

CALVARY BIBLE COLLEGE: SHILLONG
A PAPER PRESENTATION ON
TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN THROUGH
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION: As the world is developing its technology, it provides us different kinds of useful equipment. These developments of technology extend the domain of business which presents the worldwide trading called 'Globalization'. This Globalization does not end itself in business circle only, it further extend its realm to different areas and penetrate into our culture. And it use media as its instrument, where mobile phone, computer and internet are part and parcel. This media penetrate through our innocent culture, infiltrate the heart of our Christianity and pull us down in our Christian life.

The funds that should have been used towards the spreading of the gospel have now gone to the mobile companies; the funds that should have been used for the missionaries have been gathered by the non-Christians. The Holy Spirit that used to fill the heart of the saints has now been replaced by the things that we see and hear in our day-to-day life. What is this device that conquered the world? How far this Information and Communication Technology had affected us? How are we going to face it? Why not making use of it to turn the world upside down? As Satan, the Devil who always tries to make use of every opportunity to turn good things into bad has been defeated through the blood of Christ, his burial and resurrection, why not declaring victory through Christ?

In this paper we will highlight how we the followers of Christ should make use of Information and Communication Technology to turn the world upside down, but we will first see how these devices are affecting the world now-a-days.

MEANING OF MASS MEDIA: Since, the Indian Constitution gives its citizen 'the right to freedom of speech and expression', media has a great impact, and therefore we need to know what media is. Mass media is the plural form of the word "Medium" which means a channel, an intervening instrument or a means for doing something.¹The word media comes from Latin word *medium*.² According to Michael Traber, "*the mass media of communication, by definition, presuppose technical means for the production and distribution of messages.*" Thus when we are talking about mass media, we refer to

1 Keval J. Kumar, *Mass communication in India*, (New Delhi: A.T.C., 1981), 25.

2 C. Lalnuntlinga, "Media Thil Tihtheihna" in *Kristianna leh Tunlai Khawvel* (Aizawl, Mizoram: C.Lalnuntlinga on behalf of christian Media Society, 2008), 102.

those mediums such as, the print media, radio, cinema and television through which information are passed on from one place to another and they have the potentiality to influence a person (s), family and society. He continues, “*mass media are in the process of creating a new cultural environment, which in part is changing our ways of seeing and perceiving reality.*”³ Its aim is communicating with multiple audiences at the same time.⁴ Mass media includes Television, Radio, Print media, Computer (Internet), Audio Cassettes, and Video etc.

Now, let us see some of the important kinds of Information and Communication Technology in brief as follows:

a) TELEVISION: The word Television comes from the combination of a Latin and a Greek word i.e. *tele* (Greek) which means ‘far’ and *visio* (Latin) which means ‘vision/see’, therefore its meaning is “to see far”.⁵ In French it is called *telematique* (which means informatics in English).⁶ In the year 1926 TV was discovered by a Britisher John Logie Baird. Television was introduced in India on an experimental basis in Delhi on September 15, 1959. After it proved a success, entertainment and information programmes were introduced in 1965.⁷ TV occupies an important place in the transfer of information from one place to another. With its ability to send and receive both audio and visual signals through satellite communications, it has a more profound influence on the people than any other mass media.⁸ Television reaches a large group of people at the same time. Research shows that many people spend up to 80% of their leisure time in front of a TV. Thus, television provides tremendous scope for the Christian communicator to communicate the gospel to millions of people at the same time.⁹

b) INTERNET: During the early 1990's, a relatively new media technology was finding acceptability among a rapidly growing number of users of the general public. This "Internet" as it was called, was a revolutionary form of

3 Lalfamkima, *The Influence of Information Technology on the Mizo Society* (An unpublished thesis submitted to Senate of Serampore College, 2004), 14.

4 Viggo Soggard, *Media in Church and Mission Communicating the Gospel* (Bangalore: TBT, 1998), 40.

5 Evan. K. Lalthazuala's Paper Presentation on "Thianghlimna, Information Technology atang ngatin aw niang."

6 <http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/M/media.html> (21.7.2013)

7 James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 9.

8 Lalfamkima, *The Influence of Information...* 15.

9 Viggo Sogaard, *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the Gospel...*114 - 116.

communication, implemented by a world-wide network of computers, which provided both the "mass" public exposure of "web pages," as well as the "personal" two-way interaction of "e-mail."

According to a study by the Worldwide Evangelization for Christ, it had taken 38 years for radio to reach 50 U.S. million users, and 13 years for TV to attract the same number of viewers, but the Internet's World Wide Web surpassed this number of users in only four years.¹⁰ By the end of the century, the Web had grown to more than 300 million users worldwide, from only 300,000 users in 1990.¹¹ And while still evolving and improving in its technology, it has become the most phenomenal tool of communication and information the world has ever seen. The Internet has become a global town square in which the growing populations of the world gather to converse and exchange ideas.

c) MOBILE PHONE: A mobile phone (also known as a cellular phone, cell phone or hand phone) is a device that can make and receive telephone calls over a radio link. In addition to telephony, modern mobile phones also support a wide variety of other services such as text messaging, MMS, e-mail, internet access, short-range wireless communications (infrared, Bluetooth), business applications, gaming and photography. Mobile phones that offer these and more general computing capabilities are referred to as smart phones. The first hand-held mobile phone was demonstrated by John F. Mitchell and Dr Martin Cooper of Motorola in 1973, using a handset weighing around 2.2 pounds (1 kg). In 1983, the DynaTAC 8000x was the first to be commercially available. From 1990 to 2011, worldwide mobile phone subscriptions grew from 12.4 million to over 6 billion, penetrating about 87% of the global population and reaching the bottom of the economic pyramid.¹² The United Nations reported that mobile phones have spread faster than any other technology and can improve the livelihood of the poorest people in developing countries by providing access to information in places where landlines or the Internet are not available, especially in the least developed countries.¹³

IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON THE WORLD TODAY:

Technology has brought many changes to our lives. I am sure many people can look back and see how different things were five, ten or even twenty years ago. Today, most people have a cell phone, a computer, and television. With all of the advancements in technology, our lives have been changed at the same time. We use computers and cell phones to stay in touch with

¹⁰ <https://www.wec-int.org> as on 21.7.2013

¹¹ <https://www.wikipedia.com> as on 21.7.2013

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_phone as on 8.8.2013

¹³ Lynn, Jonathan. "Mobile phones help lift poor out of poverty: U.N. study". *Reuters*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_phone as on 8/8/2013

people. Computers make certain parts of our work faster and easier. At the same time, perhaps technology can be a problem in our lives as well.

With more and more technology available at a relatively low cost today, we begin to use computers and cell phones for more and more of our daily lives. It's great that now we can stay in touch with friends and family by email, text, and Facebook. What we need to concern ourselves with is a different question: Is there a danger to this technology as a Christian? I believe the answer is yes, and there are several things I can identify as dangers.

If we studied carefully the effect of the mass media among the people especially among the young people, we came to know that there are many positive and negative impacts. With the help of the mass media we can know what is happening on another side of the world, we even can see what is happening in live telecasts. In the field of evangelization, also mass media served as an important device today. There are so many programmes, channels and even web sites which focus on the evangelization and reaching of the unreached people. However, there can be many positive points or impacts, our focus should be on negative impacts of the mass media. Let us see some of its impact as follows:

1. Dress Code: The dress worn by the stars in television, films and music videos had now become the trend of the world. The fashion of hip-hop stars like wearing baggy pants with an iron chain has now become the trend of the youth today. Sometime the youth like to wear loose clothing and sometimes they are wearing tight clothing. As the Korean film stars are not combing their hair properly that hairstyle easily become the trend of the youth especially among the north east states of India. And all these imitations are the effects of media. Even the westerners have said that the dress codes of the youths today are termed as the dress code for sex workers and the hippies in 1970's.¹⁴ Our youth are copying the *emo*¹⁵ *lifestyle*, *emo hairstyle*, *emo-dress style* that they saw through these technologies. When the doctors

14 Hailey Hechtman, *Media's Influence on the Youth* in <http://teammag.free.fr/Influence.html> as on 9.6.1998.

15 Emo is a style of rock music characterized by melodic musicianship and expressive, often confessional lyrics. It originated in the mid-1980s hardcore punk movement of Washington, D.C., where it was known as "emotional hardcore" or "emocore" and pioneered by bands such as Rites of Spring and Embrace. Usually among teens, the term "emo" is stereotyped with wearing jeans, sometimes in bright colors and may often be close-fitting, and T-shirts (usually short-sleeved) which often bear the names of emo bands. Studded belts and black wristbands can be associated in emo fashion. Some males can also be often wearing thick, black horn-rimmed glasses. The emo fashion is also recognized for its hairstyles. Popular looks include thin, flat and smooth hair with lots of hair on the sides and back of the head with long side-swept bangs, sometimes covering one or both eyes. Also popular is hair that is straightened or dyed black. Bright colors, such as blue, pink, red, or bleached blond, are also typical as highlights in emo hairstyles. Short, choppy layers of hair are also common.

are having research, they found out that women who wear tight and baggy jeans are prone to have spinal problems!¹⁶

2. Character and Lifestyle: We easily copied the characters and the lifestyle of people we see in Television and put into practice in our day-to-day life. Many youth are imitating the sex life, violence, rape, torture, hostility and fighting in the films that they saw in television.¹⁷ With the extensive proliferation of advertising, the consumerist lifestyle is growing far and wide in India. The influence people got from the media affects their lives and consequently, there is a notable change in people's lifestyles, habits, behaviour especially among the young people. All these led us to 'It's my life' mentality and influence us to have a "Just do it" culture. The youth now are using internet and are watching movies, games on TV staying up till midnight and could not wake up early in the morning, so these technologies present us a "Nocturnal Generation." This newly developed technology develop laziness among the youth, the laziness to study, to play, to go to church services, to have a fellowship as well.

In an article "What TV Does to Kids," written in *Newsweek*, February 21, 1977, there are shocking effects of TV. One of the effect is that viewing violence tends to produce aggressive behavior. It also increases tolerance of violent behaviour in others. And also TV instills paranoia. It generates an exaggerated fear of violence in the viewers' own lives. It displaces many of the normal social interactions between parents and children. Moreover, it also alters the development of childhood. It prematurely jades children and makes the normal experiences of growing up seem boring to them.¹⁸

In USA, on 26th July, 2000 six associations who are caring for the health and psychological situation of the country are having a congress called Congressional Health Public Summit, and in that meeting their resolution is that our mindset, our value system, our characters were being driven and influenced by media towards violence, especially children and youth. The developed media like computer games and internet are driving the children and youths to commit sin.¹⁹

16 Hailey Hechtman, *Media's Influence on the Youth* in <http://teammag.free.fr/Influence.html> as on 9.6.1998.

17 Lalrintluanga Ngente, *Impact of Television on Mizo Youth since 1986*, Unpublished BD Thesis, ATC, 1998, as quoted by Rev. Lafakzuala, *Media-in Mizo Khawltlang a nghawng dan* (Aizawl: Chaltlang South Branch TKP, 2008), p. 41.

18 Loretta A Bernard and David K. Bernard, *In Search of Holiness* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1998),95.

19 Craig A. Anderson, et al, "The Influence of Media Violence on Youth" in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, Vol 4, No. 3, December 2003, pp. 81-110.

According to Steve Watters, an Internet research analyst for Focus on the Family, more than 15% of Americans who use the Internet use it for pornography and 5% of all who use it are addicted. Quoting recent statistics, "Of all the calls we receive from Christian leaders, over 10% are about pornography. Also, we believe that the problem may be more widespread than these numbers indicate because many don't realize they have a problem or just don't want to make it known."²⁰

Christian leaders have become "especially vulnerable" to pornography, Watters said. "Pastors as a group can be drained in their role as shepherd. After a long weekend of giving, there is no one around on Monday morning to talk to. Now something that has been off-limits is available privately. It seems like a safe area to explore. Some justify their exploring by wanting to know what the problem is all about, and then get sucked in themselves." Watters say he has been astonished by how little shame there is in society associated with Internet pornography. "I'm amazed to see so many articles in places like USA Today that seem to praise the small-business aspect of setting up a porno Web site. My concern is the need to stigmatize it rather than praise it."

²¹

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Jesus even told us in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What we are getting down to is that technology is not the evil. It merely makes desires more accessible. If this is a big temptation for someone, perhaps their life is better without the technology. Just as in any other aspect of our lives, we must identify temptation and avoid it. Are we willing to sacrifice in order to work on keeping ourselves pure for God?

3. EGOISM: Technology, especially internet develops egoism, the 'I'ness' in the minds of the users. What you post sends a message. What impression did you leave? While I should want to "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15), if every post is about me and what I'm doing, might that suggest that my focus is mostly on me? When we look at the word we post we look at people who 'like' and make a 'comments' on our post. We are giving importance to those who are wishing us on our birthdays, our anniversary. With the coming of these technologies, we stay alone as family or individually, our guests become a burden rather than a blessing, and we do not need friends anymore outside it. Sometimes having a fellowship with our parents, our brothers and sisters are just irritating and annoying for many youths.

²⁰ <http://www.victorious.org/internet.htm> as on 25/7/2013.

²¹ <http://www.victorious.org/internet.htm> as on 25/7/2013.

The material on your facebook page influences others. Before we post, we need to ask ourselves how this message will be perceived by others and whether it conveys something consistent with your profession as a Christian. The Lord teaches us to love one another and to work in unity, individually we may achieve something, but if we work together, pray together, minister together and support each other we will achieve greater things.

NEW TECHNOLOGY - OPPORTUNITY TO TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN: In Daniel 12:4 we are told that in the end times many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase. The verse reads, "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." I understand that can have multiple meanings such as prophetic discernment will be increasing as we start to see signs of the final stage being set, but do you think this prophecy from Daniel has a technological inference as well? Daniel in writing that prophecy concerning knowledge and technology confirms that the time is short because the angelic messenger told Daniel to seal up that information until the last days. Technology and ease of how we share information proves we're in the end times, and so Jesus is going to come very soon. In the meantime, God's gives us the best tools possible to reach as many people as possible as quickly as possible before He returns.

Technology has advanced to the point where we can literally reach across the entire world. As a matter of fact, Billy Graham's last crusade was broadcast through the Internet and radio literally to every country on the planet. He had more people with the potential to listen to that crusade than any time in human history.²²

Obviously, technology and the inspiration to develop it come from God and how believers can use it comes from the Holy Spirit. I really believe in this end time age the Lord is giving the Church the means to fulfill the need to be able to go out and reach people for Christ using these new technologies. Technology in evangelism started with the printing press, then the radio, next television, and now to the Internet to reach people for Christ like we've never been able to reach them before.

The church must bring its message and influence to the Information and Communication Technology for the following reasons:

1. A Great Need - The masses of unsaved millions are gathering there. The peoples of all nations are converging, with open hearts seeking for the knowledge of truth. There are also millions of Christians traveling the cyber highway, seeking encouragement, friendship and discipleship. There is also

²² <http://www.lamblion.us/2012/05/advancing-gospel-through-social-media.html> as on 26/7/2013

evil there, which the church must counter with the light of God's truth and presence.²³

2. *A Great Mandate* - The Lord's great commission to the church is to evangelize by proclaiming the Gospel to the World. As it was Christ's purpose in coming to seek to save those who were lost, so must the church seek every way possible to follow Christ's command and bring souls to Christ.²⁴

3. *A Great Opportunity* - Never has there been such availability and ease with such a form of mass communication. Web pages, which can contain any message of our choosing, cost almost nothing to create, and can be launched from anyone's bedroom. E-mail to any person on the Web is global, instant and free.²⁵

USING TECHNOLOGY TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," (Mat. 28:18,19a). This command of Jesus set the course for the apostles and ordinary Christians alike (Acts 8:4). On foot, by sea, and by letter, the Gospel message spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the Earth.

In our information age, a message can be sent from Jerusalem to Shillong to Saiha to Kohima in seconds. Many Bible translations and commentaries are available for free in the public domain. Bible study material, reference tools, and sermons may be published to and printed from the Internet. All of these things may even be done easily.

When Wycliffe translated the Bible into the common tongue in the 1380's AD, it enjoyed a wide circulation that threatened the Roman Catholic Church's unbiblical practices. When Gutenberg made a leap forward in publishing technology by inventing the printing press in the 1450's, the first book he printed was - you guessed it - the Bible! Reformers and restorers used the printing press to produce many copies of the Bible and instruction tracts. The dissemination of the Bible on the Internet is no less significant. Technology is also a huge time saver. Why spend five minutes looking through a concordance for that verse you are trying to find when you can search one of these websites and find it in five seconds?

Now, let us see how we can make use of Information and Communication Technology to turn the world upside down:-

23 <http://www.victorious.org/internet.htm> as on 25/7/2013.

24 *ibid*

25 *ibid*

1. Sharing the Gospel: Through TV and internet, we can spread the gospel to those whom we could not reach physically. In my hometown, one of our neighbour have heard the truth through the sermon of Rev. Vanlalena, the present General PYD President that is broadcast on Local Cable Network by the Local Missions Department of our church. And as we all know, in Lunglei District one of our church member have one channel called Full Gospel Ministry where they share the gospel. And the General Missions Department is also buying time in one of the channels in Aizawl where they sometimes share the gospel.

And through internet, we can also share the gospel. Consider the numbers. On the average Sunday, in the average local church, only a few hundred people will hear a sermon. If we record that sermon with video and upload it to YouTube - the potential audience goes from hundreds to thousands or may even reach millions.

The gospel message may be shared through social networks as well in various ways. Others use Facebook²⁶ to invite people to Bible studies and lectureships. And others are using twitter. I have had counselling via email and messaging. Some people who would never set foot in an assembly are willing to discuss spiritual matters over the Internet. At present, I am in contact with one Khasi guy who used to attend our English service, he feels himself that he is good enough without our so called new birth. We are using facebook to interact and exchange our views.

Therefore, I think that we can share the gospel through television and internet which will have more audience and would have reached remote areas which we may never ever reach in our lifetime. And we can replace printed bible tracts with digital or DVD or a CD tract where we can share the Gospel to the unreachable. Let us use these facilities to save the lost souls, not to hurt our fellow members, let knit together to spread the gospel. In all these ways, and many more, we can use technology to study, teach and preach the Gospel. Let's hit the "on" switch and get to work! Let's turn the world upside down, let us be like a lighthouse for ships who are lost.

2. Supporting God's Ministry: Technology has assisted us to support God's ministry financially and morally. Technology saves time and money. How wonderful it is when that time and money saved goes toward preaching the gospel! When it comes to sending money, the postal service may not be the best route. Sending money through new technology is faster and safer.

²⁶ Facebook is an online social networking service. It was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow Harvard University students. The website's membership was initially limited by the founders to Harvard students, but was expanded to other colleges in the Boston area. It gradually added support for students at various other universities before opening to high school students, and eventually to anyone aged 13 and over. As of September 2012, Facebook has over one billion active users, of which 8.7% are fake. According to a May 2011 *Consumer Reports* survey, there are 7.5 million children under 13 with accounts and 5 million under 10, violating the site's terms of service.

We can also help the Missionaries and pastors financially through internet banking or mobile banking. We can beg donation through TV and internet which will help minister turn the world upside down. Let us turn the world upside down, let us challenge the world and its glory, we have Jesus who work with us, we are mightier than the biggest company in the world, we are mightier than the Coca Cola company, the Reliance Company when we work with the Lord.

3. Prayer Network: Prayer is so powerful for the saints. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Pray always with all prayers and supplication in the Spirit." And James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." There is power and healing in prayer. If we pray with faith we can move mountains, it can melt the hardest heart. Joshua can let the sun stood still when he prayed with faith.

As technology develops, we can make use of it for having a prayer ministry to cover a larger area. Through internet, television and phones we can have a prayer network or prayer chain that can change the life of many. The Pray Live Prayer Ministry has expanded to a system that is technically capable of handling hundreds of simultaneous calls. The number of participants has been increasing mostly through committed praying volunteers and now includes prayer leaders and pastors. "There was someone who started calling the line every single day and now they're one of the leaders," said Wenda Royster, founder and president of Pray Live, a non-denominational prayer line.²⁷ We can also make use of these new technologies to turn the world upside down.

4. Pastoral Care and Counselling: Television, internet, facebook etc. can be a powerful tool for encouragement and nurturing relationships. When a brother or sister experiences some crisis, you can easily and quickly send a message of comfort and convey your concern. You can acknowledge birthdays. You can send a condolence message to those who weep. It's pretty amazing to have 50 or more people, from hundreds of miles away, wish you a Happy Birthday! Facebook can facilitate staying connected with young people and in finding out what's going on in their world. You may discover some things you didn't want to know about their activities, but knowing their particular struggles can assist in the development of teaching that could help them. Let us turn the world of the drug addicts, the alcoholics, the downtrodden, commercial sex workers upside down with these new technologies.

CONCLUSION: I want to make one final point about all of this. Staying in touch through technology has been great. I wonder if we don't lose something though. We lose the "personal touch" when this becomes the only avenue we use to reach out to others. We need a bond with each other.

²⁷ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/prayer-ministry-expands-through-technology-19360/> as on 8/8/2013

Technology has changed our lives so much. Let us be careful to be certain these changes are for the good of our souls and our brethren!

Rather let us use these new technologies to turn the world upside down. Job says, "I have made a covenant with my eyes"(Job 31:1) and the Paul in his letter to Romans says, "Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good" (Rom 12:9). So, as these passages wants us to hate evil and to abstain the Christians from evil, let us make up ourselves, let us turn our own world upside down first, Do you want to turn the world up-side down? Do your self-control but do not let that hinder the divine-control that is commanded from God. Walk your path as long as it lead to the truth and once it astray from that you ought to understand that it's time to change yourself to turn toward the truth again. Let let us prepare ourselves to turn the world of others to turn upside down.

POINTS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are the ill-effects of Information and Communication Technology on Christian life today? In what way will we tackle this problems?
2. How will we use Information and Communication Technology to spread the the Gospel in our present context? Give your points.
3. Is it harmful to get involved with these new technologies for a Christian minister? Give reasons to your answer.
4. What are the ill-effects of hollywood movies, korean serials, english serials, hindi serial, facebook etc. on the life of the youth today? How will we tackle this?