

“WHAT HAS COMMUNICATIONS TO DO WITH THEOLOGY?”

Theological Implications of the Information and Communication Technologies

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It is Tertullian’s famous rhetorical question, in the second century Christian era that has prompted me to make this enquiry. Tertullian (c.160-225)¹ in his book, *Against the Heretics* asked: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has academy to do with the Church?”² This question continues to evoke a lot of interest among theologians. Tertullian is airing a major concern of the early Church as it was emerging out of Palestine into the Greco-Roman world. This question

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¹Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus was born in Carthage to pagan parents, but became a Christian at some point before AD 197 and was a presbyter in the Church of Carthage. He was trained as a lawyer in Rome. His writings are highly rhetorical. We know about him from Eusebius and Jerome. Tertullian is associated with heresy of Montanism, but is known most for anti-intellectualism of the early theology.

²Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, Ch.7. Available from www.newadvent.org/fathers/0311.htm (July 12, 2011).

recounts the encounter of Christian theology and thinking with the predominantly philosophical Greek worldviews. The gist of the question is: "What has Greek thought and philosophy to do with Christianity and its Biblical heritage?"

This question could be looked at from a communication perspective in the context of the communication revolution happening right in front of our eyes. The new information and communication technologies have largely transformed human interaction, entertainment to such an extent that we can speak of them as beginning of a 'new era' (*Aetatis Novae*) in human existence. Since all dimensions of human life are challenged by the new information and communication technologies, Tertullian's question can be reformulated as: "What has communication technology or media to do with theologizing?" That makes this paper an enquiry into Christian theology, from a media perspective. This will lead us to look into the media dynamics of Christian theologizing then and now. It is important for developing a communication theology today.

Athens stands for the knowledge capital of the ancient world and symbol of philosophical reasoning, whereas, Jerusalem was the ultimate synonym for revealed truth of faith. Rationalization of the Christian faith was termed as Hellenization and it meant the rationalization of the 'simple faith' of the early Christians by the 'learned' thinkers of the then-erudite world of the Greek philosophers. Christianization of Greece and/or hellenization of Christianity was not just a change in geography or demography, but a change in language, culture and thought system. Jerusalem of the biblical times was the symbol of pastoral-oral culture, while Athens comprised of city states with literate and philosophical culture. Migrating from Palestine to Greco-roman world Christian thinking assumed a literate state of mind, leading to the origin of theology as we know it today.

This analysis of the origins of theology from a media perspective will definitely shed light on the nature of theology and yield fresh light on how theology adapted itself and flourished in a new culture, other than its native/birth culture. This analysis can shed light on theology in the Asian and Indian context as well as 'inculturation' of theology in the new media culture, augured in by the emerging digital culture. Theology is in birth pains for a smooth transition from a print-text based medieval-modern theology to digital culture existence. The emerging era of digital culture marks a second major shift in human communications media history, after the birth of literate culture in the Hellenistic world around the beginning of the Christian era. This is

important for developing a theology conversant with the communication culture – call it, communication theology.

1. Athens and Jerusalem: A Communication Perspective

Athens and Jerusalem stand evidently for the Greek and the Jew. However, they were not strangers to each other. Greek culture was already widespread in Jerusalem and Israel after the conquest of Alexander. The New Testament was written in Greek and St. Paul preaching to Athenians (Act 17) seeks to find common ground for communicating Gospel truth. As rhetorician, Tertullian himself used a lot of stoic philosophy. So his saying should mean deeper than just a critique of Hellenistic influence on theology or the Church.³ Athens is synonymous with Academy – centre of philosophical study and speculation; Jerusalem is described as ‘Solomon’s Porch, centre of divine wisdom and revelation’. The question itself, hence, can mean many things: What have the false Greek gods to do with the *living* God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? What has polytheism to do with monotheism? What has superstition to do with truth? What has the wisdom of the world to do with the wisdom of God? However, my hunch is that Tertullian as a great thinker, must have been referring to the Greek and biblical rhetoric and thought patterns which he found as incompatible with each other.

Although we find the presence of a *Scripture* (written book), Judaism was predominantly *oral* in culture. The biblical texts were written down primarily for preservation and transmission to posterity, but were communicated orally through proclamation and prayers and celebrations. Prophets were oral preachers. So were Jesus and the apostles. Stories of Jesus were also orally proclaimed in the first centuries. As the Christian faith moved from the predominantly oral culture of Jerusalem to the literate culture of the Greeks, theology, as we know today, originated. Hence, I seek to interpret Tertullian’s saying from a media perspective: Jerusalem represented oral cultural mindset and communication pattern, whereas Greek culture was the most *literate* (*alphabetical*) culture of those days. Philosophy was a product of *literate* thinking, while the Bible is *pastoral* and *rural* context and *oral* in mindset and thought pattern. The core of the question is a concern about a theology that would be affected by the media-change? Transmediatization affects theology – process and

³Some think Tertullian is speaking of Alexandria as the centre of Christian thinking, neither Jerusalem nor Athens, because Athens lost its glory and Jerusalem was suppressed by Romans. Besides, the Septuagint was written in Alexandria, Philo lived there and theologians like Origen.

content. Today's media studies clearly suggest that the media are not mere tools of transmission but are integral to communication. In this sense, the change from an *oral* to *literate* culture has definitely changed both the method and content of theologizing. Change in media leads to change in thought; change in thinking leads to change in life.

2. Change in Predominant Media and Change in Thought

Several studies are available today which examine the modern understanding of the impact of media on thought patterns and cultural expressions. We have some clear notion of oral and literate mindset and consciousness, especially in the writings of McLuhan, Walter Ong, and Havelock.⁴ It makes us to ask about the mindset of the Bible which is a book from an oral culture. The biblical consciousness is a watershed of oral and literate thinking. This analysis has a lot of implications for theologizing today in the changing media context, where we are witnessing a rapid change from a predominantly print-based to a multimedia communication. Likewise, this gives us a clear clue as to why Christian theology has not taken firm root in the Indian and Asian soil. The literate mindset of the mainline (Western model) theology does not and cannot appeal to the still-predominantly oral consciousness of the Indian and Asian peoples and cultures. This opens up a new frontier in inculturation of theology.

2.1. The Oral Consciousness

The earliest form and means of communication was sound organized into speech. The transitory nature of sound compelled man to store the oral information in memory for reuse. Since speech could be preserved only as it is remembered and repeated, speech had to be produced in repetitive and rhythmic patterns to enable easy memorization and recollection. The oral communication works through mimesis and identification, using vocabulary and syntax of rhythm, repetition and other mnemonic devices. They used stories, proverbs, prayers and formulaic expressions on the one hand and lot of poetry, narration, drama, music and dance to aid memorization,

⁴Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963; Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write. Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986; M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964; W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word*, London: Routledge, 1982; Derrick de Kerckhove, *The Skin of Culture. Investigating the new Electronic Reality*, Toronto: Sommerville, 1995. There are many other previous and later studies on the subject, but we are not exploring them for the sake of brevity.

recall and performance. (Scriptures of all religions originated in the oral culture and exists to this day in this format). Modern thinkers dubbed them as 'pre-categorical', primitive or mythical thinking. However, cultural anthropology of our times has established the concept of orality as a cultural situation and a language of its own. So the oral culture has its own ways of making sense and expressing and communicating to others what really made sense. In other words, it is a distinct mode of consciousness and communication, and it exists even today.

2.2. The Literate Mindset/Consciousness

Alphabetic technology (writing) made it possible to liberate knowledge from living memory and syntax of rhythm and image, releasing a lot of energy for dialectical thinking which brought about human progress, by giving rise to science.⁵ Literate thinking, produced by alphabetical writing, reading and thinking, marks the discovery of intellection in the form of a mechanism of reasoned calculation in place of memorization through association. Categorical thinking distinguished "by the power to think, to calculate, to cogitate, to know in total distinction from the capacity to see, to hear, to feel."⁶ The knower *knows, not recalls* or feels, and knowing happens through abstraction of concepts from sensible data. A subject's separate identity as a personality that thinks and knows leads to the understanding of the object as something known and thought as a body of knowledge that is thought, known and communicated. The knower is thus one who understands formulas and categories lying beyond experiences and education is not implanting new knowledge in the psyche, but cultivating the faculty of thinking as a function of converting experience into concepts. The idea of autonomous psyche and the concept of self as reflective, critical thinking subject originated with alphabetical literacy. In the view of Kerckhove, alphabetic writing changed the orientation of human culture from tradition to innovation by changing forever, "the way we see the world." The functions of the brain as well as the organization of thought are deeply affected by the phonetic alphabet. The "hypothesis is that the alphabet has ... in the long run ... led to the typically western reliance on rationality and the rationalization of all experiences."⁷ So also philosophy, theology and other sciences and objective knowledge is product of literate mindset.

⁵Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 219.

⁶Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 200-05. For Plato the aim of education is to form a self-organized and autonomous personality; an educated man has a psyche, with three forms of reason, will/spirit, besides the appetite or desire.

⁷Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 13, 29-30, 34-5.

2.3. The Biblical Mind-set

The world of the Bible was a predominantly oral in culture, although there are references to reading and writing as early as 6th century BCE⁸. Jews did not rely completely on a written text, but combined oral and written traditions. Writing was basically a way to make the original text available. Jesus lived at a time of major shift in communication culture and was apparently literate and could read. Boomershine compares Jesus to Socrates, who although did not read and write, initiated the culture of literacy by making the student to think critically and objectively and thus initiate radical socio-cultural and religious change. Jesus initiated a new way of thinking in parables⁹. He gave a new meaning to Jewish scriptures, which although written, were treated as oral. Jesus brings in conceptual clarifications, drawing practical conclusions and applications, rather than just repeating old stories. This was a good communication technique to get orally formed people to come to a critical objective thinking and reflection. Jesus made Judaism viable in the new literate culture in a distinctive way and the Jewish sect flourished in the Greco-Roman world.

While Rabbinic Judaism used literacy as subordinate to orality, "Christians were aggressive in the appropriation of the communications technology of literacy." Christians actively pursued literate culture to make the teachings of Jesus relevant and universal. Christians produced and distributed a veritable flood of new literary forms and traditions - rhetorical traditions of homiletics, liturgical hymns and prayers, hymns, letters, dogmatic writings as well as more traditional literary forms like Gospels, acts, epistles, apocalypse. The writing of first apologists and ante-Nicene fathers were highly literate writings. This led to the expansion of Christianity into Greco-roman world and possibly led to the split with Judaism, among other causes. The earliest theology shows a radical shift from a

⁸First references to writing in Israel are references to Moses (Ex 24, Deut 31), reading and writing of sacred texts is found prevalent only in the sixth century BCE. First descriptions of systematic integration of reading and writing are found in Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 8 and 10 (400-300 BCE), speaking of a covenant renewal through a new communication event of oral reading and preaching.

⁹Parables communicate a new understanding of the reign of God, human society and behaviour. Two exceptional characteristics were reversal of expectation and hyperbole. These elements are considered as epistemological shocks which made the listener to enter into a situation and identify with certain people/behaviour and suddenly to a mental distance, rather than identification, in order to have a reflective knowledge.

predominantly oral to a literate culture – Jerusalem going to Athens to settle.

3. The Shift from Oral to Literate Discourse on God

The shift from oral to written communication systems is not a passive development of technology of preservation and transmission, but radically changed culture and affected all social and religious institutions. Preliterate cultures apprehended images globally; literate societies process information analytically, think logically and organize information in a linear way. A clear sense of hierarchy, linearity and progression in thinking is developed and consequently they are able to communicate more complex and specific information.

3.1. The Greek Origins of Theo-logy

The Greeks used myths to narrate the stories of God, but as literacy grew in the Hellenistic period, more systematic approach and analysis of these stories emerged. Socrates used oral communication in a brand new manner, no longer as an exercise in poetic memorization, but as a prosaic instrument substituting poetic tradition with a conceptual vocabulary and syntax.¹⁰ “Platonism... was able to formulate a new conceptual type of language and of thinking as a replacement for the oral narrative and oral thinking.”¹¹ If Plato proposed philosophy as superior knowledge, Aristotle established metaphysics as critical knowledge of gods – a theology infused with philosophical thinking. The term theology, as a compound of *theos* and *logos*, had classical Greek origin and it meant narration of myths as a discourse about gods – a kind of theogony and cosmogony. Even Plato introduced the idea of theo-logy as a myth-ology in the sense of *logos* about *mythos* or critical reflection on the content and intent of the myths. This term was first used by Plato in the *Republic* (Bk II, ch.18) to mean rational reflection on God. In Aristotle, talk about God is metaphysics and not theology.

3.2. Origins of Christian Theology

Early Christians did not like to use the term ‘theology’ as it had *pagan* connotations. Early Christian theologians preferred the term ‘*oikonomia*’ and not ‘*theologia*’ to refer to God’s salvific actions in the world. There was/is substantial difference between what was named ‘*oikonomia*’ by Fathers and ‘*theologia*’ by the Greek apologists. Christian ‘theology’ originated as reflections on the implications of

¹⁰Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write. Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, 4-5.

¹¹Havelock, *Muse*, 29

Christian faith mostly in the form of guidance as how to live consistent with their faith. Theology began to be considered as *learned faith* (vis-a-vis *simple faith*) and dialectics taking the place of personal conviction, need of demonstrating why something is to be believed at all. Tertullian is airing this concern about Athens (Academic discourse) creeping into faith proclamation (Jerusalem): what has the church to do with the Academy?

Emergence of 'theology' starts with Christian expansion to the Greek world and it started in the form of making Christianity understandable and relevant in the new cultural context. All early Christian thinkers, including Tertullian, were literate and used 'academic' thinking to theologize. In Augustine we find the maturation of rational thinking and reflection based on reading and writing as well as perfection of literate theology.¹² He was converted by *reading* – not by hearing. He is the first one to consider reading as a means to reflection and contemplation (*lectio-contemplatio*), and to bring his reading to bear directly upon his teachings, written and spoken. In Augustine we have the origins of pure *literate* theology, different from the biblical and patristic theology which was still oral (*pre-literate* or *primitive*) in culture. While the patristic theological tradition is continued by eastern thinkers, western theology went ahead romancing with philosophy through Augustine to St. Thomas. Theology is considered as science, a discourse on God by reason enlightened by faith. Theology turned out to be a monastic (read, literate or Academic) affair – flourishing in monasteries and cathedral schools which were centres of literacy. We find the birth of professional theologians.

3.3. Oral and Literate Theologies

All theology seeks knowledge of God, which is handled differently by philosophical and revelational approaches. The oral and literate theologies are different in content and style. Their God-concept and God-language are different.

Oral cultures rely more on revelation, illumination, and prayer while literate thinking on God resort to metaphysical and epistemological pursuits: "the scriptural accounts spoke of the actions of God in history, Greek philosophy centred attention on the question of

¹²The Book *Augustine the Reader* traces the struggles of Augustine to come to terms with reading as the way of knowledge and source of reflection. Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader. Meditation, Self knowledge, and Ethics of Interpretation*, Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1996.

metaphysical being."¹³ For the Greek thinkers, God is an abstract and metaphysical Being. Plato's God is other-worldly being, to be sought and found as a mental being in the unchangeable world of Ideas and has nothing to do with the 'fallen' world of human existence. Aristotle's God is the supreme perfection, the first cause and a metaphysical monad, the Supreme Being. The Bible, however, presents a God who creates (and not causes) man into existence, who is actively interested and involved in the life and action of man and intervening in history to change the course of history. God is experienced through his presence and action (revelation) in history and not through thinking or propositions and is made known by witnesses. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).¹⁴

The God-concept changes the God-language or method of theology. While Greek literate thinking used logical syllogisms and conceptual speculations for rational objective knowledge, the Bible speaks the language of senses and vivid imageries. Bible uses narrative and rhetorical devices for evoking conviction of the heart and not proof for the head and intellect. Boman calls it psychological understanding and conviction:

The Hebrew thinkers' and poets' coming to know divine truths seems to have been less a matter of persuasion than of immediate, intuitive and ultimately incommunicable perception. Their art of composition is not like that in architecture where everything is built step by step, but it is more similar to music wherein the theme is set forth at the beginning and returns later in constantly new variations. The expressions for the function of thinking ('know,' 'see,' 'hear') likewise have the purpose of finding a point rather than of furnishing a proof.

Boman shows that, when Israelite thinkers (notably those of the Bible) seek to convince an audience, they do not resort to logical syllogisms but to parables and to repetition.¹⁵

¹³Donald K. McKim, *Theological Turning Points: Major Issues in Christian Thought*, Atlanta: Knox, 1988, 8.

¹⁴Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 171.

¹⁵For example, Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 1:2); Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (Psalm 1:1). Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, 202-5.

4. Implications of the *Transmediatization* of Theology

This interaction between the oral and literate cultures proved to be crucial for the western theology and even interpretation of Scriptures. The *transmediatization* - translation of Christian thinking to Greek literate mould - led to learned theology as opposed to the simple faith (Origen). While it served to make Christianity understandable (communicable) to the Greco-roman intellectual world, theology was rendered an abstract discipline of intellect rather than of experience and expression of heart. Several fundamental aspects of Christian belief originated in the literate thinking. The concepts like Trinity and incarnation got abstract and no more tangible realities of the economy of salvation. Many heresies are purely a matter of language, thinking style and product of literate thinking and mind-set, rather than a matter of conviction of heart and confession with lips (Rom 10:9-10). Today Christianity is the most - if not the only - literate religion in the world. Other religions remained in synagogues, temples or ashrams! And still exist primarily in the oral culture although their books are written for the sake of preservation. They consider god-talk as experiential, spiritual, relational discourse.

4.1. Growth and Spread of Christianity

The definitive shift to the literate culture was a necessary adaptation to make Christianity prominent. This led to spread and growth of Christianity not only in numbers, but also in content and reflection. Manuscripts of the gospel spread to all corners of Roman Empire and served as the subversive force to win over the empire for the Gospel. *Transmediatization* of faith served the best interest of the word, making the Christian message universally relevant and meaningful. The linear and hierarchical thinking gave the church organizational strength and stability and doctrinal clarity and unity. It was great move that set Christianity on a new journey of theology to dominate the western world for 2000 years. It slowly led to the universalization of learning and reading, leading to enlightenment and growth of philosophy, sciences and technology.

4.2. Eastern and Western Theologies

Eastern and Western theologies can easily be recognized as two predominant media cultures. Both churches have a mix of both oral and literate cultural elements, but the Western thinking has become too literate with a theology that is textual, dogmatic, propositional, and rational. The Oriental theology continues to retain several mythical-ritual-narrative elements in the icons, liturgies, and a mystical, intuitive, liturgical theology. The patristic theological

principle *lex orandi, lex credenti* still forms the foundational principle for most eastern theologies. St. Ephrem wrote songs and poems for theology. There is a growing interest in the Syrian theology, which is the only theology that developed outside and Roman Empire and hence without the influence of literate culture.

4.3. Co-existence of Oral and Literate Cultures

The inherent oral-personal dimension of the biblical faith co-existed with the written-read word to make the church and theology integral. It was not the academic theology or the apologists which spread Christianity in the first millennium, but the witnesses – martyrs – who were the demonstrators of the Word. Fathers of the Church show a balanced mix of these two cultures – even Augustine was torn between two identities, as revealed in his famous intellectual crisis expressed as the dialectics between *credo ut intelligam* and *intellego ut credam!* The oral culture played a key role in faith formation. Babin speaks of Christian formation as learning by immersion, involvement and by being there – cathedrals, long liturgies, festivals, long homilies. Patristic theology was basically biblical interpretation in homiletic or instructional format of interesting and articulate oral discourse. Homilies used the evocative prophetic language of experience, witness, stories and parables. Apologetics was addressed to outsiders, while faith formation was through homilies! Writing was for preservation, but came to dominate and hijacked the meaning and thought habits of Christians in the second millennium. Hence it is by employing the full power of the available media that Church really succeeded.

4.4. Key to understanding doctrinal controversies

The proper understanding of oral and literate roots of Christian theology gives us a better clue to trace the true meaning and implication of doctrines immersed in the theological controversies. The split between East and West as well as the Protestantism have underlying media related roots. Different of the heresies and schisms can be attributed to unrecognized difference in the thought patterns. It shows how literate refinements and quest for uniform meanings and expressions tend to divide than unite. In oral cultural interpretations are loosely held together as multiple opinions – Buddhist *anekantavada* – without affecting the core truth, as no individual interpretation is believed to have a monopoly over truth, but as perceptions. Propositional certitudes claim that truth is contained in the formula and contrary positions are heretical. The Christian doctrines, buried in propositions and formulas and written-

recited creeds do not make much sense to the moderns. But a confessed and witnessed faith still attracts people.

4.5. Better Understanding of the Scriptures

The Fathers of the church interpreted the Bible symbolically and figuratively, matching the original nature of these texts. Whereas the scholastic *disputatio* and neo-scholastic proof-texting and the modern textual criticism and even form criticism are too literate approach to the sacred texts which are texts from an oral culture, written down mostly for preservation and transmission. Even the outdated quest for the historical Jesus and Christ of faith can be reduced to oral-literate conflict. The reading and interpretation of major Christian texts are bracketed between Platonic and Bultmannian demythologizations. Too much of theological demythologization has led to purging of faith of experiential elements in favour of a rationalized God-talk. The emerging narrative and performance criticism and biblical story-telling are more fitting tools for experiencing the biblical mindset.

4.6. Inculturation and Positive Evaluation of Cultures

Oral cultures were once considered as primitive and irrational, so were their stories and wisdom. Cultural anthropology as well as communication studies have shed more light on oral cultures and a different way of knowing and expression. Colonization and even slavery can be traced back to the claims of superiority of literate cultures. Many attempts at contextualization of theology fail because it was from a textual point of view and not contextual. A positive re-estimation of oral cultures is a great help towards inculturation of faith and theology today. Proclamation of a literate Christianity is not in sync with these cultures. Most countries in Asia and Africa are still predominantly oral in culture and thought patterns. The oral reading and theology of the Bible might be closer to many cultures, than the western rational theology and Church.

4.7. Challenge of Digital Culture

Jesus and early Christians used the latest available media technology to make the word heard far and wide. While Jesus integrated the oral and literate thinking, Christians went ahead in appropriating the technology of writing to reach the Word to every nook and corner of the Roman Empire. Today we are living in a transitional time when the digital communication is emerging as the predominant media. To make the Church and theology relevant, meaningful and communicable today, we need to bring theology into dialogue with

the digital culture. The dominant theology – both catholic and protestant – stand out as a textual, literate theology and theological thinking. This is especially true of Luther and the protestant tradition, where the word (originally and biblically an oral-aural phenomenon) is imprisoned in the printed text and an irrationally rational textual reception of the word, leading to privatization of the word in silent reading and reduction of the word to the textual meaning with some glimpse into the con-text in recent times.

The theological categories and liturgical-spiritual media and methods are of communications media of the previous century – which means, the flourishing of Christianity as in the first millennia needs an inculturation of faith in the predominant culture of the day. The digital culture with its audio-visual tools has brought us closest to the original biblical world. It, however, is not a return but a new orality, which enables us to understand and experience the Bible in an entirely new way. This is the greatest challenge of theologizing today to make the Christian faith understandable and relevant.

4.8. Indian and Asian theology

This challenge is felt all the more in the larger Asian context, which remains to this day primarily oral cultures. In spite of growing literacy and schooling, India and most of the Asian countries have not come to absorb the literate mindset and hence are still culturally oral. Hence the westernized Christianity, which is literate and rationally organized fail to appeal to the Indian and Asian psyche. The original biblical mindset is basically oral-aural and much suited to the Asian context. However, missionaries who are trained with utmost philosophical and theological rigour are too soaked in the literate mindset and approach to God and salvation, that their teaching and preaching do not so much appeal to the Indian mind which is still experiential and relational in its approach to God and life. Communication theology is proposing a contextual theology that ‘speaks’ to the cultural ethos of the peoples. The emerging digital media with its ‘new orality’ of songs, stories and visuals are more akin to the ancient oral culture, that the Indian and Asian people are more at home in the new media. Theology too can benefit much from the emerging digital culture which is closer to the biblical times and thinking, rather than the rational pursuit of the medieval and modern theologies. Communication theology aims at a theology conversant with the culture generated by the predominant media of each time and place.

Conclusion

We find that in patristic times Jerusalem and Athens did a lot – met, dated, married and produced many children. The Semitic and Greek worlds fused into the Christian thought and culture. It made Christianity the predominant religion of the West for two millennia. However, the predominantly literate Christianity could not make much in-road into the Asia and Africa which are predominantly oral in culture. In the West itself, the emergence of audio-visual-textual communication of the digital culture is challenging the predominantly rational and printed-text based Christian faith and practice. A return to the biblical times and the predominantly oral culture is very helpful in making biblical experience come alive. Our reflection on how media shapes theology (and philosophy) sheds much light on the story of theology as well as paves way for more inculturated theology in the dominant-media culture. The predominantly oral cultural mindset of India and Asia invites theology to a biblical realism to take deep roots in Asia. This is the competence of communication theology.

Athens had so much to do with Jerusalem. So too, the communication culture means much for theology. But today cities like Silicon Valley and Hollywood invite Jerusalem to get closer. Christianity today needs to enter into the world of digital culture. The emerging media culture has much to do with theology and the Church. This calls not for a return to Jerusalem but to sojourn in Cyberspace. The modern Areopagus has the best of both worlds.