Orthodox publishers have been launched,

which has meant a serious competition to the official church, and to the official Publishing house of the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>193</sup> Official church communication often concentrates on the statements and visits, as well as other official works, of the Patriarch Alex II and other church authorities (Loukina et al 1996, 27; Polischuk 5.10.2000). In the beginning, religious broadcasting was difficult for the Orthodox church and communities, since there was no previous culture of religious electronic media in the country, because it was all banned during the Soviet era. Now, with the support of government channels and legislation, the Orthodox church has gained its “right market share” mostly on the national channels, and it is becoming a “good competitor with the Protestants” even though it is with the support of the government.<sup>192</sup>

There has been a recent development in the field of journalism and ROC. The recently-found “Association for Orthodox Journalists of Russia” was formed as a sub-division of the National Association of Journalists. Delays in launching were probably because of the problems in delineating who would represent the official and the unofficial voices of the Orthodox church. The first congress of the Orthodox Journalists of Russia was held in March 2000 in Moscow.<sup>194</sup> The association welcomes journalists working in both the Orthodox and secular media. The Orthodox Journalists of Russia actually created their own organization in the beginning of the year 2000. The club was announced to serve as a unifying tool to unite journalists who work for 600 publications belonging to the church and/or report on this confession in other media. “This is the first step towards creation of a unified mass media holding of the Russian Orthodox church”, according to the head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s publishing house.<sup>195</sup> The ROC also arranges a national annual conference for Orthodox communicators with special sections for Internet, tv-production, etc. They have also introduced an award of excellence in Christian film production.<sup>196</sup> The Orthodox church is facing huge challenges in communications due to the lack of resources when compared to their enormous needs and available opportunities. In this light, as a very cost-effective media, the ROC sees the Internet as being a most promising medium.<sup>197</sup>

The communications strategy of the ROC is to gain and ensure qualitative as well as quantitative visibility in mainstream media and publicity. For this reason the activities related to press information, journalists and newspapers, as well as national radio and tv-channels, are crucial. In several newspapers (and the amount is increasing) there are special sections devoted to (Orthodox) Christian matters, and such “Orthodox media persons” as, Metropolitan Kirill, gain visibility in those sections and are often interviewed to present the voice of the ROC. The biggest need and challenge for the ROC communications is to launch a newspaper owned and run by the ROC. It would be an independent media of oligarchs, the president, the administration, political parties and the state. The goal would be to present a

“Christian perspective to common life, politics, medical sphere, etc.... Newspaper for not only Orthodox but all Christians or those who are on their way to Christianity. It should not contain only religion but problems of common man.”<sup>198</sup>

The barriers restricting the launching of a newspaper are the lack of finances as well as the poor transportation infrastructure of the country, which would make

national distribution very difficult and expensive. Instead, the Internet is utilized for the most part to increase publicity for the ROC. For example, official documents of the church have now been published on the Internet, which has created a new level of openness in the church. The ROC does not have a radio station of their own, but several production centres around the country. In Russia, there are 150 dioceses of the ROC, and only eight of them have their own communications department.<sup>199</sup>

Orthodox television programs did not exist on a significant scale prior to 1998. The Orthodox radio and tv-agency was formed in 1995, but in 1998, it reached the current level of production. The agency produces six (more or less) frequent programs mainly for the national channels. The formats are (not necessarily all produced by the agency):<sup>200</sup>

- very popular live broadcasts of Orthodox celebrations such as Easter night or Christmas night worship services, at the first channel it reached a 20% audience share, about 30 million people watched it
- the most popular program, a talk-show by Metropolitan Kirill in ORT, airs every Saturday morning
- Canon: popular talk-show format for young people
- Orthodox: on tv-channel culture, on the Orthodox community of the world (not only of the ROC, but limited to the Orthodox church), weekly
- Orthodox Calendar, daily, on Moscow Channel
- I Believe: on the Moscow Channel, St. Petersburg and 14 provinces, weekly.
- New formats coming: a cooking program on traditional Orthodox cuisines and food culture prepared by an Orthodox monk, a geographical program on Orthodox holy places, and a program about family values.

The goal of these various programs is to educate people on the basis of Orthodox belief and tradition. They provide information about culture, holidays, and traditions, but theology is the most important content. These programs seek to communicate with the simple and understandable language of ordinary people. In Russia, there are no Christian tv- channels, and that is why all churches cooperate with secular channels. In the regions, there are several producers other than the Orthodox radio and tv-agency, which has a virtual monopoly in national Orthodox tv-production.

The goal of the Orthodox media, and tv in particular, is to be understood as an invitation to the Church, not as evangelism, since it is not possible through mass media. Producer of Orthodox tv-broadcast, Dmitry Mendeleev puts it,

“We must wake up people’s interest to the Church, and the Lord will decide himself, who will become Christian.”<sup>201</sup>

The Orthodox radio and tv-agency gets its funding mainly from selling programs. The revenues are not high, perhaps a few hundred dollars per program, but it demonstrates the principle that they are professional producers of special topics, of which the channels themselves do not have competence. Oftentimes the agency can use the equipment and production facilities of the tv- channels located in the national Ostankino tv-center. Another important source of financing comes from

the donations of rich Orthodox businessmen, but they are not regular. The third option is sponsorship and advertising. It is usually relatively easy to find a sponsor, since Orthodox programs gain high audience ratings. But it is more difficult to find one who does not want one's name or company to be visible. The pure form of visible advertising is the last and least preferred option for financing the production.<sup>202</sup>

Within the ROC, there are basically three types of broadcast productions: *First*, the official productions of the Moscow Patriarchate through its various agencies such as the radio and tv-agency located in the Ostankino tv-center. The Moscow Patriarchate is responsible for maintaining production to the national radio and tv-channels. *Second*, on the regional level, programs are produced by dioceses or parishes. *Third*, the brotherhood Radonezh is the single most important producer of religious programs outside of the official ROC structure (Loukina et al 1996, 15; Mendeleev 4.10.2000; Polischuk 5.10.2000).

Within Russian Orthodox media circles, important contributions come from the so-called "brotherhoods" of which probably the most important is the contemporary "Radonezh" community. The brotherhood is named after the Russian Orthodox monk and hero, Sergius of Radonezh (1314- 92), who has been called a "Builder of Russia", since he participated in the Russian fight against the Tartars. He also made an important spiritual contribution to the life of the Russian Orthodox Church (Ware 1997, 84-86). Radonezh societies have their own schools, newspapers, and religious radio stations, which are both traditionalist and nationalist by nature. The Brotherhoods played an important role in the 16th century when they came against Catholic Jesuit propaganda by founding schools and disseminating Orthodox literature (Ware 1997, 95).<sup>203</sup> Radonezh communities are favoured by the active Orthodox laity as well as the conservative priests.<sup>204</sup> The mission of the Radonezh brotherhood is genuine Orthodox education and criticism against "foreign influence in the church" and loss of "faith of the fathers" by Orthodox priests and laity. Radonezh happens to be very nationalist and uses an aggressive language of intolerance against other faiths (Loukina et al. 1996, 33-35). Ultimately, Radonezh is a conservative spiritual movement, which asserts that the only possible solution to individual as well as social problems is "the spiritual way".<sup>205</sup>

#### 3.4.6.5.2 The Orthodox Communitarian Vision for the State of Russia

Until this point, we have recognized the tensions that exist between other religions and the Russian Orthodox church. This tension is due to the particular Russian Orthodox communitarian vision, which is very different from the Western social philosophies of democracy and liberalism. We will hear the view of Russian Orthodoxy as a final contribution to the theme.

The church - state relationships in Russia form a unique combination, a kind of state- communitarian solution that is an authoritarian response to the Western challenge of liberal social philosophy. To understand the case of Russia properly, we must have a brief look at the more general church-state theme in Russia.

Even though officially Russia is a secular state without state religion, the de-facto privileged position of the Orthodox church in the 1997 legislation of religions has established a "religious quasi-establishment" (Shterin 2000, 239). It

reflects the Russian religious diversity by introducing a hierarchy of religions and by recognizing ‘the special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia’s spirituality and culture’ (Shterin 2000, 239). But this “recognition of a special contribution of Orthodoxy to Russian spirit” just happens to be against International Human Rights law. This law refuses favouring a dominant religion and discrimination of minority religions. Interpretation is based on decision on a similar case in European Court between the Orthodox church of Greece and the Greek government restrictions put on other religions (Gunn 1999, 248-250). The practical solution seems to be (even though against the Human Rights perspective) a unique Russian “Controlled pluralism”, since liberal pluralism cannot be totally prohibited, but it must be controlled and regulated by the law and the state (Agadjanian 2000, 264-265).

Throughout history, Orthodox Christianity has always tended to see nationalism and political power as one entity with religion (Ware 1997). This is particularly true in Russia, where Russian people were considered as “Supranational ethnos” formed by supranationalism, universalism and “an all-human Christian spirit”. Traditionally, Russia considered itself “not only as the most Christian country in the World, but as the only Christian country in the world” (Berdjaev in Simon 2000, 16). This shows a complete nationalization of the Church. Oneness of the nation, state, and the Church has also been a tragic burden on the Orthodox Church (Ware 1997).

Much of the perceived hostility of the ROC towards other faiths is explained as being due to oppression and too rapid changes in the society. When the Soviet era was finished, the structures of the Russian Orthodox church were virtually in ruins since no religious teaching was allowed. Most of the churches were closed and the church was kept in deprivation at all levels. When the sudden collapse of USSR took place, the Russian Orthodox Church was unprepared and un-armed to face the sudden freedom and the incoming surge of foreign religions and other Christian traditions. The environment of the Russian Orthodox church had swung from a position of ultimate authoritarianism and oppression, to a position of ultimate liberalism and freedom. To survive in such a sudden change, the ROC would have needed resources to compete in this newly established marketplace, which it did not have. The ROC was then forced to use its only “societal nuclear weapon”, which it had and which had proven to be effective historically: to ally with the ultra-nationalistic and exclusivist forces of Russia. The ROC decided that if they did not have the resources to win the game, the best solution would be to declare the whole game illegitimate and illegal. Which it did. Through the heavy machination of the Russian Orthodox Church, severe restrictions were put on “foreign” religious movements and organizations. A system of discrimination between religions was established in the new legislation of religion accepted by president Boris Yeltsin in 1997. The laws have been found to violate international human rights on several accounts and a number of organizations and countries appealed to have the law rejected, but it was approved by the president (Witte 1999, 11-19; Gunn 1999, 239-264).

In public discussion, this special arrangement with special positioning for the ROC is called “the symphony,” which refers to “fusion of secular and sacred functions in a Christian society” rooted in Russian tradition (Agadjanian 2000, 265-269). The symphony is created from both traditionalist and liberal settings.

The former criticize the ROC for the submission of docility and submission to the state authorities, while the liberals see the danger of clericalism and new Orthodox totalitarianism (Agadjanian 2000, 268). The “symphony” thus represents an unstable compromise to which nobody is satisfied, but which is achieved as a balance between different powers. The symphony balance can be drawn in either a traditionalist or a liberal direction, depending on the political development.

But the predominance of Orthodoxy in Russia is not only related to power politics, but to the genuine Russian spirit, which the West some day might want to learn something from. As philosopher Igor Chubais puts it (in Agadjanian 2000, 272):

“It is quite evident for me that the Russian cultural tradition based on priority of the spiritual over the material being, on a ‘sobornost’, community spirit and mutuality, self-restraint and self-sacrifice for the other, - that is on the ideas of the gospel, - it can be more than once called for by the West...” Russian history is thus characterized by communitarian spirit over the individualism, as well as authoritarianism over liberalism. This is why confessionalism can be called for help against anomie.”

Orthodox identity is mainly anti-liberal, and it seems to be axiomatically against Western conceptions of modernism and post-modernism, which are perceived as post- or even anti-Christian (Agadjanian 2000, 273). The contradiction can be presented as follows:

“The ‘aristocratic’ Orthodox tradition cannot fit into ‘new world order’ dictated by ‘liberal legal catechism’ of ‘universal human values’; the Orthodoxy is the ‘only and the last obstacle to the Godless world order’; ‘true (Orthodox) believers and liberals are incompatible in views’” (Agadjanian 2000, 273).

Of course, there is also a liberal wing in the ROC, but as an ideal type Russian Orthodox views on society and religion can be seen as paradigmatically anti-modern as the last fortress against modernity. This is due to the historical isolation of Eastern society and Christianity during both the Enlightenment and the Reformation, and the counter-Reformation. For this reason, Russian society has not had a position of strong ethics appropriate to modernization, nor has the ROC had a rationalistic, nor legal culture, nor a proper social doctrine, until recently (Agadjanian 2000, 274; Social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox church 2000).

Metropolitan Kyrill, a strongman of Moscow Patriarchate, describes here the conflict between the Russian and the Western mentality (in Agadjanian 2000, 274):

“The old competition of ideologies is now replaced by another complicated competition: between the global and general as manifestations of the principle of universality, and the conservatism and traditionalism as manifestations of the principle of uniqueness and singularity... the God-like man (in the West) is placed in the core of the anthropocentric cosmos, as a measure of all things... Uprooted in the theocentric spiritual tradition as we are, and considering the anthropocentric humanism as an alien worldview, we respect it but would never accept it as an absolute positive value. We also believe that the universal (liberal) standards, leading intentionally or unintentionally to demolition of national, cultural and religious identities of different peoples, will inevitably result in poverty of God’s world, its unification and its final ruin.”

This view is usually seen as a prophecy that the liberal project in Russia will fail, since it does not have religious legitimation, because the ROC has refused to join

the democratic movement and to join its ideological interests. Instead, the ROC argues for an “organic view”, which is a more neutral euphemism for traditionalism. It might be that the ROC is too bureaucratized to fulfil this organic view, for which it should be able to generate true communitarian vision and spirit through brotherhoods and communities, which would implant an Orthodox worldview in practice. (Agadjanian 2000, 275.) The Orthodox communitarian vision for Russian society and social doctrine would be as follows (in Agadjanian 2000, 276):

“...Spiritualizing politics, conversion of politicians...; restoration of the historical continuity of the Russian life... rejecting of the atheist type of state... state support to the Russian Orthodox Church and to traditional confessions (Islam and Buddhism)..., blocking up the religious invasion from abroad;... recognizing the priority of the social duties over the individual rights; revival of communal traditions, national form of democracy, spiritual nationalism; restoration of the Russian state in its natural borders...; introduction of the spiritual censorship...”

Liberal response to that vision is very negative. According to liberal critics, the vision leads to a Russian National Socialism and Orthodox Nationalism, which has never bore good fruit historically. (Agadjanian 2000, 276.)

On the other hand, historically it has become evident that the separation of church and state often means that the state becomes hostile to religion, which is almost the opposite to the goal, and one which, for example, the founding fathers of America had in mind (Uzzell 1999, 330). In the present discussion in Russia, the traditionalist, state-ideology supporting view is dominant even in the media, which is the most liberal arena in the society (Agadjanian 2000, 277).

In the face of post-modern challenge Christianity has actually two options. One is denominationalism, which means that any given Christian community cannot speak for all people, but for its flock only. The other option is taking a conflict position to liberalism and combatting pluralism and individualism (Walters 1999, 48). The Russian Orthodox Church has chosen the latter option.

The ROC does not have a concept to describe the Western separation of state and the Church, but instead, state and Church are seen as organic unity in which religious and political are united as a single organism in the Byzantine spirit (Witte 1999, 24, 40-41, 88-90). This unity has the negative consequence that more than once the Church has been submitted to the religious arm of the state “teaching obedience to the government, glorifying absolutism, and serving as spiritual police” (Witte 1999, 25). But the attempt and great vision is to establish “a living image of God’s government in heaven” (Ware 1997, 42). Nevertheless, Orthodox Churches have never lost this Byzantine tendency, but they have constantly confused nationalism with religion, which has been their bane for the last ten centuries (Ware 1997, 77).

The Eastern Orthodox world-view is seen as ontologically different to the Western one, and also from that of Western Christianity - and the difference might be increasing. According to the Orthodox view, the Western world-view provides too much room for freedom and too little room for faith. Since Enlightenment, the Western spirit has been eroded, and miracles of religion have been displaced by miracles of science (Witte 1999, 19-20). Russia and Eastern Orthodoxy did not experience the Enlightenment in the liberal-secularist meaning of the concept, but they rather drew different conclusions from it (Witte 1999, 27). The 1917 Bol-

shevik revolution drew the lesson of totalitarian fascism, in 1987, the Gorbachevian Revolution drew the lesson of “totalitarian democracy”.

“Neither course has worked in Russia. Ultimately, Russia will settle somewhere between these extremes, or it will direct its collective genius to the creation of a wholly new understanding of church, state, and nation.” (Witte 1999, 27.)

### 3.4.7 Conclusions on Strategies of Mediated Performance of Religious Communities

For the most part, the media strategy of religious community is shaped by its strategic position in a particular society. Religious communities can have two main strategies in the media, depending on whether they are a hegemonic or a minority community in any given context. In the hegemonic position, religious communities tend to have access to public service broadcasts, and they are tempted to hold an authoritarian attitude towards other faiths. They often use defensive or activating strategy, since their market share is already high (in membership statistics), but actual commitment and attendance is usually low. Religious media communication is needed to prevent even nominal resignation (since decline of membership reduces public relevance and influence as well as legitimation of the particular community). Due to the high membership-low attendance –dilemma, religious media is also needed to fulfil the genuine religious needs of the flock. This forms the basis for the supply of “virtual religion” and necessarily establishes “virtual religious communities” whether institutions intend it or not. Often the expression “to activate passive members” is used to express the goal of religious media communication. Religious media communication may also work towards competing religious communities and prevent their success in the particular national marketplace of religion. In the cases of hegemonic de facto state civil religions in Italy, Finland, and Russia, this strategy is very visible.

If a community is in a minority setting, it has very different strategies and goals. In minority position, a particular community seeks opportunities to provide basic information and knowledge about the community, since the general public usually knows very little about minority communities. The goal is simply to get the basic facts through and correct in the media. Gaining visibility, in turn, generates familiarity and trust among the popular audience towards the community. This visibility also reduces hostility of more established religious communities towards the perceived new religious supplier (competitor) in the marketplace of religion.

In a minority setting, communities usually seek opportunities for ecumenical networking, which could enable them to perform more significant communications operations that they could not do alone. They could also utilize the positive image of other, possibly more established, communities. For minority communities, alternative media is very important since access to the mainstream media is very limited because the affairs and issues of the minority community are irrelevant for mainstream publicity. Among minority communities there is oftentimes a lack of resources. In many cases however, a minority community can get significant support from another country in which the particular minority community is more established. For example in Russia, the support of American

Evangelicals is giving minority communities more opportunities to gain power.

Minority communities are motivated to use religious media as they strive for growth and often proselytism. In this sense, the significance of the use of media for the minority community is just the opposite of the hegemonic.

All previously described national cases of religious media communication belong either to the *defensive and responsive strategy* (when in hegemonic position), or to the *expansive strategy* (when in minority position). Empirical examples of these various strategies can be found in each tradition and in each country. In the USA, the Orthodox Church of America (as a minority community) utilizes the media alternative of Internet-communication very effectively, and it gains visible results as membership increases. Virtually all communities in the USA use an expansive strategy in some sense, since no religion is totally hegemonic as each one must compete for its position within the American marketplace of religion.

In Italy, the Federation of Protestant Churches (as a minority community) has very much benefited from its ability to produce public service religious programs on RAI radio and tv-channels, and this generates knowledge and goodwill among the mainstream audience (*expansive strategy*). In response, the Roman Catholic church has reacted against the loss of political power by launching a Catholic satellite Tv-channel to influence key persons in the secular audience and in the media (*responsive strategy*).

In Finland, the vital Congregational Press has increased activities on the Internet. This move serves as an Evangelical Lutheran response strategy and solution to the mainline dilemma of high membership, but low attendance (*defensive strategy*). On the other hand, the popularity of the Finnish inter-denominational Christian radio network, Radio Dei, serves as an extension of evangelical communities and ministries, which otherwise lacks contacts to a larger audience (*expansive strategy*).

In Russia, the Russian Orthodox church utilizes the state broadcasting channels as a tool of performance directed towards the large non-attending nominally Orthodox mass audience (*defensive and responsive strategy*). Protestants and Catholics, in turn, seek to extend their influence by networking not only with each other, but also with the Orthodox communities (*expansive strategy*).

Common to all traditions and national cases is the heavy emphasis on use of media, particularly, Internet-based communication and community formation. This can be seen as evidence of a global trend of increased medialization of religion, religious communities and religious experience. This trend will be studied further and systematized in the following and final chapter, Chapter 4, titled "Religious Media Theory".

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> It is not possible to cover perspective of the tradition in this setting, but it is done in the case of each Christian tradition. For more on tradition in general, see Gadamer 1994, 281; MacIntyre 1988, 152; McGrath 1999, 219.
- <sup>2</sup> From the incarnational perspective, 1. John 1:1-3 has been called as "Magna Charta" of Christian communication (Jørgensen 1986, 181).
- <sup>3</sup> Soukup 1.6.2001.

- 4 Soukup 1.6.2001.
- 5 Soteriology is a branch of theology specialized to doctrine of Christian salvation.
- 6 The classical Protestantism - Catholicism dispute on justification and salvation, see for example McGrath 1999, 437-447.
- 7 I disagree on this statement, because there is empirical evidence that in Christian communities, there is usually one hegemonic conception about evangelism present at any given time. This means that it usually is "social gospel" or "spiritual gospel". Second, resources for communication are usually limited, and because of that faith communities prioritize the message which they feel more important. For this reason, in the communication of liberal churches, social gospel has primacy as mediated message. Among conservative circles, spiritual gospel is usually communicated. In this sense, the hegemonic theological conception about evangelism (and salvation and ecclesiology) is very crucial and predicts to large extent what is the content of the communication of the community.
- 8 Ecclesiology is a branch of theology, which is specialized to consideration of the nature and borders of Christian community (theory of the church).
- 9 More extensively on ecclesiology, see for example McGrath 1999, 461-493; BEMCT 1999, 127-134.
- 10 For an overview on ecclesiology and matters of church and communication, see for example Granfield 1994, 1-18.
- 11 Email message on Media and faith mailing list; Morgan 10.9.2001.
- 12 [http://www.newtech.org/proceedings\\_en.htm](http://www.newtech.org/proceedings_en.htm). Page read 21.02.2002.
- <sup>13</sup>Orthodox Journalists Establish International Association. World Church News. <http://www.roea.org/9908/ho00012.html>. Page read 14.1.2002.
- 14 In contemporary Catholic theology, the role of Scripture seems to be emphasized more.
- 15 Ryan 27.11.2000.
- 16 Pasqualetti et al. 25.5.2001.
- 17 Another version of preferred goals of communication is provided by Trampiets 1989, 164-165.
- 18 La Porte 25.5.2001.
- 19 For example Palo 12.1.1993; Palo 5.1.2001.
- 20 White 1.6.2001.
- 21 Casserly 26.5.2001.
- 22 The documents are cited on the basis of the work of Jozeph Eilers (1997), who has gathered all the principal documents on communications by the Roman Catholic Church. Citations here should be thus treated as primary sources.
- 23 Casserly 26.5.2001, also Idefelt 2.2.2000.

- 24 Haikarainen 28.2.2000.
- 25 Evangelii Nuntiandi 1975, <http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/papal/paul.vi/p6evang.txt>. Page read 24.8.1999.
- 26 Casserly 26.5.2001.
- 27 Casserly 26.5.2001.
- 28 For example Casserly 26.5.2001; White 1.6.2001.
- 29 White 1.6.2001.
- 30 Extensive description and analysis on Catholic media system and Catholic media culture has been provided for example by William Thorn (1996, 82-106).
- 31 The following description of the tasks of the council is based on the interview of council officer Patrick Casserly, 26.5.2001.
- 32 <http://www.OCIC.org>. Page read 2.10.2002.
- 33 <http://www.unda.org>. Page read 2.10.2002.
- 34 <http://www.ucip.ch/eng/>. Page read 2.10.2002.
- 35 An example of regional communications contributions, see for example Web-page on Asian Synod's contribution on Social Communications <http://www.sedos.org/english/Eilers.html>. Page read 9.11.1999.
- 36 An example on plan of Pastoral communication for USA see <http://www.catholic.org/orgs/unda/undaplan.html>. Page read 8.4.1999.
- 37 On the papal system of communications, see Guizzardi 1986; Zizola 1996, 69-100.
- 38 Monti 1.6.2001.
- 39 On the role and history of religious orders in the media, see for example Mills 1986, 66-75.
- 40 <http://www.stpauls.it/istit/ing/default.htm>. Page Read 21.02.2002.
- 41 The basic principles of social communications by StPaul's religious order (The spirituality of the Pauline communicator) can be found on the web <http://www.stpauls.it/studi/maestro/inglese/ing01.htm>. Page read 17.5.2001.
- 42 <http://www.pauline.org/index.html>. Page read 21.2.2002.
- 43 <http://www.daughtersofstpaul.com/mediastudies/index.html>. Page read 21.02.2002.
- 44 <http://www.salesians.org/salesian.htm> Page read 21.02.2002.
- 45 Pasqualetti 25.5.2001.
- 46 The Salesian mission of social communication can be found (in Italian language) from the Web-address <http://www.sdb.org/giovani/comunicazion>. Page read 20.3.2001.

- 47 <http://www.ups.urbe.it/>. Page read 22.2.2002.
- 48 <http://www.jesuit.org/Pages/ministry.html>. Page read 22.2.2002
- 49 <http://www.sacredheartprogram.org/houseimage.html>. Page read 30.5.2000.
- 50 Pasqualetti 25.5.2001.
- 51 Soukup 1.6.2001.
- 52 Member churches of NCC can be found in the web-address <http://www.nccusa.org/members/index.html>. Page read 10.10.2002.
- 53 In the names of the two Lutheran churches of American and Finland there is also a pre-fix "Evangelical". However, they do not belong to the "Evangelical" tradition as described in this study.
- 54 Development of communications ethics of mainline Protestant churches in the context of the ecumenical movement has been extensively analyzed by Raine Haikarainen 2000. On the development of ecumenical thought on communications see also Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement; Lossky et al 1998.
- 55 The Finnish phrase "Vuoropuhelun kirkko" means "church of dialogue" in English.
- 56 Vuoropuhelun kirkkoon 2002.
- 57 Shafer 17.11.2000.
- 58 "Vuoropuhelun kirkko" (2002, 8, 11-13), Communications strategy of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.
- 59 The case here is the case of Evangelical Lutheran Church of America ELCA, <http://www.elca.org>. Page read 9.10.2002. Also Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland puts emphasis on influencing publicity through competent public discussant (Vuoropuhelun kirkko 2002, 10).
- 60 Shafer 17.11.2000.
- 61 On the different views found in local parishes of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, see Heikkilä et al 1982, 224; Yli-opas 1988; also Lehtikoinen 1998, 46.
- 62 An example of such a seminary is the communications seminary on the development of the communication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland held during 31.1.-1.2.2000.
- 63 Wikki 29.11.1995.
- 64 On history of WACC and relationship to denominations as well as public service corporations, see for example Emmanuel 1999, 82-85.
- 65 To some extent, it is not possible to avoid comparison of mainline churches to evangelicals, since pragmatically speaking evangelicals form the benchmarking tradition in electronic religious media.

- 66 <http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/research/com/hover.htm>. Page read 21.3.2002.
- 67 Shafer 17.11.2000; Bonnot 1999.
- 68 See the schedule: <http://www.FaithandValues.com/channels/FaithandValuesTV.asp>. Page read 11.3.2002. See also the Web-site of the Hallmark Channel itself: <http://www.hallmarkchannel.com/tv/index.asp>. Page read 11.3.2002.
- 69 Palo 26.1.1996; Pinto 10.11.1999.
- 70 Analysis on simplistic, popularized version of Christianity which forms the core of televangelism in comparison with mainline faith, see for example Steinmetz 1986, 16-19.
- 71 An example of such an orientation Ecumedia-project, see Steinmetz 1987, 42-43; Shafer 17.11.2000.
- 72 For example in Holland churches are a visible part of the public service broadcasting system as a whole; Elvy 1990, 72; Pragnell 1991, 66; . Page read 20.5.2002.
- 73 White 1.6.2001; Casserly 26.5.2001.
- 74 The Finnish phrase "Vuoropuhelun kirkko" means "church of dialogue" in English.
- 75 Soukup 1.6.2001.
- 76 Lausanne Committee is an international body of Evangelical communities equivalent to World Council of Churches of mainline churches.
- 77 <http://www.icmc.org/vol991/icmc.htm>; [www.icmc.org/who.htm](http://www.icmc.org/who.htm). Pages read 8.2.1999.
- 78 See <http://www.feb.org>. Page read 11.3.2002.
- 79 The description and analysis of Evangelical Protestantism largely reflects its American form, but can be applied to other contexts in its basic tenets. American case is predominant, because Evangelicalism can be said to enjoy a certain degree of hegemony in an American marketplace of religion, which means that the Evangelical communications dynamics and potential can be actualized to the large extent.
- 80 Success in utilitarian terms, there are also serious critics of this trend.
- 81 According to the results of the cultivation analysis, the fear of Evangelicals seems to be correct to some extent, see page xx.
- 82 This view can be called as "revelational or Biblical symbolic realism" as expressed in Isaiah 55:11 (The New King James Version): So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."
- 83 Stoll 21.11.2000.
- 84 Stoll 21.11.2000; Quicke 22.11.2000.

85 Murphy 24.1.2000.

86 Bollen 8.11.2000.

87 In Felt need - Deep need -theory it is unclear, how “felt needs” can be linked with particular spiritual deep need (or real need used as synonym). It means, how can we distinguish, which Felt need is an implication of which deep need, and how to fulfill that need with particular Scriptural answer.

88 Gray 2000, Chapter 1, larger and more recent edition also in the web <http://www.febc.org/Roles311.html>, Page read 6.9.2002, Chapter 2.

89 This implicit - explicit -distinction is also compatible with Evangelical felt need -deep need -formulation.

90 Gray 15.1.2000.

91 Considering the case of Eastern Orthodoxy from the perspective of Western world-view may cause a problematic value-orientation, which sees the Orthodox strategy and Orthodox media theory as an old-fashioned, reactionary and bound to loose in the pressure of liberal Western conceptions. This temptation is very big when analyzing the case of Russian Orthodox Church (more closely as a Russian system of religious media communication, see page xx). However, this impression should be avoided, since the case of Eastern Orthodoxy provides a legitimate and important theoretical position as normative religious media theory.

92 Timothy Ware’s “The Orthodox Church” (1997) is used as a main source in the case of Eastern Orthodox faith, since it provides the best comprehensive reader available in the West on Eastern Orthodoxy. There has not been much written in the West on Eastern Orthodoxy and even less on Eastern Orthodox conceptions about modern media. For this reason, the number of sources is quite limited in the case of Eastern Orthodoxy.

93 Moser, David: <http://www.orthodox.net/articles/evangelism.html>. Page read 17.1.2000.

94 Lukina et al. 1996, 31; Mendeleev 4.10.2000; Sergey 15.2.2000; Leskinen 16.3.1996; Mertanen 16.3.1996.

95 Mendeleev 4.10.2000.

96 Leskinen 16.3.1996; Mertanen 16.3.1996.

97 Leskinen 16.3.1996; Mertanen 16.3.1996; Memo on the meeting of Orthodox radio group 31.3.1987.

98 Orthodox Journalists Conference. Orthodoxia List Archive. Mail message on Arthodoxia Mailing list. [platon.ee.duth.gr/data/maillist-archives/orthodoxia/1999\\_1/msg00003.html](mailto:platon.ee.duth.gr/data/maillist-archives/orthodoxia/1999_1/msg00003.html). Page Read 7.7.2000. The description is based on the headlines found from the web, which means that there is no information on what kind of solutions and conclusions were made on the issues. This list should, however, clarify the themes relevant to contemporary Eastern Orthodox media theory.

- 99 Antoine Niviere/ Service Orthodoxe de Presse (SOP), France. "The Ethics and Morality of the Orthodox Communication" Paper presented in the seminar of orthodox journalists (SYNDESMOS-conference) in Greece 17.5.1999. Adopted from the Finnish translation by Kari M. Rantilä.
- 100 Niviere 17.5.1999.
- 101 Niviere 17.5.1999.
- 102 Niviere 17.5.1999.
- 103 For example in Greece see <http://www.roea.org/9908/ho00012.html>. Page read 7.7.2000.
- 104 <http://www.goarch.org/worldnews/>. Page read 7<sup>th</sup> July 2000.
- 105 <http://www.goarch.org/access/news/>. Page read 7<sup>th</sup> July 2000.
- 106 <http://www.roea.org/9908/ho00012.html>. Page read 7.7.2000.
- 107 <http://www.rferlorg/newsline/search/RFE/RL>, email message from Turo Uskali 15.2.2002. Russian Orthodox Church's Club of Journalist.
- 108 Polischuk 5.10.2000.
- 109 Niviere 17.5.1999.
- 110 Niviere 17.5.1999.
- 111 When describing characteristics of particular systems of religious media communication, interviews and oral sources have also been used due to the lack of documentary sources. This may cause some inaccuracy in the empirical figures, for example, to the circulation numbers, etc. However the goal and scope of this study is to present scales and relationships, not so much factual information. For this reason, some degree of inaccuracy must be accepted.
- 112 On external determinants of media systems, see for example Lull 1995, 95.
- 113 "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 18. <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>. Page read 6.12.2002.
- 114 <http://www.om.fi/perustuslaki/3312.htm>. Page read 22.10.2002.
- 115 <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.billofrights.html#amendmenti>. Page read 22.10.2002.
- 116 According to World Values Surveys 1990-1991, cited in Heino 2000, 289-304.
- 117 History of free commercial system of financing leads to development of successful media formats and products.
- 118 Quicke 22.11.2000.

- 119 Woodland 22.11.2000.
- 120 Neff 17.11.2000; Woodland 22.11.2000.
- 121 The historical connections between media technologies in the service of American Evangelical revivalism have been extensively analyzed by Sweet et al 1993.
- 122 <http://www.nrb.org/CC/article/0,,PTID308778|CHID568026|CIID1424136,00.html>. Page read 2.12.2002.
- 123 Stoll 21.11.2000.
- 124 Churches Curse Broadcast ruling, <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,33479,00.html>. Page read 11.1.2000.
- 125 Stoll 21.11.2000.
- 126 Wilson 20.11.2000.
- 127 <http://www.salem.cc/>. Page read 6.1.2002.
- 128 Neff 17.11.2000.
- 129 Stoll 21.11.2000.
- 130 An example of a recently-found Christian film-studio is Cloud Ten Pictures with its new "Christian Blockbuster" genre, <http://www.cloudtenpictures.com/>. Page read 6.12.2002. Also: Minnesota Christian Chronicle. Producers say Left Behind to set the standard for Christian film making. 7.11.2000.
- 131 On program syndication in general see for example Campbell et al. 2000, 152-156, 159-163.
- 132 Prato 29.5.2001.
- 133 Matusiah 16.11.2000.
- 134 <http://www.goarch.org/MyNews/FMPro?-db=a...il.htm&-lay=information&MemoID=588&-find>. Page Read 30.4.2001.
- 135 Matusiah 16.11.2000.
- 136 Matusiah 16.11.2000.
- 137 See for example web-site of Greek Orthodox Church; <http://www.goarch.org/access//byzantinemusic/;www.goarch.org/goa/multi-media/>. Pages read 27.6.2000.
- 138 Matusiah 16.11.2000.
- 139 La Porte 25.5.2001.
- 140 Prato 29.5.2001.
- 141 Radio Maria is an international chain with around 30 local stations around the world see [nyas.radiomaria.org/thelist.htm](http://nyas.radiomaria.org/thelist.htm). Page read 30.5.2000.
- 142 Prato 29.5.2001.
- 143 Giuliadori 1.6.2001.

- 144 Giuliadori 1.6.2001.
- 145 Giuliadori 1.6.2001.
- 146 Naso 3.6.2001.
- 147 <http://www.agora.stm.it/market/evan/sching.htm>; <http://www.agora.stm.it/market/evan/chiese.htm>. Page read 30.4.2001.
- 148 Naso 3.6.2001; <http://www.agora.stm.it/market/evan/sching.htm>. Page read 30.4.2001.
- 149 <http://www.agora.stm.it/market/evan/sching.htm>. Page read 30.4.2001.
- 150 See for example <http://www.agora.stm.it/market/evan/nevtext.htm>. Page read 30.4.2001.
- 151 Naso 3.6.2001.
- 152 Naso 3.6.2001.
- 153 <http://www.adi-it.org/>. Page read 6.12.2002.
- 154 Standridge 28.5.2001.
- 155 [http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/touch/200206/world\\_37517544.html](http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/touch/200206/world_37517544.html). Page read 30.9.2002.
- 156 Map on locations of evangelical radio stations in Italy see <http://www.vocedellabibbia.org/v-italia.htm>. Page read 30.9.2002.
- 157 For example Lo Voi, 28.5.2001.
- 158 An example of a Protestant Evangelical portal see “La Piazza Evangelica” <http://www.evangelici.net>. Page read 8.3.2002.
- 159 For example Sillanpää 28.5.2001.
- 160 Standridge 28.5.2001.
- 161 See for example Eden communications; <http://www.christiananswers.net/eden/home.html>. Page read 28.3.2001; and Bible teaching site provided by Thru The Bible ministries and Trans World Radio; <http://www.bibbia.it>. Page read 8.3.2002.
- 162 <http://gabriel.ort.fi>. Page read 30.9.2002.
- 163 <http://www.catholic.fi>. Page read 30.9.2002.
- 164 On current Russian models of public media see Zassoursky, Y 2001, 155-188.
- 165 Doctrine of Information Security (2001, 274-276).
- 166 Loukina 3.10.2000.
- 167 Polischuk 5.10.2000.
- 168 “Religious Books for Russia” and “Voice of Orthodoxy” <http://www.oca.org/Orthodox-Introduction/North-America-1794-1994/The-Emerging-American-Mission.html#evangelization>.

- 169 Even as high number as three million has been presented, see Barrett et al. 2001, 624.
- 170 Non-denominational means usually evangelical Protestant, since the producers are usually Evangelical para-church organizations, which are not associated to any particular denomination but Evangelical Protestant interpretation on Christianity. They may co-operate for example with Evangelically-minded Orthodox priests or Catholics, like for example in the case of FEBC; Wiens 5.10.2000.
- 171 For example Andreev 3.10.2000; Haukka 3.10.2000; Wiens 5.10.2000.
- It is difficult to say, what is the real significance of Evangelical broadcasting in Russia without the dangers of over-emphasizing or under-estimating the real impact. This effects-discussion is out of the scope of this reserach, but in this context one can make a moderate assumption that religious broadcasting clearly has had an important role in strategically supporting the dissemination of information about the Evangelical communities and their version of conversion and Christian life. For example, already during the Soviet era, foreign short-wave religious broadcasting generated conversions (for example Lukina et al. 1996, 42) helped to launch local congregations, and these same effects are still present, but on a larger scale due to better broadcasting channels and increased volumes. Protestant religious broadcasting in Russia should be evaluated in terms of missions.
- 172 Fateyeff 16.2.2000; Matseo 15.2.2000.
- 173 Wiens 5.10.2000.
- 174 Loukina 3.10.2000.
- 175 Andreev 3.10.2000.
- 176 Sviridov 3.10.2000.
- 177 Polischuk 5.10.2000.
- 178 Evangelical media in Russia is described because it serves as the most important tool of public performance of evangelicals in Orthodox Russia. One can also see it as a form of globalization and how it faces particular location. Evangelical media in Russia is also an important case on the overall significance of religious media in promoting a new faith to a given area.
- 179 <http://www.irrtv.org/Suomeksi/uu199909.html>. Page Read 27.6.2000.
- 180 See ACB - Moscow 2000 -conference schedule.
- 181 Haukka 3.10.2000; Loukina 3.10.2000.
- 182 Bashmakov 3.10.2000.
- 183 Wiens 5.10.2000.
- 184 Andreev 3.10.2000.
- 185 Andreev 3.10.2000; Wiens 5.10.2000.
- 186 Kluchnik 3.10.2000.

- 187 Bashmakov 3.10.2000.
- 188 For example Bashmakov 3.10.2000.
- 189 Matseo 15.2.2000.
- 190 Matseo 15.2.2000.
- 191 Sakharov, 3.10.2000.
- 192 Loukina 3.10.2000; Nedzelsky 16.2.2000.
- 193 Polischuk 5.10.2000.
- 194 Polischuk 5.10.2000.
- 195 <http://www.rferlorg/newsline/search/RFE/RL>, email message from Turo Uskali 15.2.2002. Russian Orthodox Church's Club of Journalist.
- 196 Polischuk 5.10.2000; Mendeleev 4.10.2000.
- 197 Polischuk 5.10.2000; Maluchin 5.10.2000.
- 198 Maluchin 5.10.2000.
- 199 Maluchin 5.10.2000.
- 200 The following is based on Mendeleev 4.10.2000.
- 201 Mendeleev 4.10.2000.
- 202 Mendeleev 4.10.2000.
- 203 For example in St Petersburg, conservative Russian Orthodox brotherhood Radonezh society broadcasts in middle wave 684 kHz frequency.
- 204 Polischuk 5.10.2000.
- 205 Sergey 15.2.2000.

## 4 RELIGIOUS MEDIA THEORY

In previous chapters we have noted that mediation is an increasingly important performance strategy of religion. This inevitably generates mediated religious communities. Therefore an overall theological and communications theoretical evaluation and synthesis of this trend is required. This final chapter 4 is titled “Religious Media Theory”, simply because this is the synthesis and conclusive portion of the study. Here, the overall systematics of the phenomenon will be drawn together, as synthesis models of religious media communication. As the conclusive portion of this study, here are some specifics on the nature and origin of these models as well as some determinations on how to evaluate them.

While Chapter 3 is the first comparative empirical case study to verify the normative origin and systemic nature of religious media communication, this final Chapter 4 draws on the general characteristics of the Chapter 3. The models and conclusions presented in this chapter are based on a synthesis of a considerable amount of empirical and primary material as well as research literature. There has not always been possibilities for detailed verification on each individual model presented in this chapter. But when evaluated as a whole it is possible to verify how these models correspond to empirical world cases and trends of religious media communication. Also presented in this chapter, is the relationship between religious media communication and mainstream normative media theory. In addition, there are some contributions and recommendations as to the quality of religious media communication. First, a look at the ethical dimensions of religious media communication.

## 4.1 Ethics of Religious Communication and Communications Technology

### 4.1.1 On Ethics of Religious Communication

The discussion put forth in this study could also be presented under the title of communication ethics: a concept that has been used in the field of theological studies (for example Haikarainen 2000). When mainline churches formed their contributions and statements on modern media, they used the concepts of communications ethics. I have not used this ethics perspective, because this study has a broader scope in which values are only one aspect in addition to communication systems, tradition, etc. Much of this study can also, at the very least, be understood as having an implicit ethical strand. Normative theory also includes a dominant social philosophical paradigm. According to Robert White<sup>1</sup>, a normative theory of communications should also contribute to the question “how to improve life of citizens of the society”.

I have proposed that religion is a normative epistemological sphere of communication on its own, as compared to commercial media, public service and journalism. These spheres of communication all have certain ethical standards by which they judge or demarcate between ethical and unethical communication. To be consistent, there should also be an explicit ethical code in the field of religious communication. What one can clearly say is that such a universal moral code as journalists use, for example, does not exist in religious broadcasting. Usually the ethics of religious communication are not considered as a separate phenomenon, because the ethical dimension is seen as being an integral part of religious communication. Some religious broadcasters have worked with an internal ethical code of religious broadcasting. For example, the ethics of religious communication may be found implicitly intertwined throughout the Documents of Social Communications of the Catholic church. The National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) in the USA have their own ethical code.<sup>2</sup> Briefly presented ethical rules on the web-page of the NRB are based on Biblical principles and referred to in the case of each ethical principle. These ethical codes are mainly in response to formal actions in the communications business, but also included are recommendations for running religious radio and tv stations, including program content, as well as issues of production and quality. There are also guidelines for ethical conduct in fund-raising.

There is a basic dichotomy in the ethical thought of religious communicators, and it runs between the Evangelical Protestant and the mainline churches (include both Catholic and Protestant). Evangelical Protestants, due to their emphasis on religious conversion and evangelism, tend to see media as more of an instrumental and value-neutral means of promoting their religious goals. This means that reaching those goals tends to be seen as more pressing than ethical considerations of the means of performing the goals.

Evangelical communicators quite often face the accusation of relying on techniques of persuasion, propaganda and even manipulation. The usual counter-argument of Evangelical communicators is related to freedom of speech and free-

dom of religion. They see the governmental attempts to restrict evangelistic communication as a sole effort to ban religious freedom and freedom of speech, which are essential elements of modern liberal societies. In this sense, religious communities, particularly those in a minority position, are strong defenders of the freedom of speech.

It is true that some amount of persuasion is used in Evangelical communication, and that is also recognized by Evangelical communicators themselves (see for example Engel 1976, 45-51). There is an important ethical limitation to religious persuasion: persuasion should not be used

“in such a way that the individual is, in effect, manipulated to make a decision that usually proves to be an abortive one” (Engel 1976, 49).

A better approach is the concept of “invitation” (to invite people to receive faith), or to give people the opportunity to become Christians. Persuasion can and should be used as a genuine tool to open the way to God’s call and to help a person to respond to that call.

The question of whether it is theologically and ethically correct to use modern techniques of advertising and persuasion is a much discussed topic of concern. There is an intrinsic tendency to avoid too manipulative ways of communication, even though the effects and limits of such techniques are seen very differently.

The common (Evangelical) guidelines for the use of such modern techniques go as follows (here according to Engel 1976, 40-42.)

- 1) Christians should not overlook usefulness and effectivity of such techniques, which techniques are not so much manipulative by their effects as Christians assume.
- 2) But neither should the church naively apply modern marketing techniques.
- 3) *“In reality, the secular world has discovered and applied the very principles (of communication) that our Lord Himself used (italics original). The style for the Christian communicator to emulate today is to follow the Lord’s example; recognizing of course that the world is characterized by complexity and change. Thus an adaptive philosophy often requires a formalized approach to planning, complete with audience research and measures of effectiveness. In all probability, the apostle Paul would also have used such methods if he were here today. But the basic task is the same: begin with the audience and focus the Word of God on people so that it speaks to their needs.”*

In mainline ethical discussion on communication, the leading theme, for some time among virtually all churches, has been dialogue. In fact, there is a tension between a view of Christian communication as genuine dialogue with the audience (on dialogical religious media theory, and for example Eilers 1992, 49, 50; Emmanuel 1999, 98-133) and the view of how to establish and maintain Christian authoritarian presence in society, culture and in the lives of individuals. This means that any religious institution by necessity would need some amount of instrumental communication to help establish its goals in any environment. Dis-

cussion has recently concentrated on proper ways of dialogue, and has omitted the instrumental view. The Instrumental view on media has usually been seen as theologically (ethically) problematic even though the churches cannot survive without it. In addition to the dialogical view of communication, the mainline churches have had relatively significant discussions on the “ethics of technology” in general (for example Haikarainen 2000). This double-problematization of media is characterized by mainline ethical discussions on media use.

Another theme for discussion on the ethics of religious media communication concentrates around the ethics of a particular media (technology) as being a proper vehicle of the true Christian message. The major debate has occurred in the case of religious television (see for example Horsfield 1984, 68-73). Critics claim the nature of television is against Christianity, because “television transforms everything into entertainment” (as for example Neil Postman and Jacques Ellul have stated). And in the context of entertainment media, the serious business of the gospel cannot be presented. At the moment this discussion has ceased in the case of television, and has in turn started up again in the case of the Internet. Now, hypermedia and the Internet in particular are seen as a potential technology to change our conception about the sacred (Beaudoin 1998). The hypertextual structure of the Internet clashes with the authoritative structure of religious communities, and enables a “pick and choose” religion, as critics say.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.1.2 The Four Intellectual Attitudes to Modern Communications Technology

The discussion on communication technology is ultimately a question about the construction of the world. How much do we accept the world as an artefact, constructed and completed by human contribution, and how much do we see “pure nature” as the ideal and source of values?<sup>4</sup> The polarities in attitudes towards technology consist of value-neutral *instrumentalism* and *anti-technologism*. The Neutrality-view easily leads to technological determinism: all what can be done, must also be done (Haikarainen 2000, 42). Respectively, anti-technologism would mean rejection of all but the traditional forms of technology. This would mean basically the acceptance of print, only in addition to oral face-to-face communication.

The debate has its more general philosophical and historical roots, namely Plato was critical towards technology, while Aristotle was more practical and accepted technology to promote certain practical goals. Their thought separated practical knowledge (*tekhne*) from theoretical knowledge (*episteme*), of which the latter was considered as having higher status. This tension between practical and theoretical knowledge has been the basis of, for example, Medieval Christian thought. (Haikarainen 2000, 44.)<sup>5</sup>

The critical attitude towards communications technology can be seen largely as an outcome of a media ecological approach and crystallized with the popularized notion of McLuhan’s “the medium is the message”, which means that the form of communications media determines the content. Evangelicals have always defended against this proposition by stating that the “devil’s frame need not always contain the devil’s picture” (Bruce 1990, 40).

One of the most significant pioneers of the critical mediaecological approach was Harold Innis, who began to critically analyze the distorting influence of com-

munications technologies on community formation (Haikarainen 2000, 56). Marshall McLuhan continued the mediaecological tradition, but made more optimistic conclusions (opposite to Innis), which are crystallized in the slogan “global village”. The problem with the Christian use of mass media is that at which stage is the original and transcendental revelation of God transformed into a secular form, or polluted because of technology (see for example Marty 1961, 66-67)?

In relation to the uses of media technology, there are polarities between the continuum from rejectionist to instrumental. This demarcation debate can be crystallized along the four following ideal types that I have traced:

- 1) *Rejectionist and critical approach.* This view sees communications technology as inherently corrupt and evil. This attitude can be called the “Corrupt and Evil” -thesis.

This Rejectionist intellectual attitude is based on Plato’s critical distinction between nature and technology. “Each new technology creates an environment that is itself regarded as corrupt and degrading.” (McLuhan 1999, 118). This critical view is probably based on the notion proposed by Neil Postman (1999, 125, 127) that each technology contains its agenda, bias, and predispositions of its own, and that “the supraideology” of television is entertainment. And the question, from the perspective of Christianity, is what kind of predispositions, biases and agendas does a particular technology create from the perspective of maintaining and disseminating genuine Christian faith? And Postman proposes the answer: religion has also been transformed into entertainment (as well as anything else in the age of television, Postman 1999, 130).<sup>6</sup>

Critics and rejectionists think that any kind of technological impact on Christianity corrupts the essence of Christianity (see for example Marty 1961, 66). Duncan Forrester (1993, 75) argues that Christian truths cannot be “packaged up and transferred without distortion”. Any attempt to convert people to Christianity with the help of mass media should also be rejected (Marty 1961, 76). This means that if the medium is corrupt itself, it also determines the content will become corrupt as well. For example, Malcom Muggeridge (1977), Virginia Stem Owens and Jacques Ellul (1964, 1965) fall into this critical category.<sup>7</sup> These works can be seen as a Christian version of the critique presented by Neil Postman (1986) (Schultze 1986, 23-26).

This suspicion can be seen as part of the continuum in the long history of opposition to technological change. All new stages of media technology have been criticized by religious authorities, because they feared loss of their authority. The criticism has been directed towards the mass distribution of sacred texts, using visual media as well as popular expressions of religion such as popular music and emotional preaching (Schultze 1992, 27). And the fears of established religious authorities seem to be proven correct: the newborn rivals have usually been able to gain support with the help of new and innovative applications of new communications technologies. Yet part of the criticism might stem from the fact that the established authorities were not willing to adopt to a new communications technology in the marketplace of religion. However, those movements, which took the initiative to step forward, have gained strategic benefits through uses of new means and

forms of communication.<sup>8</sup>

Part of the misinterpretation of the critics is to bundle the various aspects of a particular medium (such as social consequences and technology or dominant formats, usually television) with the concept of media.<sup>9</sup> For example, television is both a technology and a social institution. The amusement and morally suspicious contents come from the social institutions side, not from the technology itself. For example, Neil Postman himself falls into this fallacy by blaming tv-technology as ultimately corrupting, and then by suggesting that the solution is in the social sphere (by increasing "how to watch" education at schools). (Schultze 1992, 34.)

It is inherently correct that no media is neutral, but that it shapes culture no matter how it is used. At the same time, it does not mean that the technology is evil itself - it just shapes the culture in a different way than print does.

"Every (new) communications medium offers some potential for contributing to fulfilling the Cultural Mandate<sup>10</sup> and the Great Commission." (Schultze 1992, 34-35.)

If correct, this view opens doors for other, more optimistic attitudes on the relationship between faith and media technology.

- 2) *Media guarded by theology -approach.* This approach is still suspicious with modern media, particularly television. But it sees that it is possible to use media as a vehicle of the Christian message, if it is theologically and ethically guarded to be different than the secular uses of media. Media is very much theologized, which makes the use of media a heavy process of evaluation. William F. Fore represents an example of thinkers in this category. Also, various types of media theologians belong mostly to this category.
- 3) *Media ritualism -approach.* This view takes accommodation with modern media technology as a starting point, and in the spirit of media ecology recognizes that the media technology determines the meaning system of the particular media. However, new religiosity generated by media technology is accepted as a legitimate type of religiosity, particularly among the younger generation. The approach tries to analyze in which ways particular media influence religious meanings, and tries to adapt the Christian message into various mediated environments.<sup>11</sup> This view sees religion primarily from the perspective of ritualism, not that of dogmatic theology. For example, soap operas can be seen to have religious functions, while they "keep alive the rumor of God." This is the popular conception of "God-talk." Soap operas very often have references to religion, all together even more than some explicitly religious programs (Simpson 1993, 101-111). Or, for example, the newspaper becomes ritual in its stories of good and evil, saints and devils, etc.<sup>12</sup> Here, communications technologies are seen basically as a positive phenomena, while mediated religiousness and ritualism are also interpreted basically from this positive perspective. For example, Tom Beaudoin (1998), represents an example of this orientation among more liberal theologians.
- 4) *Instrumental approach.* This view is not interested in a meta-ethical or theological evaluation of the medium itself, but sees media as a tool for enhanced evangelism and teaching. Media is not good or bad as such, but an instrument for disseminating and maintaining faith. Forms of media cul-

ture are used rather favorably to perform or relay religious messages and meanings.

Ben Armstrong (in addition to various media ministers) represents the most important example of the instrumental view, which is the Evangelical attitude. Armstrong has stated that modern electronic media has broken the wall of tradition which has isolated the church from the outside community (Schultze 1992, 30). The problem in this view is the uncritical adoration of technology - to see media technology as the ultimate redeemer of faith and the booster of the dissemination of the Gospel message. This has been the view expressed by the religious print adherents for centuries already (Schultze 1992, 29). The Evangelical view on communications technology is that of Aristotle: instrumental, when goals of using technology legitimizes the uses (Christians 1997, 65-66). However, the evangelical instrumental view does not necessarily mean uncritical media-determinism, but it is to be seen as an operational ideology for effective use of media, not as an intellectual theory concerning the human-technology relationship.

As a conclusion, one can say that a mere anti-technological stance seems to be theologically unsatisfactory. Namely, if God is constantly doing His work (continual process of incarnation), how could one technology (for example television) be outside of his control and authority (for example Boomershine 1989, 86)? This distinction reflects the idea that theology of communication is many times made from the positions of a kind of "media fundamentalism", from the perspective of literary technologies, for example. The theological solution might be to view that incarnation of the transcendental into the immanent can also happen through communications technology. In short,

*"if the critics of modern media tend toward gnosticism (a heresy which denied the physical and saw the spiritual as the only pure form of life), the advocates gravitate toward idolatry, or at least the veneration of technology... it is unlikely that the church will be able to free itself completely of the burden of each. But viewers (media users) must see beyond both myths if they are to redeem their own use of television (media). "* (Schultze 1992, 31.)

We should be able to say with which criteria, and at which point, technology is transformed from good to bad and vice versa. This means developing particular ethics of technology. But the ethics of religious media communication can also be studied from another, very different perspective. Namely, does Christianity have legitimacy to address its universal claims towards other cultures and value systems? This question is a serious one in this time of post-modern adoration of particular epistemologies, when the possibility of a universal value system is usually denied. Is Christian communication merely cultural imperialism, or is it a legitimate epistemological system of universal validity? The next section provides an extensive study of this question.

## **4.2 Epistemological Legitimation of Christian Communication**

Christian communication can be understood in terms of "cultural imperialism" (if one wishes) in its conventional interpretation referring to western values and

cultural practises in relation to the so called Third World, or less powerful cultures. This is part of globalization in general. While declaring authoritative claims of world-view, morals and salvation, Christianity can also be said to be performing cultural imperialism over other belief systems (whether religious or non-religious) and sub-cultures.

This would certainly be the conclusion according to postmodern cosmology and epistemology. There is no metaphysical or cosmological link, which would connect different value systems and cultures and might justify comparison and even preference between the values and practices exercised in them.

Modern and postmodern world-views have been very destructive to Christianity. Denial of the possibility of an authoritative universal truth, a belief in the Kantian separation between cosmological spheres of life, the separation of religious and secular in society, and the adoring of human rationality over faith: the rationalistic world-view has won the contest concerning hegemony in mainstream society. This defeat has transformed Christianity to a marginalized movement, which tries to assimilate to its context to keep from being marginalized even more. Modern and postmodern world-views must therefore be seen in terms of missiology. The question is about the contextualization of faith to current cultural and social restrictions. But still, I argue that Christianity can continue to proclaim its universality even today.

This perhaps controversial conclusion needs some further explanation. Namely, I stated in the beginning that the core essence of Christianity is universal, global and expanding of religion. These propositions (among others, but these are the most relevant in this presentation) form the cosmology of Christianity. Were the universality of Christianity to be refuted, there would no longer be Christianity, but it would be transformed into something else. By refuting the universal relevance of Christian truth, the dynamics of Christian media communication would also be taken away. We also have empirical examples showing that if this happens, Christian dynamics is gone. When the relativist theology towards other religions (meaning that all religions will save) was gaining more influence, it generated major crises in missionary activities and missions organizations.

In some societies, Christianity has been implicitly treated as a particular religion, rather than a universal one. So is the case in Russia, where Orthodox Christianity is seen as the genuine religion of Russia, which is called the "Holy land of Russia", and which according to the Orthodox church is the holy canonical territory of it. The laws on religion in Russia have favoured the so called historical churches being allowed to continue their work in Russia. But those newer, mainly Protestant, denominations who have entered the country after Perestroika are treated as foreign religions (see for example Witte & Bourdeaux 1999). This is actually a type of historical and national particularism, and cannot be justified from any systematic basis. How can history justify any faith? Where is the demarcation line being the historical, enough so to be justifiably called "the original and genuine religion of the given community", because religious affiliation is always historical and mediated by history. It is not possible to define a demarcation point in history at which point the genuine essence of the "indigeneous people" is found. Nobody can say, which people and which faith

was the first one in a certain region.<sup>13</sup>

From the philosophy of science standpoint, my proposition presents the absolutist and universal view against the relativist and particularist one. This would then support the idea of Christianity as having the right to perform global communications in order to communicate truth to all locations and to all people. This conviction opens the door to serious dangers, which we need to look at now.

This assertion that Christian truth should be communicated to all, seems to open the gates for propaganda, imperialism and even for violence. And yet these dangers have become realised throughout history. The Nineteenth century was also the period in which worldwide mission was associated with colonialism. Mission and colonialism were united in a spirit of certain aggression towards the so called Third World (Shivute 1980, 16; Golding & Harris 1997, 53-55). In the Middle Ages and during Reformation violence was openly used to promote the true faith. For this reason communicating Christian truth must be studied systematically. Missiology is a science under the umbrella of theological studies, which has specialized to this effort.

There are no big theoretical problems in communicating the gospel in an environment where there already exists a significant Christian presence. Values derived from Christianity are usually known and accepted, to some extent, as civil religion. Communicating the Christian message, usually called the Gospel, in an environment or context unfamiliar with Christianity, is the main challenge and a topic of concern.

#### **4.2.1 Universal and Particular Together in the Concept of Culture**

Modern missiology commonly acknowledges there is unresolved tension between the culture (which is essentially particular) and the means used to communicate the Christian message (which is universal in essence) to it. The tension is to what extent Christianity (usually coming from abroad) should preserve local beliefs, values and habits, and to what extent they should be assimilated into newly formed Christian practises, beliefs and values. More complexity is brought to the issue, because we must recognize that those who communicate the Christian message (communication and message understood in very general terms) not only have their own cultural heritage, but they come from their own Christian sub-culture (being for example Protestant, Catholic, Charismatic etc.). This means it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reduce the impact of the communicator's own cultural context from the message which he or she is trying to communicate. There are several strategies developed by missiology on how one could handle this tension, and how to mediate between the universal and the particular.

Another area of concern is how the universal and the particular interact in the context of audience and message. Here we arrive on common ground with sociology and media studies. Namely, what is the proper interaction between global communication and local culture?

Given that Christianity is one actor in the globalization process (even though it is a special case which would need some more detailed attention which is not possible in this work), we can adopt general notions concerning globalization and cultural imperialism. We should also notice that Christianity has been a loser

in the globalization process: secular images and ideas, as well as other religions, have diminished the authority and influence of churches and denominations.

Globalization has often been seen from either the positive McLuhanian "Global Village" -perspective, or as the negative cultural oppression known as cultural imperialism. Oftentimes the previous conception has been accepted with optimism and enthusiasm, yet without any other theoretical ground. At the same time, cultural imperialism has been widely considered as a negative systemic process, which has inspired a huge body of study in the domain of communications research. Recently, new voices and perspectives have risen to make some critical comments and perhaps too strong assertions on the assumed cultural imperialistic essence of globalization. Garofalo (in Golding & Harris 1997, 5) has listed weaknesses of the concept of cultural imperialism. They are as follows:

- 1) It overstates external determinants and undervalues the internal dynamics, not the least of those being resistance within dependent societies.
- 2) It conflates economic power and cultural effects
- 3) There is an assumption that audiences are passive, and that local and oppositional creativity is of little significance.
- 4) There is often an assumption that what is at risk is the "authentic" organic culture of the developing world.

Cees Hamelink, acknowledges that "throughout history, cultures have always influenced one another "(in Golding & Harris 1997, 49). Raymond Williams has defined culture as "a particular way of life", shaped by values, traditions, beliefs, material objects, and territory. Culture is a complex and dynamic ecology of people, things, world-views, activities, and settings that fundamentally endures, but is also changed in routine communication and social interaction. (Williams in Lull 1995, 66.) Thus, culture should not be understood as determined by outside forces (Lull 1995, 68).

Crapo defines culture as

"a learned system of beliefs, feelings, and rules for living around which a group of people organize their lives; a way of life of a particular society. A culture also includes all the rules and regulations that govern a way of life, both conscious, formally stated beliefs and feelings - called an ideology -and unconscious, informal, or implicit beliefs and feelings." (1993, 24-26.)

Very commonly it is noted that cultures are not static, but rather a dynamic system, which cannot be characterized by listing some of their details (Crapo 1993, 25, 32). Each culture must be seen then as "an open ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions" (Clifford in Crapo 1993, 44). Culture is then dialogue and pendulum,

"...between forces of permanence and change, of tradition and innovation. How people organize these cultural stresses is key to understanding modern social stability". Thus, mass media "do much more to expand cultural diversity than standardize it." (Lull 1995, 148, 150.)

Change (which is such an important element of cultures) may happen in three different ways: through innovation, diffusion and through acculturation (Crapo

1993, 326-327). These contributions reject pure ethno- and culture-centred notions that foreign inputs are always negative and destructive to the culture. One can also argue that internalizing different ideas from outside is even a component vital to cultural life. Without such ability, a culture will remain closed and it will lose its dynamics. For example, Islam provides a clear model on how culture or a social way of life, may be transformed by new religious doctrine (Islamic invasion), and how new institutions will be created which transcend racial and geographical limits and endure for centuries (Dawson 1948, 53). On the contrary, some religions seem to be so particular that they do not have relevance outside of a given community, yet they seem to be psychological and cultural expressions of the given community (Dawson 1948, 53).

In the classical definition of culture (for example Crapo 1993, 329), beliefs, values, emotions and attitudes are seen as an ideological sub-system of the culture as a whole. Christianity is about influencing this "ideological set" of any culture. This means that Christian influence will generate change in the ideology of a culture, which thus generates change in the culture as a whole, because ideology, technology and social organization are dependent of each other within the culture. This means the culture will not totally change to something alien in relation to the "original and unpolluted culture", but rather it will accommodate itself to the new input. This kind of epistemological refutation of "pure culture" is to be made. Cultures are not internally homogenous, but there is internal struggle in each culture and community about hegemony. The concept of culture is split between the ideological and other components of culture, and the ability to recognize the internal heterogeneity and struggle over hegemony within a culture is crucial to establishing the legitimacy of the universality claims of Christianity.<sup>14</sup> This idea of a partial adjustment gets support, of course, from missiology, but also from sociology and communication studies. Let us first take a short look at the sociological perspective.

At the moment, particular world-views are encouraged and celebrated according to a postmodern relativist mission: whether they are ethnic, ideological, religious, or sexual by nature. Usually it is believed that the cultural cosmologies of these particularities are "sacred" in a way that no one from the outside, nor from above, should evaluate them or even try to influence them. This is the case, for example, when talking about the so called minorities of sexual orientation. Note here that also global encouragement of individualism is associated with increasing polyethnicity and multiculturalism (Robertson 1994, 105).

But there is yet a sociological process of negotiation between particularism and universalism. There is historical and sociological evidence that particular movements or ideologies in certain regions have later become universal. This happened to Christianity when it negotiated its identity and core values with Hellenism and was transformed from a particular faith of Jews to a world religion. In fact this universal - particular, global - local thematization "is a basic feature of the human condition, especially in the adjustment to religion (Robertson 1994, 101-102). Robertson argues that neither paradigm (universality vs. particularism) is sufficient, but there is a deep interpenetration of both going on (1994, 100):

"My own argument involves the attempt to preserve direct attention both to particularity and difference and to universality and homogeneity. It rests largely on the thesis that we are... witnesses to - and participants in - a massive, twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism."

This means that there is place for universal truth, but it should be negotiated within a particular local culture. Particular may become universal in a way that it gains global importance in its consequences (Garrett et al. 1991, xviii).

Christian faith, in its various variations and formats, has always mediated its original context culture to a new setting.

"There is no such thing as 'pure Gospel', isolated from culture". It was therefore inevitable that Western missionaries would not only introduce "Christ" to Africa and Asia, but also "civilization" and... "Even when we have done our best to disentangle the universal truth from the Western form... we know that we have not done it" (Bosch 1992, 297).

We must also keep in mind that the contribution of Western missionaries should not be interpreted only in terms of cultural imperialism. Missionaries have also made many positive contributions to local cultures: spread better methods of agriculture, contributed to the abolition of slavery, maintained schools, given medical care, etc (Bosch 1992, 294).

#### 4.2.2 Strategies to Avoid Cultural Imperialism

Christopher Dawson writes on the paradoxical relationship between religion and culture:

"Any religious movement which adopts a purely critical and negative attitude to culture is therefore a force of destruction and disintegration which mobilizes against it the healthiest and most constructive elements of the society... On the other hand, the identification of religion with the particular cultural synthesis which has been achieved at a definite point of time and space by the action of historical forces is fatal to the universal character of religious truth. It is indeed a kind of idolatry - the substitution of an image made by man for the eternal transcendental reality. If this identification is carried to its extreme conclusion, the marriage of religion and culture is equally fatal to either partner, since religion is so tied to the social order that it loses its spiritual character, and the free development of culture is restricted by the bonds of religious tradition until the social organism becomes a rigid and lifeless as a mummy." (Dawson 1948, 206.)

"What then are the conditions which made a fruitful co-operation between religion and culture possible? On the one hand, the assertion of the absolute transcendent spiritual claims of religion must not be interpreted as a denial of the limited, historically conditioned and temporal values of culture, and on the other the forms of a particular culture, even when they are inspired or consecrated by a religious ideal, must not be regarded as possessing universal religious validity." (Dawson 1948, 206.)

If culture and religion are identified, then every cultural conflict is also seen as religious conflict. This was the case in the break-up of the Roman Empire, where the religious aspect was the dispute over the union of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ - the question that was totally unrelated to the cultural and national divisions in question. (Dawson 1948, 209.)

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a main theologian who realized that all theological views are mediated by the institution, and it was thus impos-

sible to reach a “pure Christian message”, but it was already an interpretation (Bosch 1992, 422). This opened the door for particular theologies in comparison to the traditional conventional interpretations of Christianity. There has been a huge increase in the so-called “contextualization of theology and faith”, which means that the cultural nature (context) of faith has been revitalized and stressed with a new strength. The main idea of these various theological movements has been to reject the hegemony of the Western and traditional interpretation of the Christian faith, and insist on factoring in the local circumstances where the faith is applied. This has generated a huge body of various particular theological movements such as political theology, theology of development, liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, etc. These seek interpretation of Christianity on the basis of a particular context. (See for example Bosch 1992, 421-426.)

The idea of contextualization is of course a positive principle, but it has increased the danger of losing the universal core of Christianity, and transforming it into becoming merely a collection of particular theologies. So, the tension between universalism and particularism (relativism) is again here. Because there are faith principles that all Christians share, it means that the “universal and context-transcending dimensions of theology cannot be rejected (Bosch 1992, 427).”<sup>15</sup>

Another strategy for adapting to cultural context is inculturation. A concept first used by Catholics. The concept implies that the Christian faith never exists except as “translated into a culture.” (Bosch 1992, 447.) This means local religious traditions and rituals should not be rejected, unless they are not contradictory to Christian faith and morals.

“Inculturation suggests a double movement: there is at once inculturation of Christianity and Christianization of culture. The Gospel must remain Good News while becoming, up to a certain point, a cultural phenomenon, while it takes into account the meaning system already present in the context. On the one hand, it offers the cultures ‘the knowledge of the divine mystery’, while on the other it helps them ‘to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought’. This approach breaks radically with the idea of the faith as ‘kernel’ and the culture as ‘husk’ - which in any case is, to a large extent, an illustration of the Western scientific tradition’s distinction between ‘content’ and ‘form’.” (Bosch 1992, 454.)

In its radical form, inculturation would lead to an even greater split of Christianity and churches. This is why inculturation also assumes that local incarnations of the faith should not be too local:

“We may be tempted to over-celebrate an infinite number of differences in the emergence of pluralistic local theologies and claim that not just each local worshipping community but even each pastor and church member may develop her or his own ‘local theology’... While acting locally we have to think globally, in terms of the *una sancta*, combining a micro- with a macro-perspective... If the church is the Body of Christ it can only be one. In this sense, then - and not as an idealistic supra-cultural entity - the church is a kind of ‘universal hermeneutical community, in which Christians and theologians from different lands check one another’s cultural biases’... ‘any theology is a discourse about a universal message’. This discourse certainly leads to tension, but it can be a creative tension if we pursue the model of ‘unity within reconciled diversity’.” (Bosch 1992, 457.)

In addition to these two mission-centred solutions to the problem of universality and particularity tension, there is a third model, which stresses the equality of different faiths and value systems. It can be called a

“dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies (Bosch 1992, 484). Dialogue performs genuine respect of other faiths, but there is a remaining tension between true Christian mission and genuine dialogue. It is the tension between the ultimate commitment to one’s own religion and genuine openness to another’s - tension between certainty and doubt” (Bosch 1992, 483).

These three missiological models seem to lead us to the direction of considering the universal and particular, and the global and local -tension as to be pointing in the direction of the individual and towards media studies. Further clarification and explanation may be found from the level of individuals. Robertson argues that we must take more seriously the position of the individual in the globalization process (Robertson 1994, 104). Coming back to the field of communications, individuals are the one’s who actually use media to construct their identity. Actually, processes of communication occur only when and if cultural text somehow reflects the identity of the individual (White 1997, 47). This means that in a situation of free choice, every message selects its audience. So, in a sense, the text can also be seen as an active agent in the communications process.

Media is most often the junction of the global and local. Lull states (1995, 168-160) that

“mass media can be both oppressive and liberating at the same time and in the same place. The relation between complex symbolic texts and complex interpretative contexts cannot be satisfactorily explained by the common array of critical or functional theories. What we have is an example of the classic standoff between ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. Too much emphasis on structure (dominant ideological and cultural parameters and guidelines) exaggerates the impact of social constraint, making it appear that the worlds we live in are overwhelmingly influenced by institutions outside our control. Too much attention to agency (human volition, creativity, and transcendence) can naively overlook how dominant parameters and guidelines affect us. We must find a balance in our theory... While people may intentionally select, interpret, and use media programming in clever ways socially and culturally, theory selections, interpretations, and uses are profoundly influenced by their domestic relationships, by their social relationships more broadly, and by the cultural contexts in which particular social relations are embedded.”

Knut Lundby (1997) gives a wonderful case study on the dynamics stated by Lull. He has performed an anthropological case study on how people in the small community of Tsanzaguru, in Eastern Zimbabwe, watch the international version of 700 Club, which is a religious tv program produced by one of the major US Evangelical tv broadcasters. The locals belong to an Anglican church that was founded by colonial British missionaries. The people of Tsanzaguru seemed to interpret this, seemingly cultural imperialistic product of US rightist Evangelical Christianity, mostly as a help “to meet the problems and challenges of modern(izing) life” of the people. It is thus seen as a tool for negotiating one’s identity between global modernization and traditional community. These same conclusions were also found in the Latin American context: “700 Club is seen as a clearly religious television text, which reinforces and renews their Christian heritage”. The program provides the people symbolic freedom from the constraints of both the local culture and the social structure. The program also provides answers to similar “global kinds of problems” which the people of Tsanzaguru also have. The religious tv program, the International 700 Club, is interpreted as a window promoting a global and ecumenical faith perspective, which the audi-

ence considers as something positive.

#### 4.2.3 Three Real World Outcomes of Christian Universalism: Civil Religion, Revivalism or Christian Sub-culture

As a concluding statement, I would say that there are several seemingly unresolved tensions within the field of religious communication and the universal vs. particular -theme. These tensions can however be softened and negotiated by the various strategies presented in this study. One must not make too radical interpretations as to the primacy of the universal or the particular. As a final comment, I want to leave the door open for a positive perspective. I propose there is a legitimate place for Christian communication, which cannot only operate as a positive component of cultural and religious change, but can help with the identification of the individual.

What is then the influence or outcome of a Christian message when communicated with universality and authority? Mass media is one of the major avenues for Christianity to establish and maintain its universality in a post-modern culture. For example, Christian institution can perform symbolic universalism by distributing its congregational paper to every household in the community. However, to establish influence over a community, the symbolic struggle is crucial: the ability to communicate authoritative symbols and discourse over reality. It is not only the power to address individual questions or problems that are relevant, but to be able to answer, and to be able to choose what is the best answer. Ultimately, it is the power to convince the audience about the quality and relevance of religious discourse, and to show them the authority and reliability of religious answers.

While establishing its universality in a given community setting, Christianity has, in principle, three possibilities or options, as well as three possible sociological outcomes, if and when it is successful in its mediated operations.<sup>16</sup>

*The first* possible option to establish universality is that of *civil religion*, which is usually not the intended outcome of institutional religious communication (even though for some theologians civil religion is enough to show legitimacy and commitment to the institution). Usually, the most important elements of civil religion, in any given society, are derived from the hegemonic religious tradition. These kinds of beliefs and practices, as well as the communicating of such beliefs, are an expression and mechanism for establishing civil religion (nationality as a religious totalizing entity). Civil religion does not require commitment, but rather, to some extent, a legitimation of the religious belief system. Communications efforts of hegemonic tradition are both crucial and effective means of maintaining civil religion.

*The Second* option is *increased diversity through establishing Christian sub-cultures*. Given that Christian communication generates commitment to Christian institution and its beliefs, which in turn bring new individuals to the community, we can say that Christian universality is established in particularity. Namely, when Christian communication is contextualized well and sensitive to sub-cultures and target groups, it does not transform individuals in a given context into something "other and alien" to the "original culture", but it does influence the ideological part of the culture. This means that those who convert to Christianity

in the sub-culture have two options: first is to try to change the whole ideological system of the given culture to the values of Christianity. Then the whole culture would be Christianized. The second option is that individuals in a given culture or sub-culture create their own communities with new ideologies, but keeping with the other crucial original characteristics, which are essential elements to the recognition of that particular (sub-)culture. For this reason, there are Christian motorcycle clubs, Christian lawyers, Christian pilots, Messianic Jews, etc. This is genuine universality in particularity. Media is crucial in communicating faith to particularities as well, but the format must be more tailored according to culture, interests and situations of the target culture.

*The third* option to establish universality is *revivalism*. Religious revival in a given geographical area (society) is seen as the essential prerequisite of moral regeneration (Beyer 1994, 122). For example, the background of Protestantism is especially one that shows a history of local, regional, national and even global revivals (for example Great Awakenings, Pentecostalism, Charismatic movement etc.) For example, the Evangelistic crusades of Billy Graham try to generate a nation or region with a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere towards Christianity; it was a strategy which makes it easier to preach the Gospel. Through the media, such crusades try to make the Gospel influential in the whole region or society. Such efforts try to establish revival, but not only in a given sub-culture, but on the level of the mainstream culture in a given location. The Gospel is thus presented as the “smallest common denominator between different kinds of people, who all need purpose for their life and forgiveness of sins”. Communications concentrates then, more on the uniformity (Gospel as a basic solution), than on the diversity (variety of situations and questions). Revivalism tries to establish new Christian groups on every level of society, so that individuals might be connected to the Christian community in the first place, and not necessarily to any Christian sub-culture.

In the postmodern era, mainstream media is necessary to establish a critical mass of good will, to help build a positive image, and for missionary recruitment, be it on a local, regional or national level. This requires competent press officers and communicators in the religious organization. It is crucial to get as large a positive visibility in the media as possible in order to gain strong support for religious activity within any given area or .

Media is very compatible and appealing for the purposes of religion. Because of the wide audience available through mass media, there is an opportunity to at least symbolically establish claims of universality. From the perspective of religion, mass media has high prophetic and symbolic value, because religion is usually marginalized in terms of the public dominant ideology of society. So, from the perspective of religion, mass communication is an opportunity to break away from the marginal. From the perspective of religious institution, the mediated religious message always establishes universality, because the mediated audience (virtual community or mediated community) is always larger than the actual audience, or those who are active in the community. Religious communicators see that there is lack of religious supply within the mainstream media, and thus, they perceive the need for such a supply – a supply of universal values and beliefs. Religious media is an extension of religious community and its truth claims. This notion has been evident since the early days of radio and tv-

preaching (see for example Goethals 1985, 153). But as a more synthetical and systematical sociological perspective, the “extension of community approach” has not been used before this study.

### 4.3 The Process of Mediated Religious Communication & Community

A contemporary approach and a bridge between media and religion is created through the concept of “media ritualism” (Carey 1992). It means that use of media is seen as a ritual communitarian act of preserving shared meanings, myths and values in the community. A Media ritualism approach is needed to understand why religion and media are so much compatible with each other?

As a starting point, we can consider Michael M. Real’s statement that “all experiences of media culture in varying degree entail active ritual participation and mythical perception” (Real 1996, 89). This means that the same mechanism is working all the time and creates the effects and functions of media through similar ritual pattern. Ritual participation “operates in a variety of ways to express and shape our relations with society and the environment” (Real 1996, 47). Ritual view also includes transcendental dimension, transition and transformation from the profane into the sacred. Ritualism, as an ancient convention, always connotes and carries the truthfulness expressed in action and narrative- it cannot be questioned. “Myth is my story, and ritual is the acting out of it” (Real 1996, 46). In this sense, a positivist question and criteria of truth are totally irrelevant in this regard.<sup>17</sup>

Ritualism actually represents the continuity and tradition of the system, as an opposite to the reflective information processing (Luhmann 1995, 452-453). Through self-observation and self-description, the system produces semantic artifacts to which further communication can refer, and with which the system’s unity is indicated (Luhmann 1995, 456). These artifacts are established and renewed through ritualism. Media ritualism is accepting media content as part of your own consciousness and world-view. It is setting oneself into media narratives. It is interactivity. Ritualism of media is participatory. It is preserving something as part of your own private consciousness.

In the case of religious media communication, audiences will gain transcendental meanings through ritual reading of religious media texts. Ritualism can be given a creative role rather than a conservative function, because symbols are part of

“a timeless system (of meanings) and yet constantly reworked in a temporal process. Ritual thus points to a dynamism in religion, in social processes, and in their attendant symbol systems.” (Clark & Hoover 1997, 27.)

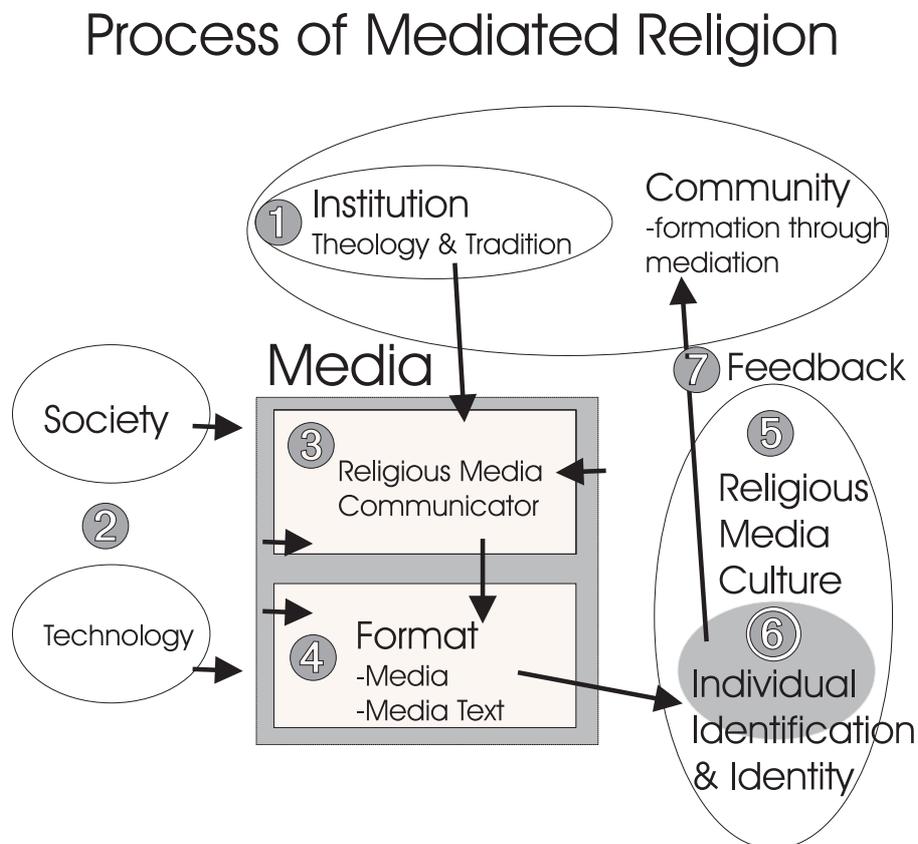
Knut Lundby (1991, 265) makes a distinction between rather stable “cultures of tradition” and constantly changing “media culture”. Also, cultures of tradition may be disseminated through media provided that traditional symbols and rituals are compatible with media. Media culture introduces change and innovation, which means that new and innovative symbols can be established on top of tradi-

tional ones in relation to them.<sup>18</sup> In this regard the polarities “difference” and “identity” imply difference between continuity and change, uniqueness and repetition (Luhmann 1995, 66). Media is seen more and more as a public “sacred space” in which “search for perfect community” and “authentic personal identity” takes place (White 1997, 47).

Religious institutions influence media communication in two ways: production and interpretation. In interpretation, they are in the role of ‘significant interpretive communities’ which influence reception and interpretation of especially morally controversial media content (see Real 1996, 111-113). Religious institutions must turn to be communities of identification and importance. Through this relationship, theology can influence in the meaning making of media: it becomes theology of interpretation for an individual’s meaning making process. In the following sections we will cover a process of mediated religion in more detail.

### 4.3.1 Production Process of Mediated Religion

The phenomenon of mediated religion can be described as a process as seen in picture 11. This description shows the overall systematics of production and meaning making as a compatible process. Each stage of the process will be described in more detail in the following text.



PICTURE 11 shows different phases of mediated religion. It also reflects the structure of this chapter, and explanations of each stage of which respective numbering is found in the following text.

- 1) *Religious institution*<sup>19</sup> has motivation to communicate. This motivation is basically shaped by its theology and tradition. The institution has a varying wealth of resources (for example financial & personnel resources, legitimacy in the society, and access to the media). When religious institution decides to foster its influence through media communication, it decides to provide both personnel and financial resources for media production. At the same time a particular explicit or implicit normative media theory or ideology is also developed to ensure theological quality of communication.
- 2) *Societal context* and available communications technology either enable or inhibit the actualization of communications dynamics of a particular community. Societal context also shapes religious communication according to particular context culture. Society influences the possibilities to perform religious media communication mainly through the structure of the media system and through mass communication legislation which society influences on the macro-level. For examples of various societal contexts of religious communication, see national cases of religious media communication, Chapter 3.4.
- 3) In the process of mediated religion, the *Religious media communicator* comes to the front, because the communicator functions as a mediator between religious institution, professional media culture (including required particular technological skills) and religious media culture (the audience). When advocating the message of the religious institution a communicator must be sensitive to the limitations set by society, to the limitations of the technology, and to the characteristics and needs of the audience. The religious communicator must enjoy the trust of the institution's authorities. The communicator must also have credibility in the eyes of the audience. The religious communicator must constantly readjust within this tension between sender intentions, the tradition, and the expectations of the (wide public) audience.
- 4) *Religious Format* is an outcome of key components, and an operative product of the religious media communicator. Religious media texts represent a unique combination of various dimensions, while media format represents stability in the identification process. Media texts are unique, but they constantly represent the same systematics determined by a particular media format.

There are four basic strategic options to choose for religious communication in terms of adaptation through media forms and contents towards a dominant secular culture. *Form* - means discourses, concepts, genres, and formats in the use of religion; *content* - means religious meanings to be communicated. More detailed, the four strategic options are:

*Traditional form – traditional content.* This option means utilizing liturgy and devotional formats: Eastern Orthodoxy being the most important empirical example of this orientation.

*Traditional form – modern content.* This option means assimilation of content to secular cosmology, but it sees the tradition and the church as something valuable themselves. It stresses more the aesthetic form than the content of the tradition. Mediation of Christian tradition is important also for cultural and historical reasons. Empirical examples can be found among Catholic and mainline Protestant churches.

*Modern form – traditional content.* This option means basically Evangelical orientation. It utilizes modern media technology and formats in presenting the traditional and conservative Christian Gospel message.

*Modern form – modern content.* This option is found among mainline Protestant churches. Both content and form of communication are assimilated in mainstream media culture, which leads to equaling, for example, the quality of journalism as a proper form of religious communication.

Religious communication utilizes all kinds of forms/formats for all kinds of goals. As R.T. Brooks (1983, 111) puts it: any religion demands for its communication

“talk programs concerned with its beliefs, documentary programs concerned with its way of life and devotional programmes concerned with its response to the transcendent”.

For example, an evangelical individual’s testimony of conversion and God’s work-convention are compatible with the interview-format. The religious format is an attempt to put together various sometimes conflicting dimensions which influence religious communication.

“Every medium of communication and information technologies used to shape and transmit does this through certain patterns, shapes, and looks and these we refer to as formats” (Altheide 1995, 11).

Even media philosophers have recognized the relevance of mediated religion which has been used the most effectively in conservative circles (Taylor & Saarinen 1994, 1-4). In the postmodern environment, where style means everything, content has also become formatized. In this postmodern process, aesthetic production has been integrated into commodity production, and the human experience as well is mediated through commodity form (Eerikäinen 1992, 47, 53).

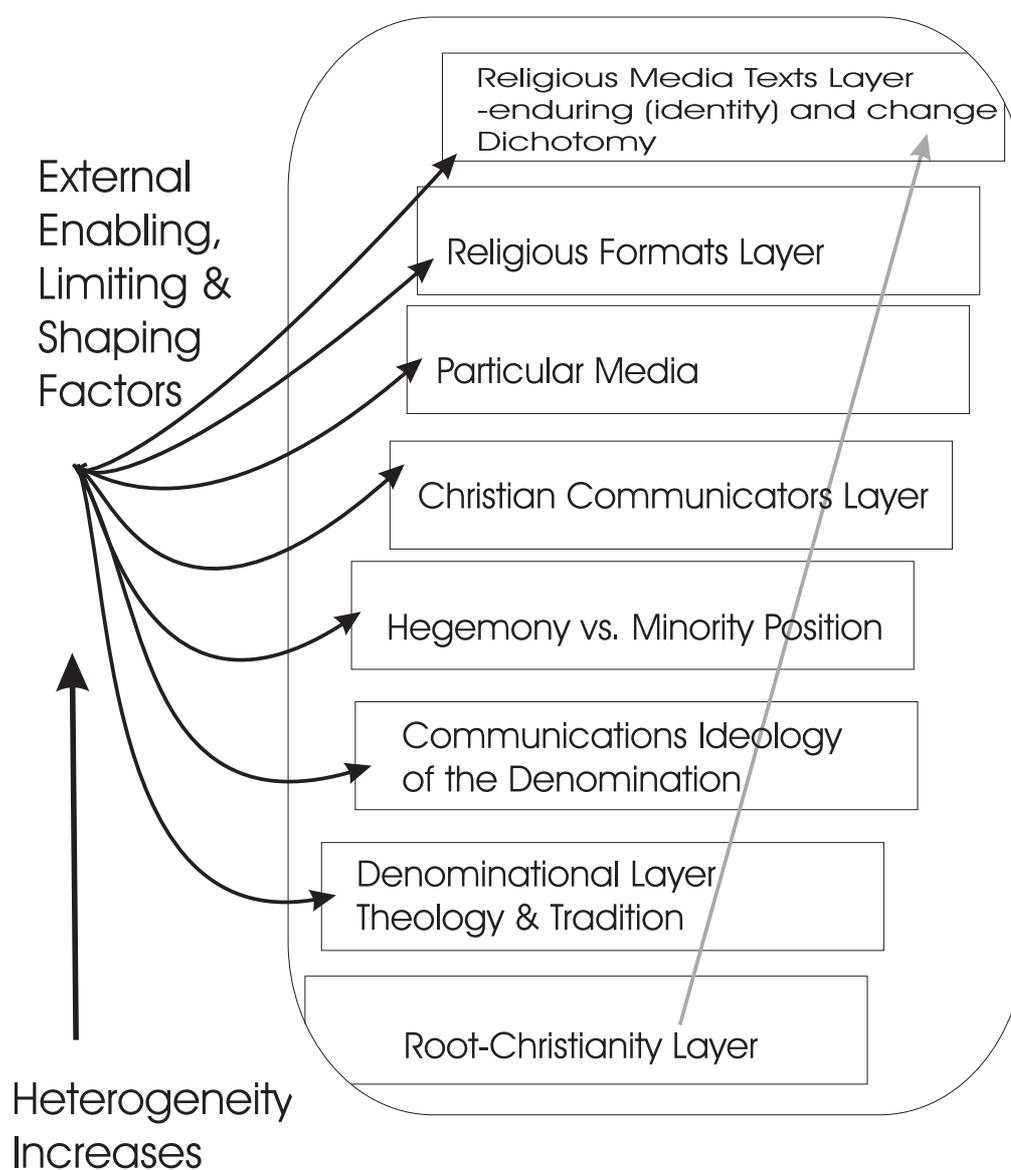
The concept of format is a useful and illustrative tool for presenting the various components and dimensions of religious media communication. Through format, one can present the dimensions particular to religious media communication: institutional tradition and theology, and their influence on religious media texts, as well as other factors more common to mainstream media studies. Format also becomes a mediating entity between the producer and the audience by providing a common platform for the meaning-making process. Meanings are generated according to the rules related to that particular format. (Sumiala-Seppänen 2001, 66; Altheide & Snow 1991, 12,18.) Transcendental meanings are generated through the ritual reading of religious media texts.

In media logics, content is designed to fit into media formats and formats are designed to be suited to audience preferences and assumed audience qualities (Altheide and Snow in McQuail 1994, 265). According to Andrew’s media deterministic view, a particular genre (and thus format) creates an audience that is suitable to that particular genre, and creates expectations for the audience that it is able to fulfil (McQuail 1994). Media format is always bound to values and ideology, and it thus becomes an expression of the identity of the audience.

The format is thus, in addition to technology, the key point of interaction between activity (text) and the environment of the communications process. Mainstream media culture puts pressure on religious media and forces it to accom-

modate, to some extent, the professional practices and audience expectations of the secular media (for example Thorn 1996, 91). Religious formats can be systematized by presenting the various dimensions of which each format is constructed. One can, in principle, analyze each particular case of religious communication through the systematics of layers of religious format to understand why the format is constructed as it is.

## Different Layers Influencing Christian Communication



PICTURE 12 illustrates that each religious format and its media text brings with it characteristics of the various shaping layers. Each layer, in turn, influences the following layer and builds to determine the various possible solutions and outcomes of religious communication.

Yet, does this utilization of secular formats in religious communication also mean commercialization and entertainment of religion? For sure, there is a strong tendency in that direction. It is clear that media logic puts pressure on media ministers to move towards spectacles and to fulfil the requirements of powerful media formats. For example, in the meta-format of “healer-evangelist”, the public spectacle of healing the sick puts pressure on the televangelist to repeat the same “miracle-really-happened” -narrative even if a sick person was not healed. This proves to be unethical, since sick people are given only an instrumental role in this media-drama. Nonetheless, the audience can still apply religious interpretation to religious content, which has been accommodated to media culture. In religious media communication, the religious substance is always considered as being more important than the format. For sure, spectacle of healer-evangelists produce authentic religious meanings among the audience.

The recognition of format is the most important concept in explaining or describing religious communication, but it has not garnered much analysis. Mark Lloyd (1988) performed an extensive quantitative format analysis on the programs of American televangelists. As a conclusion, Lloyd states that all the major televangelists used similar formats concentrating around the “star-preacher” in order to ensure success of the religious format (Lloyd 1988, 106).

From the perspective of religion, there are two options in relation to formats. *One* is to create a format, such as a devotional or worship service type of program. The *second* option is to more or less adapt to the formats of mainstream media culture. Popular religious formats have often taken components from popular secular formats. For example, the re-formation of the famous Evangelical talk show the “700 Club” was originally formed according to the format of the “Johnny Carson Show,” but with a Charismatic flavour (Bruce 1990, 39). The show was a success. In 1980, the 700 Club was transformed from talk show to magazine format with investigative reporting and news.<sup>20</sup> The format can also be understood as a kind of meta-format in a particular ecology of religious media culture, which enables various types of media and genres to operate. The most significant meta-format being that of the “Pope format”, see Chapter 3.3.1.5.

While the Bible is in itself the most disseminated format of communication, the worship service and devotional formats are the most common religious media formats, which include various devotional Bible formats: teaching, Bible school, Psalms, the Bible verse of the day, etc. (Emmanuel 1999, 156; Ellens 1974). In the business of religious broadcasting, formats linked with tradition and church life have always been important, even though they seem to have lost their significance in recent trends. Formats of mainstream media culture (such as discussion and entertainment) have increased instead. (Linderman 1993, 45.)

The central and even determining role of tradition in Christian communication is understandable, because Christian tradition is seen as a historical source of divine inspiration, whether it be crystallized in the Bible (as in Evangelical Protestant version), or seen as a continuously revealed living divine tradition (as in Catholic and Orthodox thought) (Pelikan 1991, 230-265). Tradition is for all versions of Christianity a very important source of inspiration and authority, and it must be taken into account when developing communication formats as well.

Religious formats are also changing. The religious formats are multi-layered and can adopt components from virtually all genres and components of popular culture. Some of the most successful religious formats are classics (such as the “Old Fashioned Revival Hour” in the USA, the classical 700 Club of Pat Robertson, the format of the devotional radio program used in the Finnish public service broadcasting system YLE, or Christmas mass presented by the Pope). But religious media is constantly “reformatting itself” to maintain its relevance in a changing media culture.<sup>21</sup> Religious formats can also be innovative and when gaining popularity they can even spread around the world. For example, the Lutheran Hour format, or the “Heartline” call-in-counselling program of FEBC Indonesia radio in Asia etc.<sup>22</sup>

- 5) *Religious media culture* forms the context of the audience’s use of religious media communication. The context means those conventions and habits through which people are used to receiving religious meanings from various media. For example, while information might be sought concerning congregational events that are available “from church information sections” in the newspaper, spiritual teaching and communality are both derived through worship services on radio and tv. Religious media culture is largely determined by the overall characteristics of media culture within a particular country (see national cases of religious media communication, Chapter 3.4).
- 6) *Identification* (a process) *and identity* (an outcome of the process) as concepts have also become crucial in the study of religious communication, because these concepts are compatible with postmodern individualism. While declaring death of authorities that formerly could put pressure on individuals to form their consciousness and beliefs, the concept of identity connotes the freedom and uniqueness of an individual to construct one’s own self and world. But

“...identity is not something abstract and intellectual. It is mediated through membership of a wider collectivity of those who share it.” (Crouch 2000, 94.)

Even Protestantism, which has insisted on direct relationship and communication with God, has rapidly established churches and communities. The Protestant capacity of individualism has come to mean organizational fission and fragmentation of group. The concept of identity may well explain the endurance of Christianity even though its basic beliefs have been seriously challenged (Crouch 2000, 94-95).

When religious media text meets the audience, text and the audience negotiate on meanings. The media text produced by religious institution highly reflect the tradition and identity of the community. The problem arises, when the media texts are targeted to the mainstream audience, which is not so familiar with that particular community and tradition. This creates serious problems in the decoding of the texts: meanings interpreted from the texts may be very different than the encoder intended. If an individual identifies oneself with the text and accepts its discourse, the encoded “preferred reading”, and the authority, then through that identification one has also identified with the institution in question.

However, if the opposite is true, and if the audience (consisting of individuals) does not accept the message sent by the institution and does not identify with it, the whole process of communication fails. In this situation the institution remains a mere institution (which means only hierarchical and doctrinal structure), without communal relevance as part of the individual's identity. Communication is thus a process of belonging to and accepting the institution. In turn, if religious media communication is successful, an individual feels the institution is somehow legitimate and can then identify with the institution to the extent of having some kind of feelings of belonging to it.<sup>23</sup>

Michal R. Real brings into discussion the role of value communities or "significant communities" in the interpretation of media texts and the meaning-generating process. "Interpretive communities" are "significant others" (Real 1996, 111-114), which influence the interpretations an individual gives to media texts.

According to Brown (1996, 61, 63), in interpretation and meaning-making of the text in the postmodern era, there are several strategies available for the individual. One of them is the identification strategy: "That's me!" Identification includes a notion of realism: the text should reflect somehow things that are real or ideal.<sup>24</sup> The modern concept of identity allows more reflection and selection in belonging, than social and cultural obligations (Lundby 1997b).

In this era of hypertext and virtual reality, it is argued and expected that people will increasingly generate artificial identities for themselves (for example Croteau et al 2000, 308-310). But it may also be that people increasingly reflect different aspects of their real-world identities in a new media environment, rather than dramatically change their ways of identity-construction or actual identities. For example, American televangelism should be largely understood as a process of identification on different levels (see for example Hoover 1988, 98-114, 154-177, 207-245). Identification not only gives spiritual nourishment, but social and cultural self-confidence, and self-definition as well (Alexander 1994, 70-72). Ritualism is a mechanism to generate communality through, for example, religious television viewing (Alexander 1994, 88-91).

"In the process, ritual permits and invites those engaged in it to experiment with new, more communitarian ways of conceiving the world and their relationship to one another" (Alexander 1994, 90).

- 7) *Feedback* is a crucial factor when evaluating success of religious media communication, and even crucial for evaluating continuity in general. Religious institutions assess and re-shape their communication strategies, forms, and contents, on the basis of feedback. The impact of feedback is played out as individuals actually identify with the institution: mere organization is transformed to "a significant community" through mediation that generates identification.

Even so, the feedback-stage of the communication process is theoretically a problematic phenomenon, because feedback is related to the effects of media in general and the effects of religious media in particular. Because of the complexity of the issue of feedback and effects, how does the institution then evaluate whether its communication has been successful or not, or whether it is worth continuing with the use of religious media? This evalu-

ation and legitimation mechanism of religious media communication may be broken down into four areas.

*First* type of feedback mechanism comes direct from an audience made up of individuals, and I call this the “*direct market based feedback mechanism*”. This means that religious media communication gets its legitimation and resources (financial and other) directly from its audience. The livelihood of the communicator institution depends directly on the financial feedback provided by an audience that responds with donations after feeling the messages of the communicator were legitimate and fulfilling of their religious needs.<sup>25</sup>

Televangelists in particular have been successful in building effective feedback mechanisms (Hoover 1988, 237; Alexander 1994, 65-67). The electronic church and so called media ministries are usually dependent on this kind of direct market-based feedback. This feedback-mechanism is usually criticized, because asking for money is interpreted as evidence of commercialism. This criticism is, at least partly, a mis-contextualization. Asking for donations is a necessary component if this kind of mediated ministry is to work. Donations happens to be a crucial mechanism in the system of virtual religion to function (see Chapters 4.3.2 and 4.3.3). If these particular acts of mediated ministers are not analyzed from the perspective of the whole concept, mis-interpretations are obvious. This is the case, for example, of Horsfield’s article on the electronic church asking for donations through their direct mailing (Horsfield 1985, 89-97). People receiving direct mailings have voluntarily expressed their desire to receive mail from televangelists and they see the electronic church as a legitimate religious provider. The connection between donations and religious commitment is argued by Armstrong (1979, 151).

*The Second* feedback and legitimation mechanism is the “*indirect market based feedback mechanism*”. This means the target audience gives positive feedback to the communicating organization (letters, email messages, listenership reports, conversions), but this type of feedback does not generate any financial support for the institution. Instead, the audience is more or less dependent on the communicator to utilize institutional resources to supply listeners (rather than the audience could provide resources). A communications organization must send, for example, Bibles and religious literature to assist in the growth and maintenance of the listeners’ spiritual life. Media mission organizations usually fall into this category.

Because their primary target audience is not called upon to generate resources for the organization, the religious media communicator/agent must turn to its secondary audience, the domestic supporters. Organizations must be able to communicate to their donors their success in fulfilling the mission calling (which is legitimate in the eyes of the supporters), and listeners’ responses are indicators of effectiveness. For this reason media missions organizations usually report substantial numbers of contacts. This is the feedback that they receive in the form of listener responses from their evangelistic media activities. In both the direct and the indirect feedback mechanisms, legitimation is based on the responses of individuals, and/or the resources granted by individuals.

*The third* type of feedback mechanism is something that I call the “*political feedback mechanism*”. This comes into play when there is neither a direct nor an indirect feedback mechanism option available, or it is not easy to analyze the

feedback, or it is contradictory. This political feedback mechanism is applied, for example, by communications departments of official church bodies.

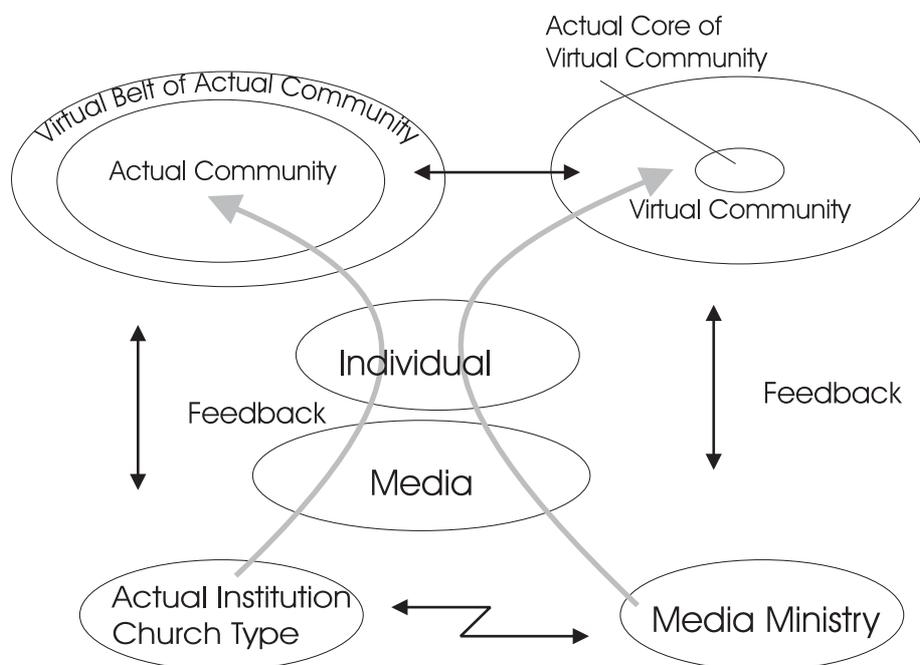
Because the primary level of influence of church institutions is society rather than the individual, the decision-making mechanism and feedback mechanisms are also established by society, which means political (“political” does not here refer to political parties, but a way of decision making based on various types of input and evaluating between various value dimensions). Because of the huge body of actual influence, the effects of religious communication cannot be analyzed on an individual basis. This means the organization must evaluate performance and legitimation from an internal frame of reference. There may also be additional performance instruments available such as readership polls, analysis of feedback, etc. But when resources for communication are addressed from the perspective of budgets within the church body, there is no clear connection between the efficacy and vitality of community communication. Decision making boards make their determinations concerning resources and legitimation on the basis of various elements and information which are often leading the boards into taking opposite views. In this process, a holistic evaluation of legitimation is transformed into a debate concerning financial resources (see on related quality of religious media communication on Chapter 4.5.3).

*The Fourth* resource-related feedback mechanism is literally and explicitly related to the “marketplace of mediated religion”. It is the “*commercial feedback mechanism*”, namely, one can also buy and/or subscribe to religious media. Success is then evaluated on the basis of sales and subscription rates. Advertisements and sponsoring may also be a way of financing media. Advertising and sponsoring may be market-based (advertiser waits for financial feedback: increased sales or a good image in the target group) or it may be done on a value basis to support the religious media in question, because an advertiser sees it is important for a religious voice to be present in the marketplace.

After considering the process of mediated religion, we will also examine the differences, the tensions and the convergence between the two analytical types of religious agents: the actual institutions (church type) and the media ministries and the respective ways in which they use media. We will also consider the relationship between the traditional religious community (the actual community) and the newly recognized accomplishments of mediated religion (the virtual community). There is a heavy measure of convergence in the media ministry –the type of religious communication, as well as the virtual religious community rather than actual participation in religious activities. In the following chapters these tendencies and tensions will be considered more closely.

### 4.3.2 Media Ministry and Actual Institution in Tension and Convergence

## Actual Institution and Media Ministry In Relation to Each Other



PICTURE 13 shows the two distinct analytical types of religious communities: actual institution and media ministry, and their respective relationship with each other.

An important distinction in religious media communication is the distinction between media ministries and actual institutions (church type).<sup>26</sup> There is a tension between mediated ministries and actual church institutions. This tension is crystallized into the question: do media ministries serve as constructive religious suppliers for already church members? Or do media ministries and church ministries compete against each other in ways that erode the authority of church bodies? The empirical evidence is contradictory and solid arguments cannot be made in either direction. (Horsfield 1984, 55.) The more established view seems to be that the active consumers of religious media are also active members in their local congregations.

Very commonly, among mainline theologians it has been argued that "the electronic church" cannot be a genuine Christian community (see for example Horsfield 1984, 52-63). A counter-argument for ecclesiological criticism is that the mediated Christian community is actually a genuine component of the Christian organization, since the early Christians did not have places of worship, but they formed a network of faith and identity.

"Through the electric church, power is once again removed from the church hierarchy and returned to the people" (Armstrong in Horsfield 1984, 53).<sup>27</sup>

How then do we distinguish between the two types of suppliers of religious communication?

A communicator belongs to the Media Ministry type, if the religious activities and influence of this communicating agent are predominantly based on media. It means there is no geographical location, because the relationship with followers is established through the media. One can easily test, if an agent belongs to the media ministry or an actual institution. Given that one takes away all the media activities of an organization, one can then recognize how much the influence of the institution is actually based on media. If the biggest portion of an institution's influence would disappear once media activities ceased, then this indicates it belongs to the media ministry -type.

One may also distinguish between mediated para-church organizations and hard-core media ministries. Mediated para-church organizations have a significant number of other activities, but hard-core media ministries have: a) an important domain of ministry all its own, and b) are capable of gaining significant support for the other needs of the ministry as well. Hard-core media ministries have concentrated solely on providing religious contents through media. The third type of ministry would be the media mission organizations that function as tools for missions.

Media ministries have been successful in developing a new form of mediated religion, which guarantees their influence and continuity, because they can fulfil genuine religious needs through the use of media. The followers of media ministries cannot participate in the activities of the given ministry directly, but they can donate money to further the perpetuation of the ministry. Donation is thus an important feedback mechanism that indeed facilitates the success or longevity of the ministry. Donating money also becomes a sacred event through which supporters, by accepting the appeal for donations, can both identify and legitimate a ministry. Specifically, the individual thus expresses that the religious claims of the ministry are found legitimate enough to support. Media ministries generate virtual religiosity in a number of ways, for example, through tv, radio, and increasingly through the Internet. The finances of the media ministries are usually based on the contributions made by their respective audience.

If, in turn, the core activities of the church, for example, would still remain when taking all the media away, one could then recognize that it belongs to the Actual Institution -type. For example, for a congregation, the most important activity is the worship service, which would not disappear even if the media information would be taken away. There are two predominant characteristics of actual institution -type. First, geographical location of the organization is important for these kind of institutions. Secondly, media is used almost solely to support the activities which take place in actual places of worship, churches etc. Media is used to inform and to possibly persuade people to participate in the activities of the institution. Religious substance as such is not the core of the media communication in this case, because religious meanings and fellowship are thought to only be genuinely actualized in the face-to-face events of the community.

But, paradoxically, actual institutions are shifting, at least partially, towards media ministries and forms of mediated religion, which they so eagerly had earlier criticized. Given that religious participation diminishes as far as an overall

trend, the significance of these mediated forms of religious activities are respectively on the increase.

TABLE 1 reveals the differences and characteristics of actual institution and media ministries as communicators.

### 4.3.3 New Nature of Mediated Religious Community

#### Actual Institution and Media Ministry by Comparison

Actual Institution	Media Ministry
<p><b>Operators:</b>            -Church hierarchies and local congregations            -Geographical local community</p>	<p><b>Operators:</b>            -Independent ministries without significant local organization</p>
<p><b>Purpose and function:</b>            -Formal information            -Organizational rules and practises,            -Times and places of events of actual community, news events</p>	<p><b>Purpose and Function of media:</b>            -Media is in strategic position to attract members, identification and gaining financial resources for the ministry            -Access to people and identification through media</p>
<p><b>Content:</b>            -Mainly news and information</p>	<p><b>Content:</b>            -Ritual participation through media; charismatic ritualism            -Content of media: Charismatic Leaders and speakers, Charisma, Spirituality, "Supernatural" incidents            -Is present any time anywhere through media</p>
<p><b>Goal:</b>            -To maintain and spread influence of actual organization and its faith</p>	<p><b>Goal:</b>            -Identification and persuasion            -Religious experience and attendance            -Belonging to virtual community            -Legitimation of media ministry</p>
<p><b>General characteristics:</b>            -Relies on actual community of faith based on geographical location and actual participation in activities of the institution            -Primacy on the actual community and participation in its activities            -Key characteristics of actual communities are hierarchy and authority            -Authority to maintain rules and authority on participation  <b>Mechanism of belonging:</b>            -Accepting authority of the institution            -Access to mainstream media (both local and regional) is important</p>	<p><b>General characteristics:</b>            -Relies on virtual community of faith, which expresses identification for example through donations or other types of feedback            -Key characteristic of virtual communities of faith is Charisma            -Power and authority are exercised through identification, which is voluntary            -Follows media logics and consumerist logics to some extent            -Explicitly religious media is important</p>

The religious community is a very crucial component and of paramount importance to religious institutions, which need a local organizational body in order to survive. However, within religious institutions there lies a “virtual belt” of religious community, consisting of individuals who do not actually participate in the services of the institution. Religious communication inevitably causes this virtual community, because the audience is far bigger than the active participating members of the community. People belonging to this virtual belt must then be motivated into becoming participating members of the actual community. This generates the need for effective media evangelism and the effective instrumental use of media to recruit members of the listening audience into becoming active in the services of the church and/or individual congregations.

The main challenge of any media enabled religious community then is to develop technique and content which in effect motivates the audience to participate in the activities of the actual community. This means developing a field of instructional material that leads to “effective church communication”. The emergence of this non-participatory virtual community does not imply that the problem could not be solved in principle. It may suggest that a form of religious communication effective enough to motivate listeners into becoming active participants has simply not been developed yet. For example, the success of the so called “Alpha Course” is an indication that religious evangelistic activities need the basic marketing techniques involving brands and products. Religion must be packed and sold effectively with a global brand identity. It must be compatible with the global consumerist media culture.

Coexisting with the actual religious community is the virtual community that is created through mediation. There are those who identify with the community, but do not actually participate in actual community activities. This virtual community is usually one not actively pursued by religious institutions: they’d rather draw people into becoming active participants in the actual community.

Officially the goal for communication is to call to community; so virtual religiosity is seen mainly as dysfunctional. There is no proper theology or theory about virtual religious community. Yet unofficially, a new kind of media theology that would allow this kind of virtual participation is being produced. The need for this kind of theorizing is increasing, because significance and supply of mediated religion appears to be increasing rapidly.

The tensions and challenges of virtual community or media ministry are very different than actual institution. It is easy to consume mediated religion, but it does not offer a proper solution to the area of commitment. Mediated religion requires only a passive participation at the least level of commitment and donations at the highest level of commitment.

Empirical surveys show that active members of actual religious communities are the main consumers of mediated religion, but due to a spill-over effect (among the mass audience there are also non-Christians, who are thus subjects to evangelism) religious communication works through the big numbers of “potential audience.” Media ministries and virtual communities must inevitably accommodate to media logics to some extent, and in this process of accommodation tensions and problems of distortion of “the true faith” arise.

The term "Community" has been classically associated with communication and vice versa. Aristotle said in his work "Politics", "that every state is a community (koinonia), which 'makes something one and common (koinon)'" (Depew et al. 2001, 3). Communications technology enables and enhances the possibilities of community formation and generates new kinds of "virtual communities", whose relationship with actual community is unclear.

In Rothenbuhler's model of community and communication, (provided by Rothenbuhler 2001, 159-179) community is not seen as an existing entity, but as a social accomplishment generated and maintained by communication. *Communication is thus not communication about the community or for the community* (italics mine).

In the classical separation of Tönnies, between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as contrasting types of communities, the ideal-type of *Gemeinschaft* represents the family and household system of the premodern European peasant village. *Gesellschaft* is the exchange between buyer and seller in the modern marketplace. In *Gemeinschaft*, commonality is built on common land, mind, blood and mind with common history. In *Gesellschaft*, social relations are built on functional differences presented as roles as bases of identity. This illustrates the shift of epistemology of community from pre-modern to modern. (Rothenbuhler 2001, 160.)

If we look at media text as public performance, together the individual spectators of the text form a community. They are present with others, who are "*significant others* (italics mine) who are of like mind and have similar tastes and attitudes". We can conceptualize the relationship between people who participate in this imagined presence as community (Abercrombie et al. 1998, 114).

Community can be defined as a group of people having something in common with each other, which distinguishes them from members of other groups. Crown and Allan (in Abercrombie et al. 1998, 115) have defined community as follows:

"Community ties may be structured around links between people with common residence, common interests, common attachments of some other shared experience generating sense of belonging".

The phrase "imagined community" was invented by Anderson. He argued that the idea of the nation state is a powerful and superior idea in mobilizing a population's energy, loyalty and trust. He defines a nation as a community, because

"regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (in Abercrombie et al. 1998, 115).

Nation is not founded as an actual local community, where all the members know each other, but it is an "imagined community" where members have to imagine each other and construct the idea of nation by themselves. Media are important means in generating and constructing and giving fuel for the imagination (Abercrombie et al. 1998, 115).

For example, reading a newspaper can be seen as a common ceremony, which is repeated by the other members of the imagined community. This ceremony is repeated throughout the calendar year at daily intervals. Community is

no longer spatially localized, and that community should rather be seen as “belonging”. Community is a category of meaning: “the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in their structural forms” (Cohen in Abercrombie et al 1998, 116). The significance of the communities lies in the way people think about their relationship with other people that belong to the same community. Community is essentially a relational concept; communities are defined in relation to one another (Abercrombie et al. 1998, 116). The boundary marks the beginning and end of a community. The boundary encapsulates the identity of the community that is generated through social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished. Boundaries of communities are largely symbolic; the sense of belonging engendered by the imagined community is also a process of identity construction. (Anderson in Abercrombie et al. 1998, 117.)

There are spatial and temporal elements in communities, but members of virtual communities (or imagined communities) are freer from particularly spatial constraints. The relationship between individual and location, and the freedom from it, can be described best with rings that are inside each other. The closest ring of an individual is directly experienced reality, and persons who come within that zone share a community of space and time with the self. Outside this zone is the zone of contemporaries who share a temporal, but not necessarily a spatial, location, and who are not experienced immediately (Schütz in Abercrombie et al. 1998, 117-118). In the case of religion this means a “virtual belt of religious community” which is formed through media communications by actual institutions (see picture 13).

A media ministry and virtual community -based model defines community as communication, and asserts that community exists because we communicate. Every new technology of communication is seen as a new possibility to generate new kinds of communities based on that particular technology, independent of place and time limitations.

There are both optimistic and pessimistic views related to these “mediated communities”. The pessimists see mass communication and communications technology in general as suspect - as forms of “false communication and culture”. The optimists, on the contrary, see the mediated communication, the related institutions, and the community as an important substitute to interpersonal communication and local social organization (Rothenbuhler 2001, 161-162). For example, the Internet can be a tool for community formation and identification for those who do not have actual community (Sypher et al. 2001, 196).

Traditional communities can use, for example, the Internet as a tool to mobilize other people to the community. On the other hand, communications technology can also replace traditional community, but also provide a new one, “virtual community,” which does not exist elsewhere than in cyberspace (Sypher et al. 2001, 198). There is not any clear answer to the question, whether and how much virtual communities can substitute for traditional face-to-face communities, and what is their definite relationship (Sypher et al. 2001, 199). At the moment, there is a clear difference in being contacted face-to-face, and in being connected virtually. But the gap is narrowing as communications technology devel-

ops (Sypher et al. 2001, 199). One possible solution to the dilemma of relationships between actual and virtual communities is to think about them as different layers of community, where each layer is somehow related to the other, and thus basically reflects the same core identity, even though with varying aspects and intensity.

The postmodern development of social bonds and local communities is usually seen as an erosion of traditional authorities, values and meanings.

“Identity in late modernity can thus be seen as a reflective process, a continuous interplay between social structures and discourses in which the individual is situated” (Linderman et al. 1999).

Postmodern imagined communities are constructed only by belief in their existence and authority. An individual seeking acceptance and belonging decides to perceive community as authoritative and legitimate to oneself. What the imagined community loses by not being institutional or established, it wins back through the emotional commitment of its members (Sumiala-Seppänen 2001, 55; Bauman 1996, 37-39). Traditionally, construction of identity and meaning is a matter of social trust. The question is how such a social trust is established in mediated communication, particularly through the Internet. In the mediated context, individuals are made more responsible on the construction of religious meanings and identity.

“In this processes elements from different traditions are used in a rather eclectic, experimental way to construct religious identity and meaning on an individual as well as social level.” (Linderman et al. 1999.)

The question of authority is crucial for all Christian traditions whether authority is promoted by Scripture, tradition, or religious hierarchy (see on authority for example Pelikan 1991, 70, 230-252). Virtual communities are almost totally resistant to external authority and control even structurally. An important characteristic of mediated religious arenas (such as discussion groups etc.) is a weakening of a religious authority. Authorities and traditional views are often questioned, yet authority can also function as a unifying bond of varying individual opinions (Linderman et al 1999). Cyberspace has a tendency to fuse private and public, sacred and profane, individual and communal (Beaudoin 1998, 127). We live in a tension between the exclusivist position or the relativist position: mine only, or all, are relevant religious interpretations and traditions of worship (Beaudoin 1998, 121).

Structurally, cyberspace threatens the stability of religious institutions because it is a radically pluralistic space. In the cyberspatial realm the distinction between public and private is blurred. The Internet exposes the fluidity of the orthodox and heterodox positions and gives an ever wider scope to the catholicity (universality) of religious belief. If the Web is taken by young generations (gen-Xers) as an ontological (a way of being) or epistemological (a way of knowing), how will it affect the young generations concepts of religion? (Beaudoin 1998, 57.)

Depending on the interpreter, the separation, or at least the transition of religious symbols and meanings towards more secular ones can be seen as an

expression of the secularization process. Or maybe it is more seen as the development of a new kind of “virtual religion” without conventional constraints of institutions towards the active and postmodern individual, but more of a grass roots communitarian type of sub-culture which might exist among the youth culture. (Beaudoin 1998, 60-61.)

Among young generations, cyberspace is seen as a metaphor for two quests: full interpersonal interaction and “attempt to transcend human experience” for which reason young generations often use the Web as a metaphor for God. Cyberspace seems increasingly omniscient and omnipresent, which may be why the obsession with speed is all about theology. In cyberspace the fourth dimension of the “eternal now” is sought. (Beaudoin 1998, 87)

#### **4.3.4 Internet as an Agent of Convergence for Religious Communication and Community**

The Internet is the single most important source of challenge and site of media convergence in religious media communication - this is true in all of the countries and the Christian traditions presented in this study. Some Christian organizations, whether church communication bodies or Christian radio stations, have been able to generate significant traffic on their sites, and thus have turned the Internet into a strategic tool for communication.<sup>28</sup> Virtually every tradition and organization seek new ways of utilizing the Internet for community communication in the most effective and innovative ways.

For various media, the converging power of the Internet means different things. For radio Internet is a tool to enlarge supply and to launch specialized formats and an international audience for which one cannot provide contents by conventional means.<sup>29</sup> For Christian magazines and newspapers, the Internet is a tool to reach the young audience, and many publishers have shifted resources from print media to the Internet. Raising funds or support is accomplished on the Internet as well, and many of the functions of publications are transformed to the Web.<sup>30</sup>

The convergence is influencing print in a way that, for example, the Associated Church Press in the USA is considering to change its name to include the web, since some of the member-publications do not have a printed version, but exist only on the Web.<sup>31</sup> For traditional televangelists, the Internet provides a platform for web casting, but primarily it is a new channel for interaction, intercession, and feedback as well as fund raising. The Internet also provides a platform for disseminating publications, articles and other resources like in the case of CBN.<sup>32</sup>

The Internet is very compatible with global Catholicism, because it is “Catholic” in meaning: universally present everywhere. It also unites a global and universal Catholic community in such countries where Catholicism is a minority religion (such as in Finland and Russia). For them, the Internet is an important way to connect to “Mother Church community” and to experience communalism as members of the church family. The Internet can be thought of as an arm of the local community, or as a virtual community to develop its own community.<sup>33</sup> The most significant contribution to the demarcation debate between actual insti-

tution and virtual community is provided by the Pontifical Council of Social Communications in its pastoral instruction on the Internet.<sup>34</sup> Sacramentality is the core characteristic of official Roman Catholic theology, which in terms of mediated religion, means that the actual unity with Christ happens through the physical sacraments that are celebrated in the mass. According to this theology, sacraments cannot be virtual, only physical. The Internet message of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications affirms this principle:

“The Internet is relevant to many activities and programs of the Church— evangelization, including both re-evangelization and new evangelization and the traditional missionary work *ad gentes*, catechesis and other kinds of education, news and information, apologetics, governance and administration, and some forms of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. Although the virtual reality of cyberspace cannot substitute for real interpersonal community, the incarnational reality of the sacraments and the liturgy, or the immediate and direct proclamation of the gospel, it can complement them, attract people to a fuller experience of the life of faith, and enrich the religious lives of users. It also provides the Church with a means for communicating with particular groups— young people and young adults, the elderly and home-bound, persons living in remote areas, the members of other religious bodies—who otherwise may be difficult to reach.”

But yet, the pastoral view on the Internet must include some limits on Internet use. Restrictions must be applied in two directions: to the audience, and to the lay-organization that produces Internet-communication in the name of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

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

“A special aspect of the Internet, as we have seen, concerns the sometimes confusing proliferation of unofficial web sites labelled ‘Catholic’. A system of voluntary certification at the local and national levels under the supervision of representatives of the Magisterium might be helpful in regard to material of a specifically doctrinal or catechetical nature. The idea is not to impose censorship but to offer Internet users a reliable guide to what expresses the authentic position of the Church.”

One could then ask a serious question; could one be a good Catholic through virtual community participation only? A leading communications theologian Paul A. Soukup answers this question:<sup>36</sup>

“No, because one needs to have some face to face connection. But there have been exceptions, we can say that one can be a good Catholic if, for example a person is ill and pastor will come to meet the person in the hospital. We are still considering a person as a member of a community. And we will bring a person a tape recorded on the Sunday service, and person can listen to it. So, if this can be regarded as being a member of the community, why the others cannot?  
-I think that theology has devoted much time on this issue, or they can see that this (media) is another way of participating in the church even though it may not lead to formal location, but at least people are doing something religious.”

This means that from the institutional perspective, mediated community is always seen as the second best option if the actual participation to church occasions is not possible (Eilers 1997, 106-107). But on the other hand, some Catholic thinkers encourage going in a virtual community -direction. For example, Jeffrey Rutenbeck, says in his comment paper in the 'New Tech 98 -conference' that

"...millions of people around the world to explore, establish, maintain and extend 'virtual communities' of diverse individuals... the Catholic community with some compelling possibilities for maintaining and expanding local parish culture and communications and also extending the reach of the Church in geographically and temporally unbounded ways."<sup>37</sup>

The most significant example of (the Catholic) virtual community is probably the case of Partenia, which is a diocese that exists solely on the Web.<sup>38</sup> The Web-site is very popular, and is open to comments and views opposite and even critical of official Church hierarchies. Partenia is a very illustrative case on "virtual religion" and "virtual communities", because its presence is built around the question of authority in a very central way. Partenia was founded by the former Catholic bishop of Evreux, Jacques Gaillot. He was asked to resign by the Vatican in 1995 because of his liberal teaching. As a response to this crisis of authority he launched Partenia, because

"the early Christians understood that what was most important, was not to claim physical power in a physical place but to establish a network of believers - to be on line" (Riggs in Steffensmeier 9.11.2000).

Now, the cyber-diocese of Partenia has around 100,000 visitors per year. The site is in seven languages, and discussion groups are moderated in several languages as well. Partenia is basically about dialogue, not authority.

"Our forum is a place of freedom where we can meet one another and speak to each other. The forum will attract people from many different backgrounds with different points of view" (Guillot in Steffensmeier 9.11.2000).

Partenia thus attracts visitors from various religious, social and cultural backgrounds. Guillot's project represents a "laissez faire" approach to Christianity.

"A Christian is not defined by the rituals and rites of the church, but by their ability to interact with the other" (Steffensmeier 9.11.2000).

As noted, virtual religious community is formed inevitably by mediated religious communication. The number of participants of mediated religion is always far greater than participants of actual religious activities. Religious institutions communicate through media to draw the wider audience to their institution and create actual identification. There are individuals who identify with the institution only through the media content, and not through actual participation. Religious institutions have mainly considered virtual religion as a negative concept and preferred that the audience become active members of the community. This has oftentimes been expressed through disappointments of the effects of so called media evangelism. There have been very few reported conversions taking place solely through media evangelism. Many churches have ceased media ministries

after such disappointments. This reflects the distinction between the mediated religious community and the actual one.

The question on the authenticity and positiveness of virtual relationships and community is the most important single question regarding virtual communities of faith. Virtual communities are challenging the Christian community, and it should be ready to re-define the culture of religion. (Campbell 1999, 50, 55; Coleiro 1997; 1999.) One crucial demarcation point is found in sacraments:

“Online prayer communities provide a valid form of worship, but it is impossible to replicate the life-giving Catholic sacramental experience in cyberspace. The Catholic Sacraments have such a powerful bond with the natural world through the symbols of water, oil, bread and wine, and they are so rooted in the physically shared experience of these symbols that it is impossible to suggest that the fullness of Catholic Christianity can be experienced in cyberspace. However, perhaps it is possible that the experience of Internet communities will lead theologians to reflect in new ways on the Catholic understanding of ‘real presence’ at the heart of the Sacrament of Eucharist, the sacrament of community.” (Coleiro 1999.)

While traditional theology suggests that Christian community can actualize only through sacraments and participation in them, reformist theology suggests that community can be without communion. Also, the convergence of mainline churches towards virtual communities is a global trend. For example in Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church provides services of the pastor and diacon through the Internet. One can also webcast baptismal services and weddings for those who cannot otherwise attend these events. Worship services are also seen through the webcasts.<sup>39</sup> Counselling services for the Web are also under development.

The increase of the importance of a media ministry -type of religious supply and respective convergence of religious communities towards the virtual, generates a major challenge to ecclesiology, the concept of authority, commitment, and sacramentality. Virtually all major branches of theology face the challenge, and there is a need for reconsideration and possibly re-interpretation.

Mediation of religion is an increasingly important trend, and in the following modelling section an entire horizon of mediated religion, in its various levels of publicity, is revealed. Each stage of publicity has its own unique issues, and respective demarcation problems: how do we define effective, successful, and theologically high quality religious communication on each level? The concept of virtual religious community makes it possible to understand religious media communication as one single entity with various levels and contexts. These systematics are presented in the following section.

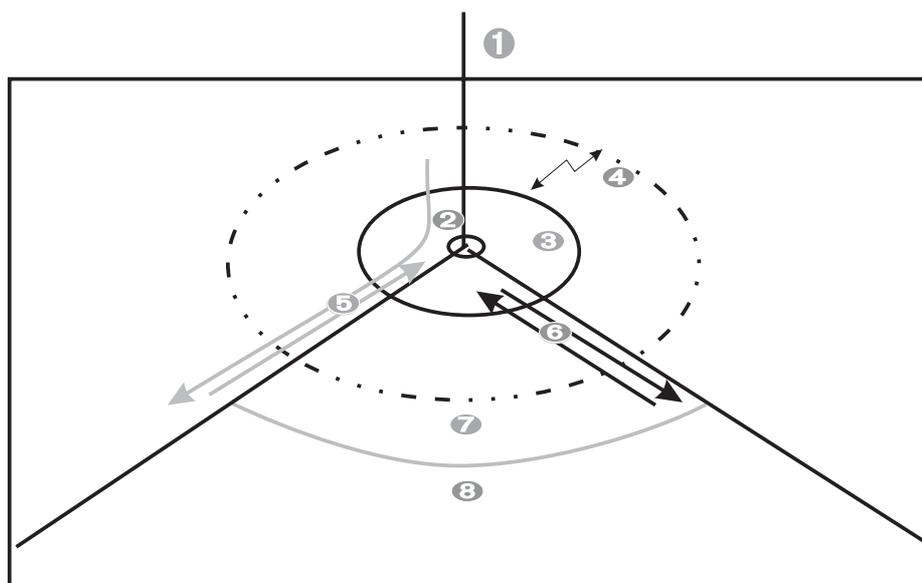
#### **4.4 The Model: the Web of Religious Media Communication**

In this chapter, I will cover the previously presented material from a systematical and synthesis -perspective to make a model on the common dynamics of religious media communication as a public performance effort by religion. The model is intended to be universal and scalable, and it unites the macro-level societal (functional) analysis of the relationship between society and religious communi-

ties in the modern era. The model represents the entire dynamic of activities and the influence of religious communication in terms of mass media studies.

The various levels of mediated public religion are systematized in the following model. It is the core result of this study, a form of “Descriptive Religious Media Theory”. I argue that various levels and ideologies, as well as practices of mediated religious communication, can be presented with a compatible model. The structure of this chapter follows the logics of this respective model. We will start from internal communication, and work through mediated virtual religious community and public service religion, and finish showing the relationship between mainstream journalism and religion.

## Synthesis on the Various Levels of Mediated Religious Performance



### C o m m u n i t y L e v e l

- ① Transcendental Revelation
  - ③ Internal Communication of the Community
- ② Institutional Elite Interpreting the Revelation
  - ④ Virtual Audience Community

### D y n a m i c s o f t h e M o d e l

- ⑤ Transformation, and Expansion
- ⑥ Reflection, and Mainstreaming

### M a i n s t r e a m P u b l i c i t y L e v e l

- ⑦ Sphere of Public Service Religious Broadcasting
- ⑧ Sphere of Journalism

PICTURE 14 presents a synthesis of the various levels of mediated religious performance with respective processes. The following text will explain the model in more detail.

Religious Media Communication can be systematized utilizing three dimensions:

- 1) the potential number of people, or the audience exposed to the media message,
- 2) the commitment of the individuals, and
- 3) the border of the community. These premises produce the Web-like model that also opens the entire media ecology of religion. It means that you can find a place for each media to be applied and utilized by religion. There is a suitable audience, message, symbols, goals and technologies to be used for that functional purpose. I argue that modern media is probably the most important sphere for assimilation, negotiation and response by religion as it endeavors to meet the modern and later postmodern challenges.

The dashed-circle in the model signifies the “virtual community” generated by mediated religious communication as it attempts to improve performance of religion through media. The “Virtual community” is an extension of the actual community, and there is a constant demarcation debate on the authenticity of virtual community, as noted in a previous chapter. The third level in the model is that of mainstream society and culture to which religion also seeks to contribute with improved performance through mediated religion. Mediated religion is particularly important in the public sphere, since through media, religion can challenge the modernist secular assumption of the sole privacy of religious matters.

The model is based crucially on two axioms or premises that are based on the sociology of religion. First, there is a tension between the two polarities: the core and the context of religion. We can call it by the concept of Eric J. Lott (1988, 57, 63). The core is the “primal or central religious vision or tradition,” and the context is “modern contemporary life”. Mediated religion is to large extent a matter of improved performance of religion by assimilation and adaptation to modern communications technology. The following model describes those dimensions of accommodation as well as the relationship between religion and the dominant professional media ideology in that sphere.

Religious communities are basically authoritarian and hierarchical systems, and there are differences between the commitments of the people to the tradition and community (Lott 1988, 24-26, 29-30). In other words, in principle you can say that some individuals have more influence and power in the community than others do, and some individuals are more committed to the community than others are. This means that if you are very committed and have power, you belong to the institutional elite of that community. I also assume that there are less of those who are very committed, than those who are somewhat or less committed. This means in principle that when the intensity of religious content rises, the number of individuals who are very committed to particular religious discourse diminishes. In simple words: there are always more -less committed, and less -more committed to the community.

It is a law-like fact that when the amount and intensity of specialized information rises, also, the amount of audience diminishes. The committed ones (with specialized needs and competencies of communication) are always less than those who belong to the mass audience and seek only popular information. From this premise one can say that the more religious the media is, the less is the audience,

but it is a more committed audience. One should thus use a more popular approach for reaching the mass audience than for simply communicating with the committed audience. On the other hand, through communications one can generate commitment among those, who are not yet too committed to the community.

Religion has a need for both internal and external communication. The key challenge is how to communicate to those outside the religious community, when one must move outside the limits of the tradition's conceptual world? In this sense the communicator stands in between the core-vision and discourse of the religious community and the external world. The more we communicate to the outsiders, the more dialogical relationship we must have to communicate to those "who are not initiated into the inner circle". The two extreme opposite responses to this typical religious task are: *first, exclusiveness* - that mysteries of the community should not be communicated at all to those outside, and *secondly, inclusiveness*, meaning that the revelation should be communicated to as large an audience as possible (Lott 1988, 73-74). Depending on the context, theological meanings must be fused into cultural expressions. This means that theology must be able to use particular cultural symbols without losing its theological and incarnational meaning. One can believe

"that language remains ultimately symbolic and can only be indirectly representative of the reality of the Beyond, or one can take a fideist realism standpoint that theological language is authentically expressive, though not fully expressive in a sense" (Lott 1988, 79).

This dichotomy, in understanding language and symbols, has direct consequences to mediated communication of religion. It leads us either to assimilation of form and content, or to traditional preaching without any assimilation or dialogue with contemporary media culture. The religious supply of the institution, whether the particular tradition-related suppliers, which operate primarily through Christian radio and tv as well as the Internet, actually form the basis of supply of religious media texts that are needed for formation of the virtual community. Related classical dilemma of religious communication is to what extent should religious concepts and expressions be used or interpreted into more familiar secular expressions? One (liberal) solution for this dilemma is to develop therapeutic ethos (for example Sumiala-Seppänen 2001, 69; Clark & Hoover 1997, 29-30), which substitutes, for example, the concept of sin with "weakness" etc.

Usually, we can see religious texts as "closed texts" in comparison to "open texts" (see for example Soukup 1997b, 93-94). Closed texts have strong discourse that tends to limit the opportunities of the active audience to interpret the text in different ways than the communicator's discourse presupposes. In dialogical religious media theory, the goal is to generate more open texts, but still there is religious discourse present on some level. Or the text is simply "too open" to suggest any kind of religious meaning or interpretation to the audience. These two text options, "closedness" and "openness," are both potential problems and a potential danger to religious communication.

The circles or levels of the web describe degrees of commitment to the community. Similar ideas have been presented for example in the Moorhouse core

(in Abercrombie et al 1998, 132-133) which analyzed American hot-rod enthusiasm. He suggests a general model of the organization of enthusiasm, which consists of a number of layers around the core phenomenon. In his model, the outer circle is the "general public", the middle circle the "interested public", and the inner circle consists half of "Amateurs" and "Professionals." while the professional side is the "Apparatus" (meaning those "intellectuals" who control the means of communication about the enthusiasm).

Overlapping circles to describe different more operational groups as targets of communication of a religious institution have also been used by Viggo Sogaard (1993, 244). Overlapping circles to communicate commitment to Christianity have also been used by Taylor (1993, 650).

When one moves from the outer circles towards the inner circles of the model, one can say that individuality and individual consciousness and commitment are established on an increasing scale. Thus, there is transition between levels of commitment in both directions. It means that a person is recognizing the personal need and showing interest towards the religious message of the institution and community. A person is shifting oneself gradually from the "massified audience" towards "individualized consciousness" in relation to religion. In this way, the model also celebrates and encourages individuality in communality.

#### **4.4.1 Explaining the Model**

The model describes the different levels of publicity in the case of religious communication. The amount of publicity increases (because the amount of potential relevant audience increases) along the lines of the web-model. In turn, the amount and intensity of religious logics and concepts presented diminishes as the amount of publicity increases, since the audience becomes more heterogeneous. On each level, religion is treated according to particular predominant ideology and logics of that media sphere, as in the case of public service ideology or journalism. On those levels, the relative power of religious institution to regulate and manage publicity diminishes respectively.

##### **4.4.1.1 The Revelation: Theology and Tradition, Goals and Means**

Religion in general and Christianity in particular are organized around the transcendent. Salvation is the central concern of religion, and it is closely linked with communication between the perfect transcendental and the limited and immanent human condition (Lott 1988, 41-49, 55). In Christianity, God's revelation in Christ, and through salvation history, is the primary and the most important mode of communication. God communicates Himself constantly through sacraments, kerygma (the Scripture), and koinonia (fellowship, community, for example Eilers 1992, 147-149). Incarnation that is transcendental becomes immanent, and thus establishes the theological basis of religious communication. Because of incarnation we can believe and assume that the divine is present and functions through our immanent attempts at communication (on incarnation for example Eilers 1992, 147-150).

According to Peter Berger (in White 1997, 43),

“religious discourse deals with the manifestations of an autonomous, fully meaningful ‘sacred’ order, not constructed by human endeavor... More important, religious institutions monitor the exploratory forays out of the imperfect and impure world of the secular into the mysterious realm of the sacred sources of meaning, truth, being, and happiness.”

Dissemination and influence of revelation in community culture (tradition) can and even must be seen as God’s own self-communication process inspired by the Holy Spirit (Leavitt 1996, 68).

#### **4.4.1.2 The Internal Communication of Religious Communities**

Group media (small media or community media, all meaning the same) is a very important or relevant type of media for religious communities. For internal communications purposes, the traditional or very inexpensive media are important (for example Afagbegee 1999, 96-98). Communication fulfils several functions in the community (on those functions also Afagbegee 1999, 119-125). Communication:

- creates and maintains legitimacy of the institution to its members as a community
- enables information flow from the top of the hierarchy to the members
- creates and supports identification in both transcendental and immanent directions through ritualism
- maintains community cohesion
- helps to mobilize individuals
- is a tool of reflection.

Let us look at the internal communications structures and practices more closely.

##### **4.4.1.2.1 Communication by The Religious Elite**

The religious elite interpret transcendental revelation and develop a system of theology around it. The internal normative rationale of religious communication (Normative Religious Media Theory) is formed by the elite and is presented in this work in chapter 3. In this phase, institutional and hierarchical modes of communication are applied: the most visible example being the Roman Catholic Church. Each religious institution and community has more or less fixed bodies for various communications functions. For example, the Russian Orthodox church has its communications Department under the Moscow Patriarchate Department of External Relations. Its duty is press relations and Internet-communication. For radio- and tv-production there is the Information Agency of the Russian Orthodox Church. The task of publishing and dissemination of official documents is done by the Moscow Patriarchate Publishing House.

##### **4.4.1.2.2 Communication to and Between the (Active) Members of the Community**

Part of religious communication is directed exclusively to committed members of the community. These services establish the religious media culture: the me-

dia mix for receiving and consuming religious supply from various media.

The media ecology of a religious media system can be analyzed as Sogaard has done (1993, 107-219). It means that religion develops a specialized way of using each particular media in religious media culture. For example, the audio cassette is a very unique media used solely by religious communities in pastoral, evangelism or for mission purposes (Sogaard 1993, 160-174). The audio cassette is a suitable media because of the centrality of oral teaching in religious communities. Preaching and teaching can very effectively and economically be transmitted by audio cassette. In addition, other media may be used in various ways by religious media culture: ways that are not used by mainstream culture. The supply of religious communication is a highly targeted niche-based supply that is very sophisticated and is produced according to religious diversity, numbers of followers, and the economic and technological development of the society.

In this internal phase, more dialogical and communitarian modes of communication are required in order to produce shared identity and legitimacy of institution and community. Also, transmission of information on particular tasks and duties, as well as events and news of interest to the members, is required from community media, for example through congregational bulletins or newspapers. Communication is very often instructional information, that helps members to fulfil certain tasks in the community.

#### 4.4.1.3 Virtual Audience Community

As noted, the audience of religious media should be understood primarily in terms of mediated community (see Chapter 4.3.3). Similar ideas with "virtual religion" have been presented by Stark & Bainbridge (1985, 208-233) who refer to some new religious movements as "audience cults," which in effect means that at least some quasi-religious contents are solely mediated phenomenon. They are mediated through occult columns in newspapers and magazines, bookstores, foodstores, etc. They provide a forum to introduce the religion to a large audience, but it requires little commitment.

There is very little research available on the audience of religious media (from more of a systematic perspective than that of the electronic church audience). John Haughey's analysis (in Thorn 1996, 102-104) provides some insight on religious media culture, the use of different religious media, and commitment to the religious community. William Thorn (1996, 102-106) presents a model (originally by John Haughey), which describes the diversification of the audience of Catholic media. He divides the audience into three categories:

- 1) *Institutional audience* is committed to institutional teachings of the church, they seek and trust the official sources of information,
- 2) *Pneumatic audience* is interested primarily in spiritual growth, not so much on institutional matters. Their media culture is dominated by books, seminars and interpersonal communications with others.
- 3) *Autogenic Catholics* have a democratic approach, and they see the Church as an imperfect community that must be open for criticism. Autogenics trust secular media coverage for the church, and see religion primarily

as an individual activity, of which individuals are responsible by themselves. Their primary source of information is secular media, and they are more independent on the church hierarchy.

According to other research (Berchmans in Thorn 1996, 103-104), those who have both an active internal religious life (prayer) and an external religious life (attendance to church events) are the most active consumers of religious media. Other important users of religious media are those with an active private religious life, yet a passive external religious life. The third type are those with an active external religious life, yet a passive internal religious life.

These classifications of audiences of religious community media (Catholic in this case) are compatible (with some exceptions) to the model of commitment and type of media presented in this study. The institutional audiences are those inside of the community. The pneumatic audiences are tending towards virtual religiosity to get religious inspiration through media (primarily of the books). For them, religiosity is primarily an individual category even though the communitarian aspect is important, but not dominant. The autogenic audience relies mostly on mass media. In this case, one might suggest that the commitment of the autogenic audience to the authority of community, and thus to the community itself, is the weakest of these three groups (institutional, pneumatic and autogenic audiences). The autogenic audience probably uses religious media the least. The participation through media can be valued even though people are not active in the church: "At least people are doing something religious."<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.4.1.4 Dynamics of the Model

Media has particular effects in two directions from the perspective of a religious community. *First*, religious media communication influences the outer society, culture and individuals. *Secondly*, mainstream media also influences both the religious community as a whole, and the individual members of religious communities.

##### 4.4.1.4.1 Transformation & Expansion

Religious communication is often *transformationist* (Hoover 1988, 233), which means that it seeks to transform the surrounding environment through use of religious mass media. On the individual level this means providing symbols for self-identification or conversion. This transformation or enculturation goal is found in all Christian traditions, even though the strategies may vary. Spirituality and the transcendental are mediated to the surrounding audience, culture and society, while at the same time the spiritual and transcendental become transformed into components of the secular sphere. Religious media communication also seeks to generate transformation in order to gain more understanding from mainstream media and the public. For example, this transformation can happen through positive visibility in the news media, or through public service religious broadcasting. Thus, the authority of the tradition is mediated through ritual media use. And innovation and new input is possible, but it is evaluated and negotiated in

the tradition as to whether to accept it or not. In terms of media culture, forms and formats of media culture are the main locus of such negotiation. Media is a source of adaptation and controlling of the relationship of the individual members and the religious community's relationship with the environment (for example Iorio 1996, 211-227; McFarland 1996, 173-182). Production of community media is an important mechanism in maintaining the faith, identity, and group boundaries for the community as well as for the individual members (for example Iorio 1996, 224-225). Modern information technologies surely also have a role in the dynamics of transformation of current Christian traditions, as well as play a role in innovation of new religious traditions (for example Schement et al. 1996, 282). Through mediated communication, religious institutions are able to generate new committed members and converts, and therefore they can enlarge, establish and maintain their public relevance in society and culture. Communication generates commitment. When using religious communication, religious commitment increases and individuals are moving towards the inner circles of the web.

#### 4.4.1.4.2 Reflection and Mainstreaming

Religious media also interprets and reflects the environment of the community in order to maintain and adapt to the environment. Mainstream media, used by individuals in the community, cultivates members of the religious community and generates the "mainstreaming effect". It means lowering the tension between community and the environment by providing values and habits of secular society as acceptable to community members. The religious media adapts community members to the wider society through negotiation, through forms of popular culture, and by assigning them a legitimate place in mainstream society (Alexander 1994, 94; 1997, 202-207). Religious media has a role in ritual adaptation.

Religious communication dynamics also works in the other direction. When a person is losing one's religious commitment and faith, one is moving toward the outer circles. One consumes less religious media and more secular media, and finally one gives up all the communication related to the particular faith community.

Normative traditions will be reconstructed and reflected through communicative dialogue with mainstream society (Casanova 1994, 230-231). Both secular and religious media have an important role in accommodating sects to mainstream society (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 100).

"Groups that are too isolated, cannot gain converts, since conversion requires that group members have access to outsiders."

The desire to construct a successful and growing movement often keeps sect founders from maximizing tension with the environment (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 167).<sup>41</sup> Transformation of a sect to a denomination occurs as the tension of the sect falls to that of a low-tension movement, which in turn means more assimilation to the environment.

The role of media is important here. Religious media does not cause the birth of a religious movement, but media is very soon required to recruit and

motivate new converts and followers for a movement. In a later stage, religious media is needed to maintain the movement and to lower the tension and generate cohesion inside the movement (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 166). The degree of tension to the socio-cultural environment provides the dynamism of the marketplace of religion and provides fuel to revival and innovation. In tension, there are three dimensions (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 66):

- 1) tension between moral standards of the environment and the sect
- 2) mutual antagonism
- 3) isolation in social relationships.

Empirical support for the mainstreaming mechanism concerning views of members of religious communities has been provided by the so called cultivation analysis. It means that the values of "heavy users" of television are transformed towards the values of the mainstream society, and this can be proven through statistical data and analysis (see for example Shanahan et al. 1999, 83-99; Morgan et al 1990, 13-30). Heavy general viewing and heavy religious viewing manifested distinctive value profiles, and could be explained through the mainstreaming effect of tv (Shanahan et al 1999,100).

Umble (1990, 141-155) provides an interesting case, where the cultivation force of television is analyzed in a very conservative Mennonite community. A religious community, which forms a very strictly bordered sub-culture, is a wonderful laboratory for testing a mainstreaming hypothesis of cultivation analysis. The hypothesis, in the case of Mennonites, was that the values of those who are anti-media (do not have television) and those who are heavy users of tv should be quite the opposite. Those who watch tv a little or not at all should have values following the teachings of the community, whereas the values of heavy-watchers (watch three hours per day or more) should be more liberal and similar to mainstream society at some level. The results show that

"television viewing, even in small amounts, is often associated with a more moderate point of view; heavy viewing contributes to already liberalized perspectives." (Umble 1990, 153.)

It means that the assimilating power of tv occurs in the Mennonite community, and heavy viewing is associated with erosion of support of the importance of church and participation in worship services (Umble 1990, 154). It seems to be proven that the main competitor of religion is secular television (Hoover 1988, 241-242; 1990, 137-139; Goethals 1981,125-144).

There is a counter-argument to this conclusion. The cultivation force of television may be denied by saying that people who are heavy tv viewers are already less closely associated with the church. This does not mean to say that tv viewing would not be the cause of lower attachment to the church. However, the conclusion presented by Umble and others may be defended here by saying that if heavy tv viewing has no effects at all to world-view and commitment to the church, this would indirectly mean that even a heavy use of media would have no effects. So, we must be able to argue, at least moderately, that heavy viewing of secular tv has causes, at least on some level, which might diminish attachment to church beliefs, values and practices.

#### 4.4.1.5 Mainstream Publicity and Religion in the Model

The least, but largest phase in the model is mainstream publicity in which particularly two spheres of communication play the crucial role. These spheres are public service broadcasting and journalism. Both spheres form a very important environment and context for religious media communication. Because of this importance, the following main section of this chapter is dedicated to public service religious broadcasting and journalism concerning religion.

#### 4.4.2 Public Service Religious Broadcasting and Journalism on Religion

##### 4.4.2.1 Public Service Religion

The struggle over control of religious programs is a classical issue of debate, since both the journalistic and religious institutions have a high sense of integrity (on integrity debates on religious broadcasting see for example Lukács 1991, 28-29; Lehtikoinen 1998, 77-79). There are two directions for religion to go. *The first* option is to launch private religious radio and tv-stations. *The second* possibility is to negotiate a compromise with journalistic and public service corporations. Let us look at the options in which religion must assimilate other functional spheres of communication in order to improve its performance: the areas of public service and journalism.<sup>42</sup>

Public service religious broadcasting represents a mediating phenomenon between discourse and the logics of religious communities and the dominant mainstream publicity ideology - journalism. The praxis of public service religious broadcasting can be crystallized with the slogan "*Cuius religio, eius radio*" – whose religion, the one's radio (Elvy 1990, 76). This seems to be an almost universal rule in all the cases of this study: formerly in the USA, and nowadays in Italy, Finland and Russia.<sup>43</sup> The dominant religious traditions of these nations and respective national public service broadcasting companies are closely allied and form a joint policy of religious broadcasting and communities which hold legitimate position within mainstream society to enable them access to public service religious broadcasting (for free).

According to public service assumptions, religious broadcasting should not assume the audience shares the given faith. This is why the open formats, such as the documentary, are a suitable for reporting religious beliefs. In a nutshell,

"Public service religious broadcasting is speaking to those, whom we cannot convert, but with whom we must live. Narrowcasting is speaking to those with whom you agree", crystallizes Viney (1993, 258).

Public service religious programs on national public service tv- and radio channels are something which are very strongly argued for and supported - basically by mainline Protestant and Catholic churches. Mainline Protestant denominations in particular rely very heavily on public service religious programs, since they have few other broadcasting activities. Public service ideology on religious programs and the theological and cultural perceptions of mainline churches are very much compatible. And there is still one bonus for public service programs:

they are free.

But nowadays, European public service religious broadcasters are facing growing challenges from a changing environment. The commercial direction of the European broadcasting system, deregulation of licenses, and the explosion of competing technologies have mounted a serious threat to the public service ideology and to public service religion itself (on these competing threats see for example Clark (1991 111-116). Peter Elvy (1990, 74) has asked, whether "the Churches nailed their colours to the mast of a sinking ship". And answers, "Perhaps they have." Each year the role of public service broadcasting diminishes due to the increased competition as well as the supply of new media and technology (Elvy 1990, 74-75; Herman 1997, 200).

Public service will further lose its significance as a platform for religious programming, simply because communities can start to produce programs independent of the public-service gatekeepers. Such has been the case in the USA for decades. An overall economic growth and sinking of technological costs, as well as increased new technologies, inevitably diminishes the role of public service religion and provides many new opportunities for private religious entrepreneurship in the field of media.

Maybe the most prescriptive characteristic of public service ideology is the fact that it is both independent and regulatory at the same time. It is free from the domination of external institutions, but in and of itself it generates a massive body of program politics and control (Dean 1997, 88-89). In every case of public service religious programming, one must choose which community to include, and which to leave out.<sup>44</sup> Public service broadcasting has played an important role in the legitimation and the sacralization of the nation-state with regards to established civil religion. Those denominations that were willing to support the civil religion of the nation state were included, while those who did not want to support "the religion of the liberal democracies were excluded" (White 1997, 57). Regulation is seen as a very positive means of control since it forces, for example, religious entrepreneurs under public scrutiny and thus brings accountability to the audience, as is not the case in the private media organizations of the Evangelicals (Dean 1997, 90-91) Shegog 1991, 85).

"Regulation is not only desirable but essential where it is possible", says Dean (1997, 98).

This notion implies a view that journalistic criteria must be superior to the religious rationale or dynamics of faith communities. Authorities within the public service model are so concerned with the American style of televangelism that they do not want to give up on control over religious content. The exclusion of Evangelicals is true also in Europe, and sometimes a high tension exists between mainline and public service broadcasters as opposed to evangelical communicators (see for example Dean 1997, 87-103; Quicke & Quicke 1992).

Public service ideology is paradoxically committed to serving both the general audience and the minorities simultaneously, but when forced to favor, it chooses the mainstream audience, which is culturally more significant than any of the minorities (Dean 1997, 91-92). Tim Dean, former producer of BBC religious programs, has listed ten virtues of public service religious broadcasting (Dean

1997, 92-94). Dean says public service religious broadcasting:

- 1) Is non-sectarian and non-partisan; it provides a platform for many religions
- 2) Is non-proselytising
- 3) Does not allow fund-raising by religious groups
- 4) It has ability, precisely because it is not bound to any particular faith, to speak uncomfortable words of critique (journalistic integrity)
- 5) Can carry out investigative journalism within different faith-communities and religious groups
- 6) Can create a space in which people who will not actually speak to each other, yet who represent different faiths and opinions... can hear each other. It can be a place of discussion and debate.
- 7) Can provide for the faith-communities an insight into how other people see them
- 8) Can open up to us different worlds about which we knew nothing
- 9) Can be a focus for the nation at times of crisis or significant moments
- 10) Can also inform the uninformed

The guidelines of religious broadcasting in the UK have been listed by Davies (1993, 241). He says,

“Religious broadcasting should seek to:

- 1) ‘Reflect the worship, thought and action of the principal religious traditions (in the UK) ’ recognizing that they are mainly Christian;
- 2) ‘Present... those beliefs, ideas, issues and experiences... which are evidently related to a religious interpretation or dimension of life’;
- 3) ‘Meet the religious... needs of those on the fringe of or outside... the major religious groupings.”

The various components of public service programs are typical, as Tim Dean puts it:<sup>45</sup>

“These programs are a part of a three part strategy. *The First is journalism*: we must deal with current affairs agenda, we are not telling religious stories, but we must also take contemporary news issues, such as East Timor or protesting Buddhist monks. There are some very important underlying religious contexts in what is happening. It is not an artificial imposition of that story: it is always something that is genuinely there. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country and East Timor is predominantly a Roman Catholic Country.

*The Second is experience*: You cannot talk about religion without talking about the way it effects people’s lives and how they experience it.

*The third thing is a requirement to have worship programs*: There used to be almost exclusively Christian Church services, outside broadcast services. Now we have far less outside broadcast events, also including Jewish and Buddhist and Hindu, but we are taking many more in the studio in a way to engage in a better way with... Worship is a human response to God or what ever you want to say,.. we want to work this out... Prayer and song still play a part in that particular genre.”

The limitations, of public service religious broadcasting (Dean 1997, 94-95, 101) on the contrary, are

- 1) difficulties to find a prime-time slot for religious programs, and

- 2) they tend to force all religions into the same mold, which will destroy their identity.

Public service religion has also tended to ignore personal religious experience. And other problems occur, particularly from the Evangelical perspective. Since public service religion tends to be moderate “middle of the road -religion”, it will be a locus and cause of civil religion, which will be a compromise of nationally held values; hence the Evangelicals, who have never been a dominant religion, tend to be ignored.<sup>46</sup>

In most cases the debate over public service religion versus independent religious broadcasting is polarized around the issue of broadcasting for “the whole nation or the Christian Ghetto (Dean 1997)”. Public service religion communicators criticize the “confessional broadcasting” style of being attractive to those already converted. The evangelical counter-argument recognizes a significant audience of non-Christians and non-church-goers present as well (see for example Marquardt 1991, 31-35). While the evangelicals have “failed the broadcasting fitness test” in Europe, they have put their energy on broadcast missions, and developed relatively successful radio and tv-mission organizations with huge potential as well as actual audiences outside Europe (Elvy 1990, 28).

Among Evangelicals there is also a more moderate line as compared to rightist televangelists concerning religious broadcasting. They define Evangelical Broadcasting tones similar to those of public service religion advocates, but Evangelicals also see religious process towards God as being part of the process of conversion (see for example Gray 15.1.2000; Adams 1991, 161-162). The religious broadcasting model proposed by Adams is something between public service religious broadcasting and independent Christian broadcasting. It would be a joint ecumenical effort of “Christian public service broadcasting” to reflect “the unity and diversity which is in Christ’s body on earth and which celebrates its contribution to western culture and social life” (Adams 1991, 162). A public service type of religious broadcasting ideology has thus had its effect on Evangelical religious broadcasters, as well as on Catholics. For example, Vatican Radio has very much adopted a public service broadcasting philosophy (Elvy 1990, 49).

But what is the difference then between moderate Evangelical or mainline Christian communication, and that of Public service religious communication? From the Evangelical side, the Program director of the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), Francis Gray presents the following description:<sup>47</sup>

“Public service is closest to what we are doing: we are broadcasting to favour the listener, not for profit and this is what Public Service wants to do. This should be our intent, I believe.”

Francis Gray also crystallizes the differences between public service religious broadcasting and the FEBC-style of broadcasting:

“Religious broadcasting as presented by FEBC is kind of a form of Public service broadcasting, but has an underlying intent that we want to expose people to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why PSB broadcasts? Is it only the interests of people or do the public service companies have certain intentions to broadcast certain messages? I think that BBC has certain purposes to promote. I hope that in all our broadcasting the intent is to move people towards Jesus Christ that they would become part of the

Christian family. We do programs to move people in that direction, possibly in co-operation with other agencies. We talk about direction. Public service broadcasting has strive for good; religious broadcasting (FEBC-style) has strive for good + strive for God.”

The BBC-model of religious broadcasting can be considered as the standard of public service religious broadcasting ideology. It emphasizes editorial integrity as well as the cultural importance of religious broadcasting. However, given similar ideologies, there are several ways of performing public service religious broadcasts. In these models, the roles of broadcaster and religious community differ slightly in terms of integrity. As a conclusion, I present different models of public service religion, which clarify the various possible strategic and operational solutions possible in public service broadcasting.

- 1) In the BBC model, religious programs are manufactured by the broadcaster, and the religious communities form the advisory board. Those outside the Christian traditions are also included.
- 2) In the Finnish YLE-model, the Communications Center of the Evangelical Lutheran Church produces the programs, and the public service broadcasting company, YLE, broadcasts them for free. There is a joint body for controlling the programs, which consists of representatives of both YLE and the respective Christian traditions.
- 3) In the Italian RAI -model, the broadcaster buys programs for example from the Communications Department of the Federation of the Protestant Churches of Italy or FCEI. The FCEI produces the programs independently, but it cannot sell the programs to any channel other than RAI. In RAI, there is no specialized department for religion, but religion reporters work in various departments.
- 4) In the Russian model, only broadcasts of the Russian Orthodox church can be considered as public service religious broadcasting, since the programs are broadcast from the national state channels.<sup>48</sup>  
In Russia, the Orthodox Radio and TV Agency is located in Moscow at the national Ostankino television -center. The agency produces the programs, which it sells to various channels. The Orthodox radio and tv agency can use the production equipment of the national channels.
5. In the Netherlands model, various denominations are very much involved in public service broadcasting since the three traditions: the Roman Catholic, Mainline Protestants and the Evangelicals each have their own channel (for example Elvy 1990, 72; Pragnell 1991, 66).<sup>49</sup> The churches are heavily involved in mainstream channel production.

#### 4.4.2.2 Journalism and Religion

Journalism lies at the core of mainstream publicity in this current historical phase. Journalism is an operational ideology promoting Enlightenment libertarian views of human and social life. From a sociological perspective, new forms of mass communication were needed to boost the industrialization and modernization processes of society. The core of journalism was the belief that it is possible to

achieve objective truth and to report on it. This can be called the “naive empiricism” of journalism, and was linked to the scientific world-view and belief in progress: transmission of knowledge to the uneducated, looking for causal relationships, the empirical understanding of knowledge, language, and materialism. On the basis of this world-view, religious and transcendental issues were judged as non-relevant and external to journalism. (For example Luostarinen 2002.)

The Positivist approach to meaning does not see religious symbols as epistemologically legitimate expressions on ultimate reality, because religious claims cannot be empirically verified nor falsified in positivist criteria (Wynn 1995, 414). This is why journalism avoids religious substance, but rather concentrates on the form, on its institutions and consequences in which religion is open also to journalistic criteria of truth. Since the Enlightenment, the ideal of rational impartiality has been celebrated in public discourse (Miles 1996, 13). Religious discourse has been seen as a violation of that principle. Religious culture is based on faith; journalistic culture is based on facts (Dart & Allen 1993). Religious communities believe in “positive news criteria”: the Church has the Good News, the Press has the bad news.

Not only does journalistic theory and practice exist in such an antagonistic relationship per se with religion, but there are additional other real-world tensions between the two. Journalism is an important player in the environment of religion, particularly from the perspective of the struggle for public relevance by religion. This being the case, religion must seriously consider its relationship with journalism.

The first question that should be addressed is how much should religion accommodate to its public environment of world-views and practices of journalism, and how much should it challenge them. Again there are several positions taken by religion. Those who defend the ultimate right of religion to define its discourse and world-view, argue for greater understanding of religious world-view by journalism. Those who do not problematize mainstream publicity, produce a supply of institutional press releases from a materialistic and ethical perspective as required by journalism, and also seek to avoid conflict to gain at least some publicity via mainstream journalism.

For modern and postmodern public religion, the problem is that public discourse does not recognize the legitimacy and authority of religious moral propositions, but religion is judged in the private sphere. This means that in order to gain publicity, religion must submit itself to rules of secular publicity (Hoover et al 1996, 260-261). For example, when conservative Christian discourse tries to gain public relevance, it is easily classified as “fundamentalism” since publicity is controlled by modernist and democratic discourse (Hoover et al 1996, 261-263). On the other hand, journalism sometimes tends to be focused on fundamentalist religion, because fundamentalism seems to provide the source for the “most dramatic public actions”. Liberal religion, or religion which tends to be self-reflective, tends to be ignored in mainstream publicity (see for example Miles 1996, 12). Even so, religion is seen only as one equal player among others in the marketplace of democracy and meanings, which are controlled by modernist democratic-liberalistic discourse. For example, the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) has many problems with journalists since the other churches are

also covered by “Vaticanists”.<sup>50</sup> The director of the Media Department of the Protestant Federation of Italy, Paolo Naso, crystallizes the problems:<sup>51</sup>

“Usually they do not know anything about the other Christians (denominations), and they do not speak about them, they do not write about them. So, the news agency was instituted just to press them to be more balanced and more fair in informing about other Christian denominations in the country.”

The overall relationships with the journalists and the minority churches are problematic:

“Our judgement is very negative. We are in ongoing confrontation with the journalists, who are very lazy, very ignorant and sometimes very very arrogant. It is very very hard. We have good results from the Catholic press. It is a paradox, but we can say we have good relationships with the Catholic papers, Catholic magazines, Catholic newspapers, etc. Probably because they have the same problems. I mean that the majors of the so called secular papers, they focus on the Pope only. For them, their job is to follow the Pope in Syria, in Athens, in Ukraine. To say how he was, how many people, or to exercise themselves, who will be the next Pope, and so to gamble on this and on that. So, the most serious people in the Catholic Church say that this is church gossip, this is not religious information.”

All Christian churches and denominations seek to contribute to mainstream publicity. One strategy towards this goal is in the training of Christian journalists who might make their contributions to the mainstream media. The training of communicators is for the mainstream media industry, but with Christian conviction and values. These are of concern to all Christian communities no matter whether mainline Protestant (Butler 1981, 158) or Catholic (about the Catholic church’s efforts for journalist training in Europe, see CEEM 1999, 92-93). The famous American televangelist, Pat Robertson, has launched a training of Christian journalists for the mainstream news industry (Fisher 1998, 44-49). Also, various religious journalist associations exist both within, or remain external to the mainstream journalist community (for example journalist association of Orthodox journalists<sup>52</sup> or International Catholic Union of the Press UCIP).

And while Christian traditions may train journalists in mainstream techniques, there is a tension making it difficult to apply Christian values (particularly conservative ones) and ideals on a secular journalistic level. The solution might be to equalize Christian values with human values: a task which Christian journalists should also promote.<sup>53</sup> The challenge is to train professional journalists with Christian values and spiritual insight. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland sees the same need to increase journalists understanding on the issues of the church. They have chosen the approach of seeking ways to “increase knowledge on Christian faith in journalistic training” (Kommunikoivaan kirkkoon 1992, 41). Efforts to gain visibility in mainstream media is formulated, not as a means of utilizing media instrumentally, but because

“defending the visibility of the material related to Christian life, faith and the Church is also in the interests of the press themselves and a natural and journalistically relevant part of the content of the press” (Kommunikoivaan kirkkoon 1992, 18).

The strategy of mainline Protestant churches concerning journalists is thus not so much to teach Christians to become journalists, but to train journalists to recognize the relevance of religion and Christianity.

In the arena of mainstream journalism, there are few media with an explicitly religious background; the Christian Science Monitor is known best as being a respected quality newspaper. The Christian Science Monitor was launched to improve the general morality of the press in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in 1908 (Merrill et al. 1980, 96-104). There are some examples of newspapers run by religious institutions: for example, *Osservatore Romano* in the Vatican (Catholic), *Avvenire* in Italy (Catholic), *Dagen* in Sweden (a newspaper with Pentecostal background), etc. For the most part these newspapers tend to be favoured by the members of their respective faith communities.

But there has been considerable progress in the field of religious reporting since the 1990's. For example in the USA, major studies were carried out on the relationships between religion and journalism. In the Freedom Forum – First Amendment Center, by John Dart and Jimmy Allen (1993), this classical study of the prestigious found that a serious structural tension between newsmedia and religious institutions surely existed. The common explanations for the problems, which weigh heavy against the side of journalism, are that journalists are ignorant, indifferent, and/or even hostile to religion (Hoover 1998, 56). There are various explanations for this indifference, which is basically based on the process of historical secularization, whereas religious plurality forces the notion that the public sphere is not the place for a religious struggle -as the spirit of the secular, independent state suggests (Hoover 1998, 56-57). The recently found common journalistic solution for the problem (of which virtually all agree) has been to establish religious sections or departments, hire special reporters on religion, and even to train journalists. This means a peaceful accommodation for both religion and journalism to resolve the current situation through mutual dialogue (for example Dart & Allen 1993). Many religion reporters also happen to be devout Christians, and the religious activity of journalists is increasing in general (Dean 3.11.1999; Lichter et al 2000).

An improvement in religious coverage should take place in both quantity and quality. The journalistic supply of news on religion can be very marginal. For example in Finland: it is estimated that only 1-2 per cent of journalistic media content covers explicitly religious topics. However, the extensive long-term content analysis of the amount and types of religion coverage, within the American mainstream media, shows an increase in the quantity of reporting from the 1990's (Biernatzki 1995, 21; Lichter et al 2000).

An extensive content analysis, of the amounts and types of mainstream publicity on religion in the USA between 1969 and 1998, has been provided by Lichter et al.<sup>54</sup> The analysis of Lichter et al., (2000) shows that each religious community have their own respective public profiles which characterize their nature or the public stereotypes that have been stamped on them. For example in the religious coverage of America, two groups had significantly deviant profiles from the overall media coverage. These groups were the Catholic Church, and the conservative Protestants (the Christian Right). In the case of the Catholic Church, the topics of lay-clergy -relationships, women's position, sexual morality, internal church dissent, and euthanasia were linked most often with Catholicism. On the other hand, the news profile of conservative Protestantism was dominated by such issues as science and religion relationships, sexual morality of all kinds, and pub-

lic school prayer. This is explained by conservative Christianity's strive for public relevance and domination on issues of public morality. This shows that news coverage reflects the identity and intentions of the particular traditions: at least with some level of accuracy.

It seems to be a universal rule that all religious communities (even if in the hegemonic position in the society) believe they are treated unfairly by secular journalists who they say will seek only to report scandals or irrelevant perspectives when reporting news from religious communities, if they report anything at all.<sup>55</sup> Some tension between journalism and religion is inevitable and permanent as in the case of any other institution of society. But the conflict is different in the case of religion since the ultimate reason is the conflict between the worldview of religion and the ideology of journalism (Hoover 1998, 142-143). It seems evident that in the current situation religious communities must adapt to requirements of journalism in order to gain publicity (Hoover 1998, 148), even though the proper degree of accommodation is always debated in faith communities. Some communities avoid all kinds of publicity, even positive. Some are more moderate and some more aggressively utilize publicity (Hoover 1998, 148). The concept of the public sphere regarding religion is dominated by "consensus discourse", which strongly builds civil religion and moderate conceptions about religion. Religious discourse is severely limited in the public sphere (Hoover 1998, 209). Religion can be talked about, but not acted on, which means that religion becomes like a hobby without consequences (Carter in Hoover 1998, 209). The problem with the journalistic coverage of religion is that journalism does not have the proper concepts or vocabulary to talk about religion, other than from an institutional or political approach (as conflict or struggle for power). Even journalists who themselves are from a religious background cannot communicate on religion with other journalists in the journalistic culture (Hoover 1998, 210-211).

Paradoxically, among journalists and journalistic theories, there is a lack of normative basis of religion reporting (Hoover 1998, 214-215). There is no clear normative basis against which journalistic goals and performance on religion should be judged. Is the increase in quantity enough, or what kind of qualitative changes should be made? As Hoover (1998, 215) puts it:

"In the simplest terms, the question is whether journalism is to *be* this improved discourse, or whether it is merely to *cover* the discourse. If it is to be the former, the self-perception of professional journalists cannot accommodate it. If it is to be the latter, is it really serving any purpose? Coverage of the 'culture wars' is generally thought to be inadequate if it merely recounts the various sides of the various battles without doing something more to interrogate them and make them accessible to readers and viewers. Thus, merely covering the discourse is not quite enough... The best religion journalism is actually about making various private claims *understandable* in public."

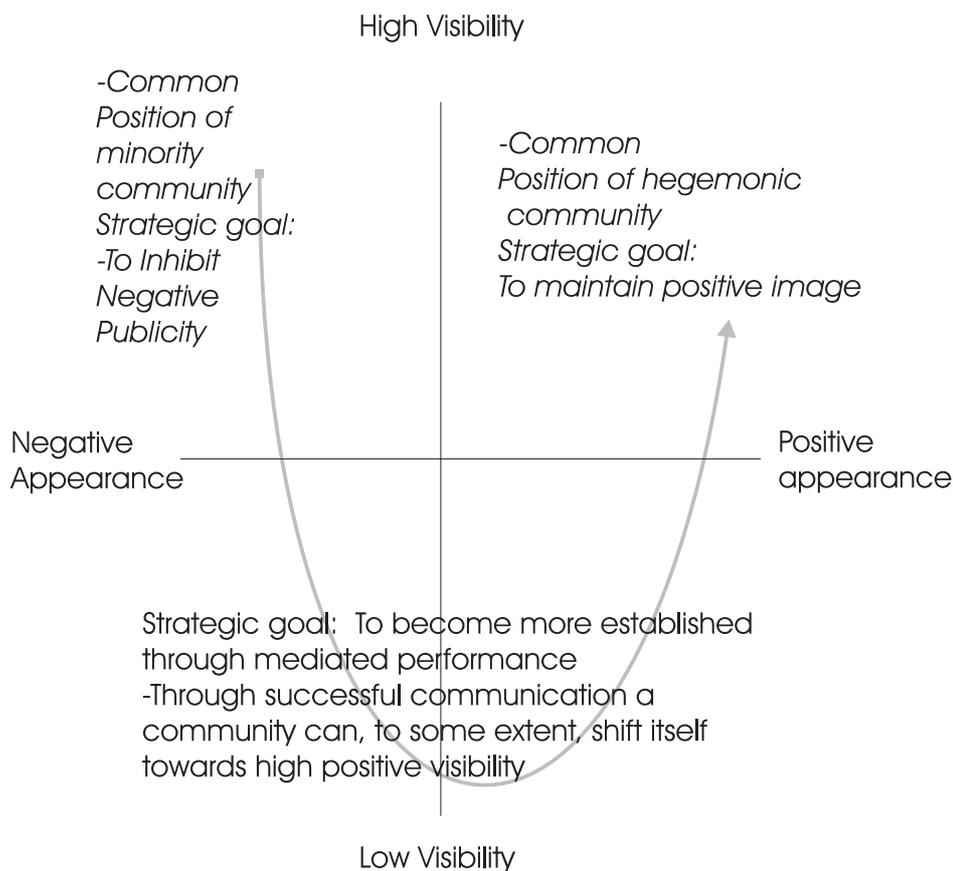
Dart & Allen (1993) provide a set of operational recommendations for both the religious communicators and for journalists on how to improve coverage of religion. John Dart has later provided an operational source- and handbook on religious news coverage, from which to find institutions, sources and tips for news coverage in the case of particular tradition (Dart 1998). There are several operational ways in which religion can perform media management. By, for example, recognizing that bishops are important media personalities, knowing the impor-

tance of Christian holidays and celebrations, developing an expertise on ethical issues, by becoming a critic on social and cultural issues, by providing public mediated national rituals, etc.<sup>56</sup>

Certainly we can say that to some extent religion can fight back with its own weapons of mainstream publicity: producing PR-campaigns, lobbying, doing media management etc., and in this way it can gain a positive image and get its message through. The strategic emphasis of mainline churches, in particular, is visibility and relevance in journalistic publicity and discussion (for example Shafer 17.11.2000; Buddenbaum 1996, 51-60).

Religious communities can have several strategic positions in mainstream publicity depending on their relationship and position to mainstream society and

## Position of Religious Community in Relation To the Mainstream Publicity



PICTURE 15 shows the various possible positions of religious community in mainstream publicity. Through successful mediated communication a community seeks to influence its reputation. The picture is applied from Manheim et al. 1984.

values. Through skilful public relations (PR), along with communications strategies and practices, they can improve both their visibility and their reputation through promotions. The image and the amount of community visibility can be transformed from that of a low visibility with a negative reputation towards that of a high visibility with a positive reputation. This is a long-term process and requires a compatible and long-term communications strategy along with competent PR- and communications operations and practices. Virtually each religious community can be placed on any locker in the figure (Mannheim et al. 1984) that illustrates the amount of publicity and reputation given to particular religious community.

#### 4.5 Mainstream Media Theory and Religion

Media theorizing is always bound to particular values and premises that are unavoidable (Nordenstreng 1995, 64). What one can still do is to recognize which are the values that influence our thought on media performance, whether or not they are applicable, and what follows from the systematical application of those values? Media (and more precisely journalism) is always in the service of the established social and political order, and media always reflects the values and views of the powerholders, no matter which media theory is applied. Also, the views of competing media theories are considered to be deviant by each other's theory (in Altschull's words in Nordenstreng 1995, 58).

When we are analyzing various normative media theories we find that communication theory is a multi-layered phenomenon, which means that each layer adds complexity to the model. The largest layer is the public social philosophy of communication, while the inside layer is the personal ideals of the communicator (White 2000, 52). From the perspective of public morals, normative media theory has the following functions in communications systems (White 2000, 60-61). It:

- 1) Gives more of a general moral basis for pragmatic communications activities
- 2) Provides a way of assessing, how particular media activity fulfils certain moral obligations
- 3) Criticizes former (or other) media activities and shows better ways to do the job (purification)
- 4) Transforms media use into public ritualism with quasi-religious functions
- 5) Provides the basis of common codes of ethics
- 6) Provides criteria for quickly identifying abuses of norms and ways how to avoid the abuses
- 7) Provides a set of ideals for media workers as a basis of socialization
- 8) Provides guidelines for media policy and media legislation and for the public good

From the classical division between liberalism and authoritarianism, one should move towards more particular communications theories (like religious media theory).

#### 4.5.1 Communitarian Media Theory

Communitarianism can also be understood as a more general (Western) alternative social philosophy in response to postmodern liberalism (for example Etzioni 1995). Emphasizing community and the collective is a response to Enlightenment individualism and atomism. The Enlightenment roots of libertarian theory of the press have been presented and analyzed by Christians et al (1993, 18-48). Collectivism is the most obvious alternative to Enlightenment individualism, when the social organism forms the normative paradigm. Then the emphasis is on the "politics of the common good" instead of individual rights. (Christians et al 1993, 44-45.) The contemporary journalism ethics and concepts of public communication surely originate from the Enlightenment, but the current trend is towards communitarian orientation of which the rise of the concept of public journalism is an indication. (Merrill 2002, 26; Merrill et al. 2001, 1-25.) In "public journalism" the concerns of people make news and citizens can even write news themselves (for example on communitarian media theory in the context of South African press, see for example Skjerdal 2001). Also, the reconsideration of religious media fit into this current view of a paradigm shift in ethics of public communication.

Communitarianism, as a concept, has been traditionally used as a describing the characteristics of, for example, the traditional African state of mind, which is communal rather than Western individual. In communalist thought, community welfare dominates all the actions of the individual and makes the individual subject to the community.

"Nothing done (or not done) either by the individual or by groups is not considered good unless it has positive relevance for the community" (Moemeka 1999).

Under this submission, of the individual to the community, is the assumption that

"whatever is of benefit to the community, will eventually be of benefit to its individual members" (Moemeka 1999).

Also, Communalist practice often equals temporal and spiritual dominance in the persons of the leaders of the communities (in traditional communities). Religion pervades life in truly communalistic communities.

"Communalism demands that people's lives reflect a solid blend of what is regarded as holy and what is accepted as socially permissible. There is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the nonreligious, or between the spiritual and the material arenas of life" (Mbiti in Moemeka 1999).

When the traditional communities have been exposed by the modern (Western) media, it has increased demands for individual rights, which has led to the negative consequences of the destruction of the traditional communalist structure, mentality and morality (Moemeka 1999).

Communitarianism or communalism has both traditional (religious) and modern secular versions. The previous is usually applied in societies of developing countries. The latter is a new-found principle: a response for the moral crisis generated by individualistic liberalism (see for example Etzioni 1995).

In traditional communalism, ethics is based on the principle of the supremacy of the community (Faniran 1999; Moemeka 1999). In traditional communities, the predominant mode of communication is interpersonal communication. In each community (of faith), there is a dominant Root-Paradigm around which values, norms, and symbols are organized, and which forms the core content of communication maintained and disseminated constantly (applied on the basis of Biernatzki 1991; 1993, 125-136). However, the community is in constant tension between the two “centrifugal and centripetal forces”:

“The centripetal forces pull towards higher degree of community service, while the centrifugal forces pull towards higher level of differentiation, individuation, self-expression and sub-group liberty” (Etzioni in Faniran 1999).

There are inherently differences between “secular communitarianism” as normative social philosophy, “religious communitarianism” as a form of religious community that is organized around the revelation, and the “national communitarianism” of the developing countries where the challenges are in the combining of the traditional and modern societies.<sup>57</sup> There are also tensions between secular communitarianism and religious communitarianism. Where communitarianism as a social philosophy seeks to derive its values from the more general socio-historical principles that can be seen as beneficial for the community by scientific measures (such as preventing divorce diminishes risk of crime among the children etc., Etzioni 1995, 73-77), the religious values are derived from the transcendental revelation. Religious circles criticize communitarianists on the lack of values other than consensus within the group. Religious communities are certainly also communitarian by nature, but norms, values, and social relations are organized around the religious beliefs and revelation of the community.<sup>58</sup>

Communitarianism as a social philosophy has made its contribution to media theory (Nordenstreng 1995). It recognizes the legitimacy of communities (also religious ones) to disseminate and maintain their culture and beliefs. Grass roots media, and particularly the Internet, favour minority groups very much and provide means to challenge established religious communities and structures. Communitarian theory stresses on the activity of communities as communications agents and their small media activities, or it stresses their efforts to gain access to mainstream media. For example, Communitarian theory might stress efforts to gain visibility in newsmedia or acquire airtime in broadcasting (see tenets of Christian communitarian media theory, Chapter 4.5.2).

Communitarian theory takes the cosmology of a particular community for granted on the basis of the values of one’s communication ethics and goals. The Communitarian theory (according to Nordenstreng 1995, 63) has the following characteristics:

- It has characteristics from both the postmodern cultural theory and the theological communications theory (particularly Catholic)

- It denies universal rationality, objective knowledge, and professionalism as a basis of communication
- Grass roots communities, values, rituals, and their meanings and mediation are the core starting points of communications, rather than the "transmission of messages"
- The main goal of media is to serve as a tool of cultural and community formation (communitarianism) as well as to establish larger harmony (cultural negotiation)

Media studies is a very different science compared to sociology, because media studies is a very normative branch of science. There is a very strong -how the things SHOULD be -orientation.<sup>59</sup> This is why humanistic tradition so easily comes close to communication studies, and why the ethics issues of human and social development are so strong in this field. As Robert White puts it:<sup>60</sup>

"We are not value-free, and we do not want to be value-free. We accept intentionality and values as part of the discipline."

And this is also the reason why religion and media meet each other in media studies. The Robert White communitarian media theory with the ritual view on media as formulated by James Carey, and the Post-Second Vatican Council document "Communio et Progressio" form the basis of communitarian media theory (White 1994, 34-39). According to that theory, communications is seen as celebration of common beliefs and identity. Robert White has crystallized the Basic Principles of Communitarian media theory as follows:<sup>61</sup>

- 1) Communication is centrally and primarily a community building process.
- 2) Communication is not (primarily) an information transmission process.
- 3) The success of communication must be primarily judged in terms of progress of the community.
- 4) Communitarian communication tries to promote social possibilities of people
- 5) Communitarian communication is related to so called public journalism, which supports participation of the citizens to the supply of mainstream media.
- 6) Communitarian media theory strongly supports alternative media and grass roots community media.
- 7) Communitarian media theory sees communication primarily as a dialogue, and it wants to encourage emancipatory and discussive democracy.
- 8) Communitarian media is participatory and believes in participation.
- 9) Communitarian media theory believes in freedom of speech.
- 10) Communitarian media theory is centrally related to human rights.

According to communitarian premises, one could and should re-think the mission of the press. Mainstream publicity now encourages the "spiral of silence" by ignoring minorities as well as non-conformist views. The alternative would be "journalism of conversation" on public issues (Christians et al. 1993, 86-87). The

press should not have objectivity as their goal, since it is not possible. The goal should be to provide “truthful narratives”. News should thus be understood as “social narratives”, which does not need to mean subjectivism or romanticism (Christians et al 1993, 116, 118-119).

The implication of this communitarian notion is the demand for “neutral discourse in public life” is not acceptable, because people are forced to speak with someone else’s language “and thus never be true to their own” (Christians et al. 1993, 189). Antonio Gramsci has stated that human consciousness is located only in the world-views, because they are never individually generated but reflect communal life. This argument would reject the notion of the legitimacy of the secular language in the public sphere as being the only legitimate discourse. This means that normatively, religious discourse also has the right to be present in journalism. The only limitation might be pragmatic: it might be so that for the wider public it is difficult to follow religious logics and concepts. The language of “the ultimates” is needed for human perfection of meanings. This would mean, in practice, adding both quality and a quantity of religious reporting in the news media and giving “world-view narratives” access to the public arena. (Christians et al. 1993, 189-190.)

Mainstream normative media theory is usually assessed according to dimensions between the ultimate emphasis on community (leads to authoritarianism as extremist position) or the individual (leads to anarchy or nihilism as extremist position; Merrill 1997, 215). In other words, the emphasis on communicative thought can exist either in “order” (neo-authoritarians, groupists) or “chaos” (libertarian orientation, individualism; Merrill 2002, 23-25). Communitarianism is basically a paradigm of order, rather than a paradigm of freedom. But communitarianism can be politically left or right oriented. When order-oriented on the left, it leans towards neo-Marxism; when order-oriented on the right, it leans towards social conservatism (Merrill 2002, 26, 27).

For the libertarian argument it is important that people can get information on both sides - otherwise they cannot decide which is good and which is bad. This is the old libertarian argument presented by John Milton in 1644, at a time when the church banned evil literature (Merrill et al 2001, 6).<sup>62</sup> Liberal communication structure allows “great diversity in public messages and mass media” (Merrill 2002, 23).

Dunwoody and Griffin (in Merrill et al 2001, 199) state that a news medium in a non-pluralistic community helps to maintain the status quo. The press would play a role in active maintenance of community stability, and would emphasize good development over bad and would cease reporting on conflicts. Media in such a context would be a kind of “Community booster”. The dream of such a communitarian ideal would be “a community of communities”. And inside of the communities would exist an “all is now a kind of happy conformity, group loyalty, and feeling of personal security” (Merrill et al. 2001, 200). What would communitarian mainstream journalism and public communication then look like? Merrill et al. (2001, 198-199) gives the answer:

“...as in the case of newspapers, broadcast and cable stations may be regulated by their own communities and basically financed as they have been. Information harmful to the common good would be handled very carefully, if at all. The emphasis

would shift from negativism to positivism, entertainment to education, irrelevancy to relevancy, discordance to cooperation, and despair to hope. The focus would be on group interest, not on private interest."

Communitarian media ethics is challenging both social responsibility and the related public service paradigm as well as libertarian theory (White 1999):

"(The) European Enlightenment model to keep cultural values, especially religious beliefs, in private sphere was no longer valid. Values had to be brought out in the open, and they had to be recognized and respected by others, not swept under the rug as if they did not exist... We must have open discussion about values (dialogue) which enables every cultural group to preserve its own values, but then to discover higher levels of common symbols in which we can all truly agree." (White 1999.)

Professionalization favoured by bureaucratic rationalism was "colonizing our life space" and destroying the sense of community (White 1999).

"The model of liberal democracy with its principle of public service and universal professionalization (implying the conscience-binding pledge to use scientific knowledge to serve society) emerged after 1850 and became dominant in the world by the 1930s. This brought with it the social responsibility and public service normative theories of mass communication." (White 1999.)

Communitarian media theory assumes a large use of non-profit media and voluntary workers with an objective to create dialogue in the community (White 1999). Community media is also important for grass roots organizations in the communities. Particularly radio is important because of its oral nature, which does not require much skill or formal training (White 1999). Within the communitarian media agenda are group communication, group media, and "Consciousness Raising Approaches" (White 1999). For communication studies, the communitarian approach has the following agenda (White 1999):

- 1) Convergence model of communication from social interaction approach in social sciences.
- 2) Ritual model of mass communication proposed by James Carey and forum model by Horace Newcomb.
- 3) Development of critical-democratic approaches in communication theory with particular emphasis on alternative meaning-construction.
- 4) Qualitative methodology derived from critical approach.
- 5) Emphasis on media activities (White 1999): emphasis is on community controlled media (possible to use even if other types of media are judged as illegal for grass roots communities or minorities)
- 6) Use of alternative media in the communitarian mode:
  - emphasis on small, inexpensive and mobile,
  - controlled democratically by a particular movement,
  - revealing oppressing ideology through discourse analysis.

The conventional and classical scheme for structuring normative media theories is one founded already by the classical Four theories of the Press (Siebert et al. 1956), and since then has been quoted as the de facto standard (even though criticized for example by Nordenstreng 1995, 52-64). These theories do not have much

to say about religion. But in the newest model, the communitarian theory, there is a special place for religion in the very heart of it.

#### 4.5.2 The Basic Tenets of Christian Communitarian Media

The Christian view on social philosophy and ethics can be traced as a part of a more general “map” of views between polarities and as a source or emphasis of ethics between community (communitarianism) vs. individual (libertarianism). The relevance to types of sources of ethics are: ethics of responsibilities (ethics based on conviction) or ethics based on outcomes (utilitarian teleology). Christians can be placed as communitarians stressing on the ethics of responsibilities, which means accepting universal obligatory rules as norms of thought and behaviour (on various types of ethical reasoning, see for example Merrill in Nordenstreng et al. 1998, 259-260). However, there is no other general epistemological ground that we can rely on for religious media communication than that of the theology, tradition, and communicative ideologies of a particular religious community. In an era of postmodernism, there cannot be any other point of departure. Thus, community is a legitimate starting point for the analysis of religious media communication. The preliminary tenets of religious communitarian media theory can be put as follows:

- 1) Religious institution is the cause, *prima causa*, of religious media communication. Thus the phenomenon must be evaluated against the intentions of the particular tradition.
- 2) Christian religious approach to ethics of communication is compatible with the social philosophical movement called communitarianism. The basic approach can be applied to religious communities as well as religious communication.
- 3) Normativity is a communitarian issue, in both production and consumption of religious media.
- 4) The empirical examples show religious media as primarily authoritarian and normative (for example the case of Russian Orthodox Church or that of Evangelical Protestant media).

The case of the Russian Orthodox Church equaling itself with the mainstream society is an important theoretical contribution to communitarian media theory. In Russia, Orthodox Christianity seeks to maintain itself as a transcendental authority of the state in the spirit of authoritarian communitarianism. The ROC has developed a doctrine of the “Holy Canonical Territory of Russia,” the Russian Orthodox Church being the spiritual core of its meaning of oneness of both state and religion (the Russian case, Chapter 3.4.6.5.2). Also, Christian communities in other countries are tending to equal nation and Christianity by saying “Italy is a Catholic nation” or “Finland is a Lutheran nation”. This means the communitarian connection between particular community and religion is very relevant no matter the size, whether that community is thought to be a nation or a local rural community.

The respective universal - particular -tension remains unresolved, which means that from the perspective of a given Christian community it is sometimes

reasonable to argue for universal equality with other traditions, at least when a particular community is in a minority position. But, in turn, when a given tradition has hegemonic position, particularistic arguments about the privileges of that particular tradition start to be far more attractive. This means that hegemonic tradition usually wants to defend itself against efforts to weaken its social and cultural position and significance. There is thus an unresolved tension between individual and societal power, and between particularism and universality. This means the empirical solution for this tension is to take the community as *sui generis* –a starting point. Accepting this solution means that sometimes a particular community can use particularist and sometimes it can use universalist arguments depending on the position. Community must not be all the way consistent with universality or particularity, because the values of the community can be taken as a starting point. The secular state cannot discriminate in any area, but religious community can act in situations on the basis of its own doctrines and values. Religious community is ultimately about religious revelation, which it tries to interpret in a given context so that the original transcendental values can remain applicable as relevant to the present situation and context. This kind of communitarian epistemology is the only possible starting point for religious community and its communication.

I have developed a Christian application of Communitarian media theory on the basis of my analysis of the religious media communication of the various Christian traditions and in relation to more general communitarian media theory. Christian Communitarian media theory considers the particularistics of Christian media communication, but is also linked to the more general communitarian media theory. The Catholic communications document, *Communio et Progressio*, actually establishes the foundation of communitarian orientation in media theory.<sup>63</sup>

There is a fundamental distinction between libertarian and Christian-communitarian media theory. When, for example, soap opera scriptwriters defend themselves by saying that they simply reflect life and present the truth: the Christian-communitarian communicator answers that “our job is to portray life not only as it is - but also as it could be in Christ” (Gray 2000, Chapter 2). The common good and principles of proper life for individuals are thus defined from the Christian communitarian-revelational basis. In the following, I have crystallized the particular characteristics of Christian media communication. These principles are found in each case of religious media communication regardless of the community or country. These characteristics of Christian media communication are as follows:

1) *Diversity*

Uniformism and control is an enemy of religious communications dynamics. Diversity of producers as well as goals and messages should be allowed, because it is a pre-requisite of community vitality. Communication and community should be understood in terms of identification and unity (for example Babin 1991, 197).

- 2) *Inter-denominational plurality*  
Co-existence of several denominations must be a starting point. They should seek mutual co-operation and respect, but also allow each community to follow their respective media theory.
- 3) *Networking*  
Networking is a very important and successful strategy particularly when a given community is in a minority position compared to the expressed goals of mediated communication. Networking is also a compatible strategy in the modern production processes of the media industry, particularly in the content-producers and distributors -chain.
- 4) *Primacy of the community*  
Christian communication is always based on the core vision of the community and is basically a communitarian community-building and performance project.
- 5) *Negotiated professionalism*  
It seems to be an almost universal principle that communications teams or departments of religious institutions are poorly resourced when compared to the goals that are being set before them. This can perhaps be interpreted as an indicator of immature or unprofessional strategic communication planning on the part of these institutions.  
Trend and emphasis towards professionalism is seen in all Christian communities. But Christian communication can never be totally professional, because of its dependency on the volunteer efforts of smaller communities. Also, in larger communities both theologians and lay-people have many communications responsibilities, and their main competence must remain in a field of a religious nature, rather than in communications and media. Communicative skills should be seen as complementary, which means that professionalism should not be over-emphasized. The strategy should be rather on educating key-people in communities to communicate better: not to make them professionals. The proper interpretation of religious media communication should come from a communitarian direction: religious media is an important indicator of communications dynamics of a particular community, which is realized according to available resources. Professional criteria should not be applied solely, but rather the criteria of a negotiated professionalism.
- 6) *Voluntary work & grass roots involvement*  
Christian media communications cannot be completely professional, but always requires voluntary work, particularly in minority communities. This volunteer workforce is a permanent characteristic of Christian media communication, and much attention should be focused on the recruiting, the enabling, and the training of voluntary personnel. Naturally volunteers themselves expect to have some degree of personal integrity, and individual workers must also be allowed to have their opinions in order to help maintain their motivation (individual religious media theory). Voluntary participation is a strength, but it also generates difficulties in the achieving and the maintaining of a common vision, goal, and the quality of communication.

- 7) *Small media emphasis*  
 Since religious communications is basically about internal communication of religious communities, small media (audio and video cassettes, tracts, booklets, the Web, etc.) is important. Small media can be used very effectively, for example, to mobilize individual members of religious communities.
- 8) *Recognizing the micro-communities in communication*  
 Since there are several sub-groups and interest groups within each religious tradition, each one respectively must be reached through albeit very narrow paths of communication. Each sub-group has its own respective style and culture of interaction and communication, which should be recognized and respected.
- 9) *Universality in diversity*  
 The previous plurality generates need for universality in diversity, which means concentrating on the uniting factors when attempting to reach a large potential audience with religious messages.
- 10) *Tension between revelation and dialogue*  
 There is no fixed measure of the combination of religious revelation, dialogue, or accommodation of that revelation to the environment and audience characteristics. Again, operational solutions must be negotiated each time depending on the goals and contexts of communication.
- 11) *Negotiated openness to culture by form and content*  
 Religious format is the key concept for maintaining the integrity of religious revelation, communicative quality, and relevance within a given media culture and audience.

These principles are deduced from the various empirical cases of Christian communication in various communities and countries. These general tenets seem to provide a solid basis for understanding and practicing religious media communication properly. From these principles we can now turn to evaluation of the overall quality of religious media communication.

#### **4.5.3 From Theory to Practice: Evaluation of Performance of Mediated Religion**

Overall quality of communications is an increasingly multi-layered phenomenon. For example, the seven dimensions of quality of media can be listed as follows (applied from Nukari et al. 1995, 45-48):

- 1) Technical quality
- 2) Content quality: content norms
- 3) Quality in comparison with competitors
- 4) Quality as a product
- 5) Ideological quality
- 6) Quality as influence to the environment (societal, cultural and ecological)
- 7) Quality from the perspective of the audience.

The quality of religious media texts is an even more difficult and multi-layered phenomenon, since the conventional measurements of quality cannot be applied as such. For example, Loukina et al. (1996, 43-45) have used three basic dimensions in measuring quality of religious radio programs: creative potential (personnel qualification), financial support and transmission, and denominational affiliation of production (primacy on internal denominational affairs considered as a negative). There is a very crucial symbiotic relationship between communications technology and the success of the church.

“The effectiveness of the apostolate in every age has depended on the Church’s ability to make use of the dominant forms of communication” (Zukowski 1994, 176.)

This sentence has two implications: *First*, there is an important link between institutional religion and communications theology, and *Secondly*, the concept of effectivity is relevant in the case of religious communication. It means that communication can and should make an effective contribution to the environment and/or the community. Communication thus must not be performed for the sake of communication, but the effectivity approach should have at least some value when evaluating performance of Christian communicators. Then, what can we say about the effects, quality, and relevance of religious media communication?

I would answer that it depends on who is asking. From the perspective of evangelical religious institution: the instantaneous conversion, “the triggering effect” is probably the mostly preferred. Whereas the liberal mainline church might be more interested in the social prophetic role, or the symbolic significance of religious media. But the legitimacy of religious communication remains highly internal and an institutional matter, which reaches to the roots of the sacred transcendental beliefs of the community. Thus religious media communication is always and ultimately about mediating the transcendental to the immanent: God’s salvific revelation to the lost human beings.

Yet, the same principles of “good communication” as in the media industry in general are applicable also in religious media communication. It seems that what remains, as far as a criteria for quality religious communication, is our every day perception of “a good speech”, “a good presentation” or “a good writing”. There are so many components present in religious media communication that make it impossible to judge in a conceptually holistic or universally compatible way. All the efforts to evaluate religious performance must be contextualized properly. The starting point should always be the understanding of the inner logics, goals, and the ideology of communication of each communicative agent. After that, one must decide how to emphasize the various dimensions of evaluation, which are often contradictory. The final decision on performance of religious media communication is always a negotiated compromise, which in turn makes a valid overall and universal comparison of the topic very difficult.

One can say that the larger the amount of positive visibility in the mainstream media, the better the performance compared to the publicity of the society as a whole (more established institutions get more and positive publicity), and in comparison to the resources of the community (making most of the limited resources, even by getting more positive attention than you would expect on the basis of the significance of community). One can consider the following di-

mensions of evaluation of mediated performance for any religious communication effort:

- 1) The amount of media activities within the community (signifies the communication dynamics, resources and available possibilities).
- 2) Relative freedom to operate without external pressure on the content of the media texts.
- 3) Amount and content of feedback, when it is relevant to gain feedback.
- 4) Theological quality judged by members of the religious community (theology= religious content of the text, meanings to be communicated).
- 5) The communicative quality: how does the text communicate with the target audience a) culture, and b) situation.
- 6) The amount of people involved in production (compared to critical needs), whether they be professionals, lay people or volunteers.
- 7) Judgement of the product according to the professional standards of the particular media industry.
- 8) The amount of actual audience compared to potential audience.
- 9) Judgement of the internal community audience and the "outside" secular audience.
- 10) The continuity of communication: how the media activities are established.
- 11) "Media Effects": when it is possible to evaluate with some degree of measure. Religious media may have five kinds of effects: 1) cultivation effects in the long term, 2) uses and gratifications function, 3) a "triggering effect" in the short term, 4) prophetic influence and significance on a moral and political level, (to tell what is right and what is wrong) and 5) symbolic significance as an expression of power and legitimacy of religious discourse (in the ability to produce mediated communication).
- 12) Make a judgement of the surrounding environment as to the relevance and communicativity of religious communication. The environment does not necessarily agree on the values and norms presented in religious communication, which is not necessarily an indication of poor quality of communication.
- 13) Communicativity (they are able to understand the text) and relevance of the media text to the target audience.

These criteria can be applied from either a macro-level (from the level of the society as a whole to evaluate all the existing religious media communication) or from a micro-level where it is contextualized with regard to the size, strategic position and resources of the given community. On this level we must evaluate what kind of role media and communication play in the overall strategy of the community. Then we compare these criteria to both the possible, and the potential performance of the community.

The question is how important is mediated performance in the overall strategy of particular community. Against this emphasis one can evaluate whether communications resources and decisions are satisfactory or not. To act rationally with the goal of effectiveness, one should apply effective techniques of communication and persuasion. Communication studies (especially audience research) and professional marketing practises should be valued and applied in the most

effective means (according to the theological, ethical and resource limitations).

As an overall assessment of performance, one must say that the challenges of religious media communication are dramatically increasing. Emergence of constantly new media technologies causes a major lack of resources in religious communication within religious communities.

## 4.6 Conclusions

Media and religion are very much compatible phenomena. From a holistic and systematic perspective it is evident that media is a suitable platform for all kinds of religious communication with various goals and messages. Religious conversion is also possible solely through media (see for example success of media missions, for example in former Soviet Union or Asia). The question of whether media can be used as a tool of evangelism has taken on a considerable amount of debate. My conclusion is that such debate is useless, considering it rather reflects the various theological conceptions of the parties involved. Success in mediated religion is a matter of religious tradition and media culture. More relevant is to analyze the particular media culture and to seek one's own possibilities or limitations within it. Debating the influences of religious media on a general level is fruitless. Instead, one must very carefully define the intended goals, the audience, and the media culture context. Only in relation to these particular dimensions can any valid analysis or recommendations be made.

The Influence and the effectivity of religious media communication always depends on the theology, goals and expectations, as well as on the targeted audience of the particular religious media activity. One can judge effectivity or ineffectivity of communication only in relation to these particular criteria.

As we have seen from various perspectives, utilization of media is one of the main strategies of Christianity in its battle to re-establish its universality in the wake of the challenges of modernity and post-modernity. Christianity aspires to use media technology to enhance its performance in postmodern society and culture. In this sense, the medialization, brandification and the technologization of religion seems to be inevitable. A Summary on the main findings of this study is as follows:

- 1) *The most important factor* that explains and determines the communication of the community is its strategic position in the society: is it a hegemonic or minority community in that particular context? If community has hegemonic position in society, it has three various types of advantages:
  - it guarantees access to public service media,
  - it ensures visibility and rather positive treatment in the mainstream media
  - it ensures that the cognitive teachings and core beliefs of the community have an important part in the civil religion of the society.

Hegemonic position ensures that the communications dynamics of a given community can have as much influence as possible on the surrounding society and culture as well as the individuals. In this position, its communications dynamics can be actualized to a large extent, simply because of previous privileges.

- 2) *One of the most important factors* shaping and influencing religious media communication (in addition to national legislation, societal and cultural position and resources of the tradition) is the dominant media ideology of the tradition (normative religious media theory). A related factor in explaining Christian communications dynamics is the ecumenical construction of Root-Christianity. This means accepting the nature of Christianity as being a universal, salvific, global, and a mission-minded religion.
- 3) *Modern media technology* powerfully challenges the ecclesiology of Christian communities: the concept of the true and proper nature of the Christian community. It creates a serious question: can genuine Christian community exist virtually having only temporal dimension through media without spatial dimension - a location? Media technology also challenges the role and nature of authority and the concept of commitment. Mediated religion probably favours charismatic religious communities and leaders. These types of communities and persons are highly compatible with media logics, of which such a compatibility is more a crucial requirement of success in the contemporary mediated marketplace of religion.
- 4) *Religious media* must be understood primarily from the perspective of adaptation. Religious media is a logical outcome of the advancement of secularization. Religious media is both a tool to challenge secularisation as well as one to perform reflection and adaptation to the surrounding society.
- 5) *Religious media communication* can be said to be effective and successful if it is capable of contributing to the maintaining and advancing of the relevance of the given community. Religious media has also been able to assist in the overall expansion of Christianity into non-Christian areas of the world through broadcast mission. This has happened for example in post-Soviet regions, in Asia, in Southeast Asia and in other parts of the world. On the other hand, religious media communication has not been successful from the standpoint that it has not slowed the progress of secularization.
- 6) *Christian communication* can be seen, for the most part, to be an expression of certain dynamics. The four most important elements of the dynamics are
  - 1) universal root-Christianity,
  - 2) the cultural position of the community (hegemony vs. minority position),
  - 3) the internal particular characteristics (both theological and traditional), and
  - 4) the religious format, which is formed in interaction between internal and external factors.
- 7) *The explicated relationship* between the sacred and the secular is one of the most important determinants and a locus of negotiation in religious media communication. There are two basic solutions to this relationship: the liberal and the conservative .

- 8) *A minority community* can use its position to achieve positive visibility in the media, if it is able to perform better in a sense that it succeeds in presenting itself as “an exotic” minority community, or as an important resource and contribution to society and culture (exotic but important -strategy).
- 9) *Conflict and conformism* are the main concepts that indicate relationship between mainstream culture and religious community. You should then seek agreement on the one hand, and be in prophetic-ethical conflict on the other hand.
- 10) *It is easier for religious community* to gain publicity in local media than in regional or national media. Also, the significance of local publicity may increase, if the audience is already familiar with the community.
- 11) *The more developed and wealthier* the society is: the more diversified and multiplied is the religious system and religious media communication. In this sense the system of religious media communication follows the logics of the external society.
- 12) *It is more openly recognized* that Enlightenment rationalism is not the only one possible intellectual strategy and world-view. There are signs of increased relevance of alternative world-views and discourses (for example Shegog 1993, 87). This is the hope and future view of Christian communicators. More ritual and value-based understanding of both media theory and practice will leave room for proper understanding of mediated religion. To remain relevant in the competitive market of media religion, Christian churches need more “media idealists” and creative artists (Elvy 1990, 95). This approach is part of the solution and future of Christian media communications.

The mediated performance efforts and strategies of religious communities are carried out in an environment of tensions and contingencies. The basic societal dilemmas remain unresolved, but through the Communitarian approach, these tensions can be negotiated and fulfilled on the community level. Each community has legitimacy to communicate its own discourse and gain as much relevance and visibility as it can. The success of such efforts must be evaluated against a multi-layered pattern of various dimensions. The ultimate decision as to the success of a mediated performance is basically made by the respective community itself, since it has also generated the particular Normative Religious Media Theory. The overall success is then measured out in the mediated marketplace of religion.

A general tension between liberalism and communitarianism remains unresolved, since religious communities also enjoy the freedoms granted by democratic-liberal ideals and societal theory. On the other hand, it has been the modernist-liberalist ideology, which has defeated religion very much in the West, and has generated the current crisis that questions its authority and relevance. If forced to choose, an anti-modern strategy would probably establish the goals of institutional religion better than the modernist option. But in contemporary post-modern context, mediated religion must be seen as a performance strategy with its limited, but anyhow important possibilities to maintain and to some extent re-

establish the authority and relevance of religion. In this process of mutual dialogue, modern media religion inevitably is forced to transform its logic to follow more the logics of media. This may generate a threat to traditional religion, but it is also a device that is crucial if mediated religion is to remain relevant in a post-modern mediated world. Mediated religion, and virtual religious community are inevitable outcomes of this performance strategy. They may be the second-best option, but given that the modernization and secularization paradigms remain relevant to some extent, mediated religion seems to be far more important as a crucial counter-strategy.

The tension between authority and freedom, individual and community, remains; and the development of communications technologies even boost the relevance of the debate. Given that religion perseveres primarily as a systemic institution (in comparison to erosion to cultural resource only), mediated religion will play a constantly increasing role in the supply of religious needs of individuals. It is probably so that religion must develop constantly more sophisticated and niche-targeted communication services to reach diversified audiences who hold various expectations for performance of religion. The religious function will be more intertwined to accommodate various strategies of religious performance. Ultimately, it depends on the community itself, whether in this competitive contemporary mediated marketplace of religion, it can utilize media for its strategic benefit.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> White 25.3.2002, Plenary on Global Media Ethics seminary.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.nrb.org/statemen.htm>. Page read 31.10.2002. More detailed code of ethics is for example found in Armstrong 1979, 178-184.
- <sup>3</sup> For example The Church and Internet. Pontifical Council for Social Communications 22.2.2002. The classification of communications attitudes in Catholic church following the instrumental vs. critical -polarities has been presented by Soukup (1996, vii-xviii)
- <sup>4</sup> About the traditional dichotomy between theology and media see for example Forrester 1993, 67-68; Shegog 1993, 80.
- <sup>5</sup> About the history of conceptions on technology has written for example Haikarainen 2000, 42-48.
- <sup>6</sup> Postman is inherently a critic of technology with de-constructive method and approach and is not able to present any positive agenda, and he should not be taken as a starting point of planning communications strategies for the Christian community.
- <sup>7</sup> The French critic of technology and lay-theologian Jacques Ellul is one of the most powerful critics of technology.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://vic.uca.org.au/ecrp/mnediaritual.html>. Page read 8.12.1999.

- <sup>9</sup> Media is a far more larger concept than mere technology, and includes such additional dimensions as for example societal, financial, media cultural and functional levels.
- <sup>10</sup> Cultural Mandate means creating, maintaining and transforming culture for the glory of God.
- <sup>11</sup> Soukup, Paul. Transforming the Sacred: The American Bible Society New Media Translation Project. Paper. Communication Department. Santa Clara University.
- <sup>12</sup> Horsfield; <http://vic.uca.org.au/ecrp/mnediaritual.html>. Page read 8.12.1999.
- <sup>13</sup> Sivonen, Janne. Ovatko alkuperäiskansat alkuperäisiä? <http://www.kepa.fi/uutiset?t=1&sid=2554>. Page read 3.10.2002.
- <sup>14</sup> Analogous for Christian universalism is for example universality claims of United Nations Human Rights. They are thought to be obligatory for every culture thus refuting cultural relativism, see for example Scheinin 24.8.2001.
- <sup>15</sup> Motivation to see unity of various empirical churches is a rather widely spread and strong, and several theological explanations have been developed to legitimize to see "unity in diversity" (on models of "one church" thought, see for example McGrath 1999, 484-485).
- <sup>16</sup> Individual religiosity without community would be the fourth option, but it implies postmodernity and thus not universality, because it is individual category, not communitarian, which is crucial for establishing universality in the public.
- <sup>17</sup> It is possible that Real talks about sacred and profane in mere analogous sense not referring to actual transcendental dimension but to experience of such a dimension through ritualism. This is not a problem for this research, because the point is in recognition of mediated ritualism to carry such meanings whether they are constructive or realist by nature.
- <sup>18</sup> On meaning-making process in the context of religious media communication, see for example Linderman 1996, 54-63; Linderman et al 1999.
- <sup>19</sup> Institution means here all kinds of organized operators, which can vary from local revival movement to the global church. Crucial is that there is a hierarchical structure of authority in the community and goals of the community are religiously motivated.
- <sup>20</sup> Woodland 22.11.2000.
- <sup>21</sup> See for example about innovation and adaptation of Evangelical talk radio in America Creasman 1999) or re-formation of the 700 Club.
- <sup>22</sup> Gray 15.1.2000; Murphy 24.1.2000.
- <sup>23</sup> But what is "identifying and belonging enough" from theological and ecclesiological perspective to say that one is included or excluded with the community, remains to be a matter of theology of particular institution.

- <sup>24</sup> On identity, subjectivity and agency, see for example Anderson et al. 1996, 206-221.
- <sup>25</sup> The concept and idea of religious needs does not necessarily refer to direct capitalism-type satisfaction of needs with religious commodities or products. One may have a deep religious need to, for example recruit oneself to voluntary relief organization or to missionary work without getting any financial reward of it. In this way the need or marketplace metaphor should not be interpreted in consumerist terms. They may be sui generis religious needs, which religious communicators are able to meet with their messages.
- <sup>26</sup> This separation is partly analytical and that of ideal types. But it very effectively and clearly shows the different characteristics in the respective media strategies of these two types. There is some convergence from church type to media ministry -type, but the basic analytical dimensions are still relevant.
- <sup>27</sup> But consequently, Armstrong's expression of the new nature of the church is to be understood more as an analogue than as a true normative recommendation for actual churches to substitute with virtual ones (Horsfield 1984, 54-55).
- <sup>28</sup> For example Bollen 8.11.2000; Shafer 17.11.2000.
- <sup>29</sup> Bollen 8.11.2000; Neff 17.11.2000.
- <sup>30</sup> Wilson 20.11.2000.
- <sup>31</sup> Roos 20.10.2000.
- <sup>32</sup> Woodland 22.11.2000.
- <sup>33</sup> Soukup 1.6.2001.
- <sup>34</sup> The Church and Internet. Pontifical Council for Social Communications 22.2.2002.
- <sup>35</sup> The Church and Internet. Pontifical Council for Social Communications 22.2.2002.
- <sup>36</sup> Soukup 1.6.2001.
- <sup>37</sup> [http://www.newtech.org/address15\\_en.htm](http://www.newtech.org/address15_en.htm). Page read 21.02.2002.
- <sup>38</sup> <http://www.partenia.org/eng/>. Page read 21.02.2002.
- <sup>39</sup> Kotimaa 15.2.2002.
- <sup>40</sup> Soukup 1.6.2001; Wikki 29.11.1995.
- <sup>41</sup> On church-sect -relationships and theory see also Swatos (1998, 90-93).
- <sup>42</sup> About the problematic relationship between religion and mainstream publicity (and distortion of religion in it) see for example McDonnell (1993, 89-98).
- <sup>43</sup> In USA, public service ideology has been mainly actualized as an obligation of radio and tv-broadcasters to broadcast also programs carrying general public service value in the so called "sustaining time" slot. In Russia, there is no official public service ideology on religious broadcasting, but

the de facto public service system of Russian Orthodox church is established through close co-operation and privileged access to mainstream channels. Explicit public service religious broadcasting ideology is found in the European context.

44 See for example in the case of South Africa, Wanless 1999, 289.

45 Dean 3.11.1999.

46 On Evangelical critique on public service religious broadcasting see for example Clark 1991, 111-116; Quicke & Quicke 1992.

47 Gray 15.1.2000.

48 The Orthodox broadcasting does not have an official public-service status, but it is de-facto public service religious programming in national both state and commercial channels.

49 Also on Dutch media system: [http://www.netherlands-embassy.org/c\\_media.html](http://www.netherlands-embassy.org/c_media.html). Page read 20.5.2002.

50 "Vaticanisti" is a professional concept for journalist, who is specialized to cover issues of the Catholic church and the Vatican. They are a respected branch of journalists, since mainline Protestants criticize their knowledge and attitude to other churches.

51 Naso 3.6.2001.

52 Orthodox Journalists Establish International Association. World Church News. <http://www.roea.org/9908/ho00012.html>. Page read 14.1.2002.

53 Pasqualetti et al. 25.5.2001.

54 <http://www.cmpa.com/archive/Relig2000.htm>. Page read 3.7.2000.

55 For example Pasqualetti et al. 25.5.2001; Naso 3.6.2001.

56 It is not possible to cover more operational issues or recommendations here, because it is out of scope of this research. There is also plenty of instructive literature on the media communications of Christian communities. On supply of religious news and religious audience attitudes and consumption of news see also Hoover 1993, 261-274.

57 It is not possible to handle communitarianism as a comprehensive social philosophy more detailed in this context. Communitarianism is presented here in forms relevant to religious communication and rights of religious communities to communicate their world-view and discourse.

58 About the debate on secular and religious communitarianism see for example Amitai Etzioni to religious critics of communitarianism <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9410/correspondence.html>. Page read 5.7.2001. The religious criticism (performed by J. Budziszewski and Bruce Frohnen) on communitarianism as social philosophy (see <http://www.firstthings.com/ft9503/articles/budziszewski.html>; <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9710/correspondence.html> Pages read 5.7.2001.

59 White 1.6.2001.

60 White 1.6.2001.

61 White 1.6.2001.

62 On the intellectual history of media ethics, see Merrill et al 2001.

63 White 1.6.2001.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix I

#### Basic interview pattern used in questioning key persons in religious media communication

##### Personal Background

-Name

-Sex

-Year of birth

-Occupation in the organization?

-Education

-Main points of personal career?

-How did person come to the field of religious communication?

-His/her personal opinion about communication of the organization?

-From where have you personally received the biggest influence to your ministry and in your thinking about religious communication?

-How should religious communication be carried out?

-How is your organization doing according to your opinion (very well, fairly well, satisfactory, poor)? Why?

-Is there a concensus within your organization how communication should be practiced?

-What are the problematic issues which cause inner conflicts?

-Which of these goals are the most important ones in your organization? (informing, entertaining, evangelism, interactivity, teaching...)

## The Organization

-Background and Institutional information

-What is the institutional status of your organization?

-What are the main tasks your organization performs?

-What kind of resources do you have in terms of annual budget and personnel? Is it enough or too little?

-What kind of plans or visions do you have in expanding your influence?

-Mention the biggest and most influential tasks of your organization according to your own opinion?

-What area of ministry should be increased?

-Tell about the history of the organization?

-When it was started and for what?

-Who are the most important partners?

-Do you have any written statement about the communications theology and/or ideology which guides your ministry?

-Who has shaped it and when?

-How do you obey and apply it in practice.

-What kind of communications policy do you have?

-What is proper religious communication according to your understanding, how would you define it?

-What kind of media and media formats do you use in your media ministry?

-Is media suited for evangelism? Why?

-What kind of relationship do you have with other religious media?

-What is the situation of religious media communication in your church/ institution?

-How do you see the influence of religious communication? How should it influence and how does it? Does it fulfill the goals given to it?

-How do you call your ministry? Is it religious communication, evangelism or what?

-What kind of forms (media formats, media) are proper in religious communication?

-What kind of messages should be communicated? What the main goal should be?

-What kind of themes are useful and should be used in religious communication?

-How useful are explicitly religious vocabulary and themes in communication?  
-Should they be increased or decreased?

-The major challenges for religious communication?

-How is the your ministry going to develop/ change. In what directions is your organization headed?

-How do you consider the spiritual and communicative aspects or elements in communication? What makes communication religious?

-Do you have specific communication theology in your institution?

-Could you give some recommended reading, documents etc. about religious communication?

-How should according to your understanding, your ministry make sure that the core meanings or Christianity are successfully communicated?

-What kind of opinions and discussions are there about religious communication within your institution?

-How would you develop religious communication within in your institution?

-Are there any written statements, which describe the basis of your ministry (theological, ideological or practical)?

## Appendix II

The Social Doctrine of Russian Orthodox Church, issued Autumn 2000,  
Chapter concerning relationships between the Church and mass media  
(bolding original).

### XV. Church and mass media

XV. 1. The mass media play an ever-increasing role in the contemporary world. The Church respects the work of journalists called to provide the public at large with information about the world developments, helping people to orient themselves in today's complex reality. It is important to remember at the same time that **the information of the spectator, listener and reader should be based not only on the firm commitment to the truth, but also concern for the moral state of the individual and society.** This involves the interpretation of positive ideals as well as the struggle with the spreading of evil, sin and vice. **The propaganda of violence, enmity and hatred and ethnic, social and religious discord and the sinful exploitation of human instincts, including for commercial purposes, are inadmissible.** The mass media, which have an enormous influence on the audience, bear a great responsibility for the education of people, especially the younger generation. Journalists and mass media executives should never forget about this responsibility.

XV. 2. **The educational, tutorial and social and peacemaking mission of the Church compels her to maintain co-operation with the secular mass media** capable of bringing her message to various sections of society. St. Peter calls Christians: «Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear» (1 Pet. 3:15). Any clergyman or lay person is called be duly attentive to contacts with the secular mass media with the view of carrying out their pastoral and educational work and awakening the interest of secular society in various aspects of church life and Christian culture. In doing so, **it is necessary to show wisdom, responsibility and prudence with regard to the stand of a particular mass medium on faith and the Church, its moral orientation and relationships with the church authorities. The Orthodox laity may be employed by the mass media and in their work they are called to be preachers and implementers of Christian moral ideals. Journalists who publish materials corrupting human souls should be subjected to canonical interdictions if they belong to the Orthodox Church.**

**The Church has her own media means, blessed by the church authorities,** within each of the specific mass media types (printing, radio-electronic, computer). She is present there either through official institutions or private initiatives of the clergy and laity. **At the same time, the Church interacts with the secular mass media through her institutions and empowered representatives.** This interaction is carried out both through creating special forms of church presence in the

secular mass media, such as special supplements to newspapers and magazines, special page, TV and radio series and rubrics, and participating in various forms of public dialogues and debates. The Church also gives consultative assistance to journalists, distributes reports prepared specially for them, provides them reference materials as well as audio and video aids, such as films, recordings and reproductions.

**The co-operation of the Church and the mass media presupposes mutual responsibility. The information given to a journalist to be conveyed to an audience should be reliable. Opinions of the clergy or other representatives of the Church, reported through the mass media, should conform to her teaching and stand on public issues.** If a purely private opinion is expressed, it should be clearly stated both by the person who speaks through the mass media and those responsible for communicating it. The co-operation of clergy and church institutions with the mass media should be carried out under the guidance of the church authorities if the coverage concerns church-wide activities and the guidance of the diocesan authorities in reporting the life of a diocese on the regional level.

**XV. 3. As the Church and the mass media develop their relations, complications and even serious conflicts may arise.** Problems may arise, in particular, because of inaccurate or distorted information about church life, putting her in an inappropriate context, confusing the personal stand of a reporter or a person cited with the stand of the whole Church. Relationships between the Church and the mass media are often darkened also through the fault of clergy and laity themselves, for instance, when they refuse without justification to give journalists access to information or react oversensitively to correct and proper criticism. Such problems should be resolved in the spirit of peaceful dialogue with the aim to remove misunderstandings and to continue co-operation.

**At the same time, more profound and principled conflicts have been seen to emerge in relations between the Church and the secular mass media. This happens whenever the name of God is blasphemed, other blasphemies are pronounced, the information about church life is systematically distorted consciously and the Church and her servants are deliberately slandered.** In case of such conflicts, the supreme church authorities (with regard to the national mass media) or the diocesan bishop (with regard to the regional and local mass media) **after issuing an appropriate warning and at least one attempt to enter into negotiations, may take the following steps: to rupture relations with the mass medium or journalist concerned; to call upon the faithful to boycott the given mass medium; to apply to the governmental bodies help settle the conflict; to subject those guilty of sinful actions to canonical prohibitions if they are Orthodox Christians.** The above-mentioned actions should be documented and made known to the flock and society as a whole.

### Appendix III

#### Clarification of the Contacts and Journey to Russia.

#### Research Process in the Context of Russia



## Appendix IV

### Clarification of the Contacts and Journey to United States of America.

#### Research Process in the Context of USA

—————> Arrow Indicates the route of the trip

## Finland

Heikki  
Luostarinen

Information Agency of Evangelical  
Lutheran Church of Finland  
Ingmar Lindqvist

## USA 8.11. - 28.11.2000

### Seattle 8.-13.11.

NCA Conference 8.-11.11.  
Spirit 106,5 FM 8.11.  
Inspiration Radio Group 8.11.

### Chicago 13.-20.11.

Northpark University 14.11.  
Wheaton College/  
BG Center 15.-16.,18.11.  
Moody Broadcasting  
Network 17.11.  
ELCA Communications  
Department 17.11.  
Orthodox Church of  
America (phone) 17.11.

### Washington DC 20.-21, 23.-28.11.

Associated Church Press 27.11.  
Evangelical Press Association (phone) 20.11.  
Comm. Department of Catholic Bishop's Conference 27.11.

### Manassas 21.11.

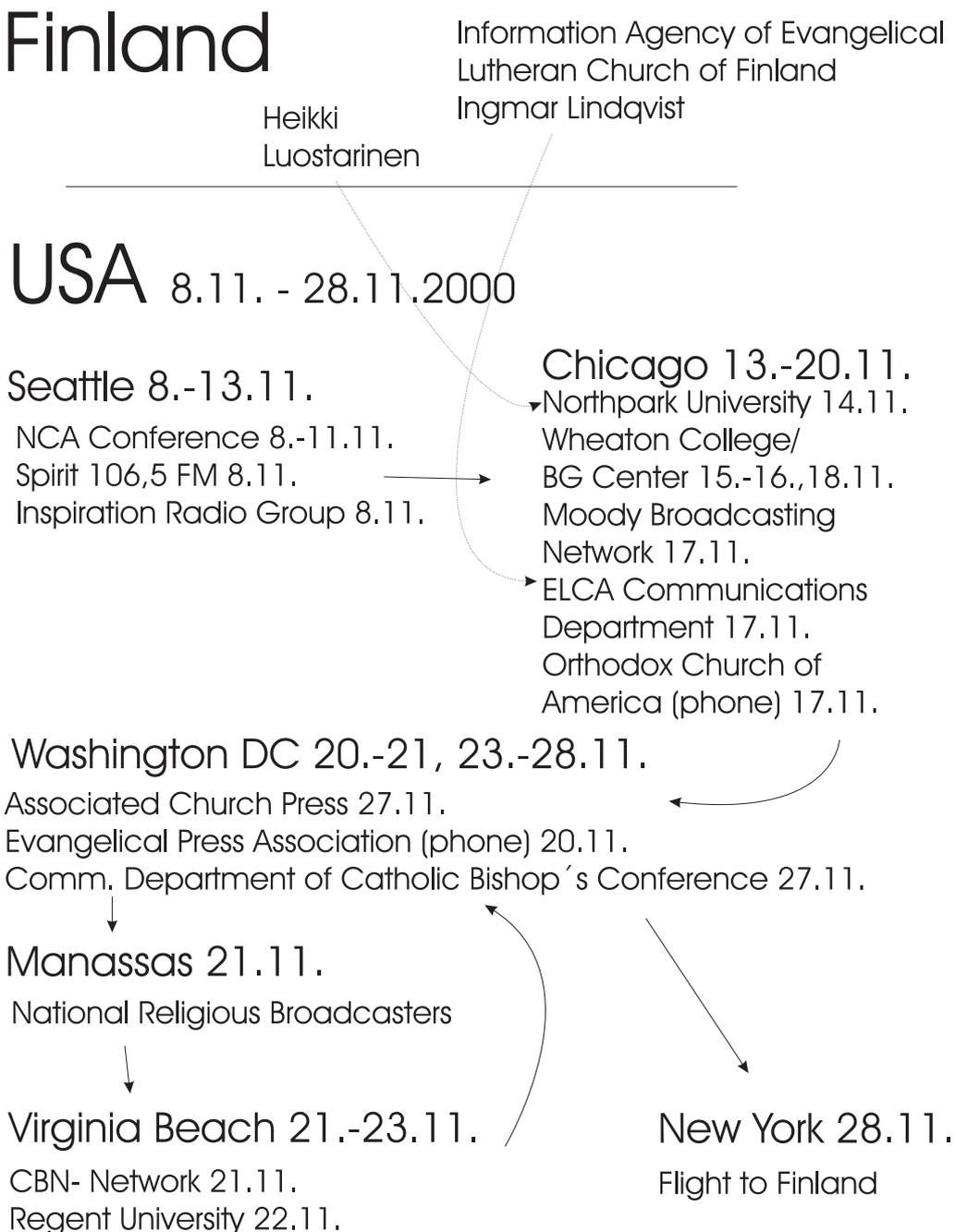
National Religious Broadcasters

### Virginia Beach 21.-23.11.

CBN- Network 21.11.  
Regent University 22.11.

### New York 28.11.

Flight to Finland

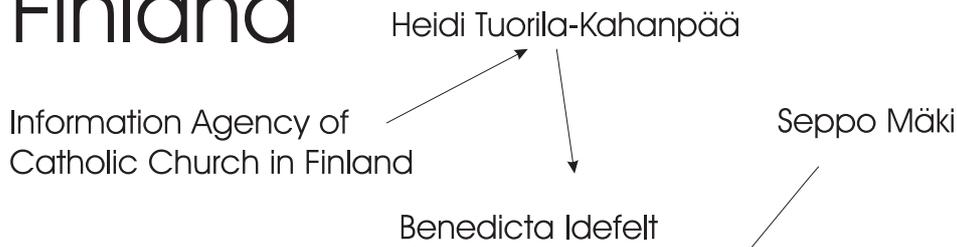


## Appendix V

### Clarification of the Contacts and Journey to Italy.

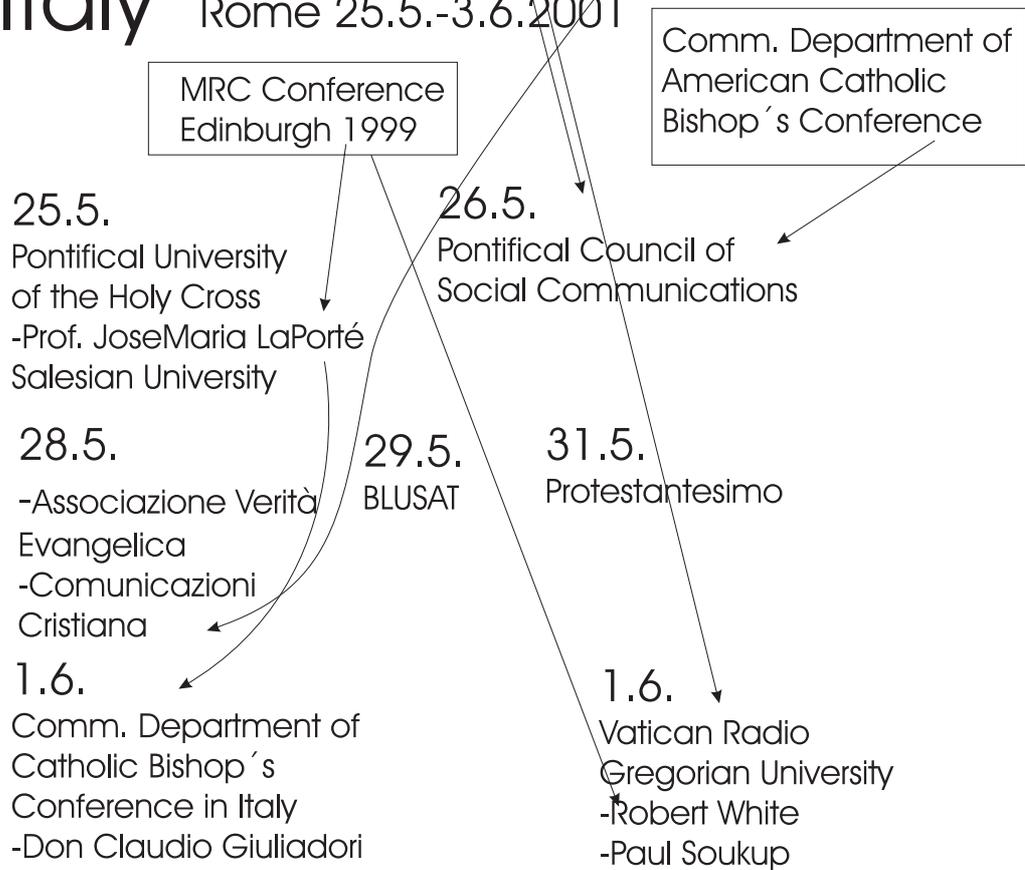
#### Research Process in the Context of Italy

# Finland



# Italy

Rome 25.5.-3.6.2001



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