Call for papers

"Religion & communication" MEI 38
Coordination: David Douyère, Stéphane Dufour, Odile Riondet
www.mei-info.com

Over the late 20th and early 21st century, there has been a large increase in religious discourse, both critical and theoretical, with regard to communication and the media. It encompasses the different practices to be found in the professional sector (journalism and communicators), and is generating new ideas¹. With the involvement of religious communities and institutions, this constitutes an extension, often in a pioneering way, of a long-standing tradition of thinking about writing, concepts, images and means of dissemination.

Religion puts forward a theoretical vision of communication that inevitably structures and defines itself in relation to other political, ideological and social conceptions, as part of a communicational reality in which it also participates directly. It is present in public space through discourse, action and information campaigns, including the marketing aspect of these campaigns, whose aim is to give visibility to the institution and its members, and to spread beliefs. Finally, religious groups communicate and interact in and through ritual actions, and in the corporal, performative and symbolic manifestations to which the sciences of information and communication give intelligibility in terms of their signs and conditions of circulation within media space.

We would suggest four intersecting lines of research on the field opened up by religion to the sciences of information and communication, which, though it goes back quite a way, has still not been sufficiently investigated:

- the signs and discourse of religious "communication" (speech, rites, rituals, etc.);
- faith, ministry and mission: the actions and communicational rhetoric that come into play (the propagation of faith in time and space, etc.);
- expressions of religion in public and media space (the involvement of religious individuals or institutions in public debate, the press, the cinema, etc.);
- techniques, practices and representations of religious realities in their communicational dimension.

Although religion presents an historical reality to historians, a political reality to political scientists and jurists, and an anthropological and sociological reality to sociologists – cf. Durkheim's ground-breaking work – its communicational dimension largely remains to be explored. In France, research has long remained fragmentary and sporadic, carried out by theorists of the sign and signification, such as Roland Barthes, at the origins, or in the margins, of the sciences of information and communication, and who became interested at an early state in the sense of religiousness; or it has been taken up by researchers on religion such as Michel de Certeau. More recently, Régis Debray's "mediology" has made an intellectual contribution, but from a very specific angle. We ourselves would advocate further study, and a renewal of research on the communicational aspects of religious belief.

Contributions may concern any religion or religious group, including sects, or any philosophical or spiritual movement that is defined in relation (or in opposition) to religious belief, or assimilated to it, either rightly or wrongly. Whether it be a question of analyses of particular forms of religious communication, or epistemological enquiry, the main focus should be on the communicational dimension (mediation, language, orality, writing, signs, media, system or technique of exchange and transmission), which is the theme of MEI No. 38.

Dates and guidelines:

Submission of proposals

• Proposals (500 words maximum, apart from the title and references, in French or English) should be submitted before 30 September 2012.
• A proposal should consist of: a clear (if provisional) title; a presentation of the problematic; a description of the terrain or the corpus; an indication of the disciplinary approach and the theoretical framework; a summary bibliography. The author should situate his proposal within his field of work as a whole.
• Proposals should be sent in two files, in MS Word format or equivalent. One file should contain the author's name, institution, position and contact details, along with the title of the proposal (e.g. "propMEI38_author_keyword_title"). The other should contain the title of the proposal, without any personal details (e.g. "propMEI38_keyword_title"), and the text.
• Proposals should be sent to dddouyere@gmail.com, stephane.dufour@univ-bourgogne.fr and odile.riondet@wanadoo.fr, with "MEI No. 38, Religion & communication: proposal" in the subject line.

Schedule

• 30 September 2012: deadline for the reception of proposals.
• 1 November 2012: notification of the selection of proposals, and of editorial guidelines.
• 30 January 2013: deadline for the reception of articles (in French or English) of 4,000 words maximum, including references.
• 20 February 2013: communication of feedback to the authors.
• 20 March 2013: final versions of the articles, after discussions with the authors.
• Second half of 2013: publication of MEI No. 38.
Assessment of texts

MEI's reviewers use a double-blind method: texts submitted to reviewers do not include the names of their authors, and the reviewers maintain anonymity.

An international committee makes a selection from among the different proposals, and a second committee carries out an evaluation of the selected articles.

Relicom network

David Douyère (Université Paris 13, Labsic), Stéphane Dufour (Université de Bourgogne, Ciméos/3S) et Odile Riondet (Rectorat de Lyon, Ciméos/3S) animent le réseau de recherche Relicom, « Communication et espaces du religieux » (http://relicom.hypotheses.org/, http://relicom.jimdo.com/). Ce projet bénéficie du soutien du Labsic et du Ciméos.

MEI 'Mediation and Information'

MEI, "Mediation and Information", founded in 1993 by Bernard Darras of Université Paris 1 and Marie Thonon of Université Paris 8, is a peer-reviewed journal of communication. It is thematic, and is published twice-yearly as a reference journal.

In June 2011, MEI was included by AERES, french Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education, and section 71 of the french Conseil National des Universités in the list of reviews devoted to "Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication" (Information science, communication & media studies).