Dialectics on New Media Culture and the African Christian of the Future

Inaku K. Egere, PhD[1]

Abstract

The industrial revolution and the communication revolution are the two most talked revolutions in human history. The duo has significantly transformed the quality of human life and has brought about apparent progress and social change in all spheres of life. Communication revolution which forms the thrust of this study, in the past century right from the telegraphic age via telephone, satellite to multimedia has generated a radical change of the African cultural heritage and every aspect of the structures of thought, including religious institutions, belief systems, and theological concepts. This is because these media are not mere vehicles of content transportation but have an innate capacity to form a "new world" with a paradigm shift from the message to the medium; from meaning to the effect; from doctrinal to emotional; from words to modulations and from matter to form. As a pastoral response, this paper, argues that effective evangelization in Africa through the use of modern media should begin with the evangelization of the media and conversion to the media to create a close dialogue between the media and the Gospel.

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[1]Inaku K. Egere Department of Communication Studies Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria holds a Higher National Diploma in Mass Communication, Bachelor Degrees in Philosophy and Theology, Master's Degree in Management and Corporate Social Responsibility, Master's Degree in Social Communications, and a Ph.D. in Communication Sciences. He studied at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome; School of Journalism, University of Missouri, United States of America and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome. (inakuegere@yahoo.com)

Introduction

Media studies very recently are gaining wider patronage among communication scholars and other scholars engaged in multidisciplinary studies. This is because many have come to realize the powerful effect media has on humanity. The centrality of media on human existence is so palpable that, one cannot honestly separate media from everything one does. To say the least, "media permeate almost every moment of our existence. There is almost nothing that we do that escapes mediation."[2] This is very true because we live in a mediated environment and "mediation is becoming more and more endemic as technology affords (for better and for worse) a more mobile and constant, 24/7 engagement with media."[3]As for De Zangotita, humanity has been transported to "a place where everything is addressed to us, everything is for us, and nothing is beyond us anymore."[4] Such vision of the media is very close to the idea of post modernism. In the contemporary culture there is little or no distinction between reality, media and us. Ideologies such as this will no doubt put pressure on the evangelizing mission of the church, which sets out to communicate the one eternal truth and reality of the existence of one God in three Divine persons. Nonetheless, the church has to live out her true mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all the ends of the earth as its true identity and vocation demands. Pope Paul VI affirms thus: "Evangelizing is, in fact, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection."[5]

This mission has to be carried out on the wheels of various forms of communication defined by the cultural milieu of the evangelizers,

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[2] Press A. & Williams, B. *The new media environment: An introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p.194.
[3] McDougall, J. *Media studies the basics.* London: Routledge, 2012, p.6.
[4] De Zangotita, T. *Mediated: How the media shape your world*. London: Bloomsbury, 2005, p.11.
[5]*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.14.

the evangelized and those yet to be evangelized. Studies over the years have noted the apparent nexus between communication styles and cultural styles. The media, which is a communicative form can both set agenda for the culture of a people as well as have the capacity to influence the fabrics of culture. It is based on this strength that, this inquiry is being made about the faith of the African Christian of the future amidst the subtle and yet powerful influence of the media. However, categorization of communication forms into four cultures by Walter Ong (oral culture, chirographic (written) culture, print culture, and secondary oral culture)[6]would serve as background to the study. Although, for Paul A. Soukup: "The communicative form of each culture influences the patterns of consciousness of the members of that culture through what Ong terms the "psychodynamic" of the form. These patterns of consciousness include not only how people think but also what they think about."[7]

The medium is the massage[8] (not the same as message)

Discussions on media culture will hardly pass on without mentioning Marshal McLuhan and his famous book on *Understanding Media: The extension of man*, where he came up with this popular cliché "the medium is the massage". This McLuhan's expression has been controversial among many scholars. Like many of his works: "they are widely known, they are widely read, yet they provoke as much head-scratching as comprehension."[9] McLuhan's writings no doubt are not cast on traditional narratives with cause and effect logical sequence. They are rather framed with substantial nuggets with no clear linkages to specific causes, specific kinds of media with specific effects. A startling example could be seen in his explanation of the "medium is the massage" cliché.

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[6] Ong, W. J. *Orality and Literacy: The technologizing of the word*. London: Routledge, 2003, p.2.
[7] Soukup, P. A. "Communicative forms and theological styles." In P. A. Soukup, *Media, culture and Catholicism,* London: Sheed & Ward, 1996, p.57.
[8] McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*, Now York: McGraw Hill, 1994, p.7.
[9] Poe, M. *A history of communications: Media and society from the evolution of speech to the internet*, Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2011, p.2.

> In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.[10]

McLuhan as complex as his imaginative, inventive thoughts and writings are, has made a critical contribution to media studies. His research interests were not on the information itself but rather on media (such as talking, writing, printing, electronic signals) as they affect human beings. McLuhan "separated the medium from the message and, in so doing, founded the central program of modern media studies, that which attempts to describe and explain the effects of media on the human mind and human groups."[11] The medium is the massage is a teaser used to captivate the audience's attention to the fact that, a medium is not somewhat neutral but something that can effect a change in the lives of people. Christianity, therefore, has rapidly spread around the world through the media stretching from the primary oral culture down to the present day new media culture.

Orality and literacy[12] and its influence on Christianity

The concern of the faith of the future African Christian amidst the powerful influence of the media that has "constantly changed structures and institutions because of the emergence of new forms of communication (media environment)[13] has become something of great interest. This trepidation is justified because the 21st century has experienced tremendous advances in the area of Information and Communication Technologies, (ICTs) more than ever. Indeed, such astronomic improvement on ICTs not only awakens one's consciousness but also gives room for a retrospect on the

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[10] McLuhan, M. *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. p.7.
[11] Poe, M. *A history of communications*. p.3.
[12] Ong, W. J. *Orality and Literacy*. p.iii.
[13] Egere, I. K. "Mediatization of religion, networks and collectives: a media ecology perspective for post-millennial Christianity," *Koinonia*, vol. 7, (2), 2016, p.94.

contribution of the media (ICTs) in reshaping and building the Christian faith over the past centuries. The knowledge of the past will form the basis for future projections. The impact of media culture on evangelization in Africa for instance brings to the fore, the writings of a Jesuit priest Walter Ong in his book *Orality and Literacy* where he wrote about "information technology and its influence in transforming society as human beings move from the spoken language to the alphabet, codex, various forms of printing and different electronic means of communication.[14]Nevertheless, in each of these stages, Christianity is mediatized.

Oral culture and its impact on Christianity

Discourses on oral culture take us back to the early days of human existence where communication is space and time-bound. Verbal conversation between two or more was the most common form of communication. This could be face-to-face interaction used at dyadic, small, public and large group levels. It is rich in content because there is a high level of interaction between the sender and the receiver. Nevertheless, oral culture refers to a culture that is completely untouched by any knowledge of writing or print. This type of culture is characterized by personalism and superlative ethnic loyalty. Oral cultures "produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth."[15]Oral culture "bound the community together, maintained a select group of experts with knowledge committed to memory, and endowed old men with authority over the young. It supported a social hierarchy based on gender, age, and the control of collective wisdom."[16] Though in the strict sense of it, nowhere in Africa today, will one find a purely primary oral culture since writing is now known; the residue of such mentality still survives the tides of the high-technology atmosphere. Christianity in Africa nevertheless, was greatly influenced by the primary oral culture as the Good News was proclaimed mainly through oral media. Group communication, as a basic quality of oral culture, was irresistibly employed as a strategy for evangelization. In an oral culture, there is an emphasis

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[14] Egere, I. K. Mediatization of religion, p.95.
[15] Ong, W. J. *Orality and Literacy*. p.14.
[16] Andrew, J. "Impact of media culture on the Indian of the future and Christian response. "In M. S. Dias, (ed). *Evangelization and social communication*, Mumbai: St Pauls, 2000, p.162.

on gender, age, and authority as its essential elements. Interestingly, this is reflected in the Church's teachings on authority and hierarchical structure. Christianity in Africa, of course, was not immune from this trend since the early missionaries in Africa carried out their mandate within this circumference.

Writing culture and its effect on Christianity

Rosalind Thomas' comments on orality and writing are very instructive especially as she makes clearer the nexus between the two which very often has generated serious debates among scholars when she says: "Writing is not necessarily the mirror-image and destroyer of **orality**, but reacts or interacts with oral communication in a variety of ways. Sometimes the line between written and oral even in a single activity cannot be drawn very clearly, as in the characteristic Athenian contract which involved witnesses and an often rather slight written document, or the relation between the performance of a play and the written and published text."[17]

However, writing from ancient times has been one of humanity's conscious efforts to transmit and preserve information and messages originally expressed through oral communication. It is indeed, a development from purely oral communication. Within the writing culture: "Languages are put into pictorial forms and develop from there to writing systems the oldest of them being the Sumerian (c. 3000 BC), the Chinese (c. 1500BC) and the Mayan (c. 300 BC)."[18] In Africa, we can talk of the hieroglyphs, the picture writings with papyrus used as writing material in Egypt as early as 4000 BC.[19] In this era, stones, woods, and other materials were used in preserving useful information, events and landmarks of the people. The *obelisks* in Rome are good examples of such. However, because of the inherent hierarchical structure dove tailing from the oral culture (by either reaction or interaction), religious leaders as custodians of tradition stored such valuable materials at the temples. With the emergence of the Christian religion, after the conversion

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[17] Thomas, R. *Literacy and orality in ancient Greece*, Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1992, p.

[18] Eilers, F. *Communicating in community: An introduction to social communication, (3rd and enlarged edition)*, Manila: LOGO, 2002, p.64.

[19] Sogaard, V. *Media in the church and mission: Communicating the gospel*. California: William Carey, 1993, p.175.

and death of Emperor Constantine, the Church influenced by this ancient tradition continued when the monasteries took over the duty of preserving, developing and producing books of various kinds. In fact, "From Cassiodor (485-500) the chancellor of emperor Theoderich we have rules for writing and copying texts as we also have from S. Benedict (529) in Monte Cassino. The monasteries were privileged places where libraries developed and books were preserved. All monasteries had a 'scriptorium', a special room where this work was to be done similar to the pagan temples and royal courts before.[20]

Print Culture and its effect on Christianity

Literate or print culture is a culture that uses printed or written words to communicate effectively among people and also store information for future references. Within this culture, the two most important sense organs of man are used. The ear and the eye are involved in the process of passing on of information to others. Communication can take place even by proxy as both the receiver and the sender must not necessarily be present in real-time.With the great invention of the printing press by Gutenberg at about 1456, there was an information explosion giving room for "new methods of information retrieval and information management."[21] The linear, logical and progressive elements of printing/writing led to the individualization of activity characterized by abstract thoughts and scientific methods. Within this culture, ideas and information were authored and commercialized among the dispersed and heterogeneous audience.

Nevertheless, the triumphalist narratives of the new invention dominating that era, like a coin with two sides also had catastrophic accounts. Most of the scribes not excluding the monks were put out of business. Mankind was bereft of peace because of information overload caused by the superfluidity of publications. Expansion of libraries made difficult the process of finding a given book on the shelves. Compilers of catalogs had to work extra hard to classify books and the librarian had the daily challenge of updating their

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[20] Eilers, F. *Communicating in community,* p.64.
[21] Briggs, A. & Burke, P. *A social history of the media from Gutenberg to the internet*. Cambridge: Polity, 2009, 15.

catalogs with new publications. Print culture made education accessible to all and democratic. As a consequence, it "also helped to foster religious debate and schisms, and later spread new secular ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, and later socialism. Religious authorities lost their monopoly to produce texts and thus to control knowledge and interpretation...Secular intellectuals began to vie with the aristocracy and the clergy for authority and influence."[22]To say the least, "different ideologies, religious affiliations, and leisure activities had to compete with each other to find and attract new adherents."[23] The print culture no doubt created an ambient where the Christian faith was understood better and had wider spread even though, it was also greatly disputed and challenged.

Electronic culture and its effects on Christianity

Electronic culture also described by Walter Ong as secondary orality, was an era of audio-visual media. It was a time in history where various forms of communication operational at the oral culture, writing culture, and print cultures are combined. Print, Radio, Cinema, and Television as it was, created a popular culture. With the principle of objectification of information and messages supported by the electronic media, the Christian faith had a significant impact. On the positive, it provided the adherents with a more objectified faith-based Christianity instead of the abstract and intellectual orientation of the writing and print cultures. Africans culturally, celebrate important events in their rituals and ceremonies within their communities. Images and spoken words are part of the traditional media for important events. Electronic media made a significant impact on the faith of the Africans because of the general appeal to audiovisuals in celebrations.

In the cities, young and literate people spend time reading newspapers, books, listening to radio and TV sets. With the availability of computers and internet facilities, electronic media

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[22] Dias, M. S. (ed). *Evangelization and social communication*, p.163.
[23] Gelfgren, S. "Let there be digital networks and God will provide growth? Comparing aims and hopes of 19th-century and post-millennial Christianity." In P. H. Cheong, *Digital religion, social media and culture: Perspectives, practice and futures* (pp.227-242), New York: PETER LANG, 2012, p.230.

became the delight of many. It became a new addiction that has changed people's routines, cultural and religious habits. Some Christians used audiovisual aids in learning how to practice, radio/televangelism and cyber churches, while others use the same to deepen their faith, reawaken that of the lapse or resting Christians and to bring the Good News to those who have not yet known Christ. Electronic culture publicized the Christian faith without engraining it much in the minds of the people. This explains why there are many denominations and churches in Africa without many converting to the Christian faith.

New age, new media and the African Christian of the future

Early in this paper, we mentioned not in detail the effects of postmodernism on the faith of those who believe in God especially as they are confronted with apparent thoughts on extreme mediation. Today we live at a time where there is no more distinction between reality, media and ourselves. New media platforms such as internet offer in its attractive menus a new form of virtual reality which includes a new form of existence. Citizens of this new world are also endowed with the ability to create, explore and control the new world. This ability also extends to the power to manipulate the physical environment thereby creating a sense of no distinction between the virtual and physical world among them. The novelty in ICTs has "significant impact upon people's religious information-seeking behaviour and also in the way people "do" religion."[24] With the growing demand and use of this new media technology, there is also the prospect of the impressive growth of trust in the content found in the new media environment. This trust, like what most advertising products do to the target audience, may create some sort of loyalty and influence that might eventually overtime influence ones' choices and values in life.

Mechanization and automation vs Christian doctrine of *Imago Dei*

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[24] Helland, C. "Rituals." In H. Campbell, *Digital religion: Understanding religious practices in new media worlds* (pp.25-40), London: Routledge, 2013, p.25.

Advancement on mechanization and automation has increasingly created Supercharged Search Engine or Prototype Robot Overlord (artificial intelligence) with the capacity to mimic specific aspects of humans. These overtake human intelligence thereby creating a scenario where creation would overthrow the creator. From the biblical viewpoint, theologians and Christian doctrines have it that, human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. The Genesis account of creation in Genesis 1: 26-27, puts it thus: "Then God said let us make man in our image and likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the livestock on the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male-female he created them." God after the creation also gave humans in addition to intelligence the power to procreate. Over the years, human beings have exercised this mandate given to them at different levels, and according to Robert Geraci, "one of mankind's most cherished dreams –in religious, scientific and artistic circles—has been the creation of humanoid life. [25] This humanoid life is associated with "intelligence or sentience." With the computer and cybernetic machine, "robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) hold the most promise for realizing this long standing dream."[26] This position is not to be looked upon from the perspective of creation as elucidated biologically, in the polygenic and ontogenic terms of procreation rather from machines' ability to *learn* and *create* other machines in their self-image.

This is similar to the myth of Golem traced back to the Jewish ghetto of medieval Prague. In this myth, the Rabbi for fear of expulsion or annihilation from the emperor constructed a Golem, an anthropomorphic statue, out of clay from the Vltava River and thus placing the unspoken name of the Almighty on its forehead and gave life to it with all the powers to perform great tasks.[27]However, the Golem according to Han, "spurred out of control, spreading fear

[25] Geraci, R. "Apocalyptic AI: Religion and the promise of artificial intelligence." J*ournal of American academy of religion*, vol. 76, (1), 2008, pp.138-166.
[26] Geraci, R. Apocalyptic AI: Religion and the promise of artificial intelligence, p.139.
[27] Kuhns, W. *The post-industrial prophets: Interpretations of technology*. New York: Weybright and Talley, 1971, p.15.

amongst the Jews whom it was supposed to protect. The Rabbi, in response, had to erase the first letter of the name, rendering it still forever." [28] Norbert Wiener, the founder of cybernetics (the science of communication and control whether in machines or living organisms) argues that, with machines, something similar can occur with non living systems. Therefore, the Christian anthropological doctrine of *imago Dei*, with the advancement of the science of artificial intelligence and robotics in the future will raise a lot of concern among the digital natives. This is so because the digital citizenry includes humanoid robots with embodied artificial intelligence that has intuitive self-understanding as well as those created in the *imago Dei*. This novelty of global inter-communication can create the new universe for the making of gods which is another form of idolatry.

New media culture and theology of sin

The theology of sin as the paper will unveil will be discussed from the perspective of *imago Dei*. Though many theologians have described sin and its consequences from many flanks we have chosen this dimension to understand human sin: how humans turn into objects, which encourage disintegration and individualization, a phenomenon lucidly evident in the new media culture. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it thus: "God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God."[29] This, of course, is the essence of being created in the imago Dei. Humanity lost this state of perpetual communion, truth, and dependency, divinized out of disobedience when the man "preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good"[30]Man's quest for independence and individualism ruptures relationship with the creator. Theologians despite their diverse views on sin still hold a common belief that sin is "a broken relationship" which "disorders and

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[28] Han, S. "Clocks and computers: The doctrine of Imago Dei, technologies, and humanism." In P. H. Cheong, P. Fischer-Nielsen, S. Gelfgren, & C. Esse (eds). *Digital religion, social media, and culture: Perspectives, practices and futures*. Oxford: PETER LANG, 2012.

[29] The Catechism of the Catholic Church. Nairobi: Publications, 1992, no.396.

[30] The Catechism of the Catholic Church, no.398.

fractures our capacity for communion."[31]Sin could be seen also as "a failure of 'community'"[32]. Procedurally, Granz explains:"Because we are alienated from God, sin alienates us from other humans as well. God designed us to enjoy wholeness, enriching relationships with each other. But we find ourselves exploiting and being exploited. We jostle with each other for power, influence, and prominence. Or we allow others to rob us of our dignity and sense of worth."[33] New media (cyberspace) "architecturally structured for connectivity, participation, and interaction"[34] facilitate different forms of exploitation and alienation including piracy, pornography, hate speech, cybercrimes, sexism, etc. These and many other negative impacts of the media give room for personal attacks, vicious put-down, and self-presentation, self-marketing which may result in loss of identity (imago Dei) and sense of worth.

The desire of humans wanting to be themselves and to be perfect in themselves, independent of God's gift to us is what Tanner describes as another aspect of sin[35]Tanner's views of sin are corroborated by LaCuna's comments on different forms of sin concerning the creation of identity online, thus: "It is a staple of Christian moral theology to define sin as prideful self-assertion…(however) temptation to sin for women is not the same as for men. The typical sin of women in a patriarchal culture is self-abnegation."[36] In a cursory assessment of online posts especially among digital natives on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, IMO, Twitter, etc., one constantly finds constructions and representation of identity that sometimes overtly portray self-assertion and abnegation.

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[31] LaCugna, C. M. *God for us: The Trinity and the Christian life*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1991, p.284.

[32] Grenz, S. J. *Created for community: Connecting Christian belief with Christian living*. Wheaton, IL: Victor books, 1996, p.90.

[33] Grenz, S. J. *Created for community*, p.100.

[34] Egere, I. K. "Digital media literacy in Africa: Precautionary principle and discourse strategies." *International journal of pedagogy, policy and ICT in education*, vol.7, 2019, p.66.

[35] Tanner, K. *Jesus, humanity and the Trinity: A brief systematic theology*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2001, pp, 46, pp.

[36] LaCugna, C. M. *God for us*, p.311.

Catholic Church in various documents and publications has consistently advocated the use of modern means of communication for her evangelizing mission. Today more than ever, most digital natives spend a considerable number of hours in the virtual world and the population is expected to be on the increase as new media platforms emerge. However, it will be interesting to know if the African Christians of the future will present themselves in cyberspace as *imago Dei* whose identity defines ours since the platforms provide opportunities for self-presentation, marketing, and abnegation.

Cyberspace, addiction and the African Christian of the future

Digital natives and sometimes, digital immigrants are constantly in the state of surfing the net, interacting and connecting with each other. This is so because the new world is built on "activity". Online presence implies connectivity and so one's presence in cyberspace presupposes engagement with other digital citizens either hanging out in social media-land, surfing, chatting, texting, profiling, studying, shopping, marketing, or designing all kinds of things all day. Playing the rule of the game in the cyberspace as required is not in itself bad. It becomes wearisome if the time meant for other activities in the real world is spent in the virtual world even unintentionally. This can truly happen when one becomes obsessed, loses control of self, and compromises the interior human freedom. Consequently, the latent power therein in the object of attachment becomes an idol to be worshiped instead of God. Gerald May's description of the addictive condition is important especially its connectedness to willful rebellion against God.

For him:

> Addiction exists whenever persons are internally compelled to give energy to things that are not their true desires. To define it directly, addiction is a *state* of compulsion, obsession, or preoccupation that enslaves a person's will and desire. Addiction sidetracks and eclipses the energy of our deepest, truest desire for love and goodness. We succumb because the energy of our desire becomes attached, nailed, to specific

behaviours, objects or people. *Attachment*, then, is the process that enslaves desire and creates a state of addiction.[37]

A person who is addicted spends more time focusing on the object of attachment to the exclusion of things including God in whose image and likeness he/she was created. However, an addicted person can also be humbled to his/her knees and eventually drawn back into a relationship with God even in the cyberspace where God equally works. With a more nuanced approach, a true love relationship with God and neighbour can be fostered in a domain with remarkable access to the ocean of information and vibrant connection among its citizenry.

Pastoral response as the way forward

The comments of Fathers of the Second Vatican Council on this "marvelous technical inventions"[38] is quintessential when they observe, "although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from increase of the kingdom of Christ", however, "such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society".[39] This paper, therefore, proposes the following steps as a practical approach to the concern raised by the Council Fathers:

Church Dialogue with the Media

Electronic media which includes new media and platforms such as social media and the internet have become part of humanity's daily life, everybody is involved directly or indirectly at a magnifying rather than declining order. Therefore, considering such importance, the Church should seek authentic and reverential dialogue with those responsible for the shaping of the media policy. Indeed, a high premium is to be placed on policy because the media as an instrument in itself is good, it should be seen as "'gifts of God' which, following his providential design, unite men in

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[37] May, G. *Addiction & grace*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1988, p.14.
[38] Vatican Council II, Decree on the Means of Social Communication, *Inter Mirifica*, no.1.
[39] Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, no.39.

brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation".[40]The dialogue should center on common grounds of collaboration where the needs of the media and that of the Church are moved towards a common goal. They should be a collaboration where both parties end up in a win-win situation.[41]Discoveries and new creative ways developed to satisfy the views and desires of both those responsible for communication media and the Church could be quintessential. Apparently, "a merely censorious attitude on the part of the Church…is neither sufficient nor appropriate".[42]

A meaningful dialogue with the media entails the Church's readiness to understand the media logic, motif, "purposes, procedures, forms and genres, internal structures and modalities— and to offer support and encouragement to those involved in media."[43]This gesture of support and understanding could become a platform to offer proposals for the removal of harmful media texts to human development and evangelization.

Active presence in the media industry

The new media world may indeed in some respect seem hostile to Christian faith and morality as it is deeply connected with the postmodernist belief that "the only absolute truth is that there are no absolute truths or that, if there were, they would be inaccessible to human reason and therefore irrelevant."[44] Pornography and violence, and other crimes associated with the media reflecting the dark side of nature marred by sin should not prevent the Church from active involvement in the media apostolate. Her involvement should not be restricted to its use for evangelization but also in the active production of media content, including hardware and

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[40] Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Pastoral Instruction, *Communio et Progressio*. Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 1971, no.2.

[41] Anyanwu, C. N. *An introduction to peace studies and conflict resolution*. Jos: Andex Press & Allied Services Ltd, 2017, p.88.

[42]Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Pastoral Instruction, *Pornography, and violence in the communications media: A pastoral response*. Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 1989, no.30.

[43] Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Pastoral Instruction, *Aetatis Novea*.Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 1992, no.8.

[44] Pope John Paul II, Message for the 35th World Communications day. Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 2001, no.3.

software manufacturing. As major stakeholders in the media industry, computer programs and hardware could be manufactured and produced with high ethical values.

As partners in the industry, the Church could articulate policy on guidelines for effective and appropriate use of the media since, "the Church's practice of communication should be exemplary, reflecting the highest standards of truthfulness, accountability, sensibility to human rights, and other relevant principles and norms"[45] In the world today, dominant media industries/companies have large interest making margins,they are owned and controlled by healthy boards and individuals who take major decisions and influence media policy that will maximize profits with little or no regard for human values or development of nations.

Religious Digital Media Literacy

The emerging new media culture in a magnifying rather than declining state has created a worldwide consciousness for the need for media education or literacy programme. A lot has been written on this as much as achieved through it. The Church's duty should also include creating platforms where her members can be educated about the various offers the media reels out to humanity. This is expedient because today new media does not stop at reflecting reality, it also creates reality and shapes it, and view of the world becoming more real than the real world itself. The church, conscious of the overbearing influence of the media, in her Pastoral Instruction, *Aetatis Novae*, states: Indeed, the power of the media extends to defining not only what people will think but even what they will think about. The reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance."[46] Therefore, for fear of the erosion of Christian values and other cultural values, the document recommends education opportunities in communications as essential components of the formation of all persons who engage in the work of the Church.[47]

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[45] Pontifical Council for Social Communications. *Ethics in Communication*, Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 2000, no.26.
[46]*Aetatis Novae*, no.4.
[47]*Aetatis Novae*, no.28.

It is worth to note that education and training of people about the media as recommended is only but a step in the right direction. The digital natives need a special programme designed by the Church to meet the needs of the young people who need to know more than the techniques of the media, how to function well in the world of cyberspace, make discerning judgments in accordance with their Christian faith and values about what the media presents, and thus use it for their integral development and benefit of others.

Conclusion

The paper made a study of media archeology to critically examine the various media cultures and how each of those cultures affects the Church with particular attention to the dominant style of communicating the faith, since Christian faith involves the dynamic insertion of the Good News into our daily life, guided by the light of the Holy Spirit.

For example, as noted above, oral culture was gender and age-sensitive amidst other things, while written and print cultures where "hierarchical, clergy dominated, linear, logical, doctrinal, dogmatic, closed Church."[48] The electronic culture introduces another new way of being a Church with an emphasis on the Church becoming the medium, the body of the message, and not the clergy. New media culture brought in two concepts of the Church, the physical and the virtual. It has brought with it a new Church of affectivity, emotion, participation, communion, as well as objectification and compartmentalization of relationships. These two apparent realities about the new media culture cannot be denied and coping with these realities requires a nuanced approach of creativity, dialogue, exploration and involvement, and the introduction of the religious digital media literacy programme at different levels of Church as a panacea.

It is, therefore, an imperative that, people especially the younger generation who are currently experiencing information explosion be

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[48] Dias, M. S. (ed). *Evangelization and social communication*, p.176.

taught how to distinguish between good from bad media text, the real-world from the virtual world; knowledge of how all media are constructions and how they construct reality. This no doubt will make people, adults and young to be true citizens of the age of digitality and connectivity without losing their true Catholic faith and identity in the future.