

The Cooperation of the Church with the Media as a Tool for the Implementation of Evangelical Values in the Culture

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In place of an introduction

The title of this article in the context of the “missions” issue of *Theological Reflections* owes its existence to the very wide semantic field of the journal’s theme. The post-Soviet evangelical movement follows David Bosch^[1] in the view that the nominal presence of the church^[2] among people is not its direct mission. The effectiveness of a religious organization’s actions has as its prerequisite a certain kind of activity. According to the author’s observations, if the traditional methods of the church’s influence on society and the processes within it, in the countries of the former USSR, have only been studied more or less superficially, then questions about the presence of Protestant churches in the modern media and the electronic world up to the present have only been deemed worthy of a few journalistic reviews and polemical articles. Characteristically, the best post-Soviet textbooks on missiology^[3] contain practically no mention on their pages of the relationship of an information-oriented society to church structures, which, in principle, declares their out-of-date status. The positions of Protestant churches are discrete, unsystematic, inconsistent and often contradictory, and are formed not by a thorough study of relevant issues, but exist because journalists and other innovative workers in the sphere of web 2.0 have come to church.

The current status quo, in which the activity of individuals and individual churches is apparent, given the absence of any thought-out tactics, and (it follows) any strategy, is due to the heavy psychological and social burden inherited from the only possible goal of the church in the Soviet Union—namely, to survive. However, events of the 1990s-2000s, as well as the harshness of post-Soviet society’s transition from an industrial to an



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informational paradigm, must contribute to the formation of an adequate and appropriate approach to contemporary living in the midst of the media in the context of the digital era.

1. The theological background for the presence of the *ecclesia* in the media

We may approach the dialectical relationship between the church and the media, which, according to journalistic tradition, includes newspapers, radio, TV, movies, the Internet and the blogosphere in particular, in two key ways. On the one hand, the Orthodox-Catholic and (to a lesser extent) Protestant traditions comprehend God not as a static Being, but by using the term *perihoresis*, stressing the dialogic nature of the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. A human being, called to godlikeness, inherits a social way of life (a «social animal,» according to Aristotle) and turns monologue media into means of mass communications (hereafter, MMC). Thus, the MMC become an adequate instrument for *imitatio Dei* on the horizontal level. The one-sided flow of information from producer to consumer^[4] cannot be theologically justified.

On the other hand, the media, as part of the social palette, in the process of the study of relations with religious organizations, turns the conversation back on the socio-political track («political,» in the Aristotelian sense). Theology, in this case, has to act from positions that have a direct or

indirect relationship to the life of society. This is why missiology (MMC and the mission of the church), anthropology (MMC and the human being as a recipient and interpreter of information), ecclesiology (MMC and the image of the church) and other branches of theological knowledge take the foreground. If the link between the last two sections of theology and MMC is touched on in subsequent chapters, it is because we are paying particular attention to the issue of the relationship between church missiology and the calling to illuminate the religious part of society by means of mass media.

Consciously or unconsciously, ecclesiastical missiological paradigms, as convincingly demonstrated by David Bosch, have a corresponding theological basis. Content analysis of materials from the churches or publications sympathetic to religious conservative (there are not many) demonstrate a directly proportional correlation between the concept of how the church understands the process of salvation and what image it is to present in the highly competitive, highly differentiated religious «market.»^[5]

In the view of believers in the former Soviet Union, the two extreme soteriological positions are Calvinism and Arminianism. Of course, this is an oversimplification, because it fails to include a wide range of views from exclusivism (the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council) to inclusivism (R. Panikkar, and, in his own way, Origen). However, we note that in the Arminian tradition it is appropriate

^[1] Cf. David Bosch, *Preobrazovanie missionerstva* (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 1997), pp. 570-571.

^[2] By «church» we mean here and below, the Church of Christ, localized for the sake of research facilities and scientific correctness, in the countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

^[3] A. Chatskiy and D. Overton, eds., *Missiologia*; D. Bosch, *Preobrazovanie missionerstva*.

^[4] Jean Baudrillard, «Rekviempo mass-media» // <http://polite.com.ua/library/3948-.html> (accessed 20.04.2011).

^[5] Hans Kung, *Christ sein* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1974), pp. 89-90.

to accept that, «our Lord Himself set the rule not to change a man by force. He can change him, and will change him, but only when man succumbs to Him. In this sense, he has limited His power.»^[6] Followers of Calvin, denying the human ability to respond to the message of salvation (John 15: 16), stress that the Divine economy does not depend on human response because the solution for the salvation of the individual was made without his participation. Such disparate theological systems have never existed in their pure form, rather like the physics of an ideal gas; they were modified, and sometimes tended to synthetic models. However, each of them has directly influenced every denomination's way of social thinking and interaction with the media.

The extremely consistent view of the Reformed Churches on the order of salvation (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints), with its «unconditional election» entered functionally into conflict with the motivation and missionary style of the Apostle Paul, who «[has] become all things... to save at least some» (1 Cor 9: 22). The basic question of the motivation of missionary work, «Why evangelize if all the elect will be saved,» was basically resolved by the logic of proof, «by the power and command of God.» That is, if an omniscient and omnipotent God commanded the church (Matt 28:19-20) to preach the gospel, it has no right to deny His call. The missionary movement initiated by believers motivated by the

views of Calvin, however, has not experienced a lack of creative preachers, able to speak to the times in which they live. Thus, John Stott urges his colleagues to «take into account the perception of the modern congregation,»^[7] which clearly can be interpreted as a desire to ease the way of understanding the gospel by its recipients. We may note that interaction with the media for Reformed communities is considered an opportunity for the realization of God's plan of salvation for all people. The reverse side is embodied here (in the context of post-Soviet countries) in the relatively low media activity among Reformation churches and the undeveloped strategy for their presence in media space.^[8]

It is a well-known fact that the Reformed community's strong emphasis on God's sovereignty is balanced by the representatives of Arminian soteriological thought who give strong attention to human free will and the right to choose. This fact, in our opinion, is directly related to the media. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) argued that the paradox of biblical theology—«God calls a person to make a choice» vs. «No one can make the right choice because of total depravity»—is solved by the concept of «prevenient grace,» associated with the evangelist John's words, «The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world» (John 1: 9). This auxiliary theory consists of accepting that «God in His love and goodness *is active* (emphasis added) in every human life, from devout Christian to atheist and conscious Buddhist,»^[9] thus compensating for the human inability

^[6] C. S. Lewis, *Beda s etim NI; Poka my lits ne obreli; Stat'i vystupleniia, interv'iu*, vol. 2 (Minsk, Moscow: Vinograd, 1998), p. 382.

^[7] John Stott, *Ia veriu v silu blagovestiia. Iskusstvo dukhoznogo krasnorechiia*, <http://www.reformed.org.ua/2/405/5/Stott> (accessed 03.04.2011).

^[8] Cf. an interview with Ralph Haska, pastor of the

Lutheran Church of St. Katarina in Kyiv, during which he described his lack of understanding of the media's role: http://risu.org.ua/ru/index/expert_thought/interview/39388/ (accessed 02.04.2011)

^[9] Michael Lodahl, *Istoriia Boga* (Saint Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2006), p. 46.

ity to seek God, in contrast to Phil 2:21.^[10] Anticipating in part the conclusion of this article, we note that the secular media often become powerful allies in the implementation of «prevenient grace,» which is very flexible in nature.^[11] The process of mission refracted through the prism of communication theory “teaches” that the source of information is the church and its representatives, while the information itself is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ by means of the church (*extra ecclesiam nullus salus*), and the recipient of the information is society. The most complex component in this chain is the communication channel. Traditional data flow in an information-oriented society (personal contacts, meetings, etc.) will continue to occupy its own niche, but modern technology and, in particular, «analog» (traditional) and electronic media are at the forefront today. It is the media that often indirectly takes on the duties that Christ Himself in His Great Commission has given to His church in the imperative mood. Thus, according to journalism theorist Vladimir Zdorovega, it was «due to oral and printed journalism... that we feel an impetus to national, spiritual, including religious, revival»^[12] in Ukraine. Media, according to experts in the field, are obliged to inform the audience concerning all the important events in the life of the church (perhaps a distant cousin of narrative theology), to produce high-quality analysis and artistic journalistic materials. As in the case of an ideal gas, the absence of external circumstances and the uniqueness of the phenomenon (i.e. the church),

together with competent performers would inevitably lead to a hagiographic production that would fulfill the actual role of pre-evangelization materials that prepare people for an encounter with the gospel. In practice, relations between the church and MMC are much more complex and dramatic, ranging from recognition of the existence of religion to the «anti-sectarian hysteria» analyzed in the following pages. Thus, in the Arminian context, MMC play a special role related to the theoretically objective provision of information about the dynamics of church life. The absence of this situation in reality is largely the fault of the church, which has failed to establish good relations with the media and to become public.

2. The post-Soviet church ignores the media: Practice

Researchers often note that the semi-catacomb existence that generally served to preserve church life during the Soviet period did Protestant churches a bad turn. Secrecy, «double-entry bookkeeping,» and conspiracy, combined with the suddenness of God’s answer to prayers concerning the collapse of the USSR, are not regarded by national media as a relic of the socialist past. Rather, they imply that the church has something to hide. Not new in itself,^[13] every suspicion during the pre-information era was dispelled by literary works offered in response.^[14] In the information stage of society’s development, characterized by the existence of parallel online reality, which is no less influential in terms of the formation of the individual’s ideological

^[10] For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (NIV).

^[11] *Istoriia Boga*, p. 47.

^[12] Volodymyr Zdorovega, *Teoriia i metodika zhurnalists'koi tvorchosti* (L'viv: “PAIS”, 2008), p. 235.

^[13] Peter Dinzelbacher, ed., *Istoriia evropeis'koi mental'nosti* (L'viv: Litopis, 2004), p. 157.

^[14] For example, «Against Celsus» by Origen, «Against Apion» by Josephus Flavius.

foundations,^[15] the adjustment of the church's public image is in no way different from the work of professional and honest secular press center.

2.1. No alternative to providing information

According to media theorists, journalism's priority is still the news. This is why church processes, although they are a highly specialized niche, have become a subject of interest to social and political publications—since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Catholic sources emphasize that the «means of social communication... allow us to open the Church to the modern world. They encourage dialogue within the Church. They help the Church to know the views and attitudes of contemporaries.»^[16] Such a description corresponds with the general spirit of Roman Catholic documents relating to MMC, but it corresponds very little to reality. In reality, media which—in contrast to the highly skilled, elite market participants—shape public opinion, tend to look at church life from the average consumers point of view. In this context it is appropriate to speak of the “primary employment» of a niche. For example, if the Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic churches were guided in the formation of media policy by, respectively, Russian or Polish experience, then the Protestant community, not having strong ties with any European institutions, could not include themselves and their media in the social framework system. This has far-reaching consequences in

the missionary context.

The late journalism professor at L'viv, Vladimir Zdorovega, reminds researchers of the maxim, «the one who first reports an event, fact, [or] phenomenon, is the first to form an opinion about it.»^[17] He warns of the consequences of suppressing information: «If you do not report an event unfavorable to you, others will do it, and you will be the one to suffer for it.»^[18] Quite often the church has withheld urgent and topical information from journalists who react professionally to any concealment of truth. The danger here is that “... rumors begin to appear. These rumors are not based on the whole truth, but in place of it spread dangerous half-truths.”^[19] The media use the same approach doing investigative journalism on the church^[20] as they do on the representatives of the PR-departments of corporations,^[21] whose responsibilities have always included PR and crisis management. Also noteworthy is the assumption that the autobiographical detail in 2 Cor 5:11^[22] can be applied to any conscious activity, particularly building the concept of the relationship between the church and the media. The lack of choice concerning information is obvious: the creation of press departments is no longer seen as a sign of strategic, but rather of logical thinking.

It should also be noted that the virtual absence of evangelical churches from MMC radar (as opposed, for example, to Orthodox or Catholic churches) is not primarily due to a corporate policy of conceal-

^[15] M. Perun, comp. and ed., *Dushepopechitel'skaia instruksiiia Communio et Progressio* (L'viv: Vidavnytstvo Ukrain's'koho Katolyts'koho Universytetu, 2004), p. 122.

^[16] *Communio et Progressio*, p. 125

^[17] *Teoriia i metodika zhurnalists'koi tvorchosti*, p. 18.

^[18] *Ibid.*, p. 54

^[19] *Communio et Progressio*, Tserkva i sotsial'na kornikatssia, p.121.

^[20] For a contemporary example, see <http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/blog/~Olena/40408/> (accessed 05.04 2011).

^[21] Liudmila Obertinskaia, “Korporativnye konflikt: esli by ne bylo SMI.” http://esg.ua/en/page/corp_konfl.html (accessed 05.04.2011).

^[22] Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience (NIV).

ing negative situations of church life. The main reason is a lack of understanding of the role of media in the evangelism paradigm. Either way, the growth of «anti-sectarian» (and, in fact, anti-Protestant) publications and stories in the media is the evident effect of both behavioral patterns.

2.2. Anti-sectarian hysteria in the media

Ukrainian legislation—taken separately—is not familiar with the concept of «sect,» whether in the sociological or journalistic-domestic sense, which is rather unusual for a post-Soviet state. However, this did not prevent a Doctor of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences in Ukraine Professor Ludmila Filipovich, in 2008 from declaring the active phase of so-called «anti-sectarian hysteria.»^[23] Under the jurisdiction of this definition falls a full range of conscious and unconscious steps on the part of the media to heighten public non-acceptance of Protestants and NRMs (new religious movements). A good example is the magazine *Ukrayinsky Tyzhden* [Ukrainian week], whose issue number 45(54) 7-31 November 2008 was dedicated to «Sects. Bombardment with love.»^[24]

Protestant churches have an ambivalent attitude toward this phenomenon. On the one hand, the apologetics departments of some confessions support the «unmasking» stories on TV and in print. They endorse the government agencies' support of known «traditional Protestant» denomina-

tions and approve the desocialization of new religious movements.^[25] Their opponents point out that in Ukraine, managing to preserve the delicate balance between existing freedom of conscience and the formal affiliation of the vast majority of Ukrainians to the Orthodox Church, the overly accented anti-sectarian theme of the media is not a carefully directed pressure tactic against a «sect,» but rather offends the honor and reputation of registered (in legal order) religious organizations.^[26] The diffuse nature of the Protestant church's image leads to a situation in which any reasonable (or unreasonable) criticism of a particular religious community, referred to in the media as a «sect,» extends to denominations with a history and a positive image.

«Anti-sectarian hysteria» plays a special role in shaping the attitudes of post-Soviet citizens to religious minorities. Not having accurate information about the theology and social position of the Protestant churches, the public is held hostage by their pre-information status, due to the «closeness and isolation from the world of the Christian family»^[27] characteristic of post-Soviet Protestantism.

In addition, we must agree that negative information flow about the third branch of Christianity is a practical reason for the church to ignore the media. Unlike commercial organizations, where the function of PR is to work with mass media and respond rapidly to queries and journalistic materials, religious organizations have

^[23] Ludmila Filipovich, «Antisektantska isteriia v ukrainskikh SMI: vidimye i nevidimye prichiny,» in A. Kolodnyi et al, *Religiina svoboda: Religiia v postmodernomu suspil'stvi: sotsial'no-politichni, pravovi ta konfesiyni aspekty. Naukovy shchorichnik*, No. 13 (Kyiv: 2008), pp. 311-316.

^[24] <http://tyzhden.ua/Magazine/54> (accessed 16.04.11).

^[25] Volodymyr Khmil', «Dodatkovym chinikom, shcho spryiae poshyrenno destruktyvnykh totali-

tarnykh kul'tiv u nashiy derzhavi, e zumovlena progalynamy zakonodavstvi vidsutnist' koordinatsii mizh pravookhoronnyimi organami // http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/expert_thought/comments/29683/ (accessed 11.04.2011).

^[26] Iuriy Reshetnikov, «Svidkiv Egovy, i ne til'ky, // http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/expert_thought/comments/14295/ (accessed 11.04.2011).

^[27] Mikhail Cherenkov, *Kul'tura vliatel'nogo men'shinstva* (Simferopol: DIAIPI, 2010), p. 146.

only slowly come to believe that PR-departments are needed for creating a positive pre-evangelization picture. In this context, the experience of the inter-denominational association of Christian journalists and publishers, Novomedia,^[28] is of undoubted value. One of its purposes is to respond to common errors of secular journalism concerning religion.

The present generation of post-socialist citizens is, according to experts, influenced by the media, especially television. For this reason, it is clear that the formation of a negative image of the Protestant churches is not conducive to public evangelism (concerts, meetings and evangelism in the narrow sense of the word), nor to personal contacts of believers who have the label «sectarian» imposed on them. Changing the status quo is only possible through active informational and educational work with the secular media, which will make it possible in the future to avoid the use of negative labels with respect to Protestants.

3. The post-Soviet church in cooperation with the media: Practice

In the third section we attempted to describe the situation when Protestant organizations refuse to cooperate with the media. As noted, the hunger for information is at first compensated with speculation and rumors, and then, predictably, satisfied by campaigns creating a negative image of these churches. A similar approach in its pure form is rare, mainly in authoritarian or totalitarian states, where journalism, as it was in the Soviet Union, is intend-

ed to convey the official view of the authorities. The dismantling of the Soviet system also led to a fundamental revision of the relations matrix between the media and the church.

3.1. The culture of objective religious journalism

Larisa Ivshyna, the compiler of an anthology of publications by the late Ukrainian journalist Klara Gudzyk, notes that «religion and the church have occupied a notable place over the last decade mainly because they have gone beyond the boundaries of their internal spiritual affairs and have begun either to be actively involved in politics or to negatively influence public policy, even against their own will.»^[29] Thus, religion as such has attracted much attention from MMC. To understand why the modern church's collaboration with the mass media necessarily leads to objective coverage of church life, we must understand the specifics of the journalist's task. Members of the media work under constant time pressure and the pressure of professional standards that require them always to be informed, competent, impartial, and honest. The Pontifical Commission for Social Communications encourages the church to «provide... detailed and clear news.»^[30] As a result, the church receives the opposite phenomenon to the one discussed above in 3.2: «anti-sectarian hysteria.»

In this context, the issue is not working to incline the media to the church's side. Theoretically, principles of fairness and balanced information do not allow journalists openly to support the activities of a church. However, for post-Soviet

^[28] www.novomedia.ua

^[29] Larisa Ivshyna, comp., *Apokryfy Klary Gudzyk* (Kyiv: ZAT "Ukrains'ka pres-grupa, 205), p. 9.

^[30] *Communio et Progressio* // Tserkva i sotsial'na komunikatsiia, p. 121.

religious space, the un-discredited honor and dignity of a given denomination are still important. Taras Antoshevsky, director of the Religious Information Service of Ukraine, stresses:

«We have many examples of foreign countries where intolerant, stupid, ill-conceived publications on religious themes led to explosions and mass demonstrations. In Ukraine these events have not taken place, however the media often publishes overtly provocative materials.»^[31]

Protestant churches of the former Soviet Union most often object to the media (especially TV) because of the use of the offensive and emotionally charged words «sect,» «brainwashing,» and «recruitment.»^[32] Of course, when creating materials, the media are not guided by Ernst Troeltsch's definition of «sect,»^[33] but by traditions of Orthodox “sect-studies” usage, which frankly has no relation to national law or to scholarly religious studies. Typically in such cases, journalists seek sensationalism where it is actually quite rare. Such motivation pushes mass media workers to mix up concepts, use hidden video, and twist commentary. The obvious result is stories or articles revealing invented problems concerning «sects» and society.

Religious organizations, relying on a positive vision of the relationship between religion and MMC, should see the logical consistency of working closely with mass media. Objective religious journalism, which also serves the objective interests of church organizations, cannot appear by itself because post-Soviet countries have had

no experience with its development. Instead, the articles that have seen the light on the pages of official publications have been synchronized with the ideology of “scientific atheism.” Thus, the first step needed in this area is to bring the media to a legitimate basis. Churches can act not only as producers and consumers of information, but also as the subjects of feedback, evaluating the quality and impartiality of religious materials with their feedback, criticism.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that a mature relationship between the media and religious structures involves not only objective coverage of the positive role of churches in the development of a democratic society, but also a rapid response to acute internal problems. In the latter case, the interests of the church leadership have run in the opposite direction to the interests of the media. Klara Gudzyk states: «... society is no longer surprised at the silence of the church hierarchy and its constant concern not to do its dirty linen in public.»^[34] It should be explained that the situation is analogous to paying for the informational openness of the church to the wider community and to the spokesman of its intellect—the media. Church leadership also must understand that the era of web 2.0 has deprived the church of any monopoly on the right to transmit information. This situation is the norm in a post-industrial society: journalists make use of all legitimate (and often, unfortunately, illegitimate) tools for creating sharp and interesting materials about the life of the church.

^[31] *L'viv's'ka poshta* No. 41(1073) (2011).

^[32] Cf. Ol'ha Zhyla, “Relihiyny narkotyky” *Novinar* No. 7 (22-28 Feb 2008); cf. a series of stories on TSN channel (tsn.ua) under the title «U Boga zapazukhoi» presented with completely clear intentions.

^[33] Ernst Troeltsch. *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (Tübingen: Gesammelten Schriften, 1923), Bd.1.3. Aufl. S. 361-377

^[34] *Apokryfy Klary Gudzyk*, p. 21.

Here also lies a psychological peculiarity which has the potential to facilitate the implementation of Gospel in the culture and life of the state. The population of the former Soviet Union is accustomed to ubiquitous double standards. The absence of that approach in the churches in relation to information about themselves and—mark this—church journalists, can serve to enhance the credibility of the position of Protestant churches. The media should throw light on both sides of church life: success stories and chronicles of failure. Church leaders (especially in large cities) should also be prepared to accept that there is a separate layer of intellectual laity, who are able to represent the interests of the *ecclesia* at least as adequately as clergy-insiders. In any case, the experience of public service of a prisoner of conscience, Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Myroslav-Marynovych is a striking confirmation of the fact. The image of the church will gain from the multiplicity of its representatives because a differentiated society will be able to find a face in the church that is consonant with it.

3.2. The demarginalization of post-Soviet Protestantism

A considerable part of the scholarly and journalistic works by doctor of philosophy and vice president of the association «Spiritual Renewal» in Ukraine, Mikhail Cherenkov, is dedicated to an overview of the causes and consequences of the marginalization of post-Soviet Protestants. Understanding the implications of this concept in the context of «deprivation of an indi-

vidual's participation in meaningful social life,»^[35] scholars point out that for twenty years Protestantism, for diverse reasons, has not been able to create a full, coherent, national culture and theology. In 2010, Vladimir Solodovnikov, who had very difficult relationships with the Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptists of Russia as well as with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, published an article entitled, «Lack of professionalism and marginalization are the scourge of Protestant society in Russia,» in which he polemically pointed out that «... the body of Christ was not just divided, but became an invalid, having lost part of its spiritual and intellectual elites.»^[36] Closed and isolated from world Christianity,^[37] preferring negative statements in their confessional identity,^[38] the Protestants of the former USSR are in need of strategies capable of rectifying the situation and offocusing efforts on correcting the church's course. In this context, positive experience of cooperation with the media can play an important role.

Since the perception of society by contemporary people is closely connected with the influence of MMC informing the individual about news and events, a situation develops in which:

... mass communication is able to determine not only what people think, but also what they think about. For many people, reality is what the mass media considers real, and what the media do not pay attention to means little. Because *de facto* [italics mine—A.G.] individuals and groups ignored by the media are doomed to oblivion and silence, even the voice of the

^[35] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marginalization> (accessed 16.04.2011).

^[36] http://ukrmonitor.ucoz.org/news/neprofessionalizm_i_marginalnost_bich_protestantskogo_soobshhestva_v_rossii/2010-01-27-1235 (accessed 16.04.2011).

^[37] *Kul'tura vliatel'nogo men'shinstva*, p. 146.

^[38] R. Wayne Stacy, ed., *A Baptist's Theology* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc. 1999), p.v.

^[39] *Aetatis Novae*, 4, "Tserkva i sotsial'na komunikatsiia," p. 143.

Gospel may be, if not nullified, then muted.^[39]

As a result, the mass media have created, as per Baudrillard, a simulacrum, that is, a product of digital hyper-reality. It is a holistic image, starting from a feature of reality, but then, in the process of its qualitative development, losing almost all the features of reality. For example, favorable “market” conditions may require the formation of public opinion expressed in the categorical rejection of «sects» by a country with a nominal Orthodox population, although, when studied sociologically, the picture of society’s opinion can be radically different from the simulacrum constructed.

In this situation, mutually beneficial cooperation between Protestants and MMC can make a particular theology, religious practices, and moral and social activities of a community the subject of discussion at the city, regional or state-level—depending on the scope of the media. In the post-Soviet states we observe a paradoxical situation in which the Protestant community, in the face of unfair and poor-quality materials (for unknown reasons), respond with an information blackout, which results in a vicious cycle. In response, the media prefer to pay attention to the criminal components of church life, ignoring the positive experience of public and spiritual service of the community. It should also be noted that “good news” for the media, whose standing is based on ratings and advertisers, is secondary, since it reveals no problems and gives no signs of sensationalism. That is why the following components are to be included in the information ministry policy of Protestant churches: the creation/development of press centers, the preparation of informational materials, and the training of qualified news staff.

The following assertion demands no proof: the clergy are not competent in public relations. To deal with PR, most denominations have established press centers or appointed press secretaries whose duties include the management of information flow inside and from within the church. If we look at marginalization (whether conscious or unconscious) as the process of directing the church to the periphery of public life, the demarginalization plan will at least consist of steps that support the centripetal (toward society and the culture) vector of church life. In the context of the church press service, it is embodied in measures taken to improve the professionalism of its staff and oriented to the standard of quality and speed of response of secular corporate PR departments. It should be noted that familiarity with the specifics of most Ukrainian church press departments suggests that the work of a competent ecclesiastical specialist dealing with the public and the media (Bishop of Vasil’kovskiy, Evstratiy (Zoria)—Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate; Father Igor Iatsiv—Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church; Archpriest Georgiy (Kovalenko)—Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate) gives the expected result in short order. Experience also shows that, given the level of busyness and the difficulty of contacting church leaders, that the church press secretary should become an independent figure in the information space. The appointment to this post makes high moral, professional, and communication demands on its candidates.

The second step towards the demarginalization of Protestantism and its legitimate appearance in the information arena is, as stated above, the training of qualified news personnel. This concerns press employees and supervisors responsible for ac-

tivities at regional and district levels. The main problem in this sector lies in the fact that before taking purposeful steps in this direction, most of the press department staff received a humanities education and gained professional experience before they became believers. That is, for example, the story of Valentina Krytska's career—the current press secretary of All-Ukrainian Association of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. The opening of the Faculty of Christian Journalism at Kyiv Christian University^[40] and of the earlier Master's program in Religious Journalism at the Ukrainian Catholic University^[41] are key events in the context of Ukrainian Christianity. It is hoped that the training of professionals in this sector will be accompanied by the involvement of secular professionals and support in finding employment.

The third point that requires some comment is the mention of the need to produce quality informational materials. By "informational materials" we mean print media, although in a digital society this term may signify any data, in any media, in any form. Informational transparency, as a rule, results in the systematic promulgation, necessary a priori for journalists and the broader public, of the materials required for the formation of an adequate picture of a church organization. The systematization and regularity of this process entail the following steps: the appointment of persons responsible for filling the church web pages with timely content; the allocation of time by senior church leadership to communicate with representatives of both the secular and religious media; and the design and development of specialist ma-

terials for the media containing general and detailed information about the doctrinal, social, and ethical features of the denomination. The ultimate goal of this set of undertakings is a church image that is open to the media and is ready to take full responsibility for being at the center of the social and political life of society.

4. Evangelical values in the culture

In talking about the penetration of evangelical values into contemporary culture, we mean that Christian virtues are not going to be implemented from scratch. When discussing similar topics, one generally takes as a starting point the time five to ten years after the declaration of independence of the former socialist republics. Parallel to these difficult socio-political events, intensive processes of spiritual and moral revival also took place. However, it was recognized that the enthusiasm that accompanied the stormy 1990s did not lead to any irreversible changes in the structure of relations between "church/authorities"; "church/society," or "authorities/society." If some states attempted to develop their own path without reference to democratic values and human rights at all, other states, in implementing religious policies resorted to the allocation of the role of «traditional confessions» (Russia, Belarus). The most stable model of a relationship between state and church interests was achieved in Ukraine, where the Constitution^[42] and the profile Law «On freedom of conscience and religious organizations»^[43] declares the equal, but not in an Orwellian sense, rela-

^[40] http://ecbua.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=ua&id=1169&Itemid= (accessed 17.04.2011), news discussion: <http://risu.org.ua/ru/index/blog/-Jesfor/33405/> (accessed 17.04.2011).

^[41] <http://ucu.edu.ua/media/2119/> (accessed 17.04.2011).

^[42] Article 35

^[43] Article 4-6

tionship of all churches and theoretically does not endow anyone with privileges of any kind.

The theme of evangelical values incorporated into modern post-communist culture involves a detailed segmentation of states with the consequential division of societies with consideration of their specific interests and needs. The very possibility of theological and sociological reflections on this subject demands that we restrict ourselves conditionally to the so-called «Ukrainian» version, because the balance of power in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and other nation-states was originally constructed against the Christian minority, so that the issue concerns the actual physical survival of people. The Russian and Belarusian options in this context are not suitable because of the symphony (or unity in the case of Belarus) between the Orthodox Church and the government, hindering the development of the interests of both religious and national minorities. The «Ukrainian» option also provides the best backdrop for the discussion because the Ukrainian law's guarantee of the government's equal attitude to religious organizations (although it has taken a significant turn in the direction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate following the inauguration of Viktor Yanukovich) does not predetermine the success or failure of any church initiative: everything depends on the vision and diverse opportunities of the pioneers of the process. It is precisely the clash of interests and the subsequent confrontation that become the reason of a particular concept's success.

^[44] http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Международный_союз_церквей_евангельских_христиан-баптистов (accessed 21.04.2011).

^[45] *Preobrazovaniia missionerstva*, p. 571.

^[46] *Ibid*, pp.353-354

4.1. Internal church context

It is a paradox, but when speaking of the incarnation, abstractly understood, of Christian values in the culture (pluralist, multi-confessional), we confirm that the object of initiative recognizes the need for the implementation of a «project.» In fact, domestic Protestantism is not monolithic in these matters. For example, the position of a considerable number of churches with a difficult historical fate (for example, Baptists who refused to register in 1961, now the International Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists^[44]) is well-known. This religious niche avoids having a direct influence on the culture. Instead, they continue to focus on direct evangelization, bringing souls into the church of Christ. This guideline comes from a corresponding missiology: the *testimony* of the church is *preaching* in the church, but *fellowship* (inter-denominational contacts) and *service* (social theology, political influence) are squeezed to the periphery.^[45] Defining liberal Christians as a group who «focus more on the form of Christian influence associated with the gradual penetration of ideas, values, customs, etc., than on the conversion to Christianity in the narrow sense of the word,»^[46] conservative Christianity has responded to this «challenge» by supporting the missionary ministry of Billy and, somewhat later, Franklin Graham. Post-Soviet apathy toward cultural-social service is due to the consequences of the deliberate marginalization of Soviet Protestantism and a complete lack of experience.

4.2. Indirect influence

Fruitful interaction with the culture requires a step of faith, which is considered a high-risk zone for financial, labor, and intellectual investment. It is much easier to apply the above resources to church prop-

erty or special equipment. No one denies the strategic importance of the development of relations in the sphere of morals and culture, preferring, however, to join a well-established “innovative” practice. If we attempt to present schematically the steps for using the media for the incorporation of evangelical values in post-Soviet culture, the result will look as follows:

§ *Attention to secular higher education*

The neglect of completed higher education with the desired subsequent specialization (Master’s level) should be remembered as a side effect of domestic Protestantism’s growing pains. It is recommended that churches focus on the fact that young Christians are prospective students; having received higher education, they are able to be financially independent, while Christian education in Ukraine and Russia, as a rule, does not guarantee employment. It is important that while executing their official duties they can embody the gospel ethic in the cultural life of society. Of course, this mainly concerns humanities graduates. If the importance of personal life witness is not directly dependent on one’s education and activities, then receiving a humanities education scholarship lays additional responsibilities on a Christian for ministry in word and thought. In this context, encouragement to obtain a journalism degree is of particular importance because it allows people who are insiders in information processes to transmit Christian values.^[47]

§ *The position of a cultural object*

Trained Christian professionals, who have an adequate amount of knowledge and relevant experience, may move from a subject

modus (“being described”) to the initiators’ modus (“describers”). In the context of journalism we must repeat once more the need for Christians in secular and church media. It is in the media, according to insiders of the process, that a journalist worldview may influence, if not the facts, then the tone and manner in which the facts are presented, which is essential in describing moral and ethical issues. One can only welcome the establishment of the Christian branches of associations or guilds of journalists, lawyers, doctors and other cells that assist specialists in their professional and spiritual growth. At this point it is clear that Christians do not play a significant role in secular journalism. However, systematic efforts to attract believers to this area can improve the social climate and contribute to the establishment of harmonious and tolerant relations between religious organizations and society. «Meanwhile, Christian education has used only a few of the opportunities presented by scientific apologetics, Christian ethics, Christian art, philosophical debates, journalism, and publishing projects.»^[48]

§ *Movement in both directions and the creation of mass-media*

Jean Baudrillard observed that the process of communication is two-way.^[49] An active response to neutral or aggressive media must be accompanied by the creation of Christian response materials distributed through its own channels of information. Domestic Protestantism feels a great lack of informational channels. If it is still too soon to talk about full-fledged church television, then the situation of magazines is truly alarming. Protestant churches are in

^[47] “Tserkva i sotsial’na komunikatsiia,” *Paps’ke poslannia znahody Vsesvitn’oho dnia komunikatsyy u 1969 rotsi*, p. 230.

^[48] *Kul’tura oliiatel’nogo men’sinstva*, p. 147.

^[49] “Rekviem po mass-media,” <http://polite.com.ua/library/3948-.html> (accessed 20.04.2011).

dire need of print media of an open, not church-oriented type. There are, for instance, the Catholic Ukrainian magazine *CREDO*,^[50] the Polish Roman Catholic *GoscNiedzielny*,^[51] and the Orthodox Russian *Foma* [Thomas]^[52] magazines. Creating its own media is pertinent to both the short- and long-term outlook of post-Soviet Protestant communities.

Conclusion

Communication between people reflects the dialogical and dynamic nature of the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. Media as a tool of communication between people is a means of transnational communication. Media play an important role regardless of the salvation model one accepts—for example, Calvinist or Arminian. In the first case, the media are used by the church as a platform for execution of the simple order of Jesus Christ; in the second case it is a component of «prevenient-grace.» In both instances, the churches are expected to take volitional steps in establishing communication with the media.

The negative relationships matrix results usually in the formation of a biased

and, in fact, extremely disadvantageous information-picture for the church, which spoils relations with society. An extreme example is the notorious «anti-sectarian hysteria,» which can marginalize Protestant churches.

However, a positive relationships matrix leads to an increased role for responsible journalists as well as to the Protestant community's demarginalization, manifesting itself in growing influence in cultural and social processes. Intentional bridge building to the media (mainly secular) can not only involve them directly in the plan of salvation, but also perform the task of indirectly creating a positive image of the church. To do this, the churches, first, must come to an agreement on the need for cooperation with the media; second, encourage young Christians to choose specializations entailing creative work in the humanities; third, move from a waiting position to the position of an active player in the informational field; and, finally, to create their own media, of no lesser quality than that of secular publications, media specifically geared to fulfill plans motivated by gospel values.

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^[50] <http://www.credo-ua.org/>

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