



**TECHNIUM**  
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL



# Technium.

39/2023

2023

A new decade for social changes

**Technium**

**Social Sciences**

Powered by



## The demands of cultural-missionary communication in the media

**Eugen Tănăsescu**

Maritime University – Constanța

[radioeugen@yahoo.com](mailto:radioeugen@yahoo.com)

**Abstract.** The phenomenon of media communication constitutes one of the essential characteristics of society. Without communication, society could not function. The Church cannot avoid the use of means of communication, for the simple reason that its mission is masterfully described by St. Apostle Paul who says: ". . . I have become all things to all, that I may save some." (1 Cor 9, 22). Therefore, an essential aspect of media communication in the Church is to make ourselves understood by the audience as well as possible. In this context, we will analyze what are the demands of cultural-missionary communication, so that the cultural and missionary values of the Church fulfill the meaning of their existence.

**Keywords.** media, cultural missionary communication

### Introduction

Confessional media, however, represent a way of doing cultural-missionary communication. It is intended to normalize the relationship of the generic believer with society. Cultural-missionary communication is a daily necessity, as is logic or mathematics. We live fully as we know and can take on the theological aspect of each individual day. From the permanence of theology in our lives comes the possibility of having a Christian point of view on any aspect. The confessional media, practicing the Church's dialogue with society, could be the beginning of its dialogue with God.

The contemporary church media, addressing a secularized world, will have to consider the fact that the public suffers from the phenomenon of "nicheization". In other words, each person who accepts a relationship with the mass media will choose a certain type of communication channel, depending on their own preferences and possibilities. Therefore, the confessional media is forced to consider the demands, forms and means by which it can reach this public. In other words, the Christian communicator is obliged to take the external elements from the secular media and mold himself according to their rhythm to ensure his message a pastoral and missionary efficiency.

Regarding cultural-missionary communication through the media, we have a series of principles that establish the framework for its development:

- Intention: What is the motivation of the act of communication? Do they respect or exploit the public? Are cultural differences respected?

- The content: does communication contribute to the building of peace, to the promotion of justice and unity? Does it present a complete picture, or is it based on sectarian or nationalistic prejudices?

- Does the style, communication have clarity, brevity, precision, variety, and an optimistic meaning?

- Dialogue: is the receiver able to respond or does the communication have a single meaning? Does the communicator listen as much as he talks? Does it respect the reality of pluralism and ensure the expression of multiple points of view?

- Relevance: is the chosen form of communication appropriate and the choice of means corresponds to the work being undertaken?

- The mystery: does communication respect "otherness", refusing self-sufficient explanation in dialogue?

- The cultural-spiritual order of values: the Christian communicator must consider the inversion of earthly and heavenly values in the Gospel: the latter before the former, folly before wisdom, weakness before strength, poverty before wealth.

These principles can be fulfilled when the Christian communicator observes the following requirements:

### **1. Preaching the values of the Gospel**

The first step for man to enter communion with God is man's return to God, through the continuous revelation of God and His saving work in Jesus Christ, through the preaching of the Gospel. Besides, the most intense and exposed part of the work of Jesus Christ is the preaching of the Gospel. In the word of the preaching of the Gospel, the Lord is present not as a simple message that recalls past events but as one who works and interpellates people: "he who listens to you listens to me" (Lk. 10, 16). Furthermore, the main calling of the Apostles is to preach the Gospel. Therefore, the preaching of the Gospel is a permanent requirement of the Church because it aims at conversion by faith<sup>1</sup>.

### **2. Inculturation of the Gospel**

Preaching the Gospel involves the missionaries calling on means of presenting evangelical truths, which can be a certain language, certain concepts, or human images. But these belong to a certain culture, which, in turn, belongs to a certain time or place of humanity. Therefore, it is essential that these forms of expression be transfigured by the Spirit of the Gospel. In this way, the Orthodox Church promoted language and culture as means of transmitting and interpreting the truths of faith, without sacralizing a certain language or without dogmatizing a certain culture, something recognized and appreciated even by Pope John Paul II<sup>2</sup>.

### **3. Transmission of the true faith**

The unaltered transmission of Revelation, as "the word of truth" (2 Tim 2, 15), is another requirement of the Christian mission because the Church does not invent the Gospel but transmits "the faith that was once for all given to the saints" (Jude 1, 3). The integral transmission of the Gospel or of the knowledge given by Revelation, that is, of the content of

---

<sup>1</sup> Priest Valer Bel, *The Mission of the Church in contemporary society*. 2. Requirements, Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 15-24.

<sup>2</sup> See John Paul II, *Oriente lumen*, Vatican, May 2, 1995.

the faith, is of decisive importance for the Christian life, for the perfection of man in communion with God.

On the other hand, a wrong teaching, which is transmitted to believers, will cause them to go astray, away from the path of salvation. However, as Scripture is only one of the ways of transmitting revelation, we understand that the transmission of the Holy Tradition of the Church is equally important, as a space for authentic deepening of Revelation. Within the Holy Tradition we will integrate the Symbol of Faith and the Teachings of Faith.

#### **4. Transmission of Tradition, understood as the practice of the Church.**

Each generation is called to find itself in the apostolic practice of the Church forever, and the faithful take this Tradition and embody it in their lives, in contemporaneity, neither exaggerations nor the imposition of auxiliary practices, nor its simplification, being allowed. Thus, through the dynamic aspect of the Holy Tradition, the Church manages to answer all the problems of every place and time.

#### **5. The world and its situation**

The mission of the Church is, in essence, the proclamation to the world of the message of salvation and perfection in Jesus Christ. Currently, however, in a major way, the world can no longer be defined as a non-Christian mission space, but, on the contrary, we are dealing with a mission of the Church in a Christian space, but in which the Gospel has not become a concrete reality in which people follow Christ. In this way, the term "world" rather describes the space of today's secularized society, and very rarely a non-Christian space. This secularized space is very vast and very diverse; therefore, the Church should adapt its mission according to the specifics of these spaces. A special aspect is those secularized spaces, where the Church must deal with a departure from Christian spirituality, in forms that vary from religious indifference to open hostility.

The Church must combat secularization, considering the experiences of society, by firmly affirming the presence and work of God in human life. A coordination of the truth revealed and realized in the person of Jesus Christ with the deepest aspirations of man is necessary. At the same time, the Church must criticize and condemn the concepts that dominate the secularized culture, especially considering the new trends in the dialogue between science and theology, which converge in affirming the reality that matter is energy, and the causes of the existence of today's world are more about transcendent than immanent. Also, the Church must not neglect the dialogue with the political-administrative world of society, because there is a tendency to dissociate or refuse Christianity from the political world, along with a parallel tendency to adopt foreign laws or even contrary to Christianity. Therefore, the Church is called to rediscover to the world the meaning of spiritual progress, which contributes in a major way to the real progress of society, through the cultivation of deep and pure love, which leads to the deification of man by grace.

One of the most effective ways to combat secularization is the systematic cultural-missionary communication of a program of sermons and catechesis, which includes the exposition of the history of salvation based on the Holy Scriptures, the explanation and development of the Symbol of Faith as well as the explanation of worship, especially the Holy Liturgy, in order to promote personal commitment and experience what is symbolized by worship.

## **6. The apostolate of the laity**

Saint Peter shows the missionary vocation of all the members of the Church, when he says "But you are a chosen tribe, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people agonized by God to announce to the world the goodness of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Cultural-missionary communication cannot exclude from its activity the contribution of believers to witnessing the Savior Jesus Christ to the world. In fact, the world is made up mostly of lay people, who themselves are members of the Church, bearing a ministry and a responsibility, in solidarity with the sacramental priesthood. Likewise, in the world of mass media, professionals mostly come from among the laity. Therefore, the specific mission of the laity is to seek and witness the Kingdom of God, in - a secularized world, especially using modern technological means.

## **7. Appropriate language and words**

Regarding the issue of language used in religious communication, it must be said from the beginning that language in religion is extremely important because it structures the precise terms and concepts that underpin dogmas<sup>3</sup>. However, it is also true that to communicate effectively, one must use a language appropriate to the communication process. Thus, it is necessary not to find new words to replace the old ones, but to discover what exactly the old words convey, their deep meanings which are unknown to most people. Even Father Dumitru Stăniloae observes that current theological reflection must not be obsessed with the desire for originality at any cost, but with the interpretation of what each historical era has left us as a common heritage, which serves salvation<sup>4</sup>.

Fr. Mihai Himcinschi states that, currently, the Church needs an adaptation of the language, when it comes to the transmission of faith teachings: "Orthodox theology must revise its language. We have inherited a rich dogmatic tradition, and we must preserve it faithfully and not change anything in content. We certainly don't need new dogmas, but that doesn't mean we need to preserve dogmas like archeological treasures. It is obvious that we need an interpretation of our dogmas in existential terms"<sup>5</sup>.

Fr. Teofil Tia believes that religious communication also requires a correct understanding and interpretation of the entire existence of the Christian: "Religious communication cannot be simplified to a simple transmission of objective truths or facts, norms, Christian religious rituals, but it is carried out only when the whole existence of the Christian is interpreted in the light of the Holy Spirit, being then re-expressed and transformed following a process of progressive identification with the earthly existence of Christ in the ecclesial community"<sup>6</sup>.

Moreover, some recommendations are made regarding the activity of catechizing: respect for the one being catechized, valuing responsibility and participatory and decision-making capacity, giving up the transmission of ready-made truths or simple ideological expositions and treating catechists in a manner missionary-personalized in an ecumenical and dialogue-opening dimension, addressing concrete problems of life, avoiding sporadic and occasional catechesis, by organizing catechesis itineraries<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Dr. Nifon Mihăiță, *Christian Missiology*, Ed. Asa, Bucharest, 2005, p. 144

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 1996, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Prof. Conf. Univ. Dr. Mihai Himcinschi, op. quote, p 53.

<sup>6</sup> Priest Lecturer Univ. Dr. Teofil Tia, For "a plus" of the credibility of the contemporary Christian message, in the volume "Pastoral guide Reintregirea. Vol XXI" Ed. Reintregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2005, p. 656.

<sup>7</sup> Priest Lecturer Univ. Dr. Teofil Tia, For "a plus" of the credibility of the contemporary Christian..., p. 660.

The act of communication essentially depends on the word, understood as a unit of information whose destination is spiritual formation. We must establish from the outset that every word communicated has an eternal value as well as an immediate value. The eternal value of the word is rendered by Christ, when he says that "by your words you will be found righteous or you will be condemned" (Matthew 12, 37), which means that any word that goes out from us to the world, will return at a given moment towards us, charged with the eternal personal value it has, so that our work will be fruitful or not: "Each one's work will be made known; the day (of the Lord) will reveal him." (1 Cor 3, 13).

The immediate value of the word resides in the impact and transformations it produces on the one to whom it is communicated. Thus, there can be "strong", useful, soul-building words, as well as "weak" words, which say nothing (empty talk) or, worse, even soul-destroying words. "Words are as delicate as porcelain. Whoever utters them at random will only succeed in making an unpleasant noise"<sup>8</sup>.

Unfortunately, society suffers from a tendency to alter the communication process, accentuated also by a large part of media communication, which consists in the pauperization of the word, in the depreciation of the missionary and constructive power of the word, in the appearance of "commercial" chatter, of meaningless speech, sometimes heretical, with tendencies to blaspheme the divinity or even with the aspect of globalized tyranny. Worse, today we can even speak of an anti-language, a sign of the sinful break between man and God-Logos.

The effects of this talk without soul building are real catastrophes for the human spirit, generating massive overturns of hierarchies and principles, in this way the essential place due to God, that of the "cornerstone", being gradually taken by modern idols: vain glory, power, avarice, etc. And where is the temptation of vain glory greater than in the mass media, which today has the power to make you known to the "global village" called Earth?

At the speed in which man lives today, he no longer has the strength to pay attention to all the words that surround him. This is how we end up not paying attention either to how we speak or to what we speak. Humanity has never printed so many words, never launched so many words into the ether as today, and yet "the eye is not satisfied with what it sees and the ear is not filled with what it hears" (Eccl. 1, 8). Why? Because many words today no longer feed, being empty of meaning. Words become full of meaning, however, when they return to their main meaning: that of forming man.

## **8. Communication and media education**

This involves the management and integration of media messages in the process of formation and development of the human personality. The need for this new educational species appears in the Romanian educational space since the 70s: "The critical spirit must be developed in students, the ability to discern and judge against such an equivocal language as the audio-visual one must be promoted, the habit of not accept without critical examination everything they read, everything they see or hear, helping them to gradually acquire criteria for appreciation, ranking and selection, for evaluating and synthesizing everything that is of quality from the avalanche of information and messages that surrounds them"<sup>9</sup>.

But this type of education should not only be exercised on students, but on all media receivers: "This training is not only indispensable considering the increasingly important place of the mass media in the educational process, but, at least equally, in order to dominate the

---

<sup>8</sup> James McDougall Black, *The mystery of preaching*, London, James Clarke, 1924, p. 105

<sup>9</sup> Ioan Cerghit, *Mass-media and school youth education*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 188.

influence, they exert on current life. Indeed, the mass media informs, entertains, sways and at the same time constantly abuses the individual in his private and social life, and it is indispensable that he benefits from an early education that prepares him to undergo personal selection this mass of messages, to exercise his critical spirit, with the advantages that flow from them, instead of allowing himself to be alienated by them"<sup>10</sup>.

Also called "media education", this new discipline that appeared within the educational sciences develops on two levels: the introduction and effective use of new communication technologies in the education process and the skills to select messages, to develop a critical sense as well as some skills in the field of valorization and interpretation of media messages<sup>11</sup>.

In this sense, a model was developed, consisting of 5 key questions, which allow the analysis of the characteristics of any media message: Who created the message? What techniques were used to attract attention? How might other people understand the message differently than I do? What life patterns, values and viewpoints are presented or omitted in the message? Why was this message sent?

This model has the role of helping to develop the ability to selectively receive messages, with a view to a rational use of mass media. But this model must be complemented with other educational interventions, which ensure the recipient of the media message:

- acquiring a reference value code, some axiological norms that they can apply when operating selectively in the huge volume of media messages.
- the formation of high intellectual, moral, and aesthetic tastes, attitudes and requirements in relation to what is communicated to them.
- the cultivation of spiritual needs and elevated cultural preferences, which allow them to overcome the temptation for what is easy, derisive, and worthless.

A very important document regarding the introduction of education for communication and mass media in school programs was developed in 1966, by UNESCO, and is entitled "Media Education: A Kit for Teachers, Students, Parents and Professionals". It proposes a curriculum structured in 6 modules, with a minimum study of 12 hours per module, structured as follows: Cultural environment of the media, Culture of media products, Language of the media, Representations in the media, Typology of the audience, educational stages, and strategies. At the same time, the document is a user manual intended for teachers, students, parents, as well as relations with communication professionals. A separate section is dedicated to the communication environment called the Internet. The Church can fulfill this missionary requirement, especially using catechesis and pastoral methods.

**9. Creation of an ecclesiastical media network**, with the blessing of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which includes all the specific media components, which will offer society a Christian media alternative. In this way, the media-consuming public would find an authoritative point of reference to counterbalance the negative effects of a secularized media communication. Optionally, these components can work on specific target audience categories: official media, youth media, diaspora media, etc., so that the missionary efficiency of the transmitted message is as high as possible. Moreover, this desired is beginning to take shape in a practical way, through the existence, at the present time, of a diversity of ecclesial media communication channels in Romania.

---

<sup>10</sup> Bertrand Schwartz, *Education tomorrow*, Ed. Didactics and Pedagogy, Bucharest, 1976, p. 126

<sup>11</sup> Ileana Rotaru, *Virtual Communication*, Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 181

### **Conclusion**

The Church is called to combat all the negative effects due to the secular mass media through Christian cultural-missionary communication. The outcome of the Church's mission in today's heavily mediatized society will depend on how the Church will know how to use this media missionary power of the word. That is why it is essential to comply with some cultural-missionary requirements in the act of media communication, which ensures an effective impact among the receiving public. The transmission of the cultural-spiritual values of the Gospel and Tradition, by using an appropriate language and by choosing the right words, the use of an apostolate of the laity and educational resources aimed at the act of media communication as well as the creation of an ecclesial media network are the requirements identified within this study. Their application generates an effective cultural-missionary communication, so that the society knows an improvement of the cultural-spiritual level.

### **References**

- [1] Priest Valer Bel, *The Mission of the Church in contemporary society. 2. Requirements*, Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 15-24.
- [2] Prof. Dr. Nifon Mihăiță, *Christian Missiology*, Ed. Asa, Bucharest, 2005, p. 144
- [3] Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 1996, p. 101.
- [4] Priest Lecturer Univ. Dr. Teofil Tia, For "a plus" of the credibility of the contemporary Christian message, in the volume "Pastoral guide Reintregirea.Vol XXI" Ed. Reintregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2005, p. 656.
- [5] James McDougall Black, *The mystery of preaching*, London, James Clarke, 1924, p. 105
- [6] Ioan Cerghit, *Mass-media and school youth education*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 188.
- [7] Bertrand Schwartz, *Education tomorrow*, Ed. Didactics and Pedagogy, Bucharest, 1976, p. 126
- [8] Ileana Rotaru, *Virtual Communication*, Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 181
- [9] See John Paul II, *Oriental lumen*, Vatican, May 2, 1995.