

ASIAN

HORIZONS

Vol. 5, No. 3, September 2011

Pages: 409-411

Editorial

THEOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

“My tweet Lord: Pope joins Twitter and launches new Vatican website,” was one of the reports appeared in *The Guardian* on 29 June 2011. The Pope’s first tweet read: “Dear Friends, I just launched News.va. Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ! With my prayers and blessings, Benedictus XVI.” The news that Pope Benedict XVI tweeted for the first time, announcing the launch of a Vatican information portal, was widely reported by the media around the globe. This new step is perceived as another attempt from the part of the Church to make use of the possibilities offered by the developments in communication technology in its evangelizing mission.

Developments in communication technology have been enormous, especially in the last few decades. Technology has drastically changed the way people communicate, how they come together and even how they think. Modern communication media were instrumental in the recent revolution in the Middle East and African countries, movement against corruption in India, and in the “Occupy Wall Street” revolution. Modern technology has empowered and brought together people in an unprecedented manner.

Faith is our response to a God who communicates. Hence communication is the basis of faith and theology. How far the Church keeps abreast with communication technology and how far it makes use of the developments is a debated question. Often, it is pointed out that the Church’s approach to the modern media is sceptical, focussing more on their negative impacts than viewing them as possibilities. In spite of many statements pointing out the need of making use of the new media and a few steps taken, many complain that the Church’s response is rather negative or insufficient. Evidently, the new media have their own positive as well as negative aspects. But, ignorance and scepticism prevent making use of the positive aspects and thus strengthen the negative aspects. At the same time, we cannot deny that

the Church is realizing the importance of modern communication technology and in the last couple of decades a Theology of Communications has taken roots and considerably developed. In the current issue of *Asian Horizons*, theologians present the origin and development of Theology of Communications and its implications.

We have eight articles on the Theology of Communications, written by both experienced theologians in the field as well as by new scholars. Jacob Srampickal, a veteran theologian in the field, reflects on the beginnings and development of Theology of Communications into an academic discipline. He enunciates why Communications must be a part of theological formation, the challenges involved and explains how contextual theologies are attempts to communicate theology. Following this we have three articles discussing the theology and theological implications of communications. Ta Anh Vu, beginning from the very basic notion that God is a communicating God shows how the Church is a communicating reality. He argues that communication theology should be an integral part of the theological formation. Joseph Palakeel's article, "What Has Communications to Do with Theology?," enquires into Christian theology from a media perspective and explores the media dynamics of Christian theologizing. Taking Athens and Jerusalem as symbols of two worlds, the author argues that the emerging media culture calls not for a return to Jerusalem but to sojourn in Cyberspace, the modern Areopagus. José M. de Mesa in his article "The 'Word' that is Jesus: A Theology of Communication," shows how Jesus, "the Word of God," as envisioned by *Dei Verbum*, founds, inspires and models our manner of communicating. As this Word is a relational word, Christian communication is about loving and caring and its bottom line is the well-being of people and the world. The unconditional initiative of God's "speaking" suggests that Christian communication is pro-active on behalf of the Kingdom and does not succumb to the temptation to give up.

The following two articles deal with computer technology, networking and theology. Paul A. Soukup in "Computer Networking, Networking and Media Ecology," argues that the media ecology approach to communication research suggests that computer networking, along with any other form of communication, interacts with religion, theology, and every other aspect of culture in the manner of an ecosystem. He shows how computer networking has affected the practice of theology and into the ways that theology might respond to the newer information management techniques. Sony Sebastian identifies communication as a common denominator between the Church and

youth as participants in the common goal of renewal of society. In his paper, "Casting out into the Deep," he says that this is an instance where the spheres of the Church (a theology of evangelisation), youth (post-modern culture) and the Internet (latest technology) can come together in the common pursuit of human existence. Envisaging young people as 'cybersouls' – based on an empirical study he conducted that paved the way to the development of a webportal – this paper explores how the Internet can be used to present Jesus Christ to them online.

Theology of Communications is not merely about making use of new technologies, but also about effectively communicating theology. "Small Christian Communities. A Dynamic Christianity for Young People," by Robert A. White attempts to apply some of the vision of theology and communication to a model of Small Christian Communities especially on the basis of his own experience with SCCs in Latin America and more recently in Africa and on the research with students in doctoral and MA theses in Africa, India and in the Philippines. Prem Xalxo, in "Communication Ethics: Toward a New Philanthropy," analyses the ethics in communication technology and calls our attention to new questions and challenges posed by developments in communication technology and subsequent changes in life-styles. "The responses to the challenges posed by communication ethics are found in the promotion of a moral sense of relationship or belongingness – creation of communion, enhancement of community spirit, and sharing in each others' life and activities through the tools of communication," argues Prem Xalxo.

This issue has two papers on other themes of theological interest. Charles Irudayam shows how Catholic Social Teaching is sensitive to new challenges. His article "Towards a Social Economy in Asia," highlights the importance of social economy to be created by plurality of companies that foster common good, human dignity and the rights of workers. K.S. Mathew, in his article "Arrival of St Thomas in India and His Missions: Historiographical Approach," brings to light the different views of scholars regarding the Indian mission of St Thomas and analyses the divergent schools of thought either confirming the arrival of St Thomas in India or denying it.

Communications can renew the Church! Developing a theology of communications and making it an integral part of the theological formation facilitates the renewal of the Church.

Shaji George Kochuthara
Editor-in-Chief