Introduction

The night before last, in the frost and light snow, I rode my bike to church. I sat down to an Advent soup supper, sang Christmas carols, and built a manger for the baby Jesus out of beloved Bibles members of our congregation had brought from home, and then blessed the Bibles before their return to their domestic resting places. We handled these Bibles with love and care, and told the story of their origin and journey. Later that evening, I gathered with a group of high school youth to discuss the Advent lectionary texts for the week in an informal, weekly Bible study we have been conducting all semester. We prayed and then went home.

Yesterday evening I went to an Episcopal outdoor prayer chapel to pray compline. Nine people gathered, and we prayed the service and lections out of the Book of Common Prayer.[1] A worship leader led the prayer office, and members of the community volunteered to read lessons and chant. Afterward we sat around and talked for a while, especially spending time asking each other about the specific prayer requests each of us had lifted during worship. Gentle ambient music was playing in the background, waves lapped at a nearby shoreline, and birds periodically flew through the worship space. Then we went home.

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1. For an online resource that prepares the daily prayer offices, see Lutheran Church of Honolulu, Daily Prayer, http://www.lchwelcome.org/spirit/office/office.php (accessed January 21, 2012).

Everything in the second paragraph above took place via avatars in Second Life[2] at St. Matthew's-by-the-Sea on their prayer labyrinth.[3] This may modify the extent to which readers consider it to have been an authentic worship experience, but then also alerts them to the theological or social presuppositions that lead them to such conclusions. Conversely, given that the first paragraph describes a "real world" church event, with real Bibles people could touch, other readers will develop another set of assumptions concerning the authenticity and reality of that encounter.

I have described these two settings because modern culture (especially in the church) has not yet thought at all clearly about the difference between the virtual and the real, and has as a result largely been blind to the effects of new media transitions as they are occurring. Although one-half of this book (on the catechumenate and bookish forms of faith formation) will make intrinsic sense to most readers, the other half on immersive digital contexts and social media is still a contested "place" for Christian formation. Because of the contested nature of the virtual context, it seems appropriate in this introduction to offer something like an extended *apologia* for virtual life and a complexification of the supposed differences between the virtual and the real. It is my hope that offering such an account will curtail the number of readers who dismiss the concept out-of-hand solely on the basis of the proposal encompassing virtual church and ministry.

Christians today are still, almost to a fault, bibliocentric. As a result, our theology of faith formation in what we tend to label "virtual" contexts is seriously impoverished, and our awareness of the effects of transitions to new media consistently leaves the church lagging behind the culture as new media emerge. To the extent that this is a result of ecclesial inattention (or even intentional disregard), Christians should be ashamed of themselves.[4] To the extent that this results from the legitimate difficulty of staying ahead of the curve on new media and philosophies of the real, the church is called simply to be more intentionally attentive. In his book *Simchurch: Being the Church in the Virtual World*, Douglas Estes writes, "The church must start now—immediately—if it wants to be a significant part of the virtual world of the future. In the United States, the church has been playing catch-up in areas such as music and film for most of the second half of the twentieth century because

2. Second Life, http://secondlife.com/ (accessed January 16, 2012).

3. St. Matthew's-by-the-Sea Chapel, http://stmattsinsl.wordpress.com/ (accessed January 16, 2012).

4. I am consistently surprised, for example, by the number of clergy I encounter who are willing to hold an opinion about ministry and worship on Second Life who are not willing to actually try it out before they develop their opinion.

it foolishly wasted God-given opportunities to engage those media in the first half of the twentieth century."[5]

As we address this challenge, it is wise to remember that, as A. K. M. Adam writes,

> the Web itself is not very old, and it didn't become a mass phenomenon until relatively recently. . . . Under the circumstances, it would be a great surprise if we yet knew what the digital sensorium turns out to be like, or what effects it might have on us. Results of studies right now might, for instance, be picking up only (or "mostly") the effect of *switching* from a mostly-physical ecology to a largely-digital ecology. We don't have a lot of perspective on the changes in which we're participating.[6]

However, given the ever-increasing importance and impact of the "digital sensorium," we are responsible for gaining as much perspective as we can.

Introductory Thoughts on Virtual and Real

The first task is to come to the labeling of the "virtual" context with some humility. Virtual church typically means any kind of church that takes place in digital contexts. However, A. K. M Adam's subtle labeling of ecologies as either "mostly-physical" or "largely-digital" is helpful. The standard terminology sets up perhaps an unnecessary distinction between two contexts that are less distinct in reality. The fundamental philosophical question is whether any aspect of life is actually "unmediated." Contemporary media studies would remind us, if nothing else, that all of life is mediated, and much more is media than we are often aware.[7]

Take, for example, any person's physical presence in a physical community. Although we tend to live as if we are really present in these contexts, our entire presence is mediated. We are mediated through our language and through the persona (avatar, mask) we put on for various contexts. In the contemporary social media context, we are further mediated by the ambient intimacy of social

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5. Douglas Estes, *Simchurch: Being the Church in the Virtual World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 223.

6. A. K. M Adam, email correspondence with the author, May 19, 2011.

7. Hence the Marshall McLuhan quote that heads this essay, which recognizes that media are extensions of humanity that, the longer we use them, the more they are displaced in our perception of them. Although central to the church's life is the use of media, we rarely reflect on the Bible as media qua media, precisely because of this perception displacement.

networks that update us on the life and thought of those we will, sometimes if not always, see in physical contexts. We are, to varying degrees, different people in the workplace, at home, on Facebook, in LinkedIn, or at church. All the digital sensorium does is remind us once again that we are mediated in this way. As danah boyd [*sic*] notes in her book "Taken Out of Context," published on her personal website, on American teen sociality in networked publics, today's teens are "the first generation to have to publicly articulate itself, to have to write itself into being as a precondition of social participation."[8] This is to say that this generation is not so much different as it is simply the first generation, and so more notable, to have to write itself into being as the first act of social participation.

Contemporary neuroscience research also increasingly recognizes that "the brain doesn't much care if an experience is real or virtual."[9] There are phenomenological and psychological modalities at play here about which I will give more detail anon, but the basic idea is worth noting. As Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson explain in their book, *Infinite Reality*,

> The distinction between real and virtual is relative. Humans contrast what is usually considered "grounded reality"—what they believe to be the "natural" or "physical" world—with all other "virtual realities" they experience, such as dreams, literature, cartoons, movies, and online environments such as Facebook or *Second Life*. This contrast allows us to avoid being mired in the unending debate over what constitutes reality.[10]

At this point, readers may be asking how precisely this conversation is theological rather than ethnographical or an exercise in media studies with a quasi-religious studies component. This introduction is laying out some preliminary thoughts on media effects that will be assumed in much of what follows. Theologically informed awareness of media effects will strengthen the faith formation practices of the church in a trans-media era. People today are increasingly aware that Marshall McLuhan was right—the medium is the message—and when they are unaware of the media effects of their chosen medium, it can corrupt, distort, or even hide the message they think they are

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8. danah boyd, "Taken Out of Context," PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2008, http://www.danah.org/papers/TakenOutOfContext.pdf. (accessed January 16, 2012).

9. Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson, *Infinite Reality: Avatars, Eternal Life, New Worlds, and the Dawn of the Virtual Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 3.

10. Ibid., 15.

communicating.[11] There is even a risk of forming people into a completely different faith than anticipated, depending on the effects of the media. That is, as Neil Postman notes in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, "the form in which ideas are expressed affects what those ideas will be."[12] Illustrating a proper understanding of the relationship between virtual and real is one important first step on the road to theologically informed awareness of media effects.

Conducting a review of "virtual church" in this way as it relates to faith formation should also send reflection back to the many places in Scripture where presence is mediated. Some of the most obvious of these include the following: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20); Jesus taking bread and saying, "This is my body that is for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24); and the cosmological assertion "He has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22–23). In the first instance, the individual speaker, Paul, is now the mediating presence of Christ in the world, begging the question of which is more virtual and which is more real. It would not be too much of a stretch to argue that in this case, the virtual is more real than the real, whatever that might mean. In the second case, the church has had a longstanding and faithful conversation on precisely how to articulate the presence of Christ in that bread, because it is not exactly clear how simple bread can be the media through which the message, Christ, can be expressed and itself be the messenger of the message in the media. Finally, in the third case, the church becomes the mediating presence of Christ in the world so that a community stands in for the one, but precisely because the one is already community. All of this illustrates not so much a theology of virtual church but rather how a conversation around virtual church sends us back to our source texts and theological presuppositions and highlights them in new ways.[13]

Or take, as a final example, the most wonderful exercise in media studies in all of Scripture: "We don't need letters of introduction to you or from you like other people, do we? You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and

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11. This is illustrated by the now famous mistake at the printer's where his book *The Medium Is the Message* was accidentally given the title *The Medium Is the Massage*. McLuhan loved the typographical, lexical error so much they left it that way. Media truly does "massage" the message.

12. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 31.

13. Much of this book amounts to cataloging the phenomenon of new ways of seeing. One must reread the Bible with a media ecology lens, and much becomes apparent that had not been on previous reads. McLuhan, watching all the advertisements across the United States landscape in the 1960s, said that "once you start seeing the world as pop, you could never go back to seeing it the way you did before." Douglas Coupland, *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work* (New York: Atlas and Company, 2010), 96.

read by everyone. You show that you are Christ's letter, delivered by us. You weren't written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. You weren't written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:1–3 CEB). Paul's riff on letters and tablets and believers as living Christ letters illustrates the wedding of media and message in precisely the theological format under consideration. In this early part of the letter, he uses the metaphor as a rhetorical flourish to win over his readers. Later, however, he mentions his own letter literally and makes this argument: "I don't want it to seem like I'm trying to intimidate you with my letters. I know what some people are saying: 'His letters are severe and powerful, but in person he is weak and his speech is worth nothing.' These people need to think about this—that when we are with you, our actions will show that we are the same as the words we wrote when we were away from you" (2 Corinthians 10:9–11 CEB). Paul argues that his letters themselves are extensions of himself and representative of him, so that the distinction between the media he sends and himself as the messenger authoring the message is a relative one—and he makes this argument in the context of a letter while he himself is absent physically. This last point is especially important, if often overlooked.

Paul's example should guide us to consider something about his ministry worth emulating, namely, that a letter or other media we make use of to extend ourselves is not *about* formation accomplished elsewhere, but is itself faith formative. Churches that "get" this use digital media *as* faith formation rather than as tools to communicate *about* formative opportunities. Perhaps this is an easier concept to embrace when speaking of social media, but it is still worth noting, since in the transition to new media, the tendency is often to focus on the media itself rather than embrace the media as an extension of the message and messenger. New technologies are self-referential until they cease to be.

Missiological Insights into the "Why?" of Formation in Virtual Contexts

Truly immersive new media, such as virtual worlds or "massively multiplayer online role playing games" (hereafter, MMORPGs) take this discussion to another level. For that matter, though not strictly virtual, yet still immersive, the catechumenate does so as well. They are, at their best, another world, separate and distinct in some ways from the "real world." In fact, in virtual environments, users often refer to "RL" (real life) or "IRL" (in real life) to distinguish between real life and their virtual life or second life. This kind

of language illustrates how immersive the virtual world can be, inasmuch as language then develops to point back to the world outside the virtual environment.

In these contexts, the church needs to bring the same kinds of critical tools one brings to mission, in order to understand the context adequately. As Estes writes, "The virtual world is a new mission field. We are called by God to pitch our tent in this strange land and learn the language so that we can share God's love."[14] It may seem obvious, but clearly it has yet to be embraced as a practice. The way one does mission is by going to a place that the church, responding to the call of God, sends the individual. Few would respect a missionary who expressed all kinds of thoughts about reaching the people of the Ukraine but had never been there, and everyone knows that to be a missionary in a foreign context for the long haul, the best first step is to learn the language.

With virtual worlds, the step into the mission field is tremendously simpler and more fluid than mission to foreign countries or new geographical contexts. If one has a computer and an Internet connection, one can be on *Second Life* or playing *World of Warcraft* in a matter of minutes for free. The primary theological task is for more of the faithful to actually go there, to be, as it were, "perichoretically present."[15] Again, this does not sound like theology until and if we embrace that theology is, to a considerable degree, ethnography—or said in the obverse, that ethnography can be excellent Christian theology.[16] Pete Ward, in one of the early works in this move toward ethnography as theology, titled *Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church*, writes, "The convergence on culture marks a significant move in practical theology. Turning to culture means that doctrine is increasingly read in and through the social and the embodied and so 'theology' itself is seen in a new light."[17] This is a way of thinking of ethnography as theological in the sense Michel de Certeau has it in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* in a chapter on "walking in the city." He writes, "To practice space [walk] is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, *to be other and to move toward the other*" (italics added).[18]

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14. Estes, *Simchurch*, 226.

15. Some consider the best translation of this term to be "circulating in the neighborhood." Gary Simpson, email correspondence with the author, May 2012.

16. See, for example, the recent collection of essays edited by Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

17. Pete Ward, *Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church* (Norwich, UK: SCM, 2008), 95.

Walking about in a virtual world, though in many respects no different from walking around in a physical city, does highlight aspects of walking around that we are less aware of in physical environments. If we decide to walk in the city, we probably select specific clothes to wear out and about. In the virtual world, you actually dress and create your avatar to represent you in that environment. These two practices, one in the real world and one in the virtual world, are not as dissimilar as they first appear, although the technology of the second draws attention to itself for most users more starkly than the clothing technologies of the first.

Ward offers a vision of a "liquid church." He recognizes that the way church has been in the past was itself a form of mediated identity, and he calls on the church to extend itself into new cultures and media. He writes, "Liquid church expresses the way that ecclesial being is extended and made fluid through mediation. The liquid Church moves beyond the traditional boundaries of congregation and denomination through the use of communication and information technologies."[19] How the church is mediated as new technologies arise is itself a missiological topic. Ward continues, "A central missiological issue for the Western Church relates to how it chooses to react to the mediation of the spiritual in popular culture."[20] Ward's concept of liquid church offers a third way, a way around the forced dichotomy between "real church" and "virtual church." Instead, the church "goes with the flow" of the Spirit in the freedom of God because the church is not *here* in one way and *there* in another, but is constantly extended, a flowing ecclesial life, through the mediation and participatory power of the message, who is also, in the case of Christian theology, the messenger (as in John 1).

By unnecessarily differentiating real-life church from virtual church, Christians do themselves a profound disservice in that they end up misunderstanding both contexts. The actual analysis conducted here, however, has problematized the encounter. If ethnography is Christian theology, then the kind of analysis Christians seek requires not the iteration of regular theological language in such a way as to speak virtually of the virtual church, but rather requires immersion in the actual context of the virtual world in order to learn the language, participate, and be mediated there. In this way, theology can be an exercise in a real ethnographic experience of the virtual rather than a virtual conversation about the virtual one assumes to be real.

18. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 110.

19. Ward, *Participation and Mediation*, 137.

20. Ibid., 190.

Additionally, and this is at the heart of this book, by attending to the similarities between virtual and real faith formation contexts via the theological nuances that arise from an intentionally open approach to both contexts, one will be better equipped to recognize the actual weakness of either formative context, discern commonalities, and celebrate opportunities. Such attention will enable the church to flow "forward" more readily into virtual environments, equipped with an awareness of what the transition to new media eventuates, while also flowing "backward" in the sense of adopting historic practices (such as the catechumenate, bookishness, and the like) that the church has used successfully for millennia as a media-rich model for faith formation. In the new trans-media era, awareness of media effects matters, including the effects of such mediating technologies as the catechemenate, preaching, and video games, because it directs us to attend not only to the effects of the media, but also the message, which is often presumed to communicate apart from the medium. Inspired by the prophetic insights of media ecologists like Marshall McLuhan, the focus on content is reduced, and one begins to move from *what* is being said to *how* it is being said.[21]

The truth is that each new medium matters precisely in its layering. Even in a post-book era, the church will remain a people of the book and host a culture of books. It will also add, and is already daily adding, layers and accretions of new media, and maintaining old media, like an ancient but still thriving *tell*. The trick in the trans-media era is to continue to pay attention to the faith-forming influence of ancient practices and books *and* the faith-forming influence of what is coming next. Part of Christian vocation is to conduct, as it were, ongoing technology assessment, as Brian Brock writes, the "systematic attempt to foresee the consequences of introducing a particular technology in all spheres it is likely to interact with," all the while interjecting "substantive theological content into concrete deliberations about specific technologies."[22] In fact, beyond simply interjecting substantive theological content into deliberations, a theological approach to formative technologies will step back and look at technologies and media writ large out of a theological perspective.

<center>OVERVIEW</center>

This book will proceed through a series of awareness-raising stages. Before launching into an examination of the development from book to trans-media

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21. Coupland, *Marshall McLuhan*, 112.
22. Brian Brock, *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 13, 21.

and immersive digital worlds, it will examine analogs of these developments in sister media of importance for the church. In chapter 1, the focus is on examining trans–media "effects." Under the guise of a memoir, this chapter will look at the parallels between neuroscience insights into the reading brain and the phenomenology of a preacher learning to preach extemporaneously.[23] Brains are hardwired for speech and learn spoken language naturally, but the brain learns to read printed text slowly and only through very involved formative practices. The process of learning to preach extemporaneously offers strong parallels. Then this chapter looks at the "effect" of formative technologies like pastoral internships and the catechumenal process, initially teasing out the interrelationship between philosophies of formation and the practices themselves. Finally, the chapter also looks at how the rise of "bookishness" in the scholastic period fostered a specific culture and way of thought that parallels, in intriguing ways, the formative catechumenal practices of the early church, and how media more generally (and specifically photography) illustrates this yet again.

Although this book is mostly receptive to the developments happening in the digital, trans-media era, the approach is critical engagement, so chapter 2 takes a close look at those who have gone to the root of the technological era and the extent to which the medium is the "massage" (especially Brian Brock and Marshall McLuhan). It takes time to explore the considerations of social commentators on the effects of technology in culture. It introduces the insights of authors in the movement now called media ecology.[24] It reads the beautiful considerations of those authors who truly lament the end of an era—the bibliophiles. It engages these philosophers, social critics, and literary scholars, because even in, and often precisely through, their criticism they provide the critical tools necessary to lay the groundwork for sustained theologically informed awareness of media effects. Most of the resources in these areas of academic inquiry have only infrequently been explored by those in religious communities with any depth and intentionality. By attending to these, we will be better prepared to engage thoughtfully the immersive realities of the catechumenate and MMORPGs.

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23. This approach is inspired by Douglas Coupland's biography of Marshall McLuhan, which he prefers to call a "pathography. "Perhaps this opens the door to what may be one future for the biography of those who create new ideas, a form in which the biographer mixes historical circumstances with forensic medical diagnosis to create what might be called a *pathography*—an attempt to map a subject's brain functions and to chart the way they create what we call the self." Coupland, *Marshall McLuhan*, 51.

24. For an introduction into this emerging field of study, see the bibliography provided at http://www.media-ecology.org/media_ecology/readinglist.html (accessed January 20, 2012).

Chapter 3 begins part 2 of the book with a chapter titled "The Effects of Catechumenal Preaching." Various faith communities in North America have adapted the ancient catechumenate as a contemporary and highly integrated adult rite of Christian initiation for adults into the life of the church. The number of persons participating in the catechumenate is far outstripped by the number of adults who willingly receive initiation into MMORPGs. Chapter 4 describes the catechumenate, with a special focus on catechumenal (or what is sometimes called mystagogical) preaching and related methods of initiation in order to give the basis for comparison with MMORPGs in the following chapter.

MMORPGs are, in some ways, the digital world's corollary of the catechumenate. In fact, they do the catechumenate one better. They attract catechumens in record numbers, people willing to give of their time, talent, and energy to be a part of the process that develops them as players. MMORPGs are catechumenal—they catechize those ready for initiation into the life of the game. They are also mystagogical—they lead those who have been initiated into deeper mysteries within the game itself. Chapter 4, "The Effects of MMORPG's Procedural Rhetoric," outlines this inculturation, with a special focus on the rhetoric of games (thus paralleling the focus on catechumenal preaching in chapter 3). Both chapters include creative riffs on recent science fiction novels that illustrate the generative nature of immersive contexts. For the catechumenate, Neal Stephenson's immersive catechism, *Anathem*, will be under consideration. For MMORPGs, Cory Doctorow's novelistic treatise on games and procedural rhetoric, *Makers*, will be considered.

In chapters 3 and 4, considerable space is given to describing immersive formational, inculturating systems. Much of the new media and social networks are, though less immersive, still a part of the total ecology that contribute to formation. Chapter 5 looks at social digital media particularly (especially the ELCA Clergy Facebook group[25]), inasmuch as they contribute to and deepen face-to-face or other immersive forms of enculturation. This chapter also looks back to the book, observing how older forms of media are not replaced but are layered over, and in that sense contribute to the changing media landscape not by replacement but by creative reappropriation and construction. The chapter returns, as it were, to the palimpsest. In the meantime, while celebrating some aspects of this layering, the earlier concerns of Brock and others should be kept in mind: "When we facilitate the expression of one level of material order, we necessarily submerge and perhaps in time lose touch with another. . . . The

25. See The Disseminary, http://disseminary.org/ (accessed January 20, 2012), and ELCA Clergy Facebook Group, http://www.facebook.com/groups/elcaclergy/ (accessed June 4, 2012).

establishment of new social and material orders always entails the subsumption or reconfiguration of previous patterns of order."[26]

Part 3 of the essay is the positive proposal. It begins in chapter 6 with an excursus that resolves some difficulties around media ecology and pneumatology. Having spent so much time looking at the technologies that contribute to faith formation, there is a danger of having overlooked Who, not what, is instrumental in creating and forming faith to begin with. This chapter seeks to spot ways that the Trinity and the Holy Spirit work in the midst of and through trans-media culture in a sacramental and mediating manner.

Finally, hopefully the excursus on the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the trans-media era will have primed the pump for the reception of chapter 7 by readers. Here, in conversation with the theology of built environments in T. J. Gorringe, three conclusions that arise out of the increasing awareness of trans-media effects are proffered that then lead back into further engagement with those media as they mutually inform and form.

First, faith formation in a trans-media culture will thrive where it attends to (and is) *beauty*, and it is a unique insight from trans-media effects that beauty is grace is justice. Second, such awareness of media effects will prepare us adequately for what is ahead by signaling the variety of ways the future is actually the present. Just as the insight of eschatology that the future is coming to us in Christ rather than the other way around has implications for how believers live here and now, so too one's imagineering about the future of media and faith formation in the future will shape how one engages these technologies now. In fact, if the church is truly proactive and culturally creative and inventive, it will, like the early church and the codex, invent or further the very media technologies it anticipates are most likely to strengthen the faith and the life of the church in its formative practices.

One eminent example of this kind of creative, Christian approach to media technologies is Marshall McLuhan. This book takes much of his work as a guiding light. In fact, many of the chapters, and the overall structure of the work, emulate the style and structure of McLuhan's magnum opus, *Understanding Media*. In the introduction to that work, the editor, W. Terrence Gordon, writes, "The book defies summary. McLuhan wanted it that way. When we are faced with information overload, he taught, the mind must resort to pattern recognition to achieve understanding. *Understanding Media* illustrates the point by its style. The reader must reach for the ideas it expresses each time they whirl past."[27] In a sense, to raise awareness of media effects (which is what

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26. Brock, *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age,* 57.

this book is attempting to accomplish), the method or style of this work must itself not only in content but in form raise such awareness. My hope is that the style and structure accomplish that.

Finally, awareness of media effects in a trans-media era attends to the truth that Christianity really is about life together, and the particular way life is life together in this era can be summarized enigmatically in that "I am the network." Theologians of network culture have come to understand networks as a metaphor for life together and life in God. God as Trinity does life as Trinity together rather than alone. It is in and through the evocation of these three senses (beauty, eschatology, and togetherness) that critical engagement with these new forms will bear lasting fruit and carry the church faithfully into a new era as theologically informed awareness of media effects will strengthen the faith formation practices of the church in a trans-media era.

27. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko, 2003), xiii–xiv.