



Why a new journal?

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Why a new journal?

Mission statement: Church, Communication and Culture (CC&C) is an open access academic journal of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross' School of Church Communications. Published by Taylor & Francis (Routledge), the Journal is dedicated to deepening knowledge and understanding about the dialogue between religion, communication and culture in the public arena. Based on comprehensive data analysis and theoretical inquiry, it offers an international forum where researchers and practitioners can advance quality communication research on the Catholic Church and other religious communities.

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The field of religion has been approached academically from many different perspectives such as Theology, Sociology, History, Rhetoric, Anthropology, Psychology and so forth. Even Communication, the youngest of scholarly disciplines in University studies, has landed in the field and nowadays we count not a small number of journals dealing with religion and media. I would like to present here the newest player in the field: the journal *Church, Communication and Culture (CC&C)*. *CC&C* intends to become a complement to the consolidated work of other well-known journals in the field. It attempts to add new topics and enlarge the communication's perspective with a more holistic and interdisciplinary comprehension of religion and communication.

The importance of religion both in its institutional dimension (churches, confessions and religious communities) and individual expression (faith, beliefs, devotions, etc.) is self-evident and does not need additional support.

The Pew-Templeton "Global Religious Futures" Project (2010), which offers quantitative and qualitative data by decades on religious affiliation, provides the following percentage distribution of religious followers in the world: 31% Christians; 23% Muslims; 15% Hindus; 7% Buddhists; 6% Folk religions; and 16% Unaffiliated (without considering the less than 1% of Jews and also of Other Religions). The predictions for 2020, considering the increment of total numbers of world population to 7.6 billion, are pretty similar (Note 1).

Even non-believers accept the impact of religion in our contemporary world. In most cases, religion is considered as a positive social force with an impact in social well-being, whether promoting social actions or, indirectly, through the betterment of its followers as citizens (de Tocqueville 1835/1840). Nevertheless, it also happens to be associated with violence, both physical and moral, in the past and today. In the last decades, terrorism – a dreadful reality but many times a very slippery and abused term – has been particularly linked to religious fanaticism. Obviously, the scholars supporting this journal are reasonably convinced of the positivity of religion for the advancement of human knowledge and prosperity of society and, with this journal, they commit themselves to the always demanding challenge of showing that reason, rationale and critical thinking must accompany, hand in hand, any religion.

Until now I have been speaking about religion, so why are we focusing on Church and why, as reads the journal's mission statement, the specific mention of the Catholic Church?

Because of the social dimension of the human being, and of religion itself, believers tend to aggregate around institutional religious bodies. Among them, the Roman Catholic Church is today the religious institution that includes the highest number of followers. Of the 2.1 billion Christians worldwide, more than half alone belong to the Catholic Church. Those millions of Catholics (from all geographical and ethnic origins, from various socio-economic status and different political views) believe in the same doctrine, have a common liturgy and follow a unique hierarchy. That makes the Catholic Church one of the most influential institutions in the world, not as much as a political actor but as a spiritual and moral power. It is enough to consider the following that inspires its leader, currently in the person of pope Francis, also among people of other religions and even unbelievers around the world, as it also happened with John Paul II and other popes in the past. Moreover, from a journalistic point of view, the Catholic Church is one of the easiest religions to cover because of its centralized government and structure (Contreras 2004). However, the focus on the Catholic Church is not just its "size" or its "structure", but its nature. Religions, and certainly Christianity and Catholic faith, express and respond to the spiritual desires of human beings. All religions have, in different degrees, a more or less structured doctrinal corpus, celebrate rituals and propose moral rules. Christianity, whether one believes or not, is a religion which claims not to be inspired by man's spiritual nature, but being the result of God's initiative and certainly the only one that affirms that God has sent his Son to save mankind. Indeed, Christianity cannot be only identified with a list of truths to believe (the Creed), morals to comply (the Commandments), and a way of worship (the Liturgy), collected in a book (the Bible) but as a proposal of a salvific relationship with a personal God (Note 2).

And this essential element, its personal dimension dealing with God and with the world, connects with the concept of culture, which is the third pillar of our journal. Culture "has to do with the lifestyle of a given society, the specific way in which its members relate to one another, to other creatures and to God. Understood in this way, culture embraces the totality of a people's life" (Francis 2013, p. 115). True culture is, then, the result of the free actions that perfect human nature itself, i.e. make man becoming man. That perfection – in constant progress and regression – needs a model that, for Christians, is found in the Person of Christ. And this model brings about a synthesis between faith and culture since a "faith that does not become culture is not wholly embraced, fully thought, or faithfully lived" (John Paul II 1982, p. 2) (Note 3).

Culture has an intrinsic communicative power. It is communication. It shapes values, norms, knowledge, wisdom, lifestyles and conveys them from one generation to the other, generally for the best but sometime for the worst. As a matter of fact, Christian faith has produced enormous and incontestable cultural examples in the field of music, art, architecture, literature, law, economy, etc. For sure, Christians throughout history have not always lived up to the heights of their faith and ideals, leaving tracks of evil still lingering in society, which leave some stumbling on the way or make room for allowing others to look with suspicion at Christ himself and his heritage. Therefore, for *CC&C*, it is essential to study and comprehend better the role that culture plays in its relationship with the field of communication as well as with actors of communication and culture of such an importance as the Catholic Church and other churches.

Indeed, some of the problems that democratic societies have when dealing with religious fanaticism come from a depreciation of their cultural values that sane religious institutions defend, like freedom of speech or tolerance compatible with respect for the truth.

Origin, name and scope

The foundry in which this international journal has been forged and moulded is the School of Church Communications of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (*Santa Croce*). Born in 1996, the School focuses in the formation and training of people responsible for communications of Church institutions, scholars in communication and religion, and journalists covering religion.

After 20 years of existence, the School has decided to introduce the field of Church Communications into the scholarly communication community and the larger public opinion debate. The bases for this new proposal are in the research works carried out by scholars in our institution since its beginning. In particular, the different studies include coverage of the Catholic Church in the international press (Mundadan 2002; Gronowski 2003; Szczepaniak 2004; Tridente 2009, 2014; González Gaitano 2010; Mora 2011), on the Church's communication activities (Shaw, Mammoser, and Maniscalco 1999; Carroggio and La Porte 2002; Arasa 2008; Arasa, Cantoni, and Ruiz 2010; La Porte 2012; Bailly-Bailliere and Milán 2014; de la Cierva 2014; Tapia-Velasco 2014) and on the relationship between faith and culture (Mitchell 2004; Jiménez and García-Noblejas 2005; Fuster and Wauck 2013).

Certainly, we are aware of the limitations of the work done so far; for that reason, we wish to enlarge the discussion and the discussants. We only hope the number of participants may grow. We have grouped around this exciting project a number of renowned scholars from around the world in different fields besides Communication (Linguistics, Sociology, Law, Literature and Philosophy). A list of members of the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board is available on the website of the journal.

CC&C derives its name from the reality that the Catholic Church is not simply one monolithic institution, but a network of various institutions. While maintaining unity through their creed and overarching aims, they operate in a variety of ways on different levels. These particular institutions within the Catholic Church have a multitude of specific objectives to carry out in concrete societies, with diverse peoples. The activity of "The Catholic Church" translates, therefore, not to one communication, but to a plethora of multifarious communications. Consequently, *CC&C* aims to apply critical thought to the communicative dimension of the Catholic Church's activity to engage society and promote dialogue with cultures. Content thus reflects theoretical inquiry based on empirical research and intellectual debate, rather than technological development.

Among the general goals of *CC&C*, we identify four:

- a. To contribute to the development of societies based on human values by presenting cutting edge research on the role of religious institutions in the public arena.
- b. To advance quality research in the communications field by promoting methods that go beyond the current fragmentation of disciplines, and include the perennial contribution of the humanist tradition to which Communication belongs.
- c. To enhance the analysis of current communication trends by offering the wisdom and experience in communications from an institution (the Catholic Church) that has stood for over twenty centuries.
- d. To encourage intellectual reflection and debate on new findings by proposing the broad perspectives of great thinkers – new and old alike – who speak about the realities concerning individual and institutional communications.

The large, overarching values that drive *CC&C*'s work, give the "why" to its objectives and express its editorial line in essentially three ways:

1. *The capacity of man to transform the world for the better*: *CC&C* believes in the goodness of the world and in man's responsibility for it. It also holds in high esteem man's potential to improve the world through his work.

2. *The complementarity of Faith and Reason, Truth and Communication*: in as much as faith enhances reason and reason protects faith from corruption, truth prevents communication from being reduced to mere techniques for persuasion or even manipulation.
3. The importance of communication as vital for man and society, through which the world's transformation can take place.

Quality research, structure and impact of the journal

The impact of a scholarly journal is mainly tied to the quality of its articles. Additionally, authors who publish work in the journal are also expected to base their work on values such as *excellence* (as a commitment to quality); *truthfulness* (transparency in all research and publication); openness (to discover results in research and not force conclusions); and *respect* (for the dignity of the person above all, in every area of research, since research serves the person as an individual and community).

The scholarly content, forming the bulk of each edition of the journal, consists of six main sections (open to further developments):

First of all, the *editorial*: a space for the editor – or another member of the Editorial Board appointed by him – to explain the content of the edition and, if present, the underlying issue at hand that links all included texts. Evidently, this first editorial is essentially focused in presenting the new journal to the academic community.

Second, the journal will include a different number of *research articles* based on scientific data regarding institutional communications, public opinion, etc. Among others, the first volume will include articles such as a communication analysis of the Synod of Bishops on the Family or the Vatican Economic Reform.

Third, it will publish *case studies* regarding religion communications on particular issues or current events like, for example, the Pope's use of Twitter, the World Meeting of Families (i.e., Philadelphia in 2015), etc.

CC&C will be characterized by two original kinds of articles in an academic journal: the first one is the *Church Communication Highlights*, a summary and analysis of the main events of the year related to Church communications written by an affirmed journalist covering religion issues. The first publication of the year will include the communication highlights analysis of the previous year; the second original piece of the journal contains an in-depth *interview* with a significant and distinguished scholar or communications practitioner. The 2016 volume proposes a conversation with Prof. Clifford C. Christians, Media Ethics scholar of international fame currently teaching at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign).

Finally, as expected in any journal, CC&C will include some *book reviews* as a useful and practical approach to publicizing recent quality literature in the field. The book reviews section will count every year with at least one relevant *classic work* that has made a significant contribution to literature in the field. The goal of this section is to form thought and encourage ongoing education among professors and professionals.

However, the influence of a journal is also related to its diffusion and brand awareness. In that sense, CC&C is honoured to ally its efforts with one of the most international and professional publishers in the field of social sciences, i.e. the publishing house of *Taylor and Francis* of the *Routledge Group*.

CC&C is an open-access online journal that will publish one volume annually in three separate instalments (January, May and September). The articles will be mainly published in English, although some volumes may include a few articles in Spanish.

CC&C hopes to encourage high-quality discussions among the scholarly community of experts in communication, religion and culture and their interactions.

From the beginning, we want to encourage all scholars interested to participate in this exciting project. Enjoy the reading and engage in the discussion!

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of this article.

Notes on contributors

Daniel Arasa, (Barcelona, Spain, 1971) has a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (UAB), Spain, a M.A. in Television and Radio from the *Southern Methodist University* (SMU), Dallas, TX, and a Ph.D. in Social Institutional Communications by the *Pontificia Università della Santa Croce*, Rome, Italy. He worked from 1994 to 1997 as a journalist in *Europa Press* news agency (Spain). In 2011, he started teaching at *Santa Croce*, where he currently is Associate Professor of Digital and Strategic Communications, Vice Dean of the Communications School and editor of the academic journal *Church, Communication and Culture*. Moreover, he is member of the Board of Directors of *Rome Reports TV*, news agency specialized in the coverage of the Pope, the Vatican and the Catholic Church. His main research interest is online religious communication, particularly the Internet communication of Catholic institutions. He is author of *Church Communications Through Diocesan Websites. A Model of Analysis* (2008), and co-editor of *Religious Internet Communication. Facts, Experiences and Trends in the Catholic Church* (2010), *Church Communication & the Culture of Controversy* (2010), and *Church Communications: Creative Strategies for Promoting Cultural Change* (2016).

Notes

1. Complete data: 2,168,330,000 Christians (31.4% of a world population of 6,895,850,000); 1,599,700,000 Muslims (23.2%); 1,032,210,000 Hindus (15.0%); 487,760,000 Buddhists (7.1%); 404,690,000 Folk religions (5.9%); 13,860,000 Jews (<1%); 58,150,000 Other Religions (<1%); and 1,131,150,000 Unaffiliated (16.4%). The predictions for 2020, considering the increment of total numbers (world population of 7,657,330), are pretty similar: 2,382,750,000 Christians (31.1% of the world population); 1,907,110,000 Muslims (24.9%); 1,161,440,000 Hindus (15.2%); 506,990,000 Buddhists (6.6%); 429,640,000 Folk religions (5.6%); 14,660,000 Jews (<1%), 60,990,000 Other Religions (<1%); and 1,193,750,000 Unaffiliated (15.6%).
2. One contemporary and authoritative document of the Catholic Church dealing with the essentials of the Church and its relationship with the world can be found in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council (1965). Other authors have approach the issue from the perspective of the Orthodox Christian Church: for example, Russian authors like Georges Florovsky (1972–1989), Pavel Evdokimov (1959) and Serge Boulgakov (1980) or the French Olivier Clément (1961). Proposing authors from a Protestant background, we could cite the volumes on *The Church Dogmatics* of the German Karl Barth (1932–1967).
3. John Paul II has treated the argument in different occasions, especially with a deep philosophical approach in the nn. 64–74 of his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1998).


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