Theology and the technologies of communication

Joseph Palakeel

The new technologies of communication have dramatically changed not only human media of communication, but also the patterns of interaction, habits of thought and expression, and styles of living. Some recent communication research points to an intrinsic connection between the technology of communication and cultural evolution. Digital communication, for example, means much more than an innovation of the media and the resultant speed and reach of communication.

These new technologies have given rise to a culture, with “new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology” (Redemptoris Missio, 37c; Aetatis Novae 11). Multimedia and multi-sensorial communication imply radically new ways of constructing and expressing meaning (new ways of communicating) with a new language (the audiovisual language) and a new psychology (state of mind). In other words, digital communication with its own logic, semantics and epistemology, is a post-literate culture in contrast to oral and literate cultures.

This new situation requires theological attention. However, looking at communication from a theological perspective, one might be tempted to ask, “what have communications media to do with theologizing?” On the other hand, when we look at theology from a communication perspective, we would feel compelled to reform theology radically to make sense in a technologically mediated culture. This article is an examination of the impact of the technology of communication on theologizing and an attempt to outline the shape of theology in relation to the communication culture. We may name it communication theology. We will start by looking at the inherent connection between the transformations in the technologies of communication and their sway on the human state of mind and cultural manifestations during the ages of oral, alphabetic, and digital technologies of communication. Then we will examine theology in each epoch with special attention to theology in the digital culture.

Communication technologies (media) and culture – Interconnections

A cultural studies approach to communication maintains that there is an intrinsic connection between the technology of communication and the cultural manifestations. They mean to say that all forms of intellectual activities, like thought and expression, social organization and culture, are decisively influenced by the predominant communication medium and language of the period. This has far-reaching consequences for all sciences, including philosophy and theology.

This study relies on the seminal research done by Eric A. Havelock, Walter Ong, Marshall McLuhan, Derrick de Kerckhove, and a host of others. While Havelock (1963) explores technologies of oral and written communication and the corresponding states of mind, de Kerckhove (1995) contrasts the language of the alphabet and that of electricity. McLuhan (1964) gives an extensive treatment of the electronic media as extensions of people, while Ong (1982) elaborates on the transformations of the technologies of the word, especially in the oral-aural and print cultures. These authors show us that each stage of communication technology represented not merely new tools, techniques, or media of transmission but also certain mental condition/habits and casts of thought. Each form of communication has its own epistemological laws that govern the arrangement of its language and syntax. Thus
human history itself can be classified as oral, literate, audiovisual, and digital cultures.

**Oral-aural media and oral thinkers**

The earliest technology of preserved communication was oral. Before Homer, Greeks stored all information for re-use in oral memory. Where there were no books to read or refer to, repeated performance through recitation and memorization had a monopoly over training citizens. Epic, poetry and drama were the forms of preserved communication as record, narrative and performance. Epic served as the encyclopedia, *tractate* or reference library as well as the didactic instrument for transmitting the tradition. Poetry was used not only for amusement, but for instruction and handing over the traditions, viz. *nomos* and *ethos* (Havelock, 1963: 91ff.). The performance of poetry and drama served as vital forms of preserved communication in the Greek cultural pattern.

In oral culture all information had to be stored in living memory and recitation, record and recall constitute the basic syntax of oral preservation: “The only possible verbal technology available to guarantee the preservation and fixity of transmission was that of the rhythmic word organized cunningly in verbal and metrical patterns which were unique enough to retain their shape” (de Kerckhove, 1995: 43). Since speech can be preserved only as it is remembered and repeated, speech was produced through physical movements (visualization) organized in special ways (Havelock, 1963: 147-151). Intimate correlation of words, meter, music and dance led to automatic performance and enjoyment: Metrical pattern was wedded to verbal formula to express meaning powerfully; complex body action and body movements to match inner rhythm are used to say something rhythmically; music and dance would assist record and recall of significant speech. All preserved communication in this culture was orally shaped. Even when written down they were framed orally for easy memorization transmission and recall and performance. As a result, communicators were seers, prophets, and performers and live recording through the sense of ear, following acoustic laws was the only way of learning. The content and form (performance) were intimately connected.

The syntax of oral composition consisted primarily of repetition and rhythmic motion by gifted performers, who were capable of manipulation of verbal, musical, bodily rhythms to produce psychosomatic effects. “Hence laws of composition were acoustic and subservient to oral technique. Technology of recital and performance became not only a way of recreation – enjoyment and relaxation through symphony of verbal, vocal, gestural, instrumental – but also the way of preserved communication… In non-literate cultures the task of education could be described as putting the whole community into a formulaic state of mind.” (Havelock, 1963: 137). Thus the technology of oral-aural communication and preservation had its own logic and syntax and episteme.

Plato in his book *Republic*, criticizes the traditional pattern of instruction as primitive because he considered the oral state of mind as too naïve and incapable of abstract and conceptual thinking as it is bound up with past events re-created in many words. It required total involvement and identification, which did not favour critical thinking and creation of new patterns and relation. Plato is not against poetry or drama but the oral state of mind, a mode of consciousness, vocabulary and syntax using rhythm, repetition and other mnemonic devices, which works through mimesis and identification. It reveals the dynamics of oral communication, which was capable of only simple truths explained in many words and connected to mythical characters and events. Modern dismissal of oral cultures as mythical and primitive in the sense of being pre-rational shows that the Platonic criticism of the oral cultures is followed to this day.
Language of the alphabet

The alphabet proved to be a more powerful and effective instrument of preservation and of fluent communication. Writing is “the secret of making the word immortal, in so far as the symbols on the page can be kept and copied and repeated in unchanged form, theoretically for ever.” With alphabetical writing, and later printing, human beings got a technology of preservation and transmission which was several times more efficient than oral communication, because it did not depend on living memory and repetition, but could be left around to be available for consultation anywhere anytime. Although it took hundreds of years to full literacy, alphabetic technology 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. De Kerckhove thinks that the alphabet is the system of the world that changed the orientation of human culture from tradition to innovation, forever: “developed and refined over five millennia, the alphabet became the most important concept ever to occupy the mind, soul and body of any human culture until the discovery of electricity.”

In the view of de Kerckhove, the alphabet has reframed our mind between the golden ages of Greece and Gutenberg. According to him, alphabetic writing created two complementary revolutions: one in the brain and the other in the world by forever changing “the way we see the world.” The alphabet is the software of the brain and language is the software that drives human psychology. The functions of the brain as well as the organization of thought are deeply affected by the phonetic alphabet. He argues that the doctrine of the autonomous psyche and the concept of self as subject, or the reflective, critical thinking self, originated with alphabetization. This is indicated by the origin of new words as thinking, thought, self, and psyche appeared. For Plato, reason is the principle of unity and control, and reflection and cogitation are the essence of personality and of education as is indicated by the idea of the philosopher-king. In Plato’s thinking, a self-governing personality is distinguished “by the power to think, to calculate, to cogitate, to know in total distinction from the capacity to see, to hear, to feel.”

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. In this sense knowledge came to be considered as objective because it should speak of thing per se, abstracted object divorced from concrete situation. The knower knows, does not recall or feel, and knowing happens through abstraction of concepts from sensible data. This mental faculty of abstract knowing is called gnome – the knowing faculty and specific objects of knowledge are called gnosis. This leads to cataloguing, classifying, and contrasting objects into opposites such as just and unjust, good and bad. Naturally the idea of content (logoi) and medium (lexis) also originated with this (Havelock, 1963: 219). Thus, alphabetical writing and thinking marks the discovery of intellection in the form of a mechanism of reasoned calculation in place of memorization through association.

Print universalized literate thinking by making copies of books widely available and perfecting abstract thought and communication in “black and white.” Silent and sequential reading as an art of deciphering a figure in a white background (blackboard and white writing) became the normative means of communication. Writing and print universalized literacy – not only the ability to read and write, but also a corresponding mindset of rational and abstract thought and scientific precision and rational explanation of all realities. Print glorified and fortified subjectivism, idealism, and rationalism. Cartesian “cogito ergo sum” and
the Kantian quest for the “pure and logical idea” show the extent of the refinement of literate thinking and communication. The language of the alphabet and literacy is also described as print culture or print mind-set. Most of the sciences and educational systems today, including theological formation, follow the print mind-set.

**Electronic technologies and transformation of mind**

Today’s electronic technologies are capable of a much greater impact on the human mind, thinking and living. It began with photography and telephony and became commonplace with films, television, computer, and internet. The computer has replaced a number of media apparatuses – typewriter, A/V recorder player – and it can handle data formats like images, sounds, and texts at the same time. Multimedia communication in which sounds, images, and text together create and communicate sense is a major gain for human experience of the world. Our experience of reality achieves a further dimension of tactility with virtual reality and hypertext with random access. The electronic media have given rise to oral cybernetic culture, which is marked by a return to orality and tactility in communication.

McLuhan speaks of the electronic media as extensions of humans and de Kerckhove adds that electronic media have extended not only our nervous system and bodies, but also our mind and psychology. There are several features of electronic technologies like the pictorial turn, a new orality, hypertext and multisensorial communication that are radically transforming human culture and living.

**The Pictorial Turn.** Contemporary culture is inundated with images and communication is increasingly a product of what we watch rather than what we read. No one can ignore that visual culture is deeply embedded in the modern technologies and the mediated culture. Mitchell characterizes it as the “pictorial turn” of modern communication: in this “age of spectacle” and “all pervasive image-making”, “the picture ... is emerging as a central topic of discussion in the human sciences in the way language once did.” (Mitchell, 1994:13). It is not merely a simplistic division between TV and book, nor an iconology as a discursive science of images – the attempt to master the icon by the logos (Mitchell, 1994:24). What is called the visual culture is about an “actual visual experience” which includes vision, space, and forms, where the ground is constitutive of the figure that it is a visual-spatial culture and amounts to a “systemic shift” or “a rift between the discursive and the visible the seeable and the sayable” as an alternative to the “phonocentric” language. In the modern language of the media, form, image and symbol work together to create the world-view or world-vision. Visual communication is emerging as a language in its own right, beyond the status of illustration, with its own vocabulary, grammar, and syntax (Mitchell, 1994:31).

**New orality.** Literacy has privileged vision over hearing, by taking over and rewiring the nervous system whereas non-literate persons think of the world in oral-aural terms. McLuhan and de Kerckhove consider the “split between the eye and ear” or the “neglect of the ear” and the “tryranny of the eye” as the price we have paid for literacy. Modern electronic media are reversing these effects. McLuhan mentions “retribalization” a return to tribal and mythical existence, while Ong speaks of a return to primary orality (Ong, 1982: 42-46). For both, orality is closer to human life-world and promotes participation and community, while writing promotes distance and individualization through mental habits of distanciation and objectification. Today we have a new understanding of oral-aural communication and poetic and narrative storytelling. The electronic communication technologies like radio, television, audio, and video recording and computer have rendered our culture once again oral/aural by bringing back music and narrative, analogies and associative listening.

**Tactile and virtual communication.** Touch is the most primitive sense and touch is
considered as the ground of reality and the integrating (*tangere*) principle. In cyberspace, virtual reality is going to revolutionize the way we know and experience reality by making it possible to “touch” and feel (de Kerckhove, 1995: 37-49). The virtual reality provides artificial sensation (vision, hearing, and touching) and artificial consciousness. Virtual reality will eventually allow the experience of depth and spatiality making it possible for many people to collectively process a kind of group consciousness. De Kerckhove is emphatic that TV speaks to the body not just the eye or ear. “TV is challenging our previously dominant, literate mindset by substituting its own tactile, collective orality. It threatens the sacrosanct autonomy we have acquired through reading and writing.” TV speaks to the whole body rather than to the mind or any *sensorium*, TV sense is different from book sense, in that it “impairs verbalization”, cognitive process happens through “felt-meaning” (E.T. Gendlin) taking place not in the mind but within the neuromuscular system through a process called “sub-muscularization”. He adds “felt-meaning is rarely conscious” …Felt-meaning precedes logic and may be more comprehensive than thought” (De Kerckhove, 1995: 13,101). These developments would have great implications for philosophy and theology, not to mention sciences.

**Hypertext.** Unlike the codex book, the electronic text of the computer and the worldwide web is a new form of text called hypertext, which essentially refers to non-sequential writing, in which the text is rendered interactive through random access. Hypertext essentially refers any data, including, words, images, sounds, files, and any media or link. While the written/printed text is static and fixed, and demands sequential reading, hypertext allows the reader to choose the sequence of thought and choose what to read and where to read. This allows new connections initiated by the reader of the text with great semantic consequences. As a result, in contrast to the linear hierarchical nature of the printed text which promotes a single point of view, hypertext allows multiple, even conflicting, views. Hypertext thus undermines printed text and its logic and semantics as literacy destroyed orality. There was no permanent word in oral cultures, but writing and printing allowed a kind of final word. Digital technologies have enabled networks and systems that promote interactivity, demanding an active reader and they reduce the gap between reader and writer in information production and processing.

**Effects of electronic media: Multimedia epistemology.** Just as language and story changed the species, and then Gutenberg’s printing press and the widespread availability of text fundamentally changed how we think, digital epistemologies will alter the very nature of what it means to think, to learn, to teach, to see (Spiro, 46/1, 2006: 3-4; 46/2, 2006, 3-4). The convergence of technologies is adding new dimensions to human experience. Before, it was only in the human mind that diverse physical phenomena like sound and light could be interchanged. Today multimedia provides people with a synaesthetic experience of sound and sight, which is natural to them. In this process the successive achievements of the species will be assimilated into a new way of thinking.

According to de Kerckhove, electronic media are “reversing the effects of literacy and language” by returning us to near-life experience through sounds, images and touch (feel around). This spells not the end, but the removal of *homo theoreticus* from centre stage, to be replaced by *homo participans*” (de Kerckhove, 1995: 5, 9,12, 49) by moving “information processing from within our brains to screens in front of, rather than behind, our eyes.” In fact, “electronic technologies not only extend the sending and receiving properties of consciousness, they also penetrate and modify the consciousness of the users.” Our personal, ordinarily internalized, consciousness will itself become externalized. In other words, the whole external world will become an extension of our consciousness. According
to Spiro, the new digital technologies, with the digital media and random access capabilities, are making possible “a kind of nonlinearity and multidimensionality possible that could not be achieved with traditional linear media, refiguring thought from the ground up,” a new way of thinking that our ever more complex and rapidly changing world of life, work, and study so urgently needs. These changes have radical philosophical and theological implications.

**Communication technology and thought**

The above analysis of communication technologies from a cultural perspective amply demonstrates that there is an intimate connection between the technology of communication (preservation and transmission) and human consciousness. Accordingly, human self-expression and cultural manifestations are also linked to the predominant media of the time and place. The history of human culture can thus be divided in terms of the stages of communications media, as (1) oral, (2) written/print/document and (3) audiovisual and (4) digital/multimedia culture. Each era of communication has not only a predominant medium and *sensorium*, but also a typical mindset or consciousness with distinctive cast of thought. Communication tools are rightly designated as technologies of the word and changes in technology imply also transformations in the word (Palakeel, 2007: 16-38) with direct implications for all sciences.

In oral communication the primary *sensorium* was the ear, in association with the eye and memory, while the eye has taken the place of ear in the alphabetic communication, shifting the storage from living memory to printed page. In electronic media, the whole body turns out to be the primary *sensorium*, with an integration of ear, eye, and touch (possibly in future, smell and taste too!). We also find that the communication process and outcome are also different in each era. In oral communication sounds spoken are alive, need no translation from eye-message to ear-message and it is direct and uncomplicated. Written and print communications promote silent reading and necessitate a translation from one sense to another thus drawing upon psychic energies of the reader while the word itself is powerless.

Multimedia and multisensorial communication achieve an integration of all previous media and all senses and involves the sender, receiver, text, and medium in an interactive process of creation of meanings. Multimedia pack important content as it naturally occurs in real-world events. TV, film, and multimedia take us back to new orality, where the audio-visual-tactile communication is much more natural to everyone than a lecture or a book, especially to the younger generation, raised on MTV, video games, televisions ads, and the Web. Audio-visual and multimedia communication, with the creative integration of sound-sight and text with random access, are more concrete and experiential than the abstract and conceptual approach to reality in the alphabetical communication. Multimedia produce open flexible knowledge structures to think within context.

Increased interactivity enabled by digital technologies challenges the transmission model of communication epitomized by the Lasswell formula. The top-down (hierarchical), figure-based, one-way, and monosemic communication of the print culture is substituted by a multisensorial, polysemic, and participatory process of construction of meaning, where figure and ground, sender and receiver, medium and message play creative roles. This has brought about a major shift in the epistemic agency of receiver and role of the medium. In the transmission/transportation model, borrowed from the telegraphic-railway model of communication, information flows from the knowledgeable (overhead water tank) to the ignorant (empty bucket) through instruction or books (pipeline). Today communication is viewed as a process of interactive construction of meanings by the sender and receiver within the given context. Knowledge is no more considered as static information sitting in
textbooks or the head of the teacher but as constantly evolving. Advancement of knowledge is a communitarian and participatory process rather than an individual quest.

True to the McLuhanian aphorism “the medium is the message”, we can today say that media are not mere instruments of transmission, but integral to the communication process and important for the understanding of the message itself. This epistemological shift necessitates non-dogmatic interaction around ideas moving away from right and wrong ideas. What matters is more a coherence of ideas, among the ideas themselves and within the rest of the system. Consequently dialogue and communication among participants become important. This challenges the hierarchical, communicator-centred and purely text-based theology.

Changes in the technology of preserved communication, from oral memory to written memory, brought about a major transition in the mental state from concrete and experiential to abstract and conceptual thinking which is the basis of the origin and growth of Greek rationalism. The pre-Socratics were oral or imagistic thinkers, while the Socratic thinkers were abstract, conceptual, and rational thinkers. Knowledge for primitive man is events in time, recited, recollected, and performed as episodes in time and personally identified with it, whereas the literate man shifts from the syntax of story to syntax of arithmetic, concrete events to timeless being, through non-visual, non-imagistic language which is wholly abstract vs. vividness of story.

Thus “man’s experience of himself, his society and his environment is now given a separate organized existence in the abstract word” (Havelock, 1963: 283-90, 305). Aristotelian science, scholastic philosophy and theology, and Kantian imperatives of mathematical relationships and analytical statements, and the enlightenment epistemology of logically (eternally) right and logically false are made possible by these shifts. Most of humanities are still organized under this world order, using the language logic and syntax of abstract thinking of the alphabet, even after the invention of digital communication. We have yet to explore the cultural implications of digital communication.

New technologies of the word: Theological implications

Our findings compel us to look at theology from a communication historical perspective. It does not take much effort to understand that the present theology belongs to the literate/print culture in its method and content. An analysis of the origin and development of theology corresponds exactly with the shift from oral to literate culture. The Bible, although it is written down, is oral in its character and content. The shift from the simple faith of the Bible to the learned faith of the Alexandrians marks a definitive shift from oral to literate theology. The traces of oral-cultural-theology are still discernible in patristic writing as well as oriental theology.

Theology in the West, through the efforts of Augustine and St. Thomas, adopted the Socratic method, Platonic mythology and Aristotelian science to favour notional, analytical, and conceptual knowing in Christianity. Although the primordial and intuitive ways of knowing survived through liturgy, arts, and music, mainline theology grew into a logo-centric (rational, conceptual, and theoretical) science which produced dogmatic statements and faith formulas, in place of the confessional faith of the Bible.

Theology in the present understanding is fides quærenœ intellectum, where the emphasis falls on the intellectus in the rational-notional sense. Thus the preferred medium of theology is verbal expression and its tools are concepts with a focus on truth. Philosophy or other social sciences are considered as handmaids rather than dialogue partners. As a consequence, theology and faith formation have tended to privilege abstract statements over
narratives, and revelation is considered as a creed or a series of clear statements to be assented to. The Bible is the written word and tradition (as) the handed down word and reading-preaching-teaching-hearing are the privileged forms of theological expression. In this literate-culture-theology, word is rightly considered as the most refined expression of man and revelation is considered as God’s word (self-communication) in human words. However, when the word was identified with the logos as the rational-notional word (even in opposition to the incarnate word), theology became rational discourse on God. This move of theology towards logo-centrism in the literate sense reached its peak in the time of the Reformation, which corresponds also with the invention of printing and which established print media as the predominant form of communication.

The word has always assumed new forms (including flesh) and this is not hard to understand. However, today the “word” also becomes image, colours and sounds, acquiring varied forms from the diverse media of social communications. The question, then, is does the word change with the change in the vehicle or tools of the word? We are inclined to say that even as the incarnate word (logos-flesh) is considered as an immensely different word from the prophetic word, the technological incarnations of the word as spoken, written, printed, and digitized can seriously alter the content or message. This has serious implications not only for the communication (teaching, learning, and writing) of theology but also for the content and the very act of theologizing.

Theology and Communication. Theology is conscious of the communication process involved in theologizing. All major theologians like Augustine, St. Thomas, and Bernard Lonergan, who occupied themselves with theology as a discipline, concerned themselves with communication in/of theology.

In Augustine we find a tension between the oral and written forms of communication of theology and even his theological thinking is qualified by the medium he used. For example, his homilies and catechetical teachings favour theology as credo ut intelligam, while his treatises favour an approach of intellego ut credam. It is quite understandable given the fact that Augustine lived at a time when oral communication dominated (a great orator himself) and written communication was used to preserve oral communication, thereby leaving the traces of oral communication styles even in written communication.

St. Thomas moved into the alphabetical culture through his familiarity with the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle who inaugurated the transition from oral to alphabetic mindset. Their objectification of knowledge through intellection naturally favours neutral media and channels which have no influence on the content they were transporting. St. Thomas believed in an objective impassionate communication of eternal truths and logical syllogisms. Communication for him was efficient and effective transmission of mental content (thought) through the medium of writing. His formulaic style, doctrinal content, and the scholastic method of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis still have some traces of oral communication, although the Summa is a supreme example of a shift from a typological to a topological treatment of theological subjects.

The Thomistic theologians who lived in the period of printing developed a theology that is objective, rational, and notional, in terms of abstract and universal language and phrases that are mostly monosemic. Modern theology in the strict sense was born in this period of enlightenment, which corresponds roughly to what can be called the print culture. All modern theologians are under the influence of the print culture and its logic. Lonergan can be treated as a representative. For him, communication is the eighth functional specialty, “in which theological reflection bears fruit and without which the first seven are in vain” (Lonergan, 1979: 355). However, as the last functional specialty, communication has no role in
theologizing except as the means of transmission. It comes in handy for the transmission of theological content once it is formulated and written/printed.

It is perhaps only the linguistic-hermeneutic traditions of theology that have paid any minimum attention to the role of communication in theologizing. Their concern for the semantic role of words and language in the construction of meanings points to the role of media in shaping the message. Here again, we find an instrumental approach to communication, where words and language are believed to carry the meanings and understanding comes from a genuine hermeneutic or interpretation of the words in context. The hermeneutic theologies may be utterly qualified as communicative theologies as they pay special attention to the communicational competence of language and words. Likewise many contextual theologies in recent years may be said to be more and more sensitive to the implications of linguistic patterns and paradigms. The communicative theology of the Innsbruck school (http://www.uibk.ac.at/rgkw/komtheo/) also focuses on a kind of contextual theology and does not take communication as integral to the theological process and content.

Rahner’s attempt to define revelation as God’s self-communication and Dulles’ definition of Church as communication go a step further in understanding the intrinsic relation between church and communication. It is Dulles who has suggested some integral approaches to church, theology and communication. According to him, “theology at every point is concerned with realities of communication” as the “communication dimension is inherent in theology” (Dulles, 1992: 22).

Church documents on communication inspired by Inter Mirifica invariably have an instrumental approach to communication. Depicting communication as the God-given means for the proclamation of the Gospel and as the modern housetops and the declaration that the church would feel guilty if these means are not used, reflect an instrument of the Gospel message. John Paul II, who was himself a media icon, went a step further to speak of mediated communication as the modern cultural context, when he stated that mass media are the modern Areopagus. (Redemptoris Missio, 37c).

Towards a communication theology
The intrinsic link between communication technology and culture, as we have explained above, challenges the method and content of theology in the changed communication culture. The present communication culture is post-literate, whereas theology is literate. In this process we come to realize that theology, which was born at the period of the birth and spread of alphabetical literacy and matured during the period of printed word, shows heavy dependence on the language of the alphabet and is hardly prepared for the electronic media. How can a theology of a previous era make sense to people of a fast-changing and constantly evolving mediated culture! Theology needs to reform itself to make sense to the mediated generation.

Here what we need to develop is evidently not a theology of communication, nor a communicative theology. While theology of communication attempts to cast communication into the moulds of theology, communicative theology envisages a theology dressed up in communication categories. Communication studies today can become a privileged partner of theology like philosophy and social sciences. A theology conversant with the emerging communication culture may be called a communication theology. Communication theology means not only a change in method of doing theology, but also a radical rethinking of theology through the language, logic and semantics of the predominant communication culture. Theology was born from the necessity to communicate effectively in a given time and
place. Theologizing is an ongoing process of self-expression of faith in cultures. The identity and relevance of theology suggests a close link to the predominant culture of the place and time.

Primary to this approach is a shift from an instrumentalist to integral vision of communications media. Secondly, there is a clear shift in the epistemic agency of theologizing from sender (magisterium) to receiver (every believer). Communication itself may be redefined as something beyond transmission of message to a process of creation of culture through a participatory construction of meaning leading to communion (connection). Theology is faith seeking self-expression or meaningful communication. The theological process of making sense of faith will be a self-expression of faith (sensus fidei) through a participatory process of construction of meaning by Christian believers in their life situation (consensus fidelium), open to the global and plural existence in the flat world (catholic). Communication theology cannot be purely rational and notional but must be experiential and tangible through multimedia and multi-sensorial communication. Such a theology is capable of exploring the breadth and depth of the Word of God in the many and varied ways of human communication, inviting everyone into a life-giving fellowship.

Bibliography
Palakeel, J. (ed.) (2005), Towards a Communication Theology, Bangalore: ATC.

Joseph Palakeel (India) is the Director of IMPACT (Initiatives for Missionary Pastoral Animation and

www.waccglobal.org
Communication Theology) in Cochin, India. His major academic degrees are a PhD in Fundamental Theology and Masters Diploma in Social Communications from the Gregorian University in Rome. He teaches both Fundamental Theology and Communication Theology in various theological faculties in India and contributes to conferences on Christianity and Communication and conducts workshops on pastoral communication for priests, seminarians and the religious. He is author of The Use of Analogy in Theological Discourse (1995), and editor of Towards a Communication Theology (2005); The Bible and the Technologies of the Word (2007). His research interests include theology and communication, communication and culture, and Christianity and Digital Culture.