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**THE GEOPOLITICS OF COMMUNICATION AND RELIGION: ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS
AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM A MEDIA, RELIGION AND CULTURE
PERSPECTIVE**

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*To my grandfathers, Antoni Rocha and Luigi Scarpetta.
The first one taught me to love knowledge.
The later, to seek wisdom.*

ABSTRACT

Resum

Aquesta tesi doctoral proposa una aproximació entre l'àrea dels estudis de comunicació anomenada «Media, Religió i Cultura» i l'estudi de la globalització i de la geopolítica en relació amb les tres tradicions religioses que deriven de la cosmovisió abrahàmica, és a dir, el judaisme, el cristianisme i l'Islam. Mitjançant una presentació de l'estat de la qüestió de la literatura acadèmica corresponent, l'anàlisi doctrinal, històrica i comparativa del desenvolupament de l'ús i la percepció dels mitjans de comunicació per part de cadascuna de les tres tradicions religioses, i mitjançant l'anàlisi de les conseqüències geopolítiques que implica aquest ús i percepció, aquest estudi pretén oferir una possible nova tendència en l'àrea acadèmica de «Media, Religió i Cultura» incloent-hi, no només la manera com les tradicions religioses específiques perceben els mitjans de comunicació a partir dels principis religiosos que les determinen, sinó també les conseqüències geopolítiques que comporta l'ús i la percepció que les religions fan dels mitjans.

Resumen

Esta tesis doctoral propone una aproximación entre el área de los estudios de comunicación llamada «Media, Religión y Cultura» y el estudio de la globalización y de la geopolítica en relación con las tres tradiciones religiosas que derivan de la cosmovisión abrahámica, a saber, el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam. Mediante una presentación del estado de la cuestión de la literatura académica correspondiente, el análisis doctrinal, histórico y comparativo del desarrollo de la percepción y uso de los medios por parte de cada una de las tres tradiciones religiosas, y mediante el análisis de las consecuencias geopolíticas que implica tal percepción y uso, el trabajo de investigación busca ofrecer una posible nueva tendencia dentro del área académica de «Media, Religión y Cultura» incluyendo, no solo el cómo las tradiciones religiosas específicas utilizan y perciben los medios de comunicación a partir de los principios religiosos que las determinan, sino también las consecuencias geopolíticas que conlleva tal percepción y uso de los medios.

Abstract

This PhD thesis proposes an approach between the area of communication studies called «Media, Religion and Culture» and the study of globalization and geopolitics regarding the three religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic cosmovision, that is, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Through a presentation of the state of the art of the main academic literature, a doctrinal, historical and comparative analysis of the development and framing of the different media within each of the three religious traditions, and through an analysis of the geopolitical consequences that such framing entails, the research work aims at offering a possible new trend of study within the «Media, Religion and Cultural» academic area including, not only how specific religious traditions use and understand media according to the religious principles that determine them, but also the geopolitical consequences that such a use and understanding involve.

KEYWORDS / PALABRAS CLAVES

Mitjans de Comunicació – Religió – Cultura – Judaisme – Cristianisme – Islam – Globalització
– Geopolítica - Medios de Comunicación – Religión – Cultura – Judaísmo – Cristianismo –
Islam – Globalización – Geopolítica – Mass Media – Religion – Culture – Christianity - Islam –
Globalization – Geopolitics

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INTRODUCTION

The main thesis of our research is that the religious traditions that derive from the Abrahamic religious traditions –Judaism, Christianity and Islam–, but also religious traditions in general, negotiate and have historically framed their perception and use of media through their understanding of divine revelation and the specific development and expansion of the religious communities they belong to. These choices on the meaning and framing –or form of use– of media (may they be oral, written, electronic or digital) are also guided by previously established views about religious authority, community, and the understanding of older mediums as, for example, the written text.

This means that a religious community's relationships with the form and beliefs of religious texts and the way they consider these texts to be transmitted («revealed») has consequences on their views of different forms of mass media, specially due to the «mission» that the religious tradition receives in order to share and witness the original divine message. Thus, what a religious community believes about the dynamics of divine or «vertical» communication («revelation») plays a crucial role in the perception and use that a specific religious tradition has of media and «horizontal» communication («mission»). To put it in other words, paying attention to a religious community's historical approach to its sacred texts and the way the community has expanded in time and space –that is, how it has become globalized– provides indicators of how it has related to and relates today to new forms of media.

But, as we shall try to illustrate, the consequences of the particular understanding that a religious tradition has of the process of communication with the transcendent does not only affect the way that that religious tradition has of perceiving and understanding media. It also has consequences in space and time –that is, the religious tradition's process of globalization– and it entails social and geopolitical consequences: the process of «vertical» and «horizontal» communication within a religious tradition and the part that media play in this process engage also geopolitical consequences, since every religion –and particularly those derived from the Abrahamic cosmivision– generates a form of relationship within itself and with the rest of its entourage when it communicates.

In order to demonstrate our thesis we follow a four-fold methodological form. First, we formulate a theoretical entourage in order to understand religion and religious traditions, not as a personal and individual set of beliefs, but as a system of beliefs that determines the way a religious tradition and its members relate with the absolute, but also

with themselves, society, political power, natures, etc. For this purpose the cosmovisional understanding of religion offers a solid foundation.

Second we seek to collect the relevant bibliography and methodologies related to the area that deals with religion and communication, that is the area called «Media, Religion and Culture». In doing so we seek to describe the foundations, limits and possibilities of this interesting area of study, but also to underline its Anglo-Saxon self-centredness, often forgetting the academic production on these matters in other languages.

Third, we use a historical analysis in order to understand the main process of theological communication (revelation), expansion (mission and globalization) of each of the three religious traditions, seeking to comprehend the dynamics of its growth and its process of encountering different cultural settings, a process in which media play a relevant role.

Four, we seek to synthesize and systematize the form in which each one of the three religious traditions has «framed» the different types of communicational media, particularly oral, written, printed, electronic and digital thus trying to depict, not only the consequences of the particular perception and use that that specific religious tradition has of media, but also the political and spatial consequences that such a process entails.

To our understanding it is vital for researchers in the area of communication, and particularly in the area of Media, Religion and Culture, to start by uncovering the history and tradition of each specific religious traditions. It is from this grounding that the patterns of use and discourse about media and technology can be outlined within the different religions of the world. However, simply identifying the historical decisions and traditional practices of a religion and its diverse communities and their communicational habits is only the starting point. Religious communities are living, dynamic entities informed by the culture in which they exist. The historical background is a prologue, but the current setting of the life of the community must also be considered. This leads to the exploration of the core beliefs of the community in the contemporary context to see how they are being lived out and how the core values of a particular community shape their current use and response to the media, and how such a use generates not only innovations within the specific religious group, but also in its political and geographical entourage.

In order to demonstrate our thesis our dissertation is divided into five main chapters. The first chapter, with a more conjectural character, seeks to present the theoretical framework of the research in two main parts. The first one deals with the understanding of religion and particularly of the Abrahamic cosmovision, from where Judaism, Christianity and Islam derive. In this section we seek to present the advantages of a cosmovisional understanding of religion in order to understand the cosmovisional elements that determine their understanding of communication and mass media, and the common

bases of the three religious traditions in which we center our attention. The second part seeks to present, first of all, a resume of the history of the academic area of cultural and communication studies named «Media, Religion and Culture», followed by the possible areas of development of this area of study, which include the understanding of the globalization process that forged them and the geopolitical importance of the communicative process they have endured in history.

The second chapter deals with the oldest of the religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic cosmovision: Judaism. Here we seek to describe the process of globalization of this religious tradition, to then deepen in its concept of revelation (or divine communication) and the complex but fascinating understanding that this religion has of written and oral tradition and its transmission. The following part describes the interaction of Jewish culture with the most relevant paradigm changes in communication, which imply the passage from oral to written culture, from written culture to the press, and from the press to electronic communication. The chapter underlines the testimonial –and not missionary– character of this specific religious tradition in contrast with the other religions derived from the Abrahamic cosmovision.

The third chapter deals with the second religious tradition derived from the Abrahamic cosmovision, that is, Christianity. Due to the multiple divisions within this specific tradition, we offer a general presentation of the process of expansion of Christianity in general, to concentrate then in three of the most relevant Christian denominations that are the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Catholic tradition, the Protestant tradition –with particular attention to its Radical and Evangelical trends–. With this chapter we seek to discern the communicational consequences of the Christian understanding of revelation and mission, and describe the multiple interactions regarding the oral, literary, printed and electronic communication, seeking to make evident the particular character of each one of its trends and the specific way they have evolved regarding their understanding of communication.

The following chapter proceeds with the presentation of the communicational elements present in Islam, one of the most fascinating religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic cosmovision from a communicational perspective due to its particular reaction to each one of the communicational paradigms in history, and to its subsequent adaptation to them seeking to maintain the basic principles derived from its understanding of revelation and mission. After presenting the process of globalization of Islam, we consider the different stages of its adaptation to new forms of media and the cultural and religious consequences that such adaptations entail. The whole chapter underlines the direct relationship between

the principles of divine communication and the principles of human communication that persist in the cultural evolution of this religious tradition.

The fifth chapter of our dissertation faces the issue of digital communication, which is the most recent paradigm change in the history of communication. After a short presentation of the meaning of this new communicational paradigm we proceed with a presentation of its understanding within the boundaries of Judaism, Christianity –and its different denominations– and Islam. Here we take into consideration the way in which these specific religious traditions have dealt with technology as a key determinant of the adaptation of digital media in the context of each tradition. Through the examples proposed for each religious tradition we seek to underline the importance of the geopolitical consequences these adaptations represent in order to understand better the process of expansion-globalization of each tradition from a communicative perspective. The chapter necessarily leaves an open page in the future development of the promising area of religion and digital media.

Following the fifth chapter we offer the main conclusions of our dissertation regarding the different areas that it implies, and underlining the possible future developments in the area of «Media, Religion and Culture» regarding the academic study of the three religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic cosmologies and the importance of taking into consideration the geopolitical and globalization issues that their communicational dynamics imply.

Finally our research offers the bibliography that includes works in seven languages, quoted along the dissertation. Initially our intention was to offer, under the form of an appendix, a comprehensive bibliography with all the publications that we have collected on the subject along fifteen years of academic interest in the area of «Media, Religion and Culture» and its relation to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Unfortunately the addition of such a huge bibliography would have made the whole volume disproportioned regarding the main contents. For this reason we offer only the works that are quoted in the main contents of the dissertation, hoping to have the opportunity of publishing the complexive bibliography in a near future.

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**CAPÍTULO 1: EL FUNDAMENTO DE LA APROXIMACIÓN AL ESTUDIO DE LAS RELIGIONES ABRAHAMÍTCAS
DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA COMUNICATIVA Y GEOPOLÍTICA EN EL CONTEXTO DE LOS ESTUDIOS DE «MEDIA,
RELIGIÓN Y CULTURA»**

Dada la diversidad de elementos que conjuga nuestra hipótesis de investigación, nuestro estudio reclama un marco teórico desarrollado a tres niveles. El primer nivel es el de la religión y la forma de comprenderla en el contexto histórico y contemporáneo. De aquí que iniciemos esta parte programática con una reflexión sobre la comprensión del hecho religioso desde la perspectiva cosmovisiva, subrayando así los diversos aspectos que marcan las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la llamada cosmovisión abrahámica, es decir del judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam, y profundizando sobre la dinámica comunicacional de tal cosmovisión.

El segundo nivel de teorización se relaciona con el área específica de la comunicación llamada «Media, Religión y Cultura». Esta área, aunque bastante desconocida en el ámbito hispánico, ha ido evolucionando en el contexto anglosajón – y últimamente más allá de éste - para ofrecer los parámetros para un estudio transversal de la relación entre los medios de comunicación y las religiones. De cara a comprender sus características y su génesis ofrecemos una síntesis de su desarrollo en el campo académico así como un resumen de sus áreas de trabajo hasta el presente.

El tercer nivel se ocupa de la relación entre el fenómeno religioso y los campos de la globalización, la geopolítica y las relaciones tradicionales. Tras una comprensión de la relación entre la globalización, la geopolítica y la religión pretendemos definir las posibilidades que ofrece el estudio de la relación entre los medios de comunicación y las religiones –tal como hace el área de «Media, Comunicación y Cultura»- y su potencial desarrollo con la inclusión del campo de la globalización y de la geopolítica, generando así un área académica que implique tanto los estudios religiosos como la sociología, los estudios culturales, y los estudios sobre el proceso de la globalización y de las relaciones internacionales.

El lector notará cómo a lo largo de este apartado intentamos profundizar sobre diversos aspectos de cada uno de los niveles de aproximación que proponemos. Al hacerlo nuestra intención no es la de confundir al lector con múltiples detalles, sino el consolidar los elementos teóricos que sostienen el análisis que se hace en los capítulos posteriores en relación al judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam, su proceso de globalización, y los elementos comunicativos que juegan parte en su expansión, su identidad, y su influencia geopolítica.

1.1. COMUNICACIÓN, RELIGIÓN Y COSMOVISIONES

El estudio del fenómeno religioso y su relación con diversos aspectos de la realidad humana –incluida la comunicativa– conove perspectivas muy diversas. En este primer apartado o nivel del marco teórico de nuestro estudio abordamos el fundamento de la comprensión cosmovisiva de la religión en tanto que fundamento para su posterior profundización en su relación con la historia de las religiones, la historia de la comunicación, la globalización y la geopolítica.

1.1.1. Religiones y cosmovisiones

Durante los últimos cincuenta años se ha discutido tanto a nivel social como teológico, político y académico el lugar de la religión en el contexto de la modernidad y de la postmodernidad. La consideración sobre el lugar de la religión en la esfera pública ha desfilado de una percepción de la religión como fenómeno declinante (secularización), pasando por la percepción de lo religioso como una cuestión puramente personal / espiritual (secularismo), a un reconocimiento de el relieve del fenómeno religioso a nivel personal, político y social definido con frecuencia como «el retorno de lo religioso».

La abundante discusión sobre el relieve o no del fenómeno religioso en las sociedades contemporáneas –que se refleja claramente en las numerosas publicaciones sobre el tema– demuestra la importancia de esta realidad al afrontar los diversos aspectos del espacio público en los diferentes contextos culturales que constituyen los grupos humanos de nuestro tiempo (Meulemann, 2009: 664-665; Stark, 1999). Esta realidad, tal como lo demuestra de forma acentuada el aumento de los movimientos religiosos fundamentalistas –por citar una evidencia que, en todo caso, no agota el panorama de lo religioso en nuestro tiempo significa que la manera como los grupos humanos entienden y transmiten el sentido que dan a la visión de la transcendencia no queda limitado a la dimensión puramente personal o ritual.

No es el objetivo de nuestra disertación el establecer los parámetros de comprensión del fenómeno religioso en nuestro tiempo, dado que tal objetivo escapa al propósito de nuestro estudio. Pero sí que se hace necesario el ofrecer los fundamentos sobre cómo entendemos la religión y la experiencia religiosa en el conjunto de los grupos sociales en general, y en el caso de los grupos que componen las tres religiones llamadas «Abrahámicas», a saber, el Judaísmo, el Cristianismo y el Islam, con el propósito de comprender mejor a qué nos referimos cuando, dentro de los parámetros de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura», hablamos de «Religión» y de sus elementos comunicativos.

Proponemos aquí seguir una comprensión del fenómeno religioso entendido a partir del concepto de «cosmovisión». Conviene primero analizar el fondo teórico del desarrollo de la comprensión fenomenológica de la religión en tanto que «cosmovisión», para poder luego profundizar sobre las características de la cosmovisión Abrahámica y sus sub-sistemas, es decir el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam.

En términos generales la cosmovisión se puede describir como un lente, un modelo o un mapa desde el punto de vista del cual las personas perciben la realidad. Charles Kraft la define como «el juego de suposiciones (incluyendo valores y compromisos/lealtades) que influyen en la forma en que se percibe y se responde a la realidad» (Kraft, 1999: 385). Dice Kraft:

«Las sociedades enteras marcan el curso de su dirección de acuerdo con un mapa de la realidad... Le llamamos a esta percepción compartida por un grupo social una cosmovisión y vemos esa cosmovisión como el corazón de una cultura, funcionando, por un lado, como un marco de referencia que determina cómo se percibe la realidad, y, por otro lado, como una fuente de pautas para el comportamiento de la gente en respuesta a esa percepción de la realidad...». (Kraft, 1999: 51).

El concepto de Cosmovisión encuentra sus orígenes en la filosofía alemana y, en concreto, en el principio de la «Weltanschauung», compuesto por «Welt» (mundo) y «Anschauung» (visión) aplicado originalmente a la epistemología, en tanto que una forma de «ver el mundo» (Bauer, 2001; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2004). A partir del s. XVIII el término sufrió diversas transformaciones hasta asumir el sentido de los aspectos esenciales que determinan cómo un individuo, un grupo humano o una cultura observan y entienden el mundo que les rodea y cómo interactúan con él (Naugle, 2002: xvii).

La aproximación cosmovisiva a la realidad influyó en particular sobre un método concreto de comprender el fenómeno religioso, metodología que hoy llamamos fenomenología de la religión. Esta área de las llamadas «ciencias de la religión» –entendidas en sentido amplio– no corresponde en realidad a un método específico de estudio del fenómeno religioso. Aunque una gran mayoría de fenomenólogos de la religión tomaron como punto de partida de los análisis de la religión las metodologías elaboradas por tres fenomenólogos alemanes de relieve como son Wilhelm Dilthey (183-1911), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) y Max Ferdinand Scheler (1874-1928). Pero el desarrollo de la fenomenología de la religión no responde tanto al uso de un método, sino a una manera de comprender la religión misma. Tal como dice Eva Hirschmann:

«No hay ningún sistema de la fenomenología de la religión. No se puede hablar de una escuela científico-fenomenológica en el sentido de un cuerpo doctrina [...]. La diversidad de concepciones de la “religión” y su determinación en el interior del sistema de las ciencias depende de la postura de cada fenomenólogo» (Hirschmann,1940: 116).

Pese a todo, puede afirmarse que la comprensión es la meta hacia la cual tienden los fenomenólogos de la religión, al margen de la filosofía concreta que hayan tomado como punto de partida. Se trata de una comprensión que se propone la búsqueda de la esencia de los fenómenos religiosos, dejando de lado, al menos en principio, su especificidad histórica, social y política, para luego volver a esta especificidad teniendo presentes los elementos comprensivos que determinan una religión específica. Por esto en esta metodología la comparación se constituye como un rasgo común en las diversas escuelas fenomenológicas, comparación que puede llevar a un cierto reduccionismo. De una manera simplificada podemos decir que en la fenomenología clásica de la religión es habitual la confusión entre los fenómenos «homólogos» y los «análogos». Se trata de un inicial «poner entre paréntesis» los hechos religiosos concretos mediante un «distanciamiento» (social, político, geográfico, económico, cultural, etc.) del fenomenólogo respecto a la tradición religiosa que estudia (Duch, 2001: 54). De esta forma la fenomenología de la religión pretende llegar al fenómeno religioso en sí mismo, dejando temporalmente de lado el «para qué» y el «para quién» de este mismo fenómeno, para construir así una tipología («Idealtypen» según los autores alemanes citados más arriba) de acuerdo con las pautas establecidas por el fenomenólogo mismo.

Gerardus Van de Leeuw, uno de los representantes más conspicuos de la fenomenología de la religión, escribe que «la fenomenología no es ni metafísica ni aprehensión de la realidad empírica. Tiende al distanciamiento [...] y su comprensión del acontecimiento depende de su “colocación entre paréntesis”» (Van der Leeuw, 1970: 774). Esto aclara por qué varios fenomenólogos de la religión tienen una aproximación más bien sincrónica a los diversos fenómenos religiosos, lo que no excluye que varios de ellos también tengan en cuenta la diacronía (historia) para así conseguir una comprensión exhaustiva de los diferentes niveles de los fenómenos religiosos.

Es necesario señalar que el conocimiento de la religión como algo valioso en sí mismo constituye el aspecto más positivo de esta corriente metodológica. Desde la crítica de la religión del s. XX se acostumbra a explicar la religión a partir de causas no religiosas (p. e. economía, poder, sexualidad, intercambios culturales, etc.). Es evidente que estas explicaciones no solamente son legítimas, sino incluso imprescindibles, como veremos más adelante. Sin embargo no se debería dejar de lado aquellas explicaciones que intentan

obtener una comprensión de la religión «desde dentro». Los fenomenólogos de la religión, pese a las profundas diferencias que existen entre ellos y a partir de una inequívoca posición «esencialista», están convencidos de que las manifestaciones religiosas tienen que ver con el ser mismo de los individuos y de las sociedades en que operan. Por eso es comprensible que alguno de ellos otorgue una importancia capital al análisis de la experiencia religiosa como aspecto central y esencial de la religión, ya que el «homo religiosus» es el punto de referencia y el protagonista.

Otra consecuencia que acostumbran sacar los fenomenólogos de la religión es que la religión misma es en el hombre algo que no puede derivarse de las estructuras más fundamentales y profundas, sino que se trata de realidades que coexisten al mismo hecho de existir como ser humano, sean cuales sean las determinaciones sociales, históricas y culturales de los individuos y de las colectividades que les envuelven (Duch, 2001: 55). Tal como afirma Martín Velasco:

«[...] la fenomenología es una forma particular de hermenéutica, de interpretación del fenómeno religioso mismo. Como toda interpretación, ésta tiene sus presupuestos, y el primero de todos es el de que la religión es un hecho humano presenta en la historia de la humanidad en una serie de manifestaciones que constituyen un sector importante de la misma: las historias de las religiones. Este presupuesto de la fenomenología de la religión va aún más lejos. El hecho religioso no sólo es un hecho humano, sino que es un hecho de alguna manera específico, diferente del principio de otros hechos humanos y, en principio, irreductible a ellos» (Martín Velasco, 2006: 57).

Dentro de las diversas aproximaciones a la fenomenología de la religión el estudio de la religión dentro del fenómeno cosmovisivo cobra particular interés en nuestro estudio. Basado en la intención de establecer los parámetros tipo de la experiencia religiosa definida por los fenomenólogos alemanes (en particular Dilthey y Schiller), su desarrollo ha cobrado particular interés en el mundo anglosajón (Bauer, 2001: 352). El estudio de las cosmovisiones ha utilizado diferentes categorías para clasificar los diversos tipos de cosmovisiones. Sire presenta un esbozo de las cosmovisiones que sostienen la forma en que las personas del mundo occidental piensan acerca de sí mismos, otras personas, el mundo natural y Dios o la realidad suprema, y traza históricamente como estas cosmovisiones se han desarrollado de una descomposición de la cosmovisión teística, convirtiéndose en deísmo, naturalismo, nihilismo, existencialismo, misticismo oriental y la nueva conciencia de la Nueva Era (Sire, 1997: 17).

Pero la división de las diversas cosmovisiones ha conocido aproximaciones muy diversas. De cara a nuestro objeto de estudio resulta de particular interés la aproximación

que propone el fenomenólogo de las religiones británico Ninian Smart (Smart, 2000: 33-34), el cual divide las cosmovisiones básicamente en torno a las regiones del mundo.

Smart básicamente distingue siete categorías cosmovisivas:

–El Occidente moderno, cristiano en su mayoría pero plural en su carácter (incluye las tradiciones católicas, protestantes y ortodoxas en sus diversas manifestaciones), extendiéndose desde el Pacífico Americano hacia el este a través de Europa a Siberia, y desde Noruega en el norte a Armenia en el sur (Smart, 2000: 34-35);

–La media luna islámica, extendiéndose desde Indonesia hacia el oeste, a través del sur de Asia y el Medio Oriente, y llegando hacia el norte a la antigua Asia Central Soviética, con una marcada influencia del Islam, tanto sunita como chiíta, así como el desarrollo de las comunidades sufíes (Smart, 2000: 35-38);

–El sur y gran parte del suroriental de Asia, todos con un trasfondo de un estilo y civilización India, abarcando a Tíbet, India, Sri Lanka, Birmania, Tailandia, Laos y Camboya, marcado por el Hinduismo y el Budismo (Smart, 2000: 35-38);

–El Asia Oriental, desde China y Vietnam, vía Corea y Japón, abarcando la esfera de influencia cultural china, en particular del Budismo chino, el Confucianismo y el Taoísmo, pero también influenciado por diversas tradiciones animistas (Smart, 2000: 38-40);

–El Sur latino, desde el Río Bravo hasta la Patagonia, marcado por el cristianismo católico y su evolución en el contexto de las tradiciones culturales autóctonas (Smart, 2000: 40);

–El África Negra y el Caribe, influenciados por el Islam y por el cristianismo, pero marcado por las tradiciones locales específicas de carácter animista (Smart, 2000: 40-41);

–La región del Pacífico (Polinesia, Melanesia, Micronesia y Australia), influenciada por el cristianismo, pero ligada a las tradiciones autóctonas (Smart, 2000: 42).

Las ventajas de la aproximación propuesta por Smart referente a las cosmovisiones se centran básicamente en tres aspectos. En primer lugar, entiende la identidad entre cosmovisión y tradición religiosa como un fenómeno plural, que evoluciona condicionado por el tiempo y el espacio, evitando una comprensión estática o monolítica al interno de cada tradición religiosa. En segundo lugar, tiene presente los elementos teológicos (y no sólo los fenomenológicos) ligados a las diversas tradiciones religiosas y sus diversas manifestaciones como elementos fundantes que determinan una cierta forma de entender las relaciones entre los principios que son objeto de las creencias de cada tradición religiosa y a su vez como argumentos que son objeto de interpretación por parte de los grupos creyentes sujetos a diversas circunstancias históricas, geográficas y transculturales. En tercer lugar, establece las cosmovisiones como elemento determinante de la manera como los grupos específicos se relacionan con realidades que sobrepasan el credo religioso, como

serían, a nivel intra-grupal, la comprensión de la autoridad, de la identidad, de la comunidad y de los rituales, y a nivel extra-grupal, su relación con los individuos circundantes (ética y misión), con los sistemas de poder (política) y con las contingencias históricas (teología de la historia y escatología) (Smart, 2000, capítulos 3 a 8).

De esta manera Smart comprende la religión en tanto determinante cosmovisivo como una realidad que sobrepasa los sistemas de creencias para abarcar la forma como estas creencias, encarnadas en un grupo inculturado en un tiempo y en un espacio específico, determinan una forma de actuar en el mundo, rompiendo la dualidad entre la creencia y la vivencia religiosa, entre lo personal, lo comunitario y lo social.

En este sentido hay varias características que se deben mencionar en esta discusión acerca de la cosmovisión. Primero, la cosmovisión se aprende del ambiente en el cual la persona crece (Bauer, 2001: 352). Como parte del proceso de la inculturación, el recién nacido comienza a aprender no sólo el idioma y las costumbres sino también las suposiciones, premisas y conceptos básicos de sus padres, familiares y comunidad. Por eso es de esperarse que un niño nacido en un ambiente musulmán va a crecer con una cosmovisión musulmana y un niño que nace a padres de cosmovisión animista se va a identificar con ella.

Segundo, la cosmovisión se absorbe antes que la persona tenga la capacidad de analizar y evaluarla (Bauer, 2001: 353). Por ejemplo, en una cultura con cosmovisión animista, si un bebé se está acercando a un trozo de pan que está en el suelo, la madre le dice: «No te comas ese pan porque tiene espíritus malos y te van a hacer que te enfermes». No obstante, en un hogar de personas con cosmovisión monoteísta (por ejemplo judía), la madre le dice al niño: «No te pongas ese trozo de pan en la boca porque es impuro». En ambos casos los niños aceptan la explicación de su madre sin cuestionarla porque no tienen la capacidad de hacerlo a esa edad temprana. Las suposiciones de la cosmovisión no se razonan, se asumen. Esa es una de las razones por las cuales hay tanta diversidad en las cosmovisiones que existen en el mundo.

Tercero, las premisas y suposiciones de la cosmovisión por lo general están en el subconsciente de las personas a no ser que algo acontezca que cause que estén conscientes de ellas. Naugle explica:

«Una parte del comportamiento cultural del ser humano es consciente –por ejemplo, en cuanto a la lengua que usa, las relaciones con su grupo, las prácticas conocidas de todos, las fiestas y ceremonias comunes, etc–. Pero hay otra parte que es normalmente subconsciente –por ejemplo, los valores que uno trae consigo, la manera de entender el universo, las creencias que uno tiene y que sólo percibe que existen cuando encuentra a personas que tienen otra perspectiva de vida–.» (Naugle, 2002: 72).

Hiebert afirma lo mismo cuando dice que «las cosmovisiones son más que todo implícitas. Así como los lentes que usamos, nos es difícil ver nuestra cosmovisión» (Hiebert, 2008: 15). Esto tiene muchas implicaciones importantes. Aquí es suficiente mencionar que posiblemente no estemos conscientes de las premisas y suposiciones de nuestra cosmovisión cuando estamos involucrados en la comprensión de sus consecuencias transculturales. Por eso, no es suficiente preguntar a una persona que sigue una cosmovisión específica cuáles son las consecuencias de su manera de ver el mundo. El proceso de identificar la cosmovisión de un grupo cultural es difícil y complicado y requiere una aproximación académica. El método de “observar y parti-cipar” utilizado en la antropología provee los mejores resultados.

Cuarto, hay que distinguir entre la cosmovisión y la religión. La cosmovisión no se agota con la tradición religiosa específica, y existen cosmovisiones no confesionales (Bauer, 2001: 354). Por esto Smart define la cosmovisión en términos de «las ideologías, tanto religiosas como seculares, de un grupo de personas» (Smart, 2000: 2.). Aunque la cosmovisión y la religión tienen aspectos que están íntimamente entrelazados, hay diferencias significativas entre ellas. La cosmovisión consiste en las suposiciones y conceptualizaciones centrales concernientes a la vida sobre las cuales las personas basan su comportamiento. La religión es la parte de estas suposiciones y conceptualizaciones que tienen que ver con seres sobrenaturales y los ritos, ceremonias e implicaciones éticas, sociales y políticas de estas creencias. La religión es más que la cosmovisión porque incluye no solo las creencias sino las prácticas y el comportamiento de las personas. A la vez, la cosmovisión involucra un gran número de creencias no relacionadas a lo sobrenatural y provee la base para todos los subsistemas además de la religión. En este sentido, la cosmovisión es potencialmente más que el sistema de creencias religiosas.

Hay una excepción importante en este punto: en las culturas animistas, la cosmovisión y la religión son casi sinónimas, ya que en estas culturas todo lo que acontece se atribuye a las fuerzas espirituales y se interpreta desde una perspectiva sobrenatural, lo que hace casi imposible hacer una distinción entre la cosmovisión y la religión. En este caso los términos son intercambiables (Hiebert, 2008: 32).

Quinto, la cosmovisión está en el centro de todos los subsistemas de una cultura, incluyendo los subsistemas tecnológicos, sociales, políticos, lingüísticos, económicos y religiosos. La forma en que estos subsistemas se establecen y funcionan refleja la cosmovisión del grupo sociocultural. Por ejemplo, en un sistema animista se consulta con los espíritus para todas las decisiones y actividades. En un sistema monoteísta las decisiones del grupo vienen determinadas por la tradición que se ha establecido siguiendo una forma

explícita de interpretación de los textos sagrados y acogiendo la manera como en el pasado ese mismo grupo ha actuado delante de una circunstancia determinada así como los usos culturales de la región específica en que el grupo se encuentra inculturado (Hiebert, 2008: 135).

Sexto, cada cosmovisión y sus subconjuntos implica una tensión respecto a los diversos aspectos que implican la relación del grupo determinado con su entorno. Estas tensiones generan una pluralidad de aproximaciones que, en el tiempo y en el espacio concreto en que viven los seguidores de una cosmovisión determinada, genera diversas aproximaciones a realidades sociales y religiosas diversas (Smart, 2000: 143). Es decir: una cosmovisión, como sistema de creencias y de formas de relacionarse con el mundo inmerso en la historia, está influenciada por diversas «tensiones» que condicionan el modo como un ideal trascendente se vive en la historia concreta. Entre estas tensiones mencionamos las más significativas:

– La tensión entre unidad y pluralismo interno: toda cosmovisión y el fondo religioso que la marca está influenciada por una «doctrina» o «síntesis» que busca de marcar unas pautas específicas de comportamiento y de pensamiento inscritos en la manera concreta de entender el mundo (Smart, 2000: 138). Pero este fundamento doctrinal es objeto de interpretación a medida que el grupo humano afronta realidades y retos concretos que pueden, de alguna manera, cuestionar su identidad. Pese a este cuerpo doctrinal común – que puede estar definido en un canon o simplemente es aceptado como principios fundantes del grupo– conlleva una pluralidad de interpretaciones y de formas de poner en acción tales principios, adaptándolos a circunstancias determinadas. Esto genera una tensión entre la «tradición» de los principios cosmovisivos que ha establecido el grupo en la historia, y su «actualización» delante de nuevas circunstancias históricas y delante de los cambios que afronta el grupo en el tiempo. Esta tensión genera necesariamente sub-grupos o incluso escisiones dentro del grupo, sobretodo cuando una parte de este define su identidad a partir de las nuevas formas de comprender los aspectos esenciales que determinan esa cosmovisión.

–La tensión entre un ideal original i su desarrollo histórico: ligado a la tensión anterior y al aspecto contingente de toda forma de comprender el mundo, encontramos que las diferentes cosmovisiones y los sub-grupos que generan tienen la necesidad de compartir y comunicar esta forma explícita de comprender la realidad, sea por motivos de supervivencias –la unidad en la cosmovisión se hace necesaria para mantener el orden social que permite la subsistencia– o sea por la necesidad natural de perpetuar la propia manera de ver el mundo y de actuar en él (Smart, 2000: 72-73). Es decir: una cosmovisión no se limita al grupo o cultura que la profesa, son que tiende a diseminarse en lugares y entre

individuos que tienen costumbre y culturas diferentes, generando así nuevas formas de comprender esa misma cosmovisión pero en espacios y entre individuos que aportan nuevos elementos cosmovisivos y que adaptan los principios cosmovisivos a su forma de ver la realidad y de actuar en ella. Este fenómeno genera un pluralismo que, en la mayoría de los casos, deriva en características particulares (con frecuencia ligados a regiones geográficas) dentro de los grupos que profesan una cosmovisión determinada, sin generar necesariamente una ruptura. Pero en algunos casos esta dinámica de expansión y de adaptación de una cosmovisión genera también rupturas que dan pie a formas cosmovisivas específicas que se diferencian de la cosmovisión que las generó.

–Tensiones entre identidad y mutaciones culturales: relacionado con la tensión entre ideal original y desarrollo histórico que hemos delineado arriba, encontramos otra tensión propia de la vivencia de la cosmovisión en la historia y el tiempo, y es que toda cosmovisión se encuentra bajo la influencia de tendencias externas que pueden responder a factores físicos (como el clima o la ubicación geográfica del grupo que profesa una cosmovisión determinada), a factores culturales (como el influjo de otras cosmovisiones o simplemente de tendencias de pensamiento o «modas» que se difunden en un ámbito social específico), o bien a factores sociales (debido a la transformación social de los grupos que profesan una determinada cosmovisión y la forma como se relacionan con la autoridad o la manera como re-definen su propia identidad delante de otros grupos con características cosmovisivas diferentes (Smart, 2000: 114; 132). Estas tensiones de tipo identitario y cultural generan mutaciones dentro de una cosmovisión específica, no porque los grupos que la profesan la tengan como algo superado, sino porque la pervivencia de la cosmovisión implica necesariamente una adaptación vital al entorno cultural, geográfico, político y/o social en que vive un grupo, hecho que genera nuevas formas de priorizar los elementos propios de una cosmovisión.

–Tensión entre comprensión «ortodoxa» y «vivencia popular» de los principios cosmovisivos: toda cosmovisión implica la aceptación de principios que no necesariamente son demostrables ni comprensibles de entrada (Smart, 2000: 88). Como hemos señalado una cosmovisión implica una comprensión del mundo y de su sentido que sobrepasa a los individuos que forman parte de ella. Esto significa que toda cosmovisión y las sub-tendencias que genera poseen siempre puntos que son objeto de una «creencia» que no derivan necesariamente de una comprensión teórica de la realidad. De aquí que en las diversas cosmovisiones los mitos, las figuras ejemplares, las narraciones y los rituales adquieran tanta importancia, dado que ayudan a dar sentido a aspectos de la cosmovisión que sobrepasan lo verificable lo tangible. Pero la comprensión de estos principios no implica que se apliquen a la vida cotidiana de forma unívoca e invariable. Todo lo contrario: implica que los individuos

que profesan una determinada cosmovisión la explican a partir de los elementos que componen su cotidianidad, no a partir de los elementos que definen sus principios teóricos o metafísicos. Esto genera una tensión entre los principios «ortodoxos» que definen una cosmovisión específica y la forma «popular» de comprenderlos y actualizarlos que sus seguidores tienen a nivel cotidiano. Los estudios culturales describen este fenómeno como la generación de una «cultura popular» que, al intentar concretar los principios cosmovisivos abstractos en la vida cotidiana, genera nuevos «sentidos» de una manera asequible a aquellos que intentan vivir los principios cosmovisivos en la realidad concreta. Esto significa también que por más que un grupo se identifique con los principios abstractos de una cosmovisión en la praxis cotidiana no necesariamente mantienen una coherencia absoluta con tales principios, sino que los van adaptando para dar sentido a su existencia más allá del significado que tales principios puedan tener en la génesis de una cosmovisión específica.

Después de proponer los diversos aspectos de la cosmovisión como principio base para la comprensión de la religión más allá de su dimensión ritual y metafísica, integrando así su sentido en los aspectos culturales y sociales de la vida humana, conviene resumir algunos elementos relevantes sobre la función específica de la cosmovisión. Esto nos ayudará a definir aun más el porqué la aproximación cosmovisiva a las tradiciones religiosas específicas y su relación con la comunicación.

La primera función de la cosmovisión es explicar (Smart, 2000: 110). La cosmovisión explica cómo llegaron las cosas a ser como son y qué las mantiene de esa manera. Si es una cosmovisión naturalista, explica que el universo es controlado por el hombre. Si es una cosmovisión animista, explica que el universo es controlado por los espíritus. Estas cosmovisiones son articuladas en la mitología de la gente, que, como hemos visto, puede incluir folclor, ciencia e historia.

La segunda función de la cosmovisión es dar validez. Valida las instituciones básicas, los valores y las metas de la sociedad (Smart, 2000: 112). Esta función da al sujeto la impresión de que su enfoque de la vida es real y correcto. Por ejemplo, las cosmovisiones de sociedades democráticas afirman los valores de la empresa privada, el método científico, los derechos y libertades individuales, la propiedad privada y la educación pública, mientras que las cosmovisiones de sociedades autocráticas sancionan valores muy diferentes relacionados con los sistemas gubernamentales, sociales y económicos.

La tercera función de la cosmovisión es proveer refuerzo psicológico (Smart, 2000: 114). Esto incluye dar apoyo en las crisis y momentos de vulnerabilidad, como la muerte de un ser querido, el nacimiento de un niño, tiempos de enfermedad, transiciones como el matrimonio, la pubertad, el tiempo de sembrar o cosechar, y períodos de incertidumbre causados por crisis personales, regionales o nacionales. Los ritos y las ceremonias a menudo

son mecanismos importantes de apoyo. Dependiendo de la cosmovisión, pueden incluir oración, experimentación científica, visitas a un consejero, sacrificios, consultas a curanderos o comunicación con los espíritus de los ancestros.

La cuarta función de la cosmovisión es la integración. La cosmovisión organiza y sistematiza las percepciones de la realidad dentro de un diseño total (Smart, 2000: 116). De acuerdo con su cosmovisión la gente conceptualiza cómo debiera ser la realidad e interpretan sus experiencias de acuerdo con esa conceptualización. La cosmovisión provee un puente entre la realidad fuera de las cabezas de las personas (lo que existe) y la realidad dentro de sus cabezas (la forma en que perciben lo que existe) de acuerdo con modelos determinados.

La quinta función de la cosmovisión es la adaptación, incluyendo el ajuste del modelo a nuevas percepciones de la realidad y la reinterpretación de percepciones anteriores para conformarlas a nuevas percepciones (Smart, 2000: 117). Esto puede acontecer a escala mundial. Por ejemplo, la sociedad occidental ha pasado por las etapas de la Edad Media, el Renacimiento, la revolución industrial y la era científica, y hoy está lidiando con la era posmoderna. Este proceso ha cambiado la sociedad de una dependencia absoluta del Dios judeo-cristiano a la creencia del hombre autosuficiente y tecnológico.

La centralidad de la cosmovisión como base para la comprensión de las tradiciones religiosas tiene dos implicaciones muy importantes para nuestro estudio: en primer lugar, el estudio de un grupo sociocultural –en nuestro caso, el conocimiento de las tradiciones derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica– requiere una comprensión tanto de los principios trascendentes que determinan la manera como un grupo específico se entiende a si mismo y a su misión en el mundo, como de la forma como las realidades circundantes transforman y determinan cómo este grupo entiende su identidad en un momento específico y delante de unas circunstancias determinadas. En segundo lugar, la aproximación cosmovisiva está determinada por el cambio: un cambio en la cosmovisión producirá cambios en todos los subsistemas del grupo, así como un cambio en los subsistemas de grupo pueden suscitar una cadena de cambios que, con el tiempo, determinarán cambios en el conjunto de la cosmovisión.

Como veremos a lo largo de nuestro estudio la relación entre los subsistemas cosmovisivos abrahámicos (el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam en sus diversas expresiones) y su forma de comunicar y de interactuar con los diversos paradigmas de los medios de comunicación (oral, escritos, electrónicos y/o digitales) a lo largo de la historia conllevan una profundización de los principios fundantes de la comunicación a partir de la comprensión que cada subsistema tiene de la manera como el Absoluto se comunica con los creyentes (sea el «pueblo elegido», la «iglesia» o la «umma»), pero a su vez de la manera

como cada subsistema afronta los cambios de paradigma de los medios comunicativos en la historia, generando nuevas respuestas que influenciarán la manera de gestionar el «ser en el mundo» de los subsistemas cosmovisivos abrahámicos.

1.1.2. La cosmovisión abrahámica y su fenomenología comunicativa

Nuestro estudio se centra en la cosmovisión abrahámica y su dimensión comunicativa. Por este motivo en este apartado pretendemos presentar, en primer lugar, los fundamentos de la cosmovisión abrahámica en general, para luego presentar una síntesis de la fenomenología comunicativa de tal cosmovisión y la manera como se concreta en los subsistemas cosmovisivos que genera, en concreto el Judaísmo, el Cristianismo y el Islam.

Antes de proceder conviene hacer una precisión terminológica: la comprensión de las tres religiones abrahámicas como una cosmovisión que deriva en tres subsistemas cosmovisivos responde a una coherencia metodológica que pretende subrayar como las tradiciones Judía, Cristiana y Musulmana proceden de un origen común, pero derivan en tradiciones religiosas diferentes que, al mismo tiempo, presentan vertientes internas diversas. Esta coherencia es importante de cara a comprender el método de análisis que llevamos a término en nuestro estudio por lo que toca a cada una de las tres tradiciones religiosas y su dimensión comunicativa. Pero dado que el fundamento abrahámico de cada uno de estos tres subsistemas cosmovisivos adquiere formas particulares a lo largo de su desarrollo, propiamente nos deberíamos referir a ellas no como subsistemas, sino como «tradiciones». Por este motivo a partir de ahora nos referiremos a la cosmovisión abrahámica como el sistema cosmovisivos que establece el fundamento de las tres tradiciones religiosas que nos ocupan, pero utilizaremos de forma indiferente el término de «subsistema cosmovisivo» y el de «tradición».

El uso de «tradición» como equivalente a «subsistema cosmovisivo» pretende subrayar, como veremos, el aspecto comunicacional propio de los subsistemas cosmovisivos abrahámicos: estos, a partir de su desarrollo en la historia, «transmiten» su forma de entender la realidad y de comunicarse con el absoluto que profesan a partir de un «legado» o «tradición» que, inmerso en la historia y en la contingencia pero atento a los principios que le rigen, va generando nuevas maneras de explicar su forma ser en el mundo y en el tiempo y de relacionarse con su entrono, actualizándose y al mismo tiempo intentando ser coherente con los principios que dieron origen a cada subsistema derivado de la cosmovisión abrahámica. De aquí que hablemos de «tradición judía», «tradición cristiana» y de «tradición musulmana» como explicitación de los mismo subsistemas cosmovisivos abrahámicos.

1.1.2.1. Los fundamentos de la Cosmovisión Abrahamítica

En una obra escrita a inicios del s. XX en la que buscaba definir la esencia de judaísmo, el pensador judío alemán Leo Beck (1873-1956) afirmaba:

«Si el factor esencial de la religión radica en la actitud del hombre hacia el mundo, según esta visión de los profetas que hoy se vuelve a reconocer, entonces hay sólo dos formas fundamentales y determinantes de religión: la de Israel y la de Buda. La primera declara que el mundo es el campo para las tareas de la vida y ofrece una afirmación moral del valor de la relación del hombre con el mundo mediante la acción y la voluntad; la segunda declara que la tarea del hombre consiste en dedicarse a la meditación sin ejercer su voluntad. El judaísmo expresa el mandamiento de trabajar y crear, el budismo la necesidad de descansar. El judaísmo conduce al deseo de trabajar para el Reino de Dios en el cual todos los hombres pueden unirse, mientras que el budismo lleva al deseo de hundirse en el único, en la nada, para encontrar allí la liberación y la salvación del yo. El judaísmo exige ascenso, desarrollo, la larga marcha hacia el futuro, mientras el budismo predica el retorno, la cesación, la existencia sin futuro en el silencio. El judaísmo busca reconciliar al mundo con Dios, mientras que el budismo intenta escapar del mundo. El judaísmo exige creación, hombres nuevos y un mundo nuevo: el budismo busca la extinción, el alejamiento de la humanidad y del mundo. Así el judaísmo es una religión del altruismo, pues declara que quien ha encontrado su camino hacia Dios buscando a sus hermanos y sirve a Dios amándolos y siendo justo con ellos, ese hombre aspira a la perfección. Por otro lado, el budismo es la religión del egoísmo, ya que atribuye la perfección al hombre que se aparta de la humanidad para describir la única manera verdadera de acercarse a sí mismo» (Baek, 1998: 63-64).

Todo y el carácter reduccionista de la comparación que Baek presenta entre el judaísmo y el budismo, su intuición responde a la distinción que podemos hacer de dos grandes grupos en la historia de las religiones: las tradiciones religiosas asiáticas, y las del medio oriente.

En un espacio de tierra relativamente pequeño, entre Palestina y el centro occidental de Arabia, surgieron tres de las grandes religiones contemporáneas llamadas de diversas maneras, de acuerdo con la forma de comprender el fenómeno religioso: monoteístas (por creer en un solo Dios), semíticas (porque encuentran su origen entre los pueblos semitas, como son los israelitas y los árabes), proféticas (dado que tienen un fundamento histórico basado en una figura profética) e históricas (porque conciben la historia como el lugar en que Dios habla, se «revela», distinguiéndose así de las tradiciones religiosas que se centran en la naturaleza o en la interioridad) (Duch, 2001: 126).

La distinción propuesta por Baek ofrece una intuición clave: las religiones nacidas en el lejano Oriente (hinduismo, budismo y taoísmo) se definen por su búsqueda de la «interioridad» y su forma trascendente de entender la realidad. En sentido estricto no profesan la existencia en un dios personal, ni proponen la transformación de la sociedad

mediante la acción misionera de las sociedades y de la historia. En esencia podríamos decir que no pretenden redimir al ser humano en el mundo, sino sacarle del mundo, percibido como negativo.

Las tradiciones que históricamente nacen en el cercano Oriente (como son el Judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam), por su parte, se definen en un dios personal (no un absoluto impersonal) que, de una manera u otra, deriva en el ideal de la transformación de la historia. Estas tradiciones reciben también el nombre de «religiones proféticas», no sólo porque su historia está ligada a figuras proféticas que se erigen como sus fundadores (Moisés, Jesús y Muhammad), sino también porque proponen que los seres humanos se transformen ya en la misma vida terrena, haciéndose plenamente humanos, con todas las consecuencias que tal principio puede tener no sólo a nivel religioso, sino también social, político, económico, etc. (Duch, 2001: 127). Son tradiciones religiosas que no sólo profesan una vida feliz en otro mundo (la escatología) sino también en éste, proponiendo un tipo de utopía intramundana que impele a la misión (Stark, 2001: 31).

Las tradiciones religiosas del cercano Oriente, derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica, provienen de un tronco común, formado por la historia fundante de los Israelitas, desde Abraham (s. XII aC) a los profetas y sabios que se derivaron en la historia bíblica, tronco que generó dos líneas derivadas que se desarrollaron como tres interpretaciones distintas de esta misma religiosidad israelita: la judía y la cristiana, que se desarrollaron en los s. I y II dC, y posteriormente el Islam, o la religión musulmana, que derivó como una expansión posterior de esa misma raíz semítica recreada por Muhammad sobre la base del judaísmo y del cristianismo, pero asumiendo también elementos de la tradición árabe anterior al s. VII.

Dado que estas tres tradiciones religiosas tienen un mismo principio, que es la figura de Abraham como referente del creyente monoteísta, el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam constituyen las cosmovisiones abrahámicas. Las características de esta cosmovisión, desde un punto de vista fenomenológico, parten de que todas estas tradiciones son monoteístas y veneran, como padre o inspirador, a Abraham, el primero de los creyentes monoteístas según la tradición semítica, que vivió entre los s. XV y XII aC, y que rechazó el politeísmo de su entorno –es decir, la forma religiosa de su gente, entrada en la veneración de diversas divinidades– para iniciar una búsqueda religiosa que defienden aún las tradiciones que constituyen esta cosmovisión (Smart, 2000: 45).

Hay que señalar que la referencia a Abraham constituye más un referente narrativo que un cuerpo doctrinal. Es difícil distinguir en Abraham la historia y la leyenda, la figura derivada de la fe y el personaje con su biografía (Soler, 2002: 17). Por esto, dentro de la

cosmovisión abrahámica, hay que aproximarse a la forma como cada una de sus tradiciones percibe la figura de Abraham:

–El judaísmo considera a Abraham como un padre nacional legítimo (Lemaire, 2003: 19). Abraham aparece así como iniciador de una nación muy concreta de creyentes que asumen una misma religiosidad y se encuentra vinculados por la misma raíz de sangre (que redundará en una percepción étnica de la cultura y de la religiosidad), como también por la interpretación casi literal de la promesa que Dios hace a Abraham en el contexto de Génesis 12: 1-3: «Sal de tu casa y de tu parentela, vete a la tierra que yo te mostraré; yo haré que seas un pueblo grande [...] de manera que de ti serán benditas todas las naciones de la tierra». En este sentido el judaísmo es una reinterpretación mosaica de la fe de Abraham. Desde el punto de vista fenomenológico e histórico, la religión israelita histórica en cuanto tal ya terminó.

Han cambiado las circunstancias culturales, geográficas y sociales del antiguo pueblo judío, pero queda su sistema simbólico que se recoge en sus escrituras (la Torah) que refieren los grandes momentos de manifestación del favor del único Dios hacia su «pueblo», como la peregrinación de los patriarcas, el éxodo, la pascua, el paso por el mar Rojo, etc. Quedan también las palabras y experiencias de los profetas de los s. VII-V aC que se encargaron de actualizar el mensaje original del Dios único que profesaron los primeros descendientes de Abraham (Sibony, 1992: 45).

Si bien la religión israelita terminó, queda el judaísmo como manifestación de aquellos israelitas que en los s. I-II dC quisieron mantener la fe de Abraham identificándola con una forma nacional, en sentido legal, y que abarca toda la vida del creyente. Según la tradición judía el Dios único de Abraham se ha vinculado para siempre en una nación escogida – el «pueblo elegido»– y por medio de ella revela su persona y manifiesta el sentido de su Ley en la historia (Sibony, 1992: 33). El judaísmo propiamente dicho, tras la destrucción del templo de Jerusalén en el s. II, con el exilio o «diáspora» masiva de los judíos de Palestina, ha querido mantener el valor de la elección israelita dentro de moldes nacionales en una tradición cultural, social y religiosa propia que no es ajena a las interpretaciones y divisiones, pero que reconoce en la figura de Abraham a su fundador (Sibony, 2002: 35).

–En el caso del cristianismo, los cristianos consideran a Abraham como un «padre en la fe». Afirman que la semilla de Abraham no se expande a través de una ley ni mediante una genealogía nacional, son a través de una fe y de una experiencia personal como la de Jesús, que les ha permitido reinterpretar y abrir de forma universal la riqueza del antiguo Israel (Sibony, 2002: 259). La tradición cristiana aparece así como una respuesta integradora y abierta de la misma identidad israelita, iniciada con la figura de Abraham. Los cristianos

pretenden así expandir a todos los pueblos la promesa originaria de la religión de Israel. En este sentido podemos afirmar que ellos quieren ser los auténticos israelitas, los «hijos de Abraham» y herederos de su promesa espiritual, por medio de Jesús a quien el cristianismo concibe como el verdadero creyente en el único Dios de la historia. Como afirma Pikaza:

«Judaísmo y cristianismo forman dos derivados polares de la misma fe israelita que aparece iniciada por Abraham y profundizada por Moisés y los profetas. En sentido estricto, judaísmo y cristianismo son dos interpretaciones de la misma raíz israelita antigua. Ciertamente, el judaísmo está preparado en los años que siguen al exilio (desde el s. I aC), de manera que gran parte de la literatura y experiencia religiosa de los últimos libros de la Biblia hebrea y los libros sagrados de la traducción griega llamada «de los LXX» (s. IV.I aC) pertenecen a lo que podemos llamar el primer judaísmo. Pero también la iglesia pueden hallarse preparada en esos textos, tal como han sido reinterpretados por Jesús y sus seguidores. Por eso, en sentido estricto, podemos afirmar que sinagoga e iglesia, tal como ahora las conocemos, han nacido en los mismos s. (del s. I al II dC), como respuestas nuevas ante los mismos retos en tiempos de una gran crisis» (Pikaza, 2002: 111).

—El Islam es una expansión posterior de la cosmovisión Abrahámica. Concibe a Abraham como padre biológico y espiritual del nuevo pueblo creyente que se forma inicialmente entre los árabes y que se llamará el Islam. La tradición musulmana concibe a Abraham como padre biológico de Ismael, por medio de Agar (la mujer que la tradición israelita presenta como esclava de Abraham y que le dio un hijo, en Génesis 16). Abraham aparece así como progenitor de los árabes, el nuevo pueblo escogido según el Islam (Sibony, 1992: 114). Pero, al mismo tiempo, Abraham es para ellos padre espiritual de todos los creyentes monoteístas, es decir de todos los que asumen la creencia en un único dios, más allá del Islam mismo. La importancia de la figura de Abraham queda explicitada en La Meca, con su Caaba o «piedra de Dios», que Abraham mismo, con su hijo Ismael, había sacralizado, dejándola como signo o templo de Dios para todos los creyentes, aunque luego La Meca cayó en el politeísmo, contra el cuál lucharía Mahoma y sus seguidores a favor de la fe en el dios único de Abraham (Sibony, 1992: 118).

La cosmovisión abrahámica y las tradiciones religiosas que genera constituyen lo que, en el campo de la historia de las religiones, se llaman las «religiones monoteístas». El término, sin embargo, presenta algunas dificultades, dado que en el mismo campo de la historia de las religiones se distingue dos niveles entre las religiones monoteístas: un nivel sería el «monismo filosófico», ligado a las cosmovisiones orientales, y en particular a las tradiciones hinduistas, que, en algunos casos, tienden hacia una comprensión de la manifestación del absoluto trascendente en tanto que unidad (Martín Velasco, 2006: 281) o bien la aceptación de la manifestación del absoluto personal en tanto que «medio» para lograr la liberación del alma (Atman) llamado «henoteísmo», como infieren algunas de las

tradiciones derivadas del hinduismo (Martín Velasco, 2006: 324); otro nivel sería el del «monoteísmo profético», que corresponde al monoteísmo exclusivo que se desarrolla con la religión de Israel en el contexto de la cosmovisión abrahámica (Martín Velasco, 2006: 330) y que es objeto de nuestro estudio.

En la comprensión del carácter monoteísta propio de la cosmovisión abrahámica y sus tradiciones derivadas se destaca ante todo la experiencia de un Dios que existe por sí mismo y que actúa en la historia, pues parten de una comprensión personal de esta divinidad que se manifiesta o «revela» en la historia, entendida como lineal y única. Por este motivo la cosmovisión abrahámica afirma básicamente tres puntos:

–La unidad de un único Dios: frente al politeísmo de otras cosmovisiones, la cosmovisión abrahámica confiesa que el único dios existente es el Dios confesado por esta cosmovisión. Es un monoteísmo «excluyente» afirmación que, como veremos, genera diversas consecuencias a nivel comunicativo y político. Tanto el Israel antiguo como el cristianismo primitivo y el Islam moderno han reaccionado contra la multiplicidad de figuras divinas que sacralizan de algún modo las fuerzas naturales y vitales del mundo (Assmann, 2003: 12). Las tradiciones judía y cristiana asumen esa herencia: la divinidad no es escinde ni multiplica, no se rompe ni se disgrega, pues sólo hay un Dios, un único poder sagrado que todo lo funda y dirige con su fuerza. Entendido así el monoteísmo es la afirmación de la unidad fundamental de todo lo que existe. Esto significa también que el mismo Dios único aparece como una «palabra común» con la cuál es posible dialogar (un elemento comunicativo de vital importancia, tal como veremos) y una «unidad de sentido» que vincula todos los seres y elementos de la realidad, entendida como realidad creada por este Dios único (Martín Velasco, 2006: 335).

–La trascendencia del único Dios: la cosmovisión abrahámica defiende también que este único Dios no se confunde con la naturaleza, ni con la vida interior de los individuos (es decir con el alma humana, con la mente o con la voluntad). Dios es distinto de todo lo que existe (Morgensztern, 2011: 32). Se excluye así toda posibilidad de una experiencia panteísta de identificación con lo divino, como proponen las cosmovisiones orientales. Lo que está al centro de las tradiciones derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica es Dios mismo, no la totalidad más o menos difusa de la idea o el valor sagrado del universo. Sólo porque ese único Dios existe, y porque desborda la realidad misma (sobrepasando todo lo que el ser humano pueda pensar, imaginar o desear) el ser humano adquiere sentido y puede realizarse. (Martín Velasco, 2006: 338). Para el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam sólo ese Dios trascendente es absoluto, es decir, una realidad original, infinita y definitiva. Es a partir de aquí que estas tradiciones rechazan históricamente los otros absolutos, considerándolos en esencia como idolátricos (sean de tipo político, vital, económico o cultural). De aquí

deriva un cierto «absolutismo» vital que, en momentos históricos específicos, han dado pie a ideologías de tipo impositivo, como veremos en el apartado sobre la relación entre las tradiciones derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica y la política (Assmann, 2003: 23).

–La creencia en un Dios «personal»: frente al deísmo o comprensión de la difusión de la divinidad (o las divinidades) en las realidades naturales o metafísicas que profesan diversas cosmovisiones asiáticas, la cosmovisión abrahámica profesa una concepción personal de la divinidad única, la cuál no es un ser indiferente que ha puesto en marcha la creación y la historia, pero que luego se encuentra separado de la vida de los seres humano, desinteresándose de la misma historia (Martín Velasco, 2006: 339). Contra esta posición la cosmovisión abrahámica defiende un Dios que es persona verdadera, alguien que piensa y desea, un ser cuya presencia y acción experimentan con fuerza los creyentes y con el cuál pueden dialogar. Esto significa que el ser humano, siendo personal, aparece especialmente vinculado a Dios, como «imagen» o como «lugarteniente» suyo, y con la capacidad de estar en diálogo con él (Duch, 2001: 113).

1.1.2.2. La tradiciones religiosas Abrahámicas y la «revelación» como comunicación vertical

Habiendo definido las características de la cosmovisión abrahámica, de cara a nuestro estudio se hace necesario perfilar las características comunicativas que se derivan de esta cosmovisión. Dentro del campo de la comprensión del fenómeno religioso la cuestión sobre la comunicación entre la humanidad y el absoluto retiene una vital importancia. Resulta un punto clave no sólo porque la comunicación entre lo humano y el absoluto es un punto determinante de la religiosidad, sino también porque la comunicación entre lo humano y lo divino determina no sólo los principios fundantes de una cosmovisión determinada, sino también la manera como esta cosmovisión y las tradiciones que genera comprenden la realidad y la forma de actuar de los seres humanos en la historia.

La fenomenología de las religiones llama a este elemento comunicativo «revelación», es decir la forma como el absoluto y/o la divinidad se manifiesta y comunica con el grupo de creyentes. En el conjunto de las religiones del mundo se tienden a determinar cuatro formas de «revelaciones» dentro del conjunto de las cosmovisiones religiosas (Croatto, 2005: 399-400):

–La Hierofanía: es el nombre propio de la manifestación de lo sagrado («hieron» = sagrado) en las cosmovisiones de carácter cósmico y politeísta (Eliade, 2005: 3971). Lo que se desvela en esta forma de comunicación no es Dios en sentido personal, sino es más bien lo sagrado, los poderes originarios de la naturaleza. En sentido amplio todo lo que existe en el mundo es o puede ser hierofanía (p. e. el sol, la luna, el cielo y la tierra, el agua, el fuego, el

nacimiento o la muerte, etc.) sin distinguir el carácter «personal» de la relación con lo divino y de la forma como la realidad trascendente se comunica con los seres humanos.

–La Avatara: corresponde al nombre hindú que sirve para indicar la manifestación de lo divino en las llamadas cosmovisiones místicas (Hinduismo, Budismo, Taoísmo) que encuentran la expresión de lo divino en ciertas figuras especiales y de un modo particular en las personas de los grandes iniciados o reveladores de los misterios del absoluto («maestros»). No es decisivo que ellos (Krishna o Rama, Buda, los bhodisatvas o los «inmortales» taoístas) hubieran existido en un tiempo concreto, pues no son importantes por su historia, sino por la verdad que manifiestan. Más que personas en el sentido filosófico-occidental, se trata de símbolos, de figuras excelsas de la hondura sagrada de lo humano (Kinsley, 2005: 707). Se manifiestan una y otra vez, sobretodo cuando el mundo corre el riesgo de perderse en el vacío y la mentira. Tanto ellos como toda la realidad pasan y se acaban. Pero queda su verdad, su profundización en el absoluto, y las palabras que escribieron o proclamaros, así como los actos y gestas que llevaron a término.

–La Teofanía: propiamente dicha la teofanía es la manifestación histórica de un Dios personal y sólo puede darse en las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica, o los llamados «monoteísmos proféticos» estrictos. (Scriba, 2008: 451). Lo que se manifiesta a través de la verdadera teofanía no es el sentido sagrado del cosmos, ni el valor profundo del espíritu (como si proviniese de una divinidad que lo llena todo) sino la «palabra» y la «acción» concreta del mismo Dios único profesado que habla a los seres humanos, sea de un modo directamente humano (a través de los profetas), se por medio de unos símbolos cómicos que el profeta o la comunidad / pueblo entero descubren como portadores de sentido trascendente (por ejemplo el ritmo de los astros, una tormenta, etc.).

En un primer momento la cosmovisión abrahámica y sus tradiciones derivadas asumen algunos elementos de las teofanías cósmicas, es decir la manifestación del Dios único por medio de ciertos fenómenos de tipo natural (p. e. la tormenta del Sinaí, la piedra sagrada de La Meca, etc.). Pero fenomenológicamente hablando la cosmovisión abrahámica acepta o cultiva una «teofanía profética» en la que el mismo Dios de la naturaleza habla o se desvela de manera fuerte a través de las palabras y los gestos de aquellos hombres y mujeres que escuchan y expresan su voz en el contexto del mundo y de la historia (Martín Velasco, 2006: 340). Sólo en este contexto podemos hablar de teofanía, destacando sus dos rasgos o supuestos principales:

–El Dios único se manifiesta pronunciando su Palabra: el Dios único de la cosmovisión abrahámica no es un poder inconsciente, ni lleva una vida aislada que se desentiende de los seres humanos. Siendo un verdadero ser personal, el Dios abrahámico

habla, despliega su poder, expresa su voluntad y dialoga con la humanidad (Croatto, 2005: 399).

–Los profetas son aquellos que escuchan y transmiten la Palabra de Dios: como mediadores de la comunicación de los hombres con Dios en la historia, como garantes y testigos de las manifestaciones del Dios único de la cosmovisión abrahámica, emergen los profetas como decodificadores del mensaje divino en un contexto histórico específico (Croatto, 2005: 341).

Podemos afirmar entonces que para las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica la «teofanía» y la «profecía» se acaban identificando. El judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam no hablan de una simple hierofanta o manifestación cósmica de Dios. Tampoco se atienen a un tipo de Avatara o declaración simbólica de Dios mediante figuras sagradas cambiantes, de carácter espiritual. Las tres tradiciones se retienen testimonios de una presencia personal de Dios, que les ha hablado y se les ha manifestado de hecho en la historia. Por esto reconocen una «teofanía» en sentido estricto.

Las hierofantas son por principio múltiples y no hay entre ellas ninguna que pretenda ser definitiva. Son también múltiples las avatares, sin que ninguna pueda presentarse como norma de todas las restantes (Kinsley, 2005: 708). Por el contrario, las teofanías no pueden ser contradictorias, ni pueden separarse unas de otras, son que todas forman un tipo de unidad, una «historia de la revelación de Dios» (Scriba, 2008: 452). Así lo afirma la tradición cristiana cuando afirma que Dios puede revelarse y se revela de muchas maneras en otros tiempos, pero básicamente lo ha hecho mediante los profetas de Israel, y ahora, en los tiempos finales, se manifiesta sobretodo por el más importante de los profetas (e hijo de Dios), que es Jesús (Hebreos 1:1). Algo semejante dicen los musulmanes cuando afirman que el Dos de los antiguos profetas ha dicho su palabra definitiva por medio de «el sello de los profetas», que es Muhammad.

De esta particular forma de entender la comunicación entre lo divino y lo humano propia de la cosmovisión abrahámica deriva la forma como cada una de las tres tradiciones religiosas que genera entienden la «revelación» o comunicación entre el dios único y su pueblo. Este punto resulta de particular importancia para nuestro estudio ya que, según la tesis que defendemos, la comprensión intrínseca de la comunicación divino-humana o «revelación» juega un papel determinante en la manera como cada una de las tradiciones religiosas que nos ocupan interactúan y han interactuado con la transformación de los medios de comunicación y en la manera como entienden la comunicación misma.

Para comprender el principio de «revelación» en las tres tradiciones derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica conviene profundizar en lo que la historia de las religiones llama «religiones del libro», término que se aplica a las tradiciones religiosas que poseen un

documento que puede presentarse como norma religiosa y código social. En este contexto la comunicación divina queda fijada por escrito dentro de la historia, y que se reproduce, lee, escribe y recita al largo de la historia.

Hay que aclarar que existen «religiones del libro» que no son monoteístas, como es el caso del hinduismo, que se funda en el libro sagrado de los Vedas y que profesa la fe en muchas manifestaciones de la divinidad absoluta o Brahma (Martín Velasco, 2006: 337). Por lo que toca a la cosmovisión abrahámica las religiones del libro se limitan a los tres monoteísmos de los que se ocupa nuestro estudio. En relación con ellas y su forma de entender la comunicación divina, hay que tener presente tres puntos esenciales.

En primer lugar, las tres tradiciones monoteístas en tanto que «religiones del libro» son religiones de la «palabra», es decir, conciben la presencia de Dios en forma de relato, mandato o ley que se puede codificar en un discurso fijado en forma cultural o escrita (Croatto, 2005: 410). La experiencia de dios se vincula a la historia literaria de un pueblo, de una determinada comunidad o de una persona que fija su enseñanza de tal manera que aparece después como normativa (bien porque se trata de una obra religiosa de carácter clásico o bien canónico).

Por otra parte estas tres tradiciones religiosas entienden sus libros sagrados como «tradicición» normativa, que persiste por siempre, es decir, como modelo para las diversas formas de entender lo divino (Martín Velasco, 2006: 339). Las tres religiones tienen un libro sagrado que transmite la voluntad de Dios, que expresa su ley y conserva los relatos que la comunidad de creyentes ha conservado como de origen divino.

En tercer lugar hay que señalar que la tres tradiciones del libro derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica tienen un carácter «canónico», ya que suponen que ha llegado el tiempo culminante de la historia y que la experiencia religiosa de una persona o de una sociedad puede ser codificada para siempre, como normativa para sus fieles, aunque la función de el libro sagrado en este sentido, como veremos, cumple una función distinta en cada tradición (Croatto, 2005: 413).

Conviene recordar que, en la experiencia del pueblo de Israel que constituye la experiencia originaria de las cosmovisiones abrahámicas, no había un libro sagrado. Había una experiencia religiosa, una palabra transmitida y perpetuada de forma oral (mediante mitos, tradiciones y normas), pero sin un texto normativo, que sólo apareció hacia el s. VI aC. Existían tradiciones religiosas y algunas se fueron fijando por escrito, al mismo tiempo que surgieron códigos legales de carácter preceptivo (Martín Velasco, 2006: 330). Pero el sentido más profundo de la religión y sus consecuencias para la vida de los israelitas no se habían codificado en un documento histórico o legal definitivo. Es decir: había monoteísmo

profético ante que libro sagrado. Los textos canónicos que fijarán esta tradición mediante la memoria y la sistematización llegarán después.

Siguiendo este principio podemos resumir algunos aspectos de la forma como las tres tradiciones religiosas provenientes de la cosmovisión abrahámica entienden este procesos de «fijación» de la comunicación divina.

—Por lo que toca al judaísmo se puede afirmar que surgió cuando los israelitas fueron codificando su experiencia en forma de libro sagrado (o «biblioteca» de libros sagrados, que es el significado del griego «Biblios» o Biblia) de tal forma que los diversos momentos de su historia (desde la vuelta al exilio de Babilonia hasta el establecimiento de las sinagogas hacia el año 70 dC) se configuran en función de la necesidad de tener un libro canónico regulador. Al mismo tiempo hay que considerar que el judaísmo definitivo, centrado en la «Misná» o «Ley oral», no nació sólo por la definición canónica de los textos sagrados, sino en torno a una ley religiosa que se transmitió de dos formas: por el texto escrito (centrado en la Torah o «Pentateuco») y por la tradición oral (puesta por escrito, con el tiempo, en el texto de la Misná). Por esto, estrictamente hablando, algunos fenomenólogos de la religión afirman que el judaísmo no es, estrictamente hablando, una religión de libro sino de ley, en la que se junta el libro canónico con la tradición, que adquiere una identidad de carácter étnica y nacional ya que nace de la «llamada» divina a ser un «pueblo elegido» (Lemaire, 2003: 17).

Por esto para el judaísmo son importantes la transcendencia divina, la historia en la que dios se revela a su pueblo «elegido», y el mismo texto sagrado que da testimonio de la acción de dios en la historia. Pero en un sentido estricto para el judaísmo da una gran importancia a la Ley entendida como el seguimiento de un tipo de vida que dios mismo ha revelado y dado a su pueblo elegido para que se «santo» (Kadosh) como el mismo dios único de Israel es santo, dando lugar a una nación que debe cultivar su identidad para convertirse en signo de la fidelidad de dios a todas las naciones (Lemaire, 2003: 18).

—La tradición cristiana reconoció como primer libro sagrado la Biblia hebrea, que Jesús conocía y predicaba. Pero pronto el cristianismo actualizó y reinterpretó ese libro desde la experiencia que los cristianos tuvieron de la vida y las enseñanzas de Jesús, que pasó a ser la verdadera revelación de dios (Sibony, 1992: 286). Posteriormente los textos relativos a las experiencias de los primeros cristianos fueron cobrando la forma de libro (llamado «Nuevo Testamento») que completa el libro anterior proveniente de la tradición judía (que pasaría a llamarse «Antiguo Testamento»).

De esta manera los cristianos ponen en primer lugar a Jesús y el Nuevo Testamento en el lugar donde los judíos situaban al pueblo elegido y su tradición oral (codificada en la Misná y el Talmud). Surge así una gran diferencia ente las dos tradiciones religiosas (Sibony,

1992: 274): los judíos ven las dos realidades (Biblia y tradición histórica) en forma paralela, como expresiones de un mismo contenido, mientras los cristianos interpretan la vida de Jesús y sus enseñanzas (el Nuevo Testamento) como culminación y plenitud del Antiguo Testamento, de tal forma que los dos no se encuentran al mismo nivel sino que uno –el Antiguo Testamento– lleva al orto –el Nuevo Testamento– donde se culmina el auténtico sentido de la acción comunicadora del único dios.

Dicho en términos más fenomenológicos, la tradición cristiana acepta los rasgos antes indicados, pero los reinterpreta en forma teológica y antropológica. En el principio, allí donde estaba la ley judía, encuentra y coloca a Jesucristo. Por eso en la base de su experiencia religiosa definirá la comprensión de la comunicación entre el dios único y la humanidad como un reflejo de la relación entre el dios único, su hijo encarnado y el espíritu que emana de ellos (llamada «Trinidad») que se propone como el nuevo principio del pueblo de dios que está abierto a todas las naciones y no únicamente a la «nación elegida» que constituye el judaísmo (Pikaza, 2002: 247). Una tal noción relacional de la revelación divina tendrá, como veremos, una influencia fundamental en la manera como el cristianismo entenderá la comunicación divina y la manera de interactuar de los cristianos con los medios de comunicación.

–La tradición musulmana tampoco inició su experiencia religiosa con un libro, sino con la «recitación» del mensaje de Muhammad, que recibe la revelación divina mediante el arcángel Gabriel y que constituye la enunciación de una verdad eterna transmitida por los profetas anteriores (especialmente de Moisés y Jesucristo). Esta «recitación» (que es lo que significa en árabe la palabra «Corán») proviene en sentido estricto de un solo ser humano: Mahoma (Sibony, 1992: 26). La Biblia israelita contiene mil años de historia, con textos de diversos autores escritos en formas literarias diferentes. La Biblia cristiana es también obra de tres generaciones de creyentes. Ambos son libros para leer y meditar, para vivir y recrear el sentido de la comunicación divina en la historia, de manera que recibieron nuevos sentidos a medida que avanzaba la historia de los creyentes de cada una de las dos tradiciones religiosas. Por el contrario el Corán es texto de un solo hombre, un conjunto de poemas, discursos y exhortaciones recitados por Muhammad durante unos veinte años y recopilados por sus discípulos inmediatos en forma de libro.

El Corán será siempre un libro declamado antes que leído, es decir, es palabra proclamada antes que escrita. Sólo tras la muerte de Muhammad (632 dC) el Corán recitado se convierte en libro escrito y recibe tal importancia que se declaran superadas las revelaciones parciales (y, según la tradición musulmana, corrompidas) de judíos y de cristianos, de tal manera que sus «Biblias» pierden importancia (Izutsu, 2002: 29).

En este sentido se puede afirmar que el concepto de comunicación divina para la tradición musulmana parte de dios que revela su palabra por medios de Muhammad, formando una comunidad que nace en el mundo árabe pero abierta a todos los hombres de la tierra, marcada por la sumisión a la voluntad de dios transmitida por el Corán. No hay pueblo escogido en el sentido judío del término. No hay tampoco encarnación (ni en Jesucristo, que es un profeta más, ni en Muhammad, que es el más importante de los profetas, pero permanece siempre humano), sino una revelación profética abierta por Muhammad a todos los pueblos de la tierra (universalismo), formando así el Islam y su «Umma» o comunidad de creyentes comprometida en el seguimiento de la comunicación definitiva de dios y en la expansión de su mensaje y de su ley.

Aunque profundizaremos en las consecuencias que tiene la noción de revelación o comunicación divina en los capítulos dedicados a la comunicación en cada una de las tres tradiciones religiosas que nos ocupan, conviene destacar ya desde ahora dos aspectos importantes.

En primer lugar que la comunicación divina (revelación) se concibe en el contexto de la historia y de la experiencia religiosa de cada tradición a partir de un proceso que implica básicamente el paso de una tradición oral-experiencial a una manifestación escrita-canónica con todo lo que eso implica desde el punto de vista comunicativo.

En segundo lugar resulta de primordial importancia en las tres tradiciones la «actualización» del sentido del texto escrito-canónico de la comunicación divina a lo largo de la historia por medio de una «tradición» que utilizará los medios de comunicación para explicarse y al mismo tiempo para valorar y asimilar –o refutar– el desarrollo tecnológico, cultural y social de las formas de comunicación (oral, escrita, electrónica y digital) para dar sentido a esta tradición en el tiempo y el espacio y para extender la resonancia de la comunicación divina primigenia en el mundo.

Pero la comunicación divina o «revelación» en el contexto de las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica no se limita en una comunicación descendiente. El monoteísmo teológico profesado por las tradiciones judía, cristiana y musulmana plantea también el deber de comunicar y «proclamar» el mensaje del único dios a las naciones, planteando así la cuestión de la «misión» o exigencia de dar a conocer tal mensaje divino más allá de la comunidad derivada de cada experiencia comunicativa (Duch, 2012: 55). Por esto, cada uno a su manera y en coherencia con las características propias de la revelación en cada una de las tradiciones específicas, judíos, cristianos y musulmanes se sienten llamados a expresar y expandir el sentido de su propia experiencia socio-religiosa para bien de la humanidad y en coherencia con el mandato divino revelado en cada tradición (Duch, 2012: 61).

Esta realidad contrasta, por ejemplo, con las cosmovisiones asiáticas que, en principio, no responden a un apelo misionero y no pretenden (al menos en principio) convertir a nadie pues sostienen que, de alguna manera, cada pueblo ha de recorrer su propio camino religioso (Croatto, 2005: 406). Las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica son, en cambio, esencialmente universalistas y misioneras: reconocen que el mensaje transmitido por dios a sus comunidades no es sólo para ellas, sino para ofrecerlo y expandirlo a todos los humanos (Martín Velasco, 2006: 341). Esta realidad ha hecho que la influencia del pensamiento judío, pese al número reducido de judíos al mundo, haya tenido una vital importancia en el desarrollo del pensamiento occidental. Y hace también que el cristianismo y el Islam, en sus diversas formas, constituyan las dos tradiciones religiosas con más seguidores en el mundo.

1.1.2.3. La tradiciones religiosas Abrahámicas y la «misión» como comunicación transversal

Si bien la «revelación» constituye el eje de la comunicación-relación entre el dios único y la comunidad de creyentes que le sigue, el impulso comunicativo generado por tal relación no se acaba en una comprensión de la divinidad y las formas como su mensaje queda expresado en los libros sagrados, en los ritos, en la ética, etc. Estas comunidades tienen el deber de perpetuar tal mensaje, pero también de darlo a conocer al resto de la humanidad, o bien de dar testimonio de él en medio del resto de los pueblos. Tal impulso comunicativo recibe el nombre de «misión», un concepto que se desarrolló en el cristianismo pero que rápidamente se adoptó en el campo de la fenomenología de las religiones para referirse al esfuerzo de propagación de los ideales cosmovisivos de una determinada religión en el tiempo y en la historia (Stackhouse, 2005: 6069).

Proponemos ahora una breve síntesis a la comprensión de la misión según cada una de las tradiciones religiosas que nos ocupan como base para la comprensión de una forma de comunicación transversal-misionera que responde a las exigencias de la experiencia de comunicación vertical-reveladora propia de cada religión. Este punto adquiere una vital importancia en el contexto de nuestro estudio, ya que los principios inherentes a la identidad y la misión constituirán, como veremos en los capítulos siguientes, uno de los pilares para la comprensión de la relación entre los tres monoteísmos y la comunicación.

–El principio de la misión en el judaísmo deriva de su monoteísmo testimonial y altamente centrado en la plenitud de la historia (escatología) (Wijnhoven, 2009: 102). Hemos subrayado como el judaísmo recalca su carácter único, de «elegidos». Por esto el judaísmo ha mantenido a lo largo de la historia una distinción, cultivando su identidad

específica en medio de unos pueblos que siguen inmersos, según la tradición judía, en alguna forma de idolatría.

Pero el judaísmo no es directamente misionero: no buscan que todos los seres humanos se hagan judíos, pues el judaísmo no es la última palabra ni la meta final de la humanidad y de la historia, sino sólo un camino que señala hacia una meta más alta. Según la tradición judía, si todos los hombres se hicieran judíos en su forma actual, antes del tiempo mesiánico final, el judaísmo habría fracasado y se habría convertido en una forma de idolatría mundana (Wijnhoven, 2009: 103). Esto genera una interesante paradoja desde el punto de vista fenomenológico y comunicativo: los judíos no se pueden sentir los mejores, pero deber trazar un camino que los desborde porque la plenitud de los tiempos no es sólo para ellos, sino para todos los humanos. Sólo al final de los tiempos podrán unirse todos los humanos allí donde se cumpla el mensaje y camino que ahora testimonian los judíos. La «misión» judía implica entonces una transmisión de su identidad y de la actualización de su mensaje en el contexto de las comunidades judías mismas, asegurando así el testimonio que, según la teología judía, cobrará su sentido pleno para toda la humanidad cuando llegue el final de la historia.

Podemos decir que, desde una perspectiva comunicativa, la tradición religiosa judía con el pluralismo que le es inherente, comunica de cara a conservar y a distinguir el mensaje original que se genera con la comunicación entre el dios único que profesa («revelación») y su pueblo elegido («alianza»). Por lo tanto su esfuerzo comunicativo en la historia no pretende convencer, sino testimoniar y conservar, características que denotarán unas consecuencias particulares en su forma de comunicar y de utilizar los medios de comunicación (Wijnhoven, 2009: 104).

—En la tradición cristiana la noción de misión deriva del monoteísmo mesiánico que profesa, así como su comprensión de un único dios que es intrínsecamente relacional, es decir, trinitario (Oborji, 2005: 41). Por esto el cristianismo profesa que dios es comunicación personal, abierta a todos los seres humanos, y que se ha comunicado de forma definitiva en Jesucristo, de manera que, ya desde ahora, se pueden vincular a su mensaje salvador. Por esto desde sus inicios las comunidades cristianas se consideraron —y se consideran hoy— como misioneras por excelencia, ya que tienen el mandato de mostrar y propagar la propuesta salvadora comunicada por Jesucristo. Esta labor se ha llevado a término durante siglo teniendo presente con frecuencia los elementos culturales propios de los pueblos que han sido objeto de esta misión (Bosch, 2002: 52). Aunque históricamente no siempre ha sido así, en general la misión cristiana realiza un gesto de comunicación y diálogo que asume las particularidades de los pueblos. No se pretende crear un pueblo especial, diferenciado, ni

edificar una cultura distinta de las demás. Así se pretende reunir a toda la humanidad en la acogida del mensaje de Jesucristo.

El reto de la misión cristiana es ofrecer las bases de una humanidad fraterna sin imposición ni fuerza. Pero de aquí surge una tentación, que es el convertir a la comunidad de creyentes en una institución de poder que asimila ideologías políticas, económicas y sociales, para imponerlos de algún modo sobre el mundo, aunque estén en contradicción con el mensaje original de la revelación cristiana (Bosch, 2002: 35). Las misiones cristianas y su acción comunicadora, sea de la confesión cristiana que sea, no son ajenas a los avatares de la historia y del pensamiento, razón por la cuál han asumido con frecuencia formas que en esencia se separan de los principios propios de la comunicación divina (Oborji, 2005: 53). Pero por otra parte este impulso misionero-comunicativo ha dado lugar a un esfuerzo continuo tanto de explicitar el mensaje cristiano en un lenguaje comprensivo a lo largo de la historia y de las culturas, y a utilizar los medios de comunicación como instrumentos de esta acción comunicativa.

–La tradición musulmana, en convergencia con la tradición cristiana, quiere construir una comunidad universal donde se integren todos los humanos. Pero en vez de hacerlo por los métodos de la misión dialogal (es decir, mediante la palabra) distinguiendo entre el mensaje religioso y el pensamiento político, en general se ha situado en una línea en la que el pensamiento socio-político y religioso se encuentran identificados, generando lo que algunos autores llaman «monoteísmo militante» (Pikaza, 2001: 112).

A partir de la experiencia histórica de Muhammad la tradición musulmana reconoce que la religión no se puede imponer, pero añade que puede expandirse y defenderse por métodos de tipo externo, pues ya el mismo Muhammad defendió y expandió el mensaje del Islam en su tiempo por medio de la lucha, como ocurrió en los años básicos de la «Hégira» (622-630 dC) (Kirk, 1979: 349). Por otra parte, en coherencia con la identificación entre mensaje religioso y poder socio-político, las misiones musulmanas a lo largo de la historia han tendido a imponer en los países donde son mayoría la ley sagrada (Shariá), de tal forma que la vida religiosa y social se identifican. Esto no significa que el concepto de misión musulmana no de pie al diálogo y al compromiso intercultural, como lo demuestra la pluralidad de «culturas musulmanas» que encontramos en el mundo (Di Leo, 2004: 35). Pero en el fondo persiste dentro de la misión musulmana la expansión de una única cultura, estructurada según los parámetros de la comunidad musulmana de los tiempos de Muhammad, que organiza la vida social y religiosa de los pueblos que reciben el mensaje del Islam, integrándolos en una única «Umma» o comunidad de creyentes universal.

Esta particularidad de la misión islámica, como veremos, generará tanto preferencias en las formas de comunicar el mensaje divino como en el uso de los medios de

comunicación en el contexto de las sociedades musulmanas. Es necesario anticipar, sin embargo, que el carácter literal de la concepción musulmana de la comunicación divina ligada a una idealización del momento histórico de la comunidad musulmana bajo la guía de su profeta (Muhammad) generará algunas tensiones al momento de definir los canales de comunicación del mensaje misionero (Kirk, 1979: 350).

Expuestos los fundamentos comunicativos de la cosmovisión abrahámica y de las tradiciones religiosas que genera, proponemos a continuación ampliar las consecuencias de esta realidad a partir de la comprensión del ser humano, de la noción de comunidad y de la noción de gestión política que generan cada una de las formas de concebir la comunicación divina y la comunicación de tal mensaje al resto de la humanidad por parte de las tradiciones judía, cristiana y musulmana.

1.1.2.4. Cosmovisión abrahámica, antropología, comunidad y política

Otro aspecto de vital importancia para comprender los elementos comunicativos de la cosmovisión abrahámica es la antropología y la noción de comunidad que se derivan en el contexto de las tres tradiciones religiosas que genera, conceptos que nos ayudan a entender la manera como el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam entienden el ser humano y su forma de socializar y de ser en el mundo, así como la manera en que se debe organizar la sociedad humana.

En este sentido hemos señalado ya la importancia del carácter «personalista» de la cosmovisión abrahámica que procede, no sólo en la comprensión de un dios único que se comunica y con el cuál es posible «dialogar», sino que, desde el punto de vista antropológico, define al ser humano como un «individuo en relación» (Duch, 2012:171). Esto significa que cada individuo tiene valor en sí mismo, dialogando con Dios y con los demás seres humanos. Este es el significado central de la antropología de las tradiciones judía, cristiana y musulmana. Estas tradiciones religiosas han destacado a lo largo de su historia el carácter comunitario del ser humano, que forma parte de un «pueblo elegido» (judaísmo), de la «iglesia» (cristianismo) o de la «Umma» (la comunidad de creyentes musulmana). Pero en sentido estricto, dentro de su propia comunidad, cada persona es responsable de sí, de manera que es dueño o dueña de su destino, asumiendo sus consecuencias (Sibony, 1992: 363).

Este punto resulta más claro si lo contraponemos a las cosmovisiones asiáticas. Estas, conforme a la visión del principio de la transmigración o reencarnación, sostienen que el ser humano carece de individualidad estricta: las personas son un momento de la gran cadena vital, y por eso las personas están determinadas por el pasado de las almas que preceden, y determinan las almas que vendrán en el futuro. Según estas cosmovisiones

nadie muere totalmente, y nadie se juega o decide su destino en una muerte. Nacer o morir son momentos de un constante pasaje vital, de un camino en el que el ser humano va de un estado de existencia hacia otro estado, hasta que al final la sustancia del alma se libera de la gran cadena de reencarnaciones para integrarse de algún modo a lo divino (Martín Velasco, 2006: 344).

Contrario a este enfoque, la cosmovisión abrahámica defiende lo que se ha llamado un «personalismo» (Martín Velasco, 2006: 345). Cada individuo que nace en este mundo de unos determinados padres, en un lugar y un momento específico de la historia, nace como individuo distinto y autónomo. Cada ser humano es responsable de la propia vida dentro de una concepción de la historia lineal (no cíclica, como sostienen las cosmovisiones asiáticas), teniendo que asumir la propia muerte, que es única y definitiva, teniendo así la oportunidad de culminar o destruirse en relación con los demás a lo largo de su vida.

Las tres tradiciones religiosas que derivan de la cosmovisión abrahámica afirman, desde el punto de vista antropológico, que cada ser humano es un absoluto, sea porque es imagen y semejanza de Dios (como afirman el judaísmo y el cristianismo) o porque es lugarteniente divino (como asevera el Islam). Esto repercute directamente en la comprensión de la comunicación humana, que se define en estas tradiciones como una comunicación de carácter social, en la que se comparte lo que se es y lo que se anhela a ser, y por medio de la cuál el sujeto puede también comunicarse con el Dios personal y único, mediante el culto, la espiritualidad y la mística (Duch, 2012: 388). Esto significa a su vez que Dios mismo no puede imponer su voluntad sobre los seres humanos obligándolos a seguir un camino determinado. La «Palabra sagrada» de cada tradición específica se convertirá en el instrumento de diálogo del Dios único con cada individuo, respetando la libertad de cada sujeto y obrando en medio de la comunidad de creyentes que se va desarrollando en la historia y en el espacio, donde los individuos pueden acoger el plan trazado por Dios, o ignorarlo (Pikaza, 2002: 245).

Dado que la comunicación entre el Dios único de la cosmovisión abrahámica con el individuo tiene lugar en un contexto social y comunitario, las comunidades de cada una de las tres tradiciones religiosas que nacen de esta cosmovisión adquieren un gran relieve. Por esto tanto el judaísmo como el cristianismo y el Islam han elaborado una teología que les permita comprender y defender sus propias comunidades.

–El judaísmo entiende esta comunidad de creyentes como un pueblo especial, «elegido» (el «'Am», que es el pueblo de Israel), separado y distinto de todos los restantes grupos humanos que son considerados como «gentiles» (Goyyim) (Gendler, 2009: 82). Esto establece una paradoja: el mismo Dios trascendente, de quien nada se puede decir porque es distinto de todo lo creado, se ha vinculado con su propio «'Am», un grupo especial, donde

ha venido a revelarse. Por eso según esta tradición religiosa el verdadero conocimiento de Dios se identifica con la pertenencia y el cumplimiento de las normas de vida de una nación, entendida tanto en sentido espiritual como en sentido étnico.

El Dios de la tradición judía comenzó siendo un Dios nacional, vinculado a un grupo humano, un Dios que garantiza la propia diferencia de su pueblo asegurando su identidad y separándolo respecto a los demás pueblos o naciones de la tierra. Todo y esto el judaísmo ha tenido conciencia de que esta elección particular se encuentra al servicio de la universalidad humana (Elazar, 2005: 114). Por esto ellos se manifiestan fieles como grupo a fin de ofrecer al resto de la humanidad el testimonio de la revelación divina que, según sostienen, un día tendrá que expandirse por todo el mundo (escatología). Sólo entonces el Dios de Israel se mostrará como único Dios para todas las naciones (Gendler, 2009: 83).

—El cristianismo entiende la comunidad de creyentes a partir del principio de que el Dios cristiano se ha revelado de modo universal en la figura de Jesucristo, del cual nació una «ekklesia» o comunidad de personas que se reúnen en su nombre y quieren ser, ya en la historia concreta, fermento y principio de comunicación y de comunión para todos los seres humanos. Por este motivo la tradición cristiana rompe con la clausura legal propia del judaísmo, recibiendo personas de todos los pueblos, más allá de su identidad nacional o étnica (Kuhn, 1998: 375)). Abandonó así las exigencias legales como la circuncisión, las restricciones alimentarias y los rituales sociales y familiares del judaísmo con el objeto de abrirse a los gentiles, rompiendo así las diferencias entre judíos, griegos, hombres, mujeres, esclavos y libres. Esta es la novedad que la tradición cristiana ofrece en el contexto de la historia religiosa de la humanidad: la comunidad cristiana quiere ser un espacio vivo de comunión y de comunicación para todos los humanos. Por esto los creyentes cristianos no pueden resguardarse de los demás pueblos y sus culturas porque afirman que el futuro, de acuerdo con su revelación, ha comenzado ya y está abierto a todos desde el momento en que el Dios único se encarnó en la figura de Jesús de Nazaret, dando así un nuevo sentido a la historia y a la existencia humana en relación con el único Dios que profesan (Avis, 1993: 128).

—La tradición musulmana no acepta, por su parte, el concepto de la encarnación de Dios en un hombre como Jesús, todo y que la figura de Jesús mantiene un valor en la tradición musulmana en tanto que profeta. El Islam afirma que Dios se ha revelado al pie de la letra, palabra por palabra, en las recitaciones concretas de los textos transmitidos a Muhammad entre los años 610 y 632 dC que luego fueron fijadas en el texto canónico del Corán (Stark, 2001: 140). Según la tradición musulmana la «Umma» o comunidad universal de los creyentes nace por la Palabra divina revelada a un hombre concreto, Muhammad,

capaz de convocar a todos los musulmanes, que son hombre y mujeres que se «someten» a Dios (Dallal, 1995: 268).

Los musulmanes fueron inicialmente árabes de entorno a La Meca, pero pronto desbordaron los límites de la cultura árabe para expandirse hacia otros pueblos con voluntad de integrarlos a nivel religioso, político y social. Esta universalidad fue posible porque sus prácticas religiosas son muy sencillas y fáciles de transmitir (condensan la Ley en cinco pilares, a saber, la confesión de fe, la oración cinco veces al día, la limosna, la observación del ayuno de Ramadán y la peregrinación a la Meca). Por esta razón, y pese a su pluralismo interno, el Islam ha creado una fuerte conciencia de integración social superando la separación entre lo profano y lo sagrado (Zoli, 2011: 132).

La comprensión esencial del ser humano y de la «comunidad» ideal que derivan de las tradiciones religiosas judía, cristiana y musulmana nos permiten profundizar sobre las consecuencias comunicativas que tienen estos aspectos no sólo, como veremos en los capítulos siguientes, por lo que toca a la forma como tales tradiciones conciben la comunicación. Nos permite también comprender como tal comunicación conlleva consecuencias tanto a nivel de la «expansión» de estas tradiciones religiosas en el contexto internacional (es decir, la «globalización»), y las consecuencias que provienen de su forma de gestionar y cohesionar la identidad religiosa propia en un contexto histórico, geográfico y político concreto (es decir, la «geopolítica»).

1.2. EL ESTUDIO ACADÉMICO DE LA COMUNICACIÓN Y DE LA RELIGIÓN: EL ÁREA DE «MEDIA, RELIGIÓN Y CULTURA»

Hasta aquí hemos intentado esbozar las bases del estudio de la comunicación en el contexto de las tradiciones religiosas que derivan de la cosmovisión abrahámica con el propósito de aportar un marco teórico para la exposición que ofrecemos en los siguientes capítulos referentes a la comunicación en las tradiciones religiosas judía, cristiana y musulmana en su proceso de globalización y en su influencia geopolítica desde el punto de vista comunicativo.

Tal esbozo teórico es de vital importancia para demostrar parte de la tesis de nuestro estudio, a saber, que el estudio de la relación entre las tradiciones religiosas y la comunicación exige una profundización sobre los elementos doctrinales que determinan como tal tradición religiosa entiende la comunicación divina y la comunicación de su mensaje al resto de la humanidad en el contexto del tiempo y del espacio.

En esta segunda parte proponemos, inicialmente, una síntesis del desarrollo del estudio de las tradiciones religiosas desde un punto de vista comunicativo para definir el «status questionis» de esta particular área académica. En segundo lugar procederemos a

proponer la necesidad de ampliar este campo de estudio hacia el área de la globalización y de la geopolítica como un desarrollo prometedor de los progresos que en este campo de han ido logrando y que han tenido una atención más bien reducida en el campo de los estudios de las ciencias de la comunicación.

Los estudios de la comunicación y de las religiones se centra en un área de los estudios culturales llamada «Media, Religión and Culture», aquí traducimos como «Media, Religión y Cultura». Presentamos a continuación el desarrollo de esta área.

1.2.1. El telón de fondo del desarrollo de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura»

La profundización académica sobre los medios de comunicación a partir de los estudios culturales se ha convertido en el paradigma dominante en la investigación referente a la comunicación y las tradiciones religiosas. En este sentido los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura» constituyen un modelo clave para el estudio de las religiones desde una perspectiva comunicativa. Por ejemplo, la reunión anual de estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» reúne cada año entre 300 y 600 académicos del mundo, donde la gran mayoría lleva a cabo su investigación a partir de un paradigma de estudios culturales. La perspectiva de los estudios culturales sigue un patrón de tipo «administrativo», dado que es el patrón utilizado para el estudio de audiencia, pero sostiene que los resultados cuantitativos realmente no responden a las preguntas centrales que suscitan los medios religiosos (White, 1997: 38).

Como hemos demostrado en el apartado precedente, la religión es una respuesta personal a una búsqueda de sentido en el marco del universo propio que genera maneras concretas de comprender la relación comunicativa entre un absoluto y las personas que se declaran sus seguidores (Smart, 2002: 18), y la manera como esta relación horizontal se transmite de forma transversal y globalizante a lo largo de la historia utilizando los medios de comunicación como instrumento. Este uso de los medios de comunicación, por su parte, implica que cada tradición «enmarca» el uso de cada medio –sea oral, escrito, electrónico o digital– de acuerdo con sus propios parámetros comunicativos (White, 1997: 42).

Hemos señalado también cómo la expresión de lo religioso normalmente se encuentra reflejada en la religión institucional, dado que los credos formales, los rituales, las devociones y los códigos morales no agotan la experiencia religiosa personal. La cuestión central de la perspectiva de los estudios culturales en el campo comunicativo se centra en cómo los individuos pertenecientes a grupos específicos utilizan los medios de comunicación para construir un significado religioso en sus vidas, y cómo este significado se relaciona a diversos aspectos de la vida y de la identidad de ese grupo.

Esta aproximación utiliza teorías y metodologías que provienen, no tanto de la de la psicología, la sociología funcional o del análisis cuantitativo de datos, sino de la antropología cultural, la filosofía, los estudios literarios, la historia y los estudios teológicos. No por esto resultan ser métodos menos rigurosos. Se trata de métodos más cercanos a las humanidades que a los estudios comportamentales (Shite, 1997, 42).

Curiosamente las tradiciones religiosas no desarrollaron durante mucho tiempo una reflexión sobre la acción comunicativa que realizaban y sobre los medios de comunicación como agentes de tal acción. Su interés estaba sujeto a la eficacia de tal acción comunicativa en el contexto de las verdades que cada tradición profesa como propias. El interés por la relación entre la comunicación, los medios de comunicación y la religión no se da en el contexto de las religiones mismas hasta que las sociedades occidentales no comienzan a desarrollar una reflexión sobre el sentido y los efectos de la comunicación impresa y electrónica y, de forma más reciente, digital.

En esencia podemos decir que hasta los años 70 casi toda la investigación sobre los medios de comunicación y las religiones buscaban responder a la pregunta que se formulaban los agentes de los medios de comunicación confesionales sobre los efectos que tenían sobre sus públicos. La mayoría de los programas religiosos de la época sostenía que tenían grandes audiencias marcadas por las prédicas dominicales, argumentando que estaban «convirtiendo» a mucha gente, todo y no tener las evidencias para demostrarlo. Pero algunos académicos eran escépticos a esta percepción triunfalista y buscaban maneras de realizar estudios más precisos de tal influencia y de tales audiencias (Hoover, 2006: 14).

Poco a poco, sin embargo, la investigación sobre los medios de comunicación y la religión se apartó de la perspectiva de los efectos de los medios de comunicación confesionales para entrar en el ámbito de cómo la gente crea un «sentido de vida» mediante la comunicación, ayudados por los medios de comunicación religiosos y muchas otras influencias culturales. A continuación exploraremos los elementos que motivaron este desarrollo.

1.2.1.1. Los elementos fundantes de los «estudios de los efectos» de los medios de comunicación

En los Estados Unidos, hacia mediados de los años 30, la Comisión Payne asumió la función de investigar sobre la consecuencia de la violencia cinematográfica en el público, concluyendo que el «impacto» de un film depende en gran parte en el fondo cultural subjetivo y otros aspectos que afectan la manera como el espectador interpreta el significado de la narración cinematográfica (Rowland, 1983: 92-99). Los estudios sobre los medios de comunicación creyeron entonces que si asumían metodologías cuantitativas

podrían demostrar los efectos positivos o negativos de los medios de cara a que los gobiernos y otras instituciones públicas tomaran decisiones y legislaran al respecto.

Un ejemplo de este propósito era la pretensión de desarrollar una escala de medidas «objetiva» relativa al contenido violento de ciertos medios, partiendo de los niveles bajos –como podrían ser las películas románticas– para pasar luego a los niveles altos de las producciones con imágenes más violentas. Los entrevistadores recibieron instrucciones de marcar con precisión sus observaciones y el comportamiento agresivo de las audiencias, esto tanto si se trataba de un dibujo animado para niños o de un film sobre la pasión de Cristo. No es de extrañar que, de acuerdo con los resultados finales ofrecidos por la Comisión Payne, muchos de los dibujos animados quedara clasificados como extremadamente violentos (Rowland, 1983: 102).

Pero si este principio cuantitativo desarrollado por algunos sociólogos se hubiera aplicado a todos los medios seguramente no habría más representaciones de las obras de, por ejemplo, Shakespeare, o incluso la representación de algunos pasajes de la Biblia. Lo que pronto se hizo evidente es que la construcción de sentido que sigue el espectador en una escena o film particular puede variar enormemente según el tipo de sujeto (Newcomb, 1978: 670-675). Por ejemplo. La representación de la crucifixión de Jesús se puede ver como violentamente ofensiva o como una señal de sacrificio y amor, dependiendo en el significado que le atribuya el espectador. Puede existir un acuerdo en la representación explícita de escenas sexuales consideradas como moralmente ofensivas, pero su significado está también sujeto a diversas interpretaciones.

Al mismo tiempo, en cada caso hay que considerar no sólo el significado que las imágenes tienen para públicos específicos, sino también para el guionista, el productor, el director, los actores y los otros sujetos ligados a la producción de imágenes que, por su parte, también le atorgan un sentido. Por esto en su momento se hizo obvio que, aunque la práctica específica de una tradición religiosa podía definir un gesto o una acción como religiosa, los miembros de esta tradición religiosa podían tener sus propias interpretaciones de las prácticas formales y podían tener experiencias consonantes con los fundamentos teológicos de una tradición religiosa pero que adquieren un sentido único para un creyente en particular (Newcomb, 1978: 279-280).

1.2.1.2. La búsqueda de un paradigma definitivo de medición

Con la introducción y popularización de la televisión hacia los años 50 comenzó la propagación de la televisión religiosa en los Estados Unidos mediante predicadores como Billy Graham en el ámbito evangélico o el obispo Fulton Sheen en el contexto del catolicismo. El medir sus audiencias se convirtió en un punto importante tanto para las

empresas mediáticas que daban espacios a este tipo de programas, como para los grupos religiosos específicos que buscaban «medir» el impacto de estas acciones comunicativas confesionales.

Las denominaciones protestantes no evangélicas sentían que estaban perdiendo a sus feligreses y se preguntabas si no habría un obispo Sheen entre los pastores de sus comunidades, fueran estas Anglicanas, Metodistas, o de la confesión que fuera (White, 2006: 317). Así se generó una discusión animada sobre si estos predicadores mediáticos tenían o no un impacto real sobre sus audiencias, si el fenómeno alejaba o acercaba a los feligreses a las iglesias locales, si realmente llegaban a un público joven, y muchas otras cuestiones.

El año 1951 el Consejo Nacional de las Iglesias en los Estados Unidos financió un estudio a gran escala sobre los «efectos evangelizadores de la televisión». El director del proyecto era una de los personajes más significativos de los medios de comunicación confesionales: Everett Parker. Su equipo incluía a Dallas Smythe, que luego se convertiría en una figura sobresaliente de la escuela de estudios culturales. Guiado por el sociólogo americano August Hollingshead, el estudio utilizó herramientas sociológicas y modelos provenientes de la de psicología social comportamental (White, 2006: 319).

La introducción al documento final del estudio subraya los intereses relativos a los medios de comunicación de la época:

«Dada la falta de estudios sobre los efectos de programas religiosos una serie de cuestiones de importancia práctica han quedado sin responder [...]. ¿Son los programas religiosos mediáticos una substitución a la asistencia a las iglesias? ¿Llegan y afectan a aquellos que no frecuentan el culto? ¿Proveen un servicio valioso a sus oyentes? ¿Ayudan a construir el carácter, a mejorar la sociedad, o a inspirar el respeto? Y aun más importante: ¿presentan correctamente el mensaje cristiano, o queda desfigurado y falsificado cuando pasa por los medios de comunicación?» (Parker – Barry – Smythe, 1955: xiv).

Este estudio permanece como uno de los paradigmas clásicos sobre los medios de comunicación religiosos, pero desafortunadamente sus propios autores llegaron a afirmar que la metodología aplicada generaba más preguntas que respuestas. El estudio corroboró lo que muchos otros estudios menores habían intuido: que los públicos de la difusión mediática religiosa tendía a ser de un status bajo, con un nivel bajo de educación, normalmente mujeres y de una edad avanzada. La conclusión más importante, obtenida a partir del modelo de psicología comportamental, fue que el seguir las transmisiones religiosas «reduce la ansiedad» (Parker, Barry, & Smyte, 1955: 405).

Los investigadores admitieron que la metodología adoptada (es decir la psicología comportamental y los modelos de efectos mediáticos) era demasiado limitada de cara a responder las preguntas reales que planteaba el estudio, incluso en sus aspectos más básicos (Parker, Barry, & Smythe, 1955: 395). El estudio no reveló si los seguidores de los programas religiosos se hacían más religiosos, mejoraban su moral, se acercaban más a sus iglesias locales, o se implicaban más en el trabajo a favor de las personas más necesitadas. Estas son cuestiones que tienen que ver con el significado, no con la cuantificación.

Hay que reconocer que los investigadores de la época utilizaban las herramientas disponibles en los años 50. Es decir: eran herramientas anteriores al desarrollo de la sociología y de la antropología de la religión, anterior a estudios como los de Stark y Glock (1968) sobre el compromiso religioso de los Americanos, anterior al desarrollo teórico de sociólogos de la religión como Peter Berger (1969) y Thomas Luckmann (1967) sobre el problema de la religión en la sociedad contemporánea, o de David Martin (1969; 1980) sobre la sociología de la praxis cristiana y la secularización, o la investigación de Bryan Wilson (1982) sobre sociología de la religión en Gran Bretaña, junto con muchos otros teóricos americanos y europeos que han marcado nuestra comprensión del fenómeno religioso.

Los años 60, sin embargo, traerían un cambio radical en el campo de las ciencias humanas en general, y en el campo de los estudios de comunicación en particular.

1.2.1.3. El desarrollo de la importancia del contexto cultural en la comunicación

A finales de los años 40 Joseph Klapper, que durante muchos años fue el jefe de investigaciones de la CBS, realizó un estudio paradigmático con su tesis doctoral sobre qué tipo de efectos se pueden esperar de la transmisión mediática audiovisual. El resultado de su estudio, basado en centenares de estudios de campo, fue que ningún estudio podía probar los efectos directos que se creían que los medios como la televisión y la radio tenían sobre el público (Klapper, 1965). Sugería también que los medios audiovisuales tenían que tomar en consideración las motivaciones, intereses, valores culturales y la subcultura del público en particular que querían conocer. Klapper y sus seguidores sugirieron que la mejor aproximación a los estudios de audiencias no era a partir de los estudios sobre los efectos sino a partir de lo que más tarde se llamarían «estudios de usos y gratificaciones» (Denni & Wartella, 1996: 24).

De acuerdo con esta aproximación la cuestión central no radica en cómo los medios de comunicación afectan a las personas, sino lo que la gente hace con los medios de comunicación. Peter Horsfield, en su estudio sobre los públicos de los medios de comunicación religiosos realizado a inicios de los años 80, descubrió muchas tesis doctorales

y estudios académicos sobre medios de comunicación audiovisuales religiosos realizados entre el 1960 y el 1970 que utilizaban el método de usos y gratificaciones de cara a identificar los patrones que manejaban los medios de comunicación religiosos (Horsfield, 1984: 118-124).

Otra aportación significativa fue la publicación de la obra de Marshall McLuhan «Understandin Media» (1964) donde el autor argumenta que el impacto de los medios de comunicación no radica tanto en el individuo sino en el conjunto de las culturas y de las sociedades. McLuhan entró en el campo de los estudios de comunicación desde una perspectiva del análisis literario relativa a las formas de leer e interpretar un texto. Subraya que los diferentes medios de comunicación afectan sentidos diferentes (el oído, los ojos, la conciencia, etc.) y que el sujeto responde construyendo el sentido del texto mediático de acuerdo con la dinámica del sentido que se ve mayormente afectado, produciendo así una «cultura oral» o una «cultura visual». La perspectiva de McLuhan y de su discípulo, el jesuita Walter Ong (1982) ayudaron a reorientar los estudios sobre la comunicación religiosa pasando de los efectos mediáticos a la interacción entre el medio y los movimientos culturales de carácter religioso. Esta aproximación a los medios de comunicación daría pie más tarde a una tendencia de estudio llamada «entorno mediático» (Media Environment) que, en el ámbito americano i europeo, ha cobrado una particular importancia en las últimas décadas (Soukup, 2014: 256).

En la misma década Berger y Luckmann, en su obra «La Construcción Social de la Realidad» (1967) centraron la atención en la epistemología social alejándose del funcionalismo sistémico de Parsons que definía la persona como un resultado de fuerzas sistémicas y su intersección con el sistema social y el sistema económico (White, 2006, 320). La nueva orientación ponía al centro la cultura, definida desde una perspectiva cognitiva como un sistema de significados producido por sujetos que interactúan. Esta aproximación estaba influida por el movimiento personalista de los años 60, que se inspiraba en pensadores como Marcuse (1968), el cual subrayaba la importancia de responder a la propia identidad y creatividad, refutando así la conformidad con los controles sociales.

La importancia de la introducción de los aspectos culturales en la comprensión de la relación entre religión y medios de comunicación en un período en que proliferaban los movimientos contraculturales tuvo su auge en el mundo anglosajón. Tal como dice White:

«Los movimientos contraculturales de los años 60 y 70 refutaban la sujeción de la propia vida a los parámetros de la industrialización y el consumismo masivo. Esto condujo a cuestionar el uso de los medios de comunicación con propósitos persuasivos y de manipulación. Había un interés vivo por el uso de los medios como

contexto para descubrir valores religiosos personales, la identidad religiosa y cultural, y la expresión activa de la fe» (White, 2006, 321).

Pero otros elementos de interpretación enriquecerían la aproximación cultural a los estudios de comunicación, subrayando el uso crítico de los medios de comunicación y el tema de la educación y los medios, tal como veremos a continuación.

1.2.1.4. El avenir de la tendencia crítica y educacional en los estudios de los medios

En los años 50 la idea dominante del uso cristiano de los medios de comunicación era todavía la del predicador potente que utilizaba retórica persuasiva de cara a convencer a su público que realizara una práctica religiosa más profunda. El desarrollo de los estudios sobre medios de comunicación y religión pronto demostró que la lógica de los programas religiosos no era muy diferente de las campañas políticas, de la publicidad y de los «talk shows» radiofónicos.

En los años 60, sin embargo, se fue desarrollando progresivamente dentro de las comunidades cristianas una crítica de los efectos negativos de algunos medios de comunicación comerciales referentes a la manipulación del público en aspectos como el sexo, la violencia, y el consumismo. Esto generó una serie de esfuerzos de cara a introducir una educación sobre el uso de los medios de comunicación que partía del principio que las audiencias no son simples receptores pasivos (White, 2006, 324).

El principio fundamental detrás de esta idea era que los públicos pueden ser críticos y pueden tener sus propias ideas sobre lo que tienen que ser los medios de comunicación. La educación sobre los medios de comunicación animó a muchos a seleccionar los medios de comunicación que seguían de acuerdo con sus valores personales y de utilizar a los mismos medios de cara a consolidar las propias convicciones. Hay que subrayar que la educación sobre los medios de comunicación ha cambiado, pasando de una visión defensiva de los medios –concebidos como una fuerza manipuladora– hacia una percepción de la banalidad de la cultura popular, acentuando el uso de los medios a partir de la identidad cultural de cada persona.

Una aportación importante en esta nueva tendencia fue el movimiento de «educación para la libertad» que surgió en América Latina y en otras regiones del sur. Las iglesias de América Latina, India, Asia y África comenzaron un proceso de educación de las comunidades pobres rurales y urbanas basado en la filosofía educativa de educar a los marginados a partir de la base mediante organizaciones que les ayudaran a resolver sus problemas específicos. Estos esfuerzos incorporaron los sistemas educativos propuestos por

Paulo Freire (1990a; 1990b), los principios educativos del teatro Indio de Badal Sircar (1978) y otros movimientos populares.

Estos movimientos cambiaron la perspectiva sobre la comunicación religiosa y su estudio, en gran parte porque este énfasis de base fue adoptado por asociaciones internacionales de comunicación religiosa tales como UNDA (hoy SIGNIS: «World Catholic Association for Communication») y la Asociación Mundial para la Comunicación Cristiana («The World Association for Christian Communication» – WACC).

Los principios que yacen detrás esta nueva aproximación se pueden resumir en tres puntos básicos:

–Primero, estos métodos educativos subrayan no sólo nuevas técnicas de producción de contenidos mediáticos, sino también la promoción de las culturas populares, es decir los medios de comunicación, especialmente los locales, el teatro, las radios comunitarias, en que los más marginados pueden desarrollar su propia identidad cultural.

–Segundo, estos métodos identifican como fuente de la pobreza y de la opresión la dependencia pasiva en la cultura hegemónica que impone un concepto de «inferioridad natural» por lo que toca a los grupos marginales que se ven obligados a depender de las elites.

–Tercero, delante de la creciente globalización de las culturas, es necesario que los pobres y marginados cuenten con sus propios medios de comunicación de cara a responder a sus necesidades materiales, sociales y culturales. Así el concepto de la cultura se convierte en un elemento central de los medios de comunicación confesionales y en su estudio (World Association for Christian Communication, 1993: 4-5).

Otro énfasis que aportó la filosofía de la «educación para la liberación» fue la importancia que daba al desarrollo del sentido de dignidad, creatividad y libertad del pensamiento personal en medio de las comunidades específicas. Estos movimientos eran muy conscientes de la deshumanización que proviene de la concentración del poder en las sociedades y el uso que se hace de los medios de comunicación de cara a imponer ese poder. La forma ideal de comunicación que se proponía era comunitaria, participativa y dialógica, ideal que se convertiría en el centro del desarrollo teológico y ético de los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura» que nos ocupan. Esto generaría a su tiempo diversos estudios inspirados en estos parámetros, sobretodo en los Estados Unidos y de América Latina (Christians, 2006: 295-296).

1.2.2. La aproximación a los medios a partir de los estudios culturales

Tal como hemos subrayado más arriba, los estudios sobre los medios de comunicación nacieron entre los años 30 y 40 en los Estados Unidos. En ese momento no existía la investigación sobre los medios de comunicación en Europa debido a los conflictos bélicos de la época. Después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial Europa inició su propio camino en el campo de los estudios sociales y de los medios de comunicación. Los medios de comunicación Europeos estaban más preocupados por la integración cultural nacional y con la calidad cultural de los contenidos mediáticos que los Estados Unidos, más centrado en un sistema mediático liberal y comercial (Hallin y Mancini, 2004: 198).

Los sistemas mediáticos europeos no tenían necesidad de establecer criterios sobre la eficacia publicitaria en los medios como tenían que hacerlo los medios de comunicación comerciales en los Estados Unidos, fundados en un paradigma liberal y comercial. Los investigadores sobre los medios en Europa estaba preocupados por las transformaciones culturales profundas que estaban teniendo lugar en Europa en el cuál el «estado del bienestar» estaba aumentando los ingresos de las clases trabajadoras y generando un amplia clase media (Hoover, 2001: 50).

Un elemento decisivo en el desarrollo de la aproximación cultural al estudio de los medios tuvo su origen en Francia, y fue acogida por el «Centro de Estudios Culturales Contemporáneos» de la Universidad de Birmingham en Gran Bretaña. El centro comenzó un programa de investigación sobre los factores que influenciaban los cambios culturales que estaban teniendo lugar en Inglaterra, especialmente entre las clases trabajadoras (Hall, 1992: 118).

Estos estudios encontraron su marco de referencia no en las tendencias comportamentales, funcionalistas y psicológicas que determinaban la forma Americana de comprender el individuo y la sociedad en ese tiempo, sino en las ciencias humanas, en el análisis textual, en los estudios literarios, en la semiótica, la historia, la antropología cultural y, en parte, en el estructuralismo. Así el nuevo enfoque se centraba, no en la respuesta comportamental, son en la creación de sentido o «prácticas significativas» que generan un sentido social compartido mediante diferentes formas de «lenguaje», en particular el lenguaje de los medios de comunicación (Barker, 2000: 7). Contrario a la percepción de instituciones como la BBC, las clases populares no estaban consideradas como «desculturadas» y como consumidores pasivos de los medios de comunicación que tenía que ser educados como una nueva clase media, sino como elementos activos en la consolidación de una cultura rica y fuerte (Hoggart, 1957: 5; Thompson, 1963: 7-8). La literatura popular, las

películas y la televisión eran fuentes de ideas y de símbolos que la gente utiliza de cara a crear sus identidades personales y culturales.

La mayoría de los académicos que lideraron el desarrollo de los estudios culturales se formaron en el campo de la crítica literaria y dramática, y veían los medios de comunicación como «textos» que revelaban a su vez la cultura y sus flujos, pero que eran también símbolos de la construcción de una gran variedad de subculturas. Resultaba particularmente interesante en esa época el estudio de las subculturas juveniles y su uso de la música como arma de resistencia contra las culturas dominante y hegemónicas (Hall y Jefferson, 1983: 15). Más que dar la espalda a su condición social, la juventud tomó de los medios de comunicación imágenes que glorificaban las virtudes de su propia clase popular (Frith, 1983: capítulo 2).

Bajo la metodología de los estudios culturales de la época yacía una fuerte implicación filosófica que reconocía la dignidad, libertad y creatividad de todo individuo. Este individuo era visto, no como un objeto de los sistemas culturales y sociales, sino como un autor de cultura. Pero hay que señalar, junto con Hoover, que aunque la escuela de estudios culturales encontró en el análisis marxista un instrumento para una comprensión crítica del poder político y económico en el proceso de constitución de las culturas, los estudios culturales rechazaron el determinismo económico del marxismo clásico. En su lugar veían al individuo como una afirmación de la identidad cultural de las clases subalternas (Hoover, 2001: 52-53).

Stuart Hall introdujo la distinción entre el concepto de codificación del sentido hegemónico de los medios y la decodificación del mensaje en términos de la identidad del usuario de los medios. Los estudios sobre los «fans» mediáticos demostraron cómo los públicos personalizan y adaptan el significado de los símbolos mediáticos de acuerdo con sus propias identidades culturales (Jenkins, 1992). Los estudios de Marín Barbero sobre la recepción de las telenovelas en Latinoamérica demostraron, por ejemplo, cómo la lectura de los textos mediáticos es una combinación compleja de seducción, rechazo, resistencia y transformación de sentido (Martín Barbero, 1993).

Por su parte la aproximación norteamericana a los estudios culturales enfatiza que la recepción de los contenidos mediáticos es una actividad social y comunitaria. Los nuevos movimientos religiosos, raciales, étnicos y de género que se desarrollaron en Estados Unidos retaron colectivamente su representación negativa en los medios de comunicación mediante sus propias redes de comunicación interna. Carey (1989), siguiendo la investigación realizada por el antropólogo Clifford Geertz (1975) introdujo una noción comunal y ritual de los medios de comunicación. Horace Newcomb y Robert Alley (1983) utilizaron la teoría del ritual del antropólogo Victor Turner (1969) como base para la comprensión de la experiencia

de las audiencias mediáticas entre el mundo real y el mundo tal como esa comunidad específica quisiera que fuera.

Pero el desarrollo de los estudios culturales y su influencia en el estudio de los medios de comunicación en general (y del área de «Media, Religión y Cultura» en concreto) daría un viraje entre los años 70 y 80 con la teoría de la recepción de los medios, que se centra en el análisis de cómo los públicos perciben las narrativas mediáticas, sus símbolos y sus modelos como elementos para construir sus propias historias vitales (Morley, 1992; Fiske, 1987). De aquí surgieron una serie de metodologías de análisis de las audiencias llamadas «etnografía de las audiencias» que incluyen historia vitales (Grodin y Lindlof, 1996), narrativas personales epistolares (Ang, 1985), observación de grupos que miran la televisión (Lull, 1988), observación de las familias que disciernen los contenidos de los medios de comunicación (Silverstone y Hirsh, 1992), o la participación en grupos de «fans» que discuten programas televisivos (Brown, 1994). Lo que ha caracterizado los estudios sobre la recepción de los medios es el análisis del uso de los medios de comunicación como una fuente de construcción de sentido en un «contexto vital natural» (Brown, 1994: 72) en el ámbito de grupos complejos como la familia, la congregación religiosa o la comunidad étnica, buscando de entender los medios de comunicación dentro de patrones complejos de relaciones generadoras de sentido.

1.2.3. El desarrollo de la vertiente académica de «Medios, Religión y Cultura» en el análisis mediático

El proceso que hemos descrito hasta ahora nos ofrece un marco amplio para comprender la corriente de estudios que ligan los medios de comunicación, la religión y la cultura y que, con el tiempo, asumiría el nombre de estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura». De todos los movimientos descritos arriba, los estudios culturales y su aplicación en el campo de los estudios mediáticos han tenido probablemente la influencia más notable sobre el desarrollo de la tendencia que nos ocupa. Con el tiempo, tal como demostraremos a continuación, el área de estudios sobre «Medios, Religión y Cultura» adquirirá un carácter propio, destacando la particularidad de la comprensión de los medios de comunicación y su relación con la religión en múltiples niveles.

1.2.3.1. Los primeros pasos de la metodología específica de «Medios, Religión y Cultura»

A inicios de los años 80 el estudio sobre los medios de comunicación y religión tenía a su disposición una nueva gama de herramientas que los autores de los años 50 habían señalado que faltaban. A su vez emergían las nuevas tecnologías de comunicación que

definirían a los medios de comunicación como parte de un proceso que reunía a públicos diversos provenientes de comunidades transversales.

Por otra parte, en el contexto de las comunidades cristianas, la evangelización comienza a verse, no como la imposición de una cultura religiosa ajena, sino como un instrumento para ayudar a las personas a descubrir y activar sus valores religiosos más auténticos. La búsqueda de dios se entiende, no como algo externo, sino como algo insertado en la naturaleza humana y en las culturas humanas. En este contexto se desarrolló una mezcla entre la teología narrativa (Shea, 1981), la interpretación moral de la experiencia vital (Kohlberg 1981; 1984), la concepción del desarrollo de la fe a partir de etapas de crecimiento (Fowler, 1981), el análisis de la recepción de los medios como una interacción entre los medios, el mito y la narración (Silverstone, 1981), y las historias vitales personales (Fiske, 1987).

Otra influencia importante sobre la corriente que nos ocupa fue la sociología de la religión que surgió entre los años 70 y 80, que demostró que la religiosidad no se podía definir simplemente a partir de la afiliación religiosa (Beckford y Luckman, 1989; Beckford, 1989). Resultaba evidente que, en ese momento en que aparecía numerosos movimientos religiosos nuevos, una nueva generación de buscadores de la experiencia espiritual estaban construyendo sus propios sistemas de creencias a partir de elementos provenientes de diferentes tradiciones religiosas (Roof y McKinney, 1987; Roof, 1999).

Hacia los años 70 y 80 el aumento de los tele evangelistas suscitó numerosos estudios sobre la comunicación religiosa, principalmente en relación a su impacto socio-cultural y político, en particular en relación con los movimientos Pentecostales (Armstrong, 1979; Hadden y Swan, 1981; Frankl, 1987; Abelman y Hoover, 1990). Resultarían de particular importancia los estudios realizados por Peter Horsfield citados anteriormente, titulados «Religious Television» (1984), que ofrecían un resumen sobre la investigación alrededor de la comunicación religiosa (Hoover, 1988: 63-70).

Todos estos estudios confirmaron que las audiencias de la programación religiosa eran básicamente devotos que pertenecían a iglesias locales de carácter más bien rural, de edad madura, y que utilizaban la televisión con frecuencia. Contrario a lo que sostenía muchos locutores de programas religiosos, esta acción comunicativa no realizaba muchas conversiones religiosas entre aquellos que no pertenecían a ninguna iglesia, pero la televisión ejercía un papel primordial de cara a la creación de símbolos públicos de identificación para los nuevos movimientos religiosos que se generaron en los años 70s y 80s.

Los estudios de sociología de la religión de la época confirmaban que se estaba constituyendo una nueva configuración de lo religioso, que era más tradicionalista, muy

comprometida, pero al mismo tiempo más personalista y espontánea. Ningún sociólogo subrayaba que los programas religiosos de la radio y de la televisión jugaran un papel primordial en este cambio, pero el hecho era que estaban construyendo una nueva cultura (White, 2004: 206).

En los años 80 Stewart Hoover, basándose en las numerosas corrientes de pensamiento sobre los medios de comunicación y la religión que hemos descrito más arriba, ideó una nueva manera de aproximarse al estudio de la religión y los medios que se centraba en el papel que juegan los medios en la creación de un sentido religioso personal y cultural. Otra aportación importante en este momento fue la labor realizada por el «Centro para el estudio de Comunicación y Cultura» («Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture», que inició la publicación de la revista «Communication Research Trends») de Londres, que promovía el estudio de la relación entre los medios y la religión a partir de la perspectiva de los estudios culturales. Hoover publicó una obra con esta institución sobre comunicación y valores humanos. La cuestión central que trata en su estudio final es qué clase de cultura religiosa se está engendrando en un período de cambios sociales e institucionales (Hoover, 1988: 12). En este estudio la televisión se encontraba al centro en tanto que medio cultural, por lo cual se derivaron los siguientes puntos relativos al área de los estudios culturales:

–El centro del estudio se encontraba en la cultura de un grupo religioso particular y en el contexto de la forma de vida que llevan las personas pertenecientes a este grupo: sus oficios, la vida familiar, las problemáticas que afrontan, y sus motivaciones políticas.

–El estudio se centraba también en las personas involucradas con el movimiento tele evangelista, particularmente con el grupo de Pat Robertson, pero buscando descubrir las fuentes del sentido religioso de sus vidas, es decir su iglesia, su militancia política, su educación, sus afiliaciones sociales, sus diversas actividades religiosas, y de qué manera utilizaban estas actividades para dar un nuevo sentido de su experiencia religiosa.

–Los datos básicos que utilizaba eran la historia de vida personal y cómo estas experiencias llevaban a los creyentes a profundizar en la búsqueda de sentido en sus vidas, buscando de distinguir concretamente qué factores llevaron al individuo a una conversión más profunda como búsqueda de un sentido más profundo de su vida.

–Otro centro de interés del estudio de Hoover era el distinguir los orígenes de la búsqueda de sentido vital en relación con la implicación de estos individuos en la vida política y social (Hoover, 1988: 18).

El estudio reveló que, el hecho de seguir a un tele evangelista en particular, era parte de la pertenencia a una subcultura religiosa concreta que en el caso de Pat Robertson implicaba una cultura más bien fundamentalista y conservadora desde el punto de vista tanto religioso como social y político (Hoover, 1988: 87).

Según el estudio, las fuentes informativas que servían a los miembros del grupo para definir su sentido vital eran básicamente los contactos interpersonales, los grupos de discusión, los libros y diarios promovidos por el movimiento de Robertson y, sobretodo, los programas de televisión afines al telepredicador, que afectaban particularmente a los públicos adultos (Hoover, 1988: 89).

Todos los entrevistados por Hoover afirmaban que el movimiento del célebre telepredicador les había ofrecido ayuda de cara a dar sentido a momentos esenciales de sus vidas, como por ejemplo la muerte de un familiar, una enfermedad crónica, la pérdida del trabajo, una crisis familiar, y muchos otros problemas que podrían afectar a una persona en los tiempos modernos. Aunque muchos de los entrevistados afirmaron que no miraban directamente el programa de Robertson en la televisión, Pat Robertson constituía para ellos un símbolo de lo que ellos creían, razón por la cuál contribuían económicamente con generosidad para sostener sus iniciativas (Hoover, 1988: 91). Además estos seguidores pertenecían, según descubrió el estudio, a denominaciones diferentes, tanto católicos como protestantes: los problemas vitales eran comunes para las personas de diversas denominaciones, por lo que todos, a pesar de venir de denominaciones cristianas diferentes, encontraban en Pat Robertson el símbolo de lo que creían y a lo que aspiraban (Hoover, 1988: 93).

Hoover concluía su estudio afirmando que en las sociedades modernas, marcadas por el individualismo y por valores monolíticos, la gente de diferentes subculturas tienden a identificarse con figuras mediáticas diferentes, y que aquellos que se identifican con una figura mediática particular tienden a estar en contacto entre ellos de cara a vivir en un mundo marcado por unos valores determinados. (Hoover, 1988: 95).

El estudio también demostró que, la manera como muchos individuos se identifican con algunas figuras mediáticas, depende en gran parte de su historia personal y de su fondo social, así como de las redes sociales que estos orígenes generan (Hoover, 1988: 98). Los factores vitales que afectan la vida personal también juegan un papel importante en esta identificación. Pero la contribución más importante del estudio de Hoover fue el demostrar cómo un medio de comunicación religioso como es la televisión constituye un factor esencial en la producción de símbolos que el público puede utilizar de cara a crear sus propios sistemas de sentido (Hoover, 1988: 124).

1.2.3.2. La definición de la agenda de investigación de los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura»

El citado estudio de Stewart Hoover sin duda marcó a fondo el desarrollo futuro de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura». En los años 80 y 90 tuvo lugar otro cambio

que afectó el desarrollo de los estudios en este campo. Durante esta década la religión, que muchos habían considerado un fenómeno en vías de extinción de cara a la modernidad, de repente cobró un gran interés, demostrando su importancia no sólo en el campo personal sino también político económico y sociocultural a nivel mundial (Stark, 1999: 273).

Varios factores demostraban esta importancia, como por ejemplo el movimiento Pentecostal y su expansión a nivel mundial, Juan Pablo II y su énfasis en la nueva evangelización, la revitalización de los grupos musulmanes, budistas e hinduistas en la arena sociopolítica y cultural, y la vital religiosidad de los fieles de países en vía de desarrollo. Al lado de esto también se constataba la multiplicación de centenares de nuevos movimientos religiosos y de grupos pseudo-religiosos considerados parte de la cultura postmoderna. Por todo esto muchos autores comenzaron a hablar de una «re-encantamiento» del mundo (p. e. Murdock, 1997: 85) reconociendo el error que habían cometido muchos estudiosos al afirmar que la religión había perdido su importancia social y en la esfera pública.

Al mismo tiempo durante esta década los estudios sobre los medios de comunicación vivieron una inclinación sobre las maneras como los medios de comunicación influían en la formación de la identidad y las aspiraciones de sus públicos: la manera de entender el mundo y el posicionamiento de los públicos específicos delante de este posicionamiento repentinamente se convirtió en el centro de atención de muchos académicos. Este interés amplió también los horizontes de tales estudios, yendo más allá de la televisión, la radio y la prensa, para entrar en el cine, las camisetas, y las diversas formas de comunicación que la cultura popular estaba engendrando (Stout, 2012: 61).

Esta preocupación por el aspecto identitario se desarrolló en gran parte por el fenómeno de la globalización cultural y la confrontación entre diversas visiones culturales, así como a la búsqueda de nuevos sentidos después de la caída de los sistemas de creencias en el contexto postmoderno (White, 1997: 38). En este sentido las instituciones que durante siglos dieron sentido a las estructuras vitales y sociales de las sociedades occidentales, como por ejemplo las iglesias y los movimientos políticos, perdían su poder simbólico y organizador generando una búsqueda de nuevos sentidos con un referente más personal y menos social, cambio de paradigma en el cuál lo religioso ocupa un lugar importante. De esta manera el estudio de los nuevos horizontes religiosos no institucionalizados, desde la devoción al Padre Pío hasta los movimientos de los cristianos «re-nacidos» («New-born Christians»), se convierte en objeto de interés de los estudios sobre la religión y la religiosidad, así como de los estudios de comunicación. Los medios de comunicación se convertirán así en el centro de interés como factor que unifica estas nuevas manifestaciones de lo religioso.

En este contexto los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» comienzan a salir de las fronteras de los estudios sobre las instituciones religiosas pasando a un campo más secular, dado que, como hemos señalado en la primera parte de este capítulo, resultaba evidente que la religión era, no una realidad en vía de extinción como predicaban los apóstoles de la teoría de la secularización, sino un elemento cultural esencial que se movía más allá de las instituciones religiosas mismas, sino una realidad significativa aunque cambiante. Así ya no sólo adquieren interés los grupos religiosos tradicionales, sino también la cultura popular que generan y la orientación vital que promueven. El estudio de lo religioso encuentra su lugar no sólo en los estudios teológicos, sino también en las facultades de sociología, estudios culturales, antropología, y ciencias de la comunicación.

Es así como los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura» encuentran su sitio en el campo de los estudios sociales y humanísticos, manteniendo la pregunta esencial sobre qué tipo de cultura estamos creando en el contexto de prácticas mediadoras significativas, y de qué manera podemos valorar sus consecuencias en el contexto de el significado de la existencia humana en nuestro tiempo (White, 1997: 42).

El énfasis en el estudio como la religión mediática genera subculturas y sentidos vitales nuevos abre la puerta a los estudios sobre las diferentes subculturas y el uso que hacen de los medios de comunicación de cara a generar un sentido vital. Esto conlleva también la aceptación del principio que cada individuo, de alguna manera, genera su propio «sentido religioso», con frecuencia diferente de la comprensión de lo religioso que sostienen las instituciones religiosas mismas. El centro deja de ser la representación institucional de la religión y sus formas de comunicación, para convertirse en el sentido de identidad personal y espiritual que afecta al individuo y a los grupos que le rodean, llevando a un intento de comprensión de lo trascendente en el cine, la música, la producción audiovisual y las artes en general (White, 1997: 48).

Otro paso importante en este momento, sobretodo para el propósito de esta disertación, es cómo los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» se abren a los procesos de globalización y de «hibridación», estudiando la recepción de culturas religiosas que comienzan a expandirse en todo el mundo, como hará Asmoa-Gyadu (2004) en sus estudios sobre el Pentecostalismo en África subsahariana.

Al mismo tiempo se pasa de un estudio de la conversión religiosa desde una perspectiva psicológica hacia una comprensión cultural de la experiencia religiosa, centrándose más en la transformación del sentido y la forma de ver el mundo –el sentido «cosmovisivo» que hemos señalado en la primera parte de este capítulo– y la integración de los valores vitales alrededor de determinados símbolos y mecanismo mediáticos. Esto ha dado paso del interés por la conversión religiosa como consecuencia de una serie de factores

externos (sociales, mediáticos o de desarrollo personal) y a su comprensión a partir de una búsqueda personal de sentido que se realiza en el marco de los contextos culturales que integran el entorno vital del individuo (véase Ihejirika, 2004: xiii).

Otro tema que suscita un profundo interés en los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura» es el estudio de los medios de comunicación y su tendencia a transformar la religión en una ideología que sacraliza y naturaliza entre los grupos religiosos y las estructuras de poder. Por ejemplo los estudios sobre los tele-evangelistas en este período demuestran como estos se presentan como una «cultura nacional», pero a veces también como un «minoría perseguida», logrando así que sus públicos se sometieran a poderes hegemónicos, sean religiosos o civiles (Bruce, 1990: 53). Esta nueva orientación suscitada entre los años 80 y 90 resultará de particular interés en la fundamentación del paradigma de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» desde una perspectiva globalizada y geopolítica, como veremos más adelante.

1.2.3.3. La institucionalización de los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura»

A inicios de los años 90 nos encontramos ya con una serie de instituciones que paulatinamente fueron asimilando, desde perspectivas diferentes, las áreas de interés de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» que hemos trazado hasta ahora. Actualmente encontramos, ya constituidos, diversos centros en diferentes partes del mundo que mantienen programas sobre la relación entre religión y medios de comunicación. Entre ellos destaca el «Centro de Media, Religión y Cultura» de la Universidad de Colorado en los Estados Unidos; el «Centro de Comunicación, Teología y Ética» de la Universidad de Edimburgo en el Reino Unido; el «Centro para el estudio Interdisciplinar de la Comunicación» de la Pontificia Universidad Gregoriana de Roma; la «Facultad de Comunicación Institucional de la Iglesia» de la Pontificia Universidad de la Santa Croce de Roma; el programa de «Media y Religiones» de la Universidad de Annenberg al Sur de California en los Estados Unidos y el «Centro para el Estudio de Cultura Africana y Comunicación» de la universidad de Nigeria.

Aunque el origen de estos diversos centros de estudio es variado, y las metodología que utilizan no son convergentes, su existencia demuestra un interés común en un área de investigación que son los modelos de comunicación y el fenómeno religioso. Tal interés a generado no sólo diversos encuentros internacionales que se realizan con regularidad, sino también publicaciones periódicas y colecciones bibliográficas de relieve.

El libro editado por Stewart Hoover y Knut Lundby en 1997 y titulado «Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture» intentó exponer en su conjunto las diversas aproximaciones a la disciplina en ese momento, intentando describir los principales conceptos, argumentos e

intereses de esta nueva área de estudio. Aunque varias de las aportaciones publicadas en dicho volumen se han convertido en paradigmáticas de los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura», obras más recientes demuestran el intento de consolidación de este campo. Hay que mencionar, por ejemplo, la obra del profesor de la Facultad de Comunicación de la Universidad de Boulder (Colorado) Jeffrey Mahan titulado «Media, Religion and Culture. An Introduction» (2014) que reúne diversos especialistas y ofrece diferentes ejemplos de la relación entre producción mediática y religión, particularmente desde la perspectiva de la era digital. El profesor de la Facultad de Periodismo de la Universidad de Nevada Daniel A. Stout ha publicado diversos estudios con un intento de síntesis de la tendencia, entre los que destaca su libro «Media and Religion. Foundations of an Emergent Field» (2012) donde intenta resumir los elementos esenciales de los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura», obra que complementa el esfuerzo significativo que realizó –aunque desafortunadamente con resultados irregulares como editor de la «Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication and Media» (2006). Esta última obra, pese a su título, parece más un diccionario sobre las religiones que un diccionario sobre comunicación y religiones, aunque algunos de los artículos que aparecen resultan útiles por su valor introductorio.

Otro autor norteamericano que entró en el campo de los estudios de «Media, Religion and Culture» desde la perspectiva de la representación visual de lo religioso es David Morgan, de la Universidad de Duke, que editó el 2008 un volumen titulado «Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture» como esfuerzo de síntesis de los principios más importantes en el estudio de los medios de comunicación, la cultura y la religión.

Una de las limitaciones que tienen con frecuencia las publicaciones de carácter sintético que sobre el tema se han ido publicando en la última década es que ignoran la producción que, en el campo de los estudios de comunicación y religiones, se ha ido realizando en otros idiomas. Nos referimos, por ejemplo, a la obra del antropólogo de las religiones español Lluís Duch que, en su obra «Religión y Comunicación» (2012) que presenta el fruto del trabajo de muchos años sobre la comunicación y la religión en el contexto contemporáneo. También merece mencionar el trabajo del sociólogo italiano Enzo Pace, profesor de la Universidad de Padua, sobre la religión como comunicación, que sigue un camino más sociológico (véase «Raccontare Dio. La religione come comunicazione», 2008, recientemente traducida al inglés). Hay que recalcar que estos autores no se identifican explícitamente con la corriente de «Media, Religión y Cultura», y que su aproximación se interesa más sobre cómo comunican las religiones, sea de un punto de vista antropológico o sociológico. Pero sus aportaciones no dejan de ser valiosas para el desarrollo del área específica que nos ocupa.

Como podemos evidenciar en la actualidad muchos de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» prestan atención a la situación de esta área académica desde perspectivas diferentes, con un acento –hay que insistir en esto– en la producción académica anglosajona. Y es que dado el interés de este campo y de su posible desarrollo en el futuro un «mapa» de las distintas perspectivas de estudio resulta de gran utilidad, aunque los esfuerzos mencionados antes no constituyan una síntesis definitiva.

Peter Horsfield (2008), quien en los años 80, como hemos visto, acierta a proponer una síntesis de los estudios que en ese momento se habían realizado sobre los públicos religiosos de los medios e comunicación, propone una interesante síntesis de los campos que actualmente se definen como áreas de interés generales de los estudios de «Media, Religion y Cultura». El autor australiano define básicamente cuatro:

–Los estudios que parten del campo de los medios de comunicación y cultura: tratan los medios de comunicación y su evolución en el sentido del contexto «ecológico» en el que se desarrolla la humanidad y, en concreto, los individuos y los grupos de los cuales forman parte, proporcionando no sólo las necesidades físicas para sobrevivir, sino también los símbolos y las prácticas para construir su identidad, su sentido, su coherencia y su comprensión del mundo. En el fondo los estudios en este campo subrayan que no somos individuos autónomos e independientes, sino que somos «seres mediados» que no podemos separar nuestras dimensiones físicas, sociales y verbales. Esta área sigue de cerca el desarrollo de la sociología británica de los años 60 y 70, y en particular la obra de Stuart Hall, tal como hemos indicado arriba. Se subraya la diversidad de culturas y su forma de lidiar con su entorno en búsqueda de sentido. Esta comprensión de los medios como cultura ha generado un interés en el estudio de la religión obligando a pensar la religión, no como un entrono estable e inamovible, sino como un conjunto de culturas y subculturas que contiguamente esta negociando su identidad mediante elementos comunicativos, culturales y materiales y políticos que producen nuevas identidades y cambios dentro de la religión institucional. Al mismo tiempo los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura» en este campo subrayan cómo la comprensión de la religiosidad se entiende mejor a partir de sus expresiones culturales y no sólo a partir de los modelos que pretenden seguir las autoridades religiosas (Horsfield, 2008: 114-116).

–Los estudios que se centran en la industria mediática: los estudios que siguen esta tendencia del área de «Media, Religión y Cultura» subrayan las implicaciones que tienen las industrias mediáticas en las tradiciones y vivencias religiosas. La habilidad que tienen las instituciones y grupos religiosos de comunicar su mensaje a una sociedad más amplia a lo largo de la historia están influenciados notablemente por su capacidad de «traducir» el lenguaje religioso y experiencial dentro de los medios de comunicación disponibles y

siguiendo las exigencias que un medio específico exige. Al mismo tiempo el desarrollo de nuevos lenguajes y prácticas dentro de una cultura determinada pueden generar nuevas expresiones y prácticas en el contexto religioso. La adaptación de las grandes tradiciones religiosas, por ejemplo, a la cultura impresa (con la invención de la imprenta) o a la cultura digital (con Internet y las redes sociales) es un punto central en este sentido, como demuestra nuestro estudio. El estudio del impacto de la industria mediática en las estructuras sociales, culturales y, por ende, religiosas, y las preferencias o transformaciones que estas innovaciones implican en el discurso religioso y la manera como las tradiciones religiosas enmarcan el uso de determinados medios permite la comprensión no sólo de cómo una determinada tradición o grupo religioso se adapta a un contexto mediático nuevo, sino también su manera de «negociar» con la cultura y su forma de definirse en ella (Horsfield, 2008: 117-118).

–Los estudios centrados en los medios de comunicación como «texto»: como hemos señalado en la descripción histórica del desarrollo del área de «Media, Religión y Cultura», el interés por los medios entendidos como «textos» se funda en el principio que la única manera que el ser humano puede dar sentido a la realidad es mediante el uso del lenguaje en sus múltiples niveles. Y el lenguaje sólo puede operar mediante «textos» (escritos, simbólicos, visuales, etc.) que actúan como «medios». Esto ha llevado al interés en estudiar los medios de comunicación en tanto que textos y prácticas textuales que construyen un sentido. El aproximarse a los medios de comunicación y la religión en este sentido abre un campo que permite comprender el lenguaje religioso y el uso de los «textos mediáticos» por parte de los grupos religiosos más allá de las autoridades religiosas que con frecuencia ostentan el poder para dar sentido a las formas y manifestaciones de una religión determinada. Esta aproximación no niega el poder que tienen los medios de comunicación y sus artífices en la producción y distribución de contenidos mediáticos. Pero subraya que el poder que tienen tanto los medios de comunicación como las autoridades religiosas. Sobre el «texto» comunicativo de un grupo religioso no se agota en ellos, sino que implica una negociación continua de sentido entre el grupo religioso y los medios de comunicación, proceso en el que los individuos utilizan tales «textos» (es decir, los miembros de un grupo o subgrupo religioso específico) juegan también un papel determinante, generando una interpretación tanto radical (o «fundamentalista») como subjetiva del sentido de tales textos, evidenciando así la diversidad de tendencias y corrientes presentes dentro de una tradición religiosa concreta (Horsfield, 2008: 118-119).

–Los estudios que abordan los medios de comunicación como tecnologías y su relación con las religiones: la perspectiva de los medios de comunicación como tecnologías se aproxima a la tecnología mediática, no como simples mediadores de contenido, sino

como agentes marcados por determinadas características físicas, sociales y tecnológicas y que constituyen una parte integral de la comunicación humana. Uno de los primeros autores en proponer esta perspectiva, tal como hemos señalado más arriba, fue el economista canadiense Harold Innis quien, hacia finales de los años 40 e inicios de los 50 (Innis, 1950; 1951) inició una tendencia de aproximación a la comunicación y a los medios de comunicación que se haría popular gracias a su colega de la Universidad de Toronto, Marshall McLuhan (p. e. McLuhan, 1964), y que posteriormente contribuiría en gran parte – pero no únicamente- a la tendencia de estudios de los medios llamada hoy «Ecología de los Medios» («Media Ecology»).

El planteamiento de McLuhan es que las tecnologías de la comunicación funcionan mediante la percepción y extensión de determinados sentidos y funciones del ser humano. En este proceso las percepciones ligadas a estos sentidos se ven afectadas de formas diferentes. (Horsfield, 2008: 120-121). Todo y que no han faltado diversas críticas a esta forma de entender la comunicación y sus medios, el planteamiento de fondo resulta profundamente enriquecedor para el campo de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura»: sólo hay que pensar en el impacto de la reproducción impresa de los textos sagrados su divulgación, o la predicación radiofónica, o el impacto social y cultural de la televisión mediante los tele-evangelistas, o el uso de las nuevas tecnologías por parte de las religiones históricas y por los movimientos religiosos alternativos que se desarrollan en nuestro tiempo. La comprensión de los medios de comunicación pone en relieve al mismo tiempo cómo los grupos religiosos negocian, enmarcan y desarrollan sus preferencias comunicativas en coherencia con su propia comprensión de la comunicación entre lo trascendente y lo mundano. No es casualidad, entonces, que esta línea de estudio haya generado numerosos estudios.

Los cuatro ámbitos de estudio señalados por Horsfield nos permiten determinar los ámbitos no excluyentes en los que se mueven actualmente los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura». Todo y que el mismo Horsfield declara que su clasificación no es definitiva (2008: 112) su síntesis resulta de gran interés, no sólo porque resume las grandes vertientes presentes en el campo emergente, sino porque nos permite constatar que existen diversos campos que podrían contribuir, de cara al futuro, a enriquecer los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura». A continuación presentamos uno de estos posibles desarrollos, en concreto en el campo de los estudios geopolíticos y de la globalización.

1.3. EL DESARROLLO FUTURO DE LOS ESTUDIOS DE «MEDIA, RELIGIÓN Y CULTURA»

El «status questionis» de los estudios sobre «Media, Religión y Cultura» que hemos esbozado nos lleva a proponer nuevos caminos para el desarrollo de esta prometedora área

de los estudios de comunicación que se ha desarrollado sobretodo en el ámbito anglosajón y Nord-europeo, pero que ha tenido un impacto discreto en otras áreas lingüísticas. Como hemos visto gran parte del interés de estos estudios se centra en el análisis de los grupos religiosos y su relación con la comunicación y/o con los medios de comunicación, y la manera como esta relación bidireccional nos ayuda a comprender sea la relación de los medios con los grupos religiosos, el uso que los grupos hacen de los medios de comunicación, o cómo el progreso en el ámbito de la comunicación afecta tanto los centros de interés como el reconocimiento de la autoridad por parte de los grupos religiosos.

1.3.1. El proceso de globalización de las religiones como proceso comunicativo

Ligado a estas aproximaciones encontramos, sin embargo, otra área de gran interés, y es cómo el proceso de expansión de los grupos religiosos –y en concreto de las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica– han ido ampliando su mensaje y adaptándolo tanto a las culturas destinatarias de su mensaje como a los medios de comunicación que utilizan para vehicular tal mensaje. Al mismo tiempo la profundización de este proceso expansivo nos permite reconocer las consecuencias globalizadoras y geopolíticas que tiene la comunicación en relación a los grupos religiosos en el panorama sociopolítico, sea en su perspectiva histórica que en la contemporánea.

El interés de los estudiosos más significativos del campo de «Media, Religión y Cultura» por este aspecto comienza apenas a despertarse, en gran parte porque el lugar que se atribuye a la religión en el estudio de los procesos de globalización va ligado a la manera como se entienda dicho proceso.

La palabra «globalización» significa cosas distintas en función de quien la emplee (Axford, 2013: 8). Por ejemplo, si la noción se utiliza para designar un movimiento de carácter fundamentalmente económico (a saber, centrada en los principios de mercado), el lugar que se asigna a la religión será probablemente mínimo (Beckford, 2003: 125).

Esto no quita que algunos individuos pertenecientes a grupos religiosos se sientan interesados en este enfoque. Sus análisis se centran en el examen cuidadoso de los efectos devastadores que probablemente tendrán las fuerzas económicas occidentales sobre un enorme número de personas que viven en el mundo en vías de desarrollo. En este modo de comprender la globalización el interés por la religión radica probablemente en el hecho de que proporciona un refugio a todos aquellos que intentan guarecerse del proceso de la globalización (Lechner, 2005: 120).

Pero la aproximación económica a la globalización no agota su significado y sus implicaciones. Si en la idea de la globalización no nos limitamos a incluir el cambio

económico, sino que juzgamos que el concepto debe abarcar asimismo toda la gama de transformaciones que ha experimentado el mundo con la expansión de las ideas y que está experimentando el mundo moderno –y que ha experimentado a lo largo de la historia– a nivel económico pero también político, social y cultural nos damos cuenta que todos estos cambios van acompañados del surgimiento de un conjunto de actores globales tanto colectivos como individuales de gran importancia.

Desde esta perspectiva el lugar que adquiere el fenómeno religioso resulta mucho más significativo. De hecho, es muy frecuente que aquellos que acostumbran a participar en los grupos religiosos tengan acceso a un conjunto notable de redes comunicativas transnacionales y que, por consiguiente, utilicen o hayan utilizado diversas formas de comunicación –tanto escritas, impresas, electrónicas o digitales– sea para establecer relaciones con individuos distantes como para desarrollar tales ideas en contextos mediáticos nuevos. No hay duda de que la comunicación religiosa como los medios de comunicación son y han sido actores de alcance global. Podemos hallar amplia ilustración de ello en, por ejemplo, las metamorfosis que ha sufrido la Iglesia católica (como veremos más adelante), o en el uso de los medios por parte de los grupos protestantes a lo largo de la historia, o la influencia de los medios de comunicación en la transformación de los grupos musulmanes –tanto moderados como fundamentalistas– o, en términos más generales, en la diversidad de actividades comunicativas que englobamos bajo el nombre de «las misiones».

Podemos tomar como ejemplo este último caso, ya que nos ofrece una excelente «imagen» de la relación entre globalización, religión y comunicación a lo largo de la historia, y particularmente en los últimos cien años. Durante buena parte de la historia moderna, las misiones se han entendido –al menos en sus formas cristianas– como un movimiento orientado en dirección norte-sur, puesto que un significativo número de europeos, y más tarde de estadounidenses, han recorrido el mundo en una iniciativa íntimamente asociada (y en ocasiones de forma turbia) con la expansión y la consolidación de los imperios. En este proceso los «misioneros» mantenían un status de «civilizadores» con un control casi exclusivo de los medios de comunicación y del conocimiento de la cultura escrita en contraste con las poblaciones nativas.

Sin embargo, en el tercer cuarto del s. XX, el vocabulario empleado comenzó a variar. Poco a poco, la idea de «enviar» misioneros dio paso a un discurso vinculado con nociones como la de «asociarse» o «compartir» las dificultades con los habitantes de los países en vías de desarrollo, ya que las iglesias de esas regiones empezaron a presentarse como socios dispuestos a trabajar en pie de igualdad con sus colegas europeos o estadounidenses (Oborji, 2006: 153). Dichas comunidades dejaron entonces de ser meros

receptores, y se convirtieron en centros neurálgicos del cristianismo por derecho propio. Unos centros, además, cuyas dimensiones eran en muchos casos notablemente superiores a las de las iglesias de las respectivas «casas madre» que comienzan a utilizar sus propios medios de comunicación gracias en parte al desarrollo de la comunicación electrónica y digital. Esto conllevaría la introducción de cambios en la organización de las comunidades y a la moderación o desaparición de la influencia de los misioneros del hemisferio norte. En muchos casos se establecieron lazos entre diócesis y parroquias (estando uno de los socios en el norte y el otro en el mundo en vías de desarrollo) y, a partir de ese momento comenzarán a convertirse gradualmente en complemento, cuando no en sustituto, de los grupos de acción social voluntaria que hasta entonces habían constituido el eje de las misiones en muchas comunidades occidentales.

En el plano teórico hay un hecho claro: hasta hace poco, buena parte de las investigaciones sociológicas y comunicativas centradas en el campo de la globalización no han prestado mucha atención a la religión, y mucho menos a la relación entre religión, globalización y comunicación. Tanto Robertson (2001) como Beckford (2003) resaltan enérgicamente este extremo, así como las consecuencias que de él se derivan para los estudios sociológicos y sociopolíticos. No obstante, en este apartado nos ocuparemos de dos notables excepciones a esta observación de carácter general: las que representan tanto el propio Ronald Robertson como Peter Beyer. Tal como afirma Beckford:

«Una de las dificultades principales de los estudios sobre la globalización es la confusión existente sobre el estatus lógico de los conceptos centrales que abarca. En algunos contextos «global» se refiere a los fenómenos sociales y culturales suscitados por la distribución de determinados bienes. [...] En otros casos el término «global» implica un alto nivel de integración sin precedentes entre fenómenos sociales y culturales que tienden a crear un sistema mundial, incluyendo la disponibilidad de redes de comunicación muy sofisticadas» (Beckford, 2003: 125).

La dificultad en la definición de la globalización misma tiene un impacto sobre la comprensión de las áreas que se derivan de la tendencia de las culturas y los grupos humanos a extenderse en el espacio y en el tiempo, y ha interactuar con grupos diferentes. Esta dificultad se hace más evidente cuando tocamos el tema de la globalización y la religión.

Pero hay que anotar que esta situación comienza a cambiar, ya que algunos académicos de diversas partes del mundo han comenzado a analizar el fenómeno de la globalización en relación a la religión y, en algún caso, incluso en relación con la comunicación y la geopolítica. Los esfuerzos de Mark Juergensmeyer (2003; 2005) y su

equipo de colaboradores internacional en este sentido presentan muchas posibilidades, pero con frecuencia ignoran el aspecto comunicativo, aunque subrayan el geopolítico.

El interés de Robertson por la globalización viene de lejos. Comenzó a trabajar en este campo ya en los años 70, y década en década ha ido prestando cada vez más atención a las cuestiones religiosas. Robertson parte del supuesto de que el hecho de ampliar el foco del análisis de la globalización no sólo afecta los estudios sobre este campo, sino también los referentes a la religión. En concreto, lo que hace Robertson es volver a vincular la religión con la corriente dominante de la vida económica y social, superando los presupuestos fuertemente arraigados en la idea occidental de la modernidad que, como hemos visto, tiende a minimizar o privatizar el hecho religioso. Sus trabajos despiertan, por tanto, una empatía hacia el núcleo central de nuestro estudio: el de la necesidad de huir de los planteamientos que consideren que la religión es «un aspecto muy circunscrito y relativamente inconsecuente de las sociedades del s. XX» (Robertson, 2001: 4). Al mismo tiempo, aunque de manera secundaria, Robertson da con frecuencia importancia a los procesos comunicativos en sus estudios sobre globalización y religión (Robertson, 2001: 22, entre otros).

Peter Beyer es uno de los autores que han recogido el guante de este desafío. Capaz de emplear tres lenguas con toda competencia y de profundizar, por tanto, en las muy exigentes fuentes teóricas de ese amplio espectro lingüístico –superando así la producción bibliográfica únicamente anglosajona– Beyer, quien se siente tan cómodo en Europa como en los Estados Unidos, se encuentra en una posición idónea para responder al reto.

Curiosamente, sin embargo, el trabajo que ha realizado en solitario –titulado «Religion and Globalization» (1993)– no comienza con un examen teórico, sino con la descripción de un incidente: el de la fatwa dictada por el Ayatola Jomeini contra Salman Rushdie en 1989 (Beyer, 1993: 2). Beyer recurre a este caso para ilustrar tanto la índole global del mundo en que vivimos como el lugar que en él ocupa la religión, señalando en particular los siguientes extremos: la inmediatez de la reacción provocada por este episodio, su magnitud auténticamente global debido a los medios de comunicación, la intensa perplejidad que vendría a provocar y el hecho de que la iniciativa hubiera sido adoptada por un dirigente no occidental.

El asunto de Salman Rushdie se transforma de hecho en una plataforma que permite a Beyer dar inicio a su argumentación, una argumentación que lo lleva a interpretar la fatwa de dos formas notablemente distintas. Por un lado, la reacción de los musulmanes a la novela de Rushdie demuestra el vínculo existente entre la fe religiosa y la identidad particularista –una conclusión que en realidad no resulta sorprendente debido al factor «mediador» y «globalizante» del medio literario impreso–. Por otro, viene a revelar la

posibilidad de una respuesta mucho más inquietante: la vinculada con la idea de que «el precio de la plena inclusión [de los musulmanes] en el sistema global, actualmente dominado por los no musulmanes» (Beyer: 1993: 3), consista en exigirles que renuncien al elemento capital de su fe: el inmutable carácter sagrado del Corán. De ahí, por un lado, el profundo malestar de la comunidad musulmana –que asume su condición marginal–, y de ahí también, por otro, la incomprensión que demuestra la respuesta laica (que representa la reacción del sistema global hoy predominante). Ninguna de esas dos situaciones resulta tranquilizadora para Beyer (Beyer: 1993: 5).

Dado este desafío, el objetivo principal de Beyer se centra en conocer lo más a fondo posible las formas de religión «institucionalmente especializadas y sistémicas» que se hallan presentes en el mundo moderno y las distintas vías por las que estas encuentran cauce de expresión (Beyer, 1993: 12), que implican también la comunicación en general y los medios de comunicación en particular. En este análisis, los aspectos puramente privados –en sus muchas y variadas formas– poseen escasa significación, pese a que ciertamente no hayan dejado de existir. Según Beyer, lo que exige atención es el lugar que ocupa la religión en el espacio público, o, de hecho, en la esfera política, adquiriendo así un significado geopolítico (Beyer, 1993: 13).

En dichos ámbitos, la religión puede operar en realidad de dos modos muy distintos: bien tendiendo al particularismo y a la diferenciación cultural, manteniendo sus parámetros clásicos y particulares de comunicación, o bien apuntando en la dirección de una variante del «globalismo», esto es, tendiendo a adoptar formas de comunicación que conecten con las cuestiones que surgen en el seno de una sociedad global y funcionalmente diferenciada.

Posteriormente Beyer irá todavía más lejos, exponiendo su objetivo en la introducción a la compilación de artículos que hemos mencionado más arriba (Beyer, 2001a). Dicho objetivo consiste en comprender la globalización a través de la religión, y no lo contrario. De aquí que recurra a la siguiente lógica:

«Si el sistema económico capitalista constituye una clase de economía específicamente moderna, especializada, instrumental y hoy ya globalizada, y si el sistema de los Estados-nación constituye un tipo de administración de los asuntos colectivos igualmente moderno, especializado, instrumental y actualmente globalizado, tiene sentido preguntarse al menos si existe o no una forma de religión correspondientemente globalizada y sistémica» (Beyer, 2001b, p. xxvii).

La declaración de intenciones de Beyer funda una tendencia que pretende dar el lugar que la religión merece dentro de los estudios de la globalización en todos los ámbitos que implica, en particular de los procesos comunicativos y expansivos y sus consecuencias geopolíticas. Desafortunadamente el autor no profundiza en estos aspectos de forma

sistemática. En gran parte los estudios posteriores sobre globalización y religión se han centrado en el carácter más radical del fenómeno religioso, como es el fundamentalismo, olvidando la notoriedad de las tendencias menos radicales dentro de las diversas tradiciones religiosas (Beckford, 2003: 127). Por otra parte las muestras de estudios sobre la globalización religiosa en tanto que proceso expansivo y comunicativo no ha encontrado un eco en el ámbito anglosajón, sino más bien en el francófono, como demuestra el estudio de Bastian, Champion y Sousslet (2001) que amplía el sentido de la globalización a partir de su raíz francesa, es decir la «mondialisation». Pero incluso en el ámbito francófono la relación entre globalización y comunicación no ha visto el desarrollo que merecería.

Pero en el contexto del desarrollo de la relación entre religión y globalización que hemos descrito hay que destacar un autor en particular que, aunque centra su área de interés solo en el campo de las iglesias cristianas ortodoxas de Oriente, aporta una sistematización que ayuda, tal como veremos en el desarrollo de nuestro estudio, a comprender las diferentes maneras en que las tradiciones religiosas hacen suyo el proceso de globalización que afrontan a lo largo de su historia. Se trata de Víctor Roudometof y su obra «Globalization and Orthodox Christianity: The Transformation of a Religious Tradition» (2014).

Roudometof reconoce cuatro formas de apropiación del proceso globalizador / expansivo de las tradiciones religiosas y su pluralismo interno:

–La «vernacularización» («vernacularization») que tiende a unir el proceso de universalización de la tradición religiosa específica con sus formas lingüísticas tradicionales y culturalmente particulares, aplicando significados definidos al proceso de expansión de la tradición religiosa determinada, generando así «burbujas» de comunidades creyentes con un fuerte carácter particularista y con frecuencia ligado a la identidad socio-lingüística del grupo (Roudometof, 2014: 172).

–La «indigenización» («indigenisation») caracterizada por vincular el proceso de globalización / universalización de la tradición religiosa con las características étnicas del grupo, generando una distinción étnico-religiosa que vincula a los miembros del grupo específico a las características étnicas atribuidas al colectivo, junto con prácticas regidas por la conservación de los rituales y una interacción limitada con la innovación y la modernización (Roudometof, 2014: 172).

–La «nacionalización» («nationalization») que, todo y reconocer el valor del procesos de globalización del grupo religioso a lo largo de la historia con sus diversos avatares, identifica la identidad religiosa con los límites de las identidades nacionales específicas, asumiendo las diversas consecuencias que se derivan de tal delimitación

geográfica e ideológica, como por ejemplo la identificación entre nacionalidad y religión, y la relación directa entre autoridad política y autoridad religiosa (Roudometof, 2014: 173).

–La «transnacionalización» («transnationalization») que, centrada en una comprensión del proceso de universalización de la tradición religiosa, desliga su esencia de las identidades nacionales – consideradas de alguna manera efímeras o insuficientes – insistiendo en el carácter global de la identidad religiosa, por encima de los elementos lingüísticos, étnicos o nacionales, tendiendo a idealizar la identidad a partir de unos valores generales comunes (Roudometof, 2014: 173).

Si bien la sistematización de Roudometof que acabamos de exponer puede ser objeto de diversas objeciones, se trata de un intento de comprensión de la relación entre el proceso globalizador inherente a las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica y su encarnación por parte de los diversos grupos que componen las tradiciones religiosas judía, cristiana y musulmana. Da pie a una comprensión comparativa – al menos en sus elementos esenciales– de la manera como las tradiciones religiosas que nos ocupan y su pluralismo interno lidian con el tiempo y con la historia. De cara a nuestro estudio aplicaremos esta nomenclatura como un instrumento tanto clarificador como de sistematización de cara a la comprensión de la relación entre tradiciones religiosas y globalización y, posteriormente, los procesos comunicativos y geopolíticos que se derivan.

El estudio de las tradiciones religiosas y sus aspectos comunicativos, como hemos visto, permite aún un amplio desarrollo. La perspectiva de su expansión en la historia y los procesos comunicativos que implica con sus respectivas consecuencias para el proceso de globalización y la geopolítica constituyen un amplio campo de interés aún por desarrollar. La potencialidad de tal aproximación será el objeto de los capítulos de nuestro estudio.

1.3.2. La influencia de los procesos comunicativos de las religiones en el campo de la Geopolítica / Relaciones Internacionales

En la síntesis sobre la relación entre globalización, religiones y comunicación hemos señalado el discreto pero creciente interés en el estudio de la relación entre globalización y religión, campo que proponemos como posible desarrollo del área de «Media, Religión y Cultura». Pero en esta perspectiva queremos proponer un paso más, planteando el estudio de la geopolítica de las religiones –y en concreto de las tres tradiciones religiosas de las que se ocupa nuestro estudio– como posible área transversal de interés de cara al futuro de los estudios en el campo de las religiones y de la comunicación.

Como ocurre con el concepto «globalización», la noción de «geopolítica» presenta diversos significados. La definición de su significado, además, se ve afectado por una cierta

tendencia «pan-geopolítica», es decir, por un uso de moda que tiende a subrayar su carácter espacio-temporal y contemporáneo.

En su esencia el término «geopolítica» proviene del griego «geos», tierra, y «politiké», política, refiriéndose al estudio del impacto de la geografía humana y/o política en el campo de las relaciones internacionales y de la política internacional de los grupos humanos y/o de las naciones (Devetak – Burke – George, 2012: 492).

A pesar de que fue el sueco Rudolf Kjellen, en 1899, el autor que acuñó el término «Geopolitik» en sueco y alemán –que corresponde al vocablo castellano «Geopolítica»– , y aunque esta denominación apenas fuera utilizada antes de la Primera Guerra Mundial, la tradición geopolítica moderna se fue conformando fundamentalmente a partir de la obra del británico Halford J. Mackinder, quien comienza a analizar los problemas de las relaciones geográficas de los Estados en términos de un sistema global (Cohen, 2009: 11).

Sin entrar en un análisis detallado, podemos afirmar que la Geopolítica (con mayúscula) es un sub-campo dentro de la Geografía Política que cuenta con una tradición reconocida, y que responde a una interpretación de las relaciones espaciales externas de los Estados desde una perspectiva global (Encel, 2011: 35). El término Geopolítica ha sido usado tradicionalmente para referirse al estudio de «las relaciones geográficas externas de los Estados y, más específicamente, a los aspectos geográficos de esas relaciones exteriores y los problemas de los Estados que afectan a todo el mundo» (Cohen, 2009: 12). En términos generales, esta definición recoge el conjunto de elementos en cuyo estudio se ha ido conformando una peculiar tradición, que es fundamentalmente moderna, aunque entronca con la tradición más antigua de la Geografía. Gérard Chaliand y Jean-Pierre Rageau habla de esta tradición en tanto que «saber estratégico» que se ocupa del estudio de las estructuras espaciales y de las características de los lugares para su uso político o militar a lo largo de la historia humana (Chaliand – Rageau, 2012: 10). En definitiva, la disciplina moderna Geopolítica estudia las prácticas y representaciones geopolíticas (con minúscula) que se vienen produciendo desde la aparición de los primeros sistemas de comunidades políticas organizadas hasta hoy, y las consecuencias que se generan entre tales comunidades políticas.

Algunos autores citan al estadounidense Alfred T. Mahan como uno de los «padres fundadores» de la Geopolítica (Cohen, 2009: 12). Este oficial de la Armada de los Estados Unidos, con el fin de mostrar la importancia de la potencia naval en la historia de Europa y América, publicó una de las primeras y más relevantes obras sobre el tema. En ella señalaba que el poderío naval era el fundamental en un Estado, y que tal poderío se deriva de una Marina de Guerra fuerte, que sólo podía desarrollarse íntimamente ligada al comercio

marítimo, cuyo auge se originaría en la posesión de colonias, inspirándose en el modelo de la Armada británica (Encel, 2011: 44).

También se suelen situar los trabajos del Alemán Friedrich Ratzel en el origen de la Geopolítica, particularmente «Politische Geographie», publicado en 1897. En alguno de ellos se ocupa de problemas similares a los de Mahan, y trató, en general, las relaciones entre Estados, normalmente desde la perspectiva de las interrelaciones entre la acción humana y el medio y, en particular, buscando las leyes que gobiernan su desarrollo (Cohen, 2009: 15). En la medida que en su obra se produjo lo que algunos denominarían un «corte epistemológico», que dio lugar a la Geografía Política, Ratzel tendría una influencia clave en la conformación de la subdisciplina de la Geopolítica, sobre todo en el caso concreto de la escuela alemana de la «Geopolitik» (Encel, 2011: 38).

Sin embargo, no se puede aceptar que la importancia de Mahan o de Ratzel sea la misma que la de Mackinder en el surgimiento de la Geopolítica, porque, según Cohen, fué Mackinder quien conformo la subdisciplina tal y como hoy la conocemos: él fue precisamente quien encajó las piezas del conjunto (Cohen, 2009: 16). El propio Mackinder, en la que se suele señalar como obra germinal de la geopolítica «The geographical pivot of history, señalaba que los inicios del s. XX marcaban el final de la época colombina –durante la cual la exploración geográfica del planeta se había terminado prácticamente, y ya no existían territorios cuya posesión pudiera realizarse de forma pacífica– señalando que el sistema mundial se había cerrado y se estaba, por fin, en condiciones de encontrar «algunos aspectos de la causalidad geográfica en la historia universal» (Mackinder, 1904: 428). Ese sistema tendría un carácter fuertemente interconectado, que implicaría que las acciones que se producen en determinado lugar tienen su impacto sobre otros, y, por ello, la Geopolítica debería concentrar su atención en «el entendimiento del todo» y por lo tanto, la escala global sería su nivel analítico fundamental (Mackinder, 1904: 430).

El principio interconectado de Mackinder –de gran interés para el propósito de nuestro estudio dada su dimensión comunicativa– tendría una gran influencia posterior. La Geopolítica como disciplina tuvo su momento de mayor auge en los años 1930 y 1940, especialmente en la Alemania nazi, a cuyo régimen se asocio bastante estrechamente. Pero también en Estados Unidos, el Reino Unido o Francia se desarrollo una importante corriente de estudio y publicaciones (Cohen, 2009: 19). El final que tuvo la guerra y la asociación que se pretendió establecer entre la expansión territorial de Alemania y la «Geopolitik» del general Haushofer supuso el suicidio de él y su esposa tras los interrogatorios de los aliados y una «condena» del mundo académico occidental de todo lo que se pudiese relacionar con la Geopolítica (Encel, 2011: 41). Evidentemente esto no significó que se dejase de reflexionar sobre las relaciones espaciales de los Estados desde una perspectiva global, pero estas

reflexiones no se hacían bajo la denominación de Geopolítica dada la reminiscencia nazista del término.

Desde los años 70, sin embargo, la Geopolítica ha ido resurgiendo como término y como área de estudio específica en el campo de las ciencias sociales: como término ha dejado de ser tabú, y como área de investigación se ha convertido en un prometedor espacio de investigación convergente. Las tendencias en ese resurgimiento se pueden incluir, grosso modo, en dos tipos fundamentales: uno, que aglutina a las tendencias estrechamente vinculadas con las prácticas tradicionales de la «política de poder», y otro, que incluiría a las corrientes que se acostumbra a llamar «radicales», «críticas» e incluso, a veces, «revolucionarias», que no constituyen, ni mucho menos, una disciplina unificada, pero que pueden proporcionar las bases suficientes para conformar la Geopolítica como teoría crítica (Cohen, 2009: 20).

Las más novedosas son las Geopolíticas radicales, de las que el auténtico pionero es el francés Yves Lacoste, que edita desde 1976 la revista «Herodote. Revue de géographie et de géopolitique », donde van aparecido numerosos análisis geopolíticos de diversas áreas del planeta, haciendo hincapié en el análisis de las situaciones de conflicto (Encel, 2011: 61). Lacoste ha dedicado varios números a los grupos religiosos y su influencia geopolítica como, por ilustrar un ejemplo, el número dedicado a los grupos evangélicos (Lacoste, 2002; 2005).

Pero quizás sea el inglés Peter J. Taylor, también fundador en 1982 de otra revista especializada, llamada «Political Geography», quien ha contribuido a sentar una de las bases que han permitido renovar la Geopolítica, desde una perspectiva radical, al aplicar a la Geografía Política el análisis de sistemas-mundo de Immanuel Wallerstein, porque considera que «ofrece una oportunidad a los geógrafos políticos para volver al análisis de escala global sin tener que rendir ningún homenaje a Mackinder» (Taylor, 1989: 7), pudiendo así estudiar, además, el conflicto Norte contra Sur, y no solo el pretendido enfrentamiento entre la potencia continental y la potencia marítima, como hacía el Mackinder.

Otras bases fundamentales de la renovación radical han sido los intentos de desarrollar una geografía del poder, cuyos exponentes más prominentes pueden ser Claude Raffestin (Raffestin, 1995) o Paul Claval (Claval, 2003), que parten de la idea de que el poder es algo que circula, que aparece en todas las relaciones sociales como elemento constitutivo de las mismas, y produce el territorio a partir del espacio. De este modo, las relaciones espaciales son en última instancia relaciones de poder, y constituyen la «problemática» objeto de estudio por una Geografía Política que no quiera seguir los pasos «totalitarios» de la versión clásica de la disciplina (Ferrestin, 1995: 6). La relación es el momento clave para el análisis del poder, debido a que este se enmascara, se oculta, no es fácilmente aprehensible, ni, por supuesto, cuantificable: pero el poder se manifiesta con ocasión de la

relación, cuando se manifiestan los polos que se enfrentan o se unen, a partir de lo que se crean «campos» de poder, que permiten un análisis (Claval, 2003: 11).

La corriente que adopta explícitamente una perspectiva que denomina «Geopolítica crítica» está ligada a los trabajos pioneros de John Agnew (Agnew, 2003), Simon Dalby y Gearoid Tuathail (Dalby – Tuathail, 1998). La idea fundamental de estos autores es rehacer el concepto de la Geopolítica como discurso, que contribuye a la construcción cultural del mapa geopolítico global. En tanto que discurso, cabría diferenciar una «geopolítica practica» de una «geopolítica formal» (Agnew, 2003: 3). La primera sería una actividad estatal, un ejercicio en el que el mundo es «especializado» en regiones con atributos o características diversas por parte de la burocracia encargada de la política exterior de los Estados (diplomáticos y militares fundamentalmente), mientras que la segunda serían las teorías, modelos y estrategias que elaboran los «intelectuales de la seguridad» (académicos, investigadores, etc.) para guiar y justificar las acciones de la geopolítica practica (Agnew, 2003: 4). En esta perspectiva resulta particularmente interesante para nuestro estudio la aportación de Agnew, dado que es de los pocos autores que considera los elementos culturales y religiosos como factores determinantes de la geopolítica contemporánea, como lo demuestra en su estudio sobre la Geopolítica de la iglesia Católica (Agnew, 2010).

Otros autores han introducido más tarde el concepto de «geopolítica popular», que se referiría a la cultura popular, a los razonamientos geopolíticos que se elaboran en los medios de comunicación, el cine, la novela, etc., que contribuyen decisivamente a la producción y circulación del «sentido común» geopolítico, de los presupuestos geopolíticos que los ciudadanos dan por sentados y que permiten, en buena medida, hacer «inteligible» la geopolítica practica y la formal. Resulta de particular interés el área que profundiza sobre geopolítica y cine en tanto que representación «popular» de la geopolítica –incluyendo algunos aspectos religiosos– (Power – Crampton, 2007) o bien con el uso del cine mundial para explicar la geopolítica contemporánea, incluyendo los aspectos culturales y religiosos (Seret, 2011).

Este breve resumen del desarrollo de la geopolítica y sus diversas interpretaciones nos demuestra cómo la reflexión espacial sobre las relaciones de poder no se puede limitar - como ocurría en la Geopolítica tradicional existente entre los Estados– olvidando los innumerables flujos que ocurren al margen; operando de forma reduccionista y limitando «lo político» a «lo estatal». De este modo, aunque la Geopolítica crítica hace hincapié en la microescala de análisis (que se ocupa del planeta entero), como era el caso en la tradicional, esto no puede significar el abandono de otras escalas, como la cultural o religiosa, a riesgo de caer en un determinismo geográfico.

Conviene remarcar, tal como afirma Cohen, que:

«La renovación actual de la Geopolítica, en cualquiera de sus versiones, no supone un divorcio total con la que se desarrolla en la primera mitad del s. XX; existen rupturas, pero también continuidades. Estas predominan en la nueva Geopolítica conservadora. mientras que las primeras abundan en la Geopolítica crítica. No nos encontramos, en fin, ante una nueva disciplina. Antes bien: mediante la renovación, se continua extendiendo la tradición geopolítica moderna». (Cohen, 2009: 28)

Si bien dentro de la perspectiva de las nuevas aproximaciones a la geopolítica el aspecto religioso ha adquirido un lugar de relieve, hay que subrayar que este status no se ha obtenido de forma natural. Scott M. Thomas (2005) señala los diversos motivos por los cuáles el lugar de la religión en los estudios geopolíticos o de las relaciones internacionales ha tardado en consolidarse. Thomas desarrolla cuatro puntos:

–El desarrollo de la ciencias sociales a lo largo del s. XX que pretendieron explicar el fenómeno religioso apartado de su influjo social, dado que la religión se consideraba como un elemento de las sociedades «tradicionales» y no de las sociedades «modernas», debido al fenómeno de la secularización y su identificación con las sociedades industrializadas, aplicando este principio incluso a las sociedades no occidentales en las que la realidad religiosa no se separa del resto de las dinámicas sociales y políticas (Thomas, 2005: 50-54).

–La presunción «Westphaliana» de que la religión se encuentra sujeto al estado, y por lo tanto tiene un carácter puramente personal y privatizado, reduciendo la realidad religiosa a los aspectos puramente éticos (Thomas, 2005: 54-55). Dentro de esta perspectiva la religión tiende a disolverse en una especie de «ética universal», principios que, según Thomas, tienen sus orígenes en el Tratado de Westphalia de 1648, que puso fin a la Guerra de los Treinta Años entre las diversas confesiones cristianas europeas, y sometiendo «lo religioso» al estado particular y eliminándolo de las relaciones internacionales, como se había ya hecho con el «Tratado de Paz de Ausburg» (1955) que establece el principio de «cujus regio, eius religio». Así la relación entre lo religioso y lo político adquiere un carácter puramente nacional, quedando marginada del contexto internacional, al menos en la teoría política europea (Thomas, 2005: 55).

–Los paradigmas de la relaciones internacionales y su estudios marginó la cultura y la religión debido al dominio de las perspectivas realista, neorrealista y estructural-realista en este campo. Estas diversas aproximaciones ha privilegiado el valor del estado, y posteriormente en los aspectos legales e institucionales, dejando poco espacio a los aspectos culturales y religiosos como actores del campo geopolítico (Thomas, 2005: 55-56). Habría que esperar al desarrollo de las tendencias pluralistas y liberales en el campo de las relaciones institucionales para que aspectos de lo religioso encontraran un lugar como

actores internacionales, como por ejemplo la iglesia Católica o los grupos radicales musulmanes. Desafortunadamente estos aspectos religiosos no se consideran en sí mismos, sino en tanto que amenazas a la seguridad nacional, reduciéndolos a agentes de distorsión de la realidad política (Thomas, 2005: 58)

–La tendencia hacia una comprensión del mundo puramente racionalista, con la influencia del positivismo y del materialismo, que impuso una manera de entender la realidad internacional subrayando los aspectos más materiales (p. e. la economía) o positivistas (p. e. la ciencia y la tecnología) y donde los aspectos «cosmovisivos» que parten de una forma no-racional de comprender la realidad quedan excluidos, o reducidos a aspectos casuales (Thomas, 2005: 59). La crítica postmoderna contribuiría, según Thomas, a debilitar la aproximación positivista y materialista a las relaciones internacionales, así como el evidente relieve de factores religiosos en los conflictos internacionales y en las identidades nacionales (Thomas, 2005: 59). Es interesante la constatación que hace el autor afirmando que, incluso las aproximaciones de corte tomista y agustiniano a la geopolítica, han contribuido a la limitación del aspecto religioso en las relaciones internacionales al insistir en «lo religioso» como únicamente cristiano (Thomas, 2005: 62).

Thomas nos ayuda a comprender porqué el aspecto religioso se ignoró en gran parte de los estudios geopolíticos. Pero esta reducción del fenómeno religioso a los límites nacionales o personales no evitó que, en realidad, durante siglos el fenómeno religioso jugara y juegue un papel en el campo de las relaciones entre las naciones y el desarrollo de los territorios.

El geo-politólogo holandés Gertjan Dijkink señala cómo la religión, y en particulares las tradiciones monoteístas, han influido sobre la geopolítica a lo largo de la historia. Denota como, por ejemplo, las nociones de «Tierra Santa» o «templo», «guerra santa», «diáspora», las tendencias «milenaristas» (que buscan una utopía social basada en principio religiosos), o bien las tendencias políticas teocéntricas (o, en caso extremo, fundamentalistas), constituyen todos ejemplos de la persistencia de la religión en el ámbito geopolítico, aunque tal presencia no se enuncie como tal (Dijkink, 2006).

De la misma manera algunos autores franceses han desarrollado interesante aproximaciones a la geopolítica del hecho religioso, sea en el campo del judaísmo (Encel – Thual, 2004; Encel, 2015), del cristianismo (Chelini-Point – Liogier, 2003; Noe, 2015), del Islam (Thual, 2002; Chautard, 2008; Sfeir, 2009; Larroque, 2014) y del budismo (Liogier, 2004). Resultan de particular interés los estudios que la escuela francesa de la geopolítica crítica ha realizado sobre la geopolítica de las religiones en general (De Cherenteny, 1997; Thual, 2004; Amir-Aslani, 2011), con apreciaciones bastante interesantes sobre la relación entre religión y sociedad, política y cultura.

Pero la tendencia que más activamente ha trabajado para reubicar la religión dentro de la reflexión geopolítica es la americana, intentando no sólo justificar metodológicamente el lugar legítimo de la religión dentro de este campo (Thomas, 2005) sino también realizando una detallada descripción de sus implicaciones en la geopolítica contemporánea. Particularmente las obra publicadas en la colección «Culture and Religion in International Relations» buscan este propósito: subrayar el lugar de la religión y sus diversas manifestaciones a nivel social, cultural y político indicando sus consecuencias y fundamentando su lugar en la epistemología de las relaciones internacionales y en la geopolítica. Las obra colectivas de Jonathan Fox y Shmuel Sandler (Fox – Sandler, 2004) y de Fabio Petito y Pavlos Hatzopopulos (Petito – Hatzopopulos, 2003) merecen una particular atención por sus aportaciones. Recientemente la obra del politólogo de la London Metropolitan University Jeffrey Haynes «An Introduction to International Relations and Religion» ha sintetizado de forma sistemática tanto los fundamentos teóricos como los ejemplos geopolíticos del lugar de las religiones en el campo geopolítico internacional (Haynes, 2013) sobretodo en esta segunda edición de su obra. El autor afirma:

«El retorno de lo religioso no sólo se relaciona con las creencias personales sino que conlleva también la influencia de la religión en el campo social, económico y político [...]. La religión aporta símbolos ya existentes, rituales, los fundamentos de la solidaridad que utiliza mediante su vida en el mundo y mediante sus líderes. Tales actores religiosos se encuentran en diversas tradiciones religiosas y tendencias sectarias, pero comparten una característica clave: el deseo de cambiar lo doméstico y, en muchos casos, el interés de aumentar la influencia de la religión en el campo internacional». (Haynes, 2013: 25).

Siguiendo la línea del trabajo de fundamentación del lugar de la religión en el campo geopolítico y de las relaciones internacionales que señala Haynes (académico que dirige la colección «Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics» que cuenta hasta la fecha con diez publicaciones sobre el tema) Nuknet Sandal y Jonathan Fox, en su obra «Religion in International Relations Theory. Interactions and Possibilities» (2013) sintetizan los puntos en que lo religioso influye sobre el panorama internacional y, por ende, en las relaciones internacionales. Esta influencia y los elementos que la integran se pueden solapar, tal como indican los autores, pero en el fondo constituyen un esfuerzo por definir los diversos aspectos que atañen la influencia de la religión sobre el panorama internacional desde perspectivas diversas (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 12). Sandal y Fox indican siete puntos en concreto:

-La influencia de las cosmovisiones religiosas: las religiones pueden influenciar las relaciones internacionales mediante su cosmovisión trámite dos vías: (1) la religión y su manera de ver la realidad pueden influenciar al agente político determinando tanto su

comprensión de los objetivos de sus acciones políticas como las mediaciones que los hacen posibles (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 13); (2) la influencia que ejercen las creencias religiosas reinante en un determinado territorio o nación, que obliga a los agentes políticos del lugar a tener consideración de la cosmovisión religiosa y sus múltiples dimensiones (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 14). En ambos casos se tiene que tener en cuenta la «teología política» que se deriva de una determinada cosmovisión religiosa y cómo esta se implanta en una región o estado en un momento histórico determinado (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 15).

-La legitimación religiosa: el término inglés «legitimacy», que se podría traducir por «justicia», va ligado a las tradiciones religiosas y a su manera de entender la forma recta de obrar (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 15). Las tradiciones religiosas tienen una relación directa con la comprensión de la ley y la justicia, y con frecuencia se convierten en fundamentos para legitimar ciertas acciones, sea a nivel semántico (como la asignación del término «imperio del mal» para referirse a un actor político rival), o a nivel de la legitimación de la autoridad, o de una práctica específica (como podría ser la manera de vestir o de comportarse) (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 16).

-Los Estados «religiosos»: aunque el campo de las relaciones internacionales y de la Geopolítica no asignan ninguna condición religiosa al sistema internacional, esto no implica que dentro de tal sistema no existan actores que se consideren ellos mismos como estados con una «religión oficial», aunque este término tenga connotaciones diferentes en contextos estatales diversos. En este sentido las naciones que sustentan una religión oficial –y por lo tanto se encuentra influenciadas por una cosmovisión religiosa determinada- tienden a tener más en cuenta la legitimación de lo religioso en su gestión política nacional e internacional como ocurre con muchos países musulmanes (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 17-18).

-Actores religiosos no estatales: las instituciones religiosas por ellas mismas pueden ser agentes movilizados tanto en la política interna como externa de una nación (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 18). Esto resulta particularmente claro cuando las instituciones religiosas organizan actos públicos o demostraciones a favor o en contra de determinada idea o causa. Las instituciones religiosas, que cuentan ya con una infraestructura organizacional sólida, constituyen así un agente religioso que puede influir a nivel internacional y que se encuentra bajo la influencia de una cosmovisión religiosa determinada (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 19), sea en su interpretación más radical o no.

-Las cuestiones religiosas locales y su alcance internacional: dado el carácter globalizante de las diversas religiones y debido al impacto comunicativo que pueden tener los asuntos locales a nivel internacional, los conflictos locales relacionados con la religión tienden a internacionalizarse (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 19) dado que los agentes religioso que implican a los seguidores de su propia religión llevan el conflicto a un nivel internacional, o el

conflicto se internacionaliza por medio de los medios de comunicación, suscitando así el interés de creyentes de otros países (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 21). Este movimiento se da particularmente con temas como las minorías religiosas, la emigración o los conflictos étnicos que incluyen elementos religiosos.

-Movimientos religiosos transnacionales: se trata de cualquier ideología religiosa o fenómeno religioso que operan en múltiples países y que persiguen una agenda a nivel internacional (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 22). Se puede tratar tanto de grupos radicales que quieren imponer su ideología a nivel transnacional (como ocurre con el Jihadismo dentro del Islam) o grupos que quieren propagar su pensamiento pacifista (como el pacifismo en el caso de los cristianos Menonitas) (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 23-24).

-Cuestiones religiosas transnacionales: dada la implicación de las ideologías religiosas en la vida personal de los creyentes, cualquier cuestión transnacional ligada a lo religioso se puede convertir en una cuestión religiosa transnacional (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 24). Esto se puede dar tanto a nivel del terrorismo étnico-religioso (no sólo el musulmán, sino también el ligado a casi toda tradición religiosa como en Sri Lanka o en Irlanda del Norte), pero se puede dar también a nivel de defensa de los derechos humanos de acuerdo con su concreción en el contexto de una tradición religiosa o cultural determinada (como la «Declaración de los Derechos Humanos del Cairo» de 1990 respecto al islam, o la defensa de la libertad religiosa en las diversas declaraciones internacionales, como la europea en 1950). Estas cuestiones se pueden también extender a los derechos de la mujer, a la defensa de los lugares de culto o a la planificación familiar y la bioética. Todas estas cuestiones pueden partir de una inquietud local, pero pronto adquieren un relieve internacional relacionado con las comunidades religiosas implicadas (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 22-23).

-La identidad religiosa: dado que la cuestión de la identidad es un factor importante en la geopolítica y en las relaciones internacionales, la identidad religiosa ejerce también una importante influencia en el campo de la geopolítica (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 28). El politólogo Samuel P. Huntington llevó este punto al extremo con su teoría de la confrontación cultural (Huntington, 1993; 1996) en la que la civilización adquiere un macro-nivel en el que casi se identifica con la tradición religiosa que le es históricamente inherente, y que conduce el protagonismo internacional de las civilizaciones. Pero no hace falta llegar a este extremo para comprender cómo la identidad religiosa puede jugar un papel relevante, por ejemplo, en los emigrantes que, con frecuencia, acuden a su identidad religiosa para reafirmar su identidad en tierras ajenas a su cultura (Sandal – Fox, 2013: 29).

Las tendencias que plantean los estudios sobre religión y relaciones internacionales por lo que toca a la influencia de lo religioso en la geopolítica denotan claramente un

«retorno de lo religioso» no sólo al campo de la comunicación, de las ciencias sociales y de los estudios culturales, sino también al campo de las relaciones internacionales.

Sandal, Fox, Haynes y los demás autores que hemos ido exponiendo forman parte del grupo de estudiosos anglosajones que trabajan en el campo académico que se ha ido consolidando desde hace relativamente poco y que busca fundamentar el lugar de la religión en el campo de la geopolítica y de las relaciones internacionales. Los autores ligados a esta tendencia comienzan también a producir trabajos de investigación relacionados con el campo de la comunicación, aunque aun sin una orientación estructurada. A manera de ejemplo podemos citar el trabajo de Mehrzad Boroujerdi y Nichole J. Allem sobre el lugar de los medios de comunicación internacionales en la creación de nuevas identidades políticas en el mundo musulmán, tanto a nivel externo como interno (Boroujerdi – Allem, 2012). También la investigación sobre la relación entre las protestas de los monjes budistas en Burma el año 2007 y el papel que jugaron los medios de comunicación en la definición identitaria de los grupos de protesta llevada a cabo por Diane Winston sigue una línea semejante (Winston, 2012). Este tipo de trabajo ya había sido precedido por Robbie Goh en su investigación sobre el uso de Internet por parte de las comunidades cristianas en el contexto geopolítico asiático (Goh, 2005).

Estos estudios comprenden las áreas de los estudios religiosos (incluyendo su aspecto doctrinal y no puramente social), la geopolítica y la comunicación. Pero en el campo de la comunicación ignoran las aportaciones realizadas por el campo de «Media, Religión y Cultura», tanto en la manera de abordar los aspectos sociales y culturales de las tradiciones religiosas como en la comprensión de los medios de comunicación como agentes de identidad, como creadores de sentido, y como consecuencia de una determinada manera que las diversas tradiciones religiosas tienen de «enmarcar» el uso de los medios en contextos históricos y geográficos determinados.

De aquí que nuestro estudio proponga el desarrollo más profundo y epistemológicamente más fundamentado del campo de la globalización y la geopolítica dentro del desarrollo del campo de «Media, Religión y Cultura». Este desarrollo, tal como intentamos demostrar con nuestra disertación, no puede ser más que prometedor.

La aproximación a la relación entre comunicación y geopolítica en relación con las tradiciones religiosas y, en particular, con las tradiciones religiosas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica, requiere alguna forma de sistematización, al menos aproximativa, de cara a poder ubicar las características geopolíticas de los diversos grupos religiosos y de sus divisiones intrarreligiosas más significativas que son objeto de nuestro estudio. Aunque precisamente uno de los puntos que defendemos con esta disertación es la necesidad de desarrollar el campo de estudio de «Media, Religión y Cultura» en relación con

la comunicación de los grupos religiosos y su dimensión geopolítica, proponemos aquí un esbozo de cómo sería posible tal aproximación transversal a las tradiciones religiosas.

En su obra «Network Governance of Global Religions» Michael Laguerre, profesor y director del «Centro sobre Globalización y Tecnologías de la Información» («Berkeley Center for Globalization and Information Technology») de la Universidad de Berkeley, California, propone una aproximación a la relación entre una «geopolítica de la comunicación» y tres tradiciones religiosas específicas: el judaísmo, el catolicismo y el Islam.

Aunque el estudio de Laguerre se interesa sobretudo por la estructura de gobierno y organizativa que se derivan de estas tres tradiciones religiosas en la era digital, sin tratar todos los grupos específicos que son objeto de nuestro interés (como por ejemplo el protestantismo, sea «main line», evangélico o radical), algunas de las categorías que utiliza este autor ofrecen una base para una posible sistematización del tema que nos ocupa, es decir la categorización de las consecuencias geopolíticas ligadas a una forma determinada de comunicación que, como hemos descrito más arriba, va ligado a una forma de comprender la autoridad y la comunidad religiosa.

La propuesta de Laguerre es lograr una comprensión de las redes de gobierno que se establecen en las tres religiones de las que se ocupa en su estudio, centrándose en tres ciudades de importancia central para las tradiciones monoteístas derivadas de la cosmovisión abrahámica: Jerusalén, Roma y la Meca. Al intentar definir estas redes de gobierno el autor pretende reconocer las dinámicas comunicativas y políticas que son inherentes a las tres tradiciones religiosas en su proceso de expansión y en su acción en el mundo desde un punto de vista espiritual y político (Laguerre, 2011: 11).

Desarrollando algunas de las categorías de Laguerre, y ampliando su lista con propuestas nuevas, proponemos a continuación una categorización de las características geopolíticas de las tradiciones religiosas que nos ocupan, que nos servirán para el análisis de las características geopolítico-comunicativas de las religiones que son objeto de estudio en los próximos capítulos. Recordamos que estas categorías no son una explicitación de la propuesta de Laguerre, sino una interpretación y ampliación de su intuición inicial de cara a ofrecer un aparato analítico válido de cara a definir los elementos geopolíticos relativos a las tres tradiciones religiosas y sus divisiones internas. Proponemos así ocho categorías:

–Exclusivismo («Exclusivist»): se trata del posicionamiento político de una tradición religiosa que excluye una participación en la acción política en las zonas geográficas en las que se encuentra. Esta posición genera una fuerte resistencia al cambio, y parte de estructuras de gobierno religioso simples e identificables, y deriva con frecuencia de una posición apocalíptica –con acento en el final de los tiempos– por parte del grupo religiosos específico.

–Celularismo («Cellular»): este posicionamiento político evade tanto la identificación entre lo nacional con la totalidad del grupo religioso, como la exclusión de toda forma de participación política. En su esencia comprende unidades definidas de la autoridad religiosa (entidades educativas, líderes religiosos, escuelas de pensamiento dentro de una tradición religiosa, etc.) que se conectan con unidades semejantes en otras zonas geográficas estableciendo relaciones que pueden mutar o desaparecer según los planteamientos geopolíticos de cada grupo específico en un momento histórico determinado o en relación a un posicionamiento político-religioso específico.

–Etnicismo («Ethnicist»): el grupo religioso específico define su identidad política a partir de las características étnicas que se encuentran a la base de su historia, sin limitarse a los aspectos puramente biológicos sino incluyendo los tradicionales, estableciendo una defensa de su identidad que actúa políticamente de cara a la preservación de sus elementos de identidad de cara a la modernidad y los cambios sociales que comporta. A diferencia de los grupos exclusivistas el etnicismo no se cierra del todo a la acción política, pero la reduce a la obtención de sus intereses particulares en el contexto de las zonas geográficas en las que prevalece.

–Sinfónica («Symphonic»): el término deriva del concepto cristiano-ortodoxo de una armonía entre la autoridad religiosa y el poder político nacional reinante, de tal manera que el grupo religioso en cuestión se identifica con la ideología política del estado, y el estado reconoce en el grupo religioso la manifestación espiritual de su ideal y del orden social que pretende establecer.

–Corporativismo («Corporative»): término derivado de la comunicación organizacional que, en este contexto, se refiere a la sumisión de la acción política de cada una de las entidades representativas de un grupo religioso a los intereses políticos –y espirituales– del grupo religioso específico, más allá de los intereses de los estados en que tal grupo se encuentra establecido. Este proceso implica una negociación mediante, por ejemplo, la acción diplomática o la inculturación a algunas de las costumbres nacionales de los territorios de expansión de la tradición religiosa, siempre con el propósito de servir los objetivos e ideales políticos del grupo religioso a nivel supranacional.

–Hegemonismo («Hegemonized»): se refiere en concreto a la manera como una tradición religiosa gestiona las diferencias doctrinales, sociales y políticas inherentes a ella misma –diferencias derivadas del proceso de expansión / globalización de la tradición específica– sosteniendo una manera única / homogénea de comprender la acción de la tradición religiosa con su entrono social y político, normalmente mediante una estructura jerárquica reconocida que va más allá de los localismos y los nacionalismos. El hegemonismo se encuentra profundamente ligado al corporativismo, pero de diferencia de éste al referirse

a la dinámica interna de una tradición religiosa por lo que toca a lo social y a lo político y por encima de las zonas geográficas concretas.

–Nacionalismo («Nationalistic»): implica la identidad entre los ideales políticos de una nación y los de la tradición religiosa específica, sobretodo a partir del pasado histórico y la identidad cultural de la nación y de la tradición religiosa determinada. Pero, a diferencia del posicionamiento «sinfónico» que hemos expuesto más arriba, el nacionalismo geopolítico permite una autonomía entre los grupos religiosos y el poder político nacional, generando una negociación entre los intereses de ambas partes, e implicando con frecuencia que el grupo religioso se yerga como un «grupo de presión» de cara a que el gobierno responda a los ideales político-religiosos que profesa. Nótese que una tradición religiosa puede oscilar entre al parámetro geopolítico «nacionalista» y el «sinfónico».

–Cosmonacionalista («Cosmonational»): se refiere a la acción política de una determinada tradición religiosa que se identifica con una región o nación tanto histórica como culturalmente, pero que ejerce su influencia más allá de sus fronteras sin llegar a constituir una dinámica corporativista. Normalmente esta influencia internacional se lleva a término a nivel económico –por ejemplo con el sostenimiento de comunidades necesitadas de la misma tradición religiosa que se encuentran en una zona geográfica ajena a la presencia institucional del grupo en cuestión– y/o ideológico –como ocurre con las tendencias ideológicas dentro de las doctrinas religiosas, como por ejemplo los fundamentalismos–. El cosmonacionalismo no actúa geopolíticamente a partir de una representación jerárquica del grupo religioso, sino mediante agentes concretos que atienden a intereses específicos de la tradición religiosa a la que pertenecen.

Conviene insistir que esta categorización constituye solo una herramienta de trabajo y una propuesta de sistematización. El evaluar y redefinir tales categorías será objeto del desarrollo de los estudios de «Media, Religión y Cultura» en su posible desarrollo transversal hacia el campo de la geopolítica.

1.4. A MODO DE CONCLUSIÓN: COSMOVISIÓN ABRAHAMÍTICA, «MEDIA, RELIGIÓN Y CULTURA», GLOBALIZACIÓN Y GEOPOLÍTICA

El presente capítulo constituye el marco teórico fundamental de nuestro estudio. En él hemos intentado presentar tres elementos clave de nuestra propuesta investigativa.

En primer lugar hemos expuesto las características primordiales de la cosmovisión abrahámica, buscando de fundamentar el porqué optamos por una comprensión cosmovisiva de la religión en tanto que, no sólo un conjunto de verdades profesadas por grupos determinados, sino como una realidad que implica la comprensión del ser humano y sus relaciones con diversos aspectos de la sociedad y la cultura en el contexto de la geografía

y de la historia, y que se funda históricamente en la figura de Abraham y el monoteísmo que se deriva. Esta cosmovisión concreta se ha desarrollado en las tres tradiciones religiosas que se encuentran al centro de nuestro interés: el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam. Las características que hemos explicitado referentes a esta cosmovisión y a estas tradiciones religiosas específicas nos permiten comprender sus fundamentos de cara a abordar sus implicaciones en el campo de la comunicación, de la globalización y de la geopolítica.

En segundo lugar hemos presentado un esbozo del desarrollo de la historia del área académica inherente al campo de la comunicación y de la cultura llamada «Media, Religión y Cultura» en tanto que un campo prometedor de estudio bajo diversos aspectos. Se trata de un área académica aun en desarrollo, razón por la cuál merece una reflexión sobre su posible maduración. Nuestra propuesta es la posibilidad de dar un paso adelante en esta área siguiendo el sendero de la globalización y la geopolítica de las religiones, entendidas desde la perspectiva de la comunicación: cada una de las tradiciones religiosas –y en particular el judaísmo, el cristianismo y el Islam– presentan una expansión histórica que se desarrolla mediante los medios comunicativos que, por una parte, son propios de los momentos específicos de la historia, pero que cada una de estas tradiciones utiliza y enmarca de acuerdo con los principios de la comunicación con el absoluto que les son inherentes. Este proceso globalizante y comunicativo tiene y ha tenido consecuencias en las relaciones internacionales y en la geopolítica

Nuestra propuesta defiende así que los estudios sobre «Media, Comunicación y Cultura» ofrecen una perspectiva prometedora si tienen presente tanto el desarrollo de su proceso expansivo-comunicativo (lo que sería su globalización) y las consecuencias geopolíticas que se derivan de un tal proceso, particularmente en el presente, en el que los medios digitales permiten un amplio uso de la comunicación. El demostrar el interés de esta tendencia de estudio es el objetivo de los capítulos siguientes.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNICATION IN THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS TRADITION

From a historical perspective the first religious tradition that derived from the Abrahamic cosmivision was Judaism. Its importance from the perspective of our research is vital, since the main trends of Judaism transcend the limits of its historical, geographic, theological and geopolitical meaning, offering the basic characteristics of communicational dynamics that, later on, would be assumed by the other monotheist religions: Christianity and Islam.

Judaism is perhaps the most global of religious traditions, since for most of its history it has existed in myriad diaspora communities throughout the Middle East, Europe, and eventually the Americas and elsewhere. There are currently some 13 million Jews in the world: the largest number, almost 5 million, are in North America; about 5 million live in Israel, 3 million in Europe, 0,5 million in Latin America, and the remainder in Asia, Australia, Africa, and elsewhere in the Middle East. The global diversity of Jewish residency has therefore created challenges for those who have attempted to study Jewish society as a whole (Goldberg, 2003: 51).

In this chapter we offer an approach to the Jewish perception and understanding of media, together with a description of the globalization process that Jewish communities have gone through along Jewish history. This general background will help us to understand the essential aspects of the network structure of Judaism around the world, and its effort to maintain the essential elements of divine communication within the broad prospect of horizontal communication. We follow with an approach to the principle of divine revelation and its forms according to the Jewish religious tradition, then turning towards the Jewish perspectives of the media world, to conclude with the social and geopolitical implications of Jewish communication.

2.1. AN OVERVIEW OF JEWISH GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Judaism has become a global religion, although some might say that it is the only religion of the three religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic cosmivision that has become global unwillingly and against its nature (Azria, 2010: 594). While Christianity and Islam expanded their boundaries from their humble beginnings to mighty empires and from a restricted local to worldwide spatial extension, Judaism was forcefully expelled from its place of origin, dispersed to all four corners of the world by the Roman conquerors of Judea, and reluctantly turned into a wide-reaching universal religion.

Thus, Judaism was cultivated and maintained wherever Jewish exiles settled and made their home. Their religion went with them wherever they wandered in their global quest for tranquillity and the autonomy to practice their own form of communal life. As we have underlined in Chapter 1, unlike the proselytizing and missionary character of Christianity and Islam, Judaism is an exclusive faith that does not seek converts and does not aspire to endless expansion. Its rules of admitting new believers (the process of *giyur*) are deliberately strict and unattractive in order to repel prospective converts (Porton, 2005: 480). If permitted, within Judaism conversion must be for its own sake or due to a genuine change of beliefs, and not out of convenience (Wijnhoven, 2009: 102).

For all these reasons the study of the communicational principles of Judaism require careful attention to its particular process of globalization, and to the geopolitical consequences it entails. In coherence with these observations, in this section we offer a synthesis of the process of globalization of the Jewish religious tradition, starting with the biblical period, followed by the diaspora, and concluding with the creation of the State of Israel.

2.1.1. The Biblical Period

One could easily say that the process of globalization (and thus the process of «communication») within the Jewish religious tradition started when Abraham received the commandment of leaving his home, his family and his land, and follow God's promise of a promised land (Genesis 12:1). But this process was much more complex, since it implied a posterior development of what is understood by «Jewish identity» within the context of a plural group of people that started to share a common belief in one god that establishes a vertical communication with them, as we have described in the precedent chapter.

As underlined by Golberg (2003: 43), the tension between unity and diversity in the society of ancient Israel is directly linked to its identity during the Biblical period. These tensions play an important part in the definition of Jewish identity at that time, but also an understanding of its internal mechanism and communicational dynamics. Golberg says:

«[This tension] is manifest in the relationship between centralized monarchy and tribal structure. First emerging in the eleventh century, the monarchy reached its pinnacle of political strength under David, who established Jerusalem as his capital at about 1000 B.C.E. After the reign of his son, Solomon, there was a split into a Northern and a Southern Kingdom. The former, with its capital in Samaria, lasted until 722 B.C.E., when much of its leadership was led into exile to Assyria, while the latter, which came to be called Judea, survived until 586 B.C. E., when it succumbed to Babylonian power and the Jerusalem Temple built by Solomon was destroyed.

Much about the social processes paralleling these developments is still to be understood» (Golberg, 2003: 44).

Several authors stress the intrusion of the monarchy and the urban-based aristocracy on the village-based agricultural sector of society within the first centuries of Judaism (i.e. Eisensdadt, 1992: 17). In this perspective, the emphasis of the Pentateuch on protecting widows and orphans and the cry of the prophets for social justice are seen as reflecting growing class tensions (Eisensdadt, 1992: 17). Another view sees rural life and its associated social structures as continuing vigorously until the Babylonian exile (c. 587–538 B.C.E.). This calls for a fuller understanding of mechanisms of taxation and army service, through which kinship units supported the monarchy, while those units still maintained their own resources and institutions (Weis, 2004: 21).

Another major issue entailing the link between various levels of society in Biblical Judaism is the centralization of worship, an element that plays an important part of the communication paradigms of early Judaism. It is clear that the Pentateuchal portrait, in which an estate of priests, descended from Moses' brother Aaron, was designated to serve at a single sanctuary, is an idealized rather than historical picture (Weis, 2004: 13). The emergence and enforcement of the norm that sacrificial worship could take place only in Jerusalem emerged slowly, crystallizing in the seventh century B.C.E.. The history of the priesthood itself is also subject to very differing interpretations (Eisensdadt, 1992: 19).

But, leaving the historical discussion aside, we know from the Hebrew sacred texts that there was a strong linkage between the priesthood and the emerging sacred literature in early Judaism (Eisensdadt, 1992: 22) that would define the terms of revelation and what we call «vertical communication». At the same time, there were other sources of religious inspiration in the form of the literary prophets appearing in the eighth century that acted, at the same time, as social unifiers, communicators and mediums (Weis, 2004: 23).

Due to these facts, literacy was widespread in the society is a central question, to which only tentative answers have been given. In any event, Judaism began to develop a canon of sacred writings that had several sources which probably were in the process of being merged with one another before the Babylonian exile (Eisendadt, 1992: 29). Some sources may have stemmed from literary creations in David's court, others were based in the priestly culture, and yet others reflected the consciousness of exile that affected Judea even as it survived for almost a century and a half longer than its northern brother kingdom. In the period of the Second Temple (c. 535 B.C.E.), made possible by the return of exiles to Judea in the late sixth century after the Persian Empire had displaced the Babylonians, the

canonization of what we now call the Bible (the Torah) and its placement at the centre of Jewish ideology and identity be-came even more marked (Weis, 2004: 42).

The creation of the Torah as a key symbol, and the cultivation of the value that its contents should be known to all Jews, laid the groundwork for possible diversity, as well as a unified religious culture. Some speculate that the synagogue originated among the Judean exiles in Babylonia even though there is no concrete evidence of synagogue life, in Palestine or in the Diaspora, until several centuries later (Goldberg, 2003: 48). Early synagogues were places in which lessons based on selections from the Torah and from the Prophetic writings were read, thereby constituting local centres for the teaching and consolidation of social norms separate from sacrifice in the Temple (Goldberg, 2003: 49).

The building of the Second Temple also introduced sectarianism into Jewish life. Local Israelites from the earlier Northern Kingdom who had not gone into exile developed syncretic religious forms based on their own traditions and religious influences imported by exiles from other regions transplanted by the Assyrians into Samaria (Weis, 2004: 44). They sought to join the returnees from Babylonia in the rebuilding of the Temple but were rebuffed and excluded. They united as a religious group called the Samaritans, with a canon made up of the Five Books of Moses and the Book of Joshua.

This «sexateuch» depicted the period before Jerusalem was made the political and religious capital of the united kingdom. Samaritan scrolls of the Torah continued to be written in ancient Hebrew script, while the returnees adopted a new script influenced by their Babylonian contact. That experience also made the Aramaic language an important component of Jewish culture, as reflected in several biblical books and, later, in the Babylonian Talmud (Eisensdadt, 1992: 56).

Further diversity was introduced by the Greek conquest of the whole area in the late fourth century and the Hellenization of the region that continued thereafter. Within Judea, ruling Hellenic culture proved attractive to some members of the upper classes but was simultaneously perceived as a foreign influence by many others. The attempt to forcefully Hellenize Jerusalem and the Temple stimulated the Maccabean revolt in 167 B.C.E., leading to the brief re-emergence of Judean autonomy. A century later, Judea was incorporated into the expanding Roman Empire (63 B.C.E.) (Weis, 2004: 45; Eisensdadt, 1992: 78).

But this political changes and exposure to many cultural influences were the background for further internal religious diversity within Judaism. Josephus, writing in the first century B.C.E., described the Sadducees, Pharisees, and (Essenes Eisensdadt, 1992: 88). The first two groups are mentioned in the New Testament, while the latter were probably the sect whose building remains were found near the Dead Sea and whose literature is now known from the scrolls discovered in the region (Weis, 2004: 83). The Sadducees and

Pharisees also appear in rabbinic writings. The former were linked to the priesthood; the latter enjoyed mass support and adopted for themselves stringent ritual rules of priest-like behaviour in everyday life at the same time that they claimed the authority to interpret the Torah (Weis, 1999: 92).

Within this milieu, Christianity arose and challenged the authority of the Pharisees and their stress on ritual behaviour. It claimed, as we shall see in the following chapter, that it was the true continuation of religious truths first revealed in the Torah. It demoted the importance of circumcision and the Torah's dietary laws, practices that became cultural markers delineating the social boundaries of the two religions (Horsfield, 2015: 10).

Pharisaic Judaism fed into rabbinic Judaism represented in the authoritative code called the Mishna, compiled in its final form about 200 C.E.. In the first century, the Temple was destroyed, and in 133 C.E.. a major revolt against the Romans was crushed. The former event brought an end to the Temple of Jerusalem as the concrete symbolic centre of Jewish life and did away with the central ruling body, the Sanhedrin. As Gouldberg puts it:

«Processes that had begun before the fall of the Temple, where an “aristocracy” of Torah scholarship challenged the aristocracy of the priest-hood, were given further emphasis. The synagogue developed forms of prayer worship that were interpreted as replacing, while also symbolically continuing, the sacrificial cult. Representations of Temple worship were also incorporated into domestic life, particularly with reference to food, both on a daily basis and on festivals such as Passover» (Goldberg, 2003: 50).

These strengthened the groundwork enabling the further development of Judaism in diverse and separated geographic centres during the period called «the Diaspora».

2.1.2. The Diaspora

The enforced dispersion of the Jews, after the failed insurrection against the Romans and the burning of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E., entailed many changes for the Jewish religious tradition, but at the same time initiated its real process of globalization.

One was the imposed transformation of the character of the Jewish community in exile, especially with regard to members' affiliation and attachment to the collective that became to be known as «the Jewish community» (Weis, 2004: 112).

As a result of the termination of Jewish independence or self-rule, Jews were compelled to follow the directives of the local authorities in each location where they settled: instead of natural and, afterwards, voluntary communities in which Jews cultivated their religious and culturally unique identity from birth and then continued and perpetuated

their association by free choice, in the Diaspora the community became an enforced and compulsory affiliation (Goldberg, 2003: 51).

The rulers of ancient Mesopotamia, Catholic Spain, or medieval Ukraine, as examples of large concentrations of exiled Jews, had a similar political preference: to isolate «their» Jews in separate and segregated social enclaves open to rigorous control. Newman explains it with these words:

«This situation meant that the Jew as an individual citizen did not exist, and his or her sole reality was expressed as a component of the community. The personal identity was submerged and taken over by the collective identity with all its religious and traditional characteristics. Furthermore, because, out of expediency, the hosting authorities usually empowered the Jewish governance to levy taxes on their people, these local community elites accumulated a tremendous amount of power over their constituencies, rendering the Jewish community all-inclusive and self-sustaining in every possible walk of life». (Newman, 1966: 24)

For this reason, while the globalization of Christianity and Islam meant expanding the horizons of their religion and encountering new worlds to be subdued, the globalization of Judaism was a humbling experience: it led to introverted and reclusive Jewish communities that appeared alien in the eyes of their host nations.

However, these dreary conditions and the loss of political sovereignty and jurisdiction created the necessity to make adjustments and generated new types of Jewish community life, institutions, and leadership. Adaptation required innovative approaches and an emphasis on community building and self-sustenance, thus producing changes in several levels of Jewish identity and self understanding (Newman, 1966: 32; Eisensdadt, 1992: 125).

Due to the absence of a unified political centre and a single hierarchical system, decentralization of authority and multiplicity of autonomous communities became the central features of Jewish reorganization in the postexilic world. First, in Palestine and the regions in its immediate vicinity: Syria, Egypt, Babylon, and Mesopotamia; next in expanding concentric circles reaching to the Near East and the Mediterranean; and finally with the Islamic expansion between the VIIth and XIIth centuries to North Africa and Spain, these structures and principles of Jewish existence prevailed (Eisnsdadt, 1966: 130).

After the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, the contours of the Jewish Diaspora were extended even further to central and eastern Europe. Yet through these tribulations, and perhaps because of them, Jewish communities managed to preserve and cultivate their exilic existence. Jewish communities in Diaspora were based on four elements (Weis, 2004: 132) that present several consequences regarding the geopolitical and communicational characteristics of these communities:

(1) Communal organization and communal bases of power, entailing strong local identities and well rooted forms of ritual and transmission of religious principles.

(2) Spiritual and educational leadership, that soon became the central element of identity, generating a whole chain of authors and religious authorities that sought to transmit the meaning of the present situation under the light of Revelation and within the transmission not only of the written but also of the oral Torah.

(3) An emphasis on oral law, transmitted through several different genres that underlined the legal but also the sapient meaning of the law.

(4) A development of messianic dreams of redemption and apocalyptic imaginaries that gave sense to the present situation of exile and separation.

The communal structure was an inevitability generated by the historical developments that pulverized the Jewish commonwealth into small and underprivileged entities dependent on the mercy of local authorities. Under such circumstances, Jewish collective existence became reticent, introverted, and inwardly oriented (Weis, 2004: 133). Assimilation with the host population was unfeasible, impractical, and undesired; assuming sovereignty and political independence was also a far-fetched and deceptive dream. Hence, the only plausible option left to maintain their unity and unique identity was for Jews to invest their energy and skills in regrouping and upholding their distinct way of life from within (Newman, 1966: 43).

Because political and economic existence was totally dependent on external powers, building an internal infrastructure of subsistence and retaining their unique character meant concentrating on education and spiritual conservation. Communal leadership committees such as the Council of the Four Lands («Vaad Arba Aratzot») in Poland, Lithuania, and other eastern European territories of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries were typical examples of such local leadership arrangements (Eisensdadt: 1992: 157). The leaders of such bodies managed and supervised the administrative affairs of their respective communities in addition to being the connecting points between their societies and the state authorities. This crucial responsibility of mediating between the official government of the land and the Jewish constituency was mainly expressed in the assessment and collection of taxes for the central establishment, but with time acquired other meanings (Eisensdadt: 1992: 158).

2.1.3. Religious Authority and Diaspora Communities

Alongside the clerical and administrative leadership that we have described above, another category of leaders gained legitimacy and respectability among the Diaspora communities: the spiritual leadership of rabbis, sages, and mystics. The spiritual and clerical

elites found themselves frequently at odds with one another as they were competing for ascendancy and influence among their «Kahal» (Hebrew for «audience» or «potential followers»). The spiritual leadership was in charge of religious, judicial, and educational issues, three aspects of Jewish life that acquired notable relevance in Jewish everyday life (Weis, 2004: 158).

In the construction of an exilic Jewish identity that had no political, economic, military, industrial, or commercial viability, the spiritual leadership of the communities quickly gained prominence. Managing religious practices, including the application of religious law and education, became the centrepiece of being Jewish in exile (Eisensdadt, 1992: 193). As we have underlined, in the times of Jewish independence in «Eretz Israel» (the «Land of Israel») before the enforced dispersion and globalization of Judaism, three nucleus of power coexisted in delicate balance: kings, priests, and rabbis. In the Diaspora, without a kingdom to lead or protect and without a holy temple to administer and maintain, the first two elites were unnecessary, while the third achieved an unprecedented status of reverence and prestige mediating Jewish identity and transmitting the core of divine communication according to the new times (Cohen, 2012: 18).

Unlike the managerial and secretarial elites, the rabbis and sages were admired, and they inspired loyalty and devotion in their adherents. They were also the main stimulation and driving force behind the pre-eminence and popularity of the oral law of Judaism, the Halakha, as opposed to the written law or the scriptures (Cohen, 2012: 18). According to the rabbinic tradition, the Torah (or «Jewish Bible») in ancient Israel was transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth and memorizing techniques. The Holy Scripture, the original written law bequeathed by Moses to the people of Israel, was too sacred to be added to or amended. Thus, the only way to ensure continuity and heritage was to verbally pass the ideas and values of the Torah to new generations of believers (Cohen, 2012: 19).

This tradition was feasible as long as the Jews lived together, free and independent, in their own land. When that reality was shattered and the remnants of the Jewish nation were scattered all over the globe, an urgent and genuine need to document and record the oral law emerged. Rabbis and sages promptly began the overwhelming task of writing the spoken tradition, a task that, according to tradition, was finally completed by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the head of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish parliament. His work was called Mishnah («repetition»), and it contained a redaction of all oral traditions. Through the years, it was merged with a compilation of commentaries and interpretations on the Mishnah from three centuries, termed Gemara («culmination»). Together, the Mishnah and Gemara created the Talmud («learning»), the ultimate anthology of Jewish oral law. Thus, although keeping the oral and written dimensions of divine communication (an aspect that we shall deepen

further on) the text of the law was finally established in a written manner, even though its interpretation remained linked to the religious authorities of the local Jewish communities.

2.1.4. The Written and Oral Law in the Process of Jewish Globalization

As we have emphasized above, in the postexilic situation, Jewish communities were under constant pressure of oppressive regimes and ever-present hostile public moods, including occasional outbursts of violence, impending threats of deportation, and banishment. In this context, faithfulness to the written law or the original unchanged version of the Torah inhibited the attempts to survive under such conditions of uncertainty. For these precarious circumstances, flexibility, adaptability, and creativity were essential for the community to survive (Newman, 1966: 93).

By emphasizing the oral law (or in the original Hebrew Torah, «She-beal pe»), the religious leaders were accommodating the concerns of their followers that rigid, unyielding interpretation of the Bible would cripple their ability to cope with the anguish of exile. Without coordination or collaboration but attentive to their audiences' distress, the rabbis in many dispersed Jewish communities promoted the use of the memorized tradition, repeated storytelling, and a broader, pluralistic, more forbearing perception of the scripture (Herr, 2007: 454).

This resilience helped to attenuate and smooth the transition from the previous state of affairs—in which sovereignty, independence, and self-determination guaranteed familiar and secured compliance with an invariable written law—to the new situation in which Jews lived under tentative and unstable conditions, where flexibility and improvisation became prerequisites for survival (Herr, 2007: 455). Oral law, with its emphasis on interpretation and analysis, granted the essential space for such creativity. Thus, it can be said that one consequence is that the transformation of Judaism into its globalized form was relatively tolerant and open-minded.

At the same time this flexibility enabled the communication between Jewish community and their surrounding cultures, allowing—only to a certain limit—an influence over other cultural settings, specially Christianity and Islam. We could say that the development of Oral law within Judaism in Diaspora established an influence of Judaism, not derived from power, but derived from the sphere of ideas, as later on history would recognize. The geopolitics of Judaism at this time, then, entailed what we would call today a «soft power» influence so profound that it is often hard to individualize after the so many centuries.

2.1.5. Messianism and Jewish Globalization

As Weis underlines (Weis, 2004: 132), the fourth feature of global Judaism was the messianic dimension, a strong expectation of metaphysical or miraculous salvation. Messianism, together with apocalyptic expectations, play an important part in the understanding of religious geopolitics in time and space, as we have underlined in the first chapter of our dissertation. This feature acquires particular importance within Judaism, due to its lack of proselytism: we could say that Judaism looks towards the future –a Messianic future– as the final purpose of its testimonial existence that awaits the confirmation of their religious commitment.

As long as they lived in their own land under their own king during the Biblical period, free to practice their religion and secure in their independence, Jews felt no need to seek redemption or to anticipate a liberating messiah. The holy temple existed; the Davidic line of kings was right there, functioning and thriving; and the end-of-days was waiting unabated and assured in the ultimate future. It was neither a fantasy nor a hallucination but a natural and forthcoming evolution, provided that the believers remain pious and observing of their religious commitments (Banon: 1984: 67).

The abolition of the Jewish kingdom, the destruction of the temple, and the heartbreaking exile wreaked havoc on the protected existence of the Jews. To survive with hope, a growing number of believers began to develop a profound inclination toward the mystical, supernatural, and numinous. The distance from the land of Israel and the remoteness from the Jews' promised inheritance produced a split between the immediate, realistic level of being and the imagined future (Scholem, 1995: 144). Whereas in the former, many Jews carried on experiencing their predicament in the Diaspora in a passive, docile, and submissive fashion, in the latter imagined world, they became active, enthusiastic, and vigorously involved. Eschatological redemption became an escape hatch for many Jews who were destitute and desperate to make sense of their catastrophe, a magical getaway for an all-embracing alternative reality. As Werblowsky says:

«The vacillation between daily concrete anxieties and the eschatological option of breaking away became commonplace among Jewish expatriates wherever they dwelled. Because the messianic trend was proven to be an effective and powerful therapeutic approach, the messianic facet of postexilic Judaism grew to a considerable size. The hopes and expectations of messianic redemption caught on like fire among Jewish refugees all over the world and awarded them at least some consolation» (Werblowsky, 1987: 598)..

The idea of guaranteed redemption, regardless of how long it should take, presented the Diaspora as an impermanent phase, a transient calamity that eventually

would be overcome. Unlike a score of other minorities forcefully dispersed by conquerors of the ancient world, Jews never accepted their new locations of domicile as normative. Consistently and adamantly, exile is portrayed as negative, harmful, and debilitating (Banon: 1984: 22). In many prayers and religious verses, the fact of the Diaspora is described as an extended punishment for moral sins and unfaithfulness. The eschatological orientation reaffirmed the spiritual bond Jews maintained with their legacy and homeland (Weblowsky, 1987: 599).

Unlike other exiled nations, which have accepted their defeat and deportation and, for the most part, availed themselves of a new beginning either by convergence or by assimilation with their immediate surroundings, the Jewish communities remained defiant and apart from the hosting milieu, hoping that the warranted deliverance would justify their voluntary insulation and reward them for their long-term sacrifice (Banon: 1984: 29).

Messianism, the belief in a messiah from the House of David who would salvage his people and lead them back home, was accompanied by the idea of martyrdom or dying for the sanctification of God's name («Kiddush Hashem»). This ritual of self-punishment in times of persecution and imposed apostasy demonstrated the absolute commitment of Jews to their faith. Favouring death to the renunciation of their faith was an inspirational choice that glorified those who made it, and they became hallowed role models to the following generations. It also underlined Jewish solidarity and feelings of shared destiny, which further stimulated their commonality in the face of external challenges and threats (Banon: 1984: 32; 38). As Banon explains it,

«Both orientations—the unearthly salvation and the deliberate and willing sacrifice for the preservation of one's faith—underlined the attitude to the Diaspora as temporary and provisional. It stressed the belief that the entire exilic experience is a test of will for the chosen people to endure, a time to purify themselves in order to be ready and qualified for regeneration in their primordial land. This widespread frame of mind among Jews in their scattered Diaspora communities made them apolitical and a-historical: They did not participate in politics and refrained from shaping or contributing to the world around them. They lived in quiet desperation, observing their religious precepts in their secluded but familiar surroundings with only the anticipation of a messiah to help them carry on through the daily hardships of an ephemeral existence» (Banon, 1984; 39).

These trans-historical tendencies, filled with millenary and utopian connotations, further alienated Jews from their host societies, and it was a major concern for sages and community leaders that such detachment from the here-and-now might be disadvantageous to the effort of community building and the extended process of revitalizing the Jewish way of life in their diverse places of sojourn (Weblowsky, 1987: 600).

In short, an imminent conflict was fermenting between Jewish responsible and realistic leaders, civil and religious, who feared false expectations and outbursts against the constraining Halakha laws, and escapist visionaries or self proclaimed redeemers who insisted on intermittently regenerating a rush of hope for messianic redemption. Such surges of aspirations typically erupted in the wake of persecutions, turmoil, and distress. Some of them, namely, the Molkhonian and Sabbatean movements, were immensely popular and intensely challenging to the rabbinical institutional hierarchy (Scholem: 1995: 132-133). In fact, the Sabbatean movement that inspired the Jewish world in the XVIIth century with all its cabalistic speculations but turned out in deception, has mostly been studied from a religious perspective, forgetting its geopolitical meaning. The study of messianism –not only within the Jewish tradition but also in many other religious traditions– is still waiting to gain its place in geopolitical and communication studies.

2.1.6. Diversity and Heterodoxy within the Jewish Diaspora

Beyond these flares of power confrontations, different lifestyles and interpretations of the Jewish experience in exile coexisted in relative tranquillity. The heterogeneity within Jewish communities in the Diaspora and their different way of adjourning divine communication was another consequence of a globalized religion that had lost its territorial and jurisdictional concentration.

Under a central commanding hierarchy, which operated within a coherent, single political setting, goals, regulations, and main concerns were clearly defined and effectively implemented. The circumstances existing in exile did not estimate the provisions of organized control and effective administration attained in sovereignty and independence (Gordis, 1955: 62). Consequently, the mainstream rabbinic tradition ultimately had to tolerate factions and movements it knew little about and therefore found them difficult to cope with at first.

Rabbis had to share their legalistic view of religious authority with an idea of spiritual accomplishment that was mystical and ascetic. Both rabbis and legal scholars competed with mystics, shamans, and seers for the attention and approbation of the crowds (Banon, 1998: 143). As Gordis states,

«[...] it seemed that any eccentric or unconventional denomination within the Jewish postexilic world was endurable as long as it kept the community integrated. Moreover, leaders of Jewish communities did not want to supply their host governments with incentives to intervene in their internal affairs. Factional strife might have been an occasion for authorities to intercede and devastate the community's spirit of solidarity and unity. Accordingly, the Jewish communal and

political ethos became more pluralistic than it had been in its ancient homeland» (Gordis, 1955: 35).

Until the modern era, this heterodoxy within the rabbinic preeminence did not shake the fundamentals of the internal traditional order. There were challenges that kept the guardians of the faith vigilant, but there was no irrevocable harm for the Jewish community. Even the hardest times, both externally and internally, that Jewish communities experienced, did not manage to destroy their long-established spiritual legacy or rupture their strong bond to their cultural heritage. But modernity, especially from the 16th century onward, rocked the foundations of Jewish communities and threatened for the first time to sever significant portions of Jews from their long-standing identity (Gordis: 1955: 12).

As we advanced above, the most daring challenge to Diaspora Judaism arrived with the Sabbatean movement in the XVIIth century (Idel, 1998: xi). A self-proclaimed redeemer called Sabbatai Zevi, a rabbi and a Kabbalist from the city of Smyrna in Anatolia, announced that he was the long-awaited Jewish messiah. The Jewish masses from the Balkan region and then the Mediterranean, who were craving redemption, were inundated by millenarian dreams prevalent around the significant year of 1666. They heeded his call as part of the global anticipation of religious awakening and founded the Sabbatean movement to promulgate Sabbatai's messages and to publicize his arrival (Idel, 1998: xii). This tore apart the Jewish exilic world. It also set a model for later movements and groups to openly defy customary rules of the Jewish way of life and to claim alternatives. More and more factions felt that they had the right to disobey the habitual Jewish religious routine and its leadership. The global facet of Jewish existence grew more cumbersome and more difficult to keep together (Banon; 1998: 114).

What kept Judaism alive as a distinct religion, despite the social, political, and internal challenges, was the continuous viability of the Jewish oral law, the Halakha (Godis, 1955: 168). Across borders and eras, the capacity of the halakhic norms, values, and regulations to maintain common bounds and supply a framework for all Jews, regardless of their location, was essential. The Halakha became the backbone that sustained the Jewish people in their separate places of exile as one coherent entity with a shared worldwide identity. It supported the leadership of rabbis as the implementers and protectors of this spiritual unity: (Godis, 1955: 174). Wais says,

«The nature of the Halakha as an evolving text, constantly enriched by ongoing events, developments, and crises, played a decisive role in the resilience of Judaism away from its homeland. Through tolerance for diverse views, the Jewish law accommodated such strange and sometimes antagonistic bedfellows as the legalistic tradition and the learning tradition, the ritualistic mystics and the erudite

philosophers, the scholars and the prayers, and Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews» (Weis, 2004: 192).

Paradoxically, the difficult exilic experience had consolidated the Jewish faith and improved its durability. Despite the seclusion of their communities, they nevertheless continued to be conscious of their environment and to keep shoulder to shoulder with contemporary development. They resisted their exile status by playing a part, at times a major part, in the world's cultural and intellectual discourse, enriching and edifying their immediate vicinities as well as more remote regions in numerous ways, as we shall see in the following section.

2.1.7. Jewish Globalization, its Contributions to Culture and the Jewish Haskalah

The process that we have described above reflects the transformation of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. But it also implies the contribution of Jewish communities at different levels. We have to underline that a cultural involvement implies a cultural recognition –in the case of Judaism on behalf of the surrounding non-Jewish communities–, a fact that entails some form of assimilation. The Jewish influence in global culture has been recognized and appreciated in many fields. Some Jewish contributions to Western culture were never properly credited, whereas others were endorsed and imitated. The establishment of recognition, together with the political changes that started to take place with the European Renaissance, would lead to an important change of paradigm in the position of many Jewish communities and their place in society, their understanding of modernity, and the framing of electronic and, afterwards, digital media. Such a process would be called the Jewish Haskalah.

Around the IXth century, Jews became known as the intellectual intermediaries of the world as philosophers and literary bridges, since many translators of classic texts from their original Arabic to Latin and other European languages were Jews (Goldberg, 2003: 50). They also gained a special recognition as intermediaries between cultures or spheres of influence in medieval times as merchants and traders in the trans-Eurasian path from East to West, carrying with them not only artifacts and material goods but also customs, beliefs, norms, ideas, habits, fables, folk stories, and poetry. Such a status was possible because Jews were allowed to travel back and forth in both the Islamic and the Christian spheres of influence (Eisensdadt, 1992: 134).

Because of the Jews' condition as deportees, itinerants, and perpetual travellers, the Arab rulers who aspired to disseminate westward their heritage and what they deemed as

their superior culture, including Greek classicism preserved and translated into Arabic, viewed the wandering Jews as the ultimate transporters for that mission. Jews were also instrumental in the expansion of Arab domination westward via North Africa and into Spain, as they were the assistants and advisors to the great Islamic spiritual leaders (Eisensdadt, 1992: 164).

Through the dissemination of knowledge, Jewish sages and erudite scholars reached out to the non-Jewish world, even though at times the Jewish intellectual influence was perceived as threatening. The advent of modernity –which some analysts place in the year 1700, others in the latter half of that century, or, more accurately, the years of the American and French revolutions, and yet others in the mid-18th century, the Age of Enlightenment–was a pivotal time for the Jewish existence in exile (Gordis, 1955: 204).

The global aspect of Judaism was about to transform again from inferior to autonomous: the two revolutions brought fresh ideas such as liberalism, democracy, and human and civil rights for all, regardless of religious affiliation. These ideas, along with the quest for emancipation, have liberated Jews from discriminatory and subjugated laws and allowed them to become equal citizens. Consequently, in the countries that experienced these changes and introduced the idea of citizenship for all residents, what where foreign lands became new homelands for many Jews (Gordis, 1955: 206).

Such a situation brought a new consequence for the meaning of Jewish identity. Many Jewish communities, particularly in Europe but also in Middle Eastern countries, sought after their total integration into local civil societies, thus provoking a rupture between Jewish «difference» and social integration. One of the antefix of such a movement was the German intellectual Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) who lead the ideal that was later called Haskalah or «Jewish Enlightenment». The movement would generate not only the transformation of many Jewish communities, but also the renewal of their religious, social and political attainments. It also meant the division between the different trends inherent to Judaism, thus Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal and Cultural. The propagation of these movement during since the XVIIIth century would transform the inner understanding of Judaism and, also, their understanding of divine revelation and communication as we shall see later on (see Shochaht – Baskin, 2007: 234-440).

2.3. REVELATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Divine Communication or «revelation», as we have explained in the first chapter of our essay, is at the heart of the understanding that a religious tradition has of communication in its transversal way, and of the way in which this specific religious

traditions deals with and «frames» media, may they be oral, written, printed, electronic or digital.

It is right to assert that communication is at the centre of the Jewish understanding of its faith experience. Divine form of communication is, as we have underlined above, what in Religious Studies is called «revelation», a term that acquired particular relevance within the Abrahamic cosmivision, and thus in its first religious derivation: Judaism. The consequences of the Jewish understanding of revelation along history relate not only to the foundations of the understanding of communication and the use of mass media within Judaism, but also in the consequent monotheistic religious traditions.

The principle of God being active in the universe lies behind the Jewish understanding of Revelation. It has led to the theological term of «agency». The Hebrew scriptures use many different verbs to express the divine activity of revealing: *gâlâ* (uncovering or unveiling of an intention or of God himself) (see 1 Samuel 9:15), *yâda* (proclaiming or making known something related to God) (i.e. Exodus 25:22), *nâgad* (to report or communicate, for example. Of God's own name) (i.e. Genesis 32:29), *'âmar* (to say or to speak) (i.e. Genesis 28:13), and *dibber* (to speak) (i.e. Amos 3:8).

In each of these examples an event within an overreaching narrative involves other agents. The narratives of revelation in Judaism, in general, may be referred to as a call of Israel to be in a *covenantial* relationship with God (Eisen, 1987: 109). In such an understanding divine revelation denotes a human experience in which new knowledge or awareness is thought to be received from God (Solomon, 2006: 321).

In a fast overview of biblical theology, as well as in the brief description of the process of globalization of Judaism, we notice that the term «revelation» has a twofold meaning (Kluge, 1989: 513). The first meaning denotes the hidden God's revelation of himself; the second denotes the God who reveals not himself but rather the «Torah from heaven» (*Torah min ha-shamayin*), that is, the God who communicates information of commands (Solomon, 2006: 321).

Such a difference between the two meanings of the term parallels the distinction between propositional and non-propositional conceptions of revelation in modern Jewish theology:

«Any discussion of revelation in the framework of Judaism requires us to concern ourselves not only with revelation whose content is the Torah, that is, with the revelation of some information about God, man, or the world, but also with revelation whose content is religious commandments, namely, a system of norms and laws» (Kluge, 1989: 513).

Such an understanding of revelation, that we could call the «hard» doctrine of revelation in Hebrew texts, refers to the texts revealed by God to Moses and other prophets, concerning basically the text of the Torah and the Prophets. This concerns the importance of the Hebrew Bible as the central form of divine communication to humanity and the regulating understanding of human ethics. Orthodox Judaism accepts that further, lesser revelation may continue even today, for example through prophetic experience or personal divine inspiration. Non authentic revelation in this sense can be recognized because it would contradict the Torah of Moses (Solomon, 2006: 322).

But non-orthodox forms of Judaism prefer a doctrine of «Progressive Revelation» or divine communication, according to which the Bible records early stages of Israel's «encounter» with God, rabbinic writings record later stages, and revelations continue to be received as humankind undergoes new experiences. According to Ludwig Steinheim, who describes both meanings of revelation in his crucial study on revelation according to the teachings of Judaism but is inclined towards a non-orthodox understanding of the concept, revelation is basically «theory» (Steinheim, 1835: 22). That is, it belongs to the realm of propositions for the inquiry and cognition and not in the realm of concrete reality and its various levels. Steinheim expressed symbolically the distinction between the two concepts of the eye and the ear in Jewish revelation.

Such a distinction is a key element in the porpoise of our study since it marks a clear difference between the pagan perception of revelation and the innovative Jewish understanding of it. Heinrich Graetz resumes this vital notion like this:

«To the pagan, the divine appears within nature as something observable to the eye. He becomes conscious of it as something seen. In contrast, to the Jew who knows that the divine exists beyond, outside of, and prior to nature, God reveals Himself through a demonstration of His will, through the medium of the ear. The human subject becomes conscious of the divine through hearing and obeying. Paganism sees its god. Judaism hears Him: that is, it hears the commandments of His will» (Graetz , 1975: 68).

Such a distinction underlines an essential aspect of Jewish religious communication: the centrality of the word as revealed and accepted by the Jewish community, and the importance of proclamation and listening. Such aspects constitute, as we shall see, characteristic elements of the Jewish understanding of revelation in general, and communication in particular.

The central issue now is the essence of Judaic revelation as a form of communication in a form of doctrine. Keith Ward illustrates the importance of Revelation in Judaism in these terms:

«For Judaism, revelation comes in a form of teaching; not a teaching about the nature of the universe, but a set of practical principles for communal life, enjoining wholeness, a loving and obedient relationship with God, and social justice. The Law is a response to an apprehension of absolute value, a power demanding and enabling the realization of a fulfilled, loving, and just society» (Ward, 1994: 133).

Thus, Revelation in the Jewish religious tradition can be seen as the result of a gradual and developing process involving the work of law-makers, prophets, historical interpreters, and poets, that has a direct consequence on how Jewish communities relate to their social and political entourage, even in a geo-political perspective:

«Although it is definitively codified in a canonical Scripture, it remains a living body of law, to be interpreted and applied within Rabbinic community as a contemporary response to the God whose will it expresses. It thus essentially embodies a tension between a conservative insistence on the distinctiveness of the Jewish community and a revisionist instance on the universal and creative task of realizing a just society in the changing conditions of the modern world» (Ward, 1994: 133).

As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, communication has played an important role in the development of Judaism. Communication by God is of a number of types. First, informational, such as details of statements and biblical events; it is noteworthy that almost every command to Moses is accompanied by the word «to say», i.e., to pass on, or communicate to others. Second, emotional, such as the binding of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, the capture of the Promised Land; in chronicling such dramatic events, the Bible is very different from the news media. Third, values of commandments (mitzvot), such as the six hundred thirteen positive and negative commands providing a code of spiritual and social behaviour. For example, the verse «Here O' Israel, the Lord is Our God, the Lord is One» (Deuteronomy 6:4.). As an ethical religion, Judaism regulates man's relationship with God and with his fellow man. While not rejecting the «good life», the Jewish cosmology is that man should use free choice to raise his stature to emulate the characteristics of the infinite God (Solomon, 2006: 322-324).

God is an activist god both for the Jewish people as a whole and in the life of individual Jews. Given both a desire for knowledge about God and the infiniteness of God, the acts and messages of God are the only knowledge about him and his attributes. The prophet has fulfilled a primary role as messengers of God (Haggai 1:13) and as witnesses of God's power and mercy. Yet the prophet was more than a messenger. He was a participant standing in the presence of God (Jeremiah 15:19).

According to the Jewish tradition, God's communication was not neutral but comprised ethical monotheism or a religion of morality, raising the spiritual standards and

moral life. Since the end of Jewish prophecy in the IVth century B.C.E., the hidden divine meaning of events cannot be extrapolated, and prophecy was replaced by faith (emunah) and daily prayer as the attached ingredient of the relationship between the Jewish people of God (Ward, 1994: 138). But the essence of divine communication persists, and its meaning is adjourned through the interpretation of the law and the continuous study of its meaning (Solomon, 2006: 325).

This essential approach to the meaning of divine communication allows us to understand the essence of the practice of communication within the Jewish religious tradition as a derivative of the Abrahamic worldview, both in its vertical or its horizontal significance. In the following section we will seek to explain the details of such communicational process in order to understand its consequences for the Jewish understanding of media and the geopolitical consequences it entails.

2.4. THE IMPLICATIONS OF JEWISH THEOLOGICAL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

An overview reading of the texts of the Torah shows us the plurality of ways in which the Hebrew Bible refers to the relationship between the Hebrew god and his chosen people. These narrative references to the Jewish understanding of what we call «vertical communication» present a variety of models and derive from specific theological understandings of divine communication. Thus the understanding of communication from a Jewish perspective presents itself complex, but not for that incomprehensible.

In this section we present the dynamics of the theological principles behind the Jewish understanding of communication. In order to do so, we propose an exploration into the three forms of biblical communication and their inner dynamics. Such a task presents itself as a challenge for two basic reasons. First, the Jewish theological understanding of communication implies not only the sacred texts that are understood as the essence of divine communication, but also the oral tradition that illuminates them and adjourns their meaning. For this reason it is essential to understand what these texts are and what they pretend. Second, the academic literature about the Jewish theological understanding of communication is limited since Judaism itself understands communication in a double manner: oral and written.

Beyond this complexity we present the implications of the Jewish theological forms of communication in three levels: the symbolic level, the oral level and the written level. Of these three levels we dedicate more space to written communication due to the fact that, as history has proven, the Jewish tradition tends to conserve the oral tradition in a written manner. At the same time we must underline the need for an academic approach to these different forms of communication on behalf of communication studies experts, particularly

from the area of «Media, Religion and Culture». Even though there has been great interest in the development of Digital technologies on behalf of Jewish communities, there is still a long way to go in deepening the meaning of other forms of communication within the Jewish religious tradition and their implications at multiple levels.

2.4.1. The Symbolic Level of Communication in the Jewish Theological Setting

Professor Menaheim Blondheim from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem recently published an article about the Jewish communication tradition and its encounters with the New Media (Blondheim, 2015). The article is an anticipation of the two volume study that this prestigious communication scholar is preparing about communications in Jewish history and culture that will probably fill the gap in the area of Judaism and communication that we stressed above.

Blondheim underlines the importance of considering the theological bases of communication within religious traditions in the line of the «Media, Communication and Culture» research area that is at the heart of our study. He says:

«Theorizing the supposed communicative encounter between God and man should be of interest not only to theologians but also to communication scholars, for at least two clusters of reasons. The first emerges precisely from the problem of God's transcendence-the fundamental challenge to which media theology is a response. The mere idea of transcending transcendence by media and establishing communications with God tests the limits of human communicative practices. It also sets the outermost frontiers of the idea of communications, as it gives way to abysses that cannot be bridged» (Blondheim, 2015: 17).

Thus, according to Blondheim, the study of the theological principles of communication in a religious tradition entails a broad understanding of the theological, historic, cultural and technological implications of communication within a specific religious setting.

In this same line the author stresses the importance of considering, not only the direct communication between the Hebrew god and his people through the oral and written tradition, but also the visual-symbolic form of communication that the Hebre Bible presents:

«The early ritual of the Hebrews, as exposed in the Bible, appears to have been an attempt to emulate the media they understood God to use in addressing man, for communicating a response. In fact, we argue that it was the mere adoption of God's media, not the conveying of any particular message, which formed the core of early Jewish ritual. First, humankind adopted the visual media of fire and smoke to address God, extending the celestial sun, moon and clouds. Then people used sound as produced by instruments and, finally, the word: written and spoken» (Blondheim, 2015: 18).

In this acute line of thought he proposes to pay attention to several symbolic-non-verbal forms of communication between God and his people that we resume as follows:

–*Ritual and the Tabernacle*: The early institutionalized ritual of the Hebrews, according to the biblical account, focused on the tabernacle built in the desert after the exodus (Leviticus 17-26). The tabernacle is a silent shrine, off limits to God's people and with but minimal presence of priests. These priests utter no words and sing no songs. In this silent temple the Holy of Holies is something of a hiding place for a distant, unsocial God who cannot be approached but who dwells for some unknown reason amid the Israelites, at the center of their mobile desert camp. This does not mean, according to Blondheim, that there was no reciprocity of messages in the silent tabernacle. In fact, reciprocity seems essential to the tabernacle, and a distinct linguistic feature points to this essential facet (Blondheim, 2015: 19). The tabernacle was constructed, and was intended to serve, as a grand interface. It would appear that just as people face each other, and as the temple's loaves of bread, candles and cherubim are to face each other, the temple's plan and purpose were to facilitate God's interfacing and communicating with people (Goffman, 1967: 48).

–*Fire and Cloud*: According to Blondheim, the reciprocity model of face structuring the architecture of the tabernacle may possibly point to a more specific process of communication between God and man in the Temple of silence. The fundamental rituals performed every morning and evening at the temple were the lighting of candles and, in close association with it, the burning of incense on the gold altar. The burning of incense, morning and evening, is to result in «a perpetual incense before the Lord» (Exodus 30:8). The two daily sacrifices were an extension of these rituals of fire and smoke. The silent rituals of fire and smoke appear to have had a deep communicative significance underscoring reciprocity (Blondheim, 2015: 19). For fire and smoke appear in the Bible as God's media par excellence. The earliest message from God to all mankind reported in the Bible, and referred to as a «sign» (literally a «letter»), is the rainbow in the cloud, and God's revelation to Abraham in the covenant was by «a smoking furnace and a burning flame» (Gen. 15:17). God and man thus flash the same signs at each other: fire and cloud—they interface and interact using the same silent media. Underscoring the sanctity of the shared media is the terrible outcome of their unauthorized use, tantamount to breaking into a sacred conversation (Blondheim, 2015: 20).

–*Sound*: The first hint of sound in the Tabernacle emanates from the bells attached to the rim of the high priest's garments. Then, another sound would be heard in or near the Tabernacle: the sound of the ram's horn (the shofar). Blondheim elucidates on how the ram's horn is God's veteran wind instrument. He sounded it on Mount Sinai when giving the

Ten Commandments, but then God commands his people to sound it on special occasions, such as holidays and over sacrifices. The sound of the ram's horn may say very little, but by moving from sight to sound, it opens up an entirely new universe of communications between God and man while retaining «face», that is, the reciprocity model of the fire and cloud. The acoustic sphere gives rise to the potential of words (spoken or silent) and ultimately to verbal prayer, mediating between humans and their God (Blondheim, 2015: 21).

Signs and symbolic language seem to be, then, the first step regarding the communication of the Abrahamic god with his chosen people, a form of communication that entails silence and perception. The sharing of the same medium, language and meaning is what James Carey called, many years ago, the ritual model of communication (Carey, 1989: 4).

Such an understanding opens a whole new meaning to the lengthy ritual descriptions present in the Torah narratives: God does not only talk to his people through words and texts, but he started his approach to the faith full through the language of the sense, such as fire, forms and incense. The path opened by this approach is promising, and would require a lengthy development. But due to the comprehensive character of our study we include these references in order to complete the horizon of the Jewish understanding of symbolic media and their theological foundation.

2.4.2. The Oral form of Communication in the Jewish Religious Tradition

Jewish sacred literature is traditionally divided into two categories: the «Written Teaching», (*Torah she-bikhtav*) and the «Oral Teaching» (*Torah she-baa! Peh*). As we shall see, the Hebrew term *torah*, translated here as «teaching», is used both narrowly and broadly, and may refer not only to the Pentateuch or to the Hebrew Bible, but also to the whole of the Jewish tradition.

Besides sharing a language of «signs» of smoke, fire and sound with humankind, the Hebrew god also talks to man in words, and a selected few could also answer by these same media. The ritual model is opposed to the «transmission» model, which implies the conveying specific messages between parties. Carey's ritual model referred to the kind of commonness that unites people such as those praying together or sharing in the performance of other rituals (Carey, 1989: 9). The Bible, however, suggests that it is in fact an aspect of transmission—the mere reciprocal sending of messages through the channel—that establishes «ritual» communications between heaven and earth. But the reciprocity of visual symbols and sounds, in revelation as in ritual, would ultimately be swamped by literary texts.

These texts, written and oral, would become the centre not only of Jewish ritual but also of Jewish religious culture.

The central and basic form of communication of God's message to his people, according to Jewish theology, are the Ten Commandments. They were guarded inside the tabernacle that, as we said, stands at the centre of symbolic communication (Deuteronomy 10:1-5). The ark and its cherubim thus represented a nexus of the orality and literacy of God's message. His temporary uttering could be perpetuated by their being engraved in stone and, by extension, inscribed on papyrus or parchment (see Haran, 2009: 187-301).

The importance of the written word for Judaism is of vital importance, as we shall see in the following section. But it is essential to understand also the value of the oral tradition. The dominance of script in the Hebrew religious heritage was challenged at the time of the post-Temple Judaism by the spoken, oral word. The re-emergence of orality within text-based Jewish culture may be considered a surprising turn by the standard of traditional understanding of the dynamics of literacy and orality (Ong, 1982). Nevertheless orality re-entered the cultural scene from the middle of the first millennium B.C.E.: there is evidence that a body of oral law had developed among the Jews and, moreover, that a clear distinction was made between the written text of the Pentateuch and this body of oral supplements and interpretations. With the gradual canonization of the 24 books of the Old Testament, the distinction between the scriptures and the oral tradition became sharper and better defined (for an extended description of this process see Leiman, 1991 and Demsky, 2012).

Since both the written and the oral bodies of teachings were attributed to God, his wish to distinguish his messages by the medium of their delivery implied no less than a divine theory of orality and literacy. Notwithstanding the assumed godly origins of both bodies of law, the role of human agency was acknowledged as much greater in the case of the oral law (Blandheim, 2015: 22).

This agency had two aspects: one was the transmission of the divine teachings not committed to writing from one generation to the next by word of mouth. The other was the derivation of the oral law from the written text of the Testament by means of God-given exegetical tools. Blandheim underlines:

«According to both aspects, God's original intent became subject to the human mind-to its powers of memory in transmitting oral edicts in the first case, to its intellectual powers to divine the "true" meaning of the texts in the second and, in both cases, to man's competence in applying the principles of the law to changing circumstances» (Blandheim, 2015: 22).

Either way, an important implication of an oral law was the notion of accommodation-of God empowering the products of human intellectual processes (Funkenstein, 1993: 88-121).

The understanding of Jewish oral tradition implies the analysis of the body of contents, that we will resume in the following sections.

2.4.2.1. The Oral Torah

The Oral Torah consists, in its widest sense, of the whole interpretative tradition which bases itself on scripture. It is important to note that the term «Torah» is used here to refer to all of Jewish religious literature as well as the Pentateuch. Since torah means «teaching», the term implies that God is the divine teacher who gives his teaching to the people of Israel, and through them to the world (Cherry, 2007: 7). When Moses ascended Mount Sinai he received not only the whole of scripture but also all future development of the Judaic tradition.

Though of divine origin, Torah is always open-ended, and each statement, whether in the Bible, the Talmud, the codes, or theological texts, has to be interpreted and argued about by scholars. It is viewed from different perspectives rather than taken literally. By its very nature Torah has to be studied before it can be effectively implemented in the life of the community and in the life of the individual.

The division between the Written Teaching and the Oral Teaching does not simply represent two parallel types of sacred literature. The Written Torah does not exist as an independent literary genre, even though it is concretely expressed in the canonical text (Cherry, 2007: 10). The Hebrew Bible never stands on its own, it exists as scripture only within the context of the Oral Torah.

The meaning of the written word is not given, even though there is a level of quasi-literal meaning (*peshat*) which recurs throughout the interpretative matrix. The Bible can be approached only through tradition, albeit a somewhat open-ended tradition. Since texts are opaque or highly ambiguous, their meaning and message have to be searched out. The process of this exegetical searching out (*derash*) is characteristic of Jewish thought, and it is this method which shaped a vast body of hermeneutical literature known as *midrash*.

The Pentateuch contains brief references to the main body of Jewish law (*halakhah*) which presupposes a much wider unwritten background. Around these influential references a variety of different interpretations grew up in the rabbinic schools of Palestine, and these were collected in halakhic *midrashim*, which in the main date back to the first few centuries C.E. A little later in origin are those *midrashim* which deal with the non-halakhic parts of Jewish teaching (*aggadah*). Most of the aggadic *midrashim* involve the expansion of

biblical stories, bringing in a host of folkloristic and theological themes. *Midrash* in general is thought to be the earliest type of Oral Torah literature, although those works of *midrash* which have survived were finally edited in the post-Talmudic period.

2.4.2.2. Biblical Commentaries and Interpretation

Since the Hebrew Bible exists within a tradition of interpretation, the text is always in need of explication and from the early Talmudic period, side by side with the composition of the early midrashic collections, biblical commentaries serving specific interests began to be composed (Cherry, 2007: 25). The commentaries are the key to understanding the relevance and message of the Bible, and are the main repository of new ideas, new philosophies, and new approaches to Judaism. The earliest of these commentaries are the Aramaic *targumim*, which were composed in the early centuries of the common era for Jews who spoke Aramaic, the lingua franca of the whole Middle East. Since Hebrew had become a literary language and the preserve of scholars, the *targumim* are in essence translations (the word *targum* actually means 'translation'), but they vary greatly from each other. *Targum Onkelos*, the most famous *targum*, sticks closely to the text, alluding to midrashic interpretation and paraphrasing the anthropomorphisms of biblical Hebrew, while others introduce much midrashic material set among the translation of the text (Fishbane, 2002: 684).

It was considered mandatory for every person to read the weekly portion of the Pentateuch twice to themselves, together with one reading of a translation. Throughout the early Middle Ages *Onkelos* was read regularly as the translation of the weekly Torah portion, and was indeed considered to be an inspired work. Aramaic ceased to be a spoken language, even among Babylonian Jews, after the spread of Islam brought Arabic in its wake. Many people therefore preferred to use the biblical commentary of Rashi (known also as Rabbi Shelomoh Yitzchaki, 1040-1105), which presents a somewhat literal interpretation of the text, and was written in a simple Hebrew style, using many Aramaic words, and translating difficult expressions into medieval French (Cherry, 2007: 35).

Rashi belonged to the Franco-German tradition, which subsequently gave rise to the Ashkenazi sub-culture. Ashkenazim were Jews who lived mainly in Christian Europe and whose lingua franca was Yiddish (a Jewish dialect of medieval German). When these Jews settled in the Slavic countries of central and eastern Europe, they took Yiddish with them and also the literature, customs and foods of Germany and Austria. A distinctive Jewish life-style, known as *yid-dishkeit*, characterized the Ashkenazi world which, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was centred on Poland, Russia, Lithuania and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Fishbane, 2002: 683).

The other main grouping of Jews in the late Middle Ages were the Sephardim, or Jews of Spanish origin. After their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula, in the 1490s, Sephardim took their highly sophisticated Spanish-Jewish culture to the Netherlands, North Africa, the Levant and into the Islamic world of the Middle East and Asia (Fishbane, 2002: 688). Some of them preserved Judeo-Spanish (sometimes called Ladino) (a Jewish dialect of Spanish) as their lingua franca, and maintained their Sephardi identity where they settled by preserving their own customs, by marrying only into other Sephardi families and even by putting the two Hebrew letters «S» and «T», standing for *sefardi tahor* («pure Sephardi») after their name (Cherry, 2007: 67).

The Ashkenazim, who became the dominant Jewish sub-group in the late Middle Ages, revered Rashi. In the course of time, some of the sanctity associated with *Onkelos* attached to Rashi, and his interpretation of a verse became *the* interpretation in the popular consciousness. His writings were also popular among Sephardim (Cherry, 2007: 70).

The standard Hebrew Bibles print the biblical text together with *Onkelos* and sometimes one or two other Aramaic *targumim*. They also include Rashi's commentary and that of his grandson Rashbam (known as Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, 1080-1174). The latter is more literal than his grandfather in his commentary and he does not include any midrashic stories. This, together with the fact that he sometimes criticizes Rashi's interpretations and that some of his comments run counter to traditional rabbinic exegesis, meant he never achieved a high level of popular acceptance. Many commentaries were actually written on Rashi's commentary, defending it from the criticism of other commentators (Cherry, 2007: 84-85).

A number of Sephardi commentaries are also usually included in standard Bible editions. The best known are those of Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164), a Spanish grammarian and philosophical exegete who has harsh things to say about interpretations he disagrees with, even when they are of talmudic origin, and of Ramban (known as Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, 1194-1270), a Spanish mystic. Ramban had to flee Spain after defending Judaism too vigorously against Christianity when he was forced to participate in the Disputation of Barcelona in 1263. A number of super-commentaries exist both on ibn Ezra and on Ramban (Fishbane, 2002: 693).

2.4.2.3. The Mishnah

At the beginning of the third century C.E. collections of halakhic material, extracted from their original location in *midrash*, were gathered together and eventually formed into the Mishnah, the first published work of the Oral Torah (Alexander, 2006: 9). It was composed in Hebrew, although it was not originally written down, since there was opposition to the

writing down of oral material. But was memorized. It contains 60 tractates divided into six sections (Neusner, 2005: 1725).

The Mishnah is not simply a code, since it contains dissenting views mentioning the names and opinions of some 128 individual authorities who are known as *tannaim*. A *tanna* is a sage of the mishnaic period, the term coming from a root meaning 'to repeat'. Originally it seems to have referred merely to someone who had memorized the text without necessarily understanding what he knew, but eventually it became a title of honour and authority (Alexander, 2006: 14).

The Mishnah also does not touch upon some central rituals which would have been included in a code. Thus there is nothing about the laws relating to phylacteries (*tefillin*), the *mezuzah* parchment on the doors of a house, the fringes (*tzitzit*) on the corners of the garment, the Torah scroll (*sefer torah*), or the liturgical formula of the *amidah* prayer which is at the centre of the daily services. The medieval authority Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishnah (*Menahot* 4:1), explained that all these matters were sufficiently well known to ordinary Jews from regular practice not to make it necessary to include them in the text (Neusner, 2005: 1728).

Thus the Mishnah is more like a textbook for the study of Jewish law than a code which seeks to lay down the halakhic norms. We cannot be sure what actually motivated Rabbi Judah the Prince and his colleagues to edit the mishnaic text, but they presented the Jewish scholarly world with an authoritative collection of the main halakhic views, and excluded much material which they did not regard as reliable. Since they severed the dependence of rabbinic learning on the Bible text, as found in *midrash*, the redaction of the Mishnah signified a breakthrough in religious consciousness (Alexander, 2006: 12).

As Neusner underlines, we must remember that the Mishnah acted as a stimulus to the process of gathering the material of the Oral Torah. Other collections of material similar in nature to that contained in the Mishnah have also survived (Neusner, 2005: 1727). There is a work known as the *Tosefta*, which is regarded by some authorities as an early commentary on the Mishnah, but there are citations of mishnaic-style material in rabbinic literature known as *beraitah* (pl. *beraitot*), «extraneous» material which had not been incorporated in the Mishnah (Neusner, 2005: 178).

The Mishnah was regarded as having originated with the oral traditions taught by Moses to the Israelites in explanation of the Pentateuch, and as such was a holy text (Alexander, 2006: 25). The implication of this is that the sayings of the sages about ethics, let alone those about *halakhah* and *aggadah* in other parts of the Mishnah, are aspects of the Torah which Moses received from God. Even the rabbinic enactments, most of which

involved 'making fences round the Torah', were all part of the revelation at Sinai (Alexander, 2006: 26).

The study of the Mishnah was thought to help the souls of dead relatives to progress in their spiritual journey after death, the Hebrew letters of the word *mishnah*, when rearranged, spelling the word for «soul», *neshamah* (Neusner, 2005: 1730). A section of the Mishnah is thus studied in a house of mourning or on the anniversary of someone's death (*yahrzeit* in Yiddish). In the late Middle Ages one leading rabbi, Joseph Caro, was even possessed by the spirit of the Mishnah (known as a *maggid* or daemon), when he studied the mishnaic text with great devotion. This spirit transmitted messages to him from the heavenly world which Caro recorded in a diary published as *Maggid Mesharim*. Thus, as Neusner asserts, to a certain point the Mishnah acquired a form of «lived» form of the Jewish oral tradition (Neusner, 2005: 1731).

2.4.2.4. The Talmud

The intense study of the Mishnah in the academies of Palestine and Babylonia led to the compilation of the Palestinian Talmud in the IVth century C.E. and the Babylonian Talmud 100 years later. These two editions of the Talmud were known respectively as the *Yerushalmi* (i.e. «Jerusalem», though, the Palestinian Talmud was not actually redacted there), and the *Bavli* (i.e. «Babylonian») (Khon, 2001: 137). The Bavli became the most authoritative rabbinic text of Judaism, since the Jewish community of Babylonia dominated the Jewish world for five or six hundred years after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud. Because of the particular interests of Babylonian Jewry, certain parts of the Mishnah, e.g., those dealing with the agricultural laws applicable essentially in the land of Israel, were not dealt with at any length in the Bavli, although they do occupy a large section of the Yerushalmi (Goldenberg, 2006, 130).

The two Talmuds differ in many substantial ways. The Bavli is more developed than the earlier version of the Talmud edited in Palestine, since the Babylonian academies in which the material was shaped were larger and of a higher calibre than their Palestinian counterparts. Folklore, angelology and magic play a larger part in the *aggadah* of the Bavli than of the Yerushalmi, reflecting the different cultural milieu. Babylonian civilization was heavily influenced by Persian religion, and Persian terms appear quite frequently in the Eastern Aramaic of the Bavli (Goldenberg, 2006, 131).

Talmudic study is also an important part of the Jewish oral tradition. Since the Bavli was the principal subject of study in the Babylonian academies, it dominated Jewish thought in the post-talmudic period. So neglected was the Yerushalmi that the text has been preserved in a highly unsatisfactory condition, with many corrupt readings and textual

variants. The Babylonian Talmud is in a much better state of preservation (Heinemann, 2007: 468).

The Bavli is thought of as an ocean, and its study is «like setting sail on a voyage of discovery; the more this talmudic ocean is explored, the more it reveals new landscapes of the mind and of the spirit to the traveler» (Goldenberg, 2006: 142). Sages, after years of study and experience, are involved in the talmudic adventure just as much as young boys who begin to study the text for the first time. The sage will already have studied thousands of pages of the Talmud, perhaps even knowing much of it by heart. Yet he may well spend his mature years trying to reconcile contradictory interpretations of abstruse talmudic discussions (Heinemann, 2007: 469).

The beginner must learn how to pronounce strange Hebrew and Aramaic words, and how to translate and interpret the many technical terms and colloquial phrases which convey the talmudic viewpoint. There is the chanting and singing of the text, which sometimes involves the constant repetition of key phrases till their particular significance is grasped in context (Goldenberg, 2006: 163-164).

The study of the Talmud has what we could call a more «proxemic» approach to its contents:

«Together with the ability to analyse issues, and the improvisation of traditional Talmud tunes, a further prerequisite for Talmud study is knowing how to use one's thumb to follow the thread of an argument. The hand is moved backward and forward round the thumb as axis, while at the same time the thumb is tilted now to the right now to the left. There is no explanation of what exactly the thumb adds to the debate but it is widely used even by those who are silently following someone else's exposition. The head nods in agreement and the thumb tilts as the argument develops» (Heinemann, 2007: 469).

The Talmud and its study thus become a vital form of understanding of the law that goes beyond the law itself.

2.4.2.5. The Oral Dimension of Jewish Mysticism and the Kabbalah

In every religious tradition mysticism acquires very specific communicational characteristics. Our study considered the possibility of including this form of communication within the three religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic cosmovision. But the extent and richness of these plural mystical traditions quickly convinced us that they merit a specific approach that goes beyond the limitations of our research. The study of the communicational characteristics of mysticism within Judaism, Christianity and Islam remains, thus, open for future research in the area of «Media, Religion and Culture». But a word must

be said about Jewish mysticism in order to attain a clearer understanding of the oral dimension of Jewish law.

Jewish mystical literature goes back at least as far as the early mishnaic period, if not back into the Bible itself (Scholem, 1991: 3). Prophetic visions of heaven became the subject of contemplation of mysticism in the tradition known as *maaseh merkabah*. The *Merkabah* mystics sought to undertake mystical journeys of the soul into the heavenly realm so that they could experience the vision of the divine throne. They were known as *yordei merkabah*, «those who descend in the chariot», since the vision of heaven granted to the prophet Ezekiel involved the chariot in which the divine figure rode. These heavenly journeys are recorded in works known as *heikhalot* texts, which provide instructions on how to pass the fiery angels who guard the halls through which the adept passes (Idel, 1988: 13).

There was also a more speculative tradition which dealt with the structures inherent in the divine creative process. This creation mysticism, known as *maaseh bereshit*, finds its earliest expression in the *Serer Yetzirah* («Book of Formation»). This book, which is ascribed to the biblical patriarch Abraham, surfaced about the III century C.E. It was believed that the book could be used to control the creative powers residing within the world, since artificial humans or animals could be created with the help of magical letter combinations referred to in the book (Idell, 1988: 14).

The doctrine of ten *sefirot*, or semi-divine functions, play a central part in the communicational dimension of Jewish mysticism. The ten *sefirot*, which control the world, is first mentioned in the *Serer Yetzirah*. In the Kabbalah (as the later mystical tradition is known) it developed into a substantial feature of Jewish mysticism, particularly in the *Serer Ha-Zohar* ('The Book of Splendour', henceforth *Zohar*), which first appeared in thirteenth-century Spain (Scholem, 1961, 77). The publisher of the *Zohar* manuscript, Moses de Leon, claimed that he had come into possession of an ancient text recording the teachings of a famous IInd-century C.E. Palestinian master, Simeon bar Yochai. The reputed age of the teachings, and the power of their imagery, made the *Zohar* into the «Bible» of the kabbalists (Scholem, 1991: 124). Parts of the work were eventually even incorporated into the prayer-book, and Jews influenced by kabbalistic teaching still chant sections on ritual occasions.

The *Zohar* puts forward a mystical philosophy of Judaism in which the forces of evil are ranged against the working of the divine in the world and the commandments of Judaism are instrumental in preserving the divine harmony. The world emanates from the Godhead through the agency of the *sefirot*, and thus there is a divine underlay just below the surface of the mundane world. (Scholem, 1991: 95)

One of the most remarkable developments of the Kabbalah took place in Safed, North Palestine, in the sixteenth century, when Isaac Luria arrived from Egypt and taught a

new system of Kabbalah to a small circle of mystical disciples (Idel, 1988: 33). This new system implied that each individual Jew, through his religious activities, was furthering the messianic process. This process will be complete only when all the divine sparks trapped in the world are raised back to their divine status. The alienation of these sparks came about through a catastrophic upheaval which took place in the process of emanation and left the world needing rectification (Idel, 1988: 34).

Lurianic Kabbalah generated messianic movements which raised the mystical theology of Judaism to the vanguard of the popular awareness (Scholem, 1991: 64). This popularization of mysticism eventually led to the Hasidic movement, founded in the mid-eighteenth century by Israel Baal Shem Tov (known as «the Besht»), a wandering folk healer and mystic. The Besht taught that God, the merciful father, could be found everywhere in all walks of life and in all activities, not merely in specifically religious contexts. Hasidism developed its own genre of sacred literature: works of a kabbalistic nature, story books full of wonderful tales about Hasidic Masters, and Bible commentaries which playfully drew lessons from words and images at a level of popular homiletics (Scholem: 1961: 144).

2.4.3. The written Word

Before we enter into the communicational meaning of the Jewish written tradition, it is important to understand the texts that constitute such a tradition. The sacred literature of Judaism consists of a vast collection of texts, some dating back thousands of years and others composed in the recent past. In general, the older the text the more sacred it is considered to be, since it is closer to the textual revelation to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai after their exodus from slavery in Egypt. Later writings are regarded as essentially interpretations and applications of the holy teachings of the past. The most up-to-date writings, though they lack the sanctity of early texts, carry great authority for the Jews because they draw on the views of all the sages of the past in formulating their conclusions.

The Jewish «Written Teaching» consists of 24 books of the Hebrew Bible divided into three sections: *torah* (henceforth Torah), *nevi'im* («Prophets») and *ketuvim* («Writings»), known by the acronym *TeNaKh*. The Torah, or Pentateuch, contains Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (in Hebrew: *bereshit, shemot, vayikra, bemidbar, devarim*).

The «Prophets» contain the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, known collectively as the «Early Prophets», plus Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi), known collectively as the «Later Prophets». The «Writings» contain Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra- Nehemiah and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

–The Torah: it is the central text of the Hebrew Bible. It is believed to contain the primary revelation from God to the greatest of the prophets, Moses, known in the Jewish tradition as «Moses our Rabbi», who received the divine teaching face to face in the most direct way. These Five Books of Moses are also known as the *humash* (i.e. «fifth', a popular abbreviation of *hamishah humshei torah*, «the five fifths of the Torah») (Seijas, 2014a: 47).

The Torah tells of the story of humanity from the beginning of the world to the death of Moses (Seijas, 2014a: 48). The main religious motifs are the creation of the first human couple, Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and were expelled from Paradise; the story of Noah's ark and the flood; the call of Abraham, the first «Jew»; the life of the patriarchs; the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt; their redemption by God through the agency of Moses; the crossing of the Red Sea; the theophany at Mount Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments; the worship of the golden calf; and the desire of the Israelites to return to Egypt after the report of the ten spies about the land of Canaan (Seijas, 2014a: 49).

The forty years' wandering in the wilderness which followed was a punishment for their lack of faith. During these years the remaining divine laws were revealed to the Israelites about subjects such as the Sacred Year, ritual purity, the Tabernacle and the sacrifices, correct behaviour between humans summarized in the command «You shall love your neighbour as yourself, I am the Lord» (Leviticus 19:18), social mores and dietary requirements. The Pentateuch ends with the death of Moses after he had led the people of Israel to the borders of the promised land (Seijas, 2014a: 33).

–The Prophets: it is believed that the books of the *nevi'im* were written by the prophets through the gift of prophecy, and they tell the story of the Israelites after they entered the promised land (Seijas, 2014b: 95). The people were first ruled by judges until the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. He was succeeded by King David, who conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital. The first Temple was built in Jerusalem by David's son, Solomon, since David was not considered suitable to build the 'House of the Lord' because his hands were stained by the blood he had shed as a warrior king (Seijas, 2014b: 96-99).

After the death of Solomon, who had taxed the people heavily to support both his building projects and his opulent lifestyle, the Holy Land was divided between the ten tribes in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the two tribes who supported the Davidic dynasty in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Books of Kings tell of the corruption of kingly rule in

Israel and Judah, where many of the kings «did evil in the sight of the Lord» (Seijas, 2014b: 100).

This culminated in the conquest of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. and the exile of its inhabitants, who came to be known as «the ten lost tribes». The Southern Kingdom continued in precarious existence till 586 B.C.. when Jerusalem and the First Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians and the Judeans were taken into exile in Babylonia (Seijas, 2014b: 102). The religious heroes of this second section of the *TeNaKh* are characters like Ruth, Deborah and Samson from the period of the judges, prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel as well as minor prophets whose sayings and prophecies are recorded in the books named after them, and those kings of Israel and Judah who sought to eradicate idolatry and to live according to the teachings of Moses and the prophets (Seijas, 2014b: 110).

–Writings: The *ketuvim* are books believed to be written under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a lesser degree of inspiration than prophecy. They contain works of Wisdom literature, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; devotional works like the Book of Psalms, which is much used in the later liturgy of Judaism; works in historical form, like Chronicles, Esther and Ezra-Nehemiah, which take the history of Israel up to the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the Second Temple (Flor Serrano, 2014: 142).

According to the rabbinic tradition, Moses wrote the five books of the Pentateuch like a scribe copying from an ancient text. Indeed, the Pentateuch, in its heavenly form, pre-existed the world and was used by God as a blueprint of the creation. Rabbinic tradition said that Moses also wrote the book of Job, Joshua wrote the book of Joshua and also, according to one view, the last eight verses of the Pentateuch which tell of the death of Moses (Flor Serrano, 2014: 143).

The prophet Samuel wrote the books of Samuel, the book of Judges and the book of Ruth. King David wrote the book of Psalms. Jeremiah wrote the book of Jeremiah, the books of Kings and the book of Lamentations. King Hezekiah and his associates wrote down the book of Isaiah, and the books of Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (the last three originally composed by King Solomon). The Men of the Great Assembly wrote down the book of Ezekiel, the Twelve Minor Prophets, the books of Daniel and of Esther. Ezra wrote the book of Ezra and the major part of the books of Chronicles (Flor Serrano, 2014: 155).

This body of Jewish written sacred writings is not only relevant because of its importance in order to grasp the Hebrew understanding of divine communication, but also because of its relation to writing as a medium of communication that was framed in a particular manner by Judaism. For these reasons the study of the Jewish framing of writing has particular importance for the purpose of our research.

Writing first appeared in Mesopotamia towards 3500 b.C. and in Egypt towards 3100 b.C. (Gelb, 1963) and was closely associated with the emergence of civilization as an alternative to tribal societies in different regions of the world (Innis, 1951: 12; Logan, 1986: 23). The importance of written records is that it made possible to keep track of properties, financial transactions, and people to an unparalleled degree. It was also through writing that the concept of codified law was introduced and historical records began to be kept. This means that writing allowed to establish more complex forms of social organization, although the specific forms differed between different cultures (Egypt and Mesopotamia, Sumerians and Akkadians and other societies that adopted technology) including the Hebrew tribes (Martin, 1994: 33).

2.4.3.1. Writing and the Hebrew Scriptures

Together with Phoenicians and Canaanites, the Hebrews were located midway between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Consequently they were able to draw on and combine elements of the two regions' writing systems (hieroglyphics and cuneiform writing) thereby inventing alphabetic writing circa 1500 B.C.E. (Innis, 1951: 22) From this perspective the aleph-bet represents a communication medium that mediates between Egypt and Mesopotamia (Gelb, 1963: 35).

The passage from the tribal and oral tradition of the ancient Hebrews to the scribal culture of the kingdom of David and Solomon is uncertain. The stories of Abraham as the «father» of the Hebrews and of the 12 sons of Jacob as eponymous ancestors of the 12 tribes, for example, are typical of oral cultures (Goody, 1986: 37; Innis, 1951: 48; Logan, 1986: 45). Versions of these legends were transmitted over time by word of mouth and subject to a high degree of variation, and were eventually recorded to a point that the tribal became a content of the scribal (Ong, 1967: 72, 1977: 23, 1982: 35). The story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt, for example, is the first unambiguous sign of chirographic culture in the Hebrew Holy Scriptures as a sequence of events, introducing the codified law into the narrative (Logan, 1986: 79).

The fact that seems clear is that a number of different groups and clans, commonly known as «Hebrews», «Israelites», or the «12 tribes of Israel» –and later as the kingdoms of Judah and Israel– were all brought together through the power of the aleph-bet writing system (Mumford, 1961: 51). Writing provided a common system of communication with significant stability over time, in contrast with the spoken word and human memory (Innis, 1951: 22). This allowed for greater social unity and cultural homogeneity hardly conceivable in earlier times. As it happened earlier in Egypt and Mesopotamia, writing was associated with the shift from a nomadic way of life to permanent settlements and the founding of

cities, where Jericho stands as one of the oldest (Mumford, 1961: 52). At the same time writing facilitated the formation of more complex forms of Jewish social organization, including the institution of religious hierarchy in its form of a priesthood and political hierarchy, in the establishment of a monarchy and in the organization of a palace elite (Goody, 1986: 47).

According to Innis, Mosaic Law allowed to increase cultural and political uniformity among the much smaller set of tribes of ancient Israel and Judah (Innis, 1951: 37). Furthermore, writing made it possible to create a homogeneous religious culture that outdated the many different tribal and local myths and rituals proper of oral cultures, as it happened in Egypt: writing gives place to the notion of religion as a specialized activity, controlled by specialized organization (e.g. priestly hierarchies, almost always literate).

According to Goody (Goody, 1986: 4) members of oral cultures do not even have the idea of *a religion*, at least as it is abstracted out of the more general notion of a way of life. In this same line Logan states:

«Literates refer to the forms of spirituality associated with oral cultures as paganism, animism, and heathenism, but within those cultures there is no specialized sector of activity equivalent to our notion of religion. Nor is there any dogma, orthodoxy, theology, or law in the absence of the written word and sacred book. Tribes may have rites of passage and may make distinctions about who is or is not a member (an issue related to the question of kinship), but there is no sense of accepting or rejecting a religion or a set of beliefs. Literacy and writing are the communication technologies that introduce the notion of boundaries to religious experience, so that individuals are categorized as either believers or infidels, the latter requiring conversion» (Logan, 1986: 122).

As we have underlined earlier the Hebrew invention of monotheism represented a giant leap for the ancient world. The introduction of a single, universal and transcendent deity reflects a kind of abstract thinking associated with alphabetic literacy and unknown among earlier writing cultures (see Innis, 1951 and Logan, 1986, for a discussion on the relationship between writing and monotheism). This innovation and the literate culture that lead to it may also have been linked to the rise of patriarchy (Shalin, 1998).

Monotheism, abstract thought, and literacy were all reinforced by the laws of Moses, especially by the Second Commandment injunctions against imagery (See Postman, 1985: 33-35, for an interesting discussion on this relationship). Moreover, a new form of history was developed in ancient Israel, one that went beyond priestly chronological records, sharing instead in the narrative qualities of oral myth and legend. Written history – in this case particularly religious history – serves as a powerful force for cultural homogenization. We could say that writing made possible the sacred text (in this case, the Torah), a unifying

symbol and an motion towards literacy, in which we can see the combination of law, religion, and history.

Alphabetical writing facilitated the evolution of the Hebrews and Israelites from a loosen knit confederacy of tribes to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, united temporarily under the reigns of David and Salomon. That the prototype of the modern nation-state did not last for long reflects the persistence of tribalism, the limited reach of chirographic communication, and the equally limited nature of scribal literacy in the ancient world (Dimont, 1962: 17). The sense of national identity was not strong enough to maintain unity between the two kingdoms, nor was it enough for the northern kingdom of Israel to survive defeat and deportation at eh hands of the Assyrian empire in 722 B.C. Aware of the fate of the 10 tribes, the southern kingdom of Judah had the advantage of the rhetoric of the rhapsodic prophets, notably Isaiah and Jeremiah. It also benefited from the expansion of the Law through King Josiah’s Deuteronomic Reformation (Croubach, 1963: 44). The result was a fortified national culture that was preserved through writing and able to survive de Babylonian captivity, and to be replanted when the Persian King Cyrus allowed the people of Judah to return from exile. Renewed national identity was invigorated by the introduction of the priestly code and probably the canonization of the five books of Moses, by Ezra the scribe and by Nehemiah, the appointed governor of Judah in 444 c.C. (Cantor, 1994: 12).

The sacred texts that held ancient Jewish culture together were far from written in stone, but rather grew through cultural accretion and were subject to revision by literate elites, as we have underlined in the presentation of the Jewish globalization process. Without the multiplication of identical copies through typography, texts were subject to variation through deliberate alteration as well as mistakes made in the process of copying by hand. Even though the variations in the variability of texts is characteristic of scribal cultures, regarding sacred scripture texts tend to be carefully transcribed. Still, as B. Martin explains,

“«The Old Testament reflects the slow gestation of a people who began as an aggregate of tribes and gives the history of its relations with God, whose chosen people it was. All genres and epochs mingle in the Old Testament. It contains the verse of a nomadic people, popular and religious songs of all sots, mythical tales based in the cosmogony of the Middle East, oral traditions concerning national origins, prophecies, legislative and sacerdotal documents at times bearing traces of laws and institutions that came from other nations and other ages, liturgical pieces, annals of chronicles, collections of proverbs written down long after their first appearance, moralizing texts often inspired by outside sources, and tales and romanticized fiction» (Martin, 1974: 103).

From a historical perspective, the written text of the Old Testament reflects a long process of elaboration and revision. As Martin puts it,

«The Old Testament is a library, the result of a series of redactions and revisions over more than a thousand years: it reflects a constant interpretation between an ongoing oral tradition and periodically updated written versions» (Martin, 1974: 104).

The myriad items on which the Holy Scriptures are based were compiled and edited by a number of writers (Friedman, 1989: 143). A tradition of biblical interpretation and exposition also emerged in the wake of the Babylonian captivity and return from exile. This was due, in part, to the fact that the Jewish people no longer spoke Hebrew, but instead Aramaic, so the translator was needed. The Hebrew alphabet's lack of vowels generated some textual ambiguity as well. Moreover, multiple authorship gave the text a polyphonic – and sometime dissonant – quality, requiring some harmonization. For all these reasons, a unique form of literate study emerges, evolving through *Midrash*, *Mishnah*, and the Pharisee's emphasis on Oral Law and culminating in the *Talmud*. This tradition of exegesis was flexible enough to allow Jews to adapt to a great many different societies and eras, but emphasis on *Torah*, *Tanach*, and *Talmud* provided sufficient uniformity to maintain Jewish identity across time and space (Rosenberg – Bloom, 1990: 73). Of particular significance was the Babylonian innovation of the synagogue, which came to combine three functions: prayer (*Bet Tephila*), government of «assembly» (*Bet Haknesset*), and study (*Bet Hamidrash*). Thus, Jewish nationality was inextricably bound together with Jewish religion, book learning and «vertical» and «horizontal» communication in general.

2.4.3.2. Writing in the Rabbinic and Medieval Periods

Judaism could survive the destruction of the Temple, and the Jewish people, as a nation in exile, could survive the destruction of Judea by the Romans, but Jewish identity could not have survived without its literary traditions (Friedman, 1989: 148).

Slowly sacred writing became central to Jewish culture. As a consequence the ability to write became sacred and reading a religious duty. The emphasis on study and book learning, with its attendant skills of literacy and numeracy, also contributed to Jewish survival in practical ways (Martin, 1974: 174).

Through medieval corporatism, early modern segregation of the ghetto, and the exclusivism of the *shtetl* (Eastern European Jewish towns), the Jewish people survived as separate, cellular semi-autonomous communities within larger imperial or feudal societies, unable to homogenize, both politically and culturally, a fact that would be characteristic of nationalism in the typographic era: Jewish communities were host to a great variety of heterogeneous national, religious, and cultural groupings (Martin, 1994: 380).

2.4.3.3. *Print culture and the Jewish Re-Formation*

With the age of Guttenberg, the Jewish people took part in the printing revolution, but separatism remained as “most Jewish printing was done by Jews for Jews» (Fevre – Martin, 1990: 268). It is unclear when the first Hebrew book was printed, because books were not necessarily dated in the first few decades of printing, but «there were almost certainly Jews who learned the new art from the first typographers in Mainz» (Martin, 1994: 387).

The first Hebrew presses probably were set up in Spain and Italy (Fevre – Martin, 1990: 387), and the first dated Hebrew books were published in 1475 in Italy (Fevre – Martin, 1990: 307), and Hebrew printing gradually spread from there to Jewish communities in Germany, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Ottoman Empire. Printing was well received by Jewish culture. As Fevre and Martin put it:

«The invention of printing could not be viewed with indifference by Jews. Hebrew was the language in which their culture found expression. Their reading and writing was in Hebrew. Even the less educated and the women, whose usual language was the vernacular of their Gentile environment, still read and wrote the language in Hebrew script. They were deeply attached to their religion and anxious not to neglect their children’s education or the precept which made them study a part of scripture each day and do they owned many manuscripts, both sacred and secular. Printing was welcome by them since it aided the diffusion, at low cost, of the text of works of scholarship, of the prayers, rituals, and ceremonies, and of the religious rules and prescriptions, and moreover it produced books which were carefully corrected without the faults of scribes. Finally for the first time the lay-out of the page made it easy for commentaries to be inserted in the margins of religious texts» (Fevre – Martin, 1990: 268-269).

More important than the direct effects of printing in Jewish culture were the indirect effects brought about by typography’s reduction of separatism, a process that began with European intellectuals. For Christian humanist scholars, the desire to supplement their knowledge of Latin with both Greek and Hebrew led them to seek out Jewish scholars and books printed in Hebrew (Eisenstein, 1980: 358). These Christians felt a sense of membership in an international «Commonwealth of Learning» of «Republic of Letters» that transcended the divisions among Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant, and the spirit of tolerance was, to some extent, extended to the Jewish counterparts. From this perspective, Eisenstein relates:

«This cosmopolitan Republic [...] seemed to grow more expansive in its sympathies as the centuries wore on. Even in the sixteenth century, collaboration with heterodox enclaves of Jews and Greeks had encouraged an ecumenical and tolerant spirit, particularly among scholar-printers who often

provided room and board in exchange for foreign aid and were, this, quite literally “at home” with travellers from strange lands. Work on polyglot Bible editions encourages scholars to look beyond the horizon of Western Christendom toward exotic cultures and distant realms» (Eisenstein, 1980: 359-360).

The «class» formed by typographic communication contributed to Jewish emancipation, though in a limited fashion. More significant was the breakdown of political and cultural barriers brought about by the rise of nationalism, and made possible by the printing revolution.

As many authors have asserted, the modern nation-state is not a natural form of human social organization, but rather a human invention (Andresen, 1983; Chabha, 1990; Gellner, 1983; Lohrey, 1986), artificially constructed with the aid of print media (Eisenstein, 1980; Innis, 1951). Nationalism in Western Europe was associated with the decline of localism, as people’s attention and loyalties shifted from their immediate community to the larger, more abstract imagined community of the nation (Andresen, 1983: 63). Print media put an end to local isolation, providing a sense of connection to and membership in a larger political entity while loosening community ties. News of the outside world could be delivered regularly, rapidly, and directly to the individual, bypassing local elites (McLuhan, 1962: 42, 1964: 19).

Of course, Jewish population might be excluded from the new forms of national unity that were forged, and instead be considered as others against whom national identity could be solidified (consequently subjected to unprecedented persecution). But the shift from the local to the national produced more heterogeneous societies, opening up the possibility that Jews might share in a broader identity with their neighbours (Steinberg, 1974: 74).

With time, as the wide dissemination of printed material made information more accessible to those who knew how to read, it led to greater desire for political participation, particularly for the highly literate middle class. Because of this the rise of nationalism was associated with democratic revolutions, and of governmental procedures, contributing both to a growing sense of political unity and to a belief in equality before the law (Strate, 2008: 25). These changes in political culture set the stage for Jewish emancipation and the end of ghetto isolation.

Typography also contributed to the growth of nationalism through its impact on language. Print media undermined the status of Latin as the international written language through the publication of works written in vernacular tongues. At the same time, vernacular printing established national languages by standardizing and homogenizing languages and

eliminating local dialects while reinforcing linguistic differences among different nations (Eisenstein, 1980: 365). Linguistic unity was a powerful tool in creating cultural unity on a national level, aided by the consequent creation of a body of national literature and school instruction «by the book». Moreover, in many instances, the first book to be printed in a particular vernacular language was the Bible, making it more easily and more widely accessible (Eisenstein, 1980: 371).

This could not help but undermine the authority of the Catholic Church, and thereby contribute to the Protestant Reformation, which emphasized individual Bible reading and interpretation (see Innis, 1951: 27; McLuhan, 1962: 64). The Protestants also made a liberal use of the press for propaganda purposes (Eisenstein, 1980: 374). To some degree, the result was the formation of national religions, such as the Church of England and Lutheranism in Germany. Cultural unity within the Roman Catholic nations was also strengthened through differentiation from Protestant countries (i. e. England and Ireland). Eventually, however, the multiplication of Protestant denominations eliminated any hope for religious homogeneity in many nations, and reinforced the idea of religious tolerance and separation of church and state in the interests of national survival. Clearly, as Strate puts it, this trend encouraged Jewish participation in national cultures (Strate, 2008: 27).

As we underlined in the description of the Jewish globalization process, the Jewish encounter with Western nationalism is in fact a confrontation between an ancient cultural identity that was constructed and maintained largely by scribal literacy and modern cultural identity created through print media (Innis, 1951: 30). The result of this typographic challenge was a variety of reformations of Jewish identity, as the Jewish people tried to negotiate with this new media environment.

One of the first to do so was the XVIIIth-century German philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. An associate of Immanuel Kant and one of the leading figures of Enlightenment in Germany, he also acted as mediator between German and Jewish culture (Blau, 1966: 63). He defined Judaism from Christian criticism, relying on rational logic and humanistic principles in public debates on Judaism's validity that took place through print media (Blau, 1966: 77). He also tried to promote Enlightenment learning and the print culture of Germany among the Jewish people, recognizing that Jewish cultural isolation was partly due to the fact that Jews spoke the Yiddish German dialect, rather than the standard German dialect. He also pointed to the fact that Jewish literacy was based on the Hebrew alphabet, rather than the Latin one, and that Jewish learning was monopolized by the study of the Talmud (Martin, 1974: 152).

Therefore, Mendelssohn encouraged the establishment of the Jewish Free School of Berlin in 1778, in which secular as well as religious subjects were taught and in which the

language of instruction was German. Also, perhaps following the example of Guttenberg and the Protestant Reformation, in 1783, he completed a translation of the Torah into German, printed in the Hebrew alphabet so as to be accessible to Jewish readers while encouraging them to learn the German language. Included with the translation was a commentary written in Hebrew, but that went «beyond the traditional lines of rabbinic and talmudic discussion to introduce modern concepts and modern approaches to the biblical text» (Blau, 1966, p. 17).

Mendelssohn also had significant German works translated into Hebrew so that Polish Jews would have access to them. In 1783 he published a book entitled «Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism», in which he argued for the separation of church and state and expressed disappointment in the fact that the Continental Congress of the United States was considering establishing an official national religion (Blau, 1966: 74). Always the mediator, he perhaps is best known for his formula for three-reformed Jewish life: «Adopt the mores and constitution of the country in which you find yourself, but be steadfast in upholding the religion of your fathers too» (quoted by Martin, 1974: 202). According to Dimont «Mendelssohn had shaped the Jews in the fold. In a series of books and pamphlets, he formulated the principles upon which modern Judaism was to be built» (Dimont, 1962: 298).

Mendelssohn's efforts to end Jewish cultural and intellectual isolation were soon followed by one of the first forms of political integration. It is no accident then that the French Revolution is seen as the starting point of both modern nationalism and Jewish emancipation. The «Declaration of the Rights of Man» of 1789 provided the general principle of equality independent of «religious opinions» a principle from which the Jews of France could successfully argue for emancipation. Thus, on September 27, 1791, the National Assembly granted full citizenship to all Jews within French borders. Enfranchisement, however, required a re-formation of Jewish identity. As Martin notes,

«Henceforth French Jews would be expected to live as Frenchmen whose personal faith happened to be Judaism, rather than as members of an autonomous, self-enclosed Jewish community with a powerful sense of kinship to one another and to the Jewish people as a whole. The price to be exacted for emancipation had been made quite clear in the declaration of the liberal deputy Count Clermont-Tonnerre to the National Assembly: "To the Jew as an individual – everything; to the Jews as a nation – nothing"» (Martin, 1974: 204).

Many Jews were happy to participate in this redefinition of Jewish identity and did so through printed-mediated communication. For example, one Samuel Levy made the following argument in a Parisian journal: «France, which has been first to remove from us

the shame of Judea, is our Land of Israel; its hills, our Zion; its waters, our Jourdan» (cited by Martin, 1974: 204). Such individual assertions of loyalty were not sufficient for the Emperor Napoleon, who in 1806 called together a National Assembly of Jewish Notables to answer 12 questions about Judaism. Martin says in this regard:

«What Napoleon clearly desired from the Notables [...] was an assurance that the jurisdiction of rabbinic halachah in civil and judicial matters would give way before the supremacy of French law, and, more importantly, a complete renunciation by Jews of all claims to Jewish nationhood and separate corporate status within France» (Martin, 1974: 206).

The notables gave him the answers he sought, and they were further ratifications when Napoleon assembled the Great Sanhedrin. As we have indicated earlier, this had been the name of the Jewish governing body in antiquity, and such a meeting had not been held since the second destruction of the Temple approximately 18 centuries earlier (Dimont, 1962: 93). Confirming the Assembly of Notables' answers, this congress essentially declared Judaism denationalized. In return, Napoleon pronounced Judaism one of France's «official» religions in 1808, although he also enacted new economic and residential restrictions on the Jewish people (Dimont, 1962: 95).

The point, regarding the interest of our study, is not the limitations placed on Jewish emancipation, but the recasting of Jewish identity. This new period opened by the so called «Jewish Enlightenment» or «Haskalah» generated different changes within the Jewish communities in Europe. Basically it was the beginning of the outcome of modern divisions within Jewish communities, basically into two great groups: the Conservative and the Liberal, and the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox (Introvigne – Melton, 2004: 59).

Conservative and Liberal Judaism assumed an open interpretation of Jewish law in the context of the modern world. This principle generated particular interest in Western Europe and later in the United States since many Jewish communities emigrated there all along the XIXth and XXth centuries (Introvigne – Melton, 2004: 79). Even though there are particular differences within the trends that constitute this broad factions, in general their approach to modernity and, thus, to electronic media, would be open, but always safeguarding the notion of following the law as the basic testimonial purpose of the Jewish vocation. The representatives of these groups in Israel are known today as the «national religious» groups of Israel and that is not limited to the «Israeli National Religious Party» (Waxman, 2004: 221). In general this broad group, as history has shown, would give place to a cosmopolitan communities of Jews linked by their common cultural background and religious understanding of the law as adaptable and innovating. It would also give place to Zionism and its different trends (including the religious one) that would drive towards the

creation of the state of Israel in 1948, giving place to a more nationalistic geopolitical positioning founded in a network of communication between different conservative and liberal Jewish communities that, even though low in numbers, exercise a strong influence in today's geopolitical horizon (Laguerre, 2011: 38).

Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities (of which the Haredi groups stand as an illustrative example) assumed a more defensive position towards the «Haskalah» stressing the particularity of Judaism and its purpose within the divine understanding of history (Introvigne – Melton, 2004: 93-94). The different groups that compose this trend seek to live Jewish law according to the standards of the law itself, and not of the impositions of modernity. They strive to discern the meaning and purpose of electronic and digital communication following a meticulous analysis of its consequences (Introvigne – Melton, 2004: 103). United into cellular groups scattered around many countries –including the state of Israel– they continue an indigenized dynamic of existence, giving particular relevance to traditions and customs, but also retaining plural positions regarding the acceptance or not of a Jewish nation that is constructed by the will of men and is not received through god's mercy. These groups, even through different in their character, follow a more cellular and ethnicist understanding of geopolitics (Laguerre, 2011: 40) seeking to assure their particularity within the context of the nations where they dwell.

This rich diversity of positions regarding the identity of Judaism and the forms of adjoining it in the context of a modern and post-modern environment have marked the ways in which Judaism understands contemporary media, a subject that we propose to resume in the next section of our study.

2.4.4. The Jewish Perspectives of the Media World

The understanding of Jewish globalization, its notion of revelation and the communicational consequences that derive from it –particularly in the framing of specific forms of media, such as oral, written and printed– allow us to face now the main perspectives of Judaism regarding the contemporary media world. We have already underline the difficulty regarding the study of Jewish media dynamics because of the limited number of studies in this area. But thanks to the few academicians that have met this challenge we can construct a fair description of such a reality.

As Yoel Cohen asserts, Judaism's perspective on mass media may be divided between motifs in the Old Testament comprising communications, and principles of Jewish religious law concerning behaviour of mass media (Cohe, 2006b: 119).

As we have underlined, Judaism does not preach social asceticism or a social isolation but encourages social participation and, therefore, communication between men as a consequence of God's will to communicate with humanity. In order to regulate social communication a number of principles may be extrapolated from the Jewish sources we have presented above: given that the Five Books of Moses (Torah), the prophets, and later Jewish law works like Mishnah and Talmud predate the mass media age, first it is necessary, in determining Judaism's view of mass media to locate points of contacts between Judaism and social communication.

2.4.4.1. The Ethical Dimension of Communication and Media Use

The main spheres of social communication where Jewish religious law (halakhah) has legalized are firstly, the individual's right to privacy and his social reputation, and secondly, drawing on the biblical precept that «the camp shall be holy» (Al-Baladhuri: 122, cited by Cohen, 2005: 180), the sexual modesty should characterize media content. A third sphere concerned the functioning and exposure to the media on the Sabbath and holy days.

This suggests that the overlap between mass media behaviour and Judaism appear conflictual: where there is a confluence of interests between Judaism and mass media such as the provision of information about events and societies which contributes to understanding and the building of peaceful relationships, this is not generally identified as a specifically religious goal (Cohen, 2006a: 114).

According to Cohen, the major innovation of Jewish theology in mass media behaviour concerns the divulging of previously unknown information (Cohen, 2012: 84). Leviticus 19:16, in warning against not being «a talebearer among your people, or standing idly by the blood of your neighbour» imposes substantial limitations on the passage of information.

The rabbis have divided types of information into a number of categories. Most severe is divulging secret information to the wider public which is intended or has the effect of damaging somebody's reputation («loshon hara»). When Miriam spoke ill of Moses for «the Cushan woman he married» she was smitten with leprosy. Also forbidden, but with lesser severity, is the disclosure of even positive information about somebody it will indirectly lead others to voice negative opinion about that individual («rehilut») (Pliskin, 1975: 32).

In contrast to modern society, characterized by the right to privacy as subservient to the right to know, in Judaism the right to know is submissive to the right to privacy. Invasion of privacy is regarded as sinful; information and photos obtained from a neighbour's private

territory is private, its publication being tantamount to an invasion of privacy, and gossip (Cohen, 2012: 93).

The restrictions in Judaism profoundly affects the work of the professional journalist in disclosing previously unpublished information. The journalist draws much of his information from sources who disclose selectively, often in order to weaken a political opponent. However, once the information is known to three people it is no longer forbidden, and it is permitted to be heard. Information therefore takes on a relative value. The journalist and his informant have carried out a most dreadful act in making this information public, but that same information may be heard by other people (Cohen, 2006b: 117).

While modern society permits everything to be published apart from that which personally damages somebody's reputation –including a large middle category of information which is not of vital importance to know– Judaism does not acknowledge an automatic right to this middle category of information (Cohen, 2012: 33). Scholars have differed regarding the middle category of information: Maimonides, for example, distinguished between information about «distant» events, such as one associated with the elite, and about individuals «nearer» to the discloser of the information of which it is forbidden. But Maimonides says that this category is not forbidden by Jewish law (Cohen, 2012: 34). More recently, the stringent approach represented by Israel Meir Ha-Kohen (1838-1833), known as the Chofetz Hayim of Vilna, contrasts with Abraham Kook (1865-1935), the chief rabbi of Palestine during the British mandate period, who recognized that the press had an integral part to play in modern nation-building, and favoured that media behaviour should be more in tune with Jewish values (Cohen, 2012: 35).

This means that, in Judaism, the only rights to know are first, the right to know Jewish knowledge, i.e. the Torah and national laws, and secondly, information which if kept secret would cause damage to somebody. In the latter, the Bible acknowledges the fourth estate role, of societal watchdog, fulfilled by the media (Korngott, 1993: 392-366). The Torah says that it is not only permitted to publish information which if kept unpublished would damage society but obligatory. That same verse (Leviticus 19:16) which prohibits the disclosure of secret information continues «[...] do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbour», and suggests that if somebody, including a journalist, hears of information, such as corruption committed by a government minister or as official, he has an obligation to take steps to rectify the situation.

Korngott thinks that the Bible is possibly unique in its time period in not only praising the heroes but also criticizing them. There is a long tradition of freedom of

expression by the prophets speaking out against wrongdoings of the leadership and the people, and against the exploitation of the poor (Korngott, 1993: 367).

A related question which has occupied some rabbis today concerns the disclosure of information of corruption on sexual improprieties committed by rabbis. Such disclosures defame the religion and even God (*hilul hashem*) and are regarded with considerable gravity. As Cohen puts it,

«Instead of emulating a rabbi-like figurehead as somebody behaving in God's way, people will emulate the wrong deed. Moreover, there may be no way to correct inappropriate behaviour by a specific individual other than by going public with the wrong deed» (Cohen, 2012: 64).

Over the centuries rabbis have generally favored covering up rather than disclosure even if it may be in the social interest for people to know. By contrast, modern society is characterised by such matters being brought to public attention rather than being ignored (Cohen, 2006b: 117). Even the Bible was not averse to publishing details of the sins of the righteous as means toward moral teaching. One of a number of examples is Mose's sin in smiting the Rock instead of speaking to the Rock to bring forth water, which would have otherwise publicized the miracle – a means toward moral teaching. Another concerns the public dishonour to the punishment given to idol-worshippers:

«[...] the idle worshipper shall be put to death; the hand of the judges being first and after them all of Israel, and all Israel shall hear and see, and there shall not be evil any longer» (Deuteronomy, 17:7).

Moreover, there is a Jewish principle of collective responsibility, according to which a Jew is responsible for warning his fellow Jew about his wrongdoing, and that failing to do so makes the former himself punishable by heavenly decree (Cohen, 2012: 95).

Although the Jewish tradition is critical of sexual exposure in the news media, notably in film and in photographs, this is less obvious than it appears. Physical pleasure from sexual relations within marriage is regarded in a positive light in Judaism. Cohen remarks:

«Biblical discussion of modesty as an ethical value concerns mostly the manner in which a person behaves in his social relations. Yet, the Israelite camp in the wilderness in "which God walked shall be holy... that God should not see anything unseemly and turn Himself away from you" (Deuteronomy 23:15) is an allusion to nudity being looked on negatively. A concern of Jewish teaching is that as a result of the exposure to images alluding to sex, a man could be sexually aroused to masturbation or "improper emission of seed" (onanism) (Genesis 38:9)» (Cohen, 2006b: 119).

Different trends in Judaism interpret the requirement of sexual modesty differently. Orthodox Judaism, for example, forbids a man to look on a female immodestly attired; in the ultra-Orthodox community it includes the uncovering hair of a married woman. Similarly, they forbid a man to listen to a woman singer lest he be sexually aroused; the modern Orthodox community permits only if the song is prerecorded and the listener does not know how the singer looks (Cohen, 2006b: 120).

The same prohibition on men does not apply on women. These restrictions raise profound artistic questions of how love can be portrayed and expressed in a manner which is religiously acceptable (Cohen, 2006b: 121). Conservative and Reform Judaism takes a more liberal attitude, but the latter, in defending women's rights, takes a stand on the sensual exploitation of women in the media (Blondheim, 2015: 37).

Another moral issue, the prohibition of work on the Sabbath Day as expressed in the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8) has implications for the Jew's exposure to the media on the Sabbath and holy days. The prohibition of work (called «acts of creativity» in the Jewish tradition) includes activating electricity on the Sabbath and holy days, with the result that television and radio cannot be switched on or the internet accessed. Liberal and Conservative Judaism, however, do not rule against using electronic media (Cohen, 2005: 182).

Since the Sabbath day is not only characterized by restrictions on work but also as a spiritual experience of prayer, study and rest on the holyday, Haredi rabbis have questioned whether such mundane activities as newspaper exposure take away from the Sabbath atmosphere. Furthermore, even though a radio or television set could theoretically either be left on from before the Sabbath, or be turned on automatically by a time clock (a device by which many Jews have heating and light on the Sabbath) it could distract from the Sabbath experience, unless the program is of a religious nature. In Israel, for example, electronic media functions on the Sabbath and holy days, with the single exception of the Yom Kippur fast day, but newspapers are not published. Cohen brings an interesting example of this moral issue:

«During the 1991 Gulf War, when Israel's civilian population was targeted by Iraqi missiles, [Haredi] rabbis allowed for the radio to be left on in order for the people to follow the instructions of the emergency forces. Certain types of information in newspapers, such as advertisements or economic and other articles directly related to an individual Jew's work, are regarded as inappropriate reading lest he come to make even a mental decision regarding work» (Cohen, 2006b: 120).

A Jew may not benefit on the Sabbath from work carried out specifically for him, such as having a newspaper delivered to his house or from news gathered on the Sabbath. The subject of Sabbath observance in the modern technological age is one that occupies rabbis today (Cohen, 2006b: 121).

Amongst other ethical media-related questions are whether a religious Jew may give an interview to a broadcast journalist on the weekday in the knowledge that it will be broadcast on the Sabbath, and whether a Jew living in Israel may listen or see a re-broadcasting of a program first broadcast by Jews on the Sabbath (Cohen, 2006a: 192).

An extension of the Jewish law prohibition to pronounce the holy Name of God – usually known as the «Tetragrammaton» – regards as sacrilegious the destruction of texts with other names of God. To overcome the problem, texts such as prayer books are by tradition buried in a cemetery (Cohen, 2006a: 187). In the past orthodox rabbis debated whether or not newspapers should print sermons and other religious material. The preferred means of the religious media is to use God's name in an abbreviation (for example *G-d*). Some rabbis limit the prohibition to the printing of full Scriptural verses and not to other types of references to God. With the introduction of computers and Internet, rabbis addressed the question of the name of God appearing on screen, and have ruled that the prohibition on erasing God's name occurs in print, not when in electronic form, which is not regarded as a writing since it involves firing electrons on a luminous substance painted on the inside of the screen which lights up in the form of letters. The leniency does not extend to material saved to disk (Cohen, 2006a: 192).

2.4.4.2. The Ultra-orthodox Jews and the Media: The Haredi Community

Of all the religious streams, the Haredi communities of ultra-Orthodox Jews have felt most threatened by changing mass media. Reflecting its philosophy of withdrawal from modernity, seeking to maintain religious values in a cultural ghetto framework, their rabbis have over the years issued religious decrees (*pesukdin*) against media as a threat to Torah family values. From the appearance of newspapers in the nineteenth century, through the to the appearance of radio and television, and latterly video, computers and the Internet, Haredi rabbis have enacted such decrees against media. The modern orthodox rabbis (*dati leumi*) have not issued legal rulings regarding media exposure, which reflects their broader philosophy of seeking to create a synthesis between Judaism and modernity. Yet some of their rabbis, particularly those identified with the Hardal sub stream (*haredi leumi*) encourage controlling exposure particularly of children to the general media.

When Israel Television was established in 1968, Haredi rabbis banned their followers from watching television because its content was considered inappropriate. The ban on

television was the most successful or the bans against media with the overwhelming number of Haredim respecting it. The earlier ban on radio – drawing on the prohibition against hearing gossip (*loshon hara*) – while enjoying some respect, is much less respected than the TV ban because radio is more of an informational than entertainment tool. The ongoing political defence problems of the country make it more difficult for people to adhere to the ban.

When video cameras were produced – with many haredi families using them to record family celebrations – no rabbinical ban was introduced initially because their usage could be controlled. However, after it was discovered that television programs could be seen if videos were plugged into computers, haredi rabbis banned videos in 1993.

In 1998 haredi rabbis imposed a ban on computers. Initially it covered the computer in its entirety but the recognition that computers are an integral part of modern business life led to a revision, and they distinguished between allowing computers in business but not at home. Not all haredi rabbis agreed to the ban, notably haredi rabbis from a Sephardi (or non-Ashkenazi) background. There is a recognition that the computer is a useful tool for religious study. For example, the Bar Ilan University CD-ROM Responsa Project is a database of the most comprehensive collection of traditional texts from the Bible, biblical commentaries, Mishnah, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, and later Jewish codes, covering 3,300 years of Jewish written scholarship. The development of the Internet resulted in a special *bet din* (religious law court) of haredi rabbis to issue a ban on its use. It was regarded by them as a far worse moral threat than television: whereas television was supervised, the Internet enabled access to pornographic sites. Haredi rabbis have been faced with the realization that the ban on computers and Internet has not been entirely accepted – an estimated 40% of haredi houses in Israel have personal computers at home. Parallel to the rabbinical bans upon computers there have been a number of attempts by haredi entrepreneurs of computer filtering programs.

In 2002 haredi rabbis forbade talmudical college students from using mobile phones, seeing them as a threatening to the appropriate atmosphere for the talmudical college study hall. But as the mobile phone's capabilities widened, notably providing Internet access, haredi rabbis saw the mobile phone as a threat to the entire community and established a rabbinical committee for communication affairs which began negotiating with mobile phone companies to provide only land telephone lines. The various bans by haredi rabbis against new media forms have caused the wider meaning of modesty in Judaism, as concerning personal behaviour such as regarding wealth and self assessment, to be somewhat lost in the overwhelming concern about sexual modesty.

2.4.4.3. Israel, the Media, and the Geopolitics of Communication

Israel, a young democracy, established in 1948, with a 120-member unicameral parliament elected officially every four years in universal, proportional, nationwide elections, is located in the Middle East, along the eastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, bordered by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. It lies at the junction of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. From the outset, Israel's media system took shape in the shadow of an extended conflict with Arab states and the Palestinian people that culminated in several military clashes – 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, 1989, 2000, and 2006 (Caspi, 2008: 2536). Along its short history, mass media in Israel have gone through an evolution. As Caspi says,

«During Israel's six decades of independence, its media institutions have undergone extensive structural change, shifting from a centralized, monolithic system to a decentralized one that integrates traditional and new media and boasts a well-developed telecommunications infrastructure. Besides the printed press – dailies, local papers, and magazines – and dozens of radio and cable and satellite television channels, a variety of online newspapers enriches the media map. Furthermore, four mobile telephony service providers offer a wide range of programs, while old broadcast media and new entrepreneurs are examining options for the Internet» (Caspi, 2008: 2537).

The centrality of religion in the Jewish State of Israel has made religion a characteristic of the Israeli mass media, thus structuring the foundations of what we call, in the context of our investigation, the Geo-political context of today's Jewish communicational tradition.

The tensions between religion and state in Israel are subject of regular coverage and discussion in the mainstream general media. There is also a separatist religious media providing the informational requirements of the ultr-Orthodox Haredim and the modern *dati leumi* («national religious») populations, the two dominant religious streams in Israel (Cohen, 2006b: 189).

A changing media structure including the place of religion in public broadcasting and Internet, and changes within the two religious Haredi and *dati leumi* communities has made mass media a subagent of contemporary religious identity and a channel of communication between religious and secular communities in Israel (Cohen, 2005: 179).

The media are the main channel through which the secular and most of the traditional (though not specifically religious) adult population – around 70% of Israeli Jewish population – receive information about religion. Coverage of religion in the general media may be divided between reporting religious related news stories and the reporting of fewer stories on religion per se notr concerning the daily news (Caspi, 2008: 2539).

According to Cohen,

«Religion coverage on the news pages mostly focuses upon aspects of state-religion relations including the religious political parties (which generally hold a fifth of the one hundred twenty seats in the Knesset and participate in the coalition style government), government funding for yeshivot (educational institutions of higher religious learning), army exceptions for yeshiva students, the status of the small but growing non-Orthodox religious streams (Reform and Conservative which do not enjoy official recognition by the government) and the question of the official status of religious conversions carried out by them, and Sabbath and kashrut observance in public institutions». (Cohen, 2006b: 190)

Other national news papers, radio, and television each have a religious-affairs correspondent covering the beat in most cases on full-time basis. Internal religious matters such as synagogal life, liturgy, rabbis, religious educational institutions (with the exception of government funding) and religious youth groups receive limited attention (Mandel – Manor, 2012: 174).

Unusual *pesukim* (religious decisions) are sometimes covered in the popular media, including the newspapers *Yedioth Aharonot* and *Maariv*, if only as reflecting the eccentricity of religions. One exception is the religious holidays which are usually covered through photographic illustration and television reports on the eve of the holiday, including the high prices of Passover (*Pesach*) food, children's fancy dress for the Purim holiday, or the contrasting manners in which the religious and secular Israelis spend the vacations during week-long Passover and Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) holidays (Cohen, 2006b: 191).

The coverage of the diverse religious trends present in modern Israel is not even. Cohen underlines:

«The Haredi population, which makes up 450.000 of Israel's five million Jewish population, is the most covered religious stream due both to their political clout and their anti-modern lifestyle. The modern Orthodox (around 180.000) are today less focused on narrow questions concerning state-religion relations and more in the forefront of Jewish settlements in the West Bank (or the biblical territories of Judea, Samaria) captured in 1967. The Reform and Conservative receive far less coverage except when they appeal to the courts or the government against the Orthodox monopoly. There is almost no religion-related coverage, neither of the Israeli Muslim population, despite that they make up a sixth of the population, nor of Christian communities, despite the presence of key Christian churches in Jerusalem, Nazareth and the Palestinian controlled Bethlehem» (Cohen, 2005:180).

Purely religious content in the press is mostly confined to a column in the Friday weekend edition on the weekly Bible reading in each of the three national newspapers, the quality *Haaretz*, *Yedioth Aharonot* and *Maariv*. Current trends in religious behaviour are occasionally the subject of features in the news papers (Cohen, 2006b: 191).

According to what we have seen above, one could say that the religious media in Israel may be divided between the Haredi media and the modern Orthodox Media. Cohen precises:

«The Haredi press has been party (or institutional) affiliated press. There are two daily newspapers. *Hamodia* (“The announcer”) founded in 1949, that is the organ of Agudat Israel political party, representing the Ashkenazi Haredi Hasidic community, most closely identified with the Gerer Hasidic Court. *Yetad Neeman* (Torah Opinion Daily) is the organ of the Degel Torah party which represents the Ashkenazi Haredi non-Hasidic or Lithuanian community. It was founded in 1985 by followers of Rabbi Eliezer Shach, head of the elite Ponovezh Yeashiva in Bnei Beraq, after the latter was thrown out of the Council of Torah Sages, and umbrella group of Ashkenazi Haredi rabbis. The paper’s readers count also Haredim from Sephardi or non-Ashkenazi background. Each have an estimated circulation of 30.000 copies. With the exception of radio, these have been the only mass media seen by this specific population» (Cohen, 2006a: 190).

The newspapers act as important agents of political recruitment: 67% of Haredim surveyed read *Hamodia* or 30% *Yetad Neeman* (Israeli Advertisers’ Association, 1997: 26-28).

The Sephardi Shas political party founded its own daily newspaper, *Yom LeYom* («From Day to Day») in 1993 but it became a weekly shortly afterwards. Its estimated circulation is 3.000 (Cohen, 2006b, 192). By contrast to *Hamodia* and *Yetad Neeman*, which are primarily media covering the news, *Yom LeYom* allots more space to covering the activities of the party and its spiritual mentor Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. Other institutional publications include *Hamahaneh Haharedi*, the weekly of the Belze Hasidic court; *Kfar Habad*, organ of the Habad (Lubavitcher) hassidim; *Haedah* of the Council of Torah Sages; and *Hahomah* of the Neturei Kartya, part of the Satmar Hassidic court. These are less news but more political commentaries with the exception of *Kfar Habad* which reports Habad’s worldwide outreach programme and contains articles memorizing past rebbes who led the movement (Cohen, 2005: 182).

Since the 1980s the monopoly enjoyed by the party papers has been successfully challenged by a commercially-oriented Haredi weekly media which has blossomed. These are attempts by journalists from a haredi background to deploy the techniques such as modern graphics, fetching headlines, covering a broader range of subjects than those in the party «establishment» Haredi media (Cohen, 2005: 183). The first papers, today obsolete, were *Erev Shabbat* and *Yom Shishi*. The main weeklies are *Mishpacha* («Family») and *BeKehila* («In the Community») both of which were established in 1997.

There have been vain attempts by the Haredi rabbis to stop the phenomenon of the commercial media may be attributed to a desire within sections of Haredi society to be better informed and in particular to be less estranged from the modern Israeli state. When

the state was founded religious Haredi leaders denounced the state as before its time: as requiring the coming of the Messiah before a sovereign Jewish state could be established. Agudas Israel party declined to participate in the country's coalition style of government. Thus Haredim also declined to serve in the army (Cohen, 2005: 194).

Haredi press is heavily influenced by Jewish principles. Its mandate reflects less what reality is and more what it should be. Drawing upon the biblical edict that «the Israeli camp shall be holy» (Leviticus 19:11), Haredi editors seek to ensure that the newspaper that enters the Haredi home does not "impure" the family atmosphere. Professor Cohen indicates that

«Each [Haredi] newspaper has a rabbinical censor whose job is daily before edition time to check the next day's edition. Above him is a board of rabbis who determine editorial policy (Leviticus 19:2)» (Cohen, 2005: 183).

There is no editorial content about entertainment, sport, stingers of women, or sexual abuse. Cohen presents several examples of this issue:

«AIDs, for example, is referred to as «a contagious disease». To get around the limitations when important information needs to be published, *Hamodia* and *Yetad Neeman* carry a column «From Day to Day» and «On the Agenda», which through attacking a subject as un-Jewish (for example and Israeli success in an international sporting event) are thereby informing their readers that it occurred. The party media also see the censor's role in inclusionary terms. For example, the way a newspaper describes a religious leader as gaon (most learned) or simply as a «rabbi» is an allusion to that individual's standing in the eyes of the paper and its sponsors» (Cohen, 2006b: 193).

Furthermore, the censor sees the role of the Jew as possessing a responsibility to build the model society:

«The Haredi media refer to the secular world from a perspective of superiority, hostility and self correction. There are Jews (that is Haredi Jews) and there are Israelis (secular Jews). Drawing upon Jewish social responsibility as an ideal, Israelis or Jewish heretics need to be rescued. Secular Jewish education is coined progressive education in a derogatory sense, described as a factor in rising crime patterns. The Left are associated with the universities and academics. The modern religious are criticized as misled religious Jews. Non-Jewish religions are not referred to» (Cohen, 2012: 58).

Most criticism is reserved for Zionism. The Israeli Army is not called by its formal name, the Israeli Defense Forces, since the true defender of Israel is God. The Supreme Court is criticized for not basing its decision on Jewish religious law (*halakhah*), so they are

not depicted as rulings: instead “the court decided” is written. The secular media is pictured as being permissive, anti-establishment, and atheistic (Cohen, 2012: 59).

Haredi press have few reporters, relying mostly upon the news agencies. Most of the material produced in-house comprises analyses, and interpretations of news developments, according to the Haredi viewpoint.

The commercial Haredi media, while respecting the code of not publishing immoral matter that would upset Haredi Jewish sensitivities, have introduced a new level of press freedom in an otherwise highly hierarchical society (Cohen, 2005: 195). It reports and discusses behind the scenes wheeling and dealing of the Council of Torah Sages, the politics inside the Haredi political parties, and instances of corruption in Haredi institutions. It has also opened a Pandora’s box of issues previously denied in Haredi circles such as the problem of Haredi drop-outs from the yeshivot, discrimination in the Ashkenazi Haredi school system against Sephardi children, and Down-syndrome children (Cohen, 2005: 196).

A major qualitative difference in religion reporting between the religious press and the general press is that the latter cover a far broader range of religious themes. These include inspiring portraits of religious sages, Jewish history, discussion of contemporary questions of Jewish religious law (*halakhah*), suitable material at times of holidays, sections of special interest for women, and book reviews of religious publications (Mandel – Manos, 2012: 175). Some of this is contained in a separate supplement with the Friday Sabbath eve edition of the newspaper. The separate supplement also enables these religious readers who prefer not to read «secular» subjects on the Sabbath holy day to read only the holy (*kadosh*) supplements (Cohen, 2005: 194).

Together with the Haredi press, we find the modern Jewish press. The National Religious Party (NRP) publishes a daily newspaper called *Hatzofe* («The Spectator») with a daily circulation of around 9.000 copies, and 14.000 on Sabbath and holy day eve (Cohen, 2005: 195). Unlike Haredi papers, its impact is less, given that the modern Jews read the general press. A nationalist press has evolved in recent years, which is read by many modern orthodox Jews, reflecting the ties between the NRP and settlement in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The weekly publication *Ba Sheva* («In the Week»), established in 2002, is financed through advertising. The quality weekly *Mekor Rishon* («First Source»), established in 1997, is less narrowly or religiously identified (Cohen, 2005: 196).

Broadcasting is broken down between religious content in the general broadcasting space, and broadcasting stations geared for religious populations.

Religious broadcasting has been heavily influenced by the public broadcasting model that exists in Israel. Israel Radio and Israel Television has since 1965 and 1968 existed as a

public broadcasting authority. Prior to this, they were part of the Prime Minister's office. Caspi observes:

«A religion department exists each in Israel Radio and Israel Television. Under broadcasting Law, the function of the religion department of the Israel Broadcasting Authority is to “strengthen ties with the Jewish heritage and its values and deepen knowledge about it”. Programming covers topical Jewish developments in Israel and in Jewish communities abroad, cantorial music and Chassidic music, discussions about Bible weekly reading, and relevant programming at times of the holy days. Under a coalition government agreement in 1950 the modern Orthodox National Religious party (NRP) was given the religion department in Israel Radio, and after Israel Radio became a public authority the department's staff was closely identified with members of the NRP. Program contents has an Orthodox accent, particularly modern Orthodox, with little program involvement of the non-Orthodox Conservative and Reform movements, in part reflecting their small size in Israel. Minority Muslim religious tastes are covered in their own Arabic-language public radio and television channels in Israel» (Caspi, 2008: 2539).

The Haredi community objects to the general media extend to Israel radio, both because its content is also regarded as unsuitable for the Haredi home and because it is part of the state Zionist structure. Some listen to the news channel of Israel radio. Other use a pirate nationalist-modern religious station, *Arutz 7*, which broadcasts from 1988 until it was closed in 2003 (Cohen, 2005: 195).

In 1996 the Israeli Government, recognizing the need to provide the religious communities with their own station, approved the establishment of Radio *Kol Chai* («The Voice of Life»). Though geared to both the Haredi and modern Jewish communities, Haredim seem to have managed to take control of the station and such features as women announcers and women singers, which are anathema to Haredi interpretation of religious law, were dropped (Cohen, 2006b: 194).

There are a large number of pirate radio stations, mostly religious, and many of which are affiliated with supporters of the Shas religious party. *Radio Emet* («The Radio of Truth»), *Radio 2000*, and *Radio 10*, for example, mainly broadcast inspirational content including religious lessons (*shiurim*), and religious songs. The Shas Party unsuccessfully lobbied a movement that searched to legalize the stations in the 1990s, but was unsuccessful (Mandel – Manor, 2012: 175).

Modern Orthodox Jews tend to listen to public radio and many also watch public television. *Yet Arutz 7*, identified with the settler movement, was until its forced closure a popular station also providing news. Dissatisfaction among some of the modern Orthodox with television programming led to the creation in 2003 of an independent television channel, *Techelet*, geared toward the traditional Israeli public with creative programming

about Jewish history and history in general, but it failed economically to sustain itself (Mandel – Manor, 2012: 176).

Religious communities are not as exposed to the mainstream media as the general Israeli Jewish population. 28% of Jewish religious people recognized by the state (Haredi and modern Orthodox) defining themselves as religious do not see a daily newspaper in contrast to 17% of secular Israelis (Israeli Advertisers' Association, 1997: 24).

According to the Israeli Advertiser's Association, this is particularly true of the Haredi community:

«32% of Haredim do not read any newspaper, and only 14% see general, non religious newspapers. 46% of Haredim do not listen to radio, 30% of which said they do not do so for religious reasons. 24% of Haredim are estimated to listen to Kol Chai's newly created news department. Beforehand, many listeners to Arutz 7, which was supporting given the station's ultra Zionist agenda. Only 14% listen to Israeli radio, and 6% to the Galei Zahal military radio station. The low figures for radio are surprising given the rapidly changing security situation in the country. The inspirational pirate radio stations have a regular following: 20% and 19% of Haredim listen to Kol Neshama («The Voice of the Soul») and Radio 10» (Israeli Advertisers' Association, 1997: 26).

Television is banned in Haredi communities because its content is regarded as morally inappropriate; while entertainment per se is not invalidated the Haredi perspective is nevertheless critical of it being seen as more than a relief from such higher values as religious studies (Mandel – Manor, 2012: 175).

There is considerable variance among the Israeli Jewish public in religion. Only 2% and 3% of secular Israelis listen frequently to *shuirim*, and programmes on religion and tradition, in contrast to 21% and 17% of traditional Israelis, 44% and 37% of modern Orthodox Jews, and 55 percent and 51 percent of Haredi Jews (Rokeach, 1997: 3).

The mass media in Israel influence mutual religious and secular perceptions of each other, having implications for the uneasy relationship between the two communities. In attacking the lifestyles of secular Israelis, the Haredi media delegitimize the population in the eyes of the Haredim (Cohen, 2012: 174).

On the other hand, the preoccupation of religion coverage in the general media with the religious political parties, and with the wheeling and dealing over state-religion matters, notably funding for Haredi institutions, distorts the perception of Haredim in the eyes of the secular population. As a stereotyping agent, the media impact could be seen, for example, in the difference in which the rabbi is perceived: whereas he is glorified by the religious media, the rabbi is vilified in the general media. Television and newspaper photo images of the Haredim construct an image of them as backward and generally fall to

penetrate their inner world. So does the demographic trend among the Orthodox population toward large families. (Herzog Institute of Communications, Society, Politics, 2003: 22).

2.4.4.4. Jewish Diaspora Media

Due to the diasporic trait of Jewish Globalization, mass media has played a role within communities in Jewish diaspora for 350 years. There are 8.300.000 Jews living in the diapora, 5.700.000 of which are in the United States. The media provide local Jewish news, national Jewish community news, and news from Israel and overseas Jewish communities. In addition to providing news, articles, essays and reviews on Jewish identity, culture and religion are included. In addition to its informational function, the media fulfils an important role in maintaining Jewish identity and solidarity with Jews elsewhere (Caspi, 2008: 2538).

The first newspaper, the *Gazeta de Amsterdam*, was founded in Amsterdam in 1675. The first Jewish newspaper in the modern sense of providing news was the *Allgemeine zeitung des Judenthums*, launched in Leipzig in 1837 and surviving until 1922. The London *Jewish Chronicle*, founded in 1841, survives to this day. Jewish newspapers grew in the XVIIIth century parallel to the growth of the Jewish Emancipation movement (*Haskalah*) mainly in Germany. By the end of the nineteenth century there were over one hundred Jewish newspapers and journals in Europe, published in German, Hebrew, English, Yiddish, French and Ladino. By the 1930s there were also Yiddish dailies in kea East European capitals, which folded after the rise of Nazism. A number of underground papers were published during World War II in areas under Nazi control including the Warsaw ghetto (Cohen, 2012: 183).

Cohen, when talking about Jewish Diaposra Media, asserts that:

«The arrival of masses of Jewish immigrants to the United States at the end of the XIXth century and the first half of the twentieth century created a daily and weekly Yiddsih press. In addition to news, it provided information about immigrants' rights and the new homeland. Today there are fifty weekly newspapers and a large number of biweekly and monthly publications in the United States» (Cohen, 2012: 177).

There are fifteen weekly Jewish newspapers in Europe, seven in Canada, three in Latin America, and two elsewhere in the world. In addition, there are many which appear fortnightly or monthly in different centres of Jewish population. The ex-Soviet republics have seen a rebirth of Jewish press with about forty publications.

A major source of information for the Jewish press worldwide is the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Established by Jacob Landau in The Hague, and based since 1922 in New York, it has a far-flung network of correspondents, mostly part time, in North America and

around the world. It is partly funded by the Council of Jewish Federations. Economic difficulties facing the Jewish press has produced a trend of local Jewish federations buying out the Jewish press, which it sees as a channel to the Jewish community. But this trend has in affect limited the newspaper's freedom of reporting about the Jewish establishment (Caspi, 2008: 2539).

News from Israel is an important ingredient of the coverage in the Jewish media today. Although the Israel-Arab conflict is covered already by daily general media, the Jewish media is less critical and covers a broader range of issues such as internal Israel politics, the economy, religion, and society. Introspective of criticizing the Jewish State, the Jewish media generates diaspora sympathy for Israel (Mandel – Manor, 2012: 180).

There are Jewish radio stations in many countries, in most cases broadcasting a few hours weekly. The most developed Jewish radio stations are those in France, Argentina, and New York, which broadcast throughout the week (Cohen, 2006b: 195).

Attempts to create Jewish television have not generally succeeded owing to its high cost; in a few countries, state television designates time to Jewish religion programmes, normally together with other religious groups (Cohen, 2006b: 197). The Internet has become an important means for following Jewish news, with many Jewish news organizations producing online editions, as we shall see in the 5th chapter of our study.

2.5. CONCLUSION: THE SOCIAL AND GEO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF JEWISH COMMUNICATIONAL TRADITION. UNIQUENESS, NETWORK AND NATION

In this chapter of our dissertation we have approached the Jewish religious tradition, its globalization paradigms and the religious foundation of its communicational dynamics. As we have underlined, the Jewish religious tradition presents a networked and testimonial development of communication. Its theological understanding of «vertical» communication is directly linked to the law, revealed to Moses, and adjourned along history so that the «chosen people» -the people of Israel– can be witness to god's allegiance to mankind. Thus communication, from the Jewish perspective, is concerned about the understanding of the divine message through signs, words and written tradition.

But the history and globalization of Judaism would entail a continuous adjournment of such a «vertical» form of communication through the experience of the Diaspora. Such an unique experience –that implies the experience of dispossession and wondering– generates, as we have underlined, a «networked community» of believers that seeks to remain faithful to its theological roots, but at the same time dwells in order to update the meaning of divine communication according to new circumstances.

As we have highlighted, there appears to be a fundamental affinity between the contemporary media environment and the Jewish historical communicative experience. This affinity presents a double relationship. One relationship is oriented towards the continuous generation of new contents that explain vertical communication in multiple historical circumstances, thus generating new forms of making such a communication understandable and, according to the law, practicable. The other form of relationship is concerned with the creation of a stable networks of identity, that have historically derived mostly in the creation of the State of Israel, understood as the space concealed for the culturally Jewish, or as the return to a promised land that brings about a profound religious meaning.

We have also underlined that, within these presuppositions, the origin of Jewish ritual was the sharing of media, not messages, with God. This theological emphasis on media, in time and with the globalizing experience of the Diaspora, would be transformed into scriptures, generating a broad range of written and oral media based in divine revelation but continuously re-interpreted according to the circumstances of the different Jewish communities. These circumstances generated a subsequent legalistic turn linked to media and communication that required a careful analysis by an elaborate system of religious law.

This media-centric religious heritage that we have described along this chapter imprinted Jewish culture with considerable attention in understanding media, as we can see in the complex religious construction of contemporary media in Israel.

But the unique social experience of the Jews, that shaped their cultural attitudes towards the different kind of media, was challenged by their geopolitical dispersion, a fact that drove towards adapting new media technologies that sought to maintain the Jewish nation in exile with basic elements of connectivity. These different types of media were linked to tradition (oral and written), mysticism –as an apocalyptic understanding of the meaning of history– and halakik law –as the centre of fidelity to god’s plan in history–. They determined the different ways in which Jewish communities understood and framed the media in favour of a stronger common identity.

Such a long development seems to have prepared Jewish communications for the media environment of the XXIst century, safeguarding the identity of Judaism until the creation of the Jewish national state. These global network communities are founded on shared content-words, memories, ideas, texts and often ethical or legal systems.

Even though the understanding of the Jewish state within Judaism presents a plurality of interpretations, the communication system enabling connectedness and maintaining Judaism’s coherence and solidarity through their testimonial –not missionary– perception of «transversal» communication is the foundation of a geopolitical network of

believers that looks towards a common religious experience and the means to prolong it, taking advantage of different kind of media, to the point of consolidating a nation based in the adjournment of the initial communicative experience with the god of Abraham.

As we have tried to emphasize along this chapter, two main trends of Judaism seem to arise from our historical approach. One is the Conservative / Liberal trend, linked to what today is called «National Religious Judaism» with a more cosmopolitan and nationalistic geopolitical status due to the multiplicity of Jewish communities around the world that see in the State of Israel a common ground for religious and political identity. The other trend, that developed all along the development of Judaism in its globalizational development, is the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities (particularly represented by the Haredi Jews) that have historically undertaken a more ethnocentric or «indigenous» interpretation of religious law that seeks to keep itself independent from the influences of modernity. Even though this group follows a networked and testimonial form of communication (as National Religious Judaism), their geopolitical status tends to be more independent (cellular) and divergent-oriented (ethnic), including their positions regarding the nature of the state of Israel and its theological foundations.

The communicative and geopolitical characteristics of Judaism acquire particular relevance since they constitute the starting point of the religious traditions derived from the Abrahamic worldview. But at the same time they assume very specific connotations because of the communicative, but at the same time exclusive and testimonial dimension of the Jewish faith that avoids a universalistic claim and proposes a sense of history that will only reveal its meaning towards the end of time.

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNICATION IN THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Christianity is the largest of the world's religions, and the most extensive across the globe. Estimates of the total Christian population of the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century put the figure at around 2 billion, or 32 per cent of world population (Woodhead, 2009: 205).

But if we consider its historical development, the status of Christianity as a truly global religion is fairly recent. At the beginning of the modern period Christianity was largely confined to the Northern hemisphere. Rapid expansion of Christianity in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia has taken place during the course of the XXth century, and is shifting Christianity's centre of gravity from the developed to the developing world. At the same time that it has been growing in the Southern hemisphere, Christianity has also been declining in many parts of the North, particularly in Western Europe. But despite these developments, Christianity remains in all cases the dominant traditional religion of both Europe and the Americas. As such, it has been more intimately bound up with the rise of modernity than any other faith, so much so that some theorists (like the sociologist Max Weber) have argued that Christian (particularly Protestant) culture had an 'elective affinity' with modernity and played an important part in its rise (Woodhead, 2009: 205).

To many non-Western religions, modernity appears as a foreign import. The situation is rather different for Christianity which has been the dominant religion of the West throughout the modern period. As Woodhead asserts,

«Modernity arose within Christian countries and cultures, rather than coming to them from the outside. Indeed in some cases —as where Christians came as missionaries to non-Christian cultures—Christians were agents and spokespeople of modernity» (Woodhead, 2009: 205).

As we shall underline all along this chapter, one of the chief differences between these different groupings in Christianity lies in their understanding of authority, a key point in order to understand the particular characteristics of Christian groups from a communicational and geopolitical perspective. Woodhead resumes these differences as follows:

«For the Orthodox churches, the tradition of the church— including its liturgy and its earliest writings and creeds—has primacy. For Catholics, the church, its sacraments and tradition are central, and these come to a focus in the figure of the Pope. By contrast, Protestants tend to attribute greater authority to scripture than

to tradition, and to have a less hierarchical understanding of authority in the church. In modern times, both Protestantism and Catholicism have also developed liberal wings, which emphasize the authority of individual reason and experience alongside scripture and the church. An even more recent development is Charismatic or Pentecostal Christianity (again cutting across both Protestantism and Catholicism, though with more direct links to Protestantism), which attributes authority to both the Bible and direct experience of the Holy Spirit» (Woodhead, 2009: 209).

Taking into consideration such meaningful differences, in this chapter of our dissertation, after surveying the historical process of globalization of Christianity, we will approach each of its three major traditional divisions (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant) and their approach to communication and its geopolitical consequences. The particularity of the three different Christian traditions makes this chapter longer than the rest of our study, but we consider that the understanding of Christianity is incomplete if we don't take into consideration its internal pluralism.

3.1. THE GLOBALIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM A DOCTRINAL AND GEO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The expansion of Christianity presents a long development, and it is not the purpose of our study to cover it all. We will proceed with a general approach to the key moments of such a process, underlining the most meaningful moments related to its communicative dynamics.

3.1.1. The Beginnings of Christian Globalization

The Christian religious tradition has gone on for more than 2,000 years. The obvious central and essential element in Christianity is Jesus Christ, the leading figure of the tradition. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Christians see the replication and the realization of all the salvific events in Jewish history. For Christians, Jesus' death and resurrection take salvation beyond the chosen community of Israel to the Christian community, which is charged with proclaiming a universal salvation. If the history from Abraham to Jesus is the history and preservation of divine promises to humans, with Jesus we have the history of fulfilment of the divine promises.

According to Christian scriptures, the followers of Jesus were first referred to as «Christians» in 1st century C.E. Antioch (see Acts of the Apostles 11:26). Etymologically, the term Christian is derived from the Greek term *Christos* meaning «the anointed one». As such, Christ and Christian initially refer to the anointed, and in this context, it includes Jesus and his followers (Norris, 2002: 7).

Jesus and his disciples, who knew him during his lifetime, were Jews and familiar with Judaic teachings and traditions. In that tradition, anointing is conferred on one who is appointed priest, prophet, or ruler. In the person of Jesus, it is the belief of Christians that he is anointed as all three, and he is proclaimed to be the promised Messiah or in Hebrew, *Mashiach* («the Anointed One») (Chidester, 2001: 6).

3.1.2. Christianity from the Roman Empire to the Middle Ages

The Roman Empire provides the larger immediate historical context for the life and times of Jesus and has profoundly affected the history of Christianity. As Horsfield puts it,

«It was the context and actions of Roman rule that were essential to the death of Jesus, became the foundation for the spread of Christianity, and resulted in the preeminence of Rome as the touchstone in Christian history. Of particular interest is the Roman authorities' reliance on order and law as the infrastructure that permitted the operation of cultural and philosophical plurality in its realm. A related Roman gift was the establishment of routes, which were necessary to exercise power, ensure communications, and maintain peace in the empire» (Horsfield, 2015: 13).

In the context of the Roman Empire, Jerusalem was a tiny outpost. Enforcement measures to maintain the peace included a restriction component and were designed for social effect as much as individual penalty. Scourging and crucifixion were used with some regularity and would not have been particularly remarkable events at the time (Evans, 2008: 29). Enforcement with a firm hand complemented the availability of Roman military might and supported the need to maintain order in a large empire. Latin was used for legal proceedings and legislative purposes. Education and commerce were more usually conducted in Greek, and the small local Jewish community where Jesus lived would have spoken Aramaic, which is a dialect of Hebrew, while studies of Judaism and biblical works would be conducted in classical Hebrew (Evans, 2008: 30).

Our knowledge of the circumstances obtaining there in the 1st century C.E. are based on archaeological analyses and the writings of persons such as the Jewish historian Josephus and fragments of texts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls (Norris, 2002: 9). Just as no information concerning Moses and the Exodus has been uncovered in Egyptian archives, to date, no mention of Jesus of Nazareth has been found in Roman records of the 1st century C.E.

Among the earliest written Christian accounts are the letters of the disciple Saul (Hebrew) or «Poulos» (Greek) or «Paulus» (Latin) or «Paul» (English). He appears to have been educated in Greek and Latin; as a rabbinical student, he would have known Hebrew

and also spoken Aramaic. Multilingual capabilities would permit Paul to communicate his thoughts in relevant languages (Horsfield, 2015: 37). However, even when the translator is perfectly competent, translation risks inaccuracy from untranslatable terms and the absence of equivalent meaning for words. Consequently, our understanding of the writings of 1st century C.E. works involving multiple translations across various languages and cultures requires complex analyses and inquiry. An awareness of this complexity is relevant to reading the Christian writings across 2,000 years and several cultures (Brown, 1993: 31). Evans underlines:

«Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, the disciples initially accepted the task of conveying the message of their teacher to a Jewish audience who were familiar with Aramaic and Hebrew. However, very early, the disciples found a more receptive audience among those who were not Jews and those less familiar with Hebraic traditions. To a Hellenized audience, linguistic and cultural translation from Jesus' Hebraic concepts into the Greek language and philosophical categories was unavoidable. It appears that considerable effort was expended to distil and maintain the integrity of the message that was to be conveyed across histories and cultures» (Evans, 2008: 32).

Historical events beyond the early Christian communities contributed to the spread of Christianity. Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus as described in the Gospels, some of the Jewish community attempted a revolt against Roman rule, as we saw in the chapter about Judaism. The Roman legions responded by destroying the Temple and dispersing the Jewish community of Jerusalem.

The earliest Christian writings include the correspondence of Paul, who was converted to Christianity after the death of Jesus and was not taught by him personally. The power of Paul's letters was carried not only by their content but also by the aura and impact of the media form itself, as described by Roetzel:

«Since the literacy rate was a small fraction of the whole population, and since the expense of writing materials was considerable and the prospects for letter delivery uncertain, for the average person the arrival of a letter was momentous [...] most letter recipients in the ancient world also shared the mood of the writer and read or circulated the letter in a broader circle. It is no wonder, then, that not only the underclass but also the privileged treasured these precious letters. The importance of letters qua letters was at least one important factor accounting for the preservation of the Pauline letters we possess. While their theological profundity and relevance doubtless were major factors in the letters' preservation, copying, and ultimate canonization, it is a mistake to ignore the impact of the medium itself on the early church» (Roetzel, 1997: 76).

The letter form is crucial in understanding Paul's influence in shaping the Jesus movement into the religion of Christianity and in understanding the shaping of Christian

communicative dynamics. Through his letters, Paul was able to align himself with influential supporters who were similarly educated and culturally connected. The adoption of a medium that has such cultural associations does more than just utilize another instrument of communication; it associates a movement culturally (Roetzel, 1997: 77).

Paul follows a structure and protocols in his letters that invoke this cultural knowledge and facility. They show characteristics of oral patterns of speech and rhetoric that evoked his personal presence., particularly where there were contentious issues being addressed. Expounding his ideas in a medium that was associated with the exclusive elite classes of society was a further factor in Paul's transformation of the lower-class Jewish peasant into a persona of the literate culture of Hellenism (Horsfield, 2015:37).

As the disciples who were Jesus' companions before his death aged, it became apparent that some form of transmission was necessary if the message was to continue beyond that generation. These writings sought to express the essential message of the death and resurrection of Jesus to different audiences. There were several such Gospels ascribed to different authors. Of these, four were included in the canonical scriptures and are known as the Gospels according to Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John.

Peter, one of the 12 apostles, was accepted as the leader, and the disciples who were with Jesus before his death were given special stature. «The Twelve» –as they came to be known– exercised a supervisory role and were consulted on matters pertaining to the teaching of Jesus. Paul and eventually others were accorded the title of apostle even though they were not known to the others before Jesus' death. Lines of succession in office traced back to the 12 apostles became the marks of authority (Brown, 2013: 47).

In the 1st century C.E., the group of disciples grew in number and distribution following the routes established by the Romans. In the process, the group evolved from a Jewish sect to becoming a religion that was initially the target of enforcement agencies that sought to eradicate the problem. As with other oppressed groups, vocalizing expressions of faith could lead to unintended consequences. Additionally, some of the early disciples may have been illiterate (Horsfield, 2015: 38). Horsfield underlines:

«In such circumstances, it would be reasonable to expect the disciples to rely on symbols to convey their faith. The earliest such graphic symbol appears to be a simple line drawing of a fish. For the more verbally adept person, the Greek term for fish, «*ichthus*» or «*ichthys*», may have also served as an anagram to stand for Iesus «*Christus Theos*», which would translate to «*Jesus Christ is God*». The cross or the crucifix was apparently not the earliest symbol of Christianity» (Horsfield, 2015: 39).

As described in the Christian scriptures, the nascent group of followers had several discussions as they tried to discern the content and meaning of the message for emergent contexts. A disagreement between the disciples regarding the requirements to be made of non-Jews who sought membership highlights some of the issues: for the Jews, circumcision signified a man's participation in the covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses (e.g., Genesis 17:13–19). For Greek sensibilities, the same procedure was repugnant as it constituted a mutilation of the body, damaging God's creation (Evans, 2008: 35).

Some, including the leader Peter, thought it necessary for non-Jews to become Jews before they were eligible to become Christians and made them undergo circumcision. Paul opposed this interpretation and advocated the acceptance of non-Jews directly to Christian membership without requiring circumcision. In what has come to be known as the «Council of Jerusalem» and as described in the letter of Paul to the Galatians (Galatians 2) and the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15), Paul's view prevailed and Peter agreed that to be a Christian, it was not necessary to become a Jew or be circumcised (Chidester, 2001: 15).

The articulation of Christian beliefs and the continuing efforts at clarifying the understanding to maintain the integrity of the message can be traced from accounts in Christian scriptures and other sources, particularly the «councils», that would soon acquire an important doctrinal and communicative role within Christianity. Evans asserts:

«Much of the ongoing discussions were summarized at meetings such as the Council of Jerusalem, which are eventually reported either in canonical scriptures or other conciliar documents. As with the Council of Jerusalem, until the Second Vatican Council in 1965 C.E., the agenda for the Councils was determined by the major disagreements of the day. Proceedings of the Councils resulted in the development of doctrinal statements known as symbols of faith or creeds. Two of the better known such creeds in current use are the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed. Symbols of faith were also crafted by individual authorities in different parts of the empire» (Evans, 2008: 37).

Councils and movements have used the term «ecumenism» from the Greek «Oikumene» –literally «all the people of the world» when they intend or wish to be seen as inclusive. An ecumenical council, then, is ostensibly one in which all the people of the world participate. Which councils and movements are accepted as ecumenical vary according to individual Christian communities and within a single tradition. For instance, the Council of Ephesus in 449 C.E. was termed the «Latrocinium» or «Robber» Council, and its decisions were subsequently overturned by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. (Norris, 2002: 20)

In the first few centuries of Christianity, and for different reasons, Christians as a minority and frequently oppressed community had been a relatively select group who established standards to be met before someone could obtain membership. For instance, a

soldier or diplomat of the Roman Empire could not be accepted into the Christian community because the oath of office required these persons to pledge allegiance to the Emperor as God, which was understood to be in direct conflict with an allegiance to the Christian understanding of God (Evans, 2006: 37).

But from about 300 C.E. circumstances began to change. Armenia was among the first to adopt Christianity as the state religion, and when the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity personally and adopted it as the official Roman religion, it became established and grew in popularity (Brown, 2013: 54). The ascension of Constantine as Emperor of Rome and his conversion to Christianity mark a major change for Christianity: for example, being a soldier and a diplomat was no longer an impediment to membership in the Christian community. Actually, standards for admission to the Christian community changed sufficiently to make a marked difference from the ascetic lifestyle. Ascetics and their followers or associates with more particular lifestyles in time developed into monastic communities. Communities who had particular social or functional directions also formed. These subsequently came to be known as religious communities (Brown, 1993: 53).

Along with the development of the community, liturgical practices and organizational structures also evolved and adapted to various cultural and national circumstances. Some features include a more developed annual cycle of liturgical celebrations, with Easter assuming dominance in the annual calendar. With ties linkages to existing patriarchates and the 12 apostles became and have remained common to all (Evans, 2008: 40).

This implied also some important geopolitical transformations: Constantine's move to the city of Byzantium in 330 C.E. and its renaming as Constantinople accorded it the status of capital of the eastern empire (Brown, 2013: 55). With Rome continuing as the capital of the western empire, the Christian communities were influenced by conventional social tensions and perceptions. By the middle of the fifth century, Christians had established bases in Jerusalem, Antioch (now in Syria), Alexandria in Egypt, and Constantinople (now known as Istanbul, in Turkey), and Rome. The leader in each of these five centres was recognized as of greater organizational significance and given the title of Patriarch. The Patriarch of the Church in Rome was then known as «the pope» (Brown, 2013: 56). As Oliver Nicholson says,

«The development of Constantinople was part of a larger process of considerable complexity, the process by which Christianity came to occupy the commanding heights of the (divine economy' of the Roman Empire, and in doing so adapted itself to the new responsibilities that it had assumed in the time of Constantine. The conversion of the Roman Empire occurred at the level of the individual; its progress

can be studied by counting those committed to Christianity and those who stood out against it. But the conversion of the empire was more than the sum of such individual commitments. It was a process involving the transformation of human habits and hopes, and of common patterns of behavior associated with them; it resulted in the formation of a distinctive Late Roman Christian civilization» (Oliver, 2009: 46).

Christian communities were also established in regions beyond the Roman Empire. For instance, according to some traditions, the disciple known as Thomas travelled as far as India. In South India, there exists a community of Christians known as the Mar Thomites, who trace formal connections with the church in Antioch. At least two liturgical rites in South India, the Syro-Malabar Rite and the Syro-Malankara Rite, trace their origins to one of the 12 apostles named Thomas and are associated organizationally with the church in Antioch in Syria (Brown, 2013: 148).

The trust in differing philosophical and cultural bases appears to have contributed to some of the doctrinal and disciplinary disputes in the communities (Brown, 2013: 149). Councils did not always result in amicable solutions and on occasion heightened tensions. Some tensions persisted for hundreds of years. For instance, a tension between understandings and practices in Christian communities in Constantinople and Rome evolved until a major division occurred in 1054 C.E. when the then successor to the office of Peter the apostle (Norris, 2002: 93),

Pope Leo IX, and the Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople mutually declared the other to be excluded or excommunicated from the community of the true followers of Jesus Christ. As we shall see when deepening in the Eastern Christian tradition, the «Great Schism» or division resulted in the emergence of the Orthodox Christian community, who were not in communion with the church in Rome (Ware, 1997: 19). This division was eventually reversed officially in December 1965 C.E. when Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of the Orthodox Church based in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) mutually nullified the excommunications of 1054 C.E. Official positions of course do not describe the complete reality, and tensions between Christian communities continue to be evident. Also, schisms and healing of divisions have occurred at various times and over varying periods for a variety of reasons (Ware, 1997: 132).

As we have underlined above, the spread of the Christian message through Europe and the West followed political and social realities such as the prevalence of Roman order. Initially, Christianity in the West meant Roman Catholicism, which subdivided into other denominations following the period of the Reformation. Christian communication, thus, was directly linked to the empire (Horsfield, 2015: 93). Horsfield underlines that:

«Several Christian monarchs found a common cause when faced with the expansion of the Turkish and other empires where the dominant religion was not Christianity. Subsequently, denominational affiliations and social and political realities affected each other. The association of Jerusalem with Abraham continues to provide fertile occasions for conflict between empires with different religious affiliations. An example of the close link between western European empires and the form and distribution of Christianity was seen in conflicts over Jerusalem. In the East, Christian communities that had been more closely integrated with local cultures acquired correspondingly different organizational and operative features. The consequence of various cultural and social features distinguishing the East from the West European Christian communities was that many of these communities were not participants in the same conflicts» (Horsfield, 2015: 128).

Eastern Christians who maintained their association with Rome are historically known as Eastern Catholics, as distinguished from the Eastern Orthodox Christians. We must remember that the term «Catholic» has come to be associated with Christian communities linked to the Patriarch of Rome (Brown, 2013: 149). As a result, there have been Orthodox and Catholic Patriarchs in the same geographical location. The process of reconciliation between the Orthodox and Catholic communities, officially marked in 1965, has not yet resolved such terminological and organizational issues. Arguably, the reconciliation may mean there is no longer any substantive significance to a distinction between Orthodox and Catholic Christians. The determination of the Patriarchate in a unified community has yet to be resolved (Ware, 1997: 135).

In Europe, the centralized organizational structure of the Roman church was susceptible to local practices in a manner that did not arise in the Eastern Christian communities. When abuses of power were not effectively addressed in the hierarchical organization operating in Europe, the authorities faced greater criticism. Unauthorized practices sometimes placed unacceptable burdens on local Christians (Norris, 2002: 193).

Moreover, continuing threats from external forces occupied the attention of authorities. Where there were concerns for survival and the ability to practice the faith, distinctions between matters of faith and more social matters became vague. The availability of new information as well as the emerging technology changed the intellectual landscape and provided new communication channels and a wider voice for calls to reform the church (Horsfield, 2015: 218).

In this period the development of mass-produced movable metal type for use in a printing press process revolutionized duplication of printed materials. Johannes Gutenberg's first major production (about 1440 C.E.) were ecclesiastical indulgences. Indulgences at that time were certificates issued by the Church authorities that people voluntarily purchased. The certificate entitled the person who purchased it to a remission of a specified amount of

time –for example, 365 days of penance due for sins committed in this life–. In such a perspective, according to Chidester,

«Penance is understood as restitution for offenses committed. The concept survives in Roman Catholicism without the issuance of certificates and with the financial component replaced by a performance of specified actions such as prayer. For example, one can now gain a plenary indulgence if one celebrates the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist» (Chidester, 2001: 134).

After the printing of indulgences, Gutenberg’s first major production was about 200 copies of the Bible in about 1455 with subsequent improvements. The mechanization of the printing process, as we shall see, marks a social change in western Europe, which led to consequences that are still operating (Horsfield, 2015: 187).

The sale of indulgences and the purchase of jobs working for the church authorities –also known as the sin of simony– are two examples of practices that earned supporters and critics. For some, the raising of funds was seen as pragmatic and necessary for the work to be done, while for critics, the same fundraising activities were impediments to participation in the community (Norris, 2002: 154).

By 1496, the call for reform was the principal topic of daily conversation. By 1500, if the need for reformation of the Western church was generally accepted, there was little agreement as to the solution. At the same time, the flow of information would play an important part in this process. Norris underlines:

«The discussions were fed by the availability of information, ideas, and solutions propagated by deployment of printing presses and a plurality of voices. In these discussions, the general presumption was the continuation of the Roman Church, which was thought to be eternal. Reformation meant the elimination of abuses, the suppression of those minority groups who deviated from the established community, and the restoration of the authority of the church. It was then and still is the expectation that the clergy are to be the conscience of the community and to be held responsible for reforms to curb the competing powers, including those of the king. It was in this task that the church appeared to have failed» (Norris, 2002: 154).

The Eastern schism and the development of Protestantism meant the expansion of a divides Christianity that, as we shall explain in the following section, marked the trends of the globalization and the geopolitical orientation of the different Christian denominations.

3.1.3. The Development of Christian Denominations

As we have shown until now the process of globalization of Christianity was anything but an homogeneous development. The cultural movements derived from the Renaissance played an important part in the definition of the development of Christianity from the XVIth century on. And one of the key figures in this process was Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Erasmus was the preeminent humanist of his time. His teachings and actions in making paraphrased versions of the Bible easily available helped set up a contrast between what the ideal called for and its real implantation. In doing so, he laid a foundation for later reformers. The most important follower of this idea was Martin Luther (1483–1546), a Roman Catholic Augustinian monk and biblical scholar who also sought to raise the standard of practice in the Church. He eventually became known for a list of 95 theses against indulgences, which he nailed to the door of the local church. Different authors affirm that initially it was not his intention to separate from the Roman church, but his efforts at protesting the failure to stem abusive practices and calls for reform by about 1517 provided the focus for an unintended revolution (McGrath, 2007: 12).

Luther's capability to perceive the concerns of popular Christianity and to communicate his ideas played an important role in the dissemination of his movement. His denunciation of the indulgences, for example, got the attention of the people, which attracted a response from the church authorities. Through discussions with his opponents, his focus on the indulgence was redirected and escalated into a challenge to papal authority. His position was then alleged to be the same as that of John Hus, who had previously been denounced at the Council of Chalcedon and who, when he refused to recant, was excommunicated (McGrath, 2007: 22). As McGrath states,

«Luther's treatment by his superiors propelled him into the position of leader of a revolution in Germany supported mostly by peasants. His initial support among the more powerful authorities was diminished when the revolution became a direct challenge to papal position and a threat to unity in the Church. However, with the majority of the people preferring to sever connections with Rome, at a meeting in Speyer in 1529, several princes delivered a protest against the proceedings of the emperor of Germany and the Catholic princes. The name «Protestant» is derived from this protest. Germany was divided, and a league of Protestant nations formed, changing the political landscape by introducing a third political power alongside Rome and the Catholic princes. The Turks also presented a threat. The interaction between these four prominent political powers influenced the emergence and continuity of the Protestant Christian denominations» (McGrath, 2007: 29).

While Luther's triggering issue was with Roman Catholic practice, successive discussions and disagreements became evident between reformers. So, although the Roman Church also reformed, the period of the Reformation provided a variety of denominations

that sought to distinguish themselves from each other. Philip Melanchthon, for instance, provided alternative views, and his followers came to be known as Philippists. Less well-known reformers include Flavius Illyricus, Bucer, and Oecolampadius (Rohls, 2997a: 7).

A central point of contention between Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and other reformers was the differing meanings ascribed to the expression «This is my body» attributed to Jesus, who offered bread to his disciples at his last supper with them before he died. On this issue, for instance, Luther accepted the Roman Church's teaching that in the liturgy, the bread did really become the body of Christ –the «real presence» view. Calvin and others rejected that view. Further distinction developed when some preferred to explain the expression to mean that the body of Christ was communicated «with» the bread rather than «in» the bread (McGrath, 2007: 35).

Besides differing views over the real presence issue, with time denominational distinctions also involved varying views on a belief in saints, the relationship between church and state, the views of what constituted simplifying, what was essential, whether or not the Bible could be read in the vernacular, how much weight was to be given to the writings in the Bible, and what if any extra-biblical sources were acceptable as authorities in faith (Rohls, 1997a: 25).

The distribution of different western Christian denominations originally part of the Roman Church in Europe was largely determined by the location of its leader and the ruler's choice. Additionally, an emerging sense of nationality and political interests operated alongside religious interests in different ways across Europe (Birmele, 1998: 945). Birmele asserts:

«While Lutherans were to be found mostly in northern Germany, the south continued to be in association with the Church in Rome. In Denmark and Sweden, the political interests were more significant than the religious. In England, under King Henry VIII, the Reformation was political, with the King resisting ecclesiastical reform, though the legendary account focuses on the refusal of the pope to grant Henry VIII a divorce, thus precipitating the break with Rome. [...] The English position appeared to be the same as that of the Roman Church, with the king replacing the pope as supreme ecclesiastical authority and preferring but not requiring clerical celibacy. Official positions sometimes arguably did not represent practice. For instance, even where some denominations rejected the elevation of some Christians to be martyrs and saints, they did consider their leaders and those of their own denomination who were brutally executed to be exemplary persons. Similarly, where some would only accept the biblical writings as the authority (Latin «sola scriptura»), they still had to contend with the views of translators and the absence of a single version of the writings» (Birmele, 1998: 946).

The consequences Reformation though had immediate geopolitical consequences. For example, within a year of Luther's death, German Lutherans were almost destroyed by

the Emperor Charles V who was free to attend to domestic matters as a result of a temporary pause in the wars with the Turks and the French. Following the battle of Muhlberg in 1547 C.E., under the Augsburg Interim settlement, he permitted marriage for the clergy and the administration of communion under both species of bread and wine in Eucharistic celebrations. The effect of the settlement divided the Lutherans, and when war with the Turks erupted again, they managed to gain the help of the French and achieved the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 (Schorn-Scütte, 2003: 46).

Providing physical safety to Protestant states, the agreement also included the principle later known by the Latin phrase «*cujus regio ejus religio*», which meant that the people were to follow the religion of their ruler. Alternatively, they could either keep the peace or leave the kingdom. Later social realities effectively inverted the operation of the principle, as in England, with the ruler required to follow the religion of the people or abdicate. Until the Edict of Nantes in 1598, the principle of one religion in one kingdom prevailed everywhere in Europe (Schorn-Scütte, 2003: 46).

These geopolitical consequences derived also into other specific geopolitical position as, for example, the development of nationalisms. For instance, the Dutch Reformers obtained the support of Catholics in opposing the Spanish rule in Holland. Subsequently, and to varying degrees and at various times, nations developed predominant rather than exclusive Christian denominations. Other major western European Christian denominations include the Huguenots in France, followers of Zwingli and the Calvinists centred in Berne and Geneva in Switzerland, Roman Catholics in France and Spain, the Reformed Church in Holland, and Presbyterians in Scotland. Even where a separation between church and state was alleged, in practice, rules obtained control over the kingdom through control of the Christian churches: religious-political structures started to define themselves within the different denominations and started to develop specific policies of identity, communication and, in some cases, expansion (Rohls, 1997a: 46).

Catholicism did not stay indifferent in front of these religious and geopolitical changes. The Roman Church held the Council of Trent, which took place in various stages and in different places between 1545 and 1563 and addressed issues raised by the reformers (Küng, 1987: 156).

While the Roman Church insisted on the use of the Latin translation of the Bible – the Vulgate – in its liturgies, in practice, Catholics were involved in translating the scriptures into other languages. The availability of the «Codex Vaticanus» in the Vatican Library contributed to the task of translation. The decrees of the Council of Trent were determinative of the life and structure of the Roman Church and its ecclesiastical interaction with the traditions of western reform Christianity up to the last Vatican Ecumenical Council

II. But the control of religious printing within the Catholic church was sharpened through the «Index» censorship. Horsfield resumes its importance with these words:

«The council [of Trent] also addressed the impact of the growth of printing and publishing. In its fourth session, the council began to define and frame regulations for the supervision and control of the printing press,[...]. The outcome of its deliberations was The *Tridentine Index* –the *Index librorum prohibitorum*– which set out ten rules to guide printing in Catholic-dominated countries and a list of prohibited books. The *Index* was published in 1564, reprinted quickly by presses in seven European cities, and extensively republished over the next thirty years. The *Index* censored nearly three-quarters of all books being printed in Europe at that time. Pope Pius IV appointed a Congregation of the *Index* to update the list periodically. Catholic readers were limited largely to Catholic devotional books and the Vulgate Bible. Intending authors were required to submit their works for approval before publication, and in some Catholic countries printers couldn't get a license to print without making a profession of orthodox faith and promising to adhere to the requirements of the Index» (Horsfield, 2015: 208).

But as Horsfield also underlines (idem) implementation of the prohibitions of the Index was variously adhered to, and its success is questionable: many Catholic printers went out of business or found themselves with unsellable stock when a new Index came out, whereas Protestant printers kept an eye on new editions of the *Index* to determine which books would be in demand and for which there would be no Catholic competition. The Index and the congregation that administered it continued till 1966, when the Index was finally abolished.

But by the middle of the XVIIth century Catholic writers also began to adapt, not just their message, but also their style of writing to counter the Protestants' popular appeal. Respected Catholic scholars, formed coalitions with Catholic printers to produce articulate works attacking the innovations, social divisiveness, and economic consequences of Protestantism and arguing the benefits of Catholicism in cheap, accessible editions and their own polemical tracts, including their own effective wood-cuts satirizing the Protestants. With these reforms, some of the advances made by early Protestantism began to be pulled back (Horsfield, 2015: 209).

But the Reformation didn't only affect theology and geopolitics, but also philosophy. The European Renaissance and the Age of Reason (from about 1650 to 1800) that followed provide the more recent background to current realities for Christianity in the West. Philosophers such as René Descartes (1596–1650) advocating reason as the normative value encouraged scientific investigation and a secular society in competition to the Christian denominations. Some of these ideas gained acceptability within Christian denominations. For example, Gregor Mendel (1822–1884), an Augustinian monk, made a systematic study of

plant breeding in the monastery garden and developed a mathematical formula that has led to his recognition as the father of the science of genetics (Küng, 1987: 174).

But European groups and ideas also expanded towards the «New World» and imposed themselves on the aboriginal peoples. The European doctrine of «terra nullius» as applied to the land they encountered across the Atlantic provided a justification to continue European forms of Christianity, initially by the authority of European monarchs and subsequently independently of them (Woodhead, 2002: 211).

In Canada and Australia, for instance, the head of state has been Queen Elizabeth II, who is a constitutional monarch of the United Kingdom and also head of the Church of England, known today as the «Anglican Church» in Canada and the «Episcopal Church» in the United States. French Catholics also established control in parts of Canada and the United States: the southern territory of the United States was dominated by Spanish Catholics in the West and Portuguese Catholics in the East. European Catholic and Protestant denominations initially settled in different parts of the continent and subsequently moved to other parts. Quakers, a denomination derived from the Mennonite Radical Reformation, initially settled in Pennsylvania, Catholics in Maryland, and the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam, now known as New York. Minority Christian denominations in European lands found new opportunity in the New World. Lutherans from Sweden, Huguenots from France, Baptists from England, and Presbyterians from Scotland moved across the Atlantic (Norris, 2002: 209).

Hand Küng emphasizes how the dominance of the «Age of Reason» explicitly or implicitly shifted the starting point of belief for consideration and acceptance of Jesus as Lord to that which is materially verifiable. He says:

«With the attitude that all prior history unless it was demonstrably reasoned, was inferior, ambivalence in religious matters and an interest in social order became more prevalent. For instance, people such as Benjamin Franklin in the United States stated that he was agnostic about the divinity of Jesus because he had not studied it. However, he did not see harm in believing that Jesus is God if the consequence is the implementation of Jesus' teachings» (Küng, 1987: 180).

But at the same time the impetus of the Reformation encouraged an interest in returning to a genuine faith in Christ, which continued through the XXth century. The success of George Whitefield's revival sermons after his arrival from England in 1739 and that of others may be noted among the new movements. American theologian and preacher Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was another who sought to motivate his hearers to seek salvation by detailing the consequences for those who do not have personal faith in Christ. Whitefield (1714-1770) was a personal friend of John Wesley (1703-1791), also a revivalist

preacher who differed with him on the doctrine of predestination. The group founded by Wesley eventually became the Methodists, a movement that would become the historical starting point of modern Evangelical denominations (Rohls, 1997a: 380-381).

An additional development was the reliance on science, which for some meant an alternative to the confidence on Christ and a religious scepticism. The coexistence of sceptic and true believer along with traditional church communities required toleration for each other at least in some sense (Küng, 1987: 183).

The XXth century World Wars, the Nazi regime, the Holocaust, the «Pax Americana», and the establishment of the state of Israel transformed the political landscape. A formerly dualistic competition between the Christian dominated nations of Europe, the creation of the state of Israel, and the Islamic dominated nations to the east became an unprecedented competition for Jerusalem between political powers aligned with the three religions derived from the Abrahamic worldview: religion, geopolitics and communication would become directly meddled, even if some pretend to diminish of the religious aspect of the globalization of religion and its geopolitical consequences.

3.2. REVELATION AND COMMUNICATION FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE: THE BASICS

As we have underlined from the beginning of this chapter Christianity arose as a movement of renewal within Judaism in the first half of the 1st century. But it divided from the latter in disseminating its teaching apart from the Jewish people (mission) and without continuing to observe the Jewish order of life and worship (*halakha*). Its early departure from a strict Jewish regime of life and living makes Christianity fundamentally flexible when it comes to its adoption by new cultures, and thereby its integration, more or less, into other ways of living. This factor, as we have seen, is one of the two most important premises of the division of Christianity into various, mutually bounded, subgroups.

The other is its framework as an organized church, under the leadership of a hierarchy of priests, bishops, and a number of «patriarchs» (highest office of leadership) or in local communities with «pastors» or charismatic leaders. This framework is partially determined by the historical and geographical divisions we have seen, and the membership of various peoples into different churches and Christian communities, and partially by a diversity of doctrine. But these two aspects are not clearly distinguishable, as we shall underline, since the passage of Christianity into particular cultures and languages has repeatedly lead to apparent or actual differences in doctrine, in the transmission of specific group doctrines, and the use of particular communication paradigms.

In the introduction to our essay we emphasized how Christianity is a historical religion. Regarding the basic doctrine, all Christian traditions appeal to the historical figure of

Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared around the year 30 aD in Galilee as a Jewish preacher and miraculous healer who, after a short period of activity, on the occasion of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival of the Jewish Passover, was arrested, and executed by crucifixion at the hands of the Roman imperial power. His death was interpreted in terms of a contemporary Jewish model according to which the death of a just person can benefit others and cancel their sins. According to Christian doctrine, Jesus rose from the dead, just as, at the end of the present world, all women and men will rise.

As a point of departure from the Jewish concept of the Messiah (in Greek *Christós* on «anointed one»), Jesus is interpreted as a figure who will play a decisive role at the final judgment upon all human beings. This is bound up with the conceptualization, originally produced in the confrontation with the Roman cult of the Emperor, that the risen Jesus is also presently at work in the world, and that therefore the one destroyed in terms of human measures is finally mightier than the political power that executed him and that persecuted his followers (Brown, 2013: 14).

But what has commonly been known about the history of Jesus and the beginning of Christianity come from copies of copies of a relatively small number of written documents reproduces in what is now called the New Testament, comprising four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and a number of letters. These texts, though, have particular characteristics that need to be considered.

One characteristic is that they did not begin to be written or compiled until at least twenty years after Jesus had been killed and a post-Jesus movement, that grew around his group of disciples, was underway. Although significant weight is given by many scholars to the dependability of the preservation of the events of Jesus in Christian oral tradition, much had happened in those dominant decades. There is evidence that some of those later events and the ideas that came out of them were taken up and included in the writing about Jesus as if they were part of Jesus' own story (Horsfield, 2015: 22).

A second characteristic is that these key documents in the New Testament are just a few of a much larger number of documents also written about the same events. This larger corpus of documents were culled over a period of several hundred years in an ideological process of selection to create an authorized version of the history (a «canon») that reflected the interests of those in power at the time. Many of those other documents, which offered alternative viewpoints, were destroyed in what we would now call a process of media censorship and control (Horsfield, 2015: 23).

A further characteristic is that these few documents are not objective or balanced historical recordings. They are devotee, creative, retrospective, interpreted reconstructions of something that happened several decades earlier by passionate social minority group with

a vested interest: explaining and giving sense to their faith (Horsfield, 2015: 24). It is more a testimony rather than what we understand as history, and they should be read therefore according to their meaning and not primarily for their factuality.

A final characteristic that has to be considered is that the texts are a specific medium: writing. Although almost all of the earliest Christians were illiterate, the perspectives we have today on who Jesus was and what he did are the views of an unrepresentative group of literate Christians who represented less than 5% of the Christian community at the time. We need to remember that levels of literacy were low and generally restricted to the upper classes (Horsfield, 2015: 26).

While there is a variety of opinions about levels of literacy, the estimation is that 95 to 97% of the population were illiterate, meaning that interactions of social and religious life, particularly in the towns and rural areas, were almost wholly oral in character. The religious movement founded by Jesus, then, was a blended oral and literate religious culture, strongly influenced by the Jewish literal traditions we have studied in the precedent chapter, but at the same time influenced by the needs of the growing Christian communities and the Hellenistic and Roman influence they were exposed to (Horsfield, 2015: 27).

Such notions about the communicational dynamics of the beginnings of Christianity are essential in order to understand the main characteristics of the Christian understanding of communication and its different concretions. In this section of our essay we will seek to resume these characteristics starting with the Christian understanding of Revelation as the base for the «vertical» notion of communication of this religious tradition and its variables.

3.2.1. The Principles of Christian Revelation of «Vertical» Communication

Building on the Old Testament understanding of revelation, the New Testament writers see revelation as the self-communication of God in and through Jesus Christ. This communication is regarded as the supreme, final, irrevocable, and unsurpassable self-disclosure of God in history (Hebrews 1:1). It is unique because, as Christians understand it, in Jesus of Nazareth, agent of revelation and content of revelation (the person, teaching, and redemptive work of Jesus) are identical and make up the sole object of revelation. The theological elaboration of the New Testament concept of revelation is to be found especially in Paul and John.

To express the idea of revelation, Paul uses above all the words «*apokaluptein*» (literally «to uncover», to «remove from concealment») and «*phaneroun*» (to «make apparent», to «show»). His basic theme is the uncovering of the mystery that has previously been hidden and is now made manifest (Ephesians 1:9, Colossians 1:26). Revelation,

therefore, means the uncovering or unveiling of the divine plan by which God reconciles the human race to himself in Christ.

Thus, according to Paul, revelation is a divine creative activity, an eschatological saving deed, rather than a simple announcing of messages or items of knowledge. God is the really active one in the process of revelation. It is he who from eternity decides that in his Son he will turn in love to the human race. The incarnation of his Son in the womb of a woman (Galatians 4:4), this Son's expiatory death on the cross, and the recapitulation or unification of the cosmos under him as head and firstborn from the dead (Romans 3:25, Colossians 1:18) are the fulfilment of this hidden plan. In this plan Christ himself is what is revealed. The death and resurrection of Christ, and even the church as his body, are elements of this process.

For Paul, in short, revelation is still incomplete within historical time. Only in its definitive stage of development at the return (the «Parousia») of Christ will it be complete. At that point, too, the glory promised to the redeemed will be manifested, for it will be clear beyond doubt that the redeemed are risen and that they are the children and heirs of God (1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Romans 8:18–23).

The concept of revelation emerges most clearly in John's gospel and his letters, even though he almost never uses the term «apokaluptein». He prefers the verb «phaneroun» (to «make apparent», to «show») and likes to use pairs of concepts that were popular in the Hellenistic religious movements of his time, especially gnosticism: light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death. The expression «bear witness to the truth» is typical of Johannine theology.

John regards the revelatory event as the centre of his message. Not only is Jesus the redeemer by means of his «work»: he is also and above all the proclaimer of God's truth and the life and light of the world (John 1:4). John's gospel underlines that God is invisible and unknowable: the Son alone knows the Father, and in him the Father is made visible and understandable (John 1:14: 1 John 1:1). Revelation is therefore given together with the person of the «Logos» (the «Word»). Because Jesus is the only-begotten Son, he reveals the Father in what he says and does (John 14:9).

In keeping with the realized eschatology of the gospel according to John, faith, as response to revelation, can even now be described as a «seeing» (John 6:40, 12:45, 14:19). What is revealed is already present. Yet, although revelation is essentially completed with the first coming of Jesus, John, like Paul, can speak of the «revelation of Jesus» and of the return of Christ (1 John 2:28, 3:2).

These essential texts demonstrate the specific characteristics of the understanding of revelation or «vertical» communication within Christianity that finds different

interpretations within the Christian theological traditions. These interpretations were developed during the first centuries of the Christian era in specific geographical and theological environments. But their ideas would echo all along the history of the globalization of the Christian tradition and its forms of understanding communication. The three models that we propose are the literal and paraenetic, the moral approach, the symbolic approach, and the pietist approach. They find their roots in patristic theology but would find, according to our thesis, a solid development in the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant understanding of communication from a «vertical» and «horizontal» perspective.

3.2.1.1. Revelation as Exemplarity: the Literal and Paraenetic Approach to Divine Revelation

The school of Antioch, on the other hand, developed during the IIIrd century B.C.E. in the region where the Persian empire of Siria had grown, under the influence of Greek-Aramaic and Asian thought (Brown, 2013: 214). The Christian community of Antioch derived from Judaeo-Christian groups that had moved from Jerusalem towards the north. It was in the context of this community that the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons (130-200) flourished influencing part of what later would be called Latin Christianity. The intellectual centre acquired its ecclesiastic importance in the III century, but did not constitute a physical structure in itself, but a dispersed centre of learning under different masters like Diodore of Tarsus (d. 394) and Theodor of Mopsuestia (350-428) (Brown, 2013: 215).

The Antioch school of theology competed with the school of Alexandria, underlining overall the place of human beings under the light of Christ in the context of creation (the present world) integrating many elements from the Christian Aramaic tradition, that was near to the Jewish interpretation of Scriptures of the time. This did not mean that it avoided an allegorical interpretation of Scripture, but that it preferred a literal interpretation of the texts with the purpose of illustrating how Christians should live their lives according to the Law of Christ (Studer, 1998: 140). In this sense it preferred the homiletic form of communication that underlined the practical aspects derived from god's revelation through the incarnation of Christ and his word as revealed in the Bible. John Chrysostom (349-407), Archbishop of Constantinople, is a good example of this genre, with a strong Biblical and pastoral orientation.

The theologians of the School of Antioch presented a positive appraisalment of the human nature of Christ that is perceived like a true image of God (Colossian 1-15 was considered a key text in this sense) and in contrast with the School of Alexandria, that underlined the divine and eschatological aspects of the person of Christ. In consequence Antiochian theologians saw the individual as an image of the eternal Verb in its own physical

(«somatic») nature, producing and anthropology with a clear accent on the human body in this world (Studer, 1998: 142).

The hermeneutical instruments used for this purpose were a moderate platonic philosophy with some Aristotelian elements, and a literal interpretation of the Bible that produced a theology oriented towards the human person (including its physical dimension) and its ascetic effort to follow Christ, accentuating the importance of creation and incarnation. This derived into the theology of the Christian as «assumed» by Christ, that would directly influence the development of monastic life as a form of genuine Christian life (Simonetti, 2010: 62).

Several historians have underlined that the school of Antioch and its interpretation - and transmission - of the message of the Gospels precedes in many ways the Protestant understanding of Scripture that would mark the specific way of understanding the Christian message and the forms it should be transmitted, with an accent on the personal life of the individual and his subjective relationship with God (Studer, 1998: 144).

At this point Christians do not turn to a general philosophy of history, as though God could be clearly seen at work as one records the history of the rise and fall of nations and dynasties. Rather, they turn to a particular history as the key to the hidden nature of all human history. They turn to the history of the life of Jesus as the self-expression of the cosmic Creator (Simonetti, 2010: 64). This life has been recorded in the gospels, and its significance interpreted in the letters of the New Testament. Since the New Testament is the only access to the life of Jesus one now has, it is clearly vital to assess the status and reliability of this Scripture as a foundation document for the Christian faith (Simonetti, 2010: 65).

The Theological methodology of the school Antioch and its form of understanding revelation would have strong influence in the development one of the trends of communication of the Christian message and its mediated forms: underlining the importance of this world as a gift in time and space in order to transform every Christian according to the will of God, it stressed the importance of the individual and his/her personal experience as such, in its every day life, nourished by the literal understanding of the Bible as a normative guide. The communication of the Christian message, understood in this way, seeks to «move» the individual in its discernment of God's will as an individual, but at the same time in the context of the community of believers. Liturgical celebrations, then, stress the importance of the revealed word and its meaning in this moment, and not as much in its eschatological / future significance.

3.2.1.2. Revelation as Discipleship: the Moral Approach to Divine Revelation

The Latin tradition developed in the Northern part of the Mediterranean sea. Since its origins, Latin theology developed a strong interest in the meaning of God's creation, his relation with humankind, and in the understanding of how Christ's salvation works on human nature (Studer, 1998: 164). The principle surrounding this main interests is profoundly Trinitarian - which means a "relational" understanding of God and God's communication with humanity - and a theological anthropology centred in mankind created according to the image of the Trinity, privileging the human soul as the place where this image resides. At the same time it implies a «sacramental» understanding of creation, and of reality in general: worldly realities are not in opposition to God's will, but constitute instrument in order to attain God's will with the help of his grace. The «sacraments» acquire a particular importance, since they constitute the proper vehicle through which God offers his grace to all believers (Simonetti, 2010: 72-73).

From a philosophical perspective, Latin theology used basically a platonic and stoic philosophical systems. Its theology is often interested in human action and in how divine grace operated in the believer. For this reason its theology - and its form of transmitting religious contents - tends towards a certain rationality and tries to explain moral issues founded in the principles of creation and redemption as the "map" of how God communicates with its creatures (Studer, 1998: 165).

Coherent with these principles, the Latin interpretation of scripture stresses the moral aspect of revelation, inquiring and explaining how Christians should act according to grace and to their faith. (Simonetti, 2010: 74).

The most influential theologians of the Christian Latin theological trend were Tertulian (155-230), who lived in Northern Africa. But the tendency would develop overall in the Northern part of the Mediterranean, particularly in Milano, Rome and Arles. The most meaningful exponent of this trend - and without doubt the most influential one to our days - was Augustine of Hippo (354-430) (Studer, 1998: 166-167).

An important contribution of Augustine to this school were his exegetical works (with a clear accent on the meaning of the texts for Christian life), together with the «Confessions», a biographical and introspective work where he explains his conversion and reads the work of grace along his life with a strong moral and spiritual style. This work, in its form and its meaning, would influence profoundly the form in which Latin theology would tend to communicate its message, to the point that the lives of saints and introspective theological works would acquire a notable importance during the middle ages. This perspective on the personal relation with God would also influence, as we shall expose later

on, the Protestant and Catholic traditions and the forms of communication they have developed until today.

3.2.1.3. Revelation as Sacramental Transformation: the Symbolic Approach to Divine Revelation

The development of Christian doctrine and its understanding of biblical interpretation and revelation found a particular development in the Alexandrian school of theology towards the end of the end century. Alexandria had become an important centre of knowledge before the arrival of Christianity: philosophical schools had developed there, and Jewish diaspora communities had also enriched its intellectual body. The city became a centre of cultural exchange and confrontation. Only until towards the IIIrd century did Christians find a place within this intellectual perspective, particularly under the philosophical integration of neo-Platonism in order to explain Christian theology and spirituality (Studer, 1998: 182).

The idea of the «Alexandrian school» of theology generally refers to the approach to interpreting Scripture taken by some key exegetes from Alexandria, Egypt, beginning in the second and third centuries. This school held to the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation, in contrast to the Antiochene school, which emphasized a more historical and grammatical approach to Scripture. It also defends a more dualistic theological anthropology that stresses the spiritual aspect of human existence in opposition to an ascetic approach to the human body and to nature.

Allegory, which literally means «another proclamation» refers to finding a figurative meaning in a text of Scripture. This interpretive tool was not unique to Christian theologians in the ancient world as Homer and Cicero made use of it, while the Jewish exegete Philo also interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures in this manner. It seems that both Jewish and Christian interpreters favoured this approach because they were influenced by the neo-Platonic worldview of their day: a worldview that saw God as completely other, without emotion, and incapable of being described by human qualities (Studer, 1998: 187).

Thus, when early Christian exegetes read Bible passages that spoke of God's wrath or of God having humanlike qualities (i.e., hands or feet), they were compelled to find a figurative meaning behind the words. The most well-known Alexandrian biblical scholar was Origen (184–254) (Simonetti, 2010: 114). In the fourth book of his «De Principiis» («On First Principles»), Origen outlined his rationale for interpreting Scripture allegorically and defined three levels of interpretation: the bodily level, which was a basic literal interpretation; a soulful level, which pointed to the moral or ethical meaning in a text; and the spiritual level, the ever-present mystical meaning that points to Christ and relationship with God. For

Origen, the spiritual level was the most important and was only accessed by a spiritually attuned exegete. In addition to these levels of interpretation, Origen emphasized reading Scripture Christologically, believing that all Scripture pointed in some way to Christ. Finally, he was a champion of typology and held that the accounts and stories of the Old Testament prefigured the realities and promises of the New Testament, and worldly realities prefiguring eschatological ones. Altogether the Alexandrian school introduced a symbolic interpretation of revelation and reality, with a strong accent in the liturgical experience as a pre-figuration of eschatological life (Simonetti, 2010: 116-117).

The principles developed by the Alexandrian school would have a strong influence on the Eastern Orthodox traditions –first the Greek and then the Slavonic churches–, specially in their understanding of a symbolic meaning of divine experience in this world: through a symbolic understanding of revelation, spirituality and of liturgy, the believer can experience, at least within the limitations of the senses and in the context of natural limitations, the richness of spiritual and eschatological life. The symbolic approach to communication is based in the conception that divine knowledge is assumed through a process of symbolic understanding that requires a more «sensorial» -and thus less rational– understanding of divine truths: symbols –specially in their liturgical form– become the particular form of understanding absolute realities that the human condition can only taste through its senses.

3.2.1.4. Revelation as Interior Process: the Pietist Approach to Divine Revelation

A fourth form or «model» of understanding of divine revelation became relevant within Radical Protestant traditions and in mainline protestantism. As orthodoxy became increasingly influential within mainstream Protestantism, so its potential defects and weaknesses became clear. At its best, orthodoxy was concerned with the rational defence of Christian truth claims, and a passionate concern for doctrinal correctness. Yet, too often, this came across as an academic preoccupation with logical niceties, rather than a concern for relating theology to the issues of everyday life (Rohls, 1997a: 54). The term «Pietism» derives from the Latin word *pietas* –best translated as «piety» or «godliness»– and was initially a derogatory term used by the movement’s opponents to describe its emphasis upon the importance of Christian doctrine for everyday Christian life (Jung, 2005: 55).

The Pietist movement is usually regarded as having been inaugurated with the publication of Philip Jakob Spener’s *Pious Wishes* in 1675. In this work, Spener lamented the state of the German Lutheran church in the aftermath of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48), and set out proposals for the revitalization of the church of his day (Jung, 2005: 58). The most important among these was a new emphasis upon personal Bible study. The proposals were treated with derision by academic theologians; nevertheless, they were to prove

influential in German church circles, reflecting growing disillusionment and impatience with the sterility of orthodoxy in the face of the shocking social conditions endured during the war. For Pietism, reformation of doctrine must always be accompanied by reformation of life (Jung, 2005: 59).

Pietism developed in a number of different directions, especially in England and Germany. Among the representatives of the movement, two in particular should be noted. The first one is Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) who founded the Pietist community generally known as the Herrnhuter, after the German village of Herrnhut. Alienated from what he regarded as the arid rationalism and barren orthodoxy of his time (that favoured a more academic and apologetic type of theology), Zinzendorf stressed the importance of a «religion of the heart», based on an intimate and personal relationship between Christ and the believer (Jung, 2005: 62). A new emphasis was placed upon the role of «feeling» as a form of divine perception –as opposed to reason or doctrinal orthodoxy– within the Christian life, which may be regarded as laying the foundations of Romanticism in later German religious thought (Rohls, 1997a: 55).

The second promoter of the pietist movement was John Wesley (1703–1791) founded the Methodist movement within the Church of England, which subsequently gave birth to Methodism as a denomination in its own right. Convinced that he «lacked the faith whereby alone we are saved», Wesley discovered the need for a «living faith» and the role of experience in the Christian life through his conversion experience at a meeting in Aldersgate Street in London in May 1738, in which he felt his heart to be «strangely warmed». Wesley's emphasis upon the experiential side of Christian faith, which contrasted sharply with the dullness of contemporary English Deism, led to a major religious revival in England (Jung, 2005: 96).

Despite their differences, the various branches of Pietism succeeded in making Christian faith relevant to the experiential world of ordinary believers. The movement may be regarded as a reaction against a one-sided emphasis upon doctrinal orthodoxy, in favour of a faith which relates to the deepest aspects of human nature.

Even though pietism as a formal movement disappeared as such, if communicative forms remained within the Protestant tradition, in particular during the renewal movements that, from the XVIIIth to the XXth c. would take place in North America, often generating new protestant denominations. Such renovation took place in what has been called «revivals», real media events of their times that endured a spiritual renovation within the protestant confessions (Jung, 2005: 98).

The communicative forms of pietism can be resumed in the basic common characteristics: an explicit personal experience of a conversion manifested through a

personal experience of grace., the personal relationship with Christ (and later on, with the Pentecostal movement, of the Holy Spirit) and his Word, and the importance of an environment that favours such an experience.

Pietism would also influence the Mennonite form of understanding divine communication, specially within the Quaker movement. Mennonites would insist in the personal and inner dimension of communication with God, and would proceed, as we shall see, to favour the environment for such form of communication, even within the context of the modern world.

3.2.2. The «Trinitarian» element of communication

The four paradigms of «vertical» communication we have described above derive from the particular forms of understanding divine revelation in the context of incarnation. But they don't represent the only aspects of the Christian understanding of «vertical» communication and its consequences. In the Christian tradition, at least in its main theological principles, we could resume the outline of a communication theology also from a Trinitarian perspective:

«Divine communication is an initiative taken by God, that is a Trinitarian God that communicates himself in Jesus of Nazareth in the power of the Holy Spirit. Such an assertion implies that divine revelation starts within God himself, as an acting communion between the Godhead, the Son and the Holy Spirit. At the same time it means that the presence of Jesus Christ is the self-communication of God to human beings through himself, not through something» (Greshake, 1999: 22).

According to this trinitarian perspective, creation ,redemption and communication arise from this mystery, and have as their final purpose to draw humanity, by this very communication, into communion with God. The creation of humanity as a free act of God is directly related to the Trinitarian principle: creating humanity in His image and likeness, God Makes us sharers of his creative and liberating communication “in communion, through communion, and in view of communion” (Haering, 1979: 40). According to Christianity, then, human communication is possible because we are created in the image and likeness of a communicating Trinitarian God.

This trinitarian principle of revelation in Christian theology implies a threefold consideration. In the first place, it is the infinite God, the Father, who reveals himself without limits to humans in order to unite himself to humanity in a community of love. Second, this revelation happens in the world, in a fully human way, linked to a specific cultural form, so that we are able to understand it. The high point of this revelation of God's «word» to

humanity, appears in Jesus Christ, God's son made man in whom God expresses and gives himself totally. Third, the acceptance and understanding of God's word takes place within man in a divine way, which means the personal and subjective acceptance of God's word through the action of the Holy Spirit. From these three elements one can affirm that, from the Christian perspective of revelation, God does not reveal *something* about him, but rather that he communicates *himself* (Greshake, 1999: 21).

Revelation appears as a divine and as a human happening, even though the human side can reflect God's perfect communication only in a limited way. Christian theology, as Bernad Haering says, has to incorporate herself into

«the rhythm of social communication of human kind and into the questions and language of the present world. To know the language of today's people is thus a precondition for every Christian Communication. In passing on God's revelation we also have to respond to what the people ask. Hermeneutics is concerned about bringing the revelation of the word of history into the life of people now» (Haering, 1979: 46).

Haering also stresses that:

«It is because these elements are taken to be fundamental both in being and in value that the Christian notion of God, quite distinctively, becomes that of a Trinity, a triadic community. This notion suggests that God is not one absolutely undifferentiated unity, the One beyond all distinctions. Though all analogies are imperfect, the Divine as the highest possible reality and value has more the nature of a communion of individuals, related in a love which is both creative and unitive. In the first place, God is supremely intelligible, being properly expressed in the Logos upon which all things are patterned and which is manifested in the life of Jesus. Secondly, God is dynamically creative, being properly expressed in the Spirit of life which moves over the waters of creation and inspires created minds to new works of imagination and beauty. And thirdly, God is the source and goal of all things, holding order and creativity together in a communion whose most basic character is love, or a sharing of delight in the mutual refraction of individual beings in communion. A temporal creation is a natural expression of such a being. In such a creation many finite persons can find their fulfilment in relation to the God in whom their existence is founded and in whose reality they are destined to share. The Christian discernment of the Divine, the core content of Christian revelation, shows that humans are not merely creative individuals in community who have to form their own goals and pursue them as best they can in a cosmic environment which is hostile or indifferent to them. That is the post-Christian malaise of the West which has eliminated the transcendent but left persons as inexplicably sacred objects in a desacralized universe» (Haering, 1979: 46).

From this perspective of the understanding of divine communication, for the Christian tradition the human community is a reflection of the Divine community, the Trinitarian reality of God in which love is the supreme value. The creative goals of humanity are not simply invented by autonomous human reason. They are pursued in response to the

discernment of absolute ideals, setting an objective aim which humans are invited to realize in their own creative way. Such an understanding would have, as we shall see, an important influence in the Catholic understanding of communication.

3.2.3. The «incarnation» element of communication

Together with the Trinitarian principle and the importance of revelation, the Christian perception of communication theology stresses incarnation, a characteristic element of Christianity if compared with the other monotheistic religions. God's incarnation through Jesus Christ is at the centre of any Christian communication. The son of God, that becomes human, is one of the highest expressions of communication. The pastoral instruction of Vatican II *Communio et Progressio* (n. 11) defines Christ himself as the perfect communicator, giving not only his word but also his example, and adjusting his way of talking to the cultural patterns of those who he addressed. The development of Christian theology will deepen the concept of Christ as *logos*, as «word», a very rich term that implies not only a communicational status, but also a link to immanent rationality and Trinitarian interaction (Lampe, 1961: 807-811.).

Incarnation is also linked to creation. If human beings are created according to God's image, an image partially lost because of sin, the incarnation of Jesus Christ not only redeems human fault, but restores his divine image. Creation, and particularly the creation of humanity, acquires a particular status. Through incarnation humanity and the whole of creation are lifted to a sacramental status: human beings and the whole of creation are not God, but they reveal his love and his creative love. From this perspective Christian theology has developed not only a communication theology, but also a theological reflection on human "creations" and their theological meaning, like in cinema, literature and poetry (Christian theologians and academics have produced abundant bibliography on these issues: just to quote some examples, see Jasper, 1989; Baugh, 1997; Martin, 1981; Jossua, J. P., 2000; 1985; Scott, 1985.).

On the other hand, the principle of incarnation and of man as *imago Dei* establishes an analogical relation between human image and divine image, where icons – and in a more limited perspective, art and photography – have a relevant place, not as «idols» or substitutions of the divine person, but as imperfect reflections of the mystery of God's incarnation and the spark of divine transcendence, particularly in the face of suffering. Iconography and religious images in particular have had a polemic development, even in Christianity, due to the phenomenological connection between «image» and «idol» (see Plate, 2006: 55-58 and 82-87; Dyrness, 2004, and Reymond, 1999).

«Incarnation», then, constitutes the focal centre of the Christian understanding of revelation and, therefore, its understanding of divine communication. An approach from the historical and cultural development of religions standpoint helps one to see how it can be claimed that only this man, Jesus, is truly God incarnate (Greshake, 1999: 32).

From a more phenomenological perspective the standpoint of revelation –and, thus, the understanding of divine communication as a vehicle of communication between the divine and humanity– a quite distinctive view is developed by the basic Christian belief that the Supreme is incarnate in the life of one particular man. The principle of divine incarnation becomes, then, a key element for understanding Christian revelation (Ward, 1994: 193). As Keith Ward puts it,

«The belief in incarnation is not the belief that God tells humans what God is like or what the divine purposes or laws are. It is not even that God shows what the divine nature is like, as if there were one thing which somehow modelled another. It is rather that God makes the Divine reality itself present in a particular historical form. According to the Christian tradition the life of Jesus is the self-expression of the Eternal in time. In the Christian conception of revelation, the form of Supreme Goodness is fully realized in the particular; revelation is primarily a making-present of Supreme Being and Goodness in a person» (Ward, 1994: 194).

This is not, as in Islam, the revelation of a set of propositions, as though God were dictating laws or doctrines to be carefully written down. It is not, as in Judaism, Divine disclosure through the control of historical events, as though God were causing water, wind, or earth to act in extraordinary or miraculous ways. It is the unlimited Divine Life taking form in a particular human life. It is the realization of the Eternal in a particular historical individual (Ward, 1994: 195).

The consequences of such an ideal within the realm of human history will have tremendous consequences in the communicational, anthropological, cultural, social and political understanding of human history, starting with the Mediterranean region, and then globalization of Christianity throughout the world under the form of different traditions and interpretations. But no matter what fraction of Christianity we think of, the Christian notion of revelation will always stand on the same principle: the confession of Jesus of Nazareth as a real man and the son of God, through who's example and teachings the one and true God has communicated in its highest and absolute way to all mankind.

3.3. THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

The Catholic tradition is basically defined in relation to the development of the church since the Middle Ages to today concerning the Roman Catholic church, that is the

part of the Christian tradition linked to the Roman Christian tradition of the West –even though it also includes Eastern Christian traditions that recognize the authority of the Bishop of Rome, called Eastern Ritual Catholic Churches–. As we underlined in the presentation on the globalization of Christianity, the Catholic tradition has the highest number of members in the world and has played an important part in the expansion and definition of Christianity from a doctrinal, communicational and geopolitical perspective.

Like other Christian traditions, Catholicism did not formally define its understanding of communication –vertical or horizontal– until the XXth century. But before that Catholicism «practices» communication policies within its process of expansion and according to the development of the different cultural trends that mark the history of the West.

One of the major influences on the shape of Western Christianity was the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, a military and political process that took place over seven decades in the Vth century. It began with the crossing of the Roman boundary of the Rhine by a large number of Germanic tribes in 406 and implied constant battles in and over Roman provinces in Gaul, Spain, North Africa, and Italy, and ended with the abdication of the Western emperor, Romulus Augustulus, in 476. The Roman Catholic Church played a central part in the process of evangelization and cultural development of Europe in general, and particularly of the north. Through its organizational base grounded in literacy, it became the primary agent of literate education and practice, and as a result one of the dominant political influences in Europe for the next nine hundred years. In the process, Christianity itself was reshaped. (Horsfield, 2015: 106).

With the fall of the Roman Empire the Catholic church assumed the cultural development of Christianity in the medieval West. Horsfield stresses that

«Although literacy and manuscript production in the wider society didn't disappear altogether, the general decline of schools and education and limited availability of books strengthened the political power of the Catholic Church. Its well-developed and carefully guarded processes of education, literacy, and manuscript production and circulation became powerful tools and were used strategically for the promotion and protection of the faith of the Church and its interests. Those interests were not so much the heavy doctrinal concerns of earlier Greek Christianity, but the application of Christian principles to education and communication» (Horsfield, 2015: 106).

A very important contribution to these developments was the monastic institution. Originally born in Egypt, monasticism grew in the West through the model defined by Benedict of Nursia (480-547) and the expansion of Celtic monasticism in the north. Along with its missionary zeal and asceticism, monastic Christianity was renowned for its enthusiasm for learning and education. It is attributed with the establishment of a love of

books and writing and classical Greek and Latin culture that was taken up by the poets and learned classes of European society (Horsfield, 2015: 114).

Monasticism, centred in the celebration of liturgy and the sacraments, soon contributed to the conservation of Latin and Greek culture, but also of Christian spirituality. Illuminated manuscripts enriched liturgical and spiritual life, underlining the importance of ecclesiastical Latin and the relevance of sacramental life. At the same time the Western church contributed to the political and social development of Europe, establishing a form of social structure that replaced the Roman structure. For this reason, during the Middle Ages, Western Christianity –that would be known as Catholic Christianity after the appearance of Protestant denominations– would constitute the institution that controlled and promoted Christian communication through manuscript production, educational centres and liturgical and sacramental life (Horsfield, 2015: 122).

With the appearance of the printing press and the multiplication of books the Catholic Church would try to keep a control over intellectual production, as we have seen when explaining the *Index* established during the Council of Trent.

When the means of Electronic communication appeared (particularly radio and television) in the XXth century, Catholicism assumed an important role in the use of these media, motivated in part by media activism on behalf of the Protestant –and particularly Evangelical– denominations. The Roman Catholic Church was active in acquiring local radio stations, mostly in countries where Catholicism was the established religion, such as in Latin America and parts of Asia. Vatican Radio in Rome, begun in 1931, identified itself with such a global mission (Viganò, 2015: 244).

Similar arrangements were carried over when television began comprehensive broadcasting in the 1950s: in countries with a strong national broadcasting system a common programming format was the broadcasting of church services from local churches, either live or pre-recorded and edited. Changes to this pattern of regulation began in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when increases in the number of television stations and commercial networks increased competitiveness and diversity in the media market. In the United States and other countries, the obligation on stations to provide free airtime to mainline Christian denominations to broadcast their religious programs began to be replaced by stations selling airtime for religious programs to whomever was willing to pay for it. This opened the way for more entrepreneurial independent Christian groups, who previously had little access to television, to buy time for the broadcast of their programs. Their readiness and ability to pay fairly quickly displaced Catholicism and mainline Christianity from television (Horsfield, 2015: 245).

This situation established a particular dynamics within the Catholic church and electronic media. From a general cultural influence within catholic countries, the liberalization of radio and television moved the church towards a double policy: the creation of Catholic programs within Catholic media, and the presence of Catholic spaces within commercial media (Viganò, 2013: 18). This position, though, stresses a conviction regarding the Catholic communication policy: the communicative impetus of the Catholic church must take place within the broad spectrum of culture, which means that the church must communicate through confessional and secular media at the same time, avoiding the setting-up of an exclusive «Catholic culture».

3.3.1. The Principles of Communication within the Catholic Tradition

In order to comprehend the principles of communication within the Catholic tradition and the way in which the Catholic church «frames» mass media and media use, we must understand its «vertical» understanding of communication that, according to our approach, relates directly with its notion of revelation.

The Catholic tradition follows the main principles of the Christian understanding of revelation that we have explained at the beginning of this chapter. But, besides believing in the absolute revelation of God in Christ, it sustains that God's revelation must be interpreted in time and history, and the element that allows the correct interpretation of God's «vertical» communication in time is Tradition: for the Catholic church Tradition means the continuous adjournment of God's message under the guidance of doctrinal authority, basically represented by theologians and the Catholic hierarchy (Fries, 1985: 199). Thus divine communication is always «mediated» in some form, specially through ecclesiastical authority and through sacramental practice.

But at the same time the Catholic understanding of revelation corresponds to the sacramental / symbolic paradigm of revelation: together with the authoritative and reason-oriented foundation of revelation, Catholicism defends that divine communication is also present in Christian sacramental life, but also in the world understood as a «sacrament» or «symbol» of its creator that speaks to humanity in many ways (Fries, 1985: 202). Somehow catholic theology integrates an intellectual understanding of divine revelation with an allegorical / symbolic perception of the world, always mediated by Tradition and its essential assertions in history.

In order to fully understand the communicational dynamics of Catholicism we must also seize its «vertical» form of communication that shows the transformation from a strong doctrinal understanding of communication, towards a more dialogical and communional

perception of communication and mission (Fries, 1985: 439). When Christianity was first spread beyond Europe, Rome attempted a strategy of imposition, that is, the enforced use of unmodified Roman forms. This attempt gave way to translation, the presumption of Roman forms encoded in the local vernaculars. At present the Catholic church is trying adaptation, the tailoring of Roman forms to local tastes and expectations. The idealized culmination of this process occurs when Roman forms become incarnate in new cultural settings.

The medieval Roman Catholic missionary paradigm drew, implicitly or explicitly, on Luke 14:23, «and compel them to come in». We first encounter this text in Augustine's controversy with the Donatists, where he argued that it meant that the Donatists had to be forced to return to the Catholic tradition. In the course of the Middle Ages the text came to be applied also to the forced conversion (or at least baptism) of pagans and Jews. Even where no explicit appeal was made to Luke 14:23, the idea as such was present and operative (Rosenkranz, 1977: 118).

That this mentality dominated missionary thinking for centuries is confirmed as late as the XVIth century, when Las Casas was challenged by opponents of his gentle and non-coercive missionary approach to explain how he interpreted Luke 14:23. «Compellere intrare» («Compel them to come in»), he responded, did not refer to force but to persuasion: the Indians should be moved by the proclamation of the word to embrace the faith, and not, proverbially speaking, at gunpoint (Rosenkranz, 1977: 184).

In subsequent centuries the explicit appeal to Luke 14:23 fell into disuse, but the sentiment behind it persisted well into the XXth century and some of its missionary encyclicals. It could not really be otherwise, as long as one argued that there was no salvation outside the formal membership of the Roman Catholic Church and that it was to people's own eternal advantage if they could be made to join this community. As we have said, during the Middle Ages the church underwent a series of profound changes. Rosenkranz says:

«[The Church] moved from being a small, persecuted minority to being a large and influential organization. It changed from harassed sect to oppressor of sects. Every link between Christianity and Judaism was severed. An intimate relationship between throne and altar evolved. Thus, membership of the church became a matter of course. The place of the believer was largely forgotten and dogma was conclusively fixed and finalized. The church had adjusted to the long postponement of Christ's return; the apocalyptic missionary movement of the primitive church gave way to the expansion of Christendom» (Rosenkranz, 1977: 54–64).

Augustine embodied the beginning of this paradigm, and Thomas Aquinas its climax (Küng 1987:258). In his theology the latter assigned everybody and everything in heaven and on earth a place in the universe, in such a way that the whole constituted a perfect synthesis with no loose ends. The key to it all was a double order of knowledge and being, the one natural, the other supernatural: reason and faith, nature and grace., state and church, philosophy and theology, where the first of each pair refers to the natural foundation, the second to the supernatural «second level». This framework of thinking put the seal on the development of the missionary idea in the high Middle Ages which, in spite of the fact that it experienced several crises, remained essentially intact until the XXth century. Since the XVIth century it manifested itself supremely within the context of the European colonization of the non-Western world.

During the last three decades, in particular, Roman Catholic understanding of mission has undergone a most profound change. The catalytic event was the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). In recent decades no other world church or international confessional body has undergone such an intensive examination of consciousness and conscience about mission and communication as did the Roman Catholic church during the four years of the Second Vatican Council (Fries, 1985: 445).

Naturally, everything did not happen all of a sudden. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm was, in the course of time, succeeded by two others: those of the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment (which will be discussed later on this chapters). For several centuries, however, the Catholic paradigm was only marginally affected by these two, so that Hans Küng (1987: 23) may be right when he says that Vatican II had to digest simultaneously not one but two paradigms. The Mission document of Vatican II «Ad Gentes» (Second Vatican Council, 1965) sees Mission as the essence of the Church. In a similar way, Catholic communication theology sees communication at the centre and as the essence of the church. According to these Catholic principles the church exists to communicate. After all, as we have insisted, mission is also communicating.

Thus the Catholic theology of communion presupposes a communication theology. Such communication is at the essence of the relation with God («vertical» communication) but also presupposes communication on the «horizontal» level. For the Catholic tradition the emergence of modern technology for communication from Gutenberg to Internet is an extension of this communication.

Sally Vance-Tremblath in an article about Catholicism in the «The Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication, and Media» asserts that:

«Catholicism's approach to communication is guided by its foundational insight that all of creation is saturated with the presence of God. This insight is displayed in the ancient principle of *lex orandi: lex credendi* (the law of praying is the law of believing), which describes the connection between the conceptual aspects of Catholicism and their public transmission and expressions. Because it is possible for God's presence to be found in every aspect of human life, the desire to communicate such an understanding has been emphasized from Catholicism's earliest beginnings» (Vance-Trembath, 2006: 63).

The first examples of this emphasis regarding communication are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles in Christian Scripture. The early church leaders frequently preached in public places. For example, Paul the Apostle told the story of Jesus Christ in Athens as well as in other centres of activity throughout the region. Both Paul and Peter preached in Rome, which was the communication centre of the known-world.

In addition to this form of communication, rituals that transmitted Catholic Christian teaching emerged very quickly. These rituals involved simple activities as well as short explanations (creeds) that communicated the central truth/claims of Christianity. Vance-Trembath affirms:

«As Christianity developed and split into different denominations, Catholicism retained this emphasis upon the community expression while others focused more on the internal, private relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ. The essentially Catholic principle of sacramentality (the idea that God is available through all reality; the human and the divine are constitutively linked) has shaped this tradition's understanding and use of communication» (Vance-Trembath, 2006: 64).

Thus Catholicism is informed and animated by the notion of sacramentality and its adjacent theological principles: mediation and communion. These principles display Catholicism's stance towards communication and the media. Mediation describes the insight that God acts and is present through secondary causes and not directly. Communion refers to the insight that while God is personally present to each human being, the divine-human encounter is fundamentally communal; it is mediated by the experience of community and not simply as an individual or private experience. While these may be present to some degree in other denominations, Catholicism is marked by the insistence on attention to all three and its various configurations of them (Soukup, 2005: 234).

We must emphasize that, of the Christian churches, the Roman Catholic Church has most actively commented on communication today. With a permanent bureaucracy in the Vatican (as well as local offices for each bishop, and national support structures), the Catholic church has offices to address the whole range of Christian living. For example, the

Vatican today has nine top-level «congregations» responsible for such things as doctrine, worship, evangelization, education, etc., and communication.

The very existence of a full-time office and staff for communication explains the consistency of both output and opinion of the Vatican's statements on communication. Since its establishment in 1964, the Pontifical Council for Social Communication has issued eleven documents on communication in its own name, three of them extensive and influential. In addition, it has prepared thirty-seven shorter statements for the pope's promulgation (Viganò, 2013: 79).

Recognizing the power of the cinema, radio, and television, Pope Pius XII issued a major encyclical letter on these mass media. In «Miranda Prorsus» (Pius XII, 1957), the pope claims a twofold Church interest in mass media: their influence on people, and the possibility of their use in proclaiming the gospel to all nations. The letter itself aims for a comprehensive treatment. After examining the potential Church use of the media, Pius XII reviews the following: the prosocial and antisocial effects of the media; the freedom of communication and its errors; the role of public authority in its interactions with the entertainment industry; news; mass education; proper education for youth; and the role of Church communication offices. Then he turns to each specific medium, writing in turn about film, radio, and television and the various social actors involved in each –producers, exhibitors, audience members, and so forth–. Though he addresses the letter to bishops and other Church leaders, his content speaks also to all who come in contact with the mass media. The overall tone of this letter is one of concern for the dangers to Christian faith and morals posed by the media; despite this, the pope urges greater Church involvement with the media.

About ten years earlier, in 1948, Pius XII had established a standing Vatican committee for film. With its name and membership changing several times over the next few years, it formed a key advisory body in the preparation of the encyclical letter (Viganò, 2013: 16). After his election as pope in 1958, Pope John XXIII appointed within this committee a «Preparatory Secretariat for the Press and the Entertainment World» after he had summoned the Second Vatican Council. This subcommittee received the charge to assemble materials on communication for the approaching Council. More specifically, it was this Secretariat's task «to identify the problems raised by the press and the audiovisual media and, while recognizing the individual character of each sector, to assemble all this material into a single study which would yet leave room for future developments in which the different instruments of social communication, as they were called from then on, would find their proper place and receive due consideration within the Church's renewed ministry»

(Viganò, 2013: 17). The work of this secretariat led to the 1963 Vatican Council Decree on the Means of Social Communication, «Inter Mirifica» (Second Vatican Council, 1963).

The Second Vatican Council, a worldwide meeting of Catholic bishops and church leaders, with observers from other Christian churches, met from 1962 to 1965. As articulated at the beginning of its second session by the then recently elected Pope Paul VI, the Council had four purposes: «to define more fully the nature of the Church, especially as regards the person of the bishops; to renew the Church; to restore unity among all Christians; and to start a dialogue with contemporary men» (Viganò, 2013: 37). The dialogue with the contemporary world plays a large role in the various statements of the Council and in the subsequent work of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication.

Meeting in regular sessions in the fall of 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1965, the bishops of the Second Vatican Council debated schemata and proposals prepared by the working committees, which met throughout the year. By the end of its sessions, the Council had approved sixteen major statements, addressing topics ranging from the nature of the Church itself, the Church in the modern world, relationships with other Christian churches and with non-Christian religions, revelation, the roles of various groups within the Church (bishops, priests, laity, members of religious congregations), worship, missionary work, education, religious freedom, and the mass media.

In the decree on communication «Inter Mirifica», the Council acknowledges the ongoing importance of mass communication in the contemporary world and identifies several thematic areas: the right to information; the relationship between the rights of art and moral demands; public opinion; and the uses of the mass media in civil society and by the Church. To promote ongoing reflection on these and other communication issues, the Council established an annual «communication day» in each diocese and mandated the creation of the Pontifical Commission (later, Council) for Social Communication.

A historical issue must be pointed out here. In his book «Using Media in Religious Education» catechist Ronald A. Sarno argues that Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian media theorist that innovated the studies on the cultural impact of media, inspired Pope John Paul XXIII to modernize how the Catholic church communicates with humanity (Sarno, 1987: 106-108). The Pope wanted McLuhan's help for the Council's task of renovation and the correlation of Catholicism either language of communications i, and McLuhan was officially appointed by the Vatican to the Vatican's Social Communication Commission.

Warren A. Kappeler underlines that in many ways this was a nominal opposition, and that McLuhan complained that the church of the 1960's no more understood the implications of electronic media than the XVIth century church had grasped the Gutemberg revolution (Kappeler, 2009: 103). The author says:

«McLuhan could have worked on the Vatican study commission's instruction designed to document "Inter Mirifica", but he did not. He was upset that he had not been consulted earlier by the Vatican. A devout Christian who converted to Roman Catholicism early in his life, McLuhan wanted to help the church with the study and understanding of the media. Though critical of texts such as "Inter Mirifica" and "Communio et Progressio", the work of McLuhan could be regarded as a form of Christian humanism or Christian apologetics. He thought modern man had entered a new era in religious communication and was concerned about the impact of so-called "electric" consciousness on the Church». (Kappeler, 2009: 103)

As a consultant and educator, though, McLuhan's work influenced other churchmen implied in the elaboration of the mentioned texts. For example the Jesuit Walter J. Ong, a pioneering literary scholar who explored the differences between oral and literate cultures, and Pierre Babin, an expert in religious pedagogy and creator of the «Centre for Research and Communication» in Lyon (France) were both directly influenced by McLuhan's work. Much like Jacques Ellul, another scholar implied in this line of work, there was a deeply Christian side to McLuhan's serious exploration of the mass media, an area of study that is still to be deepened.

Anyhow: this commission of bishops and lay communication experts would promote and coordinate Catholic thinking about communication. Finally, the Council added this charge: «The Council expressly directs the commission of the Holy See referred to in par. 19 to publish a pastoral instruction, with the help of experts, from various countries, to ensure that all the principles and rules of the Council on the means of social communication be put into effect» (Second Vatican Council, 1963: n. 32).

The commission fulfilled that mandate eight years later with the publication, in January 1971, of «Communio et Progressio», the lengthy «pastoral instruction on the means of social communication» (PCSC, 1971). This document, the first of the commission, sets the direction for the next thirty years of Vatican opinion on contemporary communication and establishes the criteria of the Catholic criteria on communication, that we present in the following section.

3.3.2. The Principles of Communication and Catholic Doctrine

As we have underlined above, we can affirm that all of this Vatican thinking and writing about communication and its particular «framing» of mass communication and media use emerges from the particular accents of Roman Catholic theological tradition.

The most explicit exposition of the theological grounding for reflection on mass communication occurs in the introductory sections of «Communio et Progressio» (PCSC,

1971). After a brief introduction, we read: «The Church sees these media as ‘gifts of God’ which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation” (PCSC, 1971: n. 2). This states the theme of the entire document: communication exists for increasing human communion, unity, and progress. This communication, we read, results from God’s love. God «made the first move to make contact with mankind at the start of the history of salvation. In the fullness of time, he communicated his very self to man» (PCSC, 1971: n. 10).

Setting this claim within the larger context of Catholic theology highlights more clearly the themes that will appear in the Church documents on communication. American theologian Richard McBrien concludes his magisterial introduction to Catholic theology and practice by identifying three key foci of the Catholic tradition:

«No theological principle or focus is more characteristic of Catholicism or more central to its identity than the principle of sacramentality. The Catholic vision sees God in and through all things: other people, communities, movements, events, places, objects, the world at large, the whole cosmos. The visible, the tangible, the finite, the historical, all these are actual or potential carriers of the divine presence. Indeed, it is only in and through these material realities that we can even encounter the invisible God.

A corollary of the principle of sacramentality is the principle of mediation. A sacrament not only signifies; it also causes what it signifies. Thus, created realities not only contain, reflect, or embody the presence of God. They make that presence effective for those who avail themselves of these realities. Just as we noted in the previous section that the world is mediated by meaning, so the universe of grace is a mediated reality: mediated principally by Christ, and secondarily by the Church and by other signs and instruments of salvation outside and beyond the Church.

Finally, Catholicism affirms the principle of communion: that our way to God and God’s way to us is not only a mediated way but a communal way. And even when the divine-human encounter is most personal and individual, it is still communal in that the encounter is made possible by the mediation of the community» (McBrien, 1980: 1180-1181).

Each of these three elements (sacramentality, mediation, and community) appears as fundamental to the Vatican ideal of mass communication. McBrien identifies other Catholic elements, which will appear in greater and lesser degrees in the documents:

«[Catholicism’s] corresponding respect for history, for tradition, and for continuity (we are products of our past as well as shapers of our present and our future); its conviction that we can have as radical a notion of sin as we like so long as our understanding and appreciation of grace is even more radical; its high regard for authority and order as well as for conscience and freedom». (McBrien, 1980: 1186)

«Communio et Progressio» draws on this Catholic tradition and presumes its way of thinking. For example, its emphasis on Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God calls attention to both the sacramental nature of communication and to the centrality of mediation:

«When by His death and resurrection, Christ the Incarnate Son, the Word and Image of the invisible God, set the human race free, He shared with everyone the truth and the life of God. As the only mediator between the Father and mankind He made peace between God and man and laid the foundations of unity among men themselves. While He was on earth Christ revealed Himself as the Perfect Communicator. Through His incarnation, He utterly identified Himself with those who were to receive His communication and He gave His message not only in words but in the whole manner of His life. He spoke from within, that is to say, from out of the press of His people. Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level it is the giving of self in love». (PCSC, 1971: n. 10–11)

This passage, which addresses «basic points of doctrine» calls attention to Christ's role as mediator as well as to the Church's role in continuing that process through the sacraments. Implicit here too is that respect for the created world, of which the mass media are parts. They are, in the words of Vatican II, «marvelous technical inventions» (Second Vatican Council, 1963: n. 1).

Finally, the passage also highlights the goal of communication: unity among people. Such teleology, which in «Communio et Progressio» also gives rise to the communion/community so typical of Catholic theology, becomes one anchor point from which the document will evaluate all communication. The other anchor point, which also appears here, comes from the example of Christ: true communication is the giving of the self in love (PCSC, 1971: n. 3). This theological preference for personalism encourages, in turn, a predisposition toward the individual, even in the world of mass communication. The themes built on this theology run through all subsequent Vatican opinion on contemporary communication, as we shall see below.

3.3.3. Vatican Statements on Communication

As we stressed earlier on this chapter, the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Social Communication has published eleven documents since its establishment following the Second Vatican Council. They are «Communio et Progressio» (PCSC, 1971), «An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious» (PCSC, 1973), «Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication» (PCSC, 1986), «Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response» (PCSC, 1989), «Criteria for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Cooperation in Communications» (PCSC, 1989), «Aetatis Novae» (PCSC, 1992),

«100 Years of Cinema» (PCSC, 1995–1996), «Ethics in Advertising» (PCSC, 1997), «Ethics in Communication» (PCSC, 2000), «The Church and Internet» (PCSC, 2002a), and «Ethics in Internet» (PCSC, 2002b).

With the exception of «An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious» (PCSC, 1973) and «Criteria for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Cooperation» (PCSC, 1989), the Vatican statements on communication media address both the meaning of social communication and the Church use of the mass media (for preaching, teaching, and internal organization). The same principles animate both discussions.

In coherence with the purpose of our dissertation, we will now centre our attention on the Vatican thinking on communication primarily on the public communication issues rather than those of church communication. When the Pontifical Council addresses the means of social communication, it begins with the press, radio, cinema, and television, but it also includes every other form of modern communication.

Because the media have as their proper purpose the building up of human community, the documents emphasize, on the one hand, those things that build community and, on the other, defences against the things that harm the community. These comments from the introduction to *Ethics in Internet* give a clear sense of the two poles of discussion of this theme. One pole is shown in «*Communio et Progressio*», which states that «media have the ability to make every person everywhere a partner in the business of the human race» (PCSC, 1971: n. 9).

«*Ethics in Internet*», however, offers the other pole to the use of the Internet: «The spread of the Internet also raises a number of other ethical questions about matters like privacy, the security and confidentiality of data, copyright and intellectual property law, pornography, hate sites, the dissemination of rumor and character assassination under the guise of news, and much else» (PCSC, 2002b: n. 5-6). The line of thinking appears clearly here: the theologically «Catholic» characteristic of communion leads to the principles of unity and solidarity. On the one hand, communication media can foster these virtues and thus achieve a certain fulfilment. On the other hand, each individual communication medium can threaten these virtues in ways particular to it. This pattern, as it appears here in a form refined during the 1980s and 1990s, begins with «*Communio et Progressio*» (PCSC, 1971).

Where pre-Vatican II Council documents tended to address moral issues at length and as their primary focus, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications prefers to highlight the potential contributions of the media to human growth first and only later identify moral issues. Thus, «*Communio et Progressio*» treats communication media first in their role of creating and shaping public opinion. Here they establish a «great roundtable»

for humanity (PCSC, 1971: n. 19) and offer the possibility of an end to the isolation of individuals and nations. Because of the importance of such communication, the document declares that people have a right to information, a right to inform, and a right to access the channels of information. From these rights flow protections against propaganda, manipulation, and deception in public affairs (PCSC, 1971: n. 33–48).

The Pontifical Council returns to this defence of the right to communicate in «Communio et Progressio's» 20th anniversary document, «Aetatis Novae» (literally, «a new era»). In this document the defence we have outlined above has shifted: where the 1971 document saw the greatest threats to the right to information originating in government activity, this 1992 document also warns against making people's right to communicate contingent upon «wealth, education, or political power» (PCSC, 1971: n. 15). Connecting this right to the right to religious freedom, «Aetatis Novae» urges that the Church step in to defend human rights against political, legal, educational, or corporate limits (PCSC, 1971: n. 15).

The theme of communication for the common good, for solidarity, for peace, for human unity, and the defence of access to communication as part of this human community finds a place in many of the Vatican statements, either centrally or as a presumption to specific actions. For example, the Pontifical Council mentions it in the documents «Ethics in Advertising» (PCSC, 1997: n. 16-17), «Ethics in Communications» (PCSC, 2000: n. 6, 20), and «The Church and Internet» (PCSC, 2002, n. 3), as well as in those already cited.

A second theme related to the Vatican's concerns with the media involves the effects of communication media on individuals, groups, and societies. «Aetatis Novae» summarizes the issues:

«Today's revolution in social communications involves a fundamental reshaping of the elements by which people comprehend the world about them, and verify and express what they comprehend. The constant availability of images and ideas, and their rapid transmission even from continent to continent, have profound consequences, both positive and negative, for the psychological, moral and social development of persons, the structure and functioning of societies, intercultural communications, and the perception and transmission of values, world views, ideologies, and religious beliefs. The communications revolution affects perceptions even of the Church, and has a significant impact on the Church's own structures and modes of functioning». (PCSC, 1992: n. 4)

The sense of the power of communication media appears also in the document «Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response» (PCSC, 1989), though in that document the Pontifical Council includes both moral and psychological

media effects, including sin, desensitization to violence, confusion about appropriate sexual behaviour, and psychological acting out.

The ethics document trilogy –«Ethics in Advertising» (PCSC, 1997), «Ethics in Communications» (PCSC, 2000), and «Ethics in Internet» (PCSC, 2002b)– categorize the effects of the communication media in economic, political, cultural, and religious terms and recognize both positive and negative effects. Most of the World Communication Day addresses at some point accept the influence of mass communication and seek either to moderate that influence or to call attention to its power. Suskup asserts:

«The acknowledgment of media effects seems natural to the Pontifical Council, since it flows easily from the theological principle of sacramentality. Just as material objects, people, and the events of one's life mediate one's experience of God, so too the communication media can filter and mediate all manner of human experience. For a group that believes so strongly in the reality and power of mediation through physical reality, the means of communication appear particularly important. However, such a view does have its drawbacks. Too strong a focus on mediation when it writes about the means of communication leads the Pontifical Council to a kind of optimistic or idealized view of these media which sees them in instrumental terms and not as social structures». (Suskup, 2005: 241)

In other words, by principally seeing mediation and sacramental efficacy, the Church documents tend to miss some of the other paths of influence and operation of modern communication.

A third theme in the Vatican documents on communication identifies typical problem areas associated with the media. Some, like the relationship between the freedom of artistic expression and the limits of the moral law, have roots that extend well before the Second Vatican Council and find an expression in «Inter Mirifica» (Second Vatican Council, 1963: n. 6). Other issues, like the social responsibility of professional communicators also appear in «Inter Mirifica» (Idem, n. 9-10). «Communio et Progressio» continues these debates and opts for freedom of expression (which it joins to the rights to information and communication) as opposed to censorship (PCSC, 1971: n. 54-58).

In the attempt to balance the defence of free expression with the responsibilities of communication for the social good, «Communio et Progressio» stresses the moral virtues of truth and human dignity, together with an ethics of solidarity. This relationship of freedom, responsibility, truth, and ethics appears in many subsequent documents, particularly the ethics trilogy, like in «Ethics in Advertising» (PCSC, 1997: n. 1, 5, 17), «Ethics in Communications» (PCSC, 2000: n. 20), and «Ethics in Internet» (PCSC, 2002b: n. 12-14). Like with many magisterial documents, Rather than resolve the issues, the documents highlight the need to balance the competing goals of free expression and social responsibility.

A fourth general theme in the Vatican documents on media and communication is media education. Where communication media prove troublesome or morally threatening, the Vatican abstains from religious or governmental censorship or restrictions. Instead, it encourages the greater education of those who read, view, or use the mass media. Following the much older idea of educating people for the new media (see, for example, Pius XII's «Miranda Prorsus» of 1957), the Pontifical Council encourages educational responses to the media in «Communio et Progressio» (PCSC, 1971: n. 64ff). Then, beginning with the 1986 «Guide to the Training of Future Priests» (PCSC, 1986: n. 9), it embraces the media-education movement as a way to «inoculate» recipients against questionable media content.

A similar recommendation appears in the document on pornography and violence in communication (PCSC, 1989: n. 25), «Aetatis Novae» (PCSC, 1991: n. 24), where media education is encouraged for each diocese, an idea followed in «Ethics in Communication» (PCSC, 200: n. 25), and «The Church and the Internet» (PCSC, 2002a: n. 7). The majority of the document «100 Years of Cinema» consists of media education units prepared by communication scholars and community activists from around the world (PCSC, 1995-1996). Media education encourages personal responsibility in the face of media content, as one would expect from the Catholic emphasis on conscience and authority. At the same time, media education highlights the role of what we could call a kind of mediated approach to learning.

In coherence with this emphasis on individual responsibility and cooperative practice, the Vatican documents on media and communication also stress the responsibilities of various individuals and groups who participate in mass communication.

This sphere of responsibility again manifests the Catholic consciousness of mediation and community in a sort of multinational perspective. Just as communication reaches individuals through the work of others, both individually and collectively, so the response to communication must similarly come through a kind of mediation of the community. According to the Vatican documents, an added motivation for those involved in improving communication arises from Christ's example of love. In this sense the whole of the second part of «Communio et Progressio» focuses on the responsibilities of recipients, whether these be teachers, children, young people, parents, or other adults (PCSC, 1971: n. 64–70; 81–83), and communicators (Id. n. 71–80). The rest of this second part focuses on the roles of civil authorities (Id. n. 84–91), nations (Id. n. 92–95), and «all Christians and men of good will» (Id. n. 96–100).

Such an approach, which calls attention to the responsibilities of groups, occurs frequently. It appears in the document on pornography and violence, insisting on the duties of communicators, parents, educators, youth, the public, public authorities, and the Church

(PCSC, 1989: n. 23-29). At the same time «Ethics in Communication» highlights the duties of professional communicators, audience members, parents, teachers, civil authorities, and the Church. (PCSC, 2000: n. 23-26).

Among all these groups, the Pontifical Council has also looked to professional communicators (writers, editors, producers, directors, all those working in the communication industries). According to the Vatican institution, these professionals bear particular responsibility, because they «preside while the exchange proceeds around the vast 'round table' that the media have made. Their vocation is nobly to promote the purpose of social communication» (PCSC, 1971: n. 73). The Church therefore wishes to provide them with «spiritual help to meet the needs of their important and difficult role» (Id. n. 104). «Communio et Progressio» continues saying that «the Church is very willing to undertake a dialogue with all communicators of every religious persuasion. She would do this so that she may contribute to a common effort to solve the problems inherent in their task and do what is best for the benefit of man» (Id. n. 105). This theme of moral and spiritual help continues in the Vatican documents: the «Appeal to Contemplative Religious» asks monks and nuns to pray particularly for those working in communication (PCSC, 1973: n. 3), and «Aetatis Novae» sets the pastoral care of communications personnel as one of four pastoral priorities for the Catholic Church.

This reasoning is coherent with the Pontifical Council's understanding of a theology of mediation:

«Media work involves special psychological pressures and ethical dilemmas. Considering how important a role the media play in forming contemporary culture and shaping the lives of countless individuals and whole societies, it is essential that those professionally involved in secular media and the communications industries approach their responsibilities imbued with high ideals and a commitment to the service of humanity. The Church has a corresponding responsibility: to develop and offer programs of pastoral care which are specifically responsive to the peculiar working conditions and moral challenges facing communications professionals. Typically, pastoral programs of this sort should include ongoing formation which will help these men and women—many of whom sincerely wish to know and do what is ethically and morally right—to integrate moral norms ever more fully into their professional work as well as their private lives». (PCSC, 1992: n. 19)

Because the work of media professionals influences so many others, the Church wishes to help them. The priorities elucidated here inform the later writings on the Pontifical Council, especially the ethics trilogy.

Between all of these concerns for individuals and groups and kinds of communications, the Pontifical Council never loses sight of the possibilities that communication media offer to the Church itself in its duty to proclaim the gospel. Precisely

as media, the means of communication fit nicely into the Church's theological understanding of mediation. So it makes perfect sense for the Church to encourage its members to use all communication media possible to spread the news of Jesus Christ.

The Church dedicates as much attention to this theme as to any other in the various documents. «Communio et Progressio» specifically discusses how the Church can use the mass media, both under the rubric of «the use of the media for giving the good news» (PCSC, 1971: n. 126-134) and as a part of a much longer discussion of «the active commitment of Catholics in the different media» (Id. n. 135-161).

Nearly all of the succeeding documents also lay claim to the media for the gospel. Preparation to better preach the gospel to all people forms a chief motivation for training priests in using modern means of communication. Such an objective not only motivates their studies but also serves as one of the apostolates for priests (see «Guide to the Training of Future Priests», PCSC, 1986). «Aetatis Novae» on the other hand sets the «development and promotion of the Church's own media of social communications» as one of the priorities for the Catholic Church and argues that «media work is not simply one more program alongside all the rest of the Church's activities: social communications have a role to play in every aspect of the Church's mission» (PCSC, 1992: n. 17). The very same thinking appears with regard to the Internet in «The Church and the Internet» (PCSC, 2002a: n. 5).

The popes have returned to the theme many times. For example Pope Paul VI wrote quite forcefully about using the media for evangelization in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (literally «Announcing the Gospel»):

«When they are put at the service of the Gospel, [mass media] are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims "from the housetops" [Matthew 10:27] the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes». (Paul VI, 1975: n. 45)

It is important to acknowledge that most of the documents of the Vatican concerning mass media and communication go through the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the agency set up in the 1960s for that purpose. In the eleven documents or statements that group has issued since 1971, six general themes or areas of concern emerge: the unity or solidarity of peoples as a goal for communication; a consciousness of the effects of the media on individuals and societies; an attempt to respond to specific problem areas or issues stemming from those media effects; the promotion of media

education; the encouragement of individual and group responses (including the Church's pastoral care for communication professionals); and the Church's obligation and opportunity to make use of contemporary communication media to preach the gospel.

These areas of concern derive from the Catholic theological worldview that stresses communion, sacramentality, and mediation as the three central elements of the Catholic tradition. From these flow the more applied theological concepts such as the importance of conscience and its relationship to authority, the importance of the physical world and human invention, the understanding of hierarchy, and the dual motivation of human progress and love of God. More applied still are applications such as mentoring, education, and cooperative work.

As we have seen, Vatican opinion about modern communication does not so much apply the theological worldview in a set pattern but grows from it in an organic way. As «Communio et Progressio» affirms «the unity and advancement of people living in society: these are the chief aims of social communication and of all the means it uses» (PCSC, 1971: n. 1). According to the Catholic tradition these goals and all things leading to them flow from god's creation and the model of god's love. Vatican opinion about modern communication calls people everywhere to live up to the example and gift of that love of god manifested through his «vertical» communication to humanity, that becomes «horizontal» in the purpose of transforming the world through the church, its hierarchy, its tradition, its sacramentality and its communion.

3.3.4. Catholicism, Communication and Geopolitics

The expression of Catholicism follows different dynamics, as we have seen in our historical resume: contrary to other Christian denomination –like Eastern Orthodoxy and Mainline Protestantism– catholic communities tend to spread through a double impetus: through a vertical, hierarchical, understanding of power –formalized in the Bishop of Rome and the Roman curia– and a global expansion that takes place, in many countries, through religious orders and missionaries that not only extend the hierarchical structure but assure a supra-national identity of their missionary agents, even though proceeding from many nationalities, thus blending their identities in a global transnational missionary action often linked to colonial expansion and to national expansion interests, but always defending the interests of the transnational church.

The sacramental/symbolic and authoritarian understanding of communication within the catholic tradition –which, as we have seen, perceives the means of communication beyond their bare literal meaning and opens them to a moral and symbolic

horizon, always under the principles of interpretation of religious authority– helped to build the corporative and hegemonized geopolitical dimension of Catholicism. Corporative, because it stands on a multicultural structure that blends together a multiplicity of identities into a common political principle of transforming the world under the guidance of one central authority (the Vatican) and through the directives of its local representatives that respond to such a centralized power. Homogenized because it seeks to create a common – though not exclusive– identity background that goes beyond the diverse nationalities and cultures that compose the institution.

3.4. THE EASTERN ORTHODOX TRADITION

As we stressed in the presentation of the process of globalization of Christianity at the beginning of this chapter, the Eastern Orthodox churches also play an important part in the expansion and development of Christianity. Within the perspective of their own tradition they also offer a particular accent in the form of understanding communication from its «vertical» and «horizontal» perspective. Even though Eastern Orthodox hierarchy has not developed a significant corpus of document on communication –like, for example, the Catholic tradition– it doesn't mean that they lack of a particular understanding of communication, the principles of which we will present along this part of our study following the description of the process of globalization of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

It is important to underline for the sake of «Media, Religion and Culture» studies that the study of the communicational dynamics of the Eastern Christian traditions is an open area of study. Even though there is a niche of academic material on the subject – material that we use for our purpose– there is still much to learn about this rich Christian tradition, particularly in its contemporary form.

3.4.1. The Eastern Orthodox Churches and their Process of Globalization

As we have underlined above, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is one of the three major branches of Christianity and the world's second largest Christian communion. Eastern Orthodoxy is the majority religious affiliation in Russia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Cyprus and is a significant minority in numerous countries throughout the world (Woodward, 2002: 217).

We must remember, though, that the Eastern Orthodox community is not a single ecclesiastical institution but actually a communion of independent churches that remain united through common theological beliefs and worship practices. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople holds a pre-eminence of honour among all Orthodox bishops but has no

administrative authority outside of his patriarchate, nor is he believed to possess doctrinal infallibility (Woodward, 2002: 218).

The Orthodox Church has grown considerably since the fall of communism in Europe, and the centre of Orthodox monasticism, Mount Athos, has undergone remarkable revival. Estimates place its number of adherents close to 300,000,000, which makes Eastern Orthodoxy the world's third largest religious body after Roman Catholicism and Sunnī Islam (Woodward, 2002, 219).

3.4.1.1. Beliefs and Practices of the Eastern Orthodox Churches

According to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, leaders of Eastern Orthodox Christianity believe it to be the rightful apostolic descendents of Jesus Christ and his disciples through an unbroken apostolic succession of its bishops. Its governance is hierarchical and conciliar, which means that all theological disputes must be worked out through councils of bishops, not through the exclusive promulgation of any individual bishop. The Orthodox Church adheres to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and thus, like the vast majority of Christians worldwide, it holds firmly to the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Its Holy Scripture consists of the New Testament together with the Greek Septuagint text of the Old Testament (Schmemmann, 1977: 25).

From a comparative perspective many of its doctrines and practices, the Orthodox Church resembles the Roman Catholic Church, with which it shares a millennium of common history. However, Greek patristic writers have had a much greater influence on Orthodoxy than Latin writers like Augustine. The Orthodox place little emphasis on the doctrine of Original sin and the hereditary guilt that it implies. Thus, while much Western theology understands the spiritual salvation of human beings in primarily juridical terms—in terms of a need to be legally acquitted before God—the Orthodox, on the other hand, are less concerned with legal acquittal than with progress in «theosis», or «deification» (Meyendorff, 1978: 12). Deification does not signify a process of becoming a god but rather progressive conformity to the likeness of God. Salvation, for the Orthodox Christian, is therefore the unending transformation of human beings into reflections of the divine. The doctrine of «theosis» provides the theological rationale underlying nearly all other aspects of Orthodox belief and practice (Meyendorff, 1978: 13).

Coherent with the principle of deification of the faithful, the Orthodox Church's worship is highly liturgical and sacramental, with a strong emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit. The church officially recognizes seven sacraments, although its understanding of this number is less rigid than in Roman Catholicism.

The Orthodox Church has a rich and distinctive spiritual tradition that underlines the process of «theosis» we have mentioned above, as a «memory» of the constant communication of the faithful with god. Central to Orthodox spirituality is the practice of «hesychasm», or stillness, which centres on «the Jesus prayer», a short, frequently repeated prayer for mercy that aims at quieting the soul, thus increasing its receptivity to the will of god and his presence. The purpose of this extended practice underlines the process of transformation for the believer that seeks to arrive to a unity between mind, spirit and body (Ware, 2002: 35).

Of particular importance for the understanding of Orthodox spirituality and Orthodox communication dynamics is the veneration of icons of Christ and the saints, which is believed to help focus attention during prayer and aid in making the presence of God manifest (Pelikan, 1977: 75). Most Orthodox icons are two-dimensional paintings that follow strict guidelines for composition; statuary is generally discouraged. Orthodox likewise maintain that the veneration of saints inspires the believer to achieve greater holiness, and they actively seek saints' prayers and intercessions.

Iconoclasm (literally, «icon-smashing») has an important place in the history of Orthodoxy in relation to the place of icons in its theology and spirituality and, thus, in its understanding of divine communication. It refers to a period in church history, usually considered from 730 to 842, in which the legitimacy of the veneration of icons was questioned in parts of the Byzantine Empire. Generally considered as beginning with Emperor Leo III, policies of removing icons from Orthodox churches were followed by the destruction of the icons themselves. The origin of the name lies in this pattern of destroying the sacred images, whether by smashing, burning, or the whitewashing of churches (Pelikan, 1977: 77). Pelikan gives account of the historical moment in these words:

«Those in opposition to the destruction of the icons («iconodules» or «those who venerate icons») successfully defended their use on theological and traditional grounds at the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (787), given impetus by the support of the Empress Irene. A resurgence of iconoclastic fervour took place under Leo V, who from 813 instituted a second period of iconoclastic imperial policy, albeit less severe in tone than the first. The definitive restoration of the icons did not take place until the first Sunday of Great Lent, 842, when, under the leadership of regent Theodora, restoring the icons to the Great Church and establishing a feast in honor of the event (commemorated ever after as the Triumph of Orthodoxy)» (Pelikan, 1977: 78).

These periods of iconoclasm were formative in the Orthodox articulation of its theology of worship and of art, during which time such figures as St. John of Damascus compiled tracts (i.e. his three treatises against those who defame the images) demonstrating

the coherence of iconographic representation in a worshipping theology grounded in the incarnation (Pelikan, 1977: 79). The tracts became a reference point in the theological understanding of the place of icons in Orthodox liturgy, spirituality and theology, thus giving ground to an exceptional theology of art and beauty.

3.4.1.2. *The Expansion of the Orthodox Churches*

Often Western presentations of the Eastern Orthodox Church claim that it originated with the «Great Schism» of 1054, in which the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople mutually anathematized each other on account of several disagreements, most notably the Pope's addition of the «filioque» clause to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (Schmemmann, 1977: 14). Such an account is problematic for several reasons. For example, the date of 1054 is somewhat artificial because tensions had been brewing between Rome and the East for several centuries prior. Second, there is strong evidence that Christians in both the East and the West continued to identify strongly with each other for nearly a century and a half until the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople in 1204. Meyendorff affirms that:

«The “Great Schism” did not represent the formation of any “new” ecclesiastical body but, rather, the fracture of the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church” of the Byzantine Empire into two. Since the sixth century, the Byzantine church had been jurisdictionally administered by five patriarchates: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The predominantly Latin-speaking patriarchate of Rome became known as the Roman Catholic Church, whereas the four Greek-speaking patriarchates of the East became the Eastern Orthodox Churches». (Meyendorff, 1978: 38)

The history of the Orthodox Church therefore begins with the earliest centuries of Christianity, during the periodic persecutions of Rome, which tested the new religion with frequent martyrdoms. These persecutions permanently ended with the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in the IVth century (Schmemmann, 1977: 18). After Christianity became the official religion of the Byzantine state, the emperors quickly realized that doctrinal unity facilitated political stability, and therefore, over the period of five centuries, they summoned seven «ecumenical councils» to work out major theological disagreements. These seven councils constitute the backbone of official Orthodox dogma.

This Vth century saw the first lasting schisms of Christianity as the Assyrian Church of the East rejected Byzantine authority in 424; the Oriental Orthodox Churches (e.g., the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syrian Orthodox) are descended from those groups that were dissatisfied with the outcome of Chalcedon. Constantinople II (553) and Constantinople III

(680–681) further clarified the definitions of Chalcedon, and the second council of Nicaea (787) defended the propriety of the veneration of icons against the iconoclasts (Pelikan, 1977: 153). These churches are now called «Old Eastern Churches» in order to differentiate them from the Byzantine tradition, and hold in themselves interesting particularities regarding their understanding of communication and mass media, since most of them have developed under Islamic rule. The purpose of our study does not allow us to deepen in their communicative nature of these churches, but we must notice that they stand as interesting area of development of the «Media, Religion and Culture» academic field, like Elizabeth Iskander has shown in her research on the Coptic church (Iskander, 2012).

The first millennium witnessed two major missionary efforts that hold a great place in Orthodox history. In the IXth century, Saints Cyril and Methodius undertook missionary efforts among the Slavic peoples of Europe. They are credited with translating the Bible and liturgical texts into what is now known as Old Church Slavonic and are believed to have developed the Cyrillic script, which is still used in many eastern European nations. Of similar significance is the conversion of Prince Vladimir of Kiev in 988, which in turn led to the conversion of the Russian people and, ultimately, several centuries later, to the establishment of contemporary Orthodoxy's largest wing, the Russian Orthodox Church (Schmemmann, 1977: 41).

We must remember that after the sacking of Constantinople solidified the 1054 schism between Rome and the East, there were several attempts at reunification. The most notable was the apparent achievement of union at the council of Florence (1439), but the unification was rejected by the majority of Orthodox in Constantinople (Pelikan, 1977: 203). Efforts for reunion continued but were abruptly cut off when the Ottomans captured Constantinople and brought about the demise of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. The Orthodox under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire were allowed to practice their religion under the auspices of the millet system, in which the Orthodox clergy became civil rulers, reporting directly to the Ottoman authorities (Meyendorff, 1983: 63).

As a result of Constantinople's captivity, Russia assumed the most prominent role in Orthodoxy from the 16th century until the rise of communism. The Russian Church undertook extensive missionary activity, most notably in China, Japan, and Alaska. The spread of Orthodoxy to most Western nations occurred, however, not through missionary activity but as a result of eastern European and Arab Orthodox immigrants fleeing Muslim and communist governments (Schmemmann, 1977: 73).

3.4.1.3. The Orthodox Church Today

The Orthodox Church today is made up of 14 independently self governing, or «autocephalous» churches. In order of descending rank of honour, they are the ancient patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem and the national churches of Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and the Czech Lands and Slovakia. The Orthodox Church in America was granted autocephaly in 1970 by the Russian Orthodox Church, but this has yet to be recognized by Constantinople, which regards the church as merely «autonomous» –that is, self-governing in most respects but dependent in some ways on their mother churches–. Autonomy is possessed by several churches, including Finland, Japan, Ukraine, and Mount Sinai (Jenkins, 2002: 160).

In spite of this tendency towards a national identity of the Eastern Orthodox churches, the contemporary Orthodox Church is facing a unique challenge that has been brought about by the emigration of peoples from traditionally Orthodox lands to western Europe, the Americas, and Australia. This has created a situation in which a majority of the autocephalous Orthodox churches have established competing jurisdictions within a single region. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of consensus among the Orthodox concerning how a local church becomes autocephalous. the Church of Russia, for example, believes that autocephaly should be granted by the mother church that first evangelized a region, while Constantinople asserts that it has jurisdiction over all lands that lie outside of Orthodox countries. In the early XXIst century, efforts to find a compromise solution for the «diaspora», as Orthodox Christians living in non-Orthodox lands are often called, have intensified, although no conclusive resolution has been reached (Roudometof, 2014: 82).

A related difficulty for the Orthodox Church is its relationship to religious nationalism. Roudometof underlines:

«Although the Orthodox officially repudiate “phyletism”, the heresy of equating church and nation, most Orthodox churches are national churches. Membership in the local church is often seen as synonymous with national identity, and religious loyalties are often bound up with patriotism. This is particularly significant in the nations that constituted the former Soviet Union, as several national churches that are not recognized as autocephalous have sprung up, in part due to nationalist fervor. In these countries, the Russian Orthodox Church often maintains a presence that stands in tension with the local Orthodox churches. In Ukraine, for example, membership in the autonomous Ukrainian Church under the jurisdiction of Russia, instead of the local Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which claims an unrecognized autocephaly, is sometimes interpreted as unpatriotic. Similarly, in the diaspora, nationalist loyalties among first generation immigrants facilitate disunity among Orthodox jurisdictions and create tensions with the younger generation of Orthodox, many of whom desire assimilation into the surrounding culture. For these and other reasons, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I declared

nationalism to be one of the greatest problems facing the Orthodox Church». (Roudometof, 2014: 103)

Religious fundamentalism has also proved to be a threat to the unity of the Orthodox Church as numerous groups have split from the major churches over a variety of issues, especially disputes over the ecclesiastical calendar and ecumenism. Controversy over the calendar has resulted from the 13day discrepancy between the Julian calendar and the Gregorian calendar produced by Pope Gregory XIII's reforms in 1582 (Kitsikis, 1995: 122). Kitsikis asserts:

«Because the Gregorian calendar is the accepted civil calendar in most countries worldwide, an Orthodox council in 1923 resolved to adopt a revised Julian calendar that is in substantial conformity with the Gregorian version. Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, and Georgia opted to remain on the old Julian calendar but remained in communion with the rest of the Orthodox world. Some Orthodox groups consider the adoption of the «new calendar» as an unacceptable concession to non-Orthodox powers and have gone into schism. A related issue is the fundamentalist accusation that the major Orthodox churches have succumbed to the «heresy of ecumenism» and are engaging in unacceptable activities with the non-Orthodox, such as recognizing Protestant and Catholic baptisms, engaging in open theological dialogue, and holding common prayer services». (Kitsikis, 1995: 124)

Nevertheless, most Orthodox churches have been very active in ecumenical dialogue and are members of the World Council of Churches. Many Orthodox and Protestant theologians have had productive theological dialogue with each other. Likewise, greater understanding has been facilitated with the Oriental Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. The Orthodox and Catholics have enjoyed particularly cordial relationships since the mutual anathemas of 1054 were lifted in 1965 by Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I (Roudometof, 2014: 231).

Missionary activity, however, has strained relationships between the Orthodox and other Christians. The Russian Church, for example, has had tense relations with Rome due primarily to disputes over Jesuit missions in Russia. Likewise, many Orthodox churches have been dismayed by the large influx of Protestant missionaries since the fall of communism and have cooperated with their respective state governments to restrict missionary activity. Nevertheless, most interaction between Orthodox and other Christian groups is considered positive, and there is a general trend toward facilitating greater understanding and cooperation with non-Orthodox churches (Roudometof, 2014: 233).

3.4.1.4. The Russian Orthodox Church in the XXIst Century

The history of the Russian Orthodox Church that we have sketched in our presentation of the process of globalization of the Orthodox churches is marked by a long history of cooperation of the Russian authority with the Orthodox hierarchy in Russia. For many centuries, then, Orthodoxy was the state religion of Russia, which meant the church not only enjoyed a respected position in society and a substantial income but also was totally dependent on the government. During the so called «synodal period» (1700–1917) the church was essentially part of the bureaucratic system; consequently its freedom was violated, and its activities were limited. During Soviet times it was even more enslaved to the state, and although the principle of separation of church and state had been proclaimed, it worked only in favour of the authorities: the church received nothing from the government, whereas the latter interfered in the affairs of the church and controlled its workings (Schmemmann, 1977: 243).

This situation that was broken with the Russian revolution and the implantation of communism in 1917. During this period the Orthodox church of Russia suffered persecution, but was also used to strengthen national identity during war periods (Schmemmann, 1977: 245).

The state of affairs changed drastically after the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1989. In this sense Jenkins asserts that:

«In the 1990s millions of people returned to their faith and were baptized, and thousands of churches, hundreds of monasteries, and dozens of theological schools were opened. The number of bishops more than doubled and by 2004 was approximately 150, and the number of priests and deacons and their parishes more than quadrupled and in 2004 stood at about 30,000. After more than seventy years the church once again became an integral part of society in all the countries of the former Soviet Union and was recognized as a highly authoritative spiritual and moral power. And after many centuries the church acquired the right to define independently its place in society and its relations with the state without any interference from secular authorities». (Jenkins, 2002: 183)

On account of the persecutions in the XXth century, the Russian Orthodox Church, when it became free from government control, declined to be associated with the government and to become a state church. In 1990 in the Bases of the Social Concept the church declared both its loyalty to and its independence from the state and reserved for itself the right, if necessary, of civil disobedience (Kazmina, 2009: 322). At the same time the Russian Republic government under Gorbachev promoted the law «On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organization» on October 1, 1990, and later on October 25 of the same year in approved the law «On Freedom of Beliefs» thus putting a formal end to the

dependence of the Russian Orthodox Church on government power. The church, though, gained importance within the Russian people as one of the most reliable Russian institutions in front of the chaos generated with the transition towards the new Republic (Kazmina, 2009: 337).

But the Russian Orthodox Church's anxiety over the activities of foreign religious organizations, as well as fears in Russian society over the existence of so-called «totalitarian sects», provoked calls in the Supreme Soviet as early as 1993 for a new law on religion. Appeals for new legislation intensified late in that year out of concern for the lack of oversight in the existing 1990 law «On Freedom of Beliefs». Russian public opinion had begun to change, too, as the initial euphoria over Western values began to give way to more nationalistic tendencies (Kazmina, 2009: 338). In the religious sphere this meant greater interest in Orthodox Christianity and other traditional religions. Indeed, the very phrase «traditional religions» became widespread in its use during this period, as did its antonyms, «totalitarian sects» and «destructive cults».

The mid-1990s also witnessed the growing politicization of religion as various political forces and state bodies began trying to use religion to suit their own ends. With public confidence in governmental bodies and political parties so low, and the prestige of the Russian Orthodox Church so high, many Russian politicians and officials sought to enhance their standing by demonstrating their loyalty to the church. Kimo Kääriäinen depicts this situation with these words:

«Often, government officials would be seen standing in church, with candles in hand, in television broadcasts of Christmas and Easter services. Many of Russia's political parties were also interested in gaining the support of the country's largest religious denomination. Even communists, who considered a belief in God to be incompatible with Marxist-Leninist ideology, and who had struggled against religion for several decades, began pretending hypocritically to be defenders of Russian Orthodoxy. During the nationwide election campaigns of 1995 and 1996, almost all of the big political blocs tried to play upon the prestige of the church to gain votes. Political leaders of different orientations also tried to appeal to public sentiments by using any opportunity to denounce foreign missions, totalitarian sects, and destructive cults. At the same time, the general population remained quite tolerant. A sociological survey conducted by Russian and Finnish scholars in 1996 reported that 70 percent of Russia's population “completely agreed” or “agreed to some extent” with the statement that “all religions should have equal rights in Russia”». (Kääriäinen, 1998: 143)

Such was the domestic political background for the adoption of the new law on religion. At the same time, on the international front, Russia was in the process of joining the Council of Europe, which requires member states to commit to the protection of religious freedom. Clearly, Russia faced two contradictory imperatives: to satisfy internal pressures

(the state wanted a law that would restrict the activities of non-traditional denominations), and to meet the expectations of external actors (the Russian state was interested in demonstrating its neutrality toward religion). Finally the Russian Federal Assembly adopted a new law on religion, effective October 1, 1997 (Kazmina, 2009: 338).

This law «On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations» had the potential to change the religious situation in Russia dramatically. It put religious organizations that already had been in operation in Russia for at least fifteen years in a more favourable position than those that had come later. All religious organizations had to undergo a new registration process, but only the pre-1982 organizations could obtain the status of a legal entity upon renewed registration. Those that arrived or were created after 1982 would have fewer rights as religious associations, including the freedom they had to conduct missionary work. This law also gave state bodies grounds to interfere in the religious life of believers (Kazmina, 2009: 338).

Although the new law was somehow discriminatory, it has never been fully enforced. In fact, some of its more restrictive terms –including the provision that engendered the harshest criticism, the fifteen-year clause– have been mitigated by constitutional-court rulings, suggesting that the law's adoption was more a political statement than a legal act. At the same time, even though the 1997 law does not deny Russia its religious plurality, it nevertheless favours the Russian Orthodox Church and Russia's other traditional faiths as they seek to enhance their standing in Russian society (Kääriäinen, 1998: 152).

Conceptually, the 1990 and 1997 laws were based on radically different notions of the nature of religion and religious belief. While the 1990 statute viewed religion as a question of individual choice, and thus a private matter of the person, the 1997 law rooted religious life in the historical context and cultural traditions of the population (Kazmina, 2009: 337). For its part, the Russian Orthodox Church, in its competition with non-traditional denominations during the mid 1990s, issued public proclamations that were more political and cultural than theological. Notable among these statements was the contention that foreign denominations would divide Russian society and destroy Russian culture and traditions. Such arguments tended to be accepted by Russians, most of whom by this time had lost interest in the new denominations. Interestingly, theological statements by the church tended to be reserved for interfaith dialogue (Kääriäinen, 1998: 130).

Initially on the defensive in its competition with non-traditional denominations, the Russian Orthodox church since the mid-1990s has paid much more attention to promoting its own missionary activities. In 1995 it adopted the «Concept of the Rebirth of Missionary

Activity of the Russian Orthodox Church», followed later by its approval of the «Concept of the Missionary Activity of the Russian Orthodox Church» (Fedorov, 1999: 11-16).

Not surprisingly, the Russian state, too, has undergone a transformation of its own in its attitude toward religion and religious organizations. In contrast with the early 1990s, when the state practiced strict neutrality in its relationship with organized religion, by the end of the decade it demonstrated clear solidarity with the Russian Orthodox Church. Under Putin, the relationship between the church and the Russian state grew even closer, so much so that the church has reclaimed its position as a vital symbol of Russian culture, power, and tradition, returning to the «symphonic» model of relation between state and the Orthodox church that had been used for centuries (Kazmina, 2009: 348).

3.4.2. Communication Principles of the Russian Orthodox Church

Our presentation of the process of globalization of the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Russian Orthodox church, although brief, offers us an understanding of the particularities of these Christian traditions. These characteristics have a profound influence in the way such traditions understand communication, starting with the way they comprehend «vertical» communication, that is, the principles behind God's communication with humanity, that influences the forms of «horizontal» communication through mission and the particular «framing» of media communication and the understanding of mass media.

Since, as we have shown, the development of the Christian Orthodox tradition stands as a plural phenomena, we will concentrate our attention in the communication principles of the Russian Orthodox church. Such a methodological option responds to three main issues. First, the horizon of our study does not allow a particular approach to each and every Eastern Orthodox church, a purpose that belongs to the future development of the area of «Media, Religion and Culture» and its future development. Second, the example of the Russian Orthodox church offers a certain paradigm in relation to the development of the other Eastern churches from the theological, historical, communicational and geopolitical perspective, thus providing a model reference to what would be the synthesis of such churches from the perspective of our study. And third –a point very much linked to a pragmatic issue– the bibliography regarding communication and media understanding is much more relevant in relation to this Eastern tradition than any other tradition.

We must insist, though, that the study of the communicational understanding of the Russian Orthodox church has a long way to go and presents a promising area of study from a communicational and geopolitical perspective.

3.4.2.1. The Orthodox Principle of «Vertical» Communication or Revelation

A first element that must be underlined is that, within the theological production of the Eastern churches in general and the Russian orthodox church in particular, there is no particular deepening of the concept of «revelation» in a systematic way, a fact that contrasts with the theological traditions of the Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches. This characteristic does not respond to the absence of the idea of divine revelation within Orthodox theology, but more to the theological dynamics that define Eastern churches in general.

Orthodoxy understands divine revelation within the perspective of the Byzantine «economy of salvation», that stresses the divine plan that takes place in history with the purpose of transforming creation and humanity according to god's image and, in particular, allowing the process of human «divinization» («theosis») that we have described at the beginning of this section. This particular form of approaching underlines the importance of the divine will of salvation towards humanity as a relational process derived from the Orthodox understanding of the Trinity as a relational communion. As John Meyendorff says,

«To express this "trinitarian" view of man so akin to the contemporary attempts to build a "theocentric anthropology" Byzantine theologians used the concepts of Greek philosophy, particularly the notion of theosis, or "deification." [...] The unavoidable necessity of reformulating and rethinking the Christian faith in the light of changing cultural patterns is widely recognized, and the effort of the Greek Fathers to formulate Christianity in the categories of Hellenism can only be viewed as legitimate. Actually, Byzantine theology was nothing but a continuous effort and struggle to express the tradition of the Church in the living categories of Greek thought, so that Hellenism might be converted to Christ» (Meyendorff, 1983: 2).

Like other Christian traditions, Orthodox theology understands god's communication with humanity in history from the Old Testament to the central historical and theological centrality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who, through his life and teachings, leaves his message to the care of the church (Farrugia, 2000: 635). But, as a particular note, Eastern theology underlines that, even though god has spoken in history and particularly through his son, the human knowledge of god remains a mystery, to the point of affirming that humanity knows more of what god is not («apophasis») than what god really is («cataphasis»). Such a perspective is called an «apophatic» understanding of revelation (Meyendorff, 1983: 7), a «theological form» founded in Eastern patristic theology. Meyendorff explains that

«In any attempt to review the major doctrinal themes of Byzantine theology, constant reference to the Fathers of the classical period is unavoidable, for they served as the major traditional authorities for the Byzantines. Yet in acknowledging that in the Church every Christian, and the saint in particular, possesses the privilege and opportunity of seeing and experiencing the truth, the same Byzantines presupposed a concept of Revelation which was substantially different from that held in the West. Because the concept of "theologia" in Byzantium, as with the Cappadocian Fathers, was inseparable from *theoria* ("contemplation"), theology could not be as it was in the West rational deduction from "revealed" premises, i.e., from Scripture or from the statements of an ecclesiastical magisterium; rather, it was a vision experienced by the saints, whose authenticity was, of course, to be checked against the witness of Scripture and Tradition. Not that a rational deductive process was completely eliminated from theological thought; but it represented for the Byzantines the lowest and least reliable level of theology. The true theologian was the one who saw and experienced the content of his theology; and this experience was considered to belong not to the intellect alone (although the intellect was not excluded from its perception), but to the "eyes of the Spirit," which place the whole man intellect, emotions, and even senses in contact with divine existence». (Meyendorff, 1983: 8-9)

Such an understanding of divine communication has placed Orthodox theology – and particularly Russian Orthodox theological thought – in a direct relation with, on the one hand, a personal experience that remains within the context of «mystery» and darkness («mysterion»), that perceives divine revelation/communication in a limited manner, not only through an intellectual process, but also through the use of the senses (sight, smell, touch, sound...) that somehow constitute a theology of beauty, as the Eastern liturgical traditions underline (Farrugia, 2000: 636) and the importance it gives to symbolical communication through icons, liturgical symbols and gestures, and the allegorical interpretation of the Bible.

On the other hand it relates directly to an experience that takes place within the community of the church that conserves and explains divine communication and its meaning in history and testifies a communion that reflects, in an imperfect manner, the communion between the three persons of the Trinity. This second aspect underlines the importance that community experience has within the Eastern churches, that cannot be separated from the personal process of «theosis» that feeds itself from the sacramental and community life (Farrugia, 2000: 636). It is not surprising that, according to this understanding of Christian life and of divine communication, the Eastern churches have given such importance to monastic life as a form of life that witnesses the process of personal transformation and community/liturgical life under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, giving Christian life a profound «pneumatological» («pneuma» or «spirit») meaning (Meyendorff, 1983: 35).

The Eastern Orthodox – and Russian Orthodox – understanding of revelation and divine communication falls basically into the model of Symbolic approach to divine revelation that we have resumed at the beginning of this chapter, with a strong influence

from Alexandrian and Byzantine theology: it implies an allegorical and symbolic understanding of divine communication (with an accent in the «apopahitic» form of such a communication), that centres its attention in the process of transformation («theosis») of the Christian believer in the context of the sacramental and communal life of the church, stressing the sensorial aspect of revelation and of spiritual experience.

The importance of the church within the Eastern traditions and its development in space and time also holds an important part in the Orthodox understanding of communication, as we shall see in the following section of the Orthodox approach to «horizontal» communication.

3.4.2.2. The Orthodox approach to Mission

In one of his books on Orthodox Theology, Orthodox theologian Timothy Ware refers a legend regarding the relationship of the Russian Christians in relation to the Byzantine Christian tradition:

«There is a story in the Russian Primary Chronicle of how Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, while still a pagan, desired to know which was the true religion, and therefore sent his followers to visit the various countries of the world in turn. They went first to the Moslem Bulgars of the Volga, but observing that these when they prayed gazed around them like men possessed, the Russians continued on their way dissatisfied. “There is no joy among them”, they reported to Vladimir. Travelling next to Germany and Rome, they found the worship more satisfactory, but complained that here too it was without beauty. Finally they journeyed to Constantinople, and here at last, as they attended the Divine Liturgy in the great Church of the Holy Wisdom, they discovered what they desired. “We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty”» (Ware, 1963, p. 269).

This story may help us to understand better the «horizontal» communication/missionary dimensions of the Russian Orthodox church in particular, and of the Orthodox churches in general. Regarding this point, Timothy Ware points out:

«How is the true philosophy of Christianity to be passed on? For Hellenistic Christianity, which became the forebear of the Orthodox tradition, the answer has always been through the life of the Church. It is the Church that draws people into its worship, teaches them the doctrine of the faith and allows them to experience the reality of eternal life through its sacraments. The Church, in other words, is the expression of mission: In Orthodox thinking, mission is thoroughly Church- centred» (Ware, 1963: 207).

Such an understanding of mission has its roots in early Eastern theology, where an ever stronger accent was put on ecclesiology. The conviction gradually grew that the church was the kingdom of God on earth and that to be in the church was the same as being in the kingdom: the church is the dispenser of salvific light and the mediator of power for renewal which produces life (Bosch 1991: 207). Quoting the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann, Bosch writes that «the basic elements of an answer to the question about Orthodox understanding of mission must be looked for in its "doctrine and experience of the Church." Mission is "part of the nature of the church"» (Bosch, 1991: 208).

This has important implications for the practice of mission according to the Timothy Ware:

«Under no circumstances may any individual, or group of individuals, embark upon a missionary venture without being sent and supported by the church. Christ must be preached within His Historical reality, His Body in the Spirit, without which there is neither Christ nor the Gospel. Outside the context of the Church, evangelism remains a humanism or a temporary psychological enthusiasm» (Ware, 2002: 172).

The liturgy, as it is for «vertical» communication, becomes central for mission within this understanding of «horizontal» communication within the Orthodox tradition. It is through the liturgy that the Church gathers and schools people so that they learn and assimilate eternal knowledge. This is seen pre-eminently in the way the catechumenate developed. This pre-baptismal course of preparation for new Christians began in the Hellenistic Church, probably in the IVth century. There was so much emphasis on the new Christians being taught the right knowledge that the course was spread over 40 days, in the period leading up to Easter, when they would be baptized.

Mission, then, according to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, is all about bringing people into the ordered liturgical community of the Church where they could be schooled in the doctrine and truth of heaven and given the opportunity to ascend into divine truth. But this was not a purely intellectual exercise. The experience of the liturgy had a crucial part to play:

«As church of the Easter light and liturgy it sees its main task in enlightening the pagans who are to receive God's light through the liturgy. The major manifestation of the missionary activity of the Orthodox church lies in its celebration of the liturgy. The light of mercy that shines in the liturgy should act as center of attraction to those who still live in the darkness of paganism» (Bosch, 2002: 207)

In helpful elucidation Bosch continues:

«In the Orthodox perspective mission is thus centripetal rather than centrifugal, organic rather than organized. It “proclaims” the gospel through doxology and liturgy. The witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact, the worshipping community is in and of itself an act of witness. People are not called simply to know Christ, to gather around him, or to submit to his will; they are called to participate in his glory». (Bosch, 2002: 208-209)

This is, as we have seen, the doctrine of «theosis», which states that through the incarnation humanity can have union with God, a continuing state of adoration, prayer, thanksgiving, worship, and intercession, as well as meditation and contemplation of the triune God and God's infinite love. It is this which leads Orthodox believers to say that the liturgy of the Church becomes «heaven on earth». In the liturgy, then, eternal truth radiates into the world, and this in the heart of Orthodox mission (Bosch, 2002: 209).

All of this means that mission was not restricted to one or two aspects of the Church's life but is understood to be expressed by the whole life of the Church: as Bevans and Schroeder have written, «every ministry was missionary, because at this point the entire church saw itself in this way. Mission was not a part of the church's reality, but was its very essence» (Bevans – Schroeder, 2004: 83).

But how do those who did not go to church hear the gospel? Casual and informal witness became central to spreading the word, a «gossiping the gospel». Celsus, a second-century critic of Christianity, gives us a graphic picture of informal evangelization being carried out by woodcarvers, cobblers, laundry workers and uneducated people both in private homes and during other daily encounters (Bevans – Schroeder, 2004: 86-92). All of this was supported and extended by what Bevans and Schroeder call «secondary models of mission», by which they mean the evangelists, bishops, apologists and teachers who travelled across the ancient world, connecting one church with another. There were also the martyrs, who through the shedding of their blood bore witness to the truth of Hellenistic Christianity (Bevans – Schroeder, 2004: 83).

Whereas in that approach to mission the key boundary was between those people who were within the saved community of the Church and those who were without, for this type of mission the key boundary was not one between people but between earth and heaven, a boundary symbolized by the iconostasis, the wooden screen dividing the nave from the sanctuary in Orthodox churches. This screen has a central gateway that is only opened during the liturgy, and the opening of the gateway during the liturgy with the bringing of the sacramental elements out into the congregation shows the people crossing this boundary and experiencing the glory of heaven. Everyone within the community is invited to do so:

«State, society, culture, nature itself, are real objects of mission and not a neutral “milieu” in which the only task of the Church is to reserve its own inner freedom, to maintain its “religious life”. In the world of incarnation nothing “neutral” remains, nothing can be taken away from the Son of Man». (Bosch, 2002: 210)

This acceptance of society as a whole, without the drawing of boundaries, has also meant that the Orthodox tradition has not generally tried to change society by adopting programmes of reform. It has often been a conservative tradition, advocating contemplation rather than action as the way forward. It has often become closely associated with the governing authorities, within both the Greek and Russian traditions, resulting in church and society penetrating and permeating each other (Roudometof, 2014: 80).

The understanding of culture and its influence of the Orthodox understanding of mission as «horizontal» communication has, as we can see, an important part in the geopolitical dimensions of the relations between the «national» religion and the state: even though the church seeks an autonomy from worldly realities, at the same time it has grown to be an essential part of Russian identity, defining what has been called a «symphonic» relationship between the state and church authority (Roudometof, 2014: 83). The ambiguity of such a relationship, as we underlined in describing the process of globalization of the Orthodox tradition, has had and has an important part in the «framing» of mediated communication from a Russian Orthodox perspective and the way in which church institutions perceive national media.

3.4.2.3. Mass Media and the Russian Orthodox Church

After seventy years of exclusion religious voices can now be heard in the Russian media. What they are saying has to be understood in the context of the rapid post-Soviet transformation of media institutions and society in Russia, especially the struggles for power between the state, the new oligarchs and other interests. The Russian Orthodox Church, as we have seen, has undergone much less change regarding its theological premises. Indeed, it is one of the few major institutions that existed during Soviet times that continues today to enjoy a strong moral recognition. While its position is assured, the Church's role is ambiguous: it benefits from media freedom but is compromised by its alignment with the Russian state.

The communication spaces which have opened up for religious representations and discourses on Christian themes are more restricted than might be imagined after the dismantling of the communist state ideological control. But its participation in state affairs and in the media is full of contradictions that restrict the new communicative potential that has become available. Howard Davis resumes this point saying that:

«Russian Orthodoxy has many of the privileges of a state religion but post-Soviet society is profoundly secular and unreceptive; the media system is highly developed but still subject to severe constraints; there is widespread availability of diverse content from national and international sources but limited variety in representations of Christian religion» (Davis, 2005: 32).

Religion and media in Russia has not so far attracted the attention of many researchers either inside or outside Russia and empirical data on the schedule content, patterns of representation, and audiences for religion has not been collected or analysed systematically. But it is necessary to understand the development of media in Russia since Perestroika if we want to understand its relation to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The transformation of the Russian media system since the 1980s has occurred with such speed that any narrative is bound to be incomplete. There is some agreement, however, on the main stages of development and the fact that they have been anything but a steady upward path towards greater openness and accountability (Briskina, 2009: 171):

–First, the newly freed media were constrained by the action of state monopolies in printing, distribution and transmission trying to recover their costs in a situation of high inflation. Direct and indirect state subsidies were the norm and some media survived by diversifying their businesses. Advertising was not sufficiently developed to provide an alternative. Editorial independence came to suffer under these pressures although the Media Law was replaced in 1992 by the Statute on Mass Media which confirmed the principle of the freedom of information and allowed private broadcasting, including ownership by foreign companies. Media organisations were thus very open to 'sponsorship' from businesses and there began a phase of privatisation of newspapers, radio and television. If politics had been the main issue in the mass media during the earlier phase of perestroika the economy now emerged as a central focus of concern (Briskina, 2009: 172). Along with these changes, television replaced the print media as the public's main source of news (Davis, 2005: 68).

–Second, by 1996, political and commercial interests were coming into new alignments. Business interests supported Yeltsin and self-censorship by journalists was the norm because they feared that a victory by the Communists would mean the loss of the relative freedom they had come to enjoy. Political advertising was an important source of revenue, and direct political influence in broadcasting increased through sackings and new appointments in state television. Religion was not a salient issue in party manifestos or voting behaviour (Briskina, 2009: 173).

There are weak differences based on religious denomination but they are connected with ethnic identification where, for example. Orthodox equals to Russian (Simons 2004: 34). The Russian Orthodox Church, like supporters of Yeltsin and Putin, has no wish to return to the past and officially it gives broad support to the pro-market and democratic movement of media. But as political and religious liaisons are turning to re-establish the «symphonic» relation between the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox church, church interests seem to be protected by official Russian media. As Davis asserts:

«The contrast between the old religious tradition and the new world of post-Soviet politics and culture, especially in a society with low levels of religious adherence and practice, could have resulted in the marginalisation of religion in the modern media. The opposite has been the case, especially for the Orthodox hierarchy. The traditionalism of the dominant Orthodox Church has been its main strength. Media have been brought under state control or influence to an increasing extent since the early 1990s and, together with the majority of other national and local media, it is organised to serve public and national interests, be they political, commercial or cultural» (Davis, 2005: 82).

Such a situation, though, requires a deeper understanding of mass media on behalf of the Russian Orthodox church, as we shall see in the following section of our dissertation.

3.4.2.4. *The Orthodox Church and the Media*

To understand more fully the Russian Orthodox Church's perspective on relationships between church, state and society, and the modern media in particular, it is helpful to refer to the document adopted by the Bishop's Council in August 2000 entitled «Foundations of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church». (ROC, 2000).

On the particular question of the Church's relationship to politics, the document distances the Church from any political method or movement to defend her position. In the section on «Church and the Nation» (ROC, 2000: n. 5) there are warnings against nationalism and xenophobia, and statements to the effect that Orthodoxy supports what is Christian in Russian culture and the right to express national identity and even make it stronger. Section 15 is on the subject of the «Church and Mass Media» (ROC, 2000: n. 15).

It begins by acknowledging the importance of the mass media in the contemporary world and the correspondingly heavy responsibilities of journalists and media executives to provide truthful information, give a positive moral interpretation and educate their audiences, especially the younger generation. As Briskina asserts, the use of the phrase «the mass media» is typical of discussions about media issues in Russia. It reflects the rather dated perception of the media as centralised institutions serving large-scale audiences. It does not correspond well with the reality of consumer-oriented, diverse and eclectic forms

accessed through a wide range of technologies (Briskina, 2009: 178). In the relationship with the «mass» media, the Church is seen as a «user» of the means of communication insofar as they are amenable to the Christian message. The next paragraph speaks of the grounds for «cooperation» with «secular» media:

«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 [for] the hope that is in you with meek-ness and fear' (1 Pet. 3:15). Any clergyman or lay person is called [to] 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». (ROC, 2000: n. 15.2)

The positive aspect of this statement is the encouragement for clergy and lay people to involve themselves in media work - a stance that would have been unthinkable in the Soviet period. There is, however, no evident theological understanding of the basis for this involvement beyond the idea that important means of communication should not be ignored. Metropolitan Kirill, Chairman of the Department for External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, explains:

«The mass media today are an important instrument for informing society about the position of the Church. [...] We understand that the main condition for increasing the presence of the Church in mass media is the development of a simple and comprehensible language in which the representatives of the Church could tell about their vision of topical problems to as wide an audience as possible, the majority of whom do not have even an elementary knowledge of theology». (Kirill, 2004)

Deeper issues about representation, commodity culture, ritual, public communication and audience behaviour are not considered in the document. In the document there is no hint of the suggestion made by some «Media, Religion and Culture» scholars that the worlds of religion and media are increasingly coming together, with the restructuring of religion away from institutions towards individual practice and media acting more like a true marketplace for cultural commodities (for example Hoover, 2004: 122).

The main source of weakness of this social concept is not inherent in the tradition but comes from the fact that Orthodoxy in Russia was long denied the opportunity to

articulate a comprehensive worldview that would integrate such problems of society and culture. «Culture» («kultura» in Russian) is in any case a concept that seems to signify «high culture» or civilisation, so that notions of popular or media culture sound contradictory. It is therefore likely to take the Orthodox Church some time to engage reflexively with the new problems of mediating religion, or even to provide an assessment of experiences so far in the handling of religion in the post-Soviet media.

Thus nationalistic and religious identity seem to return to the Russian Orthodox public stage together with an effort of theoretical recognition of the autonomy of mass media that, as we have seen in the official document on Social Doctrine by the Russian Orthodox Church, tend to be understood as mediation subordinated to the higher meaning of culture itself. Like the icons, the liturgy and symbols –that mediate between the human and the divine in spiritual communication– the Russian Orthodox understanding of mass media seems to subordinate media to the mission and national cultural status of the church avoiding any form of criticism or freedom of expression.

The ambivalence between a theoretical independence of the Russian Orthodox Church and the independence of mass media seems to contradict the practice of a government oriented media environment that considers the church as a significant cultural patrimony that reflects profound aspects of national and political identity, as it used to be understood at the time of the Russian empire. The old principle of «symphonic» alliance between state and church seems to be back in the context of a church that thrives between autonomy and national identity, and a media system that seems to have stopped in the transition between media freedom and cultural media homogeneity.

3.4.3. Communication and Geopolitics in the Russian Orthodox Church

Along this section of the chapter on Christian Communication trends we have proposed an approach to the process of globalization and the principles of communication within the Eastern Orthodox Church following the example of the Russian Orthodox Church. In essence we can say that the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition followed a globalization process marked by a nationalising tendency, where religious identity and authority became directly linked to national identity and government representation. Such a process can be perceived within the Greek Orthodox tradition, starting with its linkage with the Byzantine empire. It is precisely within this institutional development that the geopolitical idea of a «symphonic» understanding of religious and secular power started defining its character: Church hierarchy and secular authority worked together in the construction of a society that should reflect the perfection –within human limits– of the heavenly city.

The expansion of Greek orthodoxy towards the North-east , into what afterwards would be the Russian Empire, followed the same principle, including the establishment of a serf social system that implied the clear differentiation between the religious and secular political elite and the rest of the faithful.

When the Greek and Russian orthodox communities attained their expansion towards other regions and, later on, toward America and other diaspora territories – following the emigrants from Eastern Europe– the nationalistic references became even stronger within the immigrants due to the natural need to strengthen cultural identity while flourishing in a new cultural context. The symphonic understanding of the direct association between the religious and secular power would adapt to new environments but would also profess the same principles.

The stress towards a nationalistic authority in relation to political power and its entanglement with religious authority, together with the symbolic / authoritarian form of communication stressed by the different Eastern Orthodox Churches, gave place, as we can see from the globalization process we have described above, to a symphonic and nationalistic geopolitical form.

From a communication perspective this geopolitical status finds its roots, according to our understanding, in the authoritarian character of Bible interpretation that later on derived in a recognition of authority as a form of validating the vertical organization of the church, and also of society. At the same time the symbolic accent in the perception of divine communication and its perpetuation in history sponsored a profound interest in the symbolic purpose of ethnic and national identity, may it be in relation to the secular state as a symbol form the «church in this world» or in a eschatological meaning, when the state rituals –as a form of secular ritual with a post-historical meaning– bind themselves with religious rituals and are understood as an anticipation of the formal manifestation of the Absolute at the end of times. Interesting enough, such a geopolitical perception would prevail in Eastern Orthodox religious communities even after the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

3.5. THE PROTESTANT TRADITION

Protestantism is, perhaps, one of the religious traditions derived from the Christian branch of the Abrahamic cosmovision that has marked the media world in the strongest sense. Its missionary spirit and its insistence in the personal experience of god and salvation have made the different Protestant movements proactive regarding the use of media and communication.

On the other hand, though, this proactive interest in media does not mean that the different protestant trends have developed a systematic thought about communication and mass media: few protestant churches have produced a comprehensive approach to communication and media as the Catholic church, for example, has done. But this does not imply that one cannot approach the protestant approach to communication: a glimpse at its communication principles, of its framing of media, and to its globalization process will offer us the key elements behind such an understanding.

In this section of our dissertation we propose to study the different aspects of Protestantism in relationship with communication. After resuming the trends of the globalization process of Protestantism, we will deepen in the mainline, evangelical and radical-protestant traditions with the purpose of grasping the main understanding of communication («vertical» and «horizontal») and their framing of mass media.

Academic literature on these groups and their communicative methods are abundant. Less has been published regarding the theological elements that lay the foundations of such an understanding of communication and media framing. In this section we have tried to resume the main trends of the communicational subtleties of the mainline an evangelical Protestantism in the form of a resume.

3.5.1. The Globalization of Protestantism

Protestant Christianity is an umbrella term for a broad range of Christian churches and movements that are neither Catholic nor Orthodox, most of which have their origin in the Reformation, a XVIth century western European reaction against Roman Catholicism that represented a relevant change in European thought at many levels. Although protestant groups present wide variations in structure and doctrine, their beliefs are typically characterized by an emphasis on the direct relationship between the believer and god without mediations, and the consequences that derive from that: grace as the means of salvation, scripture as the source of authority, and an expanded role for laity. Having spread from Western Europe to all continents, Protestantism is now second only to Catholicism as the dominant strain of Christianity in the world.

3.5.1.1. Origins and First Globalization of Protestantism

Although many authors have underlined that it had earlier roots, the Reformation is traditionally said to have begun in 1517, when Martin Luther, a German priest and professor of theology, issued his «95 Theses» against perceived abuses within the Roman Catholic Church, such as the sale of indulgences. Luther soon began to formulate key doctrines, such

as salvation by faith alone and the sufficiency of scripture as the source of Christian authority, and strongly criticized Catholic notions of sacramental priestly authority.

By the time Luther was formally excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1521, a wide variety of other reform movements -labelled «Protestant» by the Vatican- were appearing in western Europe. As McGrath resumes,

«John Calvin wrote the «Institutes of the Christian Religion» in 1536. In this work he explained the absolute sovereignty of God, who offers salvation only to a predestined elect of a totally depraved humanity. His theological ideas and reforms of church structure became normative for a wide range of Calvinist or Reformed Churches. Anglicanism arose at this time in the context of the English monarch's break with Rome, retaining many of the symbols of Catholicism but gradually gaining a more protestant character. The radical Anabaptists (or Radical-Reformation) saw church as a free association and developed doctrines such as absolute pacifism, and suffered severe persecution as a result from their fellow Christians, Protestant or Catholics». (McGrath, 2007: 122)

These various groups that dissented from the Roman Catholic Church formed churches of their own, leading to the present day diversity of protestant denominations. We must remember that most early protestants accepted close ties between church and state. But to some of the more radical reformers, such as the Radical Protestantism movement (Anabaptists) and some English Puritans, the Christian church was not a matter of coercion by a secular authority or a clerical hierarchy, but a voluntary association of believers responsible to God alone. Based on this principle, the English non-conformist Free Churches broke from Anglicanism, spawning major Protestant movements such as Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists and their subdivisions. The trend toward sectarianism eventually spawned marginal groups, not generally considered Protestant but arising in a Protestant framework, such as Unitarians, Mormons, and Christian Scientists.

3.5.1.2. The Consolidation of Protestantism in the Western World

At its beginnings Protestantism was confined largely to northern Europe and, later on, to North America. We could say that it was a North Atlantic phenomenon until the XIXth century. Early Protestantism (leaving aside the initial reformist wave) seems to have been less interested in spreading the faith through missionaries than seeking the support of political leaders and gaining an established status.

The real geographical expansion or globalization of Protestantism began with English colonization in the New World. As Roger Finke and Rodney Stark assert:

«The American colonies became a haven for nonconformist groups such as the Puritans, and denominations and sects proliferated following American

independence, aided by the constitutional prohibition on religious establishment. Immigration added to the diversity of Protestantism in America, adding Anglicans, Calvinists, and Lutherans to the mix; this trend continues with the arrival of Asian and African Protestants as well as Latin American Pentecostals». (Finke – Stark, 2005: 32)

Major trends in the XXth century include the ecumenical movement, which has reduced the importance of denominations, and the divide between liberals and evangelicals, which has become more noticeable than other divisions.

We need to remember that protestant Christianity has had a great deal of influence on American politics all along American history, generating both conservative and progressive tendencies. Today a strong Religious Right opposes a less recognized but still active Religious Left. In North America, Protestants of all kinds represent around a third of the population (Finke – Stark, 2005: 240). Evangelical groups have persisted, but the more liberal mainline denominations have declined in recent decades. Regarding the situation of mainline Protestantism in its original homeland in Western Europe, although it is still the state religion in some places, secularism has greatly diminished the influence of Protestantism (McGrath, 2007: 302).

3.5.1.3. Protestantism and its Missionary Globalization

Protestant missionaries have spread Protestantism around the world since the XIXth century. From 142 million in 1900, it has been estimated that Protestant Christians grew in numbers to 821 million by 2000. With European colonialism subjugating much of the world to European (particularly British) control, new missionary fields opened up. Missionaries had varying degrees of attachment to colonial powers. Americans, for example, grew more and more prominent in the missionary movement, and the most successful evangelizing efforts were often conducted by the early waves of local converts (McGrath, 2007: 134).

Early missionary efforts focussed mostly in Asia, particularly India and China. Facing competition from more traditional religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, they gained few converts. By 2000, Protestants numbered at most 5% of the population in India (appealing especially to the lower castes), 1% in Japan, and 6% in China. Missionaries have had significant success in the Philippines and Korea, where Protestantism increased from a handful of adherents in 1900 to 35.7% of the population by 2000. Both countries have been receptive to American influence (Finke – Stark, 2005: 44).

Africa was divided between the colonial powers at the same time it was divided into missionary spheres of influence, with Protestant missionaries having more influence in British and German colonies than in those areas ruled by Catholic France. We must

remember that Africa was not the most popular destination for missionaries, but they won success through their support of educational institutions and mobilization. Today, African Independent Churches, blending Protestant and indigenous elements, have a great deal of influence, although they are often considered to be inappropriately syncretistic by conservative theologians. The original Protestant denominations established by missionaries also flourish and -in some cases- outnumber their Western denominations. This is particularly true of the Anglican Communion: African provinces have exercised increasing influence in many debates. Protestants –Anglicans included- number 150 million in Africa as of 2003, and the related African Independent Churches command 86 million adherents (Finke – Stark, 2005: 146).

Protestantism in Oceania has followed a similar course to that in Africa. As in Africa, European immigration has encouraged the spread of Protestantism. During the wave of missionary expansion during the second half of the XXth century, there was some desire to evangelize Latin America as well, but resistance from some groups to missionary efforts in a Christian Catholic land made missionary efforts limited. In Latin America, the greatest success of Protestantism was among liberals opposed to the power of the Catholic Church, but when such political concerns faded, so did traditional Protestantism in favour of Pentecostalism (Finke – Stark, 2005: 209).

It is important to underline that Protestantism has played a role in destroying local cultures, particularly as this involves traditional religious practices. In part such an approach derives from the Protestant understanding of culture –specially in groups derived from the Calvinist reformation-, that perceives culture as a worldly and unholy realm that needs to be transformed by the Word of Christ. For this reason, and because of the often close relations between missionaries and imperial governments, Protestantism in the global South is often considered as a tool of colonialism (Schorn-Scütte, 2003: 92). However, its local manifestations have developed local brands as Christianity has sought to define itself in terms relevant to Asian and African cultures, leading in some cases to new religious movements. In Africa, for example, Protestant Christians have often been at the forefront of anticolonial and antiapartheid movements.

3.5.1.4. The Globalization of Evangelicalism

The label «evangelical» presents diverse interpretations. In itself the term derives from the Greek «good news». Elements commonly isolated to describe the core that distinguishes evangelicalism from other forms of Protestantism and Christianity include:

- The preponderant stress on personal conversion (conversionism).
- Activism, whether in generalized service or in evangelism

-Centrality of the Bible in its literary interpretation

-Centrality in the redemption process (crucicentrism), although the rise of Charismatic influence has attenuated this somewhat, refocusing attention on the resurrection (McGrath, 2007: 293).

To our understanding the presence of these four features is sufficient to classify a movement as evangelical, neither wrongly including non-evangelical groups nor excluding those that are clearly evangelical yet avoiding the title (a number of African-descended denominations, in both North America and Africa, thus qualify). Never as monolithic as sometimes portrayed, the movement is in constant fluctuation. Some organizations or denominations that once manifested these impulses no longer do so, while others that stood apart may choose to adopt them (Fiedler, 2006: 145).

The most important movement within the evangelical denominations is Pentecostalism. Today Pentecostalism, defined by the four characteristics stressed above and by the idea of charismatic gifts of the Spirit (like speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, etc.), is among the fastest growing movements within Protestantism. American in origin, it is traditionally dated to the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, after which a broad variety of new churches began to develop. At the same time the related charismatic movement has had success working within traditional denominations –including Catholicism- to encourage reception of the «gifts of the spirit». From a global perspective, it has had particular success in Africa and Latin America (Martin, 2002: 23).

The globalization of Pentecostalism has had an important development, specially if compared with the growth of other main-line Protestant denominations in Latin America and Africa. Martin resumes this success with these words:

«Within Latin America Pentecostalism has had particular success among the poor and marginalized, women, and those disaffected by the dominant cultural Catholicism. Pentecostals in Latin America today outnumber traditional Protestants, with as much as 47% of the population in Brazil being affiliated with the movement. Pentecostals and charismatics in Africa number as many as 147 million. In Africa, the movement appeals to the aspiring middle classes with its affirmation of prosperity and prestigious links to American missionary efforts. Pentecostalism's spread in Africa (and to some extent elsewhere) is often said to reflect the growing influence of the American Religious Right. Others see in the movement a more grassroots, indigenous character; the African Independent Churches may contain Pentecostal elements as well». (Martin, 2002: 12))

The success of Pentecostalism shows the importance of evangelical Christianity and its perpetuation of the Protestant Christian worldview. And at the same time it implies, within its inherent pluralism, a renewed way of understanding communication and media according to a the specific purposes of transmitting a renewed way of understanding

Christian witness today, as we shall see in the section dedicated to evangelicalism and communication.

3.5.2. Mainline Protestantism, Revelation and Communication

The Protestant understanding of divine revelation –and thus of «vertical» communication- does not present a radical difference regarding the general Christian beliefs. But due to the personal-oriented accent of Protestant theology and spirituality, the understanding of revelation within Protestant –and thus evangelical theology- does insist in the personal character of the experience of divine communication or «vertical» communication, and we name it.

For the Protestant tradition the experience of god, who reveals himself through his word and his incarnated son, is crucial: only the individual can actually benefit from such a gift, and the process of personal transformation that derives into specific spirituality is at the heart of Protestant spirituality. In this perspective, the protestant notion of «vertical» communication implies that the process of personal transformation initiated through the contact of the individual with the word of god generates a response that concerns faith, more than deeds. The protestant notion of «salvation by faith» and its opposition to «salvation by deeds» -as Luther interpreted the Catholic practice of, for example, buying papal indulgences- implying a different approach from the Catholic understanding that deeds «educate» our path towards a stronger faith (Birmele, 1988: 944). The purpose and target of divine «vertical» communication concerns, for the Protestant tradition, the individual and his/her capability to accept god's word and allow it to transform his life.

Another important accent of the protestant understanding of revelation regards the understanding of culture, as we have briefly underlined above: for the protestant tradition the Christian distinction between «natural» and «special» revelation become central (Birmele, 1988: 945).

Natural revelation –linked to a sacramental understanding of god's communication with humanity- can lead to idolatry since it may lead to an understanding of god according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Special revelation, on the other hand, stresses the message, life and deeds of Jesus Christ and his witness of the true god (McGrath, 2007: 39).

Even though Protestantism does not deny that god may speak to mankind through the beauty of his creation, it expresses that the real form of communication of god with mankind is through Christ. The experience of this form of communication, as we have said, is central to the protestant concept of revelation and salvation. Culture, a reality linked to the «natural» aspects of revelation, acquires from this perspective a negative shade: only a

cultural setting determined by the Christian understanding of reality may be considered a suitable environment for the experience of god's communication within the believers heart. The accent on a sacramental understanding of culture and natural reality –thus the acceptance of a certain positive aspects of cultures and natural/sensible aspects of reality- may lead, according to protestant theology, to error (Van Til, 1972: 46).

Under such an approach to «vertical» communication/revelation, Protestantism strains the importance of personal experience and, somehow, the promotion of a Christian «sub culture» that would be beyond culture itself. Such a reality has generated within different protestant denominations the need to create, for example, a whole independent Christian media network in order to promote a really Christian culture, in opposition to the «secular» or worldly media that cannot assure the environment for the spiritual growth of the faithful (Fiedler, 2006: 146). It highlights, at the same time, the importance of the word over other forms of communication –for example the sacramental or symbolic forms of communication- making preaching and printing a favourite mode of «vertical» communication of the message of the gospel, as we shall see in the following sections.

3.5.2.1. Protestantism and Preaching

Within the particular accent placed by the protestant tradition in personal experience and the centrality of god's word as transmitted in the Bible, preaching the word of god became, since the origins of Protestantism, a central communication practice. Jesus came preaching the Gospel (Mark 1:14). Nothing is more characteristic of Protestantism that it's strong emphasis upon preaching, that is, the oral proclamation of the Good News.

We must stress, though, that the Reformation did not make preaching an important aspect of Christian life, since it already was. The contribution of the reformers was to champion two particular sorts of preaching: expository and catechetical. John P. Ferrer stresses this point saying that,

«Although the preaching of sermons has been a distinctive means of Christian communication from the beginning of the church, the Reformation made preaching the theological foundation of the Church, the human result of a God who speaks. Although reformer Philipp Melancthon admitted that he was not much of a preacher himself, in the 1530 Augsburg Confession (Art. 7) he defines the church for Lutherans as “the congregation of the saints in which the Gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered.” Shortly thereafter, John Calvin proclaimed in the “Institutes Of The Christian Religion” that “where the word is heard with reverence and the sacraments are not neglected there we discover... an appearance of the Church” (IV.1.10). These statements typify the Protestant inclination to make preaching a principal mark of the faithful church. Faith comes as an auditory phenomenon (Romans 10:17). The church is dependent on the freedom of the Word that gives rise to the church and also is the church's most

severe critic. Thus Luther called the church building a Mundhaus (mouth-house). Coherent with this understanding of preaching a pastor is, for Luther, “minister verbi divini” (servant of the Word of God)». (Ferré, 2006: 359).

Whereas medieval preachers tended to look for a fourfold meaning of scripture (the literal, allegorical, moral, and eschatological meanings), Luther (who had a doctorate in biblical interpretation) claimed to be bound only by the plain sense of the text and the text’s disclosure of Christ. Bridel says that

«Lutheran sermons tended to see Christ at the heart of all scripture, looking for a christological meaning in almost every text. Theologically, every Lutheran sermon attempted to stress law and Gospel as the principal means of presenting the Gospel. Hearing the law is a prelude to reception of the Gospel word of GRACE and forgiveness, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The basic theological content of the Lutheran sermon is the forgiveness of sins because even the saved do not cease sinning; we are all “simul Justus et Peccator”». (Bridel, 1995: 1204)

Luther’s preaching style –that became exemplary for later protestant denominations- tended to be expository, paraphrasing a biblical text, combined with commentary that included theological and moral observations. He shared his own personality in his preaching, often showing an appealing, mundane style that was lively and engaging (Bridel, 1995: 1204).

The other key reformers were also committed preachers, although none equalled the style and power of Luther. But nearly all Protestant preachers saw the catechism as a valid basis for sermons, particularly sermons at weekday services that focused on the instruction of the laity. Johannes Zwick devised a series of catechetical sermons for children that cover a wide range of theological topics. In their interest in catechesis, they had medieval precedents, but their zeal to educate the laity in the most complex of doctrines was one of their most notable contributions to the history of preaching (Otto – Bromiley, 2005: 332).

Protestants tended to stress that «the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God», an extremely high view of preaching indeed. Luther and Zwingli had quite different notions of just how preaching was the Word of God for the church, mainly having to do with their different doctrines of the Holy Spirit:

«Rejecting the spiritual enthusiasts who presumed that the Spirit was the immediate gift to each believer independent of the means of Word or Sacrament, Luther linked the Spirit to the Word. Zwingli rejected the Lutheran binding of Word and Spirit, insisting that preaching was a simple human witness to Christ that helped the believer to seek the true, inner Word of God that can be given only by the Spirit. Zwingli distinguished between the “external word of God” (i.e., human

preaching) and the “internal word of God” (i.e., self-communication of the Holy Spirit). Calvin appeared to take a somewhat mediating position between Luther and Zwingli on the issue of preaching as the Word of God. Calvin taught that although preachers are human, God graciously elects to use preaching, through God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, to address congregations (Institutes 4.1.5). Through the Holy Spirit, God’s Word accomplishes what God’s word promises, effecting that which it proclaims. Preaching empowered by the Holy Spirit, admitted Calvin, is a double-edged sword, provoking among hearers both acceptance and rejection, according to God’s election. Through preaching, Christ is present in and rules over the church. Preachers succeed at communicating the Word of God to their listeners only because God graciously wills that God’s Word be spoken here, now, through them». (Long, 1993: 11)

While Luther’s objective was restoring the sermon to its rightful, historic position within the Sunday mass (a position that had been lost in the Middle Ages), Zwingli and Calvin tended toward a separation of preaching from the mass in their adoption of a simple preaching service. Luther’s purified mass ritual exemplified his conviction that Word and Sacrament are inseparable means of God’s self-communication, although later Protestants have tended, in practice if not in theology, to exalt the sermon as the supreme means of grace (Otto – Bromiley, 2005: 334).

Zwingli’s radical views (compared with those of Luther or Calvin) did not go far enough, said the Anabaptists of the so-called Radical Reformation. The Anabaptists (or Radical Reformation) tended to be as suspicious of preaching as a corrupted human practice, as they were suspicious of the mass. Their worship stressed informal teaching, prayer, and mutual exhortation rather than contrived sermons, with many worshippers taking an active role in impromptu speaking, as we shall see in the section dedicated to the Radical Reformation. They considered careful composition of new sermons a sign of sinful pride. Their proclamation consisted of the public reading of sermons from the past combined with extemporaneous exhortation to the congregation by any member who was so moved by the Holy Spirit (Peck, 1988: 36).

Together with the preaching of Biblical themes, Protestantism also developed a form of catechetical preaching that sought to attain a broader understanding of the contents of the Christian message as presented in the Bible (Otto – Bromiley, 2005: 335). The Fathers of the Church often used this method in their preaching (like the sermons of John Chrysostom in the IVth century, to quote only one author). The Catholic Church also had applied this method, but the sacramental stress that took place during the Medieval period had limited its use.

Luther’s Catechetical work, even though thought for the instruction of the laity, opened a path towards catechetical sermons that combined Biblical principles with the explanation of the main contents of faith. Nearly all Protestant preachers followed this path

and saw the catechism as a valid basis for sermons, particularly sermons at weekday services that focused on the instruction of the laity. Johannes Zwick devised a series of catechetical sermons for children that cover a wide range of theological topics. The zeal of Protestant pastors to educate the laity in the most complex of doctrines was one of their most notable contributions to the history of preaching (Ferré, 2006: 360).

Preaching, as we have insisted, became a central part of mainline Protestantism, and later on an essential aspect of evangelicalism. Such a correlation between the word and the spirit gave even more importance to the advent of printing as we shall expose in the following section.

3.5.2.2. Protestantism and the Print Revolution

The invention of the printing press has been for the history of humanity a significant step forward at many levels. The contribution of the protestant Christian tradition in this sense is undeniable.

Printing virtually eliminated the inconsistency of scribal work, reduced factual errors in books, and began to freeze the spelling and syntax of the various nations' languages in place. Although there is some controversy over who invented printing, most scholars credit Johann Gutenberg with creating movable type in 1450, making alterations to a screw-driven wine press, and commencing work on printing a Bible at his shop in Mainz, Germany. The earliest printing presses consisted of a bed of stone with a smooth and level face on which the printing surface rested, and a flat piece of wood or metal called the «platen» that could be pressed down by a screw onto a piece of paper resting on the inked type. The type was held together in a frame for uniformity. This is the type of printing press Gutenberg and his contemporaries used, and the printing press remained largely un-changed for 350 years (Eisenstein, 1980: 12).

The art of printing spread rapidly throughout Europe: by 1500 every major European city had at least one printer. Most of their work comprised Bibles, sermons, and other religious books. Through printing, churches were able to standardize worship and doctrines, and spread knowledge of their faiths to the masses, more economically than had ever before been possible (Eisenstein, 1980: 14).

Some early printers of religious books felt compelled to explain this new art to their readers, as Butler points out:

«This volume of the Psalms, adorned with a magnificence of capital letters and clearly divided by rubrics, has been fashioned by a mechanical process of printing and producing characters, without use of a pen,» German printers Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer informed readers of the Mainz Psalter in 1457. Three years later, an

unknown German printer saw God's providence in the invention of the printing press. "By the aid of the most High, at whose nod the tongues of the dumb are made eloquent, and who oftentimes revealeth to children what He hides from the wise. This book, *The Catholicon*, was printed and completed not by the use of reed, stylus, or quill, but by a wonderful agreement, conformity, and precision of patrices and forms"». (Butler 1940, 91–92)

At the same time printing also accelerated the Protestant revolt against the Catholic Church. After University of Wittenburg theology professor Martin Luther nailed his «95 Theses» denouncing Catholicism to the door of the university church in 1517, he had the document published in book form and distributed throughout Germany. Luther used the new technology to spread his beliefs and create a schism in Christianity. The division of Europe into Catholic and Protestant during the XVth century prompted efforts by each faction to control dissemination of the opponent's religious books through censorship and customs inspections of imported books (Eisenstein, 1983: 33).

As we mentioned in the section regarding Catholicism, in 1564, the Catholic hierarchy issued the «Tridentine Index», a list of prohibited books. In addition to the works of Luther and others who challenged the Catholic faith, the index prohibited books about pornography, magic, demonology, and other subjects that advocated immorality. One prominent early example was Niccolo Machiavelli's «*The Prince*», which recommended government authorities use any means they wanted to accomplish their aims rather than accepted standards of moral behaviour.

Such religious efforts to regulate reading and publishing were often aided by civil governments (in both Protestant and Catholic regions) seeking to maintain political and religious orthodoxy. In the English-speaking world, Henry VII was the first monarch to recognize the challenge the printing press represented to an authoritarian government. During his reign as the first of the Tudor monarchs, 1485 to 1509, he commenced a system of licensing printers and created the Court of the Star Chamber, which punished printers and others who challenged royal authority (Horsfield, 2015: 189).

His successor, Henry VIII, imposed further press structures after he failed to secure papal consent to his divorce from Catherine of Aragon in 1529. Henry married Anne Boleyn in 1533, resulting in his excommunication by Pope Clement VII, and the following year decreed the Act of Supremacy, making himself head of the Church of England. Henry VIII punished many dissident Catholics, including St. Thomas More, who died as a martyr in 1535 defending papal primacy. Ironically, More had helped Henry VIII write «*The Defense of the Seven Sacraments*» in 1521, a book repudiating Protestantism that earned Henry the title «Defender of the Faith» from Pope Leo X:

«[W]hen we learned that the pest of Martin Luther's heresy had appeared in Germany and was raging everywhere», [Henry VIII wrote to the pope] «we bent all our thoughts and energies on uprooting in every possible way, this cockle, this heresy from the Lord's flock» (Quoted by Monti, 1997: 128).

Another Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, controlled the presses during her reign from 1558 to 1603 through the «Stationers Company», a governmental agency devoted to censorship. It licensed printers and forbade unauthorized publishing of books, particularly banning any religious books that presented a Catholic or Hebrew perspective. This forced unlicensed printers into hiding, and secret books and pamphlets flourished in XVIIth century London. A printer of the era described the process:

«There had long lurked in the garrets of London a class of printers who worked steadily at their calling with precautions resembling those employed by coiners and forgers. Women were on the watch to give the alarm by their screams if an officer appeared near the workshop. The press was immediately pushed into a closet behind the bed; the types were flung into the coal-hole and covered with cinders; the compositor disappeared through a trap-door in the roof, and made off over the tiles of the neighbouring houses. In these dens were manufactured treasonable works of all classes and sizes, from half-penny broadsides of doggerel verse up to massy quartos filled with Hebrew quotations». (Quoted by Jackson, 1885: 176–177)

Some unlicensed printers were caught, though. For them, publishing unlicensed books in many Protestant countries sometimes meant death. William Carter was tortured and hanged 11 January 1584 for publishing a book expressing the supremacy of the Catholic faith. After his bookbinder betrayed him, Catholic book publisher James Duckett suffered the same fate 19 April 1602. Interesting enough, both printers have been beatified by the Catholic Church.

3.5.2.3. *The Development of Printing in Protestant America*

The expansion of Protestantism in the newly discovered North America meant an important development for the consolidation of printing within the different protestant traditions. In the American colonies, religious books were published after a printing press was established at Harvard College by Stephen Daye in 1639. Harvard had been founded three years earlier for the purpose of training Puritan ministers. In addition to Bibles, the Harvard press published sermons, psalm books, and almanacs. English officials viewed these materials as subversive, as they did not conform to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. However, King Charles I did little about dissident religious books across the Atlantic Ocean. These books fuelled a widening gap between the established church in Great Britain and the Puritans, who sought to undermine it (Eisenstein, 1983: 123).

Thousands of Puritans immigrated to New England in the XVIIth century, seeking religious freedom and liberty of the press. However, this meant only freedom to publicize their views. Other religious teachings were worthy of censure, Puritans believed, because they represented a threat to their beliefs. As Puritan leaders in Massachusetts noted, censoring religious books was necessary (Hosfield, 2015:190).

Stimulated by waves of immigration, religious book publishing in the United States greatly expanded in the XIXth century. In 1854, Bloch Publishing Company commenced operations in New York as the country's first producer of Jewish books. The nation's first Catholic book publisher, Ave Maria Press, was founded on the campus of Notre Dame University in 1865 (Eisenstein, 1983: 234).

Even those these and other Catholic and Jewish publishers started to establish themselves in America, just as Protestantism arose with the spread of the printing press in Europe, it thrived in America with the aid of the printing press. The core Protestant belief in «sola scriptura» inspired Bible societies, tract societies, and Sunday schools to try to put a Bible in every American home and to make scripture aids easily available through church libraries. Sermons that had captivated parishioners during religious celebrations were rushed into print in both periodicals and books (Eisenstein, 1983: 236). Indeed, until the XXth century, sermons were routinely published in daily American newspapers.

Since Protestantism underlines the individual's relationship with God, it soon fragmented into diverse denominations and related organizations, particularly in America. Whether for evangelisation of outsiders or for the edification of its congregation's members, Protestant organizations have published abundantly. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, for instance, church-owned presses published some eighty five weeklies, monthlies, or quarterlies in addition to devotional books, educational materials, and hymnals.

Today mainline Protestant denominations and similar Protestant Christian organizations issue thousands of publications for denomination members or contributors to Protestant-sponsored causes. These publications have sometimes reported information that the commercial media have ignored. In the 1980s, Lutheran and Episcopalian publications responded to requests for prayers and assistance by reporting atrocities committed in South Africa's occupation of Namibia before Namibia attracted much press attention (Ferré, 2006: 359). Other times Protestant publications have kept important social issues on the public agenda long after they had run their course in the commercial news agencies. Such has been the case of homelessness in America. Whether these publications were designed to inform, support, or persuade, they have been influential (Horsfield, 2015: 221).

With the development of popular culture and the rising popularity of novels in the XIXth century, mainline Protestants found another means of communicating with the

American public, occasionally with phenomenal success. Congregational minister Charles Sheldon's novel «In His Steps» (1897) captured the public imagination with its simple story that suggested that asking «What Would Jesus Do?» would Christianize the country. «In His Steps» has never gone out of print, and its message, abbreviated as WWJD, continues to inspire believers. Another Congregational minister, Lloyd Douglas, repeated Sheldon's success with two novels (Ferré, 2006: 360). «The Magnificent Obsession» (1929) featured a protagonist who discovers that selflessness is the biblical secret for success. «The Robe» (1942) told the story of a Roman soldier who wins Jesus' robe at the foot of the cross and ends up as a Christian martyr in the Coliseum. Both of these novels were turned into Hollywood movies in the 1950s (Ferré, 2006: 361). But the proliferation of Protestant popular book printing has become a significant cultural pillar of American popular culture.

3.5.2.4. Protestantism and Visual Culture

As we emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, Pre-Reformation religion was intensely sensual, that is, it engaged with the full range of worshippers' senses. But from all sense its visual aspects stand out. From great cathedrals to humble chapels, churches were filled with imagery: painted altarpieces, frescoed walls, elaborate statues of the Virgin and other saints. Great carvings of Christ upon the cross dominated the sight-lines of churches dividing the altar space from main congregational area.

The classic defence of religious images was that they were didactic aids for the illiterate, «laymen's books». But the lovingly carved, painted, and gilded images of saints, which lay people paid for and then venerated with offerings and lighted candles, were more than just pictorial text. As William Dyrness says,

«Images were prisms of sacral power, sites where the attentive presence of the saint was most likely to be focused and prayers most likely to be answered. Images were not purely passive objects of perception: under the 'intromission' theory of vision prevalent in the late medieval and early modern periods, objects emitted ray-like descriptions of themselves for the eyes to receive and the faculties to reconstitute. Images acted upon the percipient, and were thus immensely potent». (Dyrness, 2004: 22)

Many images and paintings were no doubt aesthetically crude, but the century preceding Luther's reformation witnessed an unprecedented outburst of exquisite artistic expression in Europe. Catholic religious images of immense beauty and affective power were produced by painters like van Eyck and van der Weyden in the Netherlands, Lochner and Grünewald in Germany, and outstanding talents too numerous to begin listing in quattrocento Italy. Such painters and their workshops undertook «secular» commissions,

portraits of aristocrats and wealthy burghers, but their greatest works were devotional ones, and the Church was the eminent patron of artistic production (Reymond, 1999: 84).

The Reformation of the XVIth century repudiated this extraordinary inheritance, and even destroyed much of it, not out of lack of appreciation for the power of art, but out of a heightened sensitivity to it, and an intense fear of the dangers of idolatry. «Iconoclasm» – the destruction of religious images for overtly ideological reasons that took place in Byzantium– may be the Reformation’s most tangible inheritance to the plural cultural environments of modern Europe (Reymond, 1999: 93). Some areas – like the Iberian peninsula and Italy– were relatively untouched. Others experienced an artistic holocaust. Very little remains, for example, of the religious art of late medieval Scotland, and the count for England is scarcely better: from around 9,000 medieval parish churches that possessed one, not a single undamaged sculpture remains today.

But attitudes varied among leading reformers to the risks and potential of religious imagery. A decisive moment for the cultural development of Lutheran Reform was Luther’s decision, on his return to Wittenberg in 1522, to halt the iconoclasm initiated by his headstrong colleague Karlstadt. Dyrness recalls:

«Luther, perhaps because he himself was not particularly moved by the power of painting or sculpture, considered images ‘neither good nor bad’ – they were in themselves, in a theological category developed by Melanchthon, examples of ‘adiaphora’ , indifferent things which the Church could retain or abandon without moral hazard. What mattered was how they were used: worshipping of images, or constructing them in the hope of acquiring merit in God’s eyes, was an abomination, but as means of instruction for the ‘weak’ they were acceptable. Thus precious Gothic art works survived in the churches of Lutheran Nuremberg, as more humble altarpieces and crucifixes have done in the parish churches of Lutheran Scandinavia. Lutheranism also generated its own religious artworks, through winning the allegiance of significant artists. Albrecht Dürer became Luther’s disciple too late in life to produce recognizably ‘Reformation’ art, but the movement acquired a prize cultural asset in Lucas Cranach the elder (1472–1553), already in situ in Wittenberg as court painter to Frederick the Wise. In addition to a series of iconic portraits of Luther himself, Cranach provided illustrations for Luther’s New Testament, as well as vivid sets of paired images to accompany the *Passional Christi und Antichristi* –a text contrasting the worldly and anti-Christian pope with the humble devotion of Christ to the poor. Cranach’s paintings and altarpieces for Lutheran churches were heavily didactic allegorizations of key salvation themes: the dialectic of Law and Gospel, the redemptive blood of Jesus flowing without any earthly mediator». (Dyrness, 2004: 47)

Lutheranism’s openness, within limits, to the religious utility of visual imagery was not shared, though, by leaders of the Reformed tradition. Zwingli, for example, was a self-confessed art connoisseur, but he was emphatic it had no place in churches or part to play in worship. Allowing them such a role, according to him, was to usurp and misdirect honour

due to God alone, and to insult God's invisible majesty by putting trust in created things (Reymond, 1999: 103).

These divergent paths followed by Luther and Zwingli reflected different readings of the scriptural signposts. The fundamental and normative basis of divine law was the Ten Commandments, revealed by God to Moses, and recorded in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. These began by instructing people to «have no other Gods before me» and went on to prohibit the making of «graven images» and bowing down to or serving them. The question was: was this one commandment or two? The texts supplied more than ten injunctions, and gave no explicit guidance on how they were to be grouped. Jewish tradition held that the prohibition on graven imagery was a separate second commandment, while St Augustin e's interpretation that it was simply a gloss on the first was authoritative for the medieval Catholic West. If that was so, then the ban logically applied to idols of false gods, not to all religious imagery (Cottin – Gagnebin, 1995: 53).

Luther stuck with Augustine, with the result that to this day Lutherans, along with Catholics, number the commandments differently from other Protestants, including Anglicans. For Zwingli, as for Calvin, however, there was an explicit scriptural proscription against attempts to represent the divine. According to Calvin, «since God has no similarity to those shapes by means of which people attempt to represent him, then all attempts to depict him are an impudent affront to his majesty and glory» (see Calvin, 1987: 138a51–55 and 138b3–48). For Calvin, then, Images were by definition idols, props of false worship, and a contagion and pollution to be eliminated from any Christian commonwealth.

Ideally, this was a state-sanctioned process. In Zurich, workmen and officials went into all the churches at midsummer 1524, locked the doors, and spent nearly two weeks dismantling the accumulated material piety of generations of townsfolk. The churches became white-washed halls for the hearing of sermons. In Tudor England successive waves of iconoclasm were carried out in orderly fashion by parish churchwardens, responding to government orders. But in other places iconoclasm was the radical and democratic face of Protestant activism, unofficial, and designed to force the pace of magisterial change (Reymond, 1999: 105).

Popular iconoclasm could also take highly ritualized forms, becoming a specialized rite of violence designed to demonstrate the «powerlessness» of the image and of the belief system it represented. Dyrness describes such a process with these words:

«Iconoclasts in Basel shouted out 'if you are God defend yourself, if you are human bleed!', as they threw onto the fire the crucifix from the city's Great Minster in 1529. Elsewhere images of saints were humiliated by being smeared with blood or filth, thrown into rivers or down latrines, or undergoing 'capital punishment' in

staged mock executions. In Dundee in 1537, two men were wanted by the authorities for showing what they thought of the friars by 'hanging of the image of St Francis'. The largest waves of popular iconoclasm accompanied Calvinist revolt against established Catholic authority at the turn of the 1560s. A fiery sermon by John Knox stirred zealots in the university and cathedral town of St Andrews to descend on the churches so that, in a chronicler's words, 'before the sun was down, there was never inch standing but bare walls'. French cities saw bouts of violent and destructive iconoclasm in 1559–62, a major factor in the polarization preceding religious civil war. And at the start of the Dutch Revolt, an 'iconoclastic fury' swept across the Netherlands, with over 400 churches sacked in 1566 in Flanders alone». (Dyrness, 2004: 83)

The destruction of images was an uncompromising statement which widened existing divisions, and not just between Catholic and Protestant. Iconoclastic incidents during the Calvinist so called «Second Reformation» in Germany provoked reactive riots by Lutheran mobs, while Protestant image-breaking in the Baltic region deeply antagonized the neighbouring Eastern Orthodox, a group with whom reformers might have hoped to make common cause. The status of «idols» was a neuralgic point in the divisions among English Protestants in the 1630s, and the outbreak of Civil War was the signal for a renewed campaign to «purify» parish churches (Cottin – Gagnebin, 1995: 56).

It seems unlikely that either destroyers or defenders of images were much motivated by what we might consider aesthetic considerations. The truth, not the beauty, of religious art was precisely the point at issue. Ironically, it is likely that the largest-scale Christian iconoclasm of the mid-16th century was carried out not by Calvinists, but by Catholics, purging the newly acquired territories of Mexico and Peru of the symbols of pagan religion. The Franciscan archbishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumarraga, boasted in 1531 that he had presided over the destruction of 500 temples and 26,000 idols (Cottin – Gagnebin, 1995: 57).

But the threat to old images in Europe may have prompted some to reflect on their artistic worth. Probably the most important rescue of an artwork in this period was the action of the town authorities of Ghent in spiriting away from iconoclasts in 1566 Van Eyck's extraordinary altarpiece, «The adoration of the mystic lamb». (Dyrness, 2004: 93)

At the end, only an extreme Protestant fringe regarded the second commandment as a blanket ban on all plastic and visual art. English Quakers –a part of the Radical Reformation– were unusual in refusing point-blank to have pictures on their walls (Brinton, 2006: 14).

The restrictions on religious imagery in Protestant societies did not shut off artistic production, but re-channelled it in other directions. Dyrness says, regarding this matter:

«The career of Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543) illustrates the theme. When the work for a skilled painter of altarpieces dried up in Basel, Holbein came to England, where his paintings of Tudor courtiers and his iconic full-length portrait of Henry VIII established new standards of realism and characterization. England’s native artistic tradition was paltry compared with that of the Netherlands, where the triumph of Calvinism compelled artists to seek secular patrons and new subjects. Alongside the established field of portraiture, Dutch painters pioneered the art of landscape painting, as well as meticulously observed ‘still lifes’, and the truthful scenes of everyday life known as genre painting. Artists could not produce paintings for churches, but there was a lively trade in pictures of churches, cool and austere architectural studies of ecclesiastical interiors. Religious subject matter was not banished from 17th-century Dutch art, but had to take the form of ‘history painting’, scenes from the Old Testament which forestalled any temptation to devotional use by focusing on the narration of events with ‘genuine’ biblical settings and use of costume. Rembrandt van Ryn (1606–69) was the undisputed master of these, giving the lie to any suggestion there is no such thing as Calvinist art». (Dyrness, 2004: 107)

However, from the perspective of art as a form of «horizontal» communication, there is no question that Protestantism accelerated a separation of art from religion, removing it from an overt role in worship and desacralizing much of its subject matter. The notion of the autonomy of art –that is, a separate sphere of the aesthetic, serving chiefly to inspire admiration and delight– was no concern of the Protestant reformers. But their conviction that artistic representation could in no way express the essence of the divine, or serve as a vehicle for grace, pointed in this direction.

3.5.2.5. The Power of Music in the Protestant Tradition

Another important aspect of the communicational dynamics of the Reformation – that would require a whole study in itself– is music. «Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise» is a phrase attributed to Martin Luther. Biographers stress that Martin Luther was a lover of music, a skilled lutenist, and that he saw in song a tool for the breaking down of barriers between clergy and laity and the direct involvement of congregations in worship (Pesch, 2004: 53). Pre-Reformation musical culture was vigorous and varied. There were thriving popular customs of vernacular carol-singing, and, within churches, a rich diet of Latin polyphony (multi-voiced singing in overlapping parts), which for centuries had been edging out the older tradition of monophonic plainsong (Weber – Tonneau, 1995: 327).

In Luther’s time, though, liturgical performance, however, was restricted to clergy and professional or semi-professional choirs. In this context, Luther pioneered a new musical form: the «chorale» (usually called «hymns», if we allow certain anachronism). Chorales were original verse compositions, set to tunes resembling popular secular songs, and designed to be sung by the entire congregation during services. Luther’s «Geistliche

Gesangbuchlein» («little book of spiritual song»), compiled with Johann Walther in 1524, was the first Protestant «hymn book», a collection of music, in parts, for congregational singing. A later composition of Luther's, «Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott» («A mighty fortress is our God»), was to be a Protestant favourite for centuries to come (Swain, 2006: 37).

By the end of the XVIth century, around 4,000 Lutheran hymns had been published. The Jesuit confessor to Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, Adam Contzen, wrote exasperatedly in 1620 that «the hymns of Luther have killed more souls than his writings or declamations» (Swain, 2006: 38). Hymns were eventually to become the common currency of all Christian denominations (even within Catholicism) and a distinctly Lutheran contribution to Christian culture, later exported to other parts of the Protestant world, such as 18th-century England, where aficionados such as Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley perfected the art (Weber – Tonneau, 1995: 330).

Luther's approach to religious music was permissive. He allowed Latin texts, and admired polyphony. In this respect, he was more cultured than the humanist Erasmus, who had no time for «thunderous noise and ridiculous confusion of voices», and pedantically thought music should be no more than a vehicle for the clear reception of scriptural text (Weber – Tonneau, 1995: 332). Subsequent Lutheran music took new and adventurous paths. The addition of solo and instrumental passages to the chorale form contributed to the development of the Oratorio. In the XVIIth century, the Lutheran composers Heinrich Schütz and Dietrich Buxtehude experimented with a variety of virtuoso forms, including large-scale choral settings of scriptural texts. There is a direct line from Luther's first experiments with chorale to the corpus of their immediate successor, Johan Sebastian Bach (Swain, 2006: 38).

Zwingli, on his behalf, can claim no such artistic inclination. Although like Luther a talented musician, he placed music in much the same category as painting: a seductive distraction from unadulterated worship of God. Organs were thrown out of the Zürich churches, and all forms of singing and chant were removed from services. Calvin too rejected organs and instruments, but he and his followers were more responsive to the fact that scripture itself contained injunctions to praise the Lord in song, and provided texts for the purpose: the Psalms of David. Weber and Tonneau say on this subject that

«The setting of metricized psalms to music became a cultural speciality of the Reformed churches, and their performance a crucial mark of religious identity. There were strict rules: the comprehensibility of the text was paramount, so there was to be no polyphony. Ideally, there should be only one note per syllable. The result threatened to be dreary, but massed unison singing of simple melodies and familiar words can have an inspiring and uplifting effect. The 'Genevan Psalter' compiled under Calvin's and Beza's supervision went through numerous editions and tens of thousands of copies». (Weber – Tonneau, 1995: 330)

A key contributor was a French refugee composer, Clement Marot (1497– 1544), who had already begun metrical psalm settings in French. Marot's psalms became the battle songs of the Huguenot movement. The fact that psalm texts often express a sense of besieged certitude, and a desire for just retribution against the ungodly, made them a suitable accompaniment to militant resistance on the battlefield (Higman, 2000: 494). Psalm 68 for example – «Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered» – was a favourite of Huguenot armies, as it was later to be of the English parliamentary general Oliver Cromwell (Higman, 2000: 495).

The psalms were also sung congregationally in Reformed worship, often «lined out» by a precentor, who would suggest the tune and pitch of each line, for the congregation to roar back in response. In XVIIth-century England, too, psalm-singing was adopted with alacrity by Protestant congregations, the metrical versions of Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins being the most frequently published text of the early modern period (Weber – Tonneau, 1995: 332).

Within Catholicism, and as a reaction to Reformation claims of musical simplicity, Trent's prescriptions for liturgical music resembled its directions about visual art. Church music was to avoid any 'lascivious or impure' associations, and melodies of secular songs were no longer to be used as the basis for liturgical compositions (so-called 'parody masses'). The words should be clear and comprehensible. Yet, paradoxically, the constraints seem to have liberated polyphonic composers of the later 16th century – Lassus, Palestrina, Byrd, Vittoria – to produce some of the most beautiful masses and motets ever written (Higman, 2000: 495).

The Reformation was thus itself a polyphonic performance, producing a variety of musical forms which helped give distinct cultural shape to the emergence and consolidation of rival confessions. There were a few surprising codas as Higman notes:

«The English Reformation somehow forgot to dismantle the elaborate clerical cohorts staffing the cathedral churches. These continued to stage elaborate sung versions of the various Protestant services, and in due course laid the foundations for a venerable tradition of "Anglican" choral music». (Higman, 2000: 503)

Across the Protestant world, and to a more limited extent the Catholic one, religious music shaped popular culture and was shaped by it. People internalized religious messages as they learned the tunes that carried them, and music was a key expression of social solidarity and communal devotional sentiment.

3.5.2.6. Film and Broadcasting in Protestant Culture

The first alternative to the medium of print was film, which became an entertainment mainstay after American audiences were introduced to feature-length movies with sound in the late 1920s. Protestants responded to movies cautiously at first, for at least three reasons. First, church leaders claimed that movies offered frivolous diversions from higher, spiritual concerns, distracting viewers from important matters of faith. They also claimed that movies had the potential to lead their viewers away from biblical truths with messages that were shallow or wrongheaded. Third, they said that movies could make immoral behaviour seem attractive and thus seduce viewers from right beliefs and behaviours. Nonetheless, mainline Protestants gradually began to accept movies as expressions of creativity that could be both enjoyable and instructive and eventually began publishing movie reviews in their magazines (Reymond, 2007: 18-19).

But protestants accepted radio much more quickly than film:

«Mainline church broadcasting began in 1921 when KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, carried the vespers service of Calvary Episcopal Church. The pattern was set quickly: Church services were broadcast live to the local community. Mainline Protestant plans to broadcast nationally came to fruition in 1928 when the NBC network broadcast programs of the Federal Council of Churches at no charge as a way of meeting federal requirements to broadcast in “the public interest, convenience, and necessity.” So-called sustaining-time programs became a mainstay for decades as the other networks followed NBC’s lead». (Horsfield, 2015: 240)

Mainline Protestants took turns with the other «national agencies of great religious faiths», Roman Catholicism and Judaism, to broadcast programs that would reach the largest possible audience without offending other faith traditions. This policy excluded Fundamentalist and Evangelical churches, which had to buy the radio time they got, a policy that forced them to broadcast to audiences that would respond with cash donations. Such was the pattern when television emerged in the late 1940s: Mainline Protestants, together with Roman Catholics and Jews, broadcast non-sectarian, non-denominational messages to a national audience at no cost, while Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians paid to broadcast their programs (Ward, 1994: 36).

Television continued to follow this same pattern, with mainline Protestants producing such programs as «David and Goliath» (ABC), «Lamp Unto My Feet» (CBS), and «Frontiers of Faith» (NBC) for a small, national audience, but a change in federal regulations ended this privileged position (Barr – Fore, 2005: 1173). In 1960, the Federal Communications Commission decided that TV stations that sold time for religious broadcasting were serving the public interest just as much as TV stations that donated time,

so free time for TV religion vanished quickly. Fundamentalist and Evangelical ministries continued to promise blessings and ask for donations. Mainline churches, however, had to decide whether to pay the high cost of broadcasting they had been receiving for free or to withdraw from television (Barr – Fore, 2005: 1174).

The mainline denominations decided not to buy television time. They paid close attention to the findings in the study «The Television-Radio Audience and Religion» (Parker – Barry – Smythe, 1955) that we have presented in the first chapter of our study, and that constitutes the major social science study of that time. The study pointed out that TV viewers were neither homogeneous nor passive and that church members were the primary audience for religious television (Parker – Barry – Smythe, 1955: 18-19). Television was not the powerful means of reaching the unchurched that mainline churches had hoped it would be, the report concluded (Parker – Barry – Smythe, 1955: 64). Religious messages on television were capable of exploiting a small group of people who were drawn to authoritarian power, but mainline churches were not anxious to attract these audiences. Besides, mainline Protestants claimed, they did not have the money to lavish on television. Also, they considered their liberal theologies too complex for the simple messages television was able to convey (Barr – Fore, 2005: 1173).

Thus, mainline churches ceased television broad-casting, and by doing so retreated from an important dimension of America’s public sphere. The void would be filled by conservative Protestant ministries. In 1988, mainline churches tried to reverse this outcome by launching the «Vision Interfaith Satellite Network» (VISN). The success of this enterprise has been modest. Since changing its name to «Faith & Values Media» in 1992, this interfaith organization has put mainline religious programming on the Hallmark Channel, but primarily on Sunday and in the early morning, with occasional prime-time holiday specials (Berkman, 1980: 305). The mainline Protestant presence on broadcast, cable, and satellite television remains negligible.

Mainline denominations largely gave up producing religious programs for commercial television, but they still paid attention to the media. This attention took two forms: civil-rights activism and media-literacy campaigns. Seeing themselves as moral guardians of the culture, mainline denominations adapted their historic roles as critics and educators to the popular media (Barr – Fore, 2005: 1174).

Organized mainline media literacy efforts declined in the 1980s, although a steady stream of books on the subject continue to be published (Ward, 1994: 230). Designed to help churches and families develop critical viewing skills, these books encourage viewers to watch television selectively, critically, and in moderation.

3.5.2.7. Protestant Mission and its Communicational Principles

The process of the development of mainline Protestantism, its relation with diverse media forms that we have described until now and its framing of different forms of media cannot be truly understood without comprehending the profound meaning of protestant «horizontal» communication, which is directly related to its understanding of mission.

In order to understand the Protestant perception of mission as an exercise of the «vertical» aspects of divine communication and as a determinant factor in the way this Christian tradition understands communication and the media, we need seek the foundation of the concept of mission and of divine communication established by Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It is well known how Augustinian theology influenced Martin Luther's understanding of the gospel and how it marked his theological anthropology, and influence that marked also the basic trend of Protestant anthropology from a communicative perspective (Bosch, 2002: 215). As Bosch assesses,

«The Augustinian understanding of mission and divine communication comes from a controversy that this eminent Father of the Church had to face with a British monk called Pelagius. Pelagius believed that it is possible for human beings to take their own initial steps towards salvation: by their own efforts they could turn and move towards divine grace. Augustine, based on his reading of Paul in Galatians and Romans, became increasingly convinced of the deep corruption and sinfulness of humankind and of its inability to raise itself up. He saw his own life as one of sincere but futile attempts to find salvation: «My inner self was a house divided against itself» (Confessions VIII.8). Thus he developed the doctrine of original sin to account for this weakness, and that, for Augustine, the upward pedagogical process leading to «theosis» that the Christian East had developed was somehow also suspect». (Bosch, 2002: 216)

Augustine saw that salvation must be entirely the gift of God. Learning from Paul's teaching on justification, he saw that our sinful condition is so perilous that only God can change it, without any contribution from us. We are, in this, totally powerless. Only a human can satisfy God's demands in this respect. But since all human beings are themselves sinners, only somebody who is sinless and both human and divine can meet this condition and satisfy God vicariously on behalf of other human beings. This is in fact what Christ did, through his vicarious death on the cross. It happened once for all, and now holds true objectively; all that remains is for individuals to appropriate this salvation subjectively (Bosch, 2002: 217).

In this sense Augustine's theology brought the cross and personal salvation to the centre of the faith: it was Christ's death on the cross that achieved salvation for the believer, not their own efforts. It also shows how God must be the one who decides who shall be saved and who will not, because only he has the power to effect such an outcome. The doctrine of predestination, then, is implied by this theology of divine sovereignty and grace

and became Augustine's direct response to Pelagius: we are not free to move towards salvation; it is God who moves towards us, having predestined some to be saved and others not to be saved.

Those to be saved belong to the city of God. The rest belong to the earthly city. In this life both cities are intermingled but in the next life they will be separated (Stevenson – Frennd, 1989: 229).

All of this is significant for mission and the understanding of god's communication with humanity because it places the individual soul at the centre of mission: to belong to a corporate community that has access to the gate of heaven, as in the Hellenistic-Orthodox paradigm proposes, is not enough. The issue is whether the individual person has appropriated that fact for themselves. The community as a whole, through teaching or liturgy, cannot do this on their behalf: justification through the cross of Christ can only be appropriated by the individual believer.

Bosch describes this as the individualization of salvation and underlines how it would have as strong influence in Luther's understanding of divine communication and dramatic effects on the practice of Christian mission for the Protestant Reformation era period. (Bosch, 2002: 219).

Martin Luther, as we have underlined above, is the pioneer of the Reformation paradigm of Christianity and, within that, of the Protestant Reformation missionary and communicative paradigm. A series of social, cultural and economic developments that took place within western Europe influenced this process. These include the development of new printing technology, the rise of the merchant class in the towns and cities of Europe and their increasing reluctance to pay taxes to Rome, the rise of humanist learning and its undermining of medieval scholasticism, and the papacy's increasing attempts to commercialize the business of religion which, in turn, fostered reclusion and opposition on behalf of many Christians.

Luther's starting point, like Augustine's, was the hopelessness and futility of the human situation. He accepted fundamentally Augustine's doctrine of original sin and the dependence of humanity on God. He understood righteousness to be given to the believer as a gift, which is the grace of God. And that the response of the believer to such a grace can only be passive, to simply accept the grace that God gives, rather than in any sense to actively seek it or earn it. Such a grace provided a sense of realization and joy: the believer now knew that the securing of salvation did not depend in any way on his own futile attempts to win it. It was already secured, by the death of Christ on the cross, and all he needed to do was trustingly receive it (Spencer, 2007: 115).

This is the doctrine of «justification by grace» through faith: that the believer can be justified (declared righteous and therefore saved) only through faith (*per solam fidem*), by the merits of Christ imputed to him or her, with works or religious observance as irrelevant to this. There were a number of profound implications of this doctrine and Luther became more and more determined to follow them through and put them into practice: from a seemingly small theological insight came a whole new way of viewing the Christian faith, the life of the Church, and even the nature of Europe (McGrath, 2007, 135).

First, Luther followed Augustine in recognizing the subjective dimension of salvation: that the crucial arena for the receiving of salvation was within the soul of the believer and that what took place was known only to God. We have already seen this described by Bosch as «the individualization of salvation», where the corporate life of the Church ceases to have a direct role in the securing of that salvation. As Stephen Spencer puts it,

«The doctrine of justification by grace through faith, though, gave a theological rationale for sidelining the institutional Church in the salvation of the believer. The key relationship was between the individual believer and God, a direct and one-to-one engagement: everything else was secondary to this» (Spencer, 2007: 117).

A second implication was the elevation of Scripture over the Church as the authoritative guide in the life of the Christian. Luther quickly saw that it was his meditation on Paul's letter to the Romans that had opened his eyes to the true nature of God's righteousness and the justification of the believer. The teachings of the Church had clouded these truths and so must be downgraded: it was Scripture that taught all things necessary for salvation and it was Scripture that should be recognized as the primary authority in the life of the Christian (McGrath, 2007, 136).

This, in turn, meant that Scripture should be accessible to the Christian and therefore should be translated into the vernacular tongue of the people. Up to now it had only been available in Latin and had only been encountered by ordinary people within the liturgy of the Mass. Luther saw the importance of translating the Bible into the German tongue and, through the printing press, making copies widely available to the German people. So when he was imprisoned in the Wartburg castle in 1521 he began the work of translation and produced what became the definitive version of the German Bible (the New Testament published in 1522 and the complete Bible in 1534). William Tyndale would shortly begin to do the same for the English people, producing the first English New Testament in 1525 (printed in Worms) (Spencer, 2007: 118).

Martin Luther believed that the only way to be saved and made a member of the Church is by the inward act of faith, a faith that does not belong to the realm of appearances. The true believer can never be distinguished with certainty from the hypocrite. This led Luther to develop the idea of the true Church being essentially an invisible body. He understands the Church as «a spiritual unity» which is not a physical assembly but an assembly of hearts in one faith. For him there are two quite different ways of using the terms «Church» and «Christendom». They can refer to the divinely instituted «spiritual, internal Christendom» or to the man-made «physical, external Christendom». The true Church is the spiritual, internal one (McGrath, 2007: 86).

Such a spiritual understanding of the Church and of the communicational action of the word of God meant a particular way of understanding culture: since the importance of revelation and of the liturgy moved from the visible church to the spiritual church and the individual experience of them, the significance of culture also change. Within Protestantism culture is understood as a human environment that is surpassed by the truth and spiritual importance of the gospel (Van Til, 1972: 73). Any cultural form, then, is submitted to the message of the gospel, and can serve or oppose its transmission. Cultures – as other religious traditions – cannot be understood as containing seeds of truth, but as errors that need to be transformed by the message of the gospel through a personal process.

But, according to all this, what about the mission of the visible Church? According to Luther and the reformers it was still desirable that it possess an external and visible organization, membership of which should correspond as closely as possible to the true invisible Church, though identity was impossible (McGrath, 2007: 153). In the view of some of the Reformers the visible organization of the Church should as far as possible be of one type throughout Christendom, or at least throughout Reformed Christendom. In each nation or area of civil government this visible unity was to be secured by an «established religion», determined by decree of the ruler, and on this basis the national churches on the Lutheran and Calvinist model were organized (Spencer, 2007: 120) following what we call a «Nationalistic» geopolitical paradigm.

This also shows, as we have stressed above, the centrality of preaching to the life and mission of the Church according to the Protestant tradition, that underlines the paraenetic foundation of «horizontal» communication that derives from a «vertical» experience of god's gifts. It is through preaching, both its delivery and its reception, that the visible Church approximates most closely to the true invisible Church and fulfils its vocation of being a herald of the latter. But this happens through God's action rather than the will of the preacher or congregation:

«The starting point of the Reformers' theology was not what people could or should do for the salvation of the world, but what God has already done in Christ. He visits the peoples of the earth with his light; he furthers his word so that it may “run” and “increase” till the last day dawns. The church was created by the *verbum externum* (God’s word from outside humanity) and to the church this word has been entrusted. One might even say that it is the gospel itself which «missionizes» and in this process enlists human beings. .. In this respect scholars often quote Luther's metaphor of the gospel being like a stone thrown into the water: it produces a series of circular waves which move out from the centre until they reach the furthest shore. In similar way the proclaimed word of God moves out to the ends of the earth. [...] Throughout, then, the emphasis is on mission not being dependent on human efforts». (Bosch, 2002: 244-245)

But, beside this theological accent, the Reformation would insist on the fact that Christians are under an obligation to preach and teach the gospel as a form of witnessing and sharing the gift that they have received. Such an understanding would be crucial for the development on the Protestant understanding and framing of media.

It is important to note one more point in this mission type. There was to be a complete break with the idea of using force to Christianize people: according to Luther the emperor's sword had nothing to do with faith and no army may attack others under the banner of Christ (though, as we have seen, coercion has its place in matters of secular power) (Bosch, 2002: 245).

In the XVIIth century this approach to mission was developed in a significant way by the Moravians, a movement within German Protestantism which emphasized the practice of piety rooted in inner experience and expressing itself in a life of religious commitment. At Herrnhut, where they lived as a close-knit community, there were circles for devotional prayer, devotional Bible reading and a belief in the universal priesthood of all the faithful. These ideas would have a direct influence in the development of Mennonite Radical Protestantism, and particularly in Quakerism. Such an understanding of the relationship between the believer and the Bible was linked also to an anti-establishment ethos, seeking to move the Church away from a Christendom mentality. This was all an expression and development of the way the Reformation emphasized the importance of the individual's relationship with God but with a greater emphasis on the feelings/emotions of the heart than in the original reformers. It would take the form of intimacy within the Radical Protestant movement, and of personal emotions within the Evangelical movement, as we shall see.

3.5.2.8. The Future of Mainline Protestant Communication

We can say that, un the XXth century, mainline Protestantism went from being a dominant force in American media to becoming a religious niche market. This experience

shows that media dominance may be long lasting, but it is never permanent. Of course, presence in the media is partly a matter of choice, and had mainline Protestants decided to invest considerable funds in broadcasting they may have been able to maintain a greater presence in the public square for a longer time, but such presence probably would not have staved off the membership decline, since church involvement is not a simple correlate of media exposure.

Different media call for different types of involvement, so it will be interesting to see how mainline protestant denominations will adapt to the environment of media convergence. How church communities function, how teaching and worship operate, how members are attracted, and how community ministries are conducted will continue to change as communication systems change. New technologies do not replace old technologies as much as they change how old technologies are used. As the unidirectional media of print and broadcast make room for increasingly interactive and mobile computer technologies, all with enhanced search and storage capabilities, the challenge for main-line denominations will be to maintain the best of tradition while learning to incorporate the best from ongoing innovations.

3.5.3. Evangelical Protestantism and Communication

As we have underlined above when explaining the process of globalization of Christianity, Evangelicalism is a specifically Christian manifestation of the massive Western paradigm shift known as the Enlightenment. From a theological perspective, Evangelicals rarely abandon the first five Ecumenical Councils' Christological pronouncements. Thus evangelicalism enjoys extensive continuity with the historic faith, yet evinces its spirituality in ways consonant with the broader culture's orientation, rendering it a profoundly conservative form of modernism. But at the same time it constitutes one of the trend of Protestant Christianity that shows more vitality and a proactive involvement with media.

In this section of our dissertation we propose a resume of the main characteristics of the Evangelical «framing» of media according to their particular understanding of communication, vertical or horizontal.

3.5.3.1. Evangelicals, Communication, Mission and Media: The General Principles

Evangelicalism is basically a missionary development of Protestantism within the paradigm of personal conversion through grace, with a strong accent of the non-institutional dimension of the church and a proactive use of mass media submitted to the purpose of spreading the message of Christ according to Evangelical theology. For this reason, in order

to grasp the Evangelical understanding of mass media it is essential to analyze its conception of «horizontal» communication. In spite of the diverse expressions of the evangelical theology of mission, the Evangelical theology of mission is distinguished by certain common features, as Fiedler asserts (Fiedler, 2006: 148):

(a) A close relationship to holy scripture, which is regarded as inspired and all-sufficient for life and doctrine.

(b) Emphasis on the atoning and redemptive work of Christ, that is, a Christocentric theology based on the direct experience of salvation in Christ through faith.

(c) An emphasis on the necessity of a personal decision of faith (conversion).

(d) The priority of evangelization and the building up of congregations over all other work (i.e. social justice) in the field of mission.

The historical roots of evangelical theology lie in the revival movements of the second half of the XIXth century, while the missions have their roots more in the revival movements of the first half of the XIXth century. The revivals of the second half of the XIXth century were mainly interdenominational or un-denominational, and, as far as world mission is concerned, they found their typical expression in the faith missions, that is, the missions centred in personal conversion and not denominational proselytism (Ditchfield, 1998: 13).

The strong soteriology (theology of salvation) and the weak ecclesiology (theology of the church) of the evangelical theology of mission can be explained by this historical background. The soteriology is mainly Calvinistic, but strongly influenced in the direction of Arminianism by the Holiness movement which emerged from Methodism (Ditchfield, 1998: 22).

Besides the basic convictions named above, two points play an essential role, both of which justify the need for worldwide mission or «horizontal» communication and continual new advances to people unreached by the gospel: (a) the conviction that all who do not believe in Christ are lost eternally; and (b) the actual expectation of the imminent return of Christ, before which event the gospel must be preached to all nations.

One can easily deduce from these basic convictions that much (but not all!) evangelical theology of mission is opposed to historical criticism in methods of exegesis, liberal theology, the social gospel, liberation theology, and every idea of there being many ways to salvation. Evangelical theology of mission tends to be individualistic; its strong social commitment, therefore, takes a concrete personal form rather than a socio-political form. Parallel to this, one finds the local congregation emphasized more than the church as a whole (Søgaard, 2000: 610).

A particular characteristic of the Evangelical notion of mission is its personal dimension, well beyond the understanding of church as community. Klaus Fiedler underlines that:

«The understanding of unity in the evangelical theology of mission is personal (the common faith is primary; structural unity is secondary); continuity is understood as continuity of the same faith and doctrine, not as continuity of the same church structure, whose faith and doctrine may change». (Fiedler, 2006: 145)

Evangelical approach to Media has a profound relation with the understanding of God's communication approach to humanity and the Evangelical understanding of mission. Evangelical theologians sustain that:

«A study of God's communicational activities yields significant guidelines for media use. God uses communication symbols that are understood by us within our specific cultural contexts. He uses language, culture, and human form. He is working for an interactive relationship. Our use of media must follow similar patterns.» (Søgaard, 2000: 610)

Having considered these essential points about the «horizontal» understanding of Evangelical communication we can understand their framing of media. One of the most durable myths about evangelicals is that they are somehow suspicious of modernity and technology. Although evangelicals distrust modernity in the sense of a moral value –as exemplified by moral relativism and ethical laxity– evangelicals in the XXth century embraced technology, especially communications technology, with great enthusiasm. Evangelicals such as Lois Crawford (1892–1986), Aimee Semple McPherson (1900-1944), and Charles E. Fuller (1887-1968) were pioneers in the use of radio as an evangelistic medium. Similarly, Oral Roberts (1918-2009), Pat Robertson (1930-) and Jerry Falwell (1933-2007), and others were pioneers in television. All of them contributed to the creation of what we could call and «Evangelical media culture» that sought to take advantage of the mediation of technology in order to spread the message of Christ according to Evangelical theology and Evangelical communication paradigms. They developed –as some of their followers to today– a proactive use of media and new technologies in order to spread a personal experience of god marked by very specific characteristics.

As we have insisted all along our study, the specific understanding of media implies specific challenge for media users. Evangelical theology links the principle of mission to the commission of communicating (Søgaard, 2000: 610). There is a clear goal of being prophetic and to present the gospel goal of being prophetic in such a way that people will want to listen, understand, follow, and commit themselves (Kraft, 2000: 17).

Søgaard (2000: 610-611) resumes the consequences of such an approach regarding the Evangelical understanding of media in six basic points that we resume as follows:

–Christian Evangelical communication is person-centred: Jesus showed us the example by becoming a real human being, participating in our affairs (i.e. John 1:14). In him the message and the medium become one. This person-centeredness must be carefully guarded in media communication.

–The audience (receptors) has priority: media programs need to be receptor-oriented. Jesus illustrated receptor orientation by creating parables out of everyday life of the listeners. In a parable, the audience become players, and as such each one discovers new truths and principles.

–Relationship with the local church/assembly: it is the local church (understood as a meeting of believers, not as an institutional organization) that provides permanent structures for effective communication. If churches are to function as a base for media strategies and have sense of ownership, they need to be involved in the decision-making with respect to media employment and program design.

–The principle of process and the effective use of media: according to the Evangelical approach to media, communication itself is a process, but the listener will also be living through an ongoing decision-making process. During this process the needs of the audience will change and the communicator must adapt his or her programs and use of media accordingly.

–Good information is mandatory: if effective communication is to take place, research provides the information on which decisions can be based, and it makes media communication possible. The main concern is not the number of research methods used, but the fact that the needs of the audience have been studied and that media products (radio programs, brochures, books, videos, etc.) are adequately tested before broadcasting or distribution.

–Media use instruments to be rooted in the cultural context of the audience: as the gospel is clothed in the new culture it penetrated that culture with the true life of Christ. Then, from within that culture, it blooms to new forms and instruments. An intercultural understanding will lead to investigate local and traditional media and art forms.

The different elements outlined by Søgaard as essential aspects of the Evangelical understanding of media and its use in the propagation of the Christian message. According to our understanding, they are based in three important principles that need to be underlined:

First, the use of media is in itself instrumental: mass media constitute a «medium» in order to spread the contents of the gospel in a specific time and culture. The framing of

different media is always oriented towards the effectiveness of communication in favour of personal interior conversion.

Second, the main receptor of the messages mediated by media is the individual understood as a believer that dwells in order to accept the message of Christ and allow it to transform him. Numbers are important because of the broader effect that a communicative action (preaching, video, celebration, etc.) may have on a bigger number of people. But the specific target is always the individual and his/her reception of Gods grace, a process that requires continuous progression of acceptance and remembrance. This is basically why the sense (hearing, seeing, feeling, etc.) acquire a particular relevance, and the reaction of the believer is expressed in a similar way, through the senses (body language, talking in tongues, crying, hugs, singing, etc.).

Third, the basic understanding of the relationship between the Christian message (the gospel) and culture is «vertical»: the Gospel and god’s message is above culture itself, and the transmission of the message of the gospel is «wrapped» in a particular cultural form in order to allow it to arrive to its receptors. But the gospel is never conditioned by culture. In a certain way we could say that, according to the Evangelical understanding of communication and culture, mass media constitute a «medium», but the Christian message doe not transform them, but is over them. From the moment media are used for the purpose of evangelization they become an instrument of the gospel, but not a cultural expression of the revealed Christian message. As Steve Sywulka puts it «The various form of mass media seem to have been providentially provided by God for world evangelization, and have played a major role in modern missions» (Sywulka , 2000: 603) that is, they are submitted to the divine plan of spreading the Christian message, but don’t have a meaning for themselves form the Evangelical understanding of communication.

Stephen Ellingson in his book about the differences about the differences of Evangelical and Mainline Protestant Christianity an interesting description of how worship in both trends of Protestantism highlights the elements we have exposed above (Ellingson, 207: 111-112) that can be schematized as follows:

Features of Worship	Mainline Protestantism (Lutheran)	Evangelical Tradition
Purpose	–Gathering of community around God’s gits of Word (the Bible and saving message of Christ Crucified and Resurrected) and sacraments	–Conversion/commitment of the individual
Structure	–Four parts: Greeting/Gathering, Word (Bible reading/ prayer, hymn),	–Three parts: preliminaries, sermon, altar call

	Holy Communion, Sending (follows the Common Rite)	
Emphases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Corporate participation in the liturgy –Sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion –Confessional –Appeal to intellect and doctrine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Individual decision and individual choice –Experience and emotion –Pragmatism: use whatever means necessary to bring about conversion
Key Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Participatory liturgy –Centred on sermon and Holy Communion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Contemporary music (rock and roll, country, jazz) –Multimedia presentations –Drama –Tailored to homogeneous, target populations
Nature of Preaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Exegetical –Follows lectionary –Proclaims God’s activity in the cross and resurrection and God’s promises in the sacraments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Application –Topical –Stress on personal benefits of being Christian –Moralistic: Bible as guidebook
Role of Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Passive observers –Make decision to believe or strengthen commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Active participants (liturgy «Work of the People») –Response to God’s Word and promises

From this chart e can easily perceive the accents that Evangelicalism stresses in its effort to communicate the gospel and the specific synergies it uses to arrive to the faithful.

Having introduced the particular approach of evangelicalism to mass media, we will present the two major aspects of Evangelical media framing in history: Evangelical preaching, and the so called «Electronic Church» phenomena.

3.5.3.2. Evangelical Preaching and its Evolution

As in mainline Protestantism, preaching has a relevant importance in Evangelical communication, but Evangelicalism in America changed forever the nature of protestant preaching, a fact that makes Evangelical preaching one of the essential aspects of mediated communication within this Christian trend.

The development of the Evangelical understanding of preaching is frequently linked to Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), an American preacher who was full of evangelistic zeal for the religious needs of a growing new nation (Ditchfield, 1998: 34). Finney was impatient with the historic Protestant concerns for both expository and catechetical preaching, finding such preaching ill-suited to his great invention: the frontier religious revival. Among his innovations were the anxious bench, the inquiry room, and the protracted meeting. Finney preached dramatic, personal conversion mixed with calls for the abolition of slavery and the practice of temperance, that is, a mix of personal and social transformation that became

typical of American Protestant preaching well in to the XXth century (Ditchfield, 1998: 34). As Ditchfield asserts,

«Finney’s stirring call for conversion undermined the earlier Calvinism of preachers like Whitefield. In planning a protracted meeting, in using an array of means to beckon sinners to repentance and conversion, Finney’s “new measures for revivals” side-stepped Calvinistic notions of double predestination in a new stress on salvation as dependent on the decision of the repentant sinner rather than the eternal decree of a God who predestines some to salvation and some to damnation. Finney’s sermons were carefully reasoned arguments in which the Bible was presented as a sort of legal contract where God clearly set out what was required for salvation and what was expected of humanity. The preacher, in Finney’s sermons, was a lawyer persuading a guilty client to confess and thus to be vindicated». (Ditchfield, 1998: 35)

Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) and Billy Sunday (1862–1935), lay heirs of Finney, perfected the citywide revival meeting and emotional, transformative preaching that tended to take one biblical text and use it for the purpose of emotional conviction of the listeners (Ditchfield, 1998: 35). Dorsett strains that

«Moody sounded like a businessman making a sales pitch, keeping things short, simple, and interspersed with sentimental, homely anecdotes. Moody presented a good product to a self-interested customer. The goal of his preaching was to “get the customer to sign on the dotted line”, a small card given to those who wished to make personal commitments to Christ. Potentially divisive doctrinal issues like the sacraments or predestination were avoided rather than expounded on by evangelists like Moody. The Gospel message tended to be limited to a word that causes dramatic change in the listeners». (Dorsett, 2003: 435)

In the same line ex-baseball player Billy Sunday was America’s first Protestant evangelist celebrity. He made preaching into mass entertainment, a style that was to be developed in later twentieth-century television preachers (Ditchfield, 1998: 39).

At the same time preachers in predominately African-American churches, overwhelmingly Protestant in their traditions, tended to be heavily influenced by the fervent preaching of the Great Awakening, when great numbers of African-American slaves were converted to the religion of their white masters. The chanted sermon, a distinctively African-American style of preaching, has its roots in the Second Great Awakening (Ditchfield, 1998: 123).

Several scholars have also pointed to African musical and speech pattern elements, the dialogical, responsive relationship between preacher and congregation, and the «hum» in African-American homiletical styles as distinctly African-American contributions to the practice of preaching that persist into present Evangelicalism. Theologically, African-

American preachers participated in the great theological movements of American Protestantism, while also stressing themes of exodus and deliverance, hope, and redemptive suffering, thus contextualizing their sermons to the particular challenges of being black in America (Ditchfield, 1998: 125).

In the 1960s, many Americans who had known nothing of the vital Evangelical African-American preaching tradition were introduced to it through the preaching of Martin Luther King, Jr (1929-1968) in his «I Have a Dream» speech at the March on Washington (August 1963) and heard in that speech a call to become a more righteous nation (Ditchfield, 1998: 154).

By the beginning of the XXth century, Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) led a wing of American Evangelical protestants into liberalism, an important moment for the history of Evangelical preaching. Fosdick's radio sermons were immensely popular. Ditchfield describes his contribution as follows:

«His straightforward language, everyday life illustrations, and unchecked optimism became characteristics of what could be called the "American school" of preaching that dominated mainline Protestant preaching until the later half of the century. In an a July 1928 article in Harper's Magazine titled "What Is the Matter With Preaching?," Fosdick charged that too much preaching (and by preaching he meant Protestant preaching) had lost touch with the real concerns of real people. Fosdick championed what he called "life-situation" or "problem-centred" preaching, in which every sermon began not with a biblical text, but rather with some current human dilemma or concern, then moved toward an engaging address of that concern based on both biblical and secular materials». (Ditchfield, 1998: 206)

Whereas the Protestant Evangelicals and fundamentalists tended to see the modern world, with its domination by the thought of science, as a threat and regularly preached against it, Fosdick sought conciliatory accommodation with modernity in his sermons, sermons that tended to quote from learned contemporary secular authorities on various matters far more than citing Scripture, thus resuming the main forms of preaching that would mark Evangelical preaching to our day.

These characteristics, fruit of the development and particular understanding of preaching within Evangelical communities, found their most explicit expression within the «Electronic Church» phenomena that we will describe in the following section.

3.5.3.3. The Electronic Church Phenomena

The «Electronic Church» refers to religious broadcasting, in general, and conservative Evangelical Christian television, in particular. These programs spread church teachings over the air in several formats, from a taping of traditional preaching services to a

modified talk show centring on testimonies, interviews, or commentary. The phrase electronic church reflects the concern among some Evangelical church leaders that the faithful substitute their worship experiences from traditional churches with televised church programs. By the mid-1980s the term televangelism was also used to describe such a religious broadcasting phenomena (Schulze, 1990: 41). The electronic church is oftentimes considered a late XXth century phenomenon. Indeed, the phrase evolved from the electric church in the 1970s to describe the rise of religious broadcasting. However, as we have underlined above, religious broadcasting is as old as commercial broadcasting, and it accommodated evolving religious trends and broadcasting regulations (Gurnirth, 1998: 12).

As we have noted in the section regarding mainline Protestantism and broadcasting, when television became the dominant medium after World War II, producers abandoned radio and modified their shows for TV. The Evangelical movement followed suit, leading to the first televised religious broadcasts that were soon called «Televangelism» programs as a part of the Evangelical broadcasting movement, broadly called also the «electronic Church». Between the 1970s–1990s the electronic church reached a critical mass in the late 1970s and the early 1980s for several reasons that Jacques Gruwirth resumes in three basic points (Gurwirth, 1998: 25-28):

First, the growth of cable television made it easier for religious broad-casters to create profitable networks. Rather than having to secure a group of stations or affiliates to broadcast religious programming, cable television allowed networks to carry religious programming nationwide. By the mid-1970s over 90 percent of Americans were within the broadcasting range of at least one religious broadcast program.

Second, the political climate of the United States in the 1970s and 1980s complemented conservative Christian programs. The religious right and the Moral Majority wielded significant influence in conservative politics during this time. This politically conservative religious movement relied in part on electronic church broadcasts to galvanize believers. As the Moral Majority became more politically influential, so did the exposure of the electronic church.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, 1980s televangelism became a fixture in the public square with coverage of sexual and financial scandals. A notable example, as Rober Wuthnow proposes, is the rise and fall of Jim Bakker and PTL:

«Jim Bakker (1940–) produced PTL (which stood for «Praise the Lord», and later «People That Love») with his wife, Tammy Faye (1942- 2007). By the early 1980s the program had become one of the more popular and profitable electronic church programs. PTL viewers contributed millions of dollars annually, helping the Bakkers extend their holdings into Heritage USA, a Christian resort and theme park outside

of Charlotte, North Carolina. At the height of their fame, the Bakkers had three homes, a houseboat, several luxury and vintage sports cars, and an office Jacuzzi. In three years the Bakkers earned a reported 4.8 million dollars. But despite this apparent financial success, the Bakkers often maintained to viewers and supporters that PTL was in financial dire straits: they pleaded for cash from viewers to keep PTL afloat. The investigations into PTL's financial discretions revealed Jim Bakker's 1980 affair with PTL viewer Jessica Hahn; Bakker had paid her \$265,000 in exchange for her silence. Jim Bakker was ultimately convicted of twenty-four counts of fraud in December 1988. Among Bakker's crimes was selling 9,700 fraudulent "partnerships" to PTL's Heritage USA theme park at a time when the park could accommodate only 48 such memberships». (Wuthnow, 1190: 90-91)

On the other hand William Fore (Fore, 1190) identifies five main criticisms of the electronic church phenomena in the wake of 1980s televangelism. Although these criticisms are rather broad, they tend to be a fairly comprehensive list of the major criticisms of religious broadcasting in general since its first broadcasts in the early 1900s.

First, these programs are noted for failing to offer a comparable degree of community as offered by «real», brick-and-mortar churches. Whereas one of the virtues of community churches is fellowship and face-to-face inter-action, which some argue is critical to the Christian life-style, electronic church programs are unable to replicate this camaraderie. Theologian Martin E. Marty echoed this sentiment when he called the electronic church "the invisible church." Ben Armstrong, an electronic church defender and former president of the National Religious Broadcasters, countered that some religious broadcasters use their programs in part to encourage membership in local churches (Fore, 1190: 137).

Second, Fore notes that the electronic church fails to evangelize effectively, reaching primarily an audience of believers instead of nonbelievers. A common defence of religious broadcasting is its potential to reach the unchurched and convince unbelievers to become closer to God. But analyses of ratings and viewing habits reveal that the religious broadcast audience is almost exclusively composed of persons who were already believers (Fore, 1190: 138-139).

Third, the revenue-generating facet of commercial television is inherently at odds with religious belief. Television production is an expensive operation by nature, and it is subsidized through advertising. Religious programs also have to generate a significant amount of money to stay on the air, but unlike most secular programs they do not rely on ads. Rather, the programs appeal to viewers for donations, leading many critics to note that the shows can focus more on getting funds than on religious issues. Further, the programs' popularity on TV, like all other programs, depends in part on not offending or alienating the audience, which inherently restricts much of what the TV pastors can say (Fore, 1190: 139-140).

Fore's fourth criticism is related to the concerns about seeking donations from viewers. In order to make religious programming appealing, the shows have to incorporate many of the trappings of secular culture that churches reject, such as materialism, power, and appeals to success. The electronic church undermines an expectation that church leaders reject extravagance. The medium tends to reflect, if not embrace, a sense of overindulgence, which is not a virtue among men and women of the cloth (Fore, 1990: 141).

Others note that the electronic church tends to skew toward the more charismatic churches, in part because the demographic makeup lends itself more toward television viewers (poor, lower-income, and so forth) and in part because the ambience of the worship services tends to make for better television than the more staid services (Sierra, 2007: 250).

Finally, since churches have to buy time on the air, the underfunded churches are left off the air, which restricts the religious diversity on TV. William Fore reported in 1990 that most of the audience for religious broadcasting tends to be more conservative and fundamentalist. Less than 15 percent of viewers said the programming served as a substitute for attending worship services. Even though the electronic church may fail in its evangelical mission, it succeeds in reinforcing the faithful's beliefs (Fore, 1990: 145).

The rise and development of the Electronic Church phenomena cannot be ignored as one of the most notable aspects of Evangelical communication. Its development today outside the borders of the United States (like in Brazil, in Africa and in Asia) still offers a broad space for «Media, Religion and Culture» research.

3.5.3.4. The Future of Evangelical Communication in the XXIst century

At the turn of the XXIst century, the Electronic Church and Evangelical religious broadcasting continue to evolve with religious trends, media technologies, and communication policies. Web technologies and distribution, including social media and podcasting, do not require the engineering expertise or the financial assets necessary in more traditional broadcasting. As such, these technologies allow more churches to experiment with mass communications. This is not to suggest, though, that churches are abandoning traditional broadcasting. In fact, when the FCC opened more licenses for FM non-commercial educational stations in the mid-2000s, some Catholic broadcasters took this as an opportunity to increase the number of Catholic radio stations from around 140 to 300 nationwide (Sierra, 2007: 237).

With new media technologies and opportunities have produced new electronic church superstars. Perhaps the most prominent electronic church leader of this time is Joel Osteen (1963-). Osteen worked with his father, the pastor of Houston's Lakewood Church, primarily as the producer of the church's television show. When his father passed away in

1999, Osteen took over the pulpit, and in 2004 he published his best-selling book «Your Best Life Now». Some commentators criticized Osteen for promoting a prosperity gospel and for deemphasizing Jesus Christ in his messages. Nonetheless, by the mid-2000s Osteen's church services reached twenty million viewers in nearly one hundred countries each month (Sierra, 2007: 239).

Like their forebears, XXIst century electronic church leaders are scrutinized for alleged financial and personal indiscretions. In November 2007, U.S. senator Chuck Grassley probed Joyce Meyer (1943-), Benny Hinn (1952-), and four other mega-ministry leaders to ensure their lucrative ministries did not violate their tax-exempt status (Sierra, 2007: 240). Also in 2007, the televangelist Thomas W. Weeks III (1967-) was charged with aggravated assault after allegedly attacking his wife in a parking lot. In general, though, these stories did not receive the same degree of public condemnation that the televangelists of the 1980s did, suggesting, perhaps, that the power and interest in the electronic church is beginning to wane (Sierra, 2007: 241).

Some XXIst century Electronic Church leaders were also criticized for promoting what could be considered radical political positions. In the wake of September 11, 2001, Jerry Falwell appeared on Pat Robertson's «700 Club» program and attributed the attack to «the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen». He was roundly criticized and later apologized for his remarks. Robertson himself was criticized for calling for the assassination of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez in 2005 and for suggesting the destruction of Hurricane Katrina could be attributed to legalized abortion (Sierra, 2007: 242).

The development of Evangelical media, and in particular the Electronic Church, have not ceased in their purpose of transmitting the Evangelical understanding of the Christian gospel. Its expansion continues aided by new technologies, as we shall see in the next chapter when facing digital communication and, particularly, the development of Evangelical movement in Africa.

3.5.4. The Radical Reformation and Communication

As we have underlined above the Reformation of the church in western and central Europe in the XVIth century was dominated by Lutherans (based in Germany), Calvinists (based in Switzerland), and Anglicans (based in England). Although most Protestants everywhere in Europe were associated with one of these three communions, those who

thought that these movements had not gone far enough created a host of smaller churches and communities that often had a disproportionate influence on the wider movement. Many of these movements have survived in some form to the present day. The term «Radical Reformation» has come to designate this diverse group of new religious communities.

The early groups, including the Swiss Brethren, the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and the Amish, gave birth to the Free Church tradition in Europe. They argued for a Christian community made up not of all citizens, but only of regenerated or baptized adult believers, free of any ties to the secular state, in opposition to most Protestants, and Roman Catholics, who believed that church authority should be integrated with the state. Radical reformers also experimented with communalism (Hutterites), mysticism (Schwenckfelders), apocalypticism (Melchiorites), and theological innovation (Socinianism) (Brinton, 2002: 9).

But at the same times these groups also developed new understandings of communication, derived from their particular understanding of the sense of Christian communities. Even though often forgotten within the studies of communication, in this section we would like to offer a limited but consistent approach towards the communicational dynamics of Radical Protestantism, in particular of Quakerism. Academic approaches to this group are limited and often centred in the way they are perceived by media and not on how they frame media. Their particular understanding of communication, vertical and horizontal, has also generated, as we shall see, a particular form of geopolitical interaction.

3.5.4.1. Quakerism: A General Approach

The established Protestant churches opposed the radical reformers from the start and attempted to suppress their movement. Their leaders were often arrested and even executed. Two episodes in particular stoked popular fears: the violent, destructive armed rebellion that radical Thomas Münzer (c. 1490–1525) led against the German Lutheran princes in 1524–1525; and the disastrous experiment in utopian communal living in Münster, Westphalia, in 1535–1536, which included such measures as a massive book burning and the legalization of polygamy (Brinton, 2002: 12).

In reaction to these events, the radical groups were severely repressed throughout Europe, even though most of them supported pacifism. Some movements such as the Swiss Brethren were completely destroyed or driven from their original homes. Continued repression against Free Church groups in the XVIIth century led many to flee to Pennsylvania, the colony established by British Quaker William Penn. The Society of Friends appeared in England as the most radical wing of the British Puritan movement and in the

17th century held a position analogous to that of the earlier radical reformers on the Continent (Brinton, 2002: 22).

The Quaker community at large is more formally known as «The Religious Society of Friends» and was founded during the middle part of the XVIIth century in England. At that period of history, many English churchgoers had become disenchanted with the emphasis of ceremony and creeds in the established practices of the Church of England and the dissenting fellowships of the Baptist and Presbyterian communities alike (Brinton, 2002: 25). This was not something common only to the Society of Friends. As Brinton states,

«The formality of Biblical doctrine and the use of creeds as mechanisms of authority reinforcement within church hierarchies had become points of contention with many people of faith. The move toward direct communion with God and the forgoing of traditional modes of Christian worship had taken hold across the English countryside» (Brinton, 2002: 28).

Most historical accounts of Quakerism attribute the rise of a coherent Quaker community to the charismatic preaching and organizing of George Fox. From the purpose of our study, it is important in this context to mention that Fox was himself a Biblical scholar and a man of letters. His journals and published works influenced the shape and direction of the early Quaker movement in England and continue to do so today as an icon of this religious society.

Fox's own deep understanding of faith came directly out of English Christian tradition and Biblical accounts of god's work. Although his adoption of direct communion went against the grain of the formalized and hierarchical English church tradition, the basic foundation of his own system of belief was rooted in the definitions of faith that had evolved over centuries of Christian thought. Fox and his followers were frequently persecuted and sometimes imprisoned for their controversial belief that seekers of Divine communion could do so without the hierarchy of the church interceding, and that silence played an important part in such a communication process (Peck, 1988: 62).

Thus, in the context of Quaker theology, «vertical» revelation, in its more profound meaning, takes place under the form of inner silence as a void of human language that empties the believer in order to take in the divine message. The fruits of this process is the «horizontal» communication of such a gift through rightful works.

Further, one of the most important early works published by Quakers was the «Apology», written by Robert Barclay in 1676 as a defence of Quaker beliefs in the face of terrible persecution by the establishment church (Brinton, 2002: 64). This important piece of literature proved to be empowering for the tormented Quaker community of that period,

but certainly has not been without its critics within the subsequent generations of followers. Without a distinct theology and without the binding power of creeds to unify the practitioners of Quaker faith, growth of the larger community occurred in fits and starts, often marred by difficult and intractable schisms (Peck, 1988: 67).

As the testimonies of Quakerism's founding members began to take hold and the number of worshippers counting themselves among the movement's members grew, the reach of this new philosophy also spread its wings geographically. Quakers began to move to the new colonies in the West, settling in New England and Pennsylvania.

Throughout the late XVIIth and early XVIIIth centuries, Quakers impacted the culture and religious life of the colonial New World. At the same time, practitioners became intent on consolidating, and indeed in some cases codifying, the beliefs and behaviours of followers. Several pieces published by influential Quakers during the eighteenth century worked to this effect, however just beneath the surface of this newfound desire for consolidation was a long-simmering undercurrent of conflict that would come to a head at the start of the nineteenth century (Peck, 1988: 87).

Even during the height of George Fox's early campaign, some Quaker ministers quickly turned away from direct communion. These ministers believed strongly in the primacy of the Bible, and in fact defended that the more literal interpretation of the Divine Word required the appointment of deacons and the administration of creeds (Peck, 1988: 92). Their dissent was anticipating similar, but less rigid, evangelical streams within the Quaker community in the Americas that emerged during the XIXth century.

Peck explains how these divisions within Quakerism took place:

«These evangelicals, or Orthodox Friends as they would later be called, placed emphasis in worship on the biblical Christ. Their voices were powerful and influential in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the largest and most influential among Quaker communities in the United States. The first major schism within the Religious Society of Friends emerged in the year 1827 when a member of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Elias Hicks, openly pushed his belief in the experience of the Inward Christ over that of the biblical. While certainly the factors contributing to this schism were complex and evolved over a long period of time, it was the movement away from the Orthodox view, prominent in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and toward Hicks' interpretation of worship that pitted the Orthodox against the Hicksite for the better part of the next century». (Peck, 1988: 97)

Although the XXth century saw significant reconciliation and cooperation between these distinct groups of Quakers, it is still the difference in their view of worship that mark their divisions. For worship stands as the central element of Quaker identity, and constitutes the reality where the Quaker understanding of communication can be grasped.

3.5.4.2. Quakerism, Worship, and its Communicative Dynamics

Howard Brinton defines Quaker worship with these words:

«As Catholic worship is centered in the altar and Protestant worship in the sermon, worship for the Society of Friends attempts to realize as its center the divine Presence revealed within. In a Catholic church the altar is placed so as to become the focus of adoration; in a typical Protestant church the pulpit localized attention; while in a Friends Meeting House there is no visible point of concentration, worship being here directed neither toward the actions nor the words of others, but toward the inward experience of the gathered group.» (Brinton, 2006: 73)

As we can see the typical Friends Meeting House is a simple structure. Quakers gather to meet in a meeting room, in which unadorned seats are arranged to form a perimeter around an empty centre. At the scheduled hour, worshippers gather in this room, with the meeting for worship said to begin as soon as the first person arrives to sit in silence. For the duration of the meeting members sit, co-present in silence, only breaking for vocal testimony should a member be moved to do so by a revelation of some kind. Following vocal testimony, the room returns to silence until a senior member of the meeting shakes hands with a neighbour. Members follow suit, greeting and shaking hands with other fellow worshippers, and the meeting is adjourned (Brinton, 2006: 79).

Brinton likens this experience to a laboratory, as contrasted to the lecture style worship favoured in the aforementioned Catholic and Protestant traditions (Brinton, 2006: 80). Thus, meetings of this kind are called «unprogrammed», unlike the programmed meetings of other Christian denominations and, in fact, the meetings of Orthodox Quakers, who incorporate biblical readings, the singing of hymns, and often the sermonizing of a minister in addition to the practice of silence as one part of a more formalized ceremony (Molina-Markham, 2013: 128).

As Plugh underlines, There is no universal, agreed upon, way to worship in silence for members of the Friends community. Some meditate, while others remember passages from the Bible. Some reflect on happenings in the world or in their lives, whereas others seek forgiveness (Plugh, 2012: 205). He states:

«Generally speaking, the time of silent worship is referred to in terms of "centering," and often among the vocabulary Quakers use to describe this experience are words like "still" and "listening." The understanding of the collective nature of this silent worship could be explained in terms of music because it is like the luminous unity and individual fulfillment that arise when musicians, responding to the music before them, offer up their separate gifts in concert». (Plugh, 2012: 208)

In fact, Brinton (2002) points us directly to Matthew 18:20, which says, «Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them». He further goes on to describe this collective silence, this «waiting upon the Lord», as a «dynamo drawing on a Power beyond itself» (Brinton, 2002: 7). Much of this understanding of the Quakers' silent worship is reminiscent of McLuhan's notion of the resonant interval, a point worth further exploring.

Brinton also offers some perspective on the philosophical orientation of Quaker thought by placing it in the midst of Greek mysticism, the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, and the Hebraic modes of thought favoured by biblical prophets. For Brinton, it is important to see the distinction present in the Greek belief that God and man are bound as one, an eternal condition of existence, and the Hebrew belief in the separation between God and man, which is defined relationally:

«For the Greeks, man must seek out the eternal Truth innate in the universe. That Truth will be revealed to the seeker, unless the seeker turns away from the notion of innate oneness with God and toward sin. For the Hebrew, God acts independently of man and chooses to reveal himself at unpredictable times. It is man's duty to obey God, to take visitation as a call to right action. Truth is found in these revelations, and evil is found when man chooses to ignore or oppose them. In the Hebrew conception man is saved by doing; in the Greek, he is saved by being». (Brinton, 2002: 68).

Brinton also sustains that Quaker worship, the centring and deep contemplation of the meeting for worship, is in fact a search for revelation in the Greek tradition. Quakers practicing silence in the midst of their fellow community members are on a quest for truth or «Light», as they prefer to call it. There is certainly a sense that within each of us is an innate soul, within which Truth can be found. The strength of that belief varies within meetings and communities, and it bears further examination as to how prevalent it is among Quakers today. The Quakers, according to Brinton, have always considered themselves closer to the Hebrew prophets in philosophy, however, emphasizing action as a necessary consequence of Divine revelation. He notes,

«Quakers today are known more for their works than for the depth of their spiritual life; more for doing than for being. For many, Quakers worship and contemplation are valuable, not in themselves, but as the means to right action» (Brinton, 2002: 70).

It is the duality of Quaker philosophy in this respect, or rather the lack of a consistent system of theology, that helps to put its practice into perspective. Plugh notes that logical consistency produces rigidity, leading religious communities toward

formalization of membership. Logical inconsistency, of the type attributed to Quakers, tends toward growth, according to Plugh, and new revelations whether sought after or revealed emphasize process and action over dogma or creeds. Inconsistency of thought with respect to the established traditions of Christian philosophical roots squarely places emphasis on experience for Quakers, giving them particular sensitivity to what general semanticists would call lower levels of abstraction, in as far as they pertain to Divine Truth or Light (Plugh, 2012: 210).

3.5.4.3. God's Communication as Silence in Quakerism

The silent meeting in the Quaker tradition, as we have explained, makes mind immanent in the collection of individuals seated in silence together. It creates a path of awareness that extends between and through silent worshippers, each listening independently for communion with God.

The key is the collectivity of the experience in silent meetings. The Quaker practice strips away the verbal level of communication and puts the community in a state of collective being, where each member's physicality and biological rhythms become points of perception. The content of this medium is existence, being and unity. The idea present is a difference travelling in circuit that separates members from their isolated notions of self and raises their awareness of oneness (Plugh, 2012: 211).

Quaker communities are similar to organisms (or «systems»). If the Quaker philosophy of community is rooted in consensus and unity, it only makes perfect sense that the mechanisms of cultural construction in Quaker communities would serve the purpose of negotiating and reinforcing those values: in silence, Quakers achieve an awareness that says, «I am not separate from you, nor are you from I».

Quaker silent worship offers an example of cultural media practice that works to ease the tensions of competing cultural values. Along history many Quaker communities have evaded the use of modern electronic media precisely to favour this silence. In doing so they respond to a pietist model of communication that we presented at the beginning of this chapter. Thus «revelation» is understood as a inner process that allows the believer to perceive the essence of divine communication. Such a communication becomes «horizontal» with the discernment that Quaker action requires. It is a form of «religion of the heart», based on an intimate and personal relationship between Christ and the believer. And even though this practice is limited to some Mennonite Christian communities, it is still at the heart of the Christian principles of communication and media framing.

3.5.5. The Geopolitical Implications of the Three Protestant Communication Trends

Our presentation of the expansion and communicational characteristics of the three main trends within Protestantism reveal a triple geopolitical development, each one according to the inner communicational dynamics of each tradition.

Mainline Protestantism developed, as we have seen, under the form of an uneven movement that generated a series of different groups inspired by the theological innovations introduced by Martin Luther, John Calvin and their followers. These ideas –that involved the separation between religion and the Roman Catholic political power– soon derived into different factions linked to the national identity as a result of the identification of civil authority and the specific Christian religious group associated with it in most of Europe. Such a perspective induced to the national expansion of Protestantism –mainly through its preaching, publishing and missions– that, together with a paraenetic and networked accent in its communication paradigms and its framing of media –initially printing, but then also electronic media–.

These globalization and communicative characteristics of Mainline Protestantism, that have induced the constitution of «national churches» linked to diverse denominations, has established a cellular geopolitical structure that, even today, sustains a nationalistic understanding of the political role of such churches. It is true that many of these initially «national» protestant institutions are now international –i.e. Anglicanism– but the infrastructure of such international networks often remains linked to national denominational organizations that associate with an international infrastructure but can easily detach from such international affiliations. This cellular / nationalistic geopolitical orientation has been reinforced along the XXth century with the rise of the Ecumenical movement in which many Mainline Protestant churches have taken an active part.

The Evangelical movement, that derives from Mainline Protestantism as a transnational spiritual movement, presents a particularly interesting case within the horizon of our study. Born in many ways as a reaction against the doctrinal de-configuration of protestant movements and the social accent that numerous churches started to embrace, it had grown as a multi-denominational Christian religious trend with a clear conservative and moral orientation, together with a spiritual-subjective performance –in opposition with the social and institutional direction that many other Christian confessions assumed with the rise of industrialization and post-modernism.

One would think that the notable expansion of evangelical groups today –and their intensive use of media– would lead towards a corporative multinational geopolitical evolution of its diverse denominations. But precisely, due to its tendency towards a

vernacularization of its expansion process –where specific charismatic personal experiences mark the spiritual connection of the diverse groups– Evangelicalism has evolved into a cellular group of churches and denominations that exercise a cosmopolitan geopolitical influence. This means that, even though specific evangelical groups promote a local and spiritual-experiences-centred dynamic, their geopolitical influence is determined by conservative political interests in order to work the transformation of the world through an Anglo-Saxon understanding of individuality and economic progress.

In this perspective the influence of Evangelical groups around the world is not related to their geopolitical power (particularly when we consider that they are composed by numerous denominations and continuously changing groups) but to a transnational power based in the individual and his/her spiritual progress under the inspiration of different charismatic leaders that employ media in order to transmit their messages and also who seek to create the appropriate environment for a personal religious experience. Such dynamics tend to create a «culture of exception» within Evangelical church members for whom the political implications of faith regard the promotion of Evangelical-acquainted political environment against the cultural relativism of modernity.

3.6. CONCLUSION: CHRISTIAN GLOBALIZATION AND THE THEOLOGIES OF COMMUNICATION AND THEIR SOCIAL AND GEO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter of our dissertation we have presented the Christian religious tradition, probably the religions derived from the Abrahamic worldview that has had the most significant expansion, offering a broad development of identity and framing of media due to its global orientation, particularly during the last centuries. It is also a religious tradition that has influenced more directly the Western perception of communication regarding different levels, may they be social, communicational or theological.

The Christian communication tradition, as we have seen, is marked by the principle of incarnation and by a Trinitarian notion of relationship. Along its history and expansion, the Christian tradition will try to remain coherent with the principle of a transcendent god that does not confuse itself with his creation but who drives Christians towards mission and witness. It is because such a particular understanding of communication that the Christian religious tradition entails all kinds of mediation, specially due to the incarnate character of the central communicative experience between god and humanity that it professes. The development of such a principle will historically derive in different communication accents that have generated diverse attitudes towards media, old or new.

In the presentation of the different groups inherent to Christianity we have distinguished their main communicational characteristics, elements that affect their

geopolitical trends in the context of contemporary world settings. These groups are, basically, the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Catholic tradition, the Mainline Protestant tradition, the Evangelical tradition, and the Radical Protestant tradition. In essence we have stressed that:

–*The Eastern Orthodox tradition*, marked by a nationalist centred globalization process – that implies a strong centralized perception of authority and a tendency towards a recognition of boundaries linked to national identity– tend towards a more symbolic understanding of communication, centring its attention in the eschatological meaning of history and its meaning: media serve as means to a liturgical and symbolic understanding of god and humanity, where religious authority and tradition acquire a particular relevance in constructing a «symphonic» –agreeable accordance– relationship with political power. Communication and media are united in an effort to transmit divine glory, more than the essence of social and historical transformation. For centuries the Orthodox churches would ignore the importance of, for example, electronic media, in favour of a more liturgical transmission of religious experience. Thus, nation, authority and even ethnic identity acquire an important place in its geopolitical understanding of the world, a geopolitical trend that we define as «symphonic» and nationalistic.

–*The Catholic tradition* has had a particularly strong influence in the formation and development of Western cultures. It mainly followed a transnational process of globalization, and developed a more sacramental understanding of the world –that is, a perception of all things as a form of manifestation of the absolute in an imperfect manner– thus understanding media as a «medium» that serves as a transmitter of the divine message at different levels (theological, artistic, moral, etc.). For this trend of the Christian religious tradition media will not be at all strange, but would evolve as a necessary channel in order to understand divine communication with all its nuances, and make human communication more effective and coherent, an approach that would be particularly present during the Middle Ages. At the same time, due to this sacramental understanding of communication, it has generated a perceivable community of believers structured in a corporative and hegemonized political influence due to its centralized conception of authority and its tendency to submit geopolitical relations to a centralized administrative and spiritual structure represented at different levels around the world. Catholic geopolitics, then, derive from the principle that all realities retain a relationship with the triune god that relates with the world in a communicative manner. It is not surprising, then, that from all the Christian traditions, Catholicism is the one to have developed a clearer theological understanding of communication, the media, and the relationship of the church with its political entourage.

–Evan though divided into different derived confessions and numerically inferior to the Christian tradition, the *Protestant tradition* has had a meaningful influence in world cultures particularly since the advent of modernity, may it be regarding the way societies understand the purpose and meaning of humanity or the way media should be used in the public sphere. Founded in the importance of the individual's personal experience of the Bible and the faith that derives thereof, the Protestant Reformation generated a renewal within Christianity towards the personal experience of divine communication, mediated through music, preaching and the central role of the personal understanding and witness of the contents of the Bible. With time Protestantism would learn to use media – starting with the printing press– in order to perform its mission oriented towards a moral conversion of the individual thus proclaiming god's communication to mankind. The expansion of mainline Protestantism will entail the relationship between mainline protestant communities and national identities. Even though this national identities are plural, the paraenetic and networked form of communication will develop a more cellular –federated– and nationalistic geopolitical influence.

Within mainline Protestantism we find another trend of development marked a vernacular process of globalization that, at the same time, entails a more subjective and charismatic understanding of communication. Evangelical protestant communities, coherent with their «personal experience» orientation tend to form flexible local communities with a cosmopolitan identity, an element that marks their geopolitical influence, an influence linked to a more conservative understanding of divine communication and thus a tendency towards more conventional values, values that are often identified with political trends and parties.

Inside the first development of Protestantism itself we find an interesting and often forgotten trend of Protestantism called the «Radical Reformation» movement that developed a sober use of mediations, stressing the importance of a humble attitude towards god's word at all moments and an intimate experience of god's communication. These communities, that found their origins in central Europe, would constitute small vernacularised radical protestant groups, with a particular perspective of communication that insist in interiorizing the religious communicative experience to the point of making silence its natural environment. Geopolitically speaking these radical protestant communities have attained a cellular structure with an exclusivist approach to their environment (including the use of language) that at the same time defines their limited geopolitical influence. But at the same time their intimate approach to «vertical» divine communication has taken them to develop movements that have had, with time, a strong influence in other Christian denominations and political movements, like, for example,

pacifism, conscientious objection, and conflict management. The «silent» approach to god's message, according to this Christian trend, holds a meaningful geopolitical transcendence, even though such an influence is not always recognized.

The plural development and globalization of the Christian religious tradition and its diverse forms of understanding vertical ad horizontal communication have moulded Western thought and geopolitics, and will probably acquire more relevance if the area of «Media, Religion and Culture» undertakes the task of identifying, understanding and explaining the geopolitical consequences of such diverse forms of communicative action.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNICATION AND RELIGION IN THE MUSLIM TRADITION

After studying the elements of religious communication in the Christian and Jewish religious traditions, we will now face the same issue in relation with the third Monotheistic religion, that is, Islam. Coherent with the methodology we have followed until now, we start with and approach to the process of globalization of Islam and its geopolitical perspectives. We then expose the basis of what we could call a Muslim communication theology with its particular characteristics, basing our study in the Qur'anic tradition and afterwards in its major historical developments. Then we centre our attention in the implications of the Muslim theological models of communication, particularly in its relation to mass media and public opinion. Then, as in the precedent treatment of Judaism and Christianity, we offer some conclusions regarding Islamic globalization, the Muslim theologies of communication, and their Geopolitical consequences.

4.1. THE GEO-POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAM IN HISTORY

As it is commonly known, the Islamic era begins with the migration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. It was in Medina that Muhammad built a society on the basis of Islam, the new religion he had preached to a small number of Meccan followers as the final revelation in the Abrahamic tradition of monotheism. In the last years of his life, Muhammad conquered Mecca and unified the tribes of Arabia (Karch, 2006: 8). After his death in 632, his successors, the caliphs, fought the recalcitrant tribes in Arabia and conquered vast territories of the Persian and Roman Empires. The major step in the institutionalization of Islam after Muhammad's death was the establishment of the text of the Qur'an under the third caliph (Karch, 2006: 9).

The central event in the process of Muslim globalization started with its sacred text, the Qur'an. As Arjomand says,

«The canonization of the text of the Qur'an as the Word of God made Islam the religion of the book, even more than the other Abrahamic religions. As the literal Word of God, recited by his Prophet, the Qur'an was a holy scripture par excellence. Its transcendent authority made possible the development of sectarian and mystical variants of Islam that diverged in their interpretation of the faith from the mainstream. In addition to studying the Qur'an, several schools of pious learning began to collect and transmit the Traditions—reports of the sayings and deeds—of the Prophet. The influence of this pious religious learning on legal practice grew during the first two centuries of Islam. Consequently, the institution that emerged as the main embodiment of Islam by the end of its second century was neither a church, as in Christianity, nor a monastic system, as in Buddhism, but the Islamic law (sharia)» (Arjomand, 2003: 30).

Muslim law is essential in order to understand Islamic globalization and communication. The law became the central institution in Islam, as had been the case with rabbinic Judaism. The Islamic law was in principle based on the Qur'an, the Traditions of the Prophet, and the consensus of the jurists and remained, in Weber's terms, a «jurists' law» (Weber, 1930: 145). The jurists formed schools of law and engaged both in teaching students and in legal consultation. Their compiled opinions acquired the force of law. With the consolidation of Islamic law as the main institutional embodiment of Islam, the scholar-jurists, the ulema, emerged as its guardians and authoritative interpreters (Tibi, 2005: 12).

From this perspective, the contribution of sects and heterodoxies to social transformation in the Islamic civilization has been considerable. Modern historical scholarship of the past hundred years has significantly altered our picture of the expansion of Islam in the VIIth century and its penetration into the ancient societies that became part of a vast Arab empire of conquest (Karsh, 2006: 18).

As Karsh puts it,

«As a result of modern scholarship, we know that Islam, as distinct from Arab domination, was not spread swiftly by the sword but rather gradually and by popular missionary movements, often in defiance of the fiscal interest of the state. During the first three centuries of Islamic history, three important groups of sectarian movements—Kharijism, Murjiism (which later merged with mainstream Islam), and Shiism—played a very important role in the conversion of the non-Arab subjects of the empire to Islam» (Karsh, 2006: 19).

Some historians underline that the Arab confederate tribes that ruled a vast empire of conquest were not keen on the conversion of its subject populations. It was only with the Abbasid revolution -Islam's social revolution beyond Arabia in the mid-VIIIth century- that the universalist potential of Islam as a world religion of salvation was fully released from the superordinate interest of Arab imperial domination (Tibi, 2005: 22).

With the Abbasid revolution, a society based on the equality of Arab and non-Arab Muslims came into being. It was in this society and during the first century of Abbasid rule that the institutionalization of Islamic law was achieved. Meanwhile, from the mid IXth century onward, a movement known as Hanbalism sought to unify sundry traditionalist groups, first against philosophical and theological rationalism and later against Shiism (Karsh, 2006: 19).

Among the movements that account for the spread of Islam in the formative period, Hanbalism acted as an important force in the intensive penetration and consolidation of Islam among the urban population:

«[Hanbalism] opposed rationalism in matters of faith and insisted on the unconditional acceptance of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions as its unalterable scriptural fundamentals. Hanbalism can therefore be regarded as the prototype of Islamic fundamentalism. Furthermore, by branding sectarian movements as heretical, the Hanbalites accelerated the process of mutual self-definition between the sects and the mainstream» (Tibi, 2008: 14).

The mainstream Muslims increasingly came to see themselves as standing against all schism and division and advocating the unity of the Muslim community on the basis of the Tradition (*Sunna*) of the Prophet (that includes the Qur'an and the Sayings or *Hadiths* of Muhammad), hence the term Sunnism as the designation for the mainstream Islam (Karsh, 2006: 24).

In the subsequent centuries, however, the pattern of institutionalization of Islam through Islamic law showed its definite and rather rigid limits. Intensive Islamicization through the law could not facilitate Islam's missionary expansion, nor could it penetrate deeply into society. The mission to convert the population of the frontier and rural areas increasingly fell upon a new mass movement, Sufism (Islamic mysticism). In this line Karsh says:

«Popular Sufism became the instrument of the spread of Islam both into the geographic periphery of the Muslim world and into the lower ranks of Muslim society, especially in the rural areas. For centuries, popular Sufism offered a distinct variant of Islam that was in many ways the opposite of the scriptural fundamentalism of the Hanbalites. From the fifteenth century onward, popular Shiism adopted many of the practices of the Sufis such as the veneration of the holy imams and their descendants, in place of the Sufi saints, and pilgrimages to the shrines» (Karsh, 2006: 28).

Unfortunately the study of the different trends of Sufism in Muslim history still remains to be studied from a political and communicative perspective, an area that, without doubt, opens a necessary and interesting niche for the academic development of «Media, Religion and Culture» studies.

Following our historical account of Islamic globalization, we must underline that since the beginning of the early modern period, a number of Islamic movements have responded to the challenge of popular religiosity by advocating the revival or renewal (*tajdid*) of Islam by returning to the Book of God and the unspoiled Islam of the Prophet (Alawi, 2008: 79). These movements can be classified as orthodox reformism, since their aim was the reform and purification of religious beliefs and practices with close attention to the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition as the scriptural foundations of Islam.

An important movement grew from within the Hanbalite fundamentalist tradition in Arabia to take up this challenge of popular Sufism and Shiism in the XVIIIth century. It is

known as the Wahhabi movement, after its founder Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) who had visited Shiite Iran and had come into contact with popular Sufism in Arabia and considered both as disguised polytheism (Alawi, 2008: 23). His followers sacked the Shiite holy shrines in Iraq and destroyed the Sufi orders in Arabia. Wahhabi fundamentalism rejected popular religious practices as polytheistic and aimed at returning to the pure monotheism of early Islam with the cry «Back to the Book and the Tradition of the Prophet!» (Tibi, 2008: 17)

Since the XIXth century Islam has faced the political and cultural challenge of the West. The Muslim response to this challenge can be simplified into three main types of reaction: secularism, Islamic modernism, and Islamic fundamentalism. Tibi says that,

«Since World War II, this cultural and institutional response [of Islam] to Western domination has been deeply affected by an increasing vitality of Islam that has been firmly rooted in processes of social change. Throughout this time, the evolution of Islam as a universalist religion has continued. This evolution has been quite obvious in conversions to Islam in black Africa and Southeast Asia but much less obvious in the form of intensive penetration of Islam within Muslim societies» (Tibi, 2008: 20).

The vitality of Islam caused by the social change of the last half century had created major advantages for scriptural fundamentalism over Sufism in popular religion, with the consequence of greater penetration of scriptural Islam into the social lives of the Muslims (Roy, 2005: 7).

Three processes of social change have been conducive to a broad revival of religious activity throughout the Muslim world and encouraged the growth of orthodox reformist and scriptural fundamentalism. They are interrelated and overlap chronologically but can be separated for analytical purposes as urbanization; the growth of a religious public sphere with the development of transportation, communication, and the mass media; and the spread of literacy and education (Arjomand, 1986: 88). In addition, political change in the XXth century has had a tremendous impact on Islam.

Another point must be underlined in order to understand the globalization process of Islam: there is a strong historical connection between congregational religion and urban life in Islam (Gellner, 1981: 140). In its classic pattern, cities with their mosques and centres of religious learning have constituted centers of Islamic orthodoxy, while the tribal and rural areas were a superficially penetrated periphery. Movement from the tribal and rural periphery to the urban centres was associated with increasing religious orthodoxy and a more rigorous adherence to the central tradition of Islam. Ernest Gellner offers a description to this process:

«The scriptural, legalistic Islam of the ulema did not penetrate into rural areas where the Sufi holy men developed an alternative –a more personal and emotional– popular Islam. The puritanical, legalistic Islam of the cities would penetrate into the rural areas through the rise and fall of tribal dynasties from the periphery in alliance with puritanical ulema, making a “permanent reformation” a distinct feature of Islam. With the permanent concentration of the political life of modern states in the cities and the spread of literacy, the pace of this permanent reformation has been accelerated, and scriptural Islam has become accessible to groups in the rural periphery of Islamic societies without the mediation of Sufi holy men» (Gellner, 1981: 164).

This historical relationship between urbanization and the growth of scriptural Islam also holds for the period of rapid urbanization after World War II. In general, social dislocation –migration from villages to towns– is accompanied by increased religious practice and movements of religious revival (Alawi, 2008: 93). During the two decades preceding the Islamic revolution in Iran, the expanding urban centres of that country sustained an increasing vitality in religious activities: visits and donations to shrines and pilgrimages to Mecca greatly increased, while religious associations flourished among laymen, and the number of mosques per capita in the rapidly expanding Tehran doubled between 1961 and 1976 (Gellner, 1981: 170). A similar association between urban growth and increased religious activities such as spread of Qur’anic schools, religious activities of guilds, and growth of religious associations can be found throughout the Middle East and sub-Saharan Muslim Africa (Alawi, 2008: 94).

Considerable spread of literacy and expansion of higher education have occurred in all Muslim countries at the same time as rapid urbanization and have independently contributed to Islamic revivalist movements. An increase in the publication and circulation of religious books and periodicals, and the growth of Islamic associations in the universities are correlates of this process (Tibi, 2008: 122).

The growth of Islamic associations among university students throughout the Muslim world has been striking. It should be noted that university students and graduates in technical fields and the natural sciences predominate in these Islamic university associations. Physicians, pharmacists, engineers, and university students were assumed to be secular types but are now shown to be the backbone of Islamic fundamentalism (Tibi, 2008: 124).

Another important issue has influenced the Muslim globalization process: the advent of books, periodicals, and newspapers that creates a public sphere in which the literate members of society can participate (Alawi, 2008: 164). The institution of public debates and lectures adds to the vigor of activity in the public spheres; their boundaries are thus extended to include some of the semiliterate. It has long been taken for granted that

the enlargement of public spheres is conducive to the rise of socio-political movements. However, it is just as possible that it is the arrival of the communications media in conjunction with these spheres that gives rise to religious movements. This has been the case with many Islamic movements since the XIXth century (Roy, 2005: 143).

An interesting aspect of the phenomenon of Islamic activism among the intelligentsia is created by the recent expansion of education, as Tibi underlines. With urbanization and migration into metropolitan areas, many young people move from small towns and rural areas into the cities. There they attend universities and become Islamic activists in the newly expanding public sphere. The public sphere centres around universities, which are the scene of a new and highly politicized generation of students attracted to Islamic fundamentalism (Tibi, 2005: 112).

The process of globalization of Islam has shown important changes since World War II: continuous improvement and declining cost of transportation have greatly increased the number of pilgrims to Mecca, and of missionaries from Africa and Asia to the main centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East (Arjomand, 2003: 36).

It should be noted that this aspect of globalization reinforces Islam's old universalism institutionalized around the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). In fact, improved sea transportation since the XVIIth century had encouraged international contact among Muslims and stimulated transnational movements for orthodox reformism and renewal (*tajdid*). Ajomand asserts:

«The postcolonial era has witnessed massive immigration of Muslims into Western Europe and North America, where sizable Muslim communities are formed. Meanwhile, there has been unprecedented global integration of Muslims through the mass media. The media contributed to the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran by enabling the Iranian opposition abroad to orchestrate widespread mass mobilization inside of Iran. Khomeini's aides abroad and his followers in Iran were able to coordinate their nationwide protests by using telephone lines. Khomeini's revolutionary speeches were disseminated by cassettes through the networks of mosques and religious associations. The Persian program of the British Broadcasting Corporation sympathetically reported Khomeini's activities and proclamations, and these reports were avidly received by millions of households in Iran, to the dismay of the Shah and his political elite» (Ajomand, 2003: 37).

The international repercussions of the Salman Rushdie case also illustrate the impact of the media on a globally integrated Muslim world. The protests and burning of Rushdie's «Satanic Verses» by indignant Muslims began in Bradford, England. These were broadcast throughout the world and stimulated violent protests in Pakistan, which were in turn broadcast internationally (Roy, 2005: 113).

The effects of globalization on Islam are interpreted in different manners. Eickelman (1998) sees the combined effect of globalization, the growth of education, and vigorous discussion of Islam in books and public debates as the making of an Islamic reformation. According to Eickelman, «the Islamicization of social life has been far-reaching but also dispersed, lacking any focus or single thrust» (Eickelman, 1998: 83).

An important feature of Muslim globalization is the unfolding of anti-global sentiments in particularistic, cellular, variety-producing movements that seek local legitimacy but nevertheless have a global frame of self-reference. Global integration induces Muslims to emphasize their unique identity within their own frames of reference, that is, cultures that can be at once universal and local (Tibi, 2008: 182).

There can be no doubt that global integration has made many Muslims seek to appropriate universalist institutions by what might be called Islamic cloning. We thus hear more and more about «Islamic science», «Islamic human rights», and «the Islamic international system» (Arjomand, 2003: 38).

There are also a variety of organizations modeled after the United Nations and its branches, most notably the «Organization of the Islamic Conference», which was founded in 1969 and whose last meeting in Tehran in December 1997 was attended by representatives of the fifty-five member countries, including many Muslim heads of state (Alawi, 2008: 203). This phenomenon is a direct result of globalization. According to our understanding, to confuse it with fundamentalism is a grave mistake. It is, however, a reactive tendency, since it corresponds more to a cosmopolitan movement that takes place within cellular nucleus of Muslim communities and identities.

The dynamics of Islam as a universalist religion therefore includes a fundamentalist trend, but alongside many other trends that have been reinforced by some of the contemporary processes of social change, including globalization. Islam also has acquired a new and sharply political edge under the impact of political modernization.

It would be misleading, however, to speak simply of a shift from universalism to fundamentalism. For one thing, missionary traditional Islam continues to flourish and has adopted modern technology to its growth, as we shall see later on in this chapter. More important, the main impact of globalization on the Islamic world has not been the growth of fundamentalism but what we call a form counter-universalism called «cosmopolitanism». Fundamentalism can reasonably be characterized as selectively modern and electively traditional: it is therefore assimilative despite its intention.

Geopolitically speaking, the assimilative character of defensive cosmopolitanism is more pronounced. It has already resulted in the assimilation of universal organizational forms and of universal ideas such as human rights and rights for women. It is difficult to

escape the conclusion that, despite its intent, cosmopolitanism is inevitably a step toward the modernization of the Islamic tradition.

4.2. THE BASIS OF A MUSLIM COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY

The presentation of the Geopolitical development of Islam allows us to understand Muslim communication dynamics better. One of the difficulties that one finds when trying to systemize theological ideas in Islamic thought is the fact that, for Islamic theology, the basic theological system is the Qur'an, a highly un-systematic text. So if we want to be faithful to the spirit of Islamic thought we must approach the foundations of Muslim communication theology through its main theological synthesis, that is through the dispersed elements present in the Qur'an.

The literary form of the Qur'an and its canonical structure are neither historical nor systematic. It presents a non-linear narrative structure, in which different elements continually recur but in different arrangements and in different literary forms. Due to its particular narrative form, the study of specific issues in the Qur'an requires more of a semantic analysis than a narrative analysis, precisely because the Qur'anic *weltanschauung* is revealed more in the «sense» of its contents than in its formal expression (Izutsu, 2002: 17).

In Islam revelation means that God «spoke», that he revealed himself through language, and that, not in some mysterious non-human language, but in a clear humanly understandable language. Without this initial act of God, there would have been no true religion on earth according to the Islamic understanding of religion (Saeed, 2006: 29.).

Within the Qur'anic context revelation has two different but equally important aspects. One of them concerns it being a «speech» (*kalam*) concept, in the narrow technical sense of the term «speech» as distinguished from «language» (*lisan*) (Izutsu, 2002: 164). The other has to do with the fact that of all the cultural languages that were available at that time the Arabic language was chosen by God by design and not by accident as the means of divine speech.

The main communicative principle behind the Muslim comprehension of revelation could be resumed like this: God has spoken to mankind along history, but has revealed himself through his word, the Qur'an, transmitted through his prophet, Muhammad. The Qur'an constitutes God's word, and Muhammad represents the highest example for those who have answered to God's call. For this reason the «words» of the Qur'an are considered sacred in themselves (in their Arabic version), and the conduct of the Prophet is considered, not as a revelation in itself, but as a clear guide to all Muslim faithful in order to understand how to act according to God's word. For this reason the Hadith (literally «narration», that constitutes, as we indicated above, an oral tradition relevant to the actions and customs of

the Prophet of Islam) occupy an important place, together with the Qur'an, in the Muslim understanding of revelation.

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith –called also the *Sunnah* (literally «trodden path») of the Prophet, a somehow flexible term that indicates the example of Muhammad for the Muslim community– are the basic elements of the *sharia'* (literally «way»), the dynamic body of the Islamic religious law that constitutes, not a codified set of laws, but a system of devising laws based in the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, and the discussions and discernment of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The *sharia'* seeks at the same time to preserve and to adjourn the rightful behavior of Muslim faithful in all levels of existence, guiding them towards the path marked by god's revelation in the Qur'an and in his prophet's behavior, thus sustaining a tension between the revealed divine law and its adjournment in history.

Muslims see the Qur'an as the culmination of a series of divine messages that started with those revealed to Adam –regarded, in Islam, as the first prophet– and including the *Suhuf-i-Ibrahim* («Scrolls of Abraham»), the *Tawrat* (Hebrew Torah), the *Zabur* (the Psalms), and the *Injil* (Gospel). This historical revelation has taken place through different prophets (*nabi*) and messengers (*rasul*), always safeguarding the absolute transcendence of God and the creaturalty of human beings.

The distinction between a «prophet» and a «messenger» in the Qur'anic revelation is significant: a messenger (*rasul*) delivers a divine message that is imperative for all human kind (god's word), while the prophet (*nabi*) delivers only warnings to humans on their sinful ways and of the judgement that they will face. All messengers are prophets, but not all prophets are messengers. Because Muhammad delivers the perfect and complete form of the word of God (the Qur'an), God will send no further prophets or messengers: the Qur'an itself stands as a warning and a call to return to the service of God (Tottoli, 1999).

Having presented the main elements behind the Muslim comprehension of revelation, we can move now to the issue of divine-human communication. The Qur'anic worldview shows that there are two chief types of mutual understanding between God and man: one is linguistic (through the use of a human language common to both parties, concretely Arabic) and the other one is non-verbal (through the use of natural signs on the part of God). The initiative is always taken by God himself, demanding a «response» from the human part of the phenomenon.

When we approach what we could call the Muslim structure of communication from a Qur'anic-theological perspective, we find ourselves with two major trends: one is centred in the in the concept of «sign» (*âyat*) and the other one in the concept of «guidance» (*hadâ*) (Waardenburg, 2002: 62; Izutsu, 2002: 166). They both respond to the same principle of communication inherent to the Qur'anic worldview approached from different angles, and

are not contradictory. The two models are important in order to understand both the basis of Muslim communication theology and the implications of such a theology in the modern media world.

4.2.1. The «Sign-based» Theological Model of Communication

From the Qur'anic perspective of revelation god has revealed himself to human kind through «signs» (*âya*). These signs are present in three hierarchical levels (Waardenburg, 2002: 62; Izutsu, 2002: 166).

The first and most important «signs» are present in the Qur'an (Waardenburg, 2002: 62). They correspond to every verse of the holy text, that is understood as god's «recitation». The fact is that the Arabic term for a verse of the Qur'an is precisely *âya*, and each verse is indeed seen by Muslims as a sign through which people are linked to what theologians call the «Word of God». The ability to understand these signs becomes a means of distinguishing between believers and non believers: the latter declare them to be false, while believers recognise these *âyat* to be miracles. We must remember that Muslims recognize the whole of the «recitation» of Qur'an by Muhammad as the Prophet's «miracle», revealing truths that otherwise would have remained unknown and that must be considered as of divine origin.

The second type of signs of divine origin correspond to the signs (*âyat*) of nature that refer back to the creator. This means that, from a Qur'anic perspective, natural phenomenon is no longer a natural phenomenon: it is a «sign» of god. We must remember that all along the history of Islam this principle will justify the Muslim interest in nature, medicine, astronomy and the sciences in general: the scientist is, in the end, he who contemplates the signs of God.

The third type of divine signs are the signs of history, in particular the miracles confirming the veracity of the various prophets and the punishments of non believers that serve as warning «signs» to later generations.

These three categories of «signs» –revelation, nature and history– are eventually signs of divine mercy toward creation, sustained not only by god's mercy, but also equipped with the proper «signs» as to how it should continue to exist: they specify the rules that provide the order that god wants for his creation (Izutsu, 2002: 142).

This particular approach to god's communication under the form of «signs» presents god, the origin of the communicative action with humanity, as a «signifier» *par excellence* (Waardenburg, 2002: 62). Such a perspective has specific consequences: the unity of creation reveals the oneness of god (*tawhîd*). God reveals his mercy and compassion by

sending his signs and thus guiding humankind and creation through them. The response of humans to the «signs» through which the creator is recognized must be *islam*, that literally means «surrendering oneself» (to God), –that with time becomes a «religion» (*din*)– accepting its truth (*tasdiq*). This way *islam* constitutes the outward «sign» of conversion to god, that should require a simultaneous act of faith (*imam*). The human response could also be negative, thus producing a rejection as something false (*takdhib*), and later on to disbelief (*kufr*) (Izutsu, 2002: 146-149).

To put it in other words, according to the Muslim «sign» model of communication, the human response to god’s given signs should be that of obedience to god’s will as contained in the religious laws that the major prophets conveyed to humankind. To give a shape to this response, one should join the community of such a prophet: the whole of social and individual life should be brought into obedience to god. Over all the communities, the one that follows Prophet Muhammad, the *umma*, is considered as the best and the nearest to god’s will. In this perspective, the first *umma*, that of Muhammad and his early successors, has a particular relevance.

The sign-based model we have just described presents a somehow rational approach to god’s communication to humanity –or «vertical» communication- based in a clear theology of history (where the revelation of the Qur’an is seen as the culmination of god’s communicative will), and where the recognition of god’s communication through three levels of signs leads to the human answer of surrendering to Islam and its ideal community. From a communication theology perspective we could say that this model has its center in human reason, and points towards the formation of a perfect *umma*, that exists in the ideal *umma* of the prophet of Islam.

4.2.2. The «Guidance-based» Model of Communication

The second model of communication present in the Qur’an is what we call the «guidance-based» model. It is directly linked to the «sign» model that we have presented above, but it stresses particular aspects of the Muslim perception of divine revelation. We could say that, while the «sign» model has a more phenomenological input, the «guidance-based» model stresses the moral and geopolitical aspects of communication.

One of the features of this second communication model is that its articulation is done in terms of a set of concepts which, unlike those used in the first system, have apparently nothing to do with communication (Izutsu, 2002: 150). The central concept in this model is, as its name shows, «guidance» (*hudâ*). This would imply that God’s act of sending down his revelation (mainly through his *ayât* or «signs») is, according to the Qur’anic view,

just the same thing as sending his guidance: the «signs» (*ayât*) are but the concrete expression of the divine intention to guide mankind to the right path.

The term «guidance» in the Qur'an is signified by many words (for example *sabîl*, *sîrât*, *tarîq*, etc.; see suras 2,14; 3, 94; 7, 42-43; 72, 6, 154; 14-15; 23,76; 7, 143.). As a concept it has a pre-islamic origin, and was known in pre-Qur'anic Arab as knowing a «way» towards a destination, a very important term if we consider the meaning of geographical orientation in the Arabic peninsula desert. But in the Qur'an the semantic field of «way» and «guidance» acquires a deep symbolic meaning: it transposes the entire conceptual field from the material level of thinking to the religious level of thinking. It spiritualizes it, and makes the metaphorical system, as we shall see, the very basis on which to build up a religious understanding of guidance (Izutsu, 2002: 157).

According to this model the field of divine communication is viewed from the standpoint of «foreordination» (*qadâ wa qadar*), in direct connection with the problem of the huge ontological distance between god and man. Just as in the first model man could choose either between truth (*tasdîk*) or rejection (*takdhîn*), that lead correspondently to belief (*imam*) or disbelief (*kufr*), so in the second system: man can choose either to «follow guidance» (*ih tadâ*) or «go out of the right path» (*dalla*), thus choosing the way to the «heavenly garden» (*janâat*) or to hell (*jahannam*) (Waardenburg, 2002: 69).

But this second model presents the problem of human freedom. From the Qur'anic understanding of «guidance», everything that happens on this earth is due ultimately to god's will, to his *guidance*: a man that chooses the right way (*ih tadâ*) preferring it to the wrong path (*dalla*), or who veers away from the right path by choosing *dalâl*, is not, in reality, choosing anything for himself by himself. His very act of responding to divine guidance in either way is the necessary result of god's will, as Qur'an 6, 39 affirms («Whomsoever God will, He makes him go astray, and whomsoever He will, He sets him on a straight path»). Everything would have seemed to be already fixed and decided from the very beginning.

The issue of pre-determined divine guidance presents serious difficulties when we try to outline a Muslim communication theology: if god's will determines human liberty, there would be no communication through revelation, but only divine supervision. It is true that the Qur'an itself does not insist in the problem of predestination, since it presents, in its literary form, a mixture of semantic systems. But the issue will lead to a long discussion all along the history of Islam, both in the area of theology (*kalam*) and philosophy (*falsafa*).

The guidance-based model of communication that we have described is centred, not in human reason –like the signed-based model–, but in god and his will to guide humanity through his communicative act. Moral aspects are at its base, and theology of history finds a

minor place: god's communication with humanity and human response to it seem to be united in a tension that, somehow, dissolves history in god's determined action over human behaviour, and suggest a human global *umma* as the only possible solution to history.

We shall see how both models, the sign-based and the guidance-based, have had a strong influence in the development of what we could call the foundation of the praxis of Islamic communication and its geopolitical outcomes.

4.2.3. The Major Historical Developments of Muslim Communication Theology

There has been no effort, to our learning, on behalf of Muslim scholars or non-Muslim islamologists, to describe an «Islamic communication theology» from a historical perspective in a western language. But the development of Islamic thought, specially through its expansion and its contact with other cultures and with modernity, allows us to point some crucial moments that may contribute to the fulfilment of this necessary task, and that will help us to understand the specific implications of Muslim communication theology in the second half of our essay.

As we have pointed out above, the Qur'an offers two complementary models of communication between god and human kind. Along the history of Islam two new models were developed, always in relation with the Qur'anic ones.

After the death of Muhammad the *umma* had to face two particular problems regarding communication theology. The first was how to perpetuate the message given by Muhammad after his death, remaining faithful to its main ideas in the context of generations that didn't know the Muslim Prophet personally. The second problem was the propagation of the Qur'anic message outside the *umma*, updating its contents and meanings in a new cultural and geographical context that went beyond the Arab world. This last problem became even more significant with the fast expansion of Islam into non Arab regions, particularly under the first successors of the Prophet.

In order to understand the Muslim response to these problems and the models of communication derived from them, we must first look at the theological distinction on the possibility of revelation from god to human kind that determined specific aspects of the Muslim understanding of what we call a communication theology between god and human beings: revelation implies (1) that both parts should have the same language, and (2) that both parts should belong to the same category of being (Waardenburg, 2002: 74).

The first issue is easily resolved: god has chosen to reveal his word in Arabic, the language spoken by Muhammad and his people. The second issue, however, has disturbed

Muslim thinkers along history. Is the lack of equality between god and man a limit to divine revelation?

Muslim theological traditions resolved the dilemma pointing two solutions: either the hearer should undergo a deep personal transformation under the overwhelming influence of the spiritual force of the divine speaker, or the speaker should come down and assume somehow the attribute of the hearer. Al-Kirmânî, a persian-isma'ili scholar (996-1021) offers a synthesis of the Muslim response to these difficulties: both cases actually occurred to Muhammed. He was transformed under the influence of god, and god's angel (*Gabril*) spoke to him, a form of «divine transmitter» that somehow assumed elements of the hearer. Through this approach, the problem of divine absolute «otherness» and uniqueness, and the question of man's creatural status, at least from a Muslim perspective, is resolved (Walker, 1999: 48-50).

Going back to the problems faced by the historical and geographical expansion of Islam, we could say that the difficulty on how to perpetuate the «revelation» transmitted by Muhammad was faced with the establishment of the official text of the Qur'an, the analysis and codification of the Sunna in the Hadiths (the «traditions» of Muhammad's deeds and sayings, together with those of his first disciples), and in the theo-political importance of the caliphate. In this context the Muslim traveler and social philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) would explain the meaning of an important term regarding Muslim communication: the *tabligh* or «transmission», a term referring to the dissemination and diffusion of some principle, belief or practice in space and time, within a specific group. In his *Muqaddimah* (normally translated as «Introduction to History») Khaldun underlines the importance of «triumphal transmission» (*tabligh*) and group cohesion as the fundamental factors in the rise of world powers and large communities (Ibn Khaldun, 1967: 123-127).

Tabligh is a pre-Qur'anic Arabic word that means «to reach out», «to make known» or «to publicise». Its main meaning is rooted in the oral and social traditions characteristic of Islamic societies (Gilliot, 2000: 2264). After the appearance of Islam the term is understood as making Islam's message known to people, particularly Muslims. It is like a movement that seeks to inspire everybody to do virtuous acts, and refrain from doing misdeeds and to follow the path of Islam with coherence. It corresponds to the Qur'anic idea that Allah has sent prophets in different times for *tabligh* and in the absence of prophets, the responsibility is believed to have been devolved upon the effort of the *umma* and its leaders.

Khaldun explains the term facing the theo-political difficulty that came from the «degeneration» of Muslim rulers –a reality widely proven in Islamic history since the last «well guided caliphs», in the VII century, and the decadency of different Muslim dynasties in

diverse geographical areas– and giving the theoretical basis for the renovation of Islamic societies through a «return» to the primitive bases of Islam, that is the first Muslim community, and not its historical deterioration. The principle of *tabligh*, then, calls not only for a «transmission» of the message of Islam, but for its renovation in reference to a «return» to the primitive *umma*, idealized in many ways (Ibn Khaldun, 1967: 148-149).

We must remember that the concept of *tabligh* has inspired many modern Muslim movements. The «Tablighi Jamaat», for example, was founded in the late 1920s by the Deobandi cleric Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (1885-1944) in the Mewat province of India. The group originally started out with the aim of being a non political movement, with the main aim being to work at the grass roots level reaching out to Muslims across the economic and social spectrum (Moosa – Tareen, 2015: 210).

The other problem related to the Muslim understanding of communication from a theological perspective in the propagation of the Qur’anic message outside the *umma*. How to deal with the people belonging to non Arabic cultures that became a part of the Islamic expansion in a very short period of time and for various centuries? Another important term appears here: the concept of *da’wa*. Literally *da’wa* could be translated into «call» or «invitation». When used in the Qur’an it generally refers to god's invitation to live according to his will (Canard, 1960: 168-170; Omar, 2003: 178-179). Thus when used in the first centuries of Islam it increasingly referred to the content of that message and was sometimes used interchangeably with *sharia’* (law) and *din* (religion). It also described the duty to actively encourage fellow Muslims in the pursuance of greater piety in all aspects of their lives, a definition which has become central to contemporary Islamic thought. Some Hadith indicate that the exercise of *da’wa* is the first of three «courses of action» to be undertaken in attempting to avoid war with polytheistic enemies (Muslim, 2000, Book 19, n. 4294). But basically its meaning regards the area of divine or «vertical» communication: it is the Muslim call to believe in god, in the sense of the invitation addressed to men by god and the prophets to believe in the «true religion» that, for Muslims, is Islam.

Besides the strictly religious meaning, historically the concept of *da’wa* developed also into a socio-political term related to the adherence to the structures set up by a person or organization linked to an authoritative person or family. As Lapidus explains,

«Its use in Fatimid Egypt took to the creation of an institutional figure called the *da’i* who had the function of propagating the teachings of the Ismaili that governed the region. Such a propagandist had to have specific religious and political capabilities. Since that moment, the meaning of the term developed in contrast with *di’aya* that mostly refers to non religious propaganda, and indicates the act of “communicating” Islamic faith. From here different Muslim *da’wa* movements started to develop. The Fatimids themselves, who established a Arab Shi’a dynasty

that ruled over varying areas of the Maghreb, Egypt, and the Levant from 910 to 1171, were reputed to exercise a degree of religious tolerance towards non-Isma'ili sects of Islam as well as towards Jews and Coptic Christians (Lapidus, 2002: 283-287).

Related to these definitions, we find today the link between *da'wa* and communication sciences: in modern Arabic, *da'wa* is directly linked to the concept of communication. Departments of information in Arab-Muslim countries are usually called *kulliyat al-da'wa wal-'ilam*, and a professor of communication is called *ustadh al-da'wa* ("master" of *da'wa*) (Poston, 1992: 124).

We can say that religiously *da'wa* implies the fundamental dependence of persons and society on divine assistance and indicates the call, made on behalf of divine authority, to accept the religion revealed to assist humanity. Geopolitically, *da'wa* implies the recognition of a particular socio-political authority and leadership that enjoys transcendental legitimacy in a territory. From the perspective of modern communication sciences, it means the exercise of communicating in a very broad sense.

The act of *da'wa* has, as we can see, an important communicative dimension. It is largely achieved through preaching and thus the communication of fundamental teachings that are to be accepted as true.

The two historical realities we have discussed (the fidelity to god's original message within the *umma* and its propagation outside the Islamic community) and their communicational response (*tabligh* and *da'wa*) constitute, to our understanding, two important paradigms in Muslim communication theology even today.

4.3. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE MUSLIM THEOLOGICAL MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

To this point we have tried to describe the two semantic spheres or «models» that make up communication theology in the Qur'an, and the key points in the historical development of the concept of divine communication in the development of Muslim communication theology.

The two Qur'anic models of communication, even though complementary, indicate a tension between the human capacity to «respond» to divine revelation (the «sign-based» model) and the divine will to guide humanity to the right response to god's revelation (the «guidance-based» model). In Islamic history this tension, that we could call «vertical» (it regards God in one side and humanity in the other) has produced, as we have seen, another tension, that we could call «horizontal». It regards the «update» of god's message in an effort of fidelity within the Muslim community or *umma* towards its ideal origins (*tabligh*) and, thus, returning to the original divine message, an the renewal of God's message,

certainly in the context of the *umma*, but as an effort to expand it to those that do not believe in it, that is, outside the *umma* (*da'wa*).

This «vertical» and «horizontal» tension present in Islamic communication theology – that is between man and God's transcendent oneness, and between a return to the original message as lived by the first *umma* and an effort to spread and renew God's message outside the *umma* – has, as we will see, diverse consequences in the Islamic understanding of communication and its theological implications.

4.3.1. Arabic Language and Arabic Culture: the Basics of Muslim Communication

Before entering into the direct consequences of the principles of Muslim communication regarding mass media, we need to underline the particularity of Arabic language within Islamic culture. Arabic language is not just important because it is the language for the Qur'an, but also because it is the language of a good part of the population. But, at the same time, the globalization of Islam arrived to several regions that did not speak Arabic. For this reason we need to dedicate some time in order to understand better this significative aspect of Muslim communication.

4.3.1.1. Arabic: the Language of Islam

Without doubt Arabic is the language of Islam. It is the language in which, according to Muslim belief, God spoke to the Arabs and through them to the whole world; the language in which the revelation of preceding eras was renewed and transmitted pure and complete to all humanity: «The Beneficent hath made known the Qur'an. He hath created Man. He hath taught him [clear] utterance» (Qur'an, sura 55, verses 1-4); «And we never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them» (sura 14, verse 4). The Qur'an is «the revelation of the Lord of the world, which the True Spirit hath brought down, in plain Arabic speech» (sura 26, verses 192-3, 195).

Arabic, which was carried by the Islamic conquerors beyond the peninsula, was at first only the language of the army and the small ruling class of officers and governors. For the time being, the government apparatus of the conquered empires remained in use as did Persian and Greek, the official languages of the Sasanian and Byzantine bureaucracies. Through the government reforms of the Umayyad caliph, 'Abd al-Malik (685-705), Arabic became the official administrative language of the empire in the 690s. The sources describe this event in the following story:

«In Syria the Diwiin ['list', 'state register' of those receiving salaries and of the land tax; in a wider sense, the government financial administration] was written in Greek - until the government of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, who in the year 81 [700 AD] changed it [to Arabic]. The cause of this was that one of the Greek scribes had to write something and since he could find no water [to moisten the ink powder], he urinated into the ink pot. 'Abd al-Malik heard about it and had him punished; and he orderd Sulayman ibn Sa'd to translate the Diwiin. The latter asked him to allocate him (the proceeds of) the land tax of the province of Jordan for one year. That was granted, and before a year was up he had completed the translation and handed it over to 'Abd al-Malik. The caliph called his secretary Sergius to him and presented him with the work; the latter was filled with grief and left him full of sorrow outside, for God had taken this job away from him» (Al-Baladhuri, 1866: 193).

Similar incidents are recorded from the Iranian provinces which were governed from Iraq. Yet it was not until the influx and the urbanisation of the Arab tribes and the Islamicisation of the non-Arab population that the indigenous local languages of the Near East were gradually suppressed (Suleiman, 2003: 42).

The indigenous languages did not die out everywhere; they remained alive in places where the immigration and settlement of Arab tribes after the invasions of the conquering armies were on a small scale only. This ,was the case, for example, in Iran (with Persian), in the Caucasus (Armenia) and in North Africa (the languages of the Berber tribes in the Atlas and to the south of the mountain ranges) (Bassiouney, 2009: 31).

In the whole of the Islamic empire, however, Arabic became the language of Islamic government and of classical Islamic culture. As Suleiman says,

«As the language of the Koran given by God [Arabic] was the language of the worship of God, of law and of jurisprudence. As the language of the pre-Islamic poets (who had created from tribal dialects the common language of Arabic, on which the Koran itself drew) it became the language of literature. Finally, as the language of administration, it became the language of the urban political and economic centres. In a word, the language of the exercise of political power».
(Sleiman, 2003: 47)

The language of the Arab conquerors thus became a means of social emancipation for everyone who in a narrow or wider sense wanted to have a say. This remained the case even when under the Abbasids, from the end of the VIIIth century onwards, more and more representatives of the conquered peoples who had converted to Islam took part in the political life of the empire, above all at first the Iranians. Suleiman asserts:

«These peoples (called in Arabic *shu'ab*; from where the name *Shu'abiyya* applied to the social and literary movement of the non-Arabs in the IXth century comes) sought equality and indeed superiority through the medium of the Arabic language. Together with the Arabs who had begun to adopt the culture of their Hellenistic surroundings, they began to translate and develop the antique scientific heritage.

Thus Arabic became the language of the sciences in the East after the demise of the Greek and Syriac-Aramaic used by the Christians. One of the great men of Islamic science, al-Birfini (973-1050) who was born in Khwarazm (western Central Asia), was able to write that he would rather be scolded in Arabic than praised in Persian». (Suleiman, 2003: 53)

The language of the Qur'an permeated all spheres and became themes and forms of its poetry and the style of its prose left a profound influence even in places where political autonomy had once again encouraged respect for, and official use of, the local languages of the provinces.

Arabic belongs to the Semitic group of languages. Three large linguistic families can be distinguished in the Semitic group (Bassiouney, 2009: 20):

(1) Babylonian and Assyrian in ancient Mesopotamia (North-east Semitic);

(2) Canaanite -Hebrew, Phoenician -and Aramaic in the Western Orient (North-west Semitic);

(3) North Arabian -from the Islamic period Arabic proper; the old 'South Arabian' of the south- west borderlands (until the sixth century), and Ethiopian, which is cognate with it (South-west Semitic).

These are all closely linked by numerous common elements of phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax. These links are so close that it is plausible to postulate a common origin (Bassiouney, 2009: 21).

The sedentary Arab tribes of the northern border states used dialects of Aramaic, the old *lingua franca* of the Near East (as did for example the Nabataeans of the Arab state of Petra and Basra from the first century B.C.E. to the IIIrd century C.E.). Much less well-attested is the language of the North Arabian Bedouin before Islam, known only through a few inscriptions. Suleiman underlines that

«It seems clear that North Arabian before and after the appearance of Islam was spoken in different regional dialects. The language of the Koran also contains peculiarities which were characteristic of the dialect of the Jijaz. On the other hand, it was also important for the subsequent development of Arabic that the language of poets who came together at the festivals and markets connected with the shrines (for example at Mecca) and who there lauded in song the glory and fame of their tribes, converged in the course of the sixth century into a common 'high language'». (Suleiman, 2010: 56)

But the original form of this tongue can no longer be postulated with any certainty (Bassiouney, 2009: 23). Pre-Islamic poetry was transmitted orally, occasionally written down but only codified and collected in the form that is preserved for us now by Islamic philologists. It must be supposed that in these poetry collections the normative influence of

the Qur'an was always at work and that some texts were tampered with in this process.

Suleiman underlines that

«There is no doubt that there was one significant phenomenon for the future development of the language: Muhammad could draw on the common language of the poets and of the pagan seers. This was an important factor in the spreading of the Islamic message and in its impact. The authority of the Koran itself established a norm for language from that time onwards. From the time of the early Umayyads, i.e. from the end of the seventh century, grammarians and Koranic experts made strenuous efforts to establish the '*Arabiyya*, the pure Arabic language in accord-languages». (Suleiman, 2003: 47)

To counteract the linguistic effects of the turbulent social change caused by the immigration and mixing of Arab tribes in the course of the conquests, by their settlement and by their living in garrisons and cities both together and with non-Arabs, efforts were made to promote the pure language of the Bedouin dialects. Where the Qur'an displayed phonetic features of the dialect of Mecca its pronunciation was assimilated to the eastern dialects. Thus a common Arabic literary language arose, namely «classical» Arabic, which has maintained its integrity according to the laws of normative grammar until the present day (Bassiouney, 2009: 18).

The literary language was therefore conservative from the beginning, a reality that would affect the development of political and mostly religious communication in Islamic cultures:

«[Arabic] was an expression of united faith and centralised government. It was also the code of a social hierarchy. Non-Arabs (for example the *mawali* who had become free Muslims through conversion) only reached the top of that hierarchy when they adopted this literary language as their own». (Suleiman, 2003: 49)

We must remember, though, that the development of the living popular language continued rapidly:

«Different linguistic sub-strata of the population and differences of geographical and ethnic structure led, not least in the Arabic spoken by the conquerors, to the formation of different and increasingly independent dialects, above all in the provinces far from the metropolis. At no point was the high language in its "classical" form spoken in daily life even by scholars, and inevitably it became separated by a widening gap from the dialects of the everyday language». (Bassiouney, 2009: 22)

This process had its repercussions on the literary language. They first manifested themselves in the spheres of writing which were not religious and legal literature (subjected

to strict grammatical rules) – like poetry, artistic prose, philological– in the literature of the Greek sciences, in the works of authors from the Christian and Jewish minorities, and in private letters (Bassiune, 2009: 23).

But after a long phase of stagnation, Arab nationalism in the last hundred years has also promoted linguistic purism at the price of being unable to express concepts in the spheres of modern science and technology, and without, on the other hand, being able to stop the influx of vocabulary and linguistic patterns from European languages (Suleiman, 2003: 125).

Thus the Arabic language throughout Islamic history has been characterised by the gap between the written language (which is used orally only in sermons and speeches and in learned discourse, as for example on the radio today) and the different dialects. The Arabic literary language has remained to this day the unifying bond of the Arab Islamic world, and thus its privileged vehicle of communication.

The most important major groupings of the innumerable local dialects are the Bedouin dialects of Central and North Arabia, the dialectal group of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and the wide spectrum of Maghribi (the dialects of North-west Africa) which have been influenced in a particular way by contact with the Berber languages. Within individual regions, too, the dialects of special social groups in cities, amongst sedentary rural dwellers, and the Bedouin, vary (Bassiune, 2009: 143).

When in the year 1301 the Mamluk army put down a rebellion of Egyptian rural origin, the peasants and the Bedouin (who had united in an alliance which threatened the regime) could be distinguished by their dialect. Today, growing social homogeneity and mobility of population are gradually leading to a certain linguistic convergence; education and the media are beginning to remove regional differences, above all of vocabulary, bringing the literary and popular language closer together. But the basis of Arab unity still remains the *'Arabiyya*, the language of the Qur'an, an important factor in the religious, cultural and political spheres (Suleiman, 2003: 164).

4.3.1.2. The Other Languages of Islam

Even though Arabic gained a central place in Muslim territories, the declining political power of the caliph and the disintegration of the empire after the emergence of provincial rulers with certain autonomy lead towards new cultural developments. National languages became once again the languages of the court.

For example, Iranian dynasties relied on the traditions of Iranian kingship, promoted Persian literature at their courts and once again used Persian in their government chanceries. Suleiman resumes the process saying that:

«The language of the Sasanian empire (Pahlavi, “middle Persian”, to be distinguished from the Old Persian of the Achaemenid period), which was still the language of government in the east under the first caliphs, was used after the official introduction of Arabic only in the religious traditions of the Zoroastrians. In the meantime, the Persian colloquial language experienced a very gradual development which had begun in the late Sasanian period and was accelerated when under Arab domination the vernacular was liberated from the bonds of a conservative literary language. The disappearance of morphology, the emergence of dialectal peculiarities (above all in Eastern Iran), and the adoption of Arabic elements characterised the “New Persian” which emerged in this way. As a literary language (the script was now the Arabic one) it appeared first in places where the first independent Islamic Iranian states emerged, like in Khurasan, and still surviving tradition of poetry, heroic epic and didactic and entertaining tales, and it maintained constant dialogue with the mature poetic and stylistic traditions of Arabic». (Suleiman, 2009: 66)

Under the heavy influence of Persian, which in its turn passed on the Arabic script and Arabic vocabulary, there developed at the same time –away from the big cities– the Islamic variant of the modern Indian literary language: Urdu. In accordance with the Muslim religion, the Arabic-Persian linguistic and literary heritage –again transmitting the Arabic script– spread from India into Indonesia. It was influential above all in the Malay language of the Islamic kingdom of Malacca (late XIVth-XVth centuries) and of the sultanate of Atjeh in Sumatra (XVIth-XIXth centuries) (Suleiman, 2003: 28).

The language of the Kurds in the mountains of Western Persia, Iraq and eastern Anatolia must also be mentioned briefly: the fate of Kurdish –an Iranian language like Persian– shows, however, the political divisions and vicissitudes of this unfortunate people which has had a powerful impact on Islamic history. Only in most recent times has it been used as a literary language, using the Latin alphabet (Suleiman, 2003: 29).

Turkish emerged as the third «great» Islamic language through the government of the Ottomans. The Ottoman imperial language, which lies at the base of the modern Turkish spoken in Turkey today, is only one of the various Turkic languages which grew up from the dialects of the Turkish nomads (Suleiman, 2003: 71). They are related to Mongol and other linguistic groups which like them have their home in Central Asia.

The Turkish dynasties of the west formed a Turkish literary language later than in the east. The Seljuqs, who had established themselves in Iran and Iraq in the XIth century adopted, as already mentioned, Persian as the language of administration along with the Iranian government system, as indeed did the Anatolian branch of the dynasty. But the Turkish speaking element in the population steadily increased and was substantially enlarged by the Turkish peoples who moved westwards with the Mongol incursions (Suleiman, 2003: 73).

With the Ottoman victory over the Byzantines and their own Turkish rivals, Ottoman spread through Asia Minor and the Balkans. For quite a time it continued to compete with Persian, above all in literature, and it developed by adopting Persian and Arabic elements of vocabulary and syntax into a mixed language with very substantial foreign vocabulary (Suleiman, 2003: 74).

A distinction should be drawn between this language, Ottoman in a narrower sense (which was written in the Arabic script), and modern Turkish which since the nationalist Turkish reforms (Ataturk introduced the Latin script in 1928) was purged of many Arabic-Persian loan words and was characterised by a return to the middle Turkish linguistic heritage (Suleiman, 2003: 75).

The plurality of languages that, as we can see, mark the development of today's Muslim territories, is rich and complex. And even though Arabic has a special place in all these regions as a religious language, the importance of these other languages has to be considered when speaking about the globalization of Islam and its geopolitical environment.

4.3.2. The development of Media in the Muslim World

The basic principles of Muslim communication that we have studied above, together with the importance of Arabic language in Muslim religious identity, bring us now to the development of mass media within Islamic culture, where we present the paradigmatic moments of their development, starting with printing, the development of the press, the advent of electronic media and satellite television.

We should be aware that, within the development of Media in Muslim countries, there is not a clear distinction between what we could call «Muslim media» and «secular media». Even though, as we shall see, Islamic countries have gone through a certain level of secularization, the respect and promotion of Muslim values is still well rooted in most Muslim countries. That being said, there is still a broad area of research to be explored regarding the different ways in which Muslim values are presented in Islamic media, an area that goes beyond the objectives of our study.

4.3.2.1. The Written Word and Printing

Within many Islamic regions and for many centuries the main popular form of communication was through popular theatre, songs and poetry, specially because the high level of illiteracy of the popular classes, that presented a contrast regarding the cultured upper class minority.

Throughout the XXth century, when traditional poetry and theatre were declining in significance, along with other physical and oral manifestations of culture, more cognitive components of culture, particularly writing, took a central place, emerging strongly as a result of two powerful social transformations: secularism and increased literacy.

A secularist approach was needed to overcome religious objections to the spread of the print revolution in the Middle East (Atiyeh, 1995: 234). The history of printing in Muslim regions dates back to the end of the XVth century, when Jewish refugees from Spain had set up printing presses in the Ottoman Empire. Opposition to the print revolution was mostly religious. Arabic, the alphabet of which was used for Ottoman Turkish, was sacred, as the language in which the Quran was written. Its use in printed books threatened this sacredness. There were other means of oral and verbal communication that for a long time had not required expansion. It was more than two hundred years before the religious difficulties associated with publishing in a holy language were solved. In 1727, the highest Muslim authority in the Empire, Shaykh al-Islam, authorized publication in Turkish and the first book in the Empire appeared in 1729 (Ayalon, 1995: 21).

Books need readers, and indeed the history of the written word in the XXth century Middle East is closely associated with literacy (Atiyeh, 1995: 236). George N. Atiyeh says:

«Until the liberation of the Arab countries from foreign and colonial rule, levels of illiteracy were very high. Writers had access to wider audiences when their works were adapted as plays and operettas, and yet illiteracy constituted a high obstacle for the expansion of literary tastes and customs. At the beginning of the century in the Maghrib, the illiteracy rate was 96 per cent for men and 98 per cent for women. With independence, the level of literacy rose among people of both sexes, making them eager communities of book consumers. In Egypt, consecutive censuses showed that even partial independence between 1922 and 1952 helped to dispel illiteracy; paving the way for a new energy and creativity». (Atiyeh, 1995: 235)

Among the literate minority, however, the middle of the IXth century had already seen an explosion in output comparable only with the golden days of medieval Islam, at least in quantity. In the nineteenth century, gifted literati had focused on chronicling aristocratic lifestyle and high politics and on translating great Russian, French and English novels (Atiyeh, 1995: 238).

A more original approach came with the XXth century; and its proponents needed a stage on which to display their new products. In the Arab world it was not so much publishing houses (as in Europe), but rather the newspapers that enabled writers to experiment and flourish. Hence the history of the written word in the twentieth-century

Middle East should begin with the press as a cultural medium, and aspect that we outline in the following section.

4.3.2.2. The Press Revolution: 1815-1900

The level of illiteracy, as we have pointed out above, was very high in the early part of the XXth century in Muslim countries: newspapers were read aloud in village squares and city coffeehouses, as were plays, novels and poems. The habit of reading papers aloud in public remained even when illiteracy became negligible after the independence of many colonized Muslim countries. Ami Ayalon relates how

«In the Algerian countryside might sit around a bespectacled teacher holding the paper, usually asking him to begin with reports on local social and economic developments and then proceed to news from other parts of the Arab world. According to some reports, it was almost always Palestine that occupied a prominent place of interest, after local news had been reported and discussed». (Ayalon, 1995: 63)

Newspapers were published initially by colonial initiative. The new writing energy is shown by the appearance of *al-Raid al-Tunisi* («The Tunisian Leader») in 1861, *Suriya* in Damascus in 1865, *Tarablus al-Maghrib* in Tripoli in 1866, *S'ana* in the Yemen in 1879 and *al-Suddaniya* in Khartoum and *al-Hejaz* in Mecca in 1908. Most of these were not daily newspapers. The first daily in Arabic was published in Beirut in 1873, and the famous *al-Ahram* appeared in 1875 (although at first not as a daily) in Cairo. Until the 1970s, the numbers increased rapidly: in Egypt alone there were 283 newspapers and journals by 1913 (Dajani, 2011: 46).

The first newspaper published by Arabs for Arabs, *Jurnal al-Iraq* («The Iraqi Newspaper»), appeared in 1816 in Baghdad, in bold Arabic and Turkish (Ayalon, 1995: 91). In the 1820s, the Egyptian government published two papers in Alexandria, and in Algeria the French allowed the publication of another official bi-weekly; *Al-Mubashir* («The Herald»), in 1847. The first privately published Arab paper appeared in Istanbul during the Crimean War. A Syrian entrepreneur published a weekly; *Maraat al-Ahwal* («The Mirror of the Circumstances»), at the beginning of 1854, but it was soon closed (Ayalon, 1995: 73-74).

Many of these newspapers were closed after a short while and only a few survived to the end of the century. The dailies reappeared with a solid economic basis only after the Second World War and by 1974 there were ninety-five dailies all over the Arab world (Dajani, 2011: 49).

In many ways, Egypt was the cradle of the Arab media and press. Local pioneers in the field had the example of Napoleon, who had brought with him a printing press and

produced *Courrier de l'Egypte* in 1798 for his own troops, but soon after also published scholarly articles for the huge scientific delegation that escorted him to the land of the Nile. This was an avenue through which foreign printed books, and, later, journals entered the Middle East. Twenty years later, Muhammad Ali opened the first Arabic publishing house in the town of Bulaq (Atiyeh, 1995: 248).

Towards the end of the XIXth century journalism took off in Egypt. By 1882, it was the main platform on which Muslim political and ideological movements propagated their views about nationalism, tradition and modernity, alongside factual reporting and assessment of current local and global events. The first indigenous Cairian papers were *Jurnal al-Khedivu* («The Khedive's Journal») of 1827 and *Al-Waqa'ii al-Misriyya* («The Egyptian Events») in 1828 (Ayalon, 1995: 75). They contained news and entertainment (such as stories from *A Thousand and One Nights*) but mostly government instructions and regulations.

Ami Ayalon underlines that:

«Europeans were also a significant factor in the development of the press in Algeria. In the first year of the French occupation, in 1830, an Algerian paper appeared but was closed sixteen years later when the French exercised censorship on local papers. But they did not prevent the opening of a paper in Arabic, *Al-Sa'ada* («Happiness»), in 1905. The Italians published the first papers in Tunisia in 1838 and 1859. In Morocco, Spaniards established the *Liberal Africano* in 1820. From the beginning, paradoxically, the colonial powers invested much effort in introducing press freedom in order to curb it for their own purposes, blocking anti-colonial opinion and Islamic journalists. At first the media was not a threat to colonial rule, as the journalists lacked the means to sustain their message sufficiently. However, it was more difficult for Islamic journalists to survive: they were targeted at first as being opposed both to colonialism and to modernization, that is, the attempt to 'Frenchify' the Maghrib. In 1915, Islamic journalism was banned for a time all over the Maghrib». (Dajani, 2011: 242)

A serious challenge to Cairo as the capital of journalism came as early as the second half of the XIXth century from Beirut. *Hadiqat al-Ahbar* («The Garden of News») was the first Arabic newspaper published in Beirut in 1858 by Khalil al-Khoury; a Greek Orthodox man of letters and means (Ayalon, 1995: 87). But the newspaper celebrated by Arab journalists because of its popularity beyond the borders of Lebanon was *Al-jaw'ib* («News from Afar») published by Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, a Lebanese Muslim residing in Istanbul, who began his journalistic career in 1861 (Dajani, 1995: 52).

4.3.2.3. The Advent of the Electronic Media

Theatre, poetry, novels, operettas, songs and orchestras found new audiences with the introduction of the radio to the Middle East. The first radio broadcast in the Arab world

was heard in the 1920s, but the audiences were very small. In the late 1940s governments realized the benefit of having their own broadcasting agencies and the number of receivers *per capita* climbed. Almost twenty million Arab households had radios by 1975, and numbers have been increasing since then (Rugh, 2004: 24).

Everyone concerned –Islamists, Western journalists, freedom fighters, human rights activists and ordinary people of the Middle East as a whole– have a new arena in which they compete and interact: the electronic media and its most recent and updated innovations and developments. This was already clear during the third decade of the XXth century, as it is obvious today (Wood, 2000: 142).

The main attraction of the new electronic media when it first appeared was its availability. As Abd-Ghani has noted,

«Radio receivers were already cheap by the mid-century, which enabled people on lower incomes to purchase them. They were operated by battery even before electricity reached the rural Middle East. This was called 'the transistor revolution' that coincided with the political coups and revolutions». (Abd-Ghani, 2006: 26)

The popularity of radio grew in the age of military coups and decolonization. As William A. Rugh outlines,

«It was mainly the revolutionary regimes that hoped that the radio would be a particular effective means of enhancing an accelerated economic and social transformation of their societies. Some of the more traditional countries, such as the Gulf emirates, were reluctant at first to enter the radio era, but since they discovered that neighbouring, and quite often rival, broadcasting services made their way into their airwave space, they decided to establish their own corporations». (Rugh, 2006: 28)

Controlling a radio station became the chief ambition of the military coups and revolutions throughout the century. But radio played only a passing role when political turmoil reigned. It has had a steady presence in the lives of people and has become an important employer and source of a promising career. Twenty years after the initiation of the «Egyptian Broadcasting Authority» in 1970, more than 5,000 people worked for it. By that time the print media, established in the 1820s, were padding behind in popularity and coverage in an impossible contest with the electronic media (Ayish, 2010: 114-115).

In the more private and individual spheres, the possession of a radio became a sign or symbol. In the 1950s group listening was still very popular as not everyone possessed a receiver –it was mainly a male experience taking place in the villages' coffee-houses–. Then it became accessible to everyone regardless of their gender or socio-economic situation (Wood, 2000: 139).

Television entered the Arab world in the late 1950s. It was first operated in Iraq in May 1956 as a state-controlled agency: a modest facility which broadcast entertainment shows to the Baghdadi audience. Then television came to Lebanon, where the first huge transmitters could be seen on the hills overlooking Beirut (Rugh, 2004: 202).

Countries with a much higher GNP and considered more «modern», such as Israel and Turkey; introduced television only in the late 1960s. Those countries which hesitated had to succumb for the same reason that those that had rejected radio consented to introduce it. As with the radio transmissions, so with television. It was impossible to block the broadcast from abroad and television from neighbouring countries could be watched before it was available locally (Rugh, 2004: 203).

The dry weather in the desert for instance enabled people to watch a large number of foreign stations (Ayish, 2010: 18). In some areas of North Africa, French television was received quite well, and the Libyans, if they wished, could tune into television operated by the US military from the Wheelus Air Force Base. Similarly, Saudis could see the Arabian-American Oil Company television broadcasting from Dharan.

By 1975, with the inauguration of the Yemenite Television Company, all the Arab states had television. The Egyptian government handled the new technology with their usual flair, turning it into a popular and ubiquitous phenomenon. They extended transmission to remote areas by building as many as thirty transmitters and by subsidizing communally owned receivers in many poorer locations (Rugh, 2004: 207).

The development of Television went on:

«In Syria there were 42,000 television receivers in 1961 and 425,000 in 1975. What the radio was for the revolutionaries in Egypt and Iraq in the 1950s, television was for the next generation of radical regimes in Algeria and Yemen. Ironically, the Algerian station was constructed and almost supervised by the French ORTF channel and television complex: it became a symbol of a post-colonial reconciliation, and maybe even of a neo-colonialist domination rather than that of anti-colonialist liberation». (Rugh, 2004: 211)

In its early days, television was less popular than the radio, which was cheaper and more accessible. But towards the end of the century television became the uncontested leader of the electronic media (Ayish, 2010: 20). But it took a while for television to rise to such a prominent position. Lack of funding prevented much expansion in terms of either local creativity or proper coverage of events. The tendency was, and in many ways still is, to buy ready-made programmes from abroad catering for the lowest consumer level.

Even after television became more accessible and increased its audience, this tendency remained, for economic reasons. The cultural impact was a continued transmission

of a reduced version of the «West» and the «East», while repeated broadcasts of long concerts of Arabic music have replaced any attempt at sophisticated and detailed presentation of traditional culture. In the more immediate political sphere the situation was no better: garbled and censored items of Middle Eastern news were being imported from Western news agencies before local reporters could give their version (Ayish, 2010: 22).

William A. Rugh underlines that in Muslim countries

«Radio and television were closely supervised by governments, and were used carefully so as not to upset traditional and religious sensitivities. And yet they were more powerful media than print. In Egypt, for instance, the print medium was mostly an elite business until the tabloids appeared in full force in the second half of the 1970S, but even that did not expand readership to the masses». (Rugh, 2004: 217)

The popularity of electronic media meant that they had a potential hold on people that could be used for political purposes (Ayish, 2010: 23). Hence, as mentioned above, radio and television stations were prime targets for military rebels and instigators of *coups d'etat*, of which there were many in the Arab world between 1936 and the early 1970s.

With the relative stabilization of the political system, these media could expand and allow satire and comedy in their programmes as well as more open debates on current issues. But radio and television remained state monopolies even in the 1970s, with direct government supervision. State control has not been affected so far by privatization and the capitalization of local economies. In the late 1970s funding moved from government to private sources raised from advertising, allowing wider margins of independent creativity, but still within government- approved limits (Ayish, 2010: 24).

The worst periods, in terms of freedom of the media, were, without exception, the early years of independence (Rugh, 2004: 206). Governments justified this seizure of a public medium on security grounds: they had to face external and domestic problems of a magnitude that required full control of the press, radio and television. The security risk seemed to linger on to the end of the century:

With such transparent state control, it is no wonder the traditional culture of oral communication also persisted throughout the century. The more significant opposition –the political Islamic movements– regarded the media not only as a tool in the hands of oppressive regimes but also as a symbol of invasive and negative Western culture. And yet, many opposition groups established not only newspapers, but also their own radio and television stations. This shows the inability of dogmatic fundamentalists to adapt to the new social realities produced by modernization.

4.3.2.4. Satellite Television

The introduction in the 1990s of satellite TV has totally transformed the Middle East. Terrestrial and national television were very limited in their news coverage (mostly narrating official ceremonies and policies) and broadcasting mainly feature films and music programmes. Shortly before the appearance of the satellite TV there were already signs that strict state control had its limits and was unable to cope with a rapidly globalized Middle East. The first cracks in the wall of censorship and control appeared in Lebanon. The never-ending civil war that erupted in 1975 eroded the power of central government and a local channel, Lebanese Broadcast Corporation (LBC), opened the way for informal, non-state and non-governmental narratives and coverage (Rugh, 2004: 221).

Historically satellites do not appear out of the blue. They require certain technological developments and a political readiness to mature. The fact that they are there casts an interesting light on the modernization of the Middle East in the twentieth century.

It was actually a pan-Arab decision that produced a new pan-Arabist reality. The Arab ministers of information under the aegis of the Arab League took that formative decision in 1967 to launch satellite TV in the region. Egyptian leadership and Saudi money produced the next stages that include complex acts of legislation and technical preparations (and of course the actual launching into space of the satellites in the 1990s).

As we have seen, there was already a rich Arabic-speaking media environment by the end of the century even before the proliferation of TV satellite stations. In 1999, Arabic was only second to English as a global broadcasting language. The satellite stations introduced lively debates, highly professional journalism with a global reach and many niches for popular culture from the most traditional to the most up-to-date (Rugh, 2004: 222).

The first country to launch such a TV was Egypt, and although it was a novelty in its form, in its content it was still very much in the old mould. It was used to enhance the position of the Egyptian dialect within the Arab world and to promote tourism to Egypt. A more dramatic change in content and purpose came from the projects located in and connected with the Arabian peninsula. To be more precise, it was the exposure to CNN in the first Gulf War that triggered a wish for a counter-narrative and similar technology (Ayish, 2010: 19).

In London, a private Saudi founder launched its own satellite station, Middle East Broadcast (MBC) in September 1991 (ten years later it moved to Dubai). Because it was at the heart of the Islamic experience, not surprisingly its initial schedule included many religious programmes. However soon enough news-reels and informative documentaries

were added. It showed potential but needed a less conservative environment to realize it. This came with the establishment of the al-Jazeera network (Lynch, 2006: 13).

In 1996, the Emir of Qatar launched al-Jazeera as the first twenty-four-hour news station in the Middle East (Rugh, 2004: 232). Although a fairly new phenomenon of the 1990s, it feels today like a veteran actor in the region. It has its own museum, hosts forum debates on democracy and broadcasts from everywhere in the Arab world where civil society has its say (it even broadcast live some of the gracious ceremonies which accompanied my own departure from Israel to the United Kingdom) (Lynch, 2006: 17).

As quite a few scholars have noted, the revolution that al-Jazeera brought about in the Middle East's mass communication became a double-edged sword. Its increased credibility and wide popularity among viewers quite often incurred the wrath of many Arab governments. It seems that even the Gulf regimes were not spared the network's critique and in 2002 the Gulf States considered taking measures against the network for its 'offensive' reporting. Restrictive actions followed in other countries (such as Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Palestinian territories) by more drastic measures of expulsion of reporters, cutting the network's signal and recalling the respective countries' ambassadors to Qatar (Karaïskou, 2007: 2-5).

It is not surprising, given its location within Qatar, that some scholars are hesitant about its role in the tension between assisting powers that be to exercise their authority, on the one hand, and serving the societies as a genuine and authentic voice of the people, on the other. It is indeed part of the complex cultural reality of the area in the twenty-first century: time will tell if it provided a sterile stage for debates on democracy, human rights and so on, which are prominent shows on its agenda, or it unwittingly helped mute the fierce opposition to authoritarian regimes all over the Arab world (Rugh, 2004: 220).

Satellite TV has proved to be an essential factor in everyone's agenda. Generally speaking this is not a new historical phenomenon. There were endless airwaves wars before satellite TV appeared. Israel and the Palestinians, Gaddafi and his enemies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia and many others built and funded TV stations focused on their enemies or rivals and practically neglected anything else (Lynch, 2006: 42).

Thus, political Islamic groups such as Hamas and Hizballah have also employed this new media for their purposes and Polisario, struggling for independence in the Western Sahara, followed suit. Political opponents in Syria founded in the late 1990s their own satellite TV station, ANN, voicing doubts about Bashar al-Assad's qualifications, and were duly arrested a short while after the first broadcast. So satellite TV became an important factor in the political struggles within, and against, the ruling elites. TV satellite documentary programmes revisited historical narratives and challenged them. A particularly popular topic

is the crypto-diplomacy involving Israel and the Arab world (such as the revelation that King Hussein of Jordan warned Israel in 1973 of an imminent Syrian and Egyptian attack) (Ayad, 2000: 14-16).

Indeed, the telecommunication landscape of the Middle East was dramatically transformed by the end of the twentieth century. Satellite dishes cover most rooftops of the cities and even in rural areas the new technology is slowly entering local households. Today there are almost 400 satellite channels in the area. The main effect of this new proliferation is what Habib Battah, managing editor of the *Middle East Broadcast Journal*, calls the *the creation of new forums that cross regional boundaries [which] has established a virtual on-air community, a sense of Pan-Arab unity* (Saker, 2002: 1-2). Thus Arab governments could take a distant position on Palestine or Israeli attacks on Lebanon, while the on-air community presented the counter-position of commitment and involvement. Satellite TV transcends territorial and more importantly, as noted by recent research, jurisdictional boundaries and produces unexpected interpretations, of reality that clash fiercely and directly with that dictated from above (Saker, 2002: 13).

Time will tell how politically potent this tension is. The Bush administration, in any case, perceived this pan-Arabist sentiment as powerful and anti-American and created its own Arabic satellite station, al-Hurra (as well as bombing the al-Jazeera station during the invasion of Iraq in 2003).

The Islamic republic of Iran has its own satellite station, also in English, but has banned reception of satellite stations in Iran. However, in practice the ban is ineffective. One recent report assessed that twenty-three million Iranians tune to satellite TV and the number is probably growing (Hossinpour, 2007).

In the 1990s, Saudi Arabia also banned dishes, but there too a black market for dishes flourished and still does. It was estimated that almost a million such illegal devices are in use there. Most other Arab countries gave up banning private dishes although officially in some of them there is an attempt to control what is received and viewed (Rugh, 2004: 229).

So in many states the seemingly free discourse and speech that radiates from the small screen is not reflected in the reality on the ground: a reality of censored printed press, lack of genuine parliamentary life and abuse of human and civil rights. But satellite television may have the potential to transform this reality as well, not as a sole factor, and maybe not even as a principal force, but as part of a excess of impulses to change that moved the people of Muslim countries throughout the XXth century.

What this revolution has already done is to shift the cultural production centre from its traditional power bases such as Cairo and Beirut to the tiny principedoms of the Gulf. Again only time will tell whether this is a permanent or a temporary shift.

The appearance of some of these satellite televisions in the English language, such as al-Jazeera International, brought to the world a new authentic voice. The Arab world, both in the most expanded and generalized sense of the word and its most intimate meanings, is broadcast without the filters of Western orientalism, Arab politicians and diplomats or anyone wishing to be a representative of this voice.

4.3.3. Media and Images

When the Western media started to take interest in Afghanistan and its Taliban revolution, many television networks sent their journalists and cameramen to interview the Taliban leaders. When they arrived they were surprised to find out that the leaders would not accept any interview if they were to be filmed or pictures of them were taken. They justified this ban saying that Islam did not accept images in any form. Later the same Talibans destroyed the sixth century Bamiyan Buddhas carved into a cliff face alluding to the same Islamic principle (Leaman, 2010: 81).

Yet there is next to nothing in the Qur'an about the use of images. There is certainly an aversion towards idols, specially if we consider that Muhammad fought against polytheism, of which the Mecca was a renown centre (Qur'an 5, 92 and 14, 35). There are also Qur'anic passages that give the opposite impression, such as that of King Salomon commanding the spirits to create «places of worship, statues...» (Qur'an 34, 12-13). Another passage presents god speaking to Mary, the mother of Jesus (*Isha*), who tells her that Jesus will perform miracles such as the «sign» (*ayat*) of creating a bird out of clay, and breathing life into it (Qur'an 3, 34). So rather it would seem that god gives power to great prophets to create images !

The Hadith literature, though, presents a different perspective. The key difficulty with figurative images, according to various Hadith, is that the makers of the images are doing creative acts, and that constitutes a direct challenge to the sole creative power of God. In the Hadith, there is a story of the Prophet's youngest wife, A'isha, who made pillows for her husband that were decorated with images. Upon seeing them, Muhammad became upset and told her that «the makers of images will be punished on the Day of the resurrection», and that «angels do not enter houses with images of living things». We can consider, for example, the collections of Hadiths on this issue collected in the small booklet by the Masrash Arabia Islamia. This small booklet is a useful compendium of the sources that some Muslims use to justify the veto of images (Madrash Arabia Islamia, 2004: 11-16).

According to these sources, the negative attitude towards images in primitive Islam seems to have developed within the first generations, after the death of Muhammad, in the

context of anti-idolatry apologetics (Hawting, 1999: 45-47), and the fact that some of the newly converted Arabian tribes kept their polytheistic convictions. The issue was also related to the principle of god's unity (*tawhid*), and the impossibility of «adding» anything to god's transcendence and oneness. The idea was that any image or any intent to imitate or add something to God was considered *shirk*, translated «addition» or «polytheism» (Leaman, 2010: 79).

The discussions with Christians on the incarnation and the Trinity were placed in this same theological level (Hawting, 1999: 67-69). Due to this historical context, the development of Islamic arts, particularly in the Middle East, favoured the use of geometrical figures and of calligraphic designs. Medieval Islamic cultures showed a certain tolerance towards the representation of Muhammad (Aziza, 1978: 37-39). But even this was later considered a form of *shirk*, due probably to a certain popular «divinization» of the figure of the prophet. For all these reasons Islamic culture is said to be more «ideational» than «sensate». An ideational culture is mainly symbolic (Mowlana, 1989: 7).

Plate stresses that:

«If in some periods of Islamic history there was a tolerance of images and pictorial representations of Muhammad, Islamic history has produced several movements that have gone against them. The most important one is probably the Wahhabi movement that arose in Arabia in the second half of the eighteenth century, uniting forces with the Saudi family to establish the first Saudi state. Understanding themselves to be purifying and getting back to the true principles of Islam, the Wahhabis destroyed the shrine of Imam Husayn in Karbala, and pillaged the very tomb of Muhammad in Medina» (Plate, 2006: 95).

Other movements along history have taken similar actions, always claiming that images are forbidden by the law of Islam.

Such a background regarding images had its consequences when modern media started to influence and began to increase in Muslim countries, specially with the arrival of television (Aziza, 1978: 110-128). On the one hand, the new media included images, and on the other hand they were «western». But such an attitude responds also to the elements of communication theology that we have outlined above.

According to our understanding two theological issues regarding communication theology are behind the suspicious attitude of Islam towards images. One is the total transcendence and unity of god (*tawhid*), linked to the guidance-based model that we have presented. The other theological principle is linked to the sign-model of communication theology present in the Qur'an: men must not «imitate» the «signs» of god, but must only

discern them. Humanity may be a marvel of god's creation, but its place in creation does not permit him to imitate the signs of its maker.

The issue of images in Islam and their use in media seems to trouble only some specific theological schools. But, together with the elements of communication theology related to this matter, we must remember that the aversion towards media images is often linked to the aversion towards western media. Both elements come together, and they are often hard to differentiate.

4.3.4. Public Opinion and Censorship

Article 91 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Convention, adopted by the United Nations in December 1948, proclaims: «Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers». While the Convention idealistically encapsulates the desirability of universal press freedom, this remains an elusive and sometimes unwelcome principle in many countries.

In this perspective, the media environment in the Middle East has been characterized by the supremacy of the censor (for this issue see Mostyn, 2002: 19-20). The development of the press in the Middle East is a comparatively new phenomenon and sees its roots in Arab nationalism, first in the decline of the Ottoman Empire and later in the struggles for independence from the European colonial powers. The fact is that many nationalists were often journalists, who used the media to create consensus in public opinion. Yet independence did not bring a free press. Media were mostly nationalised under nationalist governments. Even today, in many Arab states, the media are closely monitored. For example, the annual *Freedom of the press survey* notes that:

«Restricted media environments remain the norm in parts of Asia, Africa, and almost all of the Middle East and the former Soviet Union, where entrenched autocratic regimes continue to deny their citizens access to free media and where governments wary of criticism are increasingly moving to limit sources of independent information».(Freedom of the Press Survey, 2015: 8).

The mechanism for this is invariably the omnipresent Ministry of Information that exists in most of these countries. It is not surprising that many Muslim media organizations have, over the years, chosen to develop work outside the system, many basing themselves in London. This also explains why, in order to escape the mediocrity and banality of state media, many English-speaking Muslims watch news through CNN or the BBC, often on illegally owned satellite dishes. In 1996 the news outlet created in the tiny State of Qatar

called Al-Jazeera («The Island») began to change this situation: broadcasting 24 hours a day in an opinion and counter opinion style to an audience today estimated at more than 35 million people, the channel has enraged nearly every sector of international society (while simultaneously being courted by all!) (Zayani – Sahraoui, 2007: 13; Della Ratta, 2005: 9-10).

Even though it's development has not been free of polemics (some describe it as anti-Arab, others as anti-Jewish and many as anti-American) the channel and its increasing number of clones in Muslim countries have transformed civil society in many Muslim countries. But such a transformation arrives late in history: the necessity of a channel such as Al-Jazeera reveals the problem of public opinion in Muslim countries, a problem linked to the history of communication and communication theology.

It would be an error to conclude from what we have just said that public opinion has found its place in Muslim culture only in the last decades because of the totalitarian setting of its theopolitical principles, as orientalist approaches to Islam have tended to see. The fact is that Muslim cultures have historically developed a certain form of public opinion, but this development has been determined by the dynamics of the Muslim interpretation of the relation between the State and the *umma*, a dynamic process rooted in the principles of communication theology that we have discussed (Hoexter, 2002, provides a thorough demonstration of the existence of «public spaces» in Muslim communities along the development of Islam).

Since the XIIIth century the *'ulama* or Muslim law experts gained the responsibility of the religious guidance of the community since the caliphs demonstrated to be insufficient for this purpose. *'Ulama* and their law schools (*waqfs*) followed closely the rulers' duty to uphold the social order and to implement *shari'a* justice. It was the *'ulama* who were the guardians of the pristine Islamic vision, upholders of the normative dimensions of the *umma* or Islamic community, and keepers and interpreters of the *shari'a* (Hoexter, 2002: 119-138).

With the expansion of Islam, Sufi orders (formed mainly by merchants and artisans that played an important role in the economic development of Muslim societies) constituted also a part of the public sphere and provided arenas of life not entirely controlled by the rulers (Levtzon, 2002: 109-118). The public spheres were arenas in which different sectors of the society could voice their demands in the name of the basic premises of Islamic vision, thus creating a certain form of public opinion. The continual interaction between the *'ulama*, the rulers, and the different sectors of the community, then, were crucial to the constitution of an autonomous public sphere in Islamic societies.

Such an understanding of the public sphere was based mainly in the models of communication theology that we have presented earlier. The obligation of the *umma* to transmit the meaning of the signs of Allah, and particularly his revealed word (revealed

signs) through the submission of new faithful and the guidance through the straight path was guaranteed by the enforcement of the *shari'a* law that, theoretically, should be applied by the caliphs or successors of the Prophet, but in practice was watched over by the *'ulama* and by other ranks of society.

The main model was the ideal *umma* under the Prophet Muhammad, hence creating a tension between the idealization of the original Muslim community and the renewal (*ijtihad*) of the *shari'a* into new political, geographical and social contexts. The polarity of these two main approaches –that is, a more «pluralistic» tendency stressing the update of the *shari'a* and a totalistic approach emphasizing the literal interpretation of God's signs– has been at the heart of religious, political and social movements all along the history of Muslim societies. Such a tension responds to the original strain inherent to Muslim communication theology regarding human response to god's revelation and his guided communication. At the same time it stresses the tension between the original *umma* and the updating of its founding message, that is god's will.

It is only natural that these tensions and confrontations between pluralistic and totalistic tendencies, between a stress of the original message or its modernization, became intensified in Muslim societies with the establishment within them of regimes rooted in the ideological premises of modernity, with their strong emphasis on relatively homogeneous territorial states (Lynch, 2006: 30-31). The rise of modern nations states and their claim to homogeneity has greatly undermined the autonomy of the public sphere, with the state attempting to control it (Lynch, 2006: 32). A vibrant public sphere did develop in these regimes –attesting their growing democratization– but this trend did not necessarily broaden the scope of autonomous political participation and of pluralism.

Contemporary Muslim societies can be seen as moving between two poles: attempts to establish territorial states with some elements of pluralism that try to combine their earlier historical experience with the demands of modern societies, and strong anti-pluralistic tendencies in the form of either extreme secular oppressive regimes or extreme fundamentalist ones, often religiously founded in the pretension of returning to the original *umma*. Both poles seek to justify their positions arguing that they are being faithful «transmitters» of god's original message as received by Prophet Muhammad.

4.3.5. Islamic Analysis of the Media World

When speaking about Islamic communication theology and it's implications in the Media World, we must make a distinction between «Arab media» and «Islamic» or «Muslim media». Arab media refers to media that uses Arabic as its main language and is addressed

to an Arabic speaking public, but it does not mean that their main ideology responds to Muslim faith. On the other hand Muslim media refers to a religiously Muslim inspired media that seeks to transmit, directly or indirectly, the Muslim faith or to communicate according to Islamic communication principles. We could say, then, that not all Arab media are Muslim (even if most of their personnel consider themselves Muslims and/or respect Muslim values), but that many Muslim media use Arabic as its main language or as a reference language, since it is the «holy» language of the Qur'an. The term «Arab media» is normally used either referring to media in the Middle East, or, as in our case, to non-confessional Media in Arab speaking countries. The fact is that many Muslim communication theorists criticise Arab media for not being «Muslim».

Due to the character of Muslim communication theology the number of publications in the matter are neither uniform nor are they generally recognized as a body of literature (Tehrani, 1988: 191). One must undertake the task of searching for the theological model that lies under an specific author and the consequences that such a model brings to his theory of Muslim communication. To put it another way, the task demands to work with authors that deal with Muslim communication theory.

From the perspective of communication theory the literature on Muslim media reflects a diversity of tenets, concepts and strategies. But concerning the communication theology that lies under it, one can easily distinguish two main tendencies.

The first trend insists in the re-islamization of Arab information through a submission of information to the classical Muslim theological communication models. The main idea sustained by authors belonging to this group is that information (*i'lam*) should be submitted to religious propagation (*da'wa*). 'Amara Najib sustains – against non confessional Arab speaking authors that defended a «Western» approach to communication theory – that information can be the expression of the mentality of an authority or a regime with no connection to the people (Najib, 1980: 7). The Arab word for «information» is *i'lam*, a classical word that refers to the transmission of news, not necessarily religious (Lewis, 1960: 1133-1134). One of the issues at stake in Muslim communication theology is if an islamization of *i'lam* is necessary or not.

Although information, in theory, seeks to provide people with correct data and truths, it can also be interpreted as disseminating lies and false reports in such a way that it can mislead people (Najib, 1980: 16). This is why information, for authors such as Najib, should be regarded as a manifestation of the entire process of delivering the message of god and should be subordinated to *da'wa*, the call to participate and gather together in order to follow the path of divine truth, the straight path to god (Najib, 1980: 10). Thus *da'wa*, the message (*balagh*) and information (*i'lam*) must merge into one process, a process that

requires that religion and the state amalgamate. Najib goes even further, sustaining that one cannot inform people without carrying out *da'wa* or without religious teaching and instruction (*ta'lim*). He emphasizes that Islamic information also means to express the truth clearly (*haqq*) in a way that attracts people (Najib, 1980: 17-18). This truth should be transmitted using all means and methods in order to win the people to the truth, that is, for Islam. The islamization of information means making *da'wa* the notion at the top, while information and instruction become less important.

A similar position is defended by another Muslim author, Mohammed Yusuf (Yusuf, 1986a; 1986b). Yusuf sees *da'wa* as the new call to believe in the unity of God (*tawhid*) as a call to Muslims to find their way back to Islam, and to non-Muslims to join Islam, as well as a call to Islamic unity (Yusuf, 1986a: 9). *Da'wa* is then an objective of information, but cannot be achieved without searching for knowledge, because «knowledge (*'ilm*) is the path to belief (*iman*)» (Yusuf, 1986a: 9; 1986b: 12).

A more radical and at the same time ideological approach to the issues defended by this first category is presented by a disciple of the Islamist Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), author Yusuf al-'Azam (Al-'Azm, 1980: 7). According to him, official information practice has no identity and has been misleading Muslims for generations: Muslims only listen to what the «enemy» provides, and modern media do not serve modern matters, have no relation with the Muslim legacy, and so do not give any orientation to Muslim society (*umma*). They have divided the Muslim community in ideological and political digression (Al-'Azm, 1980: 10-12). As most radical ideologists, 'Azm affirms that the history of the Arab press exemplifies the decline and loss of prestige of the *umma*, it indicates the westernization of Muslim thought, and has no influence in Muslim public opinion (Al-'Azm, 1980: 14-18).

This position is shared by many Muslim popular polemicists, like the Indian Zakir Naik, an Indian Islamic scholar, public speaker, debater and writer. He is the founder and director of the «Islamic Research Foundation» (Mumbai). Although he usually speaks to audiences of several hundreds, it is the videotapes of his talks which are widely distributed. A clear expression of his positions about Muslims and the media can be seen in the video of his 1998 conference in Bangalore entitled «Media and Muslims» (Birmingham, Islamic Dawah Centre International, 1998).

The second tendency related to the statement of an Islamic communication theology insists in the reformulation of Arab information through a re-interpretation of Muslim theological communication models.

Authors related to this tendency sustain that Islam provides society with a clear purpose, and offers methods and guidelines by which it may attain its objective. The content of Islamic media and the methodology used must coincide with this fundamental principle.

Since the existing news agencies and models are essentially «western» institutions, present day Muslim media cannot create an alternative model merely by adding the word «Islamic» to their programmes and news agencies. It is necessary to Islamicize the practices and methodology of journalism thus promoting a process of umma-oriented communication (Schleifer, 1986: 23). In this perspective Information (*i'lam*) should not be submitted to religious propagation (*da'wa*), but should be «guided» – in the sense of the guidance-based model that we have presented – to the needs and cultural characteristics of the *umma*, understood not only in its religious dimension, but also in its cultural elements.

We find a good depiction of this tendency in the Islamic mass media model promoted by the «International Institute of Islamic Thought» or «IIIT» (Schleifer, 1986: 109-124), where information has the purpose of «guiding» Muslims into the path of God by re-orientating information within a «secular» media structure.

The IIIT promotes an Islamic information model defined by the absence of a «secular» outlook where reporting is concerned. It understands information as somehow related to the Islamic worldview (Schleifer, 1986: 68-69). Another issue involved in establishing an Islamic information model is the question of what constitutes «news», tending to give a propaedeutic sense to news services: there should not be an overemphasis on negative societal trends.

The issue is that Islamic journalism to date has been ignoring the newsworthiness of the life and activities of the contemporary Muslim world in favour of the various Islamic political movements, creating a political polarization and radicalization of much of the Muslim world. The Islamic information model should be oriented towards the «big picture» (Schleifer, 1986: 70), in favour of a broader Islamic concept of objectivity that requires not the elimination of values in judging whether or not to circulate a news item, but «the introduction of values based on the ultimate objectivity of God as revealed throughout the Qur'an» (Schleifer, 1986: 72; Al-Seini, 1986: 277-289).

A clear implementation of God-guided information is promoted, basically by (1) relaying good news, where Islamic media would attribute such good fortune to God and his mercy; (2) acknowledging that any hardship encounters is not a merely random and arbitrary act of nature, but rather something that God has ordained; (3) a positive oriented information that will have an inspiring and motivational effect on others, and (4) the orientation of Muslims to fulfil their duties and come to one another's aid (Al Barzinji, 1998: 70).

Another interesting critical assessment of Muslim information was undertaken by Ziauddin Sardar (Sardar, 1999). Sardar approaches the issue of information in the Muslim

world from the perspective of cultural criticism, even though his main interest is the theorization of communications in a Muslim (and not only Arabic) cultural hemisphere.

According to this London-based thinker there is a wide breach between Western information and its Muslim recipients because they both differ in what he calls «societal knowledge». For Sardar this term constitutes a «guide» that «provides a mapping of human life and environment» (Sardar, 1999: 9). Societal knowledge is influenced by four types of «information systems»: (1) world view; (2) national identity; (3) the social setting (job, social status, family, etc.) and (4) personal philosophy, which includes self-conscious aspects of individual personality. Because of this difference in «societal knowledge» he concludes that information and perception are undermined: there is an unbalanced relationship between the Western origins of information and its Muslim recipients, thus creating the main problem of communication (Sardar, 1999: 105-108). Muslims, then, might not really understand Western information.

Sardar concludes that developing a communication system that meets the needs of the *umma* cannot be an external affair, but must be undertaken by the *umma*, the Muslim society. The *umma's* communication system has to offer harmonization between information and Muslim «societal knowledge», that includes a specific theological world view. He stresses, though, that such harmony «can evolve only when Muslim states generate their own information with the relevant apparatus geared to meeting the needs of their decision-makers and communities» (Sardar, 1999: 15).

Sardar rarely quotes from the primal theological sources (the Qur'an and Hadith) but from classical authors like al-Kindi (d. 870), al-Razi (d. 925), al-Farabi (d. 950), Ibn Sina (d. 1037) and even from Sufi masters as al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 950). He also quotes extensively the work of Ibn Khaldun. His main interest is not how to perpetuate a Muslim way of communicating, but how to adapt Muslim societies to the dynamics of modern information networks from a truly Muslim information system.

The communication theologies that lay behind these two tendencies of Muslim criticism of Arab communication clearly respond to the tensions present in the «horizontal» accent in Muslim communication theology. In a simplistic manner we could say that the re-islamization of Arab media through a submission of information to the classical Muslim theological communication models stresses the «return» to *umma* controlled media, while the reformulation of Arab information through a re-interpretation of Muslim theological communication models corresponds to the effort of modernizing the Muslim message while re-islamizing the media.

Ziauddin Sardar's intuition of an inter-cultural and intra-cultural analysis of communication as a base for a development of a Muslim communication theology remains

potentially promising. Unfortunately his basic interests have moved from information and communication theory to the broader horizon of the Western perception and representation of Muslim cultures (Sardar, 1999: 22).

4.4. CONCLUSION: TRANSMISSION, COMMUNICATION AND HISTORY IN THE MUSLIM TRADITION

Along this chapter, dedicated to the globalizational, communicational and geopolitical trends of the Muslim religious tradition, we have sought to describe the main characteristics of Islam regarding our triple area of interest.

Islam, since its origins and all along its process of expansion, has engaged in a clear transnational communicational process that seeks to transmit the basic message received by its founder, Muhammad, in the origins of the first Muslim community. In this sense the founder of the religious tradition acts as medium to the «vertical» communication that god establishes with his «umma». Contrary to the Christian «incarnational» communication experience, for Muslims the most important communication event in history is the transmission of god's definitive communication: the Qur'an.

We have underlined how the Qur'an, understood as a medium is, neither historical nor systematic. It presents a non-linear narrative structure, in which different elements continually recur but in different arrangements and in different literary forms. That is: from a Qur'anic-cultural perspective, what we could call the Muslim structure of communication, is expressed in two major trends: one centred in the concept of signs, and the other one in the concept of divine guidance.

Both the «sign» based and the «guidance» based forms of divine communication respond to the same standard of communication inherent to the Qur'anic worldview approached from different angles, and are not contradictory. They both have had a strong influence in Muslim communication culture and have modelled the way Islam understands and deals with the modern media world.

According to the first model of communication – the «sign» model–, human response to god's given signs should be that of obedience to his will as contained in the religious laws that the major prophets conveyed to humankind. In order to give shape and consistence to this response, the real believer should join the community of such a prophet: the whole of social and individual life should be brought into obedience to god. According to the second model –the guidance-based model of communication– the essence of communication is not related to human reason, but to god and his will to guide humanity through his communicative act. Such a model underlines the moral aspects of human existence, and the theology of history finds a minor place: god's communication with humanity and the human response to it seem to be united in a tension that, somehow,

dissolves history in god's determined action over human behaviour, and suggest a human global «umma» as the only possible solution to history, thus upholding a form of exclusivism.

Due to these principles we can conclude that the Muslim «vertical» communication experience derives in a direct «horizontal» communication experience that requires a total obedience to the leaders of the community of believers or «umma». In the Islamic globalization process this tension, that we could call «vertical» (it regards God in one side and humanity in the other) produces another tension, that we call «horizontal». It regards the «actualization» of God's message in an effort of fidelity within the Muslim community towards its ideal origins (tabligh) and, thus, returning to the original divine message, an the renewal of God's message in the context of a Muslim social environment, creating at the same time a geopolitical tension between the Muslim milieu/countries and the non Muslim environments.

This also means that Muslim communicational dynamics tend to be networked and authoritarian, due to the importance that religious authority holds and to the plurality of particular interpretations of the Muslim law that we find in different geographical settings. These particular characteristics of Muslim communication derive in a more cellular – non hegemonized – and cosmonational geopolitical status, that derivate from the history off Islamic globalization and the process of communication that it implies.

We need to remark that, even though there are particular differences between Sunni and Shia Muslims, these communicational and geopolitical characteristics may be extended to both trends of Islam. Only the more mystical approach inherent to Islam, called Sufism, goes beyond this communicational trends due to its charismatic characters that stresses a symbolic «vertical» and «horizontal» communication, but the development of these groups and their academic study still have to confirm if these communicational characteristics constitute a change in the cellular and cosmonational geopolitical consequences of the rest of the Muslim trends, a point that stands as an interesting area of academic research.

CHAPTER 5: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM AND THE ERA OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

The development of the relationship between Abrahamic religions and the Media takes us now to the so called «Information Age», the present period in the development of communication culture. In the precedent chapters we studied the evolution of the impact and reception of media in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, arriving to the threshold of the Electronic age. In this chapter we unite the three religious traditions in order to present some of the paradigm-changing consequences of the Digital era in these traditions, thus establishing an open perspective regarding the future of Media, Religion and Culture studies.

In order to do so we will start with an approach to the cultural meaning of the Internet Era regarding the Abrahamic religions. Doing so we wish to provide some basic reflections on the cultural settings of the encounter between religion and the Internet. We follow with a presentation of the basic steps in the study of religion and the Internet in order to summarise the «locus» of the evolving studies on the subject until now, underlining how such studies present not only a promising future in the area of Media, Religion and Culture studies, but also in the understanding of its consequences in the perception of authority and its geopolitical consequences regarding the three religious traditions that centre our attention. We then present a more specific approach to the way Judaism, Christianity and Islam have faced the new Internet paradigm, offering an example of some of the transformations that this new paradigm has generated within each one of the religious traditions regarding their respective relation with technology and with the issue of authority. Finally we will offer some considerations regarding the possible lines of research regarding the relationship between the Internet and the three Abrahamic traditions as an open space for the future development of Media, Religion and Culture studies and geopolitics.

5.1. THE INTERNET ERA AND ITS CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

As we have shown along our study, understanding religion's entanglements with old and new media is best approached through a theoretical and historical perspective that sees both religion and media embedded symbiotically in the matrix of cultural life rather than as separate phenomena that simply engage with each other. Religious traditions are, as we have seen, not simply a product of unconditioned divine revelation immune from the mundane conditions within which it arose and developed. All of the different expressions of religion in general –and the Abrahamic traditions in particular– are the result of powerful emotional and intellectual drivers involving overt or covert power struggles involving complex economic, political, cultural and social interests that are given meaning and

structure within specific religious traditions that linger in time and space (Campbell, 2010: 10).

These interests and struggles are also embodied in different patterns and hierarchies of mediation practices by which they are socialised and which become an inherent part of the content and means of the struggle. Every expression of religion, every experience of spirituality, every religious idea, is a mediated phenomenon (Stolow, 2008: 189). It is mediated in its generation, in its construction and in its dissemination. In the process of its mediation, it is incarnated with particular grammar, logic, validations, sensibilities, frames, industrial requirements, cultural associations and structures, power relationships, opportunities and limitations that give it nuances that contest with other mediations of the same faith and its internal pluralism (Chesebro and Bertelsen, 1996: 142).

The arrival of the Internet as a form of communication is not an exception in this entangled relation between time, technology, belief and social transformation. The Internet has seen many phases since its introduction to the commercial and household market in the 1990s. In this decade we have watched the Internet evolve, moving from Oldweb to Web 2.0 as the introduction of Internet-based applications and programs have led to a new system of production, distribution and consumption of online content that is facilitating interaction between users and resulting in the exponential growth of Internet sites around the world (Briggs and Burke, 2002: 321). As it does, it is impacting on how religious traditions are understood, experienced and practiced by believers whose cultural experience incorporates both their online and offline life. But in what ways will religious traditions (and in particular Judaism, Christianity and Islam) become different in this new cultural environment?

The phrase Web 2.0, was first coined by Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle to describe a new set of Internet applications such as social networking sites, wikis, file sharing networks and syndication sites (Levinson, 2009: 130). Social networking sites include websites such as Myspace and Facebook, where users create their own personal web pages in order to make and maintain connections with other users. Wikis are single web pages that allow for «collaborative authoring», i.e. data input and editing from many authors in any location. File sharing networks include sites like Flickr and YouTube, where users offer still images and videos for storage and free distribution among other users. Syndication sites, or «feeds», are pages that appear in a range of web sites, like weblogs and wikis, that contain data read by web-based programs (like Bloglines.com and Google Reader) and some web browsers (such as Mozilla Firefox and the latest version of Microsoft Internet Explorer), in order to alert these programs regarding new information published on their host sites. A user can create an account on Google Reader and list the location of the syndication feeds of all the weblogs the user likes to read. Google Reader will then alert the user when new information is

posted on the weblogs. In effect, these applications produce a new web page for the user built from information retrieved from a mass of other sites.

These new systems of online information storage and sharing represent a new step in the evolution of online technology, communication and culture. Fifteen years ago, online communication accessible to the ordinary user was limited to e-mail, news groups, instant messaging and chat rooms designed by outside operators. Personal web pages were created by only those who had some time to learn basic HTML script, and some money to buy web space through their Internet service provider (ISP) (Levinson, 2009: 11). These pages were fairly static: any change to web content required the author to remove the page from the site, edit it and send it back. Audiences, or users, of online content were separated by its producers by technical knowledge, access to online storage space, time and money. Now web-based applications allow users to create and store information online without as much need for knowledge of HTML and other web languages or the purchase of web storage space. Web 2.0 applications allow ordinary users to create personal web pages, contribute to the creation of online content on group pages, store information online free of charge, and even create systems of online ordering and retrieval.

As with the convergence of printing that we have explained in precedent chapters, a number of factors have led to this new step in the evolution of online communication. The first is technological advancement. Improved program semantic systems (for example, the invention of XHTML from HTML) allowed form to be separated from content (Winston, 1998: 321)). This means that for many web sites, the way information is ordered, stylised, structured and presented on a web site is kept on a separate page from the information itself. With this separation, information could travel to and from web locations, be collected and presented on one page, without having to transport masses of data. Computers and web-based applications can now simply locate, identify, and 'cut and paste' pieces of information from all over the World Wide Web and present it according to the design specifications of their users (Levinson, 2009: 8).

The second is the increased access of households to the Internet. In many Western countries, for instance, ten years ago the basic Internet set up in the home was a dial-up connection allowing data transfer of 48 kbps (or 6 kilobytes per second), that was turned on for no more than one hour per day on average. Now, broadband connections are available in the home that can carry up to 1 megabyte (1,000 kilobytes) per second (Levinson, 2009: 15). The web-connected computer has moved from the parents' study to the family room and children's bedroom desks and life has become in many countries more «connected», relying more on the Internet for information and entertainment than ever before.

A third factor in the evolution of online communities has been diminished trust in major corporations and institutions holding control of information, especially newspapers and television news programmes. New Internet applications have been welcomed by those seeking alternatives to mainstream news sources (Briggs and Burke, 2002: 330).

The fourth major factor paving the way for Web 2.0 is the open-source movement. Fed up with the poor quality of software produced by the big companies, their financial stronghold on technological development, and their lack of response to the changing needs of their own markets, individuals have collaborated to produce and share alternative software without restriction. In an open-source environment, software is available free of charge to any user, yet there is an assumed agreement that any user that develops improvements on currently used programs will also offer their versions freely (Levinson, 2009: 180).

Considering these factors, the Internet as we see it now may be seen as a challenge to the institutional structure of information distribution in our society, or even a revolutionary act. The buzzwords that are often associated with Web 2.0 are «producers» and «democratisation». In the world of Web 2.0, the producers of online content are not separated from their audiences (Levinson, 2009: 12). They are, in fact, members of the same group: producer + user = «produser». People logging on to YouTube or Facebook to check for new information are using the same sites in the same way as those logging on to offer their own video or music creations. The audiences of YouTube and Facebook consist of both users and producers of the sites' contents. As a consequence Web 2.0 applications provide alternative settings for the sharing of information that may be rejected, downplayed or ignored by mainstream media platforms. Never before has the Internet had the potential to raise the awareness of issues that are important to audiences not recognised by mainstream media producers. Web 2.0 offers a glimpse of a Utopian vision where control of the flow of information is taken from large communication corporations and given back to the public (Fuchs, 2008:127).

Just as the Reformation utilisation of print to extend faith ownership to the lay person challenged the XVIth century Catholic premise that God is available only through the mediation of an assigned religious authority, the new media web challenges the presumption that information is only available to the public through media organisations and their journalists or, in the case of religious information, through religious institutions or publishers. As in Luther's campaign that no intermediary is needed to communicate with God, new Internet applications allow direct access to find and contribute to the flow of information in society, including religious information. This thesis highlights the claim that these new Internet technologies are ideological in nature, and not purely technological.

Where some media scholars argue that no new technology enters society without some sort of moral or ideological value, they see Web 2.0 being embraced by people who seek a change in the current system of information distribution and control (Fuchs, 2008: 132). Consider weblogs as an example. Known more conveniently as blogs, these are by far the most popular manifestation of Web 2.0, with over 86 million sites and approximately 175,000 new ones being created each day. The blog is, in its simplest form, an online diary, a collection of articles (or posts), organised in reverse chronological order (Levinson, 2009: 19). The diary page is powered by a blogging program which allows the user to enter new information without having to edit and republish the entire site. Blogger.com, WordPress.com and TypePad are among the most popular blogging software programs that allow users with limited knowledge of web design to produce individual blogs either on the user's own storage site or on the program's own server. Most of these blog programs are free of charge. Blogs don't exist in isolation from each other. As authors read books, so bloggers also read others' blogs. Bloggers respond to comments made about their posts. They publish lists of their favourite bloggers on their blog's front page or sidebar. They make references to posts on other blogs, with hyperlinks so readers can follow conversations occurring over multiple sites. Bloggers recognise they are part of a blogging community, recognise common blogging etiquette and rules of behaviour, work to build friendships and relationships of collegiality and trust with other writers (Levinson, 2009: 27).

What impact can be seen of blogging and Web 2.0 on Abrahamic religious traditions? Since the Internet became a household name, the World Wide Web has been used for religious purposes. People have joined chat rooms to talk about how to make relevant and inclusive worship spaces. People have subscribed to e-mail lists to connect with people of the same denomination across the globe. People have read online magazines that criticise the actions of bishops and priests. Churches have made web pages displaying photos of their buildings and published their religious leader's contact details and preaching times. People have joined newsgroups seeking alternative forms of spiritual practice. Almost every form of religious community in the offline world has had a counterpart form on the web, where people congregate to pray together, worship together, discuss social justice and theology, write songs and make art, make community and care for one another (Campbell, 2010: 11).

If we see these traditional online, or Oldweb, gathering spaces as «online churches», then blogs can be likened to «online house churches». While the email lists, newsgroups and chat rooms of Oldweb were constructed by religious leaders and organisations, whose moderators were relatively faceless and impersonal, blogs have become meeting points where the host is only too keen to let him or herself be known, to welcome the user into

«his/her own space». And while e-mail lists and chat rooms had relatively few links to other online places, bloggers are only too eager to show you which other house congregations they attend, invite you to join them there, and give you directions. The networks of blogs becomes a neighbourhood of religious communities, where bloggers and audiences meet in different places, even at the same time.

Sociologists, theologians, and cultural theorists involved in the fifteen year-old tradition of research into religion online have always debated the future of specific religious traditions, and whether the Internet will lead to a rebirth of a spirit-filled people, or to the ultimate demise of organised religion (i. e. Levinson, 2009; Fuchs, 2008; Briggs and Burke, 2002; Campbell, 2010). Many now agree that from an institutional perspective, online forms of religious community serve more as a complement than as a replacement to religious expression and communion in the offline world. For many, the virtual provides a space to explore new forms of religious expression that can be carried into life offline, and for them the virtual church offers a glimpse of what «real» religious communities could be like. For the same people, however, there are elements of «real» religious communities that cannot be replicated online, so they seek a harmony in their online and offline religious experiences.

That does not mean that the complementary nature of online religion will leave offline religion untouched. In the same way that the facility of printing and the widespread implementation of printing within the wider culture changed the cultural construction of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the same may be expected of the Internet. Several of these challenges can be identified to illustrate the point. Here we propose four:

New Religious Language: as people use new forms of media technology to communicate, new forms of discourse will emerge to fit the medium (Lundby, 2013: 226). Already it can be seen that bloggers tend to shy away from using the terms favoured in academic discourse upon which modern theology was developed and is still taught to seminarians today. As bloggers and their audiences reflect on their experiences, contextual theology will favour the language of online communication. Religious identity defined institutionally within academic theological discourse or particular forms of controlled ritual and/or spirituality will become increasingly alien or useless in evoking the experience and practice of a specific faith.

Contextual Doctrine: those who fear that the rise of online religion will lead to the death of organised religions in society focus on the issue of religious authority: where does authority lie in religious communities when those without any formal grounding or education in religious history, thought or practice communicate their ideas as readily and as widely as those formally appointed to positions of leadership in religious institutions? It may be, however, that the greater challenge to organised religion is how theology is done and

how doctrine is applied to everyday life, rather than who is specifically authorised to do it (Cheong, 2013: 73). As life online becomes an increasingly important part of people's whole cultural life, and as people take up the opportunities and permission to share their own views about God and the world in Web 2.0, theologies developed in Jeshivas, seminaries or Madrasas –to quote the study centres of Abrahamic religions– may increasingly lose their universality or wider relevance to the general understanding of religion. Just as, in the early years of the Reformation, the alternative Catholic viewpoint lost influence because its authors kept their ideas in the closed circles of Latin rather than enter the circulating debate taking place in the vernacular of the new medium, simply continuing the current practices and attitudes of Christian theology will expose it for what it is: the offline, limited circulation discussions of a particular interest group within Christianity. In its place, new questions of what/who God is, how God is and the relevance of God-belief in the offline-online blogosphere and cyberspace will produce new conversations and directions for religious expression and action.

Simplification: While the «mega-church» model of evangelical Christianity has become one of the ideals of successful Christianity in the current climate, or the «Mega Mosques» in Arab countries have become the symbol of Muslim political identity, with the Internet being a significant tool in that, religious life in Web 2.0 also offers the networking alternative of more intimate and stronger connections with a relative few (Helland, 2013: 32). As the blogosphere is filled with a multitude of options, many users also seek a small niche by which to connect closely with like-minded seekers. The cumulative effect of these numerous smaller intimate groupings offers an alternative conglomeration of religious believers equal to the more visible centralised large assembly embodiment of traditional religious groups.

Glocalisation: Internet users seek connections with people on the web regardless of their location, to build important relationships, find belonging and enhance their religious life in their own contexts. Religion online offers a global perspective to local life (Campbell, 2013: 61). The merging of these two outlooks devalues the impact of regional and national structures on which today's religious traditions are organised (Helland, 2013: 28). In the future, a congregation's connection to their religious leader or moderator may matter less than their connection to a congregation in South Africa, South Dakota or South Korea with whom they are sharing rituals, hymns and social projects.

As we have seen the separation of mediated experience from physical experience has become an artificial distinction. Printing at the time of the Reformation changed the construction of Christianity, not by creating a Christianity that existed within books and a Christianity that existed in «real life». People's lives became an interactive amalgam of the

realities experienced and acquired through what they read, what they heard from others, and what they experienced as a physical reality. In the same way today, as the Internet becomes an increasingly integral part of life and a dominant source of information for the average user over television, radio and newspapers, and as the average user becomes more integrated into online life, able to produce and publish information with greater ease and skill than ever before, online identity and community will be inseparable from life offline. How offline religious communities and organisations are integrated into and fuelled by the Internet, rather than how they are affected by it, will be a major direction of research in the future. But signs of certain main trends, as we shall see, seem to be appearing.

5.2. THE STUDY OF THE INTERNET AND RELIGION: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

While a growing body of literature is accumulating around religion and Internet studies, the interdisciplinary focus within studies of religion and the Internet has meant in some respects this area remains a disparate collection of ideas and approaches. O'Leary & Brasher's (1996) article, «The Unknown God of the Internet», provided a foundational overview of how religion began to be influenced and manifested in online environments. This was followed by the landmark article, «Cyberspace as sacred space» (1996), where O'Leary, details the emergence of religion online by identifying how online rituals perform an important function, enabling users to import their religious sensibilities online.

These articles marked the starting point for serious academic inquiry into religious engagement on the Internet and led to a decade of diverse research. These ranged from focused studies investigating the connections between online and offline religious practice, such as a study of prayer in a multi-user virtual reality environment by Schroeder and colleagues (1998), to large-scale studies of user behaviour patterns such as those undertaken by the Pew Internet and American Life Project Wired Churches, Wired Temples (Larsen, 2000) and CyberFaith (Larsen, 2001), which provided empirical evidence about the religious use of the Internet. A decade after the publication of *Cybersociety* (Jones, 1995), that earmarked the birth of Internet studies, Baym in a special issue of *The Information Society* (2005) highlights the fact that religion online has become a valid part of the emerging field and a dimension in need of more attention (Campbell, 2005c).

Since 2000, three key edited collections on religion online have been produced which highlight the diversity of research topics and approaches related to new expressions of religious practice seen in networked computer technologies. The first edited collection was *Religion on the Internet – Research Prospects and Promise* (Cowan & Hadden, 2000), bringing together early studies of researchers in the above-mentioned disciplines in an attempt to mark out the Internet's new sphere for studying religion. In this volume, Dawson

stated «sociology of cyberspace, let alone religion on-line, is still in its infancy» (2000: 49). This links the research of religion online to similar struggles being faced by those taking an interdisciplinary approach to study of life online in the mid-1990s.

In reviewing the main academic literature one realises that the study of religion online followed a similar path to Internet studies, beginning with simple research topics and basic questions which attempted simply to describe what was happening online. These approaches likewise had to be refined over time as the research matured. Dawson and Cowan (2004), in the second edited collection, state that the first studies on religion in cyberspace veered towards «utopian and dystopian extremes», «mirroring the speculative nature of many of the first works published on the social impact of the Internet. As Internet studies began to come into its own field in the late 1990s with substantial empirical studies emerging, religion too began to receive more serious reflection. Yet in Dawson and Cowan's assessment the study of «how religion is being practiced online is only just beginning». They emphasize a need to «understand developments online in the context of wider social and cultural conditions changing life in later-modern societies» (Dawson and Cowan, 2004: 9).

In one of these collections, Hojsgaard and Warburg (2005) provide a helpful but brief typology which identifies three waves of research related to the academic study of religion on the Internet (Hojsgaard and Warburg, 2005: 8-9). The imagery of a wave is used to show how particular research questions owed scholars in a particular direction, and eventually gave rise to new areas of interest. This development also illustrates how the study of religious communities online has correlated with the overall growth of Internet studies, with progressive changes occurring in the questions asked, methods used, and topics pursued.

Hojsgaard and Warburg describe the first wave of research on religion online as focusing on the new and extraordinary aspects of cyberspace, where religion «could (and probably would) do almost anything» (Hojsgaard and Warburg, 2005: 8). The Internet is seen as a tool and symbol for religious and social transformation. Initial interest in many studies was in how this new technology created possibilities for new religions, or at least provided practitioners the possibility of reinventing traditional religious practices online. As Brasher states, the Internet «reconfigures the content of what we do and redefines who we are» (Brasher, 2001: 4). First-wave studies in the 1990s were often excessively utopian or dystopian in their views: the Internet was seen as either building religious solidarity or potentially destroying traditional religiosity. Many of these early studies were focused on a single case study – a specific online community, website, or other online environment – and were highly descriptive, seeking to simply define the range of religious practices and phenomena online (Hennerby and Dawson, 1999; Davis, 1998).

The second wave, as Hojsgaard and Warburg describe it, was built on early descriptive studies but moved towards a «more realistic perspective» by seeking to more concretely define and compare different forms of online religious phenomena. Researchers began to understand that it was not simply the technology, but rather people who were generating these new forms of religious expression online. They began to put their findings on topics such as online community and identity construction within a broader and more critical perspective, thus drawing on sociological, political, and philosophical debates and research related to community and identity in general. An important contribution in this area was Helland's (2000) popular distinction between religion-online (importing traditional forms of religion and religious practice online) and online-religion (adapting religion to create new and interactive forms of networked spirituality). This distinction has been employed by many researchers seeking to distinguish forms of religion in online environments. There is also a marked movement in the second-wave studies to try to link findings related to online religion with offline developments in religious structures. For example, a special symposium issue of *Religion* (2002), describing itself as «a second wave of academic studies» on religion online, and building on the work of Brasher and O'Leary (1996), Wertheim (1999), and Zaleski (1996), sought to categorize and begin to theorize about the changing shape of religion in a wired world, as well to inaugurate «a new-sub-field of religious studies» (MacWilliams, 2002: 277).

As research questions and methodologies have begun to mature, Hojsgaard and Warburg deduce that a third wave of research «may be just around the corner» (p. 9). They describe this research as a «bricolage of scholarship coming from different backgrounds with diverse methodological preference» (p. 10). Third-wave research thus will probably be marked by more collaborative, longitudinal, and interdisciplinary explorations of religion online. One example of this is Laney's (2005) study of application of uses and gratifications theory in order to determine the relationship between personal motive or desires and Christian website usage. This is also exemplified by the work of the University of Colorado's Centre for Mass Media and Religion, which has taken a lead in investigating how the Internet acts as «symbolic or meaning resource» used by spiritual seekers in contemporary society for religious orientation and formation practices (Hoover and Park, 2004). If newer studies such as these of religion online are indicative of what is to come, we can expect to see a sharper turn towards theoretical and interpretive scholarship. We will see individual, focused studies seeking to relate their findings to other research in an effort to further analyze the implications of life online for wider society, and to provide grounds constructing theoretical frameworks to aid in these interpretations. Third-wave studies will also seek to demonstrate how studies of religion online add unique insights and help contribute to the

overall understanding of life in a global information society. Our approach to the relationship between on-line religion and geopolitics is, for example, an attempt to go further in this third-wave paradigm.

Hojsgaard and Warburg's description of the «state of the field» in terms of waves of research illustrates how religion and the Internet can be seen as an evolving area of study, and one in need of continued mapping. It is important to note that these waves imply a process. Each wave or phase of research moves forward with a distinctive approach informed by a certain set of cultural and social perceptions about the research topic it is studying (i.e. how the Internet is perceived and understood at that moment). As knowledge is gained so is impetus: the research wave gathers information until a critical mass moves it towards a peak and then a break-point. At the breakpoint, some questions fall away and insufficient approaches or methods fall aside. Yet instead of the wave completely disappearing, the knowledge gained creates new momentum and gives birth to another wave which is pushed forward by a new set of questions and refined approaches. One wave of research gives rise to the next.

Yet this is not to say that researchers not involved in the initial waves of research of religion online are excluded from future exploration. Rather, this is a helpful image to show how the area has moved forward from focus on the descriptive and definitional, to developing typologies and comparisons, to entering a phase focused on theory and interpretation. As new technologies and religious trends emerge online, it is likely that this will require further waves or phases of research to emerge in order to map, contextualize, and analyze the implication of these occurrences.

Using the image of a wave provides a helpful attempt to describe in more detail how different questions and approaches have arisen and been carried forward in the past decade of research on religion and the Internet. This sets the stage to investigate how one key area within studies of religion and the Internet community has been approached.

5.3. ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS AND THE NEW INTERNET PARADIGM

As we have seen along our study, while Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each have their own unique history, belief system, and religious rituals, they also share commonalities, especially when it comes to the basis for their interactions with media. Heidi A. Campbell suggests that these three religions' patterns of media negotiation are guided by three factors (Campbell, 2010: 19):

- (1) how they define their distinctive communities around issues interpretation of core beliefs and practices,
- (2) their tradition of interaction with their sacred texts, and

(3) their unique understanding of religious authority (i.e. leadership roles and community hierarchies) serving as the primary guide to their responses to text and community.

These areas, as Campbell underlines, are crucial in order to understand a religious group's response to any new form of media, especially the Internet. As we have noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Internet as a network of networks represents a collection of diverse software, networking applications, and forums that allow innovative forms of religious interaction and ritual.

In many respects it is a hybrid technology combining different text, images, and sound into a new media forum that serves as a digital playground of new opportunities for sharing and experimentation. While it is considered a new media, the opinions and concerns raised about use of the Internet by many religious users are not new and can be clearly linked to base concerns about how religious groups frame the idea of community, authority, and written media or texts (Campbell, 2013: 60).

Religious views of media are readily informed by one's conception of religious community. It is not only their affiliation with a specific set of beliefs and a tradition, but how those practices are lived out that defines a religious community. The boundaries of a particular religious community are established by agreed-upon standards of interpretation based on a particular groups' understanding of the role text plays in the community and what authorities have the right and responsibility to guide these interpretations (Cheong, 2013: 68). Therefore groups with more conservative or literalist interpretations of their sacred texts and a high dependence on recognized religious authorities to dictate those interpretations often have a stricter understanding of communal boundaries than others, as seen in the ultraorthodox Judaism or Shia Islam.

This varying sense of boundaries and obligations means, as we have said in the precedent chapters, that religious faith traditions are unlikely to have a monolithic or unified response to a given media. Rather responses are negotiated and dictated by the life patterns of the specific group to which religious believers belong. For this reason, when it comes to media like the Internet one can expect that, for instance, Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians will differ on the sources they turn to for advice regarding technology use and the extent to which certain innovations are encouraged or embraced because of their histories and view of authority. Therefore it is important to consider not only the tradition a religious community comes from but also the particular characteristics and lived practice of the specific group when reflecting on media use (Cheong, 2013: 88).

Also, because tradition and teachings instruct religious communities on how sacred texts should be interpreted, handled, and performed it must be recognized that these

instructions also form the basis of a «theology of communication», as we have indicated on the chapters on each one of the Abrahamic religious traditions. This means that within a given religious community there are inherent, embedded rules of how media should be treated and conceived of, arising from communal beliefs.

As we have tried to demonstrate in precedent chapters, observing the relationship of the community to its sacred text as a sort of basic communicational reference can provide clues to these unspoken guidelines. For example, Orthodox Jews consult both oral as well as written texts in the process of interpretation and encourage a high level of intellectual and dialogic engagement in order to attain textual meaning (Jaffee, 2001). Yet they will not physically touch the Torah, because it is considered holy, and is created through a highly regulated process laid out in Torah law. The advent of the printing press thus raised unique Halachic problems. Could sacred documents such as a Sefer Torah, tefillin (psalms), or mezuzoth (blessings placed at the doorposts of homes) be printed in light of traditional and accepted mitzvot (rules)? Over time, mitzvot were adopted by many groups related to the art of printing to allow for wide acceptance of printed prayer books and other documents (Cohen, 2012: 228). However, the craft of handwriting certain sacred texts is still revered and preferred by some Jewish groups. Thus the digitization of texts through the Internet again has raised issues within Judaism about the production of sacred texts.

The flexibility or rigidity of interpretation of rules surrounding sacred text sets the tone for how a religious community views and treats the written word in general. Those in the Jewish tradition who highly value dialogic discussion and engagement with sacred text over the singular adjournment of the interpretations of recognized rabbis and interpreters have also historically had a greater openness towards using other printed materials such as newspaper to facilitate a cultural connection through the Jewish Diaspora (Blondheim and Blum-Kulka, 2001). This means a Jewish community's relationships with and beliefs about religious texts may have consequences on their views of different forms of mass media. Thus what a religious community believes about the use and role of text within the community plays an important role in guiding future media use. Paying attention to a community's historical approach to text can provide important indicators of how they will approach and decipher new forms of media (Horsfield, 2015: 263).

Finally, as we have underlined in the research overview regarding religion and the Internet, it is argued that religious responses to media are informed by a community's view of religious authority, especially in relation to the interpretation of sacred texts (Cheon, 2013: 72).

For instance, Shiites often refer to recognized imams for the application of the Qur'an, while Sunnis may refer to a preferred legal tradition to help in their understanding of

Quranic meaning. For one, religious authority is based on specific authority roles; and for the other, authority comes from recognized religious structures. Yet for both the source of authority sets the boundaries for acceptable construction of meaning. Identifying what a religious community considers to be a source of religious authority in relation to text may serve as an indicator of what sources will hold authority in the future engagement with media.

This leads to another issue: religious leaders play an important role in relaying or mediating the construction of meaning about official sources of information. As we have underlined at the beginning of this chapter and in the Chapter regarding communication and Christianity, the defence of reformed Christian religious leader of the use of the printing press for religious dissemination and to proselytise created a baseline of tradition within Protestantism that has enabled future generations to advocate the use of radio, television, and as we shall see later, the Internet for evangelization (Eisenstein, 1979; Walsham, 2000). By presenting the printing press as God inspired and created, leaders not only blessed its use, but in many respects forced their communities to utilize it (Loach, 1986). Seeing media technology as a God-given resource to be embraced for religious purposes is a legacy and belief clearly seen in the media usage of many Protestant Christian groups, especially in an era of televangelism and religious Internet use.

Therefore, how religious leaders present a given technology and the rhetoric they employ may open or close doors for future media technology to be introduced to that community. Thus it is in careful observation of the engagement of religious groups with «old media», as it were, that we begin to comprehend the factors influencing their decision-making regarding new forms of media, such as the Internet. This means that community, text, and authority serve as key elements in order to understand religious engagement with new media.

As stated before, the Internet has become a space populated by users who have gladly brought their faith online with them, and as a result have developed a countless cybertemples, online prayer chapels, religious discussion forums, and information portals that enable them to live out their faith in a networked environment. Yet, as suggested above, the choices made by religious Internet users are often strongly informed by the religious communities they belong to. These choices related to Internet use and innovation are also often guided by previously established views about religious authority, community, and even older mediums such as printed text.

Thus even in an age of new digital media, religious Internet users frequently act in line with the trajectory proposed by their community's negotiations with previous media. In

order to consider this more fully, we will explore Jewish, Christian and Muslim perceptions of the Internet.

The presentation of this part of our dissertation offers, first, a general overview of the rise of religious information on the Internet, outlining the dominant forms of religious use—a point that should not be confused with the study of religion and the Internet we have developed before—. This leads to an investigation of how each of these religious traditions and different groups within them have responded to the Internet.

Through surveying how voices within each Abrahamic religion have critiqued as well as advocated the use of the Internet we seek to demonstrate that a religious tradition's beliefs regarding religious text—and its communication—, authority, and community play a significant role in determining one's position about the nature of the Internet and the future engagement of that specific religious tradition to future communicative mediations. At the same time we will underline how the digital media paradigm also opens a path towards a new geopolitical understanding of the religious group due to the new parameters it establishes between recognized authority and the specific understanding of the religious experience of individuals belonging to that faith.

5.4. THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION ONLINE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

As Heidi A. Campbell states (Campbell, 2010: 13) for almost three decades the Internet has been used as a space where spiritual rituals are conducted and traditional religious beliefs are discussed. Religious use of the Internet can be traced back to the early 1980s. It was a time when religious computer enthusiasts began to explore «ways to use this new means of communication to express their religious interests» (Lochhead, 1997: 46). Rheingold documents some of the first religious-orientated activity taking place at this time on Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) under a «create your own religion» discussion area on CommuniTree. The Origins conference described itself as «partly a religion, partly like a Westernized form of yoga society, partly a peace movement» and brought together people from a variety of religious persuasions in online dialogue (Rheingold, 1985). However, it was not too long until this evolved into numerous BBS forums on religion, some «connected with real-life congregations» and traditions such as Christianity, to others that seemed to «come in sixteen shades of unorthodox» focused on paganism or New Age cybernetics (Rheingold, 1993: 134-5).

During this same period religious discussions began to surface on Usenet. Helland has documented discussions how in 1983 anxiety from Usenet users about how religion-focused dialogue seemed to be dominating the miscellaneous discussion group section eventually led to the creation of «net.religion» (2007: 14). This became the «first networked

forum for discussions on the religious, ethical, and moral implications of human actions» (Ciolek, 2004: 22). Discussions on net.religion were diverse, but tended towards Christian discourse and debate. This led to eventual tension with Jewish members of the group who felt the need for a space where they would not be immediately criticized for advocating their beliefs and traditions. After applying to the Usenet administrators and substantive debates surrounding the implication of creating a religion specific group their request was granted, and in 1984 «net.religion.jewish» was created. Six months later «net.religion.christian» was born as religious dialogue online continued to grow. By the late 1980s other groups emerged and split into the hierarchies of «alt.philosophy», «alt.religion», «soc. Culture», «soc.religion», and «talk.religion» during a reconfiguration of Usenet. Throughout the late 1980s many other religious computer enthusiasts formed online groups dedicated to their specific religion, such as the Christian email newsletter «United Methodist Information» (Campbell, 2005: 22).

By the 1990s increasing numbers of religious groups, especially email discussion lists, were forming online such as: Ecunet, an ecumenical Christian email list service (<http://www.ecunet.org>), H-Judaic (<http://www.h-net.org/~judaid>), and BuddhaNet (<http://www.buddhanet.net>). Also, the first virtual Christian congregation was established in 1992 by American Presbyterians, a non-denominational online church called «The First Church of Cyberspace» (<http://www.godweb.org>) that hosted services until 2007. This marked the birth of a generation of online cyberchurches and temples that served as repositories of religious information, provided online prayer centres, or even hosted weekly Internet-based meetings or rituals (Campbell, 2010: 35).

By the time the publication of Time magazine's special issue «Jesus Online» appeared in 1996, dozens of religious websites could be found online: from the first monastic website, Monastery of Christ in the Desert (<http://WWW.christdesert.org>) and first Islamic e-periodical, Renaissance: A Monthly Islamic Journal (<http://www.renaissance.com.pk>), to the first Zoroastrian cybertemple (<http://www.zarathushtra.com>) and the establishment of the Virtual Memorial Garden, a tribute to people and pets (catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg/).

Chama's article «Finding God on the Web» also proved an important landmark, as the main-stream media recognized the prevalence and importance of religious activity online. As it stated:

«For many signing on to the Internet is a transformative act. In their eyes the web is more than just a global tapestry of personal computers. It is a vast cathedral of the mind, a place where ideas about God and religion can resonate, where faith can be shaped and defined by a collective spirit». (Chama, 1996: 57)

The article provided examples of how online religious seekers were cultivating traditional and non-traditional religion in a new media context.

The late 1990s saw the rise of numerous religious portals and hubs seeking to connect religious seekers with the growing number of resources online at such websites as Crosswalk (<http://www.crosswalk.com/>) and Gospel.com (<http://www.gospelcom.net/>) that provided Christians with access to online Bible study tools and various interactive devotional or fellowship groups. Websites providing access to new forms of religion were also on the rise, altering and adapting ancient beliefs to this digital environment. Ancient religions, such as Wicca (NightMare, 2001) and new religions such as technopaganism (Davis, 1998) –neo-paganism adapted and celebrated in a technological context–found homes online. Also, experiments in religious inter-networking emerged, most notably Beliefnet, (<http://www.Beliefnet.org/>), a «multi-faith e-community» which offers thoughts for the day from the Dalai Lama, inspirational screensavers, and access to sacred text from different faith traditions.

By 2000 religion had been firmly established on the Internet's virtual landscape (Campbell, 2010: 32). Religious organizations, groups, and individuals continue to create and import new forms of religious ritual and community practice online. In the past decade, we have seen even more novel examples of religion spring up online such as «godcasting» or religious podcasting which involves the production of religious-style talk shows, sermons, or other audio MP3 hosted by anyone from televangelists to home school mums [see: The Godcast network (<http://www.godcast.org/>) or GODcasting. tv (<http://www.godcasting.tv/>)].

Blogging, or Web logs, emerged in the late 1990s from the online diaries appearing on many journalist's personal websites. Between 1998 and 1999 several blogging platforms and hosting tools were launched including Open Diary, Live Journal, and Blogger.com. From these came the emergence of the blogging revolution, and by the early XXIst century religious blogs came on the scene such as those found at religious blog hubs such as Jblog: The Jewish and Israeli blog network (<http://www.israelforum.com/blo~home.'php>), Christian blogs (such as christianblog.com and thechristianwoman.com, just to quote two examples out of many others), and Muslim blogs at (hadithuna.com).

Cybertemples and churches continue to surface online today, taking advantage of the latest technologies and innovation to experiment with new forms of religious gathering. One experiment that received much media attention was the Church of Fools (<http://www.churchoffools.com/>), the UK's first Web-based 3D church, sponsored by the Methodist Church of Britain, and the satirical website Ship of Fools. Beginning in May 2004, Church of Fools ran highly publicized weekly services that allowed congregants to attend as

avatars that could sing, pray, and interact synchronously in a 3D multi-user environment. Within its first twenty-four hours online, the church had 41,000 visitors and raised much discussion in the international press about the implications of an online church for organized religion (Jenkins, 2008). While the weekly gatherings ceased after three months, the virtual church remained online allowing parishioners the opportunity to drop in and visit the sanctuary or crypt and interact with others in a 2D environment with a bulletin board and chat room.

Through this interaction a group of participants met there and formed St Pixels: Church of the Internet in May 2006. The community offers blogs, chat rooms, and a «live» online worship forum to its members. St Pixels's mission is «exploring online Christian community to test the boundaries of what exactly church is and needs to be to “be church”» (http://www.stpixels.com/view_page.cgi?page=discover-one).

With the continual advancement of virtual reality technologies, virtual worlds have become a popular place to socialize, and even experiment with religion. This is exemplified by Second Life (<http://secondlife.com!>), a 3D virtual world launched in 2003 that allows residents to interact via a motional avatar to explore, socialize, play, create, and do business with other virtual residents. Through cutting-edge virtual reality technology, it allows residents to literally create a «second life», claiming that anything that can be done in the offline world can be recreated in this environment.

As Therefore it should not be surprising that religion also plays a role in Second Life (Radde-Antweiler, 2008: 32-33). For example, you can visit Second Life Synagogue-Temple Beit Israel for Shabbat services, (<http://slurl.com/secondlife/nessus/18/146/103>), participate in a virtual hajj (<http://slurl.com/secondlife/IslamOnline%20dot%20Net/128/128/128>), or attend weekly worship at ALM CyberChurch in Second Life (<http://almcyberchurch.com/>).

Second Life has allowed its citizens not only to import their religious practice online, but even re-envision their faith in ways not possible offline. This can be seen in the rabbi who has recreated the second temple that was destroyed in Jerusalem in CE 70 (at Holy City <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Holy%20City/9/5/29>), an act many Orthodox Jews long to do in the offline world, but which is not possible. The Internet allows devotees to live out their religious vision in innovative ways that suggest it provides a powerful space to bring together the "now" and the "not yet" sides of religious eschatology (Radde-Antweiler, 2008: 44).

Religion online is also about creating safe spaces online. Many religious groups have become concerned about the negative side of social networking, exposing their members to secular values or problematic sexual content. Related to this has been a trend towards the creating of religious versions of popular social networking sites like My Space and Facebook,

such as Jew- mango (<http://www.jewmango.com/home.php>), Muxlim Spaces (<http://spaces.muxlim.com/>), or Xianz (<http://www.xianz.com/>!). Religious versions of the video-sharing website Youtube.com have also been launched, such as Jew- Tube.com and the popular GodTube.com (found at tangle.com). These sites seek to offer an alternative venue for religious believers to participate in the same activities offered by these popular sites, but in the context of a community of like-minded believers and values (Sarno, 2007).

Religion online continues to grow, as does the variety of religious forms of participation online. It is likely that as new innovations, programs, and networks emerge, so will religious applications and alternatives.

Despite the variety of expressions of religion online, several dominant forms of use seem to surface. Campbell has identified five narratives that help explain the common ways religious users employ the Internet to fulfil certain spiritually motivated goals or uphold specific religious beliefs (Campbell, 2005b: 107-123).

–First, the Internet may be seen as a spiritual medium, facilitating spiritual experience for individuals and communities and so it is utilized as a spiritual network or a place where spiritual encounters are made and activities performed.

–The Internet may also be seen as a sacramental space that can be set aside for religious ritual or activities, so that the Internet becomes a worship space.

–For some the Internet is primarily used as a tool for promoting a specific religion or set of beliefs, and so the Internet becomes a missionary tool for making disciples or converts.

–The Internet may be viewed as a technology to be used for affirming one's religious community, background, or theology; here the Internet can be seen as helping an individual build and maintain a particular religious identity by connecting into a global, networked community of believers.

–The Internet may also be viewed as a functional technology. In this sense, the Internet is viewed as an essentially useful technology, supporting the social practices or tasks valuable to the religious community.

However, as Stout points out (2012: 74) the Internet itself is essentially neither sacred nor secular in its character. The Internet as a spiritual network, worship space, missionary tool, religious identity, and functional technology illustrates the variety of motivations of religious use of the Internet. Considering these roles also helps us uncover the motivations and frame discourse offered by different religious communities in relation to the Internet.

As asserted along this dissertation, Judaism, Christianity and Islam represent religious traditions that are composed of multiple communities informed by different

theological and historical distinctions. This diversity means that making monolithic claims about one faith's unified use or opinion about the Internet is difficult. Therefore, in exploring these traditions' engagement with the Internet in the next section, distinctions are made wherever possible to highlight which particular community in these faith traditions that specific claims about the Internet are emerging from.

In the next sections we will explore the specific relationship of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to the Internet, paying special attention to the appropriation of Internet technology by religious community members belonging to specific groups.

In the section regarding each religious tradition, besides the general considerations regarding each religious tradition, we will offer examples of their specific response to the internet: the Jewish ultraorthodox and the National Religious groups, the Protestant Evangelical and the issue of authority, and the moderate Sunni Islam's Amr Khaled phenomenon.

5.5. JUDAISM AND THE INTERNET

Our presentation of the relationship between religion and the Internet now leads us to the specific Abrahamic religious traditions. In this section we present the relationship between Judaism and the Internet, starting with a general description of the development of the use of Internet within Judaism, followed by a description of the relationship between Judaism and technology as an essential element in order to understand the issues at stake. Finally this section presents a case study centred in the use of Internet filters on behalf of Jewish communities in Israel.

5.5.1. A Historical Overview of the use of Internet by Jewish Communities

As described above, Judaism has had presence on the Internet since the early days of online religion. This has taken a variety of forms, from websites linking users to anything from kosher recipes to news from Israel (Jewish.com or kipa.co.il), online Jewish dating services (Jdate.com), to online consultation sites providing «ask the rabbi» services (askarabbi.org or aish.com/rabbi), Jewish shopping (zionjudaica.com or rotem.net), popular online Jewish magazines (jewcy.com), and sources for studying Torah (torah.org). The Internet also offers Jews around the world new access to the ritual of their faith such as Web cams providing live viewing of the Western Wall, a point of pilgrimage and prayer for Jews (<http://www.aish.com/wallcam/>), participation in the centuries-old tradition of placing prayers in the Western Wall via an email request (http://www.aish.com/wallcam/Place_a_Note_in_the_Wall.asp), or even joining an online

minyan (quorum of ten men over the age of thirteen needed in order to take part in community prayer) prayer service on Shabbat (<http://newsiddur.org/listen/index.html>).

While some concerns have been voiced over time by Jewish religious leaders about the potential «landmines along the information highway» (Y Herman, 1995), during the 1990s Jewish Internet use continued to grow (Cohen, 2015: 183). In the 1990s a number of guide books to Judaism online were produced (Green, 1997; Romm, 1996; Levin, 1996) providing an introduction to the diversity of resources found online. By 2000 several books had appeared reflecting on Jewish use of the Internet. Rosen argued in a positive light in *The Talmud and the Internet* that in many respects interaction with the Internet reflects traditional engagement with the Talmud, both being timeless, unbounded texts.

Hypertext of the Internet provides conceptual linkages allowing online readers to flow from the initial text to related sites and sources. Similarly the Talmud represents an interactive argument where readers are linked between different verbal universes and traditions as readers' engagement with the text becomes a journey of meaning-making (Rosen, 2000: 9). Rosen states,

«The Internet is also a world of unbounded curiosity, of argument and information where anyone with a modem can wander out of the wilderness for a while, ask a question and receive an answer. I take comfort in knowing a modem technological medium echoes an ancient one». (Rosen, 2000: 10--11)

He goes on to stress that the Internet also provides a new virtual home for the global Jewish community. Just as the Talmud provided a grounding for Jewish tradition and meaning in the great wanderings of the Jewish community post the destruction of the Second Temple, so the Internet possesses the ability to bind the Jewish Diaspora together as a repository of stories, shared belief, and a meeting space (Rosen, 2000: 12).

Hammerman in *thelordismyshepherd.com: Seeking God in Cyberspace* (2000: 91) suggested that the Internet could be used for spiritual reflection and development. He stresses that computer use is changing the way people of faith, including Jews, think about God and personal faith as he challenged people to think of the Web as potential holy ground, a meeting place between God and humanity.

Yet that same year many prominent Israeli ultraorthodox rabbis issued an edict that publicly banned the Internet in their communities. The ban initially came about in October 1999 from the Belz Hasidic sect in Israel, and a few months later it was endorsed by Israel's Ashkenazi Council of Torah Sages (Sherlick, 2003). The Internet was described as a communal threat and danger to the Jewish people, especially because the Web provided easy access to pornography sites and thus a potential source for transgression, or at the very

least a *moshav letsim* (a seat of scorn) or a social gathering where no matters of Torah are discussed (El-Or, 1994: 101). While a full ban on computers had been proposed, this was rejected because computer proved valuable for studying Torah and running businesses. Rabbis in Israel urged the Jewish community around the world to recognize and embrace this ban (see Associated Press, «Ultra Orthodox Rabbis Ban Net Use», 10 January 2000).

The ban was in general ignored by non-Orthodox Jews and was also met with mixed responses by different ultraorthodox communities. The American Lubavitch Hasidim in Brooklyn, while recognizing the wisdom of such an edict and the motivation to protect innocent children from secular and pornographic content, made no efforts to reduce their growing Web presence. The Lubavich, also known as Chabad worldwide, are known for their embrace of physical objects and technologies to spread their word, and especially to reach out to secular Jews. Chabad are known for having a strong proselytizing outreach to the secular Jewish community. American Lubavitch operates a series of virtual Jewish Centers online that seek to target secular Jews and draw them towards a religious lifestyle, such as Chabad.org (Kamber, 2000).

Other ultraorthodox groups supported the ban to a certain point, but they continued to work as computer programmers, using the Internet only when it was imperative or unavoidable for their work (Coleman, 2000: 3). Still others followed, though quietly criticized, the ban as merely a fearful response «that technology will act as a mainstreaming force in the community» threatening its separatist nature without fully considering the potential benefits it might afford them (Coleman, 2000: 1). It is important to note, as underlined by Cohen (2015: 185) that the American ultraorthodox community's response to the Internet is relatively under-studied in comparison with the Israeli ultraorthodox community, yet such accounts suggested some diversity of response towards the Internet exists within the different ultraorthodox communities in different cultural contexts.

In the next few years there was a slight softening of the ban on the Internet within some sectors of the ultraorthodox world. The Internet continued to be seen as a potential danger and gateway to the secular world and its values (Tsarfaty and Blais, 2002). Yet it was also recognized that the Internet offered benefits to the community, such as enabling women to work more easily from home (Livio and Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2007: 30). This positive social affordance also created new tensions as discourse moved between highlighting both the possibilities and the dangers. Livio and Tenenboim-Weinblatt's study of ultraorthodox females who used the Internet for work-related tasks felt they needed to legitimize this use in the face of potential communal criticism. This meant they tried to distinguish the technology itself from the content produced, separating personal and

societal effects, drawing on acceptable justifications such as statements of religious officials or depoliticizing use by denying any subversive implication of the technology. In general, their study found women spoke about Internet technology in ways that deliberately framed it as compatible with community values, such as allowing them to work at home, and affirmed discernment of use, such as requiring active decision-making during use and the forced filtering of content (Livio and Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2007: 50).

Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai's (2005) study of ultraorthodox Internet users of the website Hevre (<http://www.hevre.co.il>) that helps friends from the past to connect with each other once again, also found similar strategies of Internet negotiation at work. They found that the rabbi's condemnation of the Internet was challenged by economic demands of the community, where computers and the Internet allowed women to work at home. This led to a change in official views about the technology, but also required the technology to be reshaped to fit within the boundaries and beliefs of the community's culture by framing it as a "textual communication tool" that could encourage traditional forms of communication such as response online or studying religious texts (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai's, 2005: 38). Yet this access also has created fears that empowerment may lead to a breakdown of traditional hierarchies and patterns of life related to omen and work. For some religious authorities, this raises concern, while for other sects this innovation is praised (Lefkovitz and Shapiro, 2005: 121-122).

One response to this increased flexibility to the Internet has been the creation of software and services meant to make the Internet «kosher», or «pure». For example, Koshemet is an Internet service provider (<http://www.koshernet.com/>) that automatically blocks websites and even emails focused on topics such as drugs, violence, hate speech, sexually explicit topics, personal dating (except kosher sites), chatting, and «many other websites that are inappropriate for the Jewish environment», as the webpage underlines. Created for Orthodox Jewish and supported by the Rabbinical Council for Communication Affairs in Israel (<http://www.religionnewsblog.com/18352/kosher-Internet>), the website suggests that using the Internet without Koshernet is like driving a winding road with your eyes closed.

Also Jgog (<http://www.jgog.net/>) offers a Hebrew search engine created by an Orthodox Israeli programmer. While the site appears similar to the Hebrew version of Google, it is a uniquely Jewish-focused search engine in that the filtering mechanisms block or redefine «unorthodox» words or searches.

The debate over the place of the Internet in ultraorthodox communities continues, especially as its diffusion becomes more pervasive in both secular and religious society. One of the key issues related to this is the question of authority, whether or not the remit of the

religious leaders of various communities still holds weight and should be heeded. Such is highlighted by the words of one rabbi:

«Today the Internet has penetrated our community, but with the same strength we will uproot it too. [...] Unlike our neighbours in the secular world we are not confused. We recognize the danger; we see the inadequacy of partial orientation; and we know what needs to be done. We possess a vaccination: [...] Our gadolim [religious leaders] have advised us to remove the Internet from our homes, and so we will do». (Kelemen, 2003: 12-13)

For the ultraorthodox the Internet is essentially a functional technology, facilitating work patterns that are seen as a benefit to the life of the religious community. As we have underlined at the beginning of this section, within Jewish communities –and not only ultraorthodox ones– it is recognized that the Internet may also be used as a spiritual network, enabling community members to engage in the study of Torah. However, this act is still seen as potentially problematic for the secular content one might accidentally encounter in this pursuit. Presenting the Internet as a functional technology also becomes an important tool for ultraorthodox users trying to justify Internet use in their work. For Lubavich, who have a strong «evangelistic-like» outlook towards the secular Jewish community, framing the Internet as a missionary tool also becomes an important way to justify their use in non-work-related pursuits.

This reframing of the Internet as a functional, work-related tool by community members has also impacted official community policy. In July 2008 the Belz Hasidic court, which initiated the first Jewish official ban of the Internet in 1999, issued a statement allowing community members to use the Internet for work-related purposes, although there was a debate surrounding the limits of this permission. This use, however, was contingent upon members using a «restricted Internet» provided by one of a number of Israeli Internet companies (Sela, 2008).

One of the most popular of these services is called Internet Rimon, which developed a number of filtering programs for the Haredi but also for the National Religious Jews in Israel (moderate) in order to create a «kosher Internet», by blocking content that has not been pre-approved by community leaders (Sela, 2008; Spira, 2008). The work of Internet Rimon and its use on behalf of National Religious Jews is explained further on in this chapter as a case study that illustrates an interesting area of study of the relationship between religious traditions and the Internet.

Now we would like to underline that the religious leaders' response and change in position has been influenced by continued community use and rhetoric related to the Internet, as well as an attempt to regain social control over the technology by setting

distinctive boundaries for use. Through this brief exploration we see that religious authority –namely religious leaders– plays an important part in the community response and supporting discourse surrounding Internet use.

In order to offer a broader approach to the understanding of the relationship between Judaism and the Internet, in the following section we will discuss the link between Judaism and technology, thus allowing us to understand better the case study centred in Jewish Internet filters.

5.5.2. Judaism and Technology

As we have seen individuals and religious leaders within Judaism take a concerned and reflective approach towards media technology, firmly grounded in their relationship to the Torah, the central religious text of Judaism. As we have underlined in the chapter related to Judaism and communication, the application of Torah may differ among different Jewish communities. For instance Reformed Judaism sees the Torah as God-inspired, given through the medium of one or more human beings, rather than God-given in its entirety. This distinction allows them to have a more open or fluid translation of the Torah. It becomes a source of Jewish history and the story of Israel's relationship with God, but not a strict ethical document to be applied literally to the contemporary context. And so Halacha is viewed as emerging under divine influence, but also shaped by factors such as historic interpretations, the influence of rabbis, folk customs, and other cultural influences.

Because of this, Halacha is not seen as binding, and Reformed Judaism advocates the application of modern scholarly research methods to religious texts in order to contextualize their meaning within current times and to define how the texts relate to the life of the contemporary Jew. Thus Reformed Judaism allows for greater flexibility of interpretation than Orthodox Judaism, enforcing few practical limits or aspects of religious law.

The variety of interpretations of Torah are connected with the fact that communities within Judaism respond differently to the use of technology. For those within Conservative or Reformed Judaism, a typical response to technology is often to set no boundaries, but to advocate education and encourage self-control of users. Yet, as we have seen in this chapter, the Jewish Orthodox response tends to set some form of limits. This boundary setting is often described as «building a fence around the Torah» (Cohen, 2015: 188).

Since the Torah serves as the central source of community guidance of what is permitted and what is not permitted, setting tight limits is seen as a way to protect

community members from violation. Torah is seen as the book of righteousness and truth; to put a fence round it is to protect religious Jews by ensuring they do not violate some law intentionally or unintentionally.

As we have stated along our dissertation, understanding, interpretation, and application of Torah forms an important basis for understanding Jewish engagement with media technology. Teaching and interpretation of Torah create traditions that guide community practice that serve as the prime source for decision-making related to expectation of religious life and accepted daily practices. While the limitations placed on religious Jews regarding technology use, especially around Shabbat, this does not mean that they are antagonistic towards technology.

Many scholars have argued that Orthodox Judaism has historically had a positive relationship with science and technology, which can be correlated with willingness to embrace media for religious and other social means. Noah Efron, a Historian of Science at Bar Ilan University in Israel, has shown in his work how nineteenth-century rabbinic literature and early Jewish writings of the twentieth century are supportive of new technologies, which has influenced modern Jewish culture's appropriation of new forms as well (Efron, 2007).

Efron's work suggests that there are two reasons for the Jewish embrace of technology. First, he claims there is a long standing Jewish tradition towards scientific innovation that is linked to developments in XIIth century Jewish history in the European Jewish Diaspora. Second, he suggests that the Zionist project, especially in Europe, identified technology with progressiveness and enlightenment. Zionists saw the Levant region of the Middle East as poor in resources, but felt that with the embrace and employment technology they could move it forward in progress (Efron, 2007: 22-23). Rather than ambivalence to technology he argues that the Jewish world has readily embraced technology (p. 25).

The Jewish embrace of technology by the religious community has always been in light of its core religious teaching. New inventions and technological developments are readily embraced when they are seen as improving the world and life (Efron, 2007: 54).

If these approaches regard Judaism in general, the Orthodox perspective affirms using technology within traditional boundaries. It is important to note that while, technology is being discussed here in the broad sense, there are nuances of difference in the Jewish approach to communication technologies and other forms of technologies such as eyeglasses, refrigeration, or medical technologies. Technologies which are seen as enhancing and extending human life are often more readily accepted, especially when exceptions must be made in regards to their use in light of religious law. Communication technologies which can be framed also as extending life –such as the telephone which can connect one with

medical help in the face of a life-threatening emergency– are more readily appropriated within religious communities for their support of the core values of the community (Campbell, 2010: 168).

In light of this the ultraorthodox often take a stronger approach in relation to the appropriation of communication technologies, such as in the case of leaders of the Belz Haredi community in Israel declaring use of the Internet forbidden for its members in 1999. This is not because everything on the Internet is forbidden or that the technology has no value; it is so they are not put in a situation to be tempted to do something that is wrong. The ultraorthodox often set very wide boundaries around technology so that they in no way come close to violating Torah by their use (Cohen, 2015: 200).

Discussion of rule-making and setting firm boundaries is very important for the ultraorthodox of Haredi and has been the preoccupation not only of rabbis but also of Orthodox scholars and academics. Yehuda Leo Levi, a retired professor from Jerusalem College of Technology in Optics and Engineering, has a special interest in the intersection between Science and Torah. Levi was raised and continues to be part of the ultraorthodox community. He has also worked alongside other Orthodox scientists for over thirty years to address the challenges posed by Judaism's interaction with the sciences (see Carmell and Domb, 1976). For over two decades much of his work has focused on how the sciences can be seen as a tool for the advancement of ideas about the Torah (1983, 1998, and 2004).

While Levi recognizes that there is often a negative perception of modern media technology, especially amongst the ultraorthodox, he believes this does not mean it should always be totally dismissed. Technology and the sciences provide tools for creation and the betterment of the world, acts technology, he urges that Jews must consult the Torah as a map to navigate a World where there is much confusion (Levi, 2004: 34).

As we have pointed out in the chapter about Judaism, Ultraorthodox communities typically characterize media technologies (i.e. TV and the Internet) as symbols of modernity and secular values, traits from which they consciously distance themselves. Thus for ultraorthodox Jews decisions about technology use are often problematic and tightly linked to their community's understanding of religious law and communal boundaries (Cohen, 2006: 193).

Under this perspective, in Judaism the use of technology is often a question of purity. When technology use crosses a potential transgression between the sacred-secular boundaries it is viewed as highly problematic. Discussions about technology use often focus on the subject of law- making to protect community members from breaking Torah. These discussions are often facilitated by rabbis and religious leaders and are often framed in terms of the possibilities and dangers that the technology affords the community.

Discussions about Judaism and technology are often framed in terms of religious obligations and official restrictions related to technology, often tied to official mitzvot (religious rules). For example, how electrical appliances might be used on Shabbat, or reasons for forbidding televisions in homes, as it symbolizes the epitome of secular values, seen as a device aimed at moral seduction (Stadler, 2005: 220).

The multiple layers of meaning that exist around different forms and categories of technology with Orthodox Judaism suggest a need for further, more detailed investigation than is possible here (Wahrman, 2002: 9).

As we can see even within highly conservative segments of the Orthodox community technological inventions and developments are often embraced, as part of the world which has been given by God. When those technologies come into conflict with the tradition of the community, informed by religious laws and teachings, it does not always mean they will be immediately rejected.

Therefore, it is vital for researchers in the area of Media, Religion and Culture to start by uncovering the history and tradition of that specific community. It is from this grounding that the patterns of use and discourse about media and technology can be outlined. However, simply identifying the historical decisions and traditional practices of a community is only the starting point. Religious communities are living, dynamic entities informed by the culture in which they exist. The historical background is prologue, but the current setting of the life of the community must also be considered. This leads to the exploration of the core beliefs of the community in the contemporary context to see how they are being lived out and how the core values of a particular community shape their current use and response to the media, as we propose in the following case study regarding the Jewish Internet filters and their implications regarding a new form of shared authority.

5.5.3. Case study: Jewish Internet Filters and Shared Authority

Internet filters are a type of content-control software that allows users to monitor and block access to undesired images and messages on the web. Some filters are attached to the browser (such as Chrome's safe search preferences), others to the operating system (i.e., Windows 7 parental controls), and yet others are independent programs installed on a computer (i.e., Net Nanny).

In contrast, Internet service provider (ISP) filters are installed by the provider. When the Internet reaches the household, the content has already been filtered. Any device that connects to the Internet in the household through that ISP receives the filtered contents. ISP filters can only be modified by the provider, although users can usually request a

modification by calling customer service. In this sense, the ISP filters offer a different, more holistic type of technological solution to the problem of unwanted content in the domestic sphere (Levinson, 2009: 176).

ISP filters, like other filters, offer users the opportunity to delegate moral authority. By choosing to connect to the Internet through an externally filtered source, users partially remove the burden of responsibility for providing morally correct Internet for their children or themselves (Levinson, 2009: 178).

In this section we discuss the use of Internet filters within Judaism centring our attention in the research regarding the National Religious families in Israel –that is the observant Jewish families in Israel that do not consider themselves a part of ultraorthodox groups– and their negotiation with the Internet in the home as a form of recognition of an «authority» that marks the line between «pure» and «impure» Internet contents, creating a new form of control over media contents in the Internet era.

As we have underlined along our research, as lived religion, Judaism is expressed through adherence to mitzvot (commandments) not just in the synagogue but in the domestic sphere and everyday life as well. In the case of the National Religious community in Israel the interface between the Internet and Judaism is found at what Ruth Schwartz Cowan (1987) named «the consumption junction» or «the place and time the consumer makes choices between competing technologies» (Schwartz Cowan, 1987: 263).

This means that, for observant Jewish families, media choices fall within the broader context of negotiation with the secular, «modern» world. As we have said, for ultraorthodox Jewish communities, such as the Haredi communities in Israel today –who regard themselves as preservers of the one and only right course of action– any media use that could possibly disturb the cultural and religious status-quo should be strenuously avoided (Deutsch, 2009: 5). Therefore, television is explicitly banned in Haredi households by the rabbinic authorities in addition to Internet and the use of «smart» phones (Campbell, 2007, 2011; Deutsch, 2009; Rashi, 2012). But, as recent research has unveiled, for National Religious Families in Israel this reaction towards new technologies is not the case. The question, though, remains: where should the frontier be marked regarding the contents found on the Internet in order to avoid the involuntary access to contents opposed to the Jewish Law?

Here we explore the possibility to surf the Internet via Rimon (<http://www.rimon.net.il/en>), an Internet service provider (ISP) that offers varying degrees of filtering (visual and verbal) for its religiously observant subscribers. Rimon is the Hebrew word for «pomegranate», which symbolizes abundance and fruitfulness and is customarily eaten at Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year). By choosing to name the company with this

traditional fruit, the company countered the negative discourse of certain Haredi Rabbinical authorities regarding the Internet (Campbell, 2011; Campbell and Golan, 2011; Deutsch, 2009) and branded its Internet services as safely within the confines of Jewish religious tradition itself. Rimon Internet is Jewish Internet with abundant content that remains safely within the boundaries of what is permissible in the domestic sphere. That means that, by choosing Rimon, a religiously branded filtering system rather than simply a secular Internet service, Jewish communities are able to integrate the Internet into their religiously inflected domestic sphere and to express their Jewish lifestyle and identity through their Internet use.

By installing the filter, National Religious Jews in Israel –and especially parents– share with Rimon the moral responsibility for maintaining an observant lifestyle while surfing. Bruno Latour (1992) has highlighted the role of nonhuman actors in social life. It is only by recognizing the ways in which humans delegate authority to nonhumans and vice versa (in other words, the ways in which technology shares the burden of moral responsibility) that we can gain insight into the ways networks operate (Latour, 2011: 798).

As we have seen in the historical presentation of the relationship between the Internet and Judaism previous research on Jewish communities in Israel and the Internet has largely focused on ultraorthodox / Haredim Judaism (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai, 2005; Campbell, 2011; Campbell and Golan, 2011; Livio and Tenenbaum Weinblatt, 2007). Self-defined as «antimodernist», the negotiation of Haredi communities with technological innovations is striking and well documented in the secular and religious press, in a series of wall posters (*pashkevlim*), and even well orchestrated rallies against media (Nathan-Kazis, 2012; Mendelbaum, 2011). Researchers have documented the tension between the need and the value of using the Internet for particular purposes, and the perception of the threat it poses to traditional lifestyle and knowledge transmission. Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai (2005) suggested that while rabbinical authorities were weary of the potential impact of the technology on the community, users were adapting the Internet for their own purposes, reinforcing the sense of community rather than only challenging its boundaries. Livio and Tenenbaum Weinblatt (2007) focus on the discursive strategies employed by ultraorthodox women to rationalize and explain their computer use, despite its problematic perception amongst their family and peers. Likewise, Campbell and Golan's (2011) research on websites directed to ultraorthodox users, and their challenge to religious authority, detailed the process of web production and the delicate balancing act required by the relevant actors (webmasters, designers, rabbis) to innovate while preserving social and cultural boundaries.

But little attention has been paid to other Jewish religious groups. National Religious Jews constituted 11.7% of the total Jewish population (in contrast to the Haredim that constituted 8%). Within this population, there are diverse religious and political

perspectives: right and left; more «lax» and more «pious» (Dati «light» and Hardalnikim), but nonetheless, more than 80% define themselves as right wing and more religiously inclined. The National Religious community defines itself in contrast to both the Haredi and secular communities (Waxman, 2004: 225).

The Haredi communities are often defined sociologically as enclave or bounded communities, with very clear boundaries (Heilman and Friedman, 1991; Stadler, 2002). In contrast, the National Religious community viewed integration with secular Israeli society positively, as originally had the modern Orthodox movement in the XIXth century and, as a consequence, is integrated in secular higher education and economic life (in sharp distinction to its Haredi counterparts). National Religious rabbis are less likely than their Haredi counterparts to issue public statements condemning one form of technology or another as potentially problematic. Science and religion are not viewed as inherently opposed to one another, but rather, science is viewed as a resource to be harnessed (Waxman, 2004: 228).

Thus, within National Religious communities in Israel, Technology is conceptualized as a neutral tool that can be helpfully harnessed in order to remain observant in the contemporary context. But as portions of the community become more strictly observant (or interpret aspects of practice in what is conceived by most to be a more strict approach to observance), they too seem more likely to practice a kind of cultural separation either by desire or default of their geographical location (Gabel, 2006: 12; Kleinberg, 2004: 6).

As we have underlined Rimon is a commercial ISP company. It presents itself as catering to religious needs and is reported to have anywhere between 20,000 and 50,000 household subscribers. It offers complete Internet service (including e-mail) to home subscribers and recently began a new service, Green Track, for smartphones (Ziv, 2013).

Rimon is marketed in synagogues and National Religious communities, and in some neighbourhoods it is the normative choice for Internet access. Directed at Israeli households that view themselves as traditional or observant, Rimon offers five levels of Internet filters to accommodate a variety of religious perspectives and consumer practices: (a) Protected Track, (b) Protected Track Plus, (c) Protected Track Squared, (d) Preserved Track and (e) Hermetic Track.

As the official webpage asserts, each track provides consumers with a different conception of the Internet, its potential use, and its potential dangers. Briefly, the Protected Track provides full access to the Internet with the exception of websites that contain «pornography, nudity, drugs, gambling». The Protected Track Plus provides full access to the Internet within the boundaries of modesty as reflected by the current situation in the Israeli streets –that is, no websites that deal with «night life, fashion shows, swim suits, underwear

websites, and similar content». The Protected Track Squared blocks all websites that are considered to be news and entertainment while allowing access to financial and commercial websites. The Preserved Track blocks all websites with visual content that is not considered appropriate from a «religious perspective», without preventing access to verbal content. Finally, the Hermetic Track allows limited access to the Internet for practical tasks (i.e., bus schedules, government offices) and Torah-related content. Both visual and verbal content are controlled in the Hermetic Track.

The tracks in Rimon begin with the most open and become increasingly censored. Etrog (<http://etrog.net.il/>), the sister service of Rimon directed to Haredi Jewish communities, operates from the opposite assumption: the tracks are listed from most restricted to the least restricted, with the first track: e-mail and list, including only personally selected websites; the Practical Track includes only banks, governments institutions, weather, transportation, Torah websites, and some of the Haredi news sites. The Expanded Track allows for those sites on the practical track as well as «economic sites», «municipal and regional governments, charities and other funds», «professional websites that the chance of them being problematic is close to zero» and other industrial services such as cleaning, exterminator services, weatherproofing and so on. Etrog is endorsed on the website by a list of rabbis and rabbinical courts. The difference between Rimon and Etrog mirrors the difference in their potential consumers: National Religious of varied levels of observance (from religiously light [«Dati-light»] to Hardalnikim and Haredim from varied communities with different levels of concern about Internet access).

With Rimon the subscriber theoretically does not have to exercise choice to make the correct moral decision, rather he or she is shielded from encountering situations that would require an act to avoid the problematic materials (i.e., closing the pop-up or website that has offensive materials). The user has ceded moral authority to the filter.

Behind Rimon's filter, however, there are human labourers choosing which sites to block and which to leave open, and designing and adopting algorithms based on the users' responses. When a user tries to access a website that has been blocked, and he or she believes it to be «safe» and mistakenly labelled, he or she can call the company, using a password, in order to «release» the website for access (see Rimon webpage).

This means that there is a human judging the materials in this censorship process, yet nowhere is there an explicit articulation of the criteria (beyond the brief descriptions of the tiers of filters) used by this network. Filters create and preserve the boundaries of imagined and real communities: they signify and symbolize belonging to a certain worldview about masculinity, modesty and a established moral framework.

Turning away from the rhetoric of prohibition and avoidance that characterizes the Haredi leadership's approach to new technologies, and from the media-saturated lifestyle of the average secular Israeli consumer, National Religious Jews try to operate within the world while remaining observant. The Internet is embraced, not as the free marketplace of ideas that early entrepreneurs of the web envisioned, but rather a restrained and domesticated version that does not transverse the invisible yet clearly articulated cultural boundaries of their users.

For-National Religious Jewish families who choose to use Rimon the Internet is recognized as a part of everyday life, and Rimon is the means by which they domesticate the technology in order to signify and preserve their religious lifestyle. While self-identified secular Jewish Israelis might employ filters in order to shelter their children from unwanted contents, their motivation for such an act is not articulated in terms of their desire to be part of a specific faith community, or to keep their home «Jewish», but rather in terms of parenting style. In contrast, Haredi use of the Internet is far more circumspect, reflecting a parallel approach to daily life that is more separatist in tone and practice than their National Religious counterparts.

Etrog or other similar services for Haredim work differently than does Rimon because they offer a limited approved list of websites that can be accessed rather than filtering the Internet for problematic materials. Rimon provides a technical solution for a community that views technology as an ally in its effort to remain in the world while being halachically observant. In that sense, Rimon is perhaps not so different than other technological «solutions» for keeping Shabbat (Sabbath), like the electric timer, the Sabbath elevator, or the Sabbath kettle (Campbell, 2010: 67).

The study of Internet filter services has still a lot to say to Media, Religion and Culture studies from different perspectives. Within the context of our study we have underlined the shared authority of discernment between the Rimon Internet Service and its National Religious Jewish users in Israel, a form of authority that differs from other Internet services that are based on a restriction of access to specific websites alien to a specific religious trend (e.g. Etrog for the Haredi).

Within the context of the Jewish understanding of communication and technology that we have explained above, this shared form of authority presents itself as a novelty with important geopolitical consequences due to the fact that believers share the criteria of selection of their access to subjects offered through the Internet, thus opening a fissure in the hierarchic control of information. The area of study of Internet filters is yet to be developed, but the mixed collaboration between big-data geographic Internet filter-use analysis regarding religious groups may turn out to be more surprising than it may seem.

5.6. CHRISTIANITY AND THE INTERNET

Christian denominations have had an interest in the potential uses of the Internet for different purposes. In this section we offer a brief historical approach to the use of the Internet on behalf of Christian communities and faithful, followed by a presentation of the relationship between technology and religions according to a few of the different Christian traditions. We conclude with a case study centred in African Pentecostal communities and the globalization of the Pentecostal movement due to an adaptation of this medium to the objectives and characters of this growing Christian denomination.

5.6.1. A Brief History of the Christian use of the Internet

Christianity has arguably been the most dominant religion represented online since the early days of the Internet. Christians from a variety of groups and communities have willingly embraced the Internet to re-envision traditional forms of practice and utilize the technology for religious purposes. For example, in 1986 a memorial service was conducted online in remembrance of the US space shuttle Challenger, which exploded soon after take-off. Organized on the Unison network BBS, the memorial involved a liturgy of Christian prayers, scripture, and meditations followed by an online «coffee hour» designed to allow individuals to post reactions to the tragedy. This online service «demonstrated the power of the computer medium to unite a community in a time of crisis beyond the limits of geography or denomination», with shared faith becoming a connection point (Lochhead 1997: 52).

From the mid-1980s to 1990s there was a steady rise in the formation of online Christian communities and networks seeking to network people of faith and share their spiritual lives online, Christian individuals began to envision new ways of performing church within cyber-congregations, and online interaction expanded their understanding of the global body of Christ. At the same time the Internet was also presented as the new mission field and tool for spreading the gospel (Campbell, 2005: 62-3).

Just as the printing press was lauded by Protestant Christians as a revolutionary tool for spreading the gospel in the vernacular of the common people of Europe, a new generation has come forth and embraced the Internet for the task of spreading Christian beliefs. As Charles Henderson, an early advocate and founder of the First Church of Cyberspace, stated, «Through the printing press, Christians became a people of the book, Now, the Internet invites all believers to become a people of cyberspace» (Henderson, 1996), Groups such as Gospelcom.net took this call to heart and in 1995 launched a Web

alliance of ten Christian ministries, such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Campus Crusade for Christ, to serve as an online gateway and resource hub for Christians on the Internet. While numerous Protestant groups and individuals embraced the Internet, it was the Catholic Church that became a significant early adopter of the net, the first religious denomination to do so.

According to Sister Judith Zobelein, a webmaster for the Vatican when it was launched in 1995, the Catholic Church readily embraced the Internet in the early 1990s as a tool to accomplish its mission. «Our community is oriented towards evangelizing, if you will, in different ways, and really getting out the message of the dignity of the person in the tools of today» (Viganó, 2013: 152). In his 1990 World Communication Day messages, the late Pope John Paul II urged for the Church to embrace the opportunities offered by computers and telecommunication technology to fulfil its mission. As he stated:

«In the new “computer culture” the Church can more readily inform the world of her beliefs and explain the reasons for her stance on any given issue or event, She can hear more clearly the voice of public opinion, and enter into a continuous discussion with the world around her, thus involving herself more immediately in the common search for solutions to humanity's many pressing problems». (PCSC, World Communication Day Message, 1990)

However, the Catholic Church somehow underestimated the interest this involvement and presence online would garner. For example, the Vatican website crashed soon after it was launched when it was flooded with site traffic related to an «email the Pope» option being offered.

Also, in 1995 organizers of the Pope's planned visit to New Jersey decided to also set up a companion website aimed at «launching the Pope into cyberspace» during his US visit. The website titled «New Jersey Remembers the Pope's Visit» provided links to news stories, hypertexts of encyclicals, and RealAudio recordings of papal blessings. Chat rooms allowed individuals to discuss his visit and a revised «email the Pope» option meant users could send messages that were forwarded to the Holy See. The volume of email received meant communication officers had to offer automated responses on the Pope's behalf (Italiano, 1996: 36).

Yet, even with these problems in the information superhighway, the Catholic Church continued to experiment with new ways to use the Internet for religious education [i.e. Catholic Distance University at (cdu.edu)], news [i.e. Catholic online at (catholic.org)], and mission [i.e. Catholic Internet Mission at (<http://www.c-Internet-mission.net/>)]. Research has also shown that Catholic communities and institutes continue to readily embrace Internet technology for communication and ministries. However, those with a social agenda,

offering aid to the poor and sick, are likely to use it to a higher degree than those whose mission focuses on spirituality, such as prayer and contemplation (Cantoni and Zyga, 2007: 302). The Vatican has even launched its own YouTube channel providing news coverage of the Pope and to provide positive PR and information about the Catholic Church to the Internet public (<http://www.youtube.com/user/vatican>).

As a prime authority figure, the Pope sought to provide clear guidelines related to Catholic use and employment of the Internet. In 2002 the Pontifical Council for Social Communications produced two documents, one outlining ethical use of the Internet in light of the Catholic tradition of social justice (PCSC, 2002b), and another offering recommendations to Church leaders, educators, and parents on how to use the Internet in ways that glorify God and further the work of the Church (PCSC, 2002a). Yet even with these qualifications and some concerns raised about issues such as the digital divide and pornography online, the Pope's stamp of approval on the Internet as a «new forum for proclaiming the gospel» (PCSC, 2002a) has allowed Catholic use and appropriation to flourish.

Within the Protestant Christian traditions, the fact that Protestants do not have a similar voice of authority has meant numerous voices have emerged to rave and shout about the implications of Internet use. This is illustrated by three books published in 1997 from a range of Protestant Christian responses to the Internet. At one extreme, an edited collection by Tal Brooke (1997) and others associated with the conservative Christian think tank, the Spiritual Counterfeits Project, argued against Christian use of the Internet. They described cyberspace as creating an artificial reality which introduces problematic practices and conceptions of reality for those seeking to live by biblical truths. «Cyberspace is a breeding ground for delusion... creating the worst kind of alienation -from reality and from God» (Brooke, 1997: 176). He based this on the argument that technology tends to lead us down a path away from God and into a circle of self-deceit, as the Internet magnifies and accentuates the spiritual brokenness of humanity. Therefore he suggests, Christians should severely limit, if not outright reject, the Internet because of the moral and spiritual hazards it poses (Brooke, 1997: 178).

On the opposite side, Patrick Dixon, a British evangelical, enthusiastically described the Internet as the «greatest new market to emerge in the history of humankind and will cause a revolution» (Dixon, 1997: 17). He wrote that new forms of Christian practice such as «cyberchurch» would create a global networks of believers reproducing aspects of conventional church life in new and innovative ways. He argued that the embrace of the latest tools of technology is rooted in the Christian tradition, drawing links with the first «cyberapostle», Paul of Tarsus, who used the technology of his day to be virtually present in

different churches as well as eras. Christian churches thus should seek to incorporate technology into their local ministry and strive to have a global outreach as well (Dixon, 1997: 22).

On the other hand Douglas Groothuis, a professor from an American evangelical seminary, suggests that Christians should approach the Internet with caution. He questions what impact innovations such as hypertext will have on traditional interpretation of authorial intent and intellectual coherence, or what it will mean when the Bible goes online for Christians who are «people of the book». His concern is mainly that «technology has taken the place of deity and people serve it instead of God» (Groothuis, 1997: 15). By this he means that technology becomes problematic when users blindly follow it down its innate path that often leads towards secular goals and away from God. He indicates the Internet may offer Christian individuals and ministries new opportunities which should be considered and used, as long as the novelty of the Internet does not take away the believers' focus of their calling.

In the XXIst century, critiques and calls for embrace of the Internet continue to surface within Christian groups. There are warnings of how the Internet might be a threat to genuine Christian community, communication, and reciprocity (Schultze, 2002). Conversely, there is advocacy of the internet's potential to reinvigorate religious communication and make faith relevant to contemporary society (Zukowski and Babin, 2002).

Many of the concerns raised by Christian religious leaders are related to fears that Internet use will call Christian churchgoers to «Plug In, Log On and Drop Out» of face-to-face religious participation. However, research on religious use of the Internet does not support these assumptions (Campbell, 2004: 82). Researchers have found that practices and beliefs of Internet Christianity are closely connected to offline Christianity and its related communities (Young, 2004: 98). Even in instances when online Christian communities do develop unique theological methods or praxis they often base these on traditional theological doctrines and structures which are used to justify or legitimate these new forms (Herring, 2005: 60).

The Christian tradition engages in several of the narratives of religious Internet use. The Internet is praised for creating a spiritual network and religious identity that connects believers for shared interaction and support, whether it is in the face of tragedy or just living out one's faith in the every day. However, the focal point for Christians justifying their use of the internet lies in describing the Internet as a missionary tool.

Both Catholics and Protestants see the Internet as helping them fulfil their call to evangelize those outside the church. Catholics focus on how the Internet can be used to support their religious identity and theology in their social and spiritual outreach.

Protestants stress that the Internet becomes a tool that can be used by individuals as well as groups to fulfil the commission of expanding the gospel in unique and novel ways.

Critique of the Internet, especially seen here from Protestant Evangelicals, emphasizes that the Internet is not merely a functional technology but one endowed with problematic moral qualities like deception and a contribution to the disintegration of Evangelical principles. The Internet might indeed be a spiritual network, but they are concerned that the spirit of the Internet is rooted in anti-Christian values or inauthentic community. Thus these narratives can be used equally to support and critique the Internet. However, the goal of evangelism that can be realized through this technology seems in many respects to outweigh the criticism and cautions raised.

5.6.2. Christian Denominations and Technology

As we have repeated above, when religious groups choose to embrace a new media technology such as the Internet, in order for its use to be promoted by the community a framing process takes place. This involves presenting the technology in a particular light, that is, highlighting certain issues and potentially downplaying others. Presenting technology as acceptable for religious use and users involves affirming it in light of the values which are central, or at least compatible with, that of the community. This affirmation also involves instructions regarding unacceptable use or outcomes related to the technology. This may be explicit or implicit boundary setting.

A prescriptive discourse is used to affirm a technology by emphasizing a specific use that supports a core value or practice of the religious community. This is how evangelical Christians and organizations have advocated fellow members to utilize the Internet for the sake of e-vangelism. E-vangelism is seen as a central activity for these Christian communities and the Internet is described as performing a vital role in aiding contemporary proselytizing efforts. This discourse highlights a select task or tasks in order to direct member's engagement with it. It is not a full on endorsement of the technology, but it is an enthusiastic promotion for particular religious activities (Campbell, 2010: 142).

Here we see how different Christian denominations have sought to frame the Internet as an acceptable technology while possessing qualities that may be problematic within the bounds of the community's values and practice. This discourse focuses not as much on the functionality of the technology, but on the outcome of potential technology use. In officialising discourse the main concern is over the values promoted by Internet culture and content. Thus this discourse takes a broader approach, looking at where

technology might be leading the community of users and how they should respond to or redirect its use.

The Catholic Church quickly saw the potential of electronic media to be used as a tool to spread the mission of the church. The International Catholic Association for Radio and Television (UNDA) was founded in 1928 by a group of European broadcasters who early on saw potential links between the newly forming telecommunication industry and the mission of the Catholic Church. By the late 1940s a similar group formed in the USA, and the Catholic Broadcasters Association attempted to further unite Catholic communicators in order to share expertise and ideas of the potential religious uses of electronic media. While some caution was noted in these early explorations about the potential effects of using media for religious purposes (Evans, 1954: 168), for the most part both groups focused on promoting Catholic use and involvement in cinema, radio, and later television.

With the rise of televangelism Catholics and Evangelical Protestants embraced television as a new method for spreading their message. A report from the 1954 International UNDA Conference highlighted the positive Catholic response to television in Europe. It emphasized that recent messages from the Pope and high-ranking bishops at that time explicitly called for Catholic involvement in the newly emerging television industry, and so served as

«A reminder of the high authority that has been given to the religious use of television by the Pope's recent utterances... underlined the opportunity that awaits a constructive acceptance as means by which the church can meet whole areas of modern life too usually untouched by a Christian interpretation». (Evans, 1954: 166-7)

The Catholic call to readily adopt this new form of media was informed by a conviction of media's ability to serve primarily as a conduit for religious and moral messages. A key concern was not the newness of the technology, but what communicative practices it affirmed or potentially interrupted. As television emerged as a new medium «The primary question is whether TV is a new medium of communication at all, or only a bigger and better instrument for the circulation of existing communication» (Lockhart, 1954: 149).

Here we see the prescriptive discourse of promoting media use for specific ends. Attention was often placed on discussion of what religious functions new media support and what styles of communication they encourage.

Communal discourses have also been employed to address critiques from some sectors of the Christian community regarding concerns about the incorporation of new media for religious purpose. Using media to extend or perform the functions of church is one

area that has raised theological challenges for some sectors of the Christian community. Christian advocates of media usage thus have worked hard over time to frame technology as a helpmate to its mission, often using prescriptive and validation discourses to do so. Ben Armstrong, executive director of National Religious Broadcasters at the height of televangelism in the 1970s and 1980s, became an outspoken advocate for religious broadcasting. He strongly argued: «The electric church is not a replacement to the local assembly of believers, but a compliment to it» (Armstrong, 1979: 10).

He also stressed that, contrary to the critics' allegations, religious radio and television enhance church attendance, financial support, and spiritual growth (Armstrong, 1979: 144). Many scholars explored Christian responses to television in the 1980s (Abelman and Neuendorf, 1985; Schultze, 1987; Fore 1987) and found that religious use did not create a mass exodus from the predictions that many had feared in their critique of the phenomenon. In reality, Hoover's study (1990: 38) of the myths behind religious broadcasting found that not only did electronic church broadcasts not substitute for people's going to church, but it had not garnered a large and significant audience or an «invisible army» as predicted by televangelism advocates. However, concerns were voiced by sections of the Christian community about the potential dangers of mainstream television content, which led to a movement amongst some groups to discourage TV viewing and in some cases even remove TVs from the home (Rosenthal, 2007: 14).

In an Internet age, Christian groups, Protestant and Catholic, have once again framed this new media in optimistic terms, lauding the Internet for its potential ability to transform the spread of religion (Wilson, 2000; Zukowski and Babin, 2002). Christians called for active engagement in the new medium for the sake of the future of the church and the moral life of the emerging Internet. British Christian Patrick Dixon claimed in 1996 that «The Internet world needs cyberchurch, not as a substitute for local church life, but as a vibrant electronic expression of the life found in the body of Christ worldwide» (Dixon 1997: 162). Such claims were echoed by many religious practitioners who were readily going online, such as Charles Henderson, Presbyterian minister and founder of the First Church of Cyberspace, who proclaimed: «Through the printing press, Christians became a people of the book. Now, the Internet invites all believers to become a people of cyberspace» (Henderson, 1996).

This perspective has fuelled not only the birth of cyber churches and e-vangelism activities online, but motivated Christian groups to create new versions of popular media platforms for religious-only markets, such as GodTube, a popular Christian version of YouTube (Sarno, 2007).

There is some concern voiced by scholars of media and religion about the seemingly uncritical acceptance of media by religious groups. Indeed Christians argued, «Not surprisingly evangelicals typically focus on hardware, tools and mechanical artefacts while largely ignoring the values embedded in the technical process» (Christians, 1990: 338). Yet it as has been shown in this chapter the enthusiastic embrace of media by some Christian groups typically does not occur within a vacuum. Media engagement more often than not is contextualized by religious leaders and advocates with a defined discourse that frames the technology in a particular light. These discourses set boundaries for acceptable use for specific groups, as well as providing guiding mandates for Christendom in general.

For evangelical Christians we see a strong reliance on the idea of the Internet as a tool for evangelism, where the Internet serves as an extension of the self and one's personal calling to «make disciples». This is closely linked to a common evangelical missiology that focuses on reaching people over changing worldly structures. For Catholics the Internet becomes framed as a mission field or a space for people to inhabit in order to transform it towards a Catholic view of the world. This complements the Catholic social justice tradition that advocates setting up a religious space in the world that becomes transformative by the influence of the religious community.

One group which is not so easy to contextualize in relation to their framing of the Internet is mainstream or mainline Protestant Christian groups. Many mainline denominations do not have a clear or established discourse when it comes to their community's engagement with mass media. Scholars have argued that such groups have historically been tentative about posing a definitive response to media because they lack a clear religious hierarchy to enforce such positions –like the Catholics– and do not possess a strong missiological tradition that dictates certain responses to media –like the Evangelicals– (see Lehtikoinen, 2003). Yet they are hesitant about embracing the media because media is seen as riddled with corruption and problematic content which makes the technology suspect.

Some groups such as the United Methodist Church are able to draw on a social justice tradition that allows for a hybrid response of utilizing the Internet while making strong statements of its potential harm or weakness. Thus an area of more thorough research is needed regarding mainstream Christian churches' framing of the Internet, which, however, is beyond the boundaries of our dissertation. What is important to notice is that even within a single religious tradition there is a range of framings and responses to the Internet that link closely to the tradition, culture, and values of that particular group (Campbell, 2010: 148).

Employing the religious and social shaping of technology approach helps reveal these and other potential framing discourses by focusing attention not only on how religious communities use media, but the justifications used to incorporate them within community boundaries. To simply report on how religious community's use new media is not enough. The process of negotiation involves shaping both the technology and the language used to describe it within distinctive ways. Thus, how religious user communities' talk about their technology is not simply descriptive, it is also an active process performing a variety of roles, including those of internal marketing, authoritarian boundary setting, and public relations. Language has power, and in the case of a religious community's relationship to technology it creates the platform for communal acceptance, boundary setting, and ideological promotion. Until the different Christian denominations develop their discourse about the use of Internet a broad comparative approach remains incomplete and limited. But careful attention to the appearance of documentation regarding the position of the different denominations regarding the use of Internet and new media stands as a promising development for the academic area of Media, Religion and Culture studies.

5.6.3. Case study: The Internet and Global Pentecostalism in Africa

One of the most noted and public Christian phenomena of the contemporary period has been the rise of the Christian stream of Pentecostalism. While Pentecostalism associates its distinctive emphases and practices such as glossolalia, dramatic miracle healings, prophecies, exorcisms, and spiritual gifts directly to the New Testament, it has aspects in common with historic Christian traditions, such as ecstatic mysticism and Evangelical revivalism. From its modern beginnings in the early twentieth century, it has grown to become the fastest-growing branch of Christianity globally, driven largely not by churches but by entrepreneurial Christians.

It is identified most publicly by its large mega-churches, not just in the United States but also globally. Christian Pentecostalism has become the dominant religious force in Latin America, displacing what had been the traditional dominance of Roman Catholicism. The founder of one of the key Pentecostal groups in Brazil, the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), was able to bring sufficient political influence and financial resources to bear to secure personal ownership of one of Brazil's largest broadcast networks, Rede Record (Guedes-Bailey – Jambeiro Barbosa, 2008: 51). Pentecostalism is also the most rapidly growing religious expression across Africa (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; 2012) to the extent that Africa is exporting its spirituality: the largest church in Kiev, Ukraine, is a Pentecostal church of twenty-five thousand members

with seventy branches, started and headed by a Nigerian, Sunday Adelaja (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005: 229).

These, however, are the tip of the iceberg. Below the surface are innumerable medium-sized regional and city churches and small town or village churches that nevertheless name and identify themselves as global. Operating within the opportunities and needs created by the global spread of capitalism, these local-based, media-extended Christian movements compete in the open media market with packages of faith solutions to dissatisfactions and opportunities created by the rise of cultural pluralism, failures in post-colonial national rebuilding, and the economic and political uncertainties of globalization.

Lehmann notes that despite differences in their national and cultural contexts, Pentecostal churches «exhibit astonishingly similar pat-terns of growth, use similar techniques of oratory and proselytization, similar forms of organization and leadership, and also resemble each other strongly in their ritual practices». (Lehmann, 1996: 14)

Asamoah-Gyadu, from his studies of African Pentecostalism, elaborates shared characteristics in more detail. The churches are mostly urban-centered congregations, with English as the principal language of communication, an absence of religious symbolism in places of worship, and a special appeal to and attraction for «upwardly mobile youth». They share a strong emphasis on church growth, with extensive and innovative use of modern media technologies. Leadership is predominantly by laypeople, with ecclesiastical office based on a person's charismatic gifting. There is an ardent desire to appear successful –the churches project a modern outlook, there is a relaxed and fashion-conscious dress code for members, and significant effort goes into cultivating an international image. (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005: 228)

Several considerations have to be mad regarding the globalization of Pentecostalism in general: first, he connections between Pentecostalism and global capitalism are particular. Whereas Weber saw well-being and prosperity as indirect consequences of Protestantism's faith in a higher power and emphasis on living an ordered, thrifty, and industrious moral life (Weber, 1930: 27) global Pentecostalism is overtly materialist in its practice and emphases, unashamedly promoting Christian belief and practice as means of individuals becoming healthy and wealthy.

Second, regarding spirituality and in contrast to the indirect, rationalist, abstracted stance of much of western Christianity, the theology and spirituality undergirding these movements are direct, active, interventionist ones. In many ways they reflect a regeneration of historic oral-based, rhetorical Christian practices, but with distinctive economic perspectives. There is, it is claimed, an active spiritual force in the universe that can influence daily events. The desire of that power, among other things, is that believers be

healthy and wealthy. This power can be enlisted and used by those who believe to improve their personal and financial circumstances. All a person has to do is to claim it by saying it (the power of the spoken word) and acting in a way that gives that power the opportunity to work. The global Pentecostal movement reflects the maturation of the Evangelical, Revivalist, Pentecostal entrepreneurship of the XIXth and XXth centuries (Meyer, 1998: 770).

Third, the rise and spread of global Pentecostalism and the development of its on-line activities cannot be fully understood without understanding its place within and relationship to the global empire and what Horsfield calls «digital capitalism» (Horfield, 2015 :261). A number of researchers locate the rise of these religious movements, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, in needs generated through the collapse of social and economic systems, political corruption, and disillusionment with the functionality of institutions of government in the postcolonial period. Meyer, in her studies in African Pentecostalism, notes that the rise of these churches in Ghana corresponded to a period of severe economic decline and starvation in the postcolonial period of the 1980s (Meyer, 1998: 759).

Fourth, we find the issue of prosperity. There have been other responses made by Christianity to address the poverty generated by western capitalism's exploitation of the labouring classes and third world countries. Advocacy movements in the West have agitated for social justice and economic development. Indigenization movements in Christian mission churches have sought to strengthen local cultures and cultural responses. The movement of Liberation Theology and the development of base Christian communities in Latin America were active centres of resistance to economic domination. The failure of these Christian efforts to redress entrenched poverty laid the ground for Pentecostalism. Rather than valorising poverty as a way of ameliorating its dehumanizing effects, Pentecostalism has offered a form of Christian faith and faith community that is dynamic, emotionally engaging, accessible, and globally oriented, and that promises a way to secure God's help to access the benefits of western capitalism and become wealthy.

Fifth, we must remember that the appeal of Pentecostalism lies in the cultural patterns of digital, electronic media. More than just using media extensively, Pentecostalism has relocated Christianity within a quite different sort of media culture: electronic, visual, spectacular, mobile, slogan-based, dynamic, and fluid. As Asamoah-Gyadu notes, «Pentecostals, as modern day evangelicals, have taken the use of media for religious purposes to a new level» (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2012: 128). Highly technological in their media and particularly Internet use, they subordinate the stability, order, and linearity of textual Christianity to the dynamics of oral culture. Internet contents together with community worship services and prayer meetings are loud, dynamic, participatory, interactive, and

constantly in motion. It is a culture of «flow» of words, and of people moving in and out of services, workshops and groups, and experiences. As Coleman puts it,

«Words spoken in faith are regarded as objectifications of reality, establishing palpable connections between human will and the external world. They form a kind of inductive fundamentalism. Believers are supposedly enabled to assert sovereignty over multiple spheres of existence, ranging from their own bodies to broad geographical regions» (Coleman, 2000: 28).

Sixth, within Pentecostalism communities in Africa monetary exchange is a part of this flow and verbal performance and an indicator of one's trust in the spiritual power that governs the universe. Money is readily given away, generally to the church or the preacher, in faith and expectation that within the global flow of capital, God will cause a larger amount of money to flow back again. One needs to give in order to receive. Whether one is prepared to do so or not is one of the indicators of whether one has faith or not. As Coleman notes,

«The speaking out of words and the giving away of money are therefore akin to each other in the way they provide means of reaching into a world of opportunity as well as threat.... An ideology of uninterrupted flow and reception is reinforced by the global charismatic habitus in combination with particular ways of structuring linguistic and financial "transactions"» (Coleman, 2000: 202–203).

Seven, we must remember that this concept of flow also informs the charismatic engagement with the empire of global capital and mediated communication. Pentecostalism is a global movement in identity and perspective, to the point that even small churches claim the word «global» or «international» as part of their title. The pastors of the larger churches dedicate significant parts of their website to images of their international recognition, such as photographs with world leaders and celebrities. Significant time is given in church services to praying for and celebrating success in such things as gaining international visas or business deals. While some of the claims made on websites may be questionable, there is an international circuit of Pentecostal leaders regularly visiting each other, with Western-based charismatic leaders trading funding support in exchange for association with the raw spiritual power and energy of charismatic leaders from Africa, Latin America, and Asia. There is also significant interchange between diaspora Asian and African communities in the United Kingdom and United States and their home religious communities.

Eight, from an ethical perspective, and as the African Pentecostal webpages underline, Christian Pentecostalism focuses on personal morality with an emphasis on chastity or heterosexual marriage in a patriarchal-headed nuclear family. Its social ethic is

oriented toward structures that support these values and facilitate church growth and wealth creation. This generally finds expression in the support of governments and political parties that serve those interests, creating a virtual activism that is enhanced by on-line and personal testimonies (Coleman, 2000: 208).

Although justified within a Christian theological framework, Christian Pentecostalism and its virtual globalism contributes notably to the spirit of aspiration and hope that capitalism needs to maintain its attraction and workforce that will soon show its geopolitical consequences. In developing countries, Pentecostal churches have become important training centres for basic skills and services to facilitate the rebuilding of social and economic communities within a global context. Maxwell, in his study of the Zimbabwean Assembly of God Church, identifies a variety of practical steps taken by this Christian community to convert existing cultural practices into a Christian culture of making money. These include shifting relationship support away from traditional tribal supports to church communities, education in literacy and morality, training in economic and technological management, making profit and enterprise a spiritual calling, teaching money making through workshops and worship, interpreting Christianity into the financial marketplace, and promoting lifestyle changes that reflect one's aspirations. Despite its emphasis on the spirit, Pentecostalism is a commodity-oriented religious expression, with significant investment made into the acquisition of consumer goods to indicate, or create the impression, that one has been blessed by the spirit. As Maxwell observes,

«Free from kin and community to accumulate wealth, the new believer is smart in appearance, trustworthy, hard working and literate, and hence employ-able.... Being born again can create a "redemptive uplift"» (Maxwell, 1998: 355)

Because of the biblical caution against the dangers of wealth and possessions, Pentecostalism has established processes for the exorcism of evil from wealth and consumption to make them spiritually safe for believers. Meyer describes these processes from her studies in Ghana,

«By invoking God's power over every commodity bought, they perform "exit rites" for the commodity, through which it is purified from its polluting past in the global market – in short, it is de-fetishized. Stripped of its history, it is safe to carry into its owner's house. Through this process, the object is subordinated to its owner; now it can no longer act as a fetish nor turn its owner into a satanic sign». (Meyer, 1998: 760).

The virtual and global expansion of African and international Pentecostalism is taking place through a silent and apparently ethereal manner. But the principles that move

the essence of this growing globalized Christian denomination are generating a change in societies that have been considered by Western powers as insignificant. The Pentecostal use of the internet is contributing to this expansions due to its personal and testimonial character, together with its global networking advantages. As an instrument for religious globalization, the Pentecostal Internet has allowed this growing Christian denomination to place itself at the heart of the expansion of the gospel moulded according to its own image and framing the use of new technologies in order to serve its personal and spiritual character.

5.7. ISLAM AND THE INTERNET

Having approached the understanding and use of the Internet in Judaism and Christianity, in this section we will present the development of the Islamic use of Internet, trying to delineate the main aspects of the relation between Islam and technology. Having done that we will offer a case study centred in the Amr Khaled phenomenon in Egypt that influences other Muslims in many Arab countries.

Before approaching the relationship between Islam and the Internet, we would like to state a remark concerning the recent events linked to the Muslim world and digital technologies. After careful study of the issue, we have decided to avoid two central topics related to this matter: the Arab Spring movement, and the use of the Internet by Muslim radical groups. This decision responds, first, to the general and introductory character of our study, that seeks to establish a common ground for future studies regarding Media, Religion and Culture and its relationship to geopolitical development. The presentation of this two issues would have generated an unequal attention regarding the other two Abrahmic religions. Second, the exclusion of these two subjects, fascinating as they may be, remain open to future research due to their meaningful relevance in the understanding of Islamic geopolitics and of the impact of new technologies in religious communities.

5.7.1. The Development of the Islamic use of Internet

The late 1990s saw a rise in a variety of cyber Islamic environments. Islamic resources became available on websites functioning as storehouses for ulama (legal scholars or learned men of Islam) and commentaries and traditional Hadith interpretations. In addition, applications aiding in the fulfilment of religious obligations provided daily recitation of the Koran for set prayer times became available. For example, Islamicity (<http://www.islamicity.com>) launched online in 1995 by a US-based group, employed a virtual-city metaphor in order to create «a non-sectarian, comprehensive, and holistic view

of Islam and Muslims to a global audience». In 1998 Jannah.com (<http://www.jannah.com/>) was founded as a download site for songs and videos of popular Nasheed musicians, MP3s of lectures by well-known religious scholars, and digital copies of the Quran, as well as Islamic software, computer fonts, and prayer times.

Islam online has been praised for creating a «digital ummah»,¹ or an electronic, networked Islamic community with a global reach enabling Muslims to connect with and impact both believers and non-believers (Cooke and Lawrence, 2005: 3). For many Muslim webmasters the desire to offer an alternative and more accurately informed view of Islamic beliefs and way of life has been a motivation for going online. This was a core motivation for the founding of Islam Online (<http://www.islamonline.net>) which was launched in 1997 as an Islamic portal run by the Al-Balagh Charity Society of Doha, Qatar. The site was founded by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a well-known Egyptian Sunni Muslim Scholar and host of a popular al Jazeera program «ash-Shariah wal-Hayat» (Shariah and Life). Sheikh Qaradawi's motivation for starting the site is based on his perception that having a significant Muslim Web presence is actually imposed by the very teaching and calling of Islam and the need to engage with the «reality of our modern times». He says:

«We [Islam] used print, radio, and television. Today, there is a new medium known as the Internet. All religions have used it to call to their religions and sects. It is the duty of the Muslims to use this tool to call to their great religion, which God has granted them with, and leave others - who have lost their way -to call it». (<http://www.islamonline.net/English/Qaradawi/index.shtml>)

According to his website, Sheikh Qaradawi believes the duty of the Muslim presence online is to teach non-believers the truth of Islam from recognized «pure sources» and to help Muslims understand their faith correctly. Islam Online, besides providing the expected resources on Muslim news, culture, and global affairs, also offers an «ask the Scholar» section where users can send questions and receive advice from recognized and independent religious leaders related to sharia law, participate in a «Live Fatwa», or interact with a «cyber counsellor» who offers online guidance on personal and family issues. The site has over 1,500 writers, scholars, and staff working for it around the world and committed to its mission, making it one of the most significant Muslim presences online.

However, the Internet seems to be a double-edged sword for Islam, as it is for other religions, offering benefits and new challenges simultaneously. One common concern raised is what happens when Internet use brings with it religious innovation, as traditional offline religious practices are imported online. While websites that offer digital reminders of prayer times and help believers find the direction of Mecca are seen as positive innovation,

concerns have been raised about the implication of taking part in a virtual hajj or the idea of performing salaah (prayer) in a virtual reality environment. As one Muslim lecturer in Singapore commented:

«To pray online? No. Because in Islam, prayer requires the physical movement. It involves, first you have to cleanse yourself, then it involves facing the Kaaba, it involves standing and doing the ruku' position. It involves prostration, so you can't do it over the Internet». (Cited in Kluver and Cheong, 2007)

Another concern voiced is that Muslims may confuse access to religious information online with actual religious devotion or authority. This is echoed in a warning found on the front page of the University of Southern California Muslim Student Association's «Qur'an Database webpage» that provides thematic search options for online copies of Hadith and the Quran:

«Warning (especially for Muslims): Today, technology is helping bring Islam into the homes of millions of people, Muslim and otherwise. There is a blessing in all this of course, but there is a real danger that Muslims will fall under the impression that owning a book or having a database is equivalent to being a scholar of Islam. This is a great fallacy. Therefore, we would like to warn you that this database is merely a tool, and not a substitute for learning, much less scholarship in Islam». ([http://www.usc.edu/dept/M SA/reference/searchquran .html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/M%20SA/reference/searchquran.html))

In Gary Bunt's well-documented work, virtual Islam indeed has the potential to both wear down certain traditional networks as well as enhance individual Muslim's engagement with their faith (2000: 143). One core area of concern is that of Islamic authority online, especially in relation to the rise of a breed of online mujtahid, or persons considered qualified to engage in ijtihad, which is the interpretation of scriptures. As the Internet allows those without formal training or offline recognition to offer their views or to issue fatwas online, the question arises as to who should be considered qualified to serve as interpreters online.

Jon Anderson's work on «The Internet and Islam's New Interpreters» explains in detail the rise of three new communities of interpreters within Islam being supported by a computer-networked platform. First there are «Creole pioneers» who have professional/technical qualifications and access to the Internet and «bring religious interest on-line as after-hours interests» (Anderson, 1999: 50). Next, «activist interpreters» seek to recruit others towards a certain discourse or simply address a wider audience online. Then there are «officialising discourses» which are governmental or official religious groups that seek to affirm «universal access and a sense of participation in public spheres of listener's, watchers or ...browsers» (Anderson, 1999: 52). He argues that Islamic discourse is being

altered by these new interpreters as the Internet brings a more public dimension to the process of interpretation and provides opportunities for alternative expressions and networking in Muslim society.

Defining who is a qualified scholar offline is a controversial issue within both Shia and Sunni Islam, so it is understandable that the Internet would only introduce new complexity. Bunt has found that those who hold the power in Islamic decision-making online are often closely informed by traditional understanding and practices offline. For instance, Shia cyberspace has had a different pulse of Internet authority than other Muslim communities online such as Sufism. This is due partially to imbalances in technology in parts of the world where it is dominant. This keeps many Shia Muslims offline, but also tied to their stricter understanding of where traditional authority is and should be vested, on and offline (Bunt, 2003: 184-94).

Another issue related to Muslim authority online is linked to the sources used in order to offer interpretations and answers to questions online. Lawrence, in «Allah On-Line» (2002) suggests that when considering the institutional, public, and private vectors of contemporary Islam, there is a tendency for cyber-Islam to lean towards conservative tradition and reinforce global structures by employing dominant metaphors found in Islam offline. One example is the image of the «Straight Path» that Muslims are encouraged to find and stay connected to which he demonstrates is often used in websites and online texts. The idea is upheld that «cyberspace, like social space, to be effectively Muslim, must be monitored» to ensure its proper use (Lawrence, 2002: 240).

Thus Islam online raises interesting and important questions related to the construction of authority. It serves as both a «vehicle for harm, as well as a tool with which to maintain the status quo» (Wheeler, 2002). In Wheeler's study, she found the Internet allows religious and civic leaders to monitor the behaviour of gay Muslims in Egypt as well as allowing fringe fundamentalist groups such as al-Qaida to expand their influence and flourish online. So, while cyberspace pushes the boundaries of religious life and discourse, it also provides a tool that can be adapted to traditional forms of monitoring and social control.

Muslim clergy, however, especially within Moderate Islam, insist that the Internet can and should be used for positive religious purposes such as to «convert or communicate about Islam» (Campbell, 2007). This argument is often based on framing the Internet as a neutral instrument and thus it is not the Internet itself that is problematic, but its use. As one Iranian cleric commented, «The Internet is like a knife. You can use it to peel fruits or to kill someone. But that does not mean that the knife is bad» (Kalinock, 2006). Thus the danger of the Internet lies not in the technology itself, but in how it is wielded.

It is important to note that the challenge created by the Internet to religious authority in Islam in many respects is not new at all. Such shifts in religious authority are clearly seen in Sardar's (1993) description of the three periods of transformation within Islam in which we see significant changes in power and structural relations.

He suggests that the first transformation of Islam was the inner urge to know or acquire ilm (knowledge), which shifted Islam from a desert religion to a world civilization. The classification of knowledge, which was aided by the advent of technologies such as paper and later book production, enabled adherents to Islam to solidify and spread its message. This created a network of communities of Islamic knowledge around the Arab world and beyond for the first 800 years of Islam (Sardar, 1993: 48).

However, the second transformation led with the rise of the ulama, recognized religious scholars who served as official interpreters of the established texts. The ulama set criteria for interpretation of knowledge leading to a shift in knowledge management from the hands of the community to the hands of an exclusive few, a trend Sardar described as a huge setback for the ummah. This created a hostile response by some of these new authorities to some media innovations, such as the printing press which challenged the control of the ulama especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Sardar, 1993: 50). Sardar argues that Islam has become a totalitarian moral order from many parts of the ummah, rather than system of knowing, meaning, and doing, as it was initially intended (Sardar, 1993: 51).

The third transformation is described as a period of re-engagement with the original quest for knowledge. He encourages the embrace of information and communication technologies (ICTs) whose use facilitates distributive and decentralized networks, making available a renewed potential towards gathering religious knowledge and reopening the "gates of jihad" [Islamic precepts], re-establish a continuous, interpretative relationship with the sacred text that Muslims abandoned five centuries ago" (Sardar, 1993: 56).

Thus, according to Sadar's inquisitive approach, in many respects the Internet simply brings Islam full circle, back to its roots where individual Muslims shaped the formation, interpretation, and spread of Islam. What is new in this era is the intensification of objectifying Islam through the proliferation of religious new media and a generation of online and broadcast mujtahids, as Bunt and others have suggested (see Bunt, 2003: 14).

The use of new media has also encouraged a «democratization» of interpretation within Islam and the re-spatialization of Islamic discourse from private to public realms. Echchaibi (2008) notes this trend within Muslim media whereby the Internet and satellite television seem to promote an individualized Islam empowering new voices that must compete for attention. Yet while this occurs the old centres of authority in Islam still retain a

place of power in the emerging discourse, despite the fact that their interpretations are increasingly challenged on the Web. Some established leaders have been able to maintain authority in this new era by appropriating and embracing new media. Sheik Al-Qaradawi is an example since he seeks to reaffirm the traditional role of the ulama in his online works, so his use of new media can be seen as an attempt to reassert the centrality of orthodoxy and tradition (Mandaville, 2007: 108). Therefore, discussions of religious authority within Islam online should not be reduced into a simple power struggle between the new and the old.

We should also notice that the Islamic discourse about the Internet uses several Internet narratives. Muslims like Qaradawi argue that the Internet can be used as a missionary tool to spread the truth (da'wa) of Islam to non-Muslims, and to foster a religious identity. This in turn will help build the digital ummah and create greater unity among Muslims around the world. Internet technology allows Muslims to transcend time and space, and reach outside the Muslim world to shape dialogues about Islam in the West.

However, concerns have been raised regarding how the Internet potentially impacts religious authority roles and structures. These concerns highlight the spiritual narrative metaphor and the problems that can arise from unmonitored interpretations which easily arise in online forums. Islamic leaders and researchers predict that as the Internet spreads this will likely impact traditional power centres of religious authority as new voices emerge online. Concern is also raised over how access to religious teaching and sources may create a Muslim public who may confuse access to text with wisdom, or being one of the learned. Islam online is therefore an area where a number of narratives are at play and clear boundaries are yet to be drawn (Bunt, 2003: 22).

5.7.2. The Muslim Approach to New Technologies

We have underlined that various religious communities and groups prioritize Islamic values differently based on their interpretations of how their beliefs should be understood in the contemporary context in which they find themselves.

Modern Islam is a broad movement that juxtaposes itself against traditional or classical Islam and suggests the rethinking of religious and social tradition. This is especially true in relation to debates over the role of religious authority in the interpretation and application of religious law to social practices.

Within classical Islam, and following the Islamic principle of Revelation, there is an understanding that the deposit of current knowledge or truth originates with a past authority and is handed down within a religious community over time through the ulama, the established tradition of religious scholars. Modern Islam seeks to reflect on and question

these accepted processes, which often leads to conflicts over definitions and content of authentic tradition, especially related to interpretations of the Prophet tradition (Brown, 1996: 2). Modern Islam is thus an amorphous ideological movement that is not clearly defined. Yet it has become a way to categorize a growing number of schools of thought and individuals who seek to challenge accepted conceptions and processes of religious structures. Traditional Muslim values are emphasized with Modern Islam, but personal piety is often emphasized over adherence to, traditional patterns or structures of authority (Campbell, 2010: 94).

There are of course other classifications of Islam. Popular Islam is a form of folk piety that mixes traditional Islam with other cultural or regional traditions while still holding a belief in the clerical elite as sources of religious law, education, and administration (Gaffney, 1992: 43). Progressive Islam is marked by a focus on social justice and engagement in social projects representing a renegotiation of the relationships between religion, the individual, and public life by emphasizing action (Safi, 2003: 35). Political Islam seeks to take over the state by using traditional religious texts and teaching as a basis for justifying the establishment of Islam as the model moral community on the earth (Ayubi, 1991: 33).

Each of these different classifications of Islam highlights the broadness of interpretations within the Islamic ummah, and the variations of how common values of Islam are expressed and lived. While there is some general agreement of what are considered core values within Islam, such as the call to bear witness and the imperative to help others in this world, the prioritization of these and how they are expressed differs greatly based on the communities and movements one associates with. This also highlights the need to closely consider how the contemporary context and communal priorities play a role in defining not only the boundaries of the community –in terms of the relationship to religious authority– but also in how values are expressed in their engagement with modernity and its tools (i.e. mass media). We have faced this issue describing the different trends in the understanding of the relationship of Islam with the media in the chapter dedicated to Islam.

Blank (2001: 32-33) shows how identifying the core values and beliefs of a given group may provide indicators of how they will approach different forms of media and how they may attempt to achieve continuity between group beliefs and media practices. Issues related to understandings of community authority and interpretations of religious text have already been highlighted as having important bearing on how different religious groups approach media and where varying opinions exist within a single tradition.

According to Blank Muslims use media technology as if it was a necessary evil and potential threat to their values, other Muslim communities, like the Oaubi Bohras of India,

see technology use as a vital and necessary part of social and religious life in the modern world (Blank, 2001: 43). He suggests these differing approaches to technology emerge as Muslim values get filtered through the localized context, responses to authority, and the experiences of these communities.

This can create a conflict between different applications of Islamic knowledge and the needs and desires of local communities versus the global ideological movements that many Muslims follow. The forces of modernity and globalization have impacted how Muslim values are interpreted and lived out in the contemporary world, as local Muslim communities must renegotiate their relationship to the global ummah and traditional values. Individual communities must decide whether they will continue to follow an established tradition of religious scholars (ulama) or mystical brotherhoods (i.e. Sufi sheikhs) or new alternatives (Blank, 2001: 45).

Campbell proposes an interesting example regarding the way the Turkish Gillen movement embraces broadcasting technology for religious purposes via the TV channel STV. It shows how the distinctive beliefs of a specific religious community –namely tolerance, pursuit of understanding, and moral living in the world– become a philosophical platform guiding the group's embrace of media. Thus media becomes a tool to promote the values of the community to mainstream society. Through public service campaigns which advocate a particular relationship between youth, new media, and individual piety (especially in «Pause, it's prayer time») we see that values also frame public technology use. The beliefs of religious integrity and balanced consumption not only became framing tools for highlighting the importance of responding to the call to prayer, but also created a clarifying rhetoric of acceptable pattern of media use for modern young Muslims in Turkey (Campbell, 2010: 98).

These example of Muslim media engagement point to a common set of social values we have discussed in the chapter about Islam and communication.

First is the importance of the pursuit of knowledge and understanding that brings a benefit to the Muslim community. Media is important for its ability to spread knowledge and provide a platform for sharing truth in Islam with others. This echoes the Islamic values of a Muslim's responsibility to bear witness and speak the truth about Islam in the world.

Second is the need for pious or moral living within contemporary society. Choices about media should therefore be based on the values of modesty, chastity, and tolerance. There is also an expectation that Muslims should act responsibly in all areas of their life, and so will be held accountable before Allah for their choices related to media engagement.

Third is the requirement for integrity in one's actions in light of the Muslim faith and Islamic teachings. This means that a Muslim's media practice should be in line with the call to live with sincerity, courage, patience, and humility each day. Media use must reflect one's

religious living. The social values of one's community and the shared faith of the ummah become guiding principles for Islamic media use, and also serve as a basis for individual and communal accountability to religious teaching and leaders.

We have seen that there may be some differences in the priorities and teachings about technology and media between different Muslim groups, an issue that goes beyond the specific understanding of the Internet. These differences relate to how the principle of revelation is understood and how traditional practices and teachings are negotiated in light of contemporary interpretations or beliefs. Identifying the interpretive frameworks (such as the local context, movement, or school of thought) that influence these responses becomes important, especially when we consider how this establishes a platform for a community's negotiation with new forms of media, and particularly the Internet and its continuous transformation.

5.7.3. Case study: the Amr Khaled phenomenon

After presenting the trends in the use of Internet on behalf of Muslims, and having described the relationship between Islam and new technologies and the questions that it raises regarding authority, we now offer a case study about the Muslim use of new media centred in the Amr Khaled phenomena.

Born in Alexandria (Egypt) the 5th of September 1967, Amr Khaled is a young Egyptian, Western-educated accountant turned lay preacher. He rose to prominence in Egypt as a religious preacher with no formal religious training, and quickly became popular among young Muslims throughout the Middle East because of his informal style, passionate messages about Islam, use of emotional stories, and Arabic slang to communicate in an accessible way to his target audience of eighteen to thirty-five year old, upper- to middle-class Arabs (Olsson, 2015: 5). An observer described the tenor of one of his public appearances as:

«He used modern Western terms, saying that Islam “empowers” women and that the Prophet Muhammad was “the first manager” and held “press conferences”. Unlike traditional Muslim religious leaders, Khaled didn't parse the finer points of Islamic law or get too deeply into political questions. He emphasized that he wasn't qualified to speak on it either. He talked instead about how to be successful and happy and how to enjoy life while avoiding sin». (Shapiro, 2006)

A significant part of Khaled's appeal is his emphasis on a moderate-conservative message, which moves away from politics and avoids issuing fatwas (religious edicts related to sharia law). Rather he focuses on encouraging secular Muslims to return to their spiritual

roots and issues of personal piety, such as dating, family relationships, veiling, daily prayer, manners, and community responsibility. Advocating a «new brand of 'veiled-again' Islam» (Olsson, 2015: 10) amongst Muslim women, he is credited with promote a popular trend of young women taking on the veil in Egypt and across the Arab world.

Khaled's form of Modern Islam is a religiously conservative message in trendy contemporary packaging and represents the controversial nature of some aspects of current Islamic thought and practice. His style and rising popularity raised concerns in Egypt in 2002 amongst certain religious authorities who supposedly «banned» him from da'wa (preaching) and eventually resulted in a hasty migration to the UK (Olsson, 2015: 12). His self-imposed exile to the UK fuelled the expansion of his influence and outreach to young Muslims, as he has begun to now focus attention on young European-born Arabs.

From the beginning, mass media has played an important role in the «Amr Khaled phenomenon», both in his own use and his advocacy of embracing media to spread the message of Islam. From his early days of preaching in the homes of well-to-do Egyptians and local mosques he actively embraced popular media to get his message out, recording and circulating tapes of his messages amongst his fans and followers (Olsson, 2015: 13).

The development of his initiative really started in 1999, as he was beginning to rise to fame in Egypt as a charismatic preacher. That year he partnered up with Ahmed Abu Haiba who had a vision for a new TV production company. Abu Haiba's goal was «to create a brand-new style of Islamic TV» focused around innovative religious programming modelled after the conversational, entertainment style of Western Christian televangelism (Shapiro, 2006).

Khaled's first religious talk show «Words from the Heart» offered a format with audience participation, pre-recorded interviews with young Muslims, and ended with a time of emotional, spontaneous, open prayer which had never before been televised on Arab TV: it was fresh, controversial, and initially turned down by dozens of Egyptian broadcast and satellite TV networks that Abu Haiba approached. In front of these negatives, he decided to make 2.000 copies of the program and distribute them to street vendors in Cairo to sell. When sales eventually hit 50,000 copies in 2001, the Egyptian satellite network Dream TV took notice and picked up the program. Soon the conservative religious Saudi Arab radio and television network Iqraa also began to air the show, with hopes of reaching out to a young demographic (Olsson, 2015: 16).

As Khaled's popularity continued to grow, he also expanded his repertoire of media tools. He set up a publishing company to produce books and pamphlets that began to spread around the Arab world. He also built a website (<http://www.amrkhaled.net>) which is recognized as one of the most popular Arab sites worldwide: AmrKhaled.net offers video

downloads of his sermons, MP3s of popular religious music, printed transcripts of TV shows, and numerous other resources for young followers. While the main website is in Arabic, it also offers versions in nineteen different languages including, English, Chinese, Russian, and Urdu. It also features chat forums where Khaled encourages young people to discuss issues he speaks about and highlights in his televised sermon and TV programs.

Khaled's approach is appealing as it promotes a fresh view of Islam that emphasizes «individual» accountability and «breaking the chain of negativity» over seeking to control individual's thoughts or behaviours as in previous generations of Muslim preachers (Echchaibi, 2008: 204). Yet, Khaled has been critiqued for promoting not just a modern form of Islam but a «New Age Islam» where «the feeling and experience of religiosity are more important than critical spirituality» (Echchaibi, 2007).

Khaled emphasises experience and performance of meaning, as compared with traditional Islam that focuses on encountering and engaging with the content of texts, traditional notions of authority, and praxis. His TV programs continued to be marked by his charismatic presentation of shows that appear to be a «hybrid between entertainment and spiritual education» (Wise, 2004). His second series «Beloved Companion» compared the life of the Prophet and his followers to the lives of Muslim youth today. Followed by «Until They Change Themselves» which addressed the need for the global Islamic community to recognize and address their personal and spiritual conflicts.

But the most popular is Khaled's 2004-5 TV program «Life Makers» (Sunaa' al-Hayah), which covered a spectrum of facets of contemporary life seeking to inspire a cultural renaissance in the Arab world and a renewed vision of Islam.

As he stated in the first episode of «Life Makers» (Introduction, Part 1):

«What I'll present you with is not just another television program, but a project that will revive our countries and save our youth. This program is a practical project not a preaching one. It is based on the words of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, in addition to the sayings of the Prophet's companions. Its main aim is: let us make the lives of our countries.» [(http://www.amrkhaled.net/articles/articles62.html)]

Life Makers was a forty-six-episode series described as «part self-help psychology - an emotional and positive twelve-step program to a better Islamic life -part spiritual experience, and part televised call for social reform and grassroots organization» (Olsson, 2015: 42). Different from his previous programs, Life Makers sets out a «faith-based development program» to motivate youth towards religious and social action for sake of a transformed Islam. Over this series of forty-six episodes Khaled sets out a three-stage plan for youth-led transformation and reform of the global Islamic community.

Many of the episodes addressed specific areas he felt are in need of development within the Arab world in order to move towards a social, cultural, and religious revival such as «Fighting smoking» and «Utilizing our Minds». Included in this series were two episodes directly addressing the Muslim use of media. In Episode 28, «Culture, Art, Media... and Making Life», Khaled urged young people not to shy away from careers in media.

His urging for a new generation of Muslim media producers is direct and cautious. He expresses strong concern for popular music and media that are produced using Western-style images and production techniques which he feels inaccurately reflect Arab or more importantly Muslim culture and values. He especially criticizes Arab-produced music videos and children's cartoons where «The picture is Western and the voice is ours... It is useless and aimless. In that way, it is not art that will exalt the soul; it is directed to desire and lust; this is the result of blind imitation».

He urges artists, writers, and media producers to reflect not only on the potential power they have to be shapers of Muslim culture, but also on the huge responsibility they incur. Those involved in media professions are described as "producers of culture," and culture serves as a tool that can either facilitate revival or damage the moral lives of the community. He warns that all involved in media will be held accountable for the media they produce and the effect they have on society.

In Episode 29 «The Field of Technology» Khaled addresses the importance of technology engagement for the Muslim community and how this relates to religious beliefs and practices. He calls for Muslim innovation and creation of new forms of media to help eliminate Arab dependence on imported technologies. Khaled believes that it is a religious imperative that more Arab Muslims become involved in fields of technology.

To this end, Khaled's ministry initiated a "Promoting Computer and Internet Literacy" project in conjunction with the TV series, which through his website sought to link computer specialists and interested youth to encourage technological experimentation and innovation. He also encouraged viewers around the Arab world to set up their own local computer literacy projects. For Khaled, computer literacy represents the gateway for fulfilling the religious revival.

All of these aimed at putting legs on a reformist discourse calling for Muslims to change past behaviours and mindsets in order to bring increased participation and validation of Islam with Arab society. The series and Khaled's discourse on media and technology also promotes a distinct narrative which complements his brand of moderate Islam. He presents Islam as a progressive faith which needs to be active in transforming mainstream culture through its engagement in cultural production. This means that Muslims should embrace roles as artists and media creators so that they can promote religious ideals and morals

through the products they create. It is also important for Muslims to be technological innovators, in both the products they create and technologies they use, rather than borrowing or mimicking Western-inspired ones which promote values that contradict Muslim culture. Khaled insists that engagement with media is a «religious imperative», one which Muslims will be held accountable for in the afterlife.

Through this narrative we see several key social values at work:

–First, Khaled promotes creativity especially in using media, and stresses media involvement is not haram, but very much in line with Muslim beliefs.

–Second, Muslims are called to be transformers of their culture by using the tools of cultural production in line with their religious beliefs.

–Third, cultural engagement requires responsible actions that are informed by potential spiritual outcomes or consequences of wrong use.

By considering Amr Khaled's rhetoric and narratives about media in his TV series «Life Makers», we see the promotion of several beliefs: the value of creativity and pursuit of knowledge for Muslims, the call to be transformers of culture including in the realms of media production, and the religious responsibility and accountability such a demand requires. By advocating these beliefs Khaled presents a clear guide to how Muslims should engage media. This is a call that requires wisdom and discernment of the teachings of Muhammad and the aid and support of the community to do so in a just and righteous way.

The Amr Khaled phenomenon illustrates how religious communities and especially new religious leaders can play an important role in framing religious use of media. This is done by using a discourse that frames media as acceptable, necessary though fraught with tensions, Khaled links pro-social values to religious beliefs in order to create a clear series of expectation and motivations for media engagement. Subsequently, important areas to explore in the process of the religious-social shaping of technology become relevant, like understanding how religious groups may draw on pro-social values, and how they associate them with recognized religious beliefs in order to create or encourage certain modes of practice. As Nabil Echchaibi says,

«The story of Amr Khaled and the other protagonists of this individual revivalism is only one side of a complex equation of Islam in late modernity. The producers of this strand of Islam demonstrate they are creative in their reinvention of tradition and maybe even versatile in their search for a progressive religious identity. The other side of this equation lies in how this revivalism through communication and other distribution patterns is received by its targeted audience» (Echchaibi, 2008: 213).

5.8. CONCLUSION: THE INTERNET, RELIGIONS AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF COMMUNICATION

In this chapter we have sought to describe the paradigm shift in communication generated by the development of digital communication, and specifically by the use of Internet on behalf of the three Abrahamic religions. In order to do so we have proposed a brief dissertation about the Internet Era and its cultural and social implications, and a synthesis of the development of academic studies regarding Internet and Religion. We have also resumed the rise and development of the religious use of Internet in order to offer a solid contextualization of the relations between Judaism, Christianity and Islam and their perception of Internet. We have also added specific case studies illustrating the process of adaptation of each one of the Abrahamic religions to the Internet age.

Having done that, we could say that the discussions by Jews, Christians, and Muslims regarding the positive and negative outcomes offered by the Internet echo some similar themes. In a positive light, the Internet can be viewed as a tool that can be used to promote religion and religious practice. By describing the Internet as a neutral technological tool, religious users and communities can easily justify their use of the Internet for informational or work-related activities. This is clearly seen in the case of ultraorthodox and Muslim's positive portrayals of the Internet. It is not the technology itself, but its use in relation to the motives and desires of its users and designers which determines if the Internet is kosher or halal.

For Christians and Muslims this discourse is also important in order to justify their use of the Internet for evangelism or missionary activities. The Internet can also be positively framed as a technology that can be used to affirm the religious life of the community. The Internet is presented as a social technology that helps people of shared faith gather together, thereby connecting those from the same religious tradition who would normally be separated by geography, time, or other limitations. This ties in to the image of the Islamic «digital ummah», or the Christian global or networked «body of Christ».

Yet the Internet can also be critiqued when it is presented as a spiritual medium facilitating spiritual experiences. If the Internet is seen as a spiritual medium that possesses special qualities that help facilitate spiritual experiences, it becomes problematic because it separates the online experience from the offline tradition. A key concern for all three religions is the introduction of religious innovation which may alter traditional rituals, engagement with text, and especially authority structures and roles. Also of concern is how the Internet may facilitate engagement with secular culture or values. Conservative religious groups such as evangelicals and clustered groups such as the Jewish ultraorthodox are especially worried by these tendencies of Internet technology.

Our presentation shows that religious communities' view of the Internet is informed not only by their beliefs about media technology, but also by their views of engagement with secular culture, the understanding of the mission of their faith community, and their previous engagements with other forms of media. The relationship between the basic understanding of divine communication and its consequences in the transmission of the main core of each religious tradition acquires particular importance. This demonstrates that authority roles, structures, or belief systems continue to play an important function in guiding a religious community's response to the Internet. It also shows how a particular religious community sets boundaries regarding engagement with mainstream media culture and continues to play a role in whether it embraces or critiques the Internet as new media.

This further echoes discussions in the introduction that highlight the interaction between text and authority as key indicators of a religious community's response to media. There is continued concern as to how new forms of media alter the community's relationship with traditional practices related to sacred texts and authority. There is also concern that the Internet alters the relationship and control of offline religious authorities and structures in ways that can be very uncomfortable to accepted patterns of monitoring or official interpreters.

The method by which traditional texts are transformed has only been touched on here and will be looked at in more detail in later chapters. Yet for now we see that the new freedoms offered to community members for engagement and even interpretation of texts with the aid of online tools pose new questions for religious community.

In order to more fully understand the nuances and implications of religious negotiations with new media, so larger claims can be made about what happens to religious communities that come into contact with new forms of media, a more rigorous approach is needed. In this next chapter I wish to offer a new theoretical approach and model for studying the complexities of religious communities' engagements with new media forms that have been highlighted in this chapter. This approach is described as the religious-social shaping of technology and provides a basis for mapping on multiple levels the negotiations, innovation, and responses religious communities have to new forms of media, especially in the current context of a global information society.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

Our dissertation started proposing a basic hypothesis that can be resumed as follows:

[a] The perception and understanding that religious traditions have of media, and the way they «frame» or use them is a consequence of the understanding that the specific religious tradition has of the communication with the absolute, a form of communication normally called «revelation».

[b] This theological understanding of communication, or «vertical» communication, also determines the way in which the specific religious tradition transmits its message (or gives witness of it) in space and time, thus adapting different forms and using different media in order to make it understandable to the rest of humanity.

[c] The approach to the historical development of the religious tradition and its globalization and communicational process, together with its adaptation to new geographic, cultural, social and communicational settings, implies, at the same time, a transformation of the religious community and its relationship with its immediate geographic and political entourage: thus, the form in which a specific religious tradition deals with its expansion and the communicational innovations it encounters –framing its use of old and new media–, has an impact not only in the way the community perceives and uses specific media, but also in the geopolitical environment it is linked to.

[d] Taking into consideration the precedent points, the study of religions and their communicational habits implies not only a dynamic understanding of religion in itself, but also a specific form of religious traditions of dealing with their entourage according to their core beliefs, conditioning their form of understanding and relating with the world that surrounds them, a dimension that is called «cosmovision». Consequently religious traditions cannot be considered an issue related to the private and personal sphere of the individual, but as dynamic social factors that transform and are transformed by their surroundings according to their form of relating with the absolute and with others. This is particularly evident with the religious traditions that derive from the Abrahamic cosmovision, that is the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam that share a common belief in one god and his initiative of communicating himself to humanity through different media (symbolic, oral, written, etc.).

[e] The area of communication sciences called «Media, Religion and Culture» deals directly with religion and communication. This academic area has evolved taking advantage of different academic disciplines that have helped to broaden its horizons and have generated promising trends of study that seek to understand better the different dimensions of communication in relation to religious thought, religious experience, and religious media use with its different transformations and forms of perceiving culture and media innovation.

[f] The continuous development of the area of «Media, Religion and Culture» and its understanding of the communicative dynamic of religious traditions –and specifically of Judaism, Christianity and Islam– allows the possibility of broadening its academic interest into the area of religious globalization and the geopolitics of religion due to the geopolitical consequences of the expansion of religious traditions in space and time and the geopolitical consequences that derive from their adaptation to new forms of media: the continuous process of adaptation to new forms of communication undertaken by religious traditions along their history and present should allow us to understand the consequences of the expansion and communicational habits of religious traditions and communities.

Along the five chapters that compose our research we have been able to demonstrate all these processes starting with the methodological framework explaining the relationship between religious cosmovisions, Abrahamic religions, the «Media, Religion and Culture» academic discipline and its evolution, and the relationship between this discipline and the areas of religious globalization and geopolitics, illustrated with the communicational processes inherent to Judaism, Christianity and Islam and their particular ways of understanding and updating their «vertical» and «horizontal» forms of communication according to the evolution of media, particularly within the area of the Internet and digital media that has been the subject of the last chapter of our research.

From all the issues that we have exposed along our dissertation related to the communicational processes of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, their inner differences and their geopolitical consequences in history, we can conclude the following points:

[1] The Jewish religious tradition presents a networked and testimonial development of communication. Its theological understanding of «vertical» communication is concerned about the understanding of the divine message through signs, words and written tradition. But the history and development of Judaism would entail a continuous adjournment of revelation through the experience for the Diaspora, generating, as we have underlined, the «networked community» of believers that seeks to remain faithful to its theological roots, but at the same time dwelling in order to update the meaning of divine communication. As we have highlighted, there appears to be a fundamental affinity between the contemporary media environment and the Jewish historical communicative experience.

This affinity presents a double relationship, one oriented towards the continuous generation of new contents that explain vertical communication in multiple historical circumstances, and another one concerned with the creation of a stable networks of identity, that has historically derived in the creation of the State of Israel. As we have seen, the origin of Jewish ritual was the sharing of media, not messages, with God. This theological emphasis on media would be transformed into scriptures, generating a broad range of written and oral media based in divine revelation but continuously re-interpreted according to the circumstances of the different Jewish communities. This circumstance generated a subsequent legalistic turn linked to media and communication that required a careful analysis by an elaborate system of religious law. This media-centric religious heritage imprinted Jewish culture with considerable attention in understanding media, as we can see in the complex religious construction of contemporary media in Israel. The unique social experience of the Jews, that shaped their cultural attitudes towards the different kind of media, was challenged by their geopolitical dispersion, a fact that generated new media technologies that sought to maintain the Jewish nation in exile with basic elements of connectivity: tradition (oral and written), mysticism and halakic law determined the way Jewish communities understood and framed the media in favour of a stronger common identity. This long development seems to have prepared Jewish communications for the media environment of the XXIst century safeguarding its identity until the creation of the Jewish national state. These global network communities are founded on shared content-words, memories, ideas, texts and often ethical or legal systems. The communication system enabling connectedness and maintaining the group's coherence and solidarity through their testimonial –not missionary– understanding of «transversal» communication is the foundation of a geopolitical network of believers that looks towards a common religious experience and the means to prolong it, taking advantage of different kind of media, to the point of consolidating a nation based in the adjournment of the initial communicative experience with the god of Abraham. As we have seen in the second chapter, two main trends of Judaism seem to arise from our historical approach: the Conservative / Liberal trend, linked to what today is called «National Religious Judaism» with a more cosmopolitan and nationalistic geopolitical status due to the multiplicity of Jewish communities around the world that see in the State of Israel a common ground for religious and political identity. At the same time, and all along the development of Judaism in its globalizational development, we find the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities (particularly represented by the Haredi Jews) that have historically undertaken a more ethnocentric or «indigenous» interpretation of religious law. Even though this group follows a networked and testimonial form of communication (as National Religious Judaism), their

geopolitical status tends to be more independent (cellular) and divergent-oriented (ethnicist), including their positions regarding the nature of the state of Israel and its theological foundations.

[2] The Christian religious tradition presents an influential and broad development of identity and framing of media due to its global orientation, particularly during the last centuries. Marked by the principle of incarnation and by a Trinitarian notion of relationship, the Christian tradition will try to remain coherent with the principle of a transcendent god that does not confuse itself with his creation but who drives Christians towards mission and witness. From this particular approach to communication, that entails all kinds of mediation due to the incarnate character of the central communicative experience between god and humanity, its development will derive in history in different communication accents that would generate diverse attitudes towards media, old or new.

–The Orthodox tradition, marked by a nationalist centred globalization process – that is, with a strong centralized perception of authority that is often identified with national identity– will be linked to a more symbolic understanding of communication, centring its attention in the eschatological meaning of communication: media serve as means to a liturgical and symbolic understanding of god and humanity, where religious authority and tradition acquire a particular relevance in constructing a «symphonic» relationship with political power. Communication and media are united in the transmission of divine glory, more than the essence of social transformation. For centuries the Orthodox churches would ignore the importance of, for example, electronic media, in favour of a more liturgical transmission of religious experience. Thus, nation, authority and even ethnic identity acquire an important place in its geopolitical understanding of the world, a geopolitical trend that we define as «symphonic» and nationalistic.

–The Catholic tradition, that followed a transnational process of globalization, will be more centred in a sacramental understanding of the world, thus understanding media as a «medium» that serves as a transmitter of the divine message. For this important trend of the Christian religious tradition media will not be strange, but would evolve as a necessary channel in order to understand divine communication and make human communication more effective. At the same time, due to its sacramental understanding of communication, it will generate a perceivable community of believers structured in a corporative and hegemonized political influence due to its centralized conception of authority and its tendency to submit geopolitical relations to a centralized administrative and spiritual structure represented at different levels around the world.

–The Protestant tradition, underlining the personal experience of the Bible, generates a renewal within Christianity towards the personal experience of divine

communication, mediated through music, preaching and the central role of the personal understanding of the contents of the Bible. With time Protestantism would learn to use media – starting with the printing press– in order to perform its mission oriented towards a moral conversion of the individual thus proclaiming god’s communication to mankind, including the use of music and other media. The expansion of mainline Protestantism will entail the relationship between mainline protestant communities and national identities. Even though this national identities are plural, the paraenetic and networked form of communication will derive in a more cellular and nationalistic geopolitical influence, even though the ecumenical movement during the last century has started to introduce certain variables in this sense.

Within mainline Protestantism we find another trend of development marked a vernacular process of globalization that, at the same time, entails a more subjective and charismatic understanding of communication. Evangelical protestant communities, coherent with their «personal experience» orientation tend to form flexible local communities with a cosmonational identity, an element that marks their geopolitical influence, an influence linked to a more conservative understanding of divine communication.

Within the development of Protestantism itself we find the radical protestant movement that developed a sober use of mediations, stressing the importance of a humble attitude towards god’s word at all moments and an intimate experience of god’s communication. These communities, that found their origins in central Europe, would constitute small vernacularised radical protestant groups, with a particular perspective of communication that insist in interiorizing the religious communicative experience to the point of making silence its natural environment. Geopolitically speaking these radical protestant communities have attained a cellular structure with an exclusivist approach to their environment (including the use of language) that at the same time defines their limited geopolitical influence.

[3] Islam, since its origins, has engaged in a clear transnational communicational process. Contrary to the Christian «incarnational» communication experience, for the Muslim tradition the most important communication event in the cultures that derive from Islamic identity: the Qur’an. The Qur’an as a medium is neither historical nor systematic. It presents a non-linear narrative structure, in which different elements continually recur but in different arrangements and in different literary forms. When we approach what we could call the Muslim structure of communication from a Qur’anic-cultural perspective, we find two major trends: one is centred in the in the concept of signs, and the other one in the concept of divine guidance. Both principles respond to the same standard of communication inherent to the Qur’anic worldview approached from different angles, and are not

contradictory and have a strong influence in Muslim communication culture and its implications in the modern media world. According to the Muslim «sign» model of communication, the human response to god's given signs should be that of obedience to god's will as contained in the religious laws that the major prophets conveyed to humankind. To give a shape to this response, one should join the community of such a prophet: the whole of social and individual life should be brought into obedience to god. The guidance-based model of communication is centred, not in human reason, but in god and his will to guide humanity through his communicative act. Moral aspects are at its base, and theology of history finds a minor place: god's communication with humanity and human response to it seem to be united in a tension that, somehow, dissolves history in god's determined action over human behaviour, and suggest a human global «umma» as the only possible solution to history.

Thus the Muslim «vertical» communication experience derives in a direct «horizontal» communication experience that requires a total obedience to the leaders of the community of believers or «umma». In the Islamic globalization process this tension, that we could call «vertical» (it regards God in one side and humanity in the other) produces another tension, that we call «horizontal». It regards the update" of God's message in an effort of fidelity within the Muslim community towards its ideal origins (tabligh) and, thus, returning to the original divine message, an the renewal of God's message in the context of a Muslim social environment, creating at the same time a geopolitical tension between the Muslim milieu/countries and the non Muslim environments. Muslim communicational dynamics, as we have underlined in chapter four of our study, tend to be networked and authoritarian, due to the importance that religious authority holds and to the plurality of particular interpretations of the Muslim law that we find in different geographical settings. These particular characteristics of Muslim communication derive in a more cellular – non hegemonized – and cosmonational geopolitical status.

Even though there are particular differences between Sunni and Shia Islam, these communicational and geopolitical characteristics may be extended to both trends of Islam. Only the more mystical approach inherent to Islam, called Sufism, goes beyond this communicational trends due to its charismatic characters that stresses a symbolic «vertical» and «horizontal» communication, but the development of these groups and their academic study still have to confirm if these communicational characteristics constitute a change in the cellular and cosmonational geopolitical consequences of the rest of the Muslim trends, a point that stands as an interesting area of academic research.

[4] In front of the Digital Era and of Internet communication, the discussions by Jews, Christians, and Muslims regarding the positive and negative outcomes offered by the

Internet echo some similar themes. In a positive light, the Internet can be viewed as a medium that can be used to promote religion and religious practice. By describing the Internet as a neutral technological tool, religious users and communities can easily justify their use of the Internet for informational or work-related activities. This is clearly seen in the case of ultraorthodox and Muslim's positive portrayals of the Internet. It is not the technology itself, but its use in relation to the motives and desires of its users and designers which determines if the Internet is «kosher» or «halal». For Christians and Muslims this discourse is also important in order to justify their use of the Internet for evangelism or missionary activities. The Internet can also be positively framed as a technology that can be used to affirm the religious life of the community. The Internet is presented as a social technology that helps people of shared faith gather together, thereby connecting those from the same religious tradition who would normally be separated by geography, time, or other limitations. But at the same time the Internet presents a threat to religious authority and tradition, since it generates a space of free interpretation and networking that can easily derive in intrarreligious conflict or intrarreligious radicalization. The digital milieu generates a personalized medium that privileges the local religious community and its interaction with its geopolitical environment, thus producing a mixture of possible interactions that we can intuit, but that needs more thorough study. The development of the area of «Media, Religion and Culture» towards a more geopolitical understanding of religious communication can be, a promising area of study in this sense.

The area of «Media, Religion and Culture» remains a promising academic setting for the study of religion and communication, in particular regarding their relationship with the geopolitics of religion. Developing the potential of this area of study depends on the research efforts done in the near future, for which our dissertation seeks to be a solid foundation.

APPENDIX: RESUME TABLE

	RELIGIOUS TRADITION TREND	GLOBALIZATION PROCESS	COMMUNICATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	GEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION
JUDAISM	–Conservative and Liberal Judaism [National Religious]	Nationalisation	Networked / Testimonial	Cosmonational or Nationalistic
	–Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox [Haredi]	Indigenisation	Networked / Testimonial	Cellular and Ethnicist
	–Eastern Orthodox	Nationalisation	Symbolic / Authoritarian	Symphonic and Nationalistic
CHRISTIANITY	–Catholic	Transnationalisation	Sacramental / Authoritarian	Corporative and Hegemonized
	–Mainline Protestants	Nationalisation	Paraenetic / Networked	Cellular and Nationalistic
	–Evangelicals	Vernacularisation	Subjective / Charismatic	Cellular and Cosmonational
	–Radical Protestantism [Mennonites]	Vernacularisation	Intimate / Charismatic	Cellular and Excluvist
	–Sunni Islam	Transnationalisation	Networked / Authoritarian	Cellular and Cosmonational
ISLAM	–Shia Islam	Nationalisation	Networked / Authoritarian	Cellular and Cosmonational
	–Sufi Islam	Transnationalisation	Networked / Charismatic	Cellular and Cosmonational

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