The Dyophysite Nature of the Internet:
Negotiating Authorities within Institutionalized Christianity

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Abstract

Is the internet a means for individual empowerment and collective upheaval against oppressive powers, or is it a tool to monitor and control people in the hands of authoritarian rulers? This article addresses the "dyophysite" or what can be called the double nature of internet. That is a dualism that goes back to the origin of internet with its roots simultaneously in American West coast counterculture and the cold war militarism of the 1960s. Within the Christian community, this dualism plays out as the internet is viewed in a paradoxical matter. Even as cyberspace equips evangelicals to connect with other believers, it can introduce Christians to pagan ideas, tempting misbehavior and destructive communities.

Introduction

Is the internet a means for individual empowerment and collective upheaval against oppressive powers, or is it a tool to monitor and control people in the hands of authoritarian rulers? This article addresses what can be called the double nature of the internet. That is a dualism that goes back to the origin of internet with its roots simultaneously in American West coast counterculture and the cold war militarism of the 1960s (Turner 2006). It seems to be a question that cannot be solved. It is almost a religious question; similar to the question about the nature of Christ. Is He purely divine, or is He human, or both? As with the internet, it is commonly accepted within both the Catholic and Protestant traditions that His nature is dual or "diophysite." Understanding the diophysite nature of the divine has been a source of discussion and division over the years. To be diophysite is not to be either divine or human, but, as the answers (in a theological sense) often have been, it is to be somewhere in between.

Within the Christian community, the internet is viewed in a rather paradoxical matter. It spans from those who see the internet as an opportunity to reach out and communicate with people, to a source to temptations, misconduct, or a waste of precious time. As Quentin J. Schultze puts it, "The medium [the internet] is a two-edged sword", and he continues, "largely because of its highly interactive, decentralized character as a networked rather than a mass medium, the Internet implicitly persuades in both directions, from faith and doubt, doubt to faith - and everything in between. Even as cyberspace equips evangelicals to connect with other believers, it can introduce Christians to pagan ideas, tempting misbehavior and destructive communities. [...] In other words, cyberspace is a kind of laboratory for individuals and groups to experiment with self-identities" (Schultze 2008, 142). This quotation encapsulates

the ambiguity toward the internet within the religious sphere and its representatives, which this article will discuss.

Centered on four case studies that are based within the institutionalized Christian sphere, this article aims at pointing out, emphasizing, and discussing the double nature of internet. Its focus is on what is considered to be an ongoing negotiating process in relation to institutional power and the anti-hierarchical participatory culture of internet—two entities not fully align with each other. The four cases are selected to mirror some of the diversity one finds within Christianity (even though limited given the broad variety). It is also important to point to how uses, attitudes and effects of the use of internet is contextual, and should not be seen as determined by the media itself.

Authority is one main issue within the growing field of digital religion (Campbell 2012; Cheong 2012; Cheong & Ess 2012), and an illustrative example where the double character of internet is highlighted. The twofold nature of internet shines through also in every day practices, which here will be dealt with through a synthesis of the four case studies regarding the negotiating of authority within churches. Those are: 1) A live streamed American televangelist scrutinized on Twitter by a Swedish online audience, 2) the twitter account of the (fake) Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, 3) virtual churches in Second Life, and 4) the use of internet within a conservative and technology skeptical Swedish Christian denomination.

It is important to notice and interpret how internet as medium both undermine and strengthen power structures—and to see how other factors also come into play. People with their competences and sociocultural positions, societal and economic circumstances, and so on, give a framework for how the internet contributes to the negotiation of authority. Ideological or preconceived assumptions blur our understanding of what the internet and a digitized society do to us. An empirically grounded interpretation of the role of the internet helps us to better understand contemporary society on both an individual and collective level, and how technology might, or might not, influence society, and social movements related to politics, religion, economy, and beyond.

In the different cases, we will note how new actors are heard, actors who question existing authority, but at the very same time it is noted how these voices are intertwined in existing structures. The internet is an arena where authority is contested and negotiated by both existing and new structures. The internet is also used as a means to contest authority. But as soon as established structures are undermined new ones tend to arise based upon other premises such as media expertise and offline positions.

Cyberspace, hybridity and the mediated Church

Throughout history a relation between media usage and changing power relations can be detected (cf Eisenstein 1980; Kittler 1999; Winston 1998). When it comes to the Christian Church, it has to a large extent been in control over media through history, while attempts to undermine the official message has also been mediated in different ways. Religion and media is thus not possible to separate (see for example Horsfield

2015 for an overview, or Stolow 2005). There is, for example, a correlation between the 16th century Lutheran Reformation and the printing press, between the 19th century Evangelical Awakening and the industrial printing press, and the raise of Mega churches and television. The printing press undermined Church structures in the process of the Reformation. Luther and other reformers printed their work and distributed their subversive message in opposition to the Catholic Church, and the preachers of the Awakening distributed their pamphlets outside the established (national) churches. New actors have challenged, today and throughout history, the monopolistic role of the Church and its priesthood. At the same time, we see how new and contemporary media play a role through challenging old structures while promoting and building new institutions. Today, digital media are a tool and a platform which function as a platform for negotiating power structures.

As shortly pointed out in the introduction, the internet has a dual background that is rooted in both the fear of Cold war missile attacks and the 1960s counter culture of the US west coast. Networked computer communication would secure bombproof communication in case of warfare. Simultaneously internet technology was seen as an anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian technology promising tools for individual freedom and even spiritual enhancement (Turner 2006). Military needs and counter culture ideals worked hand in hand in other words. In the early days of the internet, the technology was perceived by its pop cultural proponents as a separate entity as in the case, for example, of William Gibson's influential conception of "cyberspace" in Neuromancer (Gibson 1984). In the 1980s Gibson envisioned cyberspace as a parallel (virtual) reality that individuals connected to and then experienced a new reality with another set of rules that were completely different from actual reality (Hogan, Bernie & Wellman, Barry 2012).

While "cyberspace" was seen as a mode of reality with other sets of rules where traditional authority was subverted and individual freedom flourished, today online authority is perceived rather as tangled with, and related to, offline authority. There are however examples of how the internet has both strengthen and undermined established power structures. As mentioned above, digital media and what is referred to as social media have been seen playing a role in the popular upheaval in the Middle East. The revolutions in Tunis and Egypt in 2011 are popularly labelled the "Twitter revolution", and the 2009 election protests in Iran are referred to as the "Facebook revolution". The role of social media in these processes was important, but in both cases it became clear afterwards that other significant factors came into play as well. (cf Howard & Hussain 2011; Pfeffer & Carley 2012)

On the one hand, the internet and digital media have for example been part giving voice to the previously unheard, but on the other hand the internet has been a tool for mass surveillance on both a national and global scale, as shown by the Snowden affair, or in the hands of a capitalist market. Digital media is shut down in states under oppressive rule and used to track dissents; the very same ones who uses the subversive side of the internet. At the same time, states, governments, law enforcement and business agencies strengthen control through the capacity to engage

in mass surveillance. Individual representatives, both already established and non-established, can strengthen and secure their influential position through the use of digital media. (cf Lyon, 2007; Morozov, 2012) Similarly the role of digital media, and the digitization of society, is transforming for example the field of public debate, how marketing is done, and the traditional and authoritative role of journalists, teachers and doctors, just to mention a few areas (cf Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos 2007; Loader & Mercea 2012; Metzger & Flanagin 2008). The answer to the question regarding the nature of the Internet is that it is neither nor, or both, but probably something in between—depending on context.

In early 2000, Manuel Castells claimed that digital media differed from traditional media since it was a many-to-many medium and hence undermining established hierarchical structures in one-to-many media, and he was not the first or the only one making such ideologically colored predictions (Castells 2003; see also Jenkins 2006; Rheingold 2002). The use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs and similar, has indeed challenged traditional authority, and is a means to negotiate authority. Today anyone (with skills, an internet connection and a computer) can post a blog or a Facebook update, contribute to Wikipedia (and participate in building the world's largest and most dynamic encyclopedia), or collaboratively make open source software, to name just a few possibilities.

Our view and understanding of cyberspace has changed. Now we see virtual reality as intertwined with physical reality. Instead of two separate sets of rules or ways of being, it is spoken about as an inseparable hybrid, mixed reality, or a "third space" with interaction in between. (Hoover & Echchaibi 2012; Lindgren 2013) The role between online and offline, between authority and the anti-hierarchical, the official and the vernacular is blurred and must be considered as rather complex relations. (cf Cocq, 2015; Hindman 2008; Howard 2008) The emergence and the extended use of these concepts in contemporary research in relation to interpreting the use and effect of the internet, indicates how the understanding of the internet as a phenomenon has become more nuanced over the years. Early assumptions about a border-crossing and separate "cyberspace" has been replaced by assumptions emphasizing hybridity and duality (compare with Højsgaard & Warburg (2005) regarding the development within the field of digital religion).

Digital media plays a role in relation to how authority and structures are reoriented and negotiated. In the following, there will be examples of how authority is negotiated in relation to the implementation of digital media in an institutionalized Christian setting, suggesting one needs to take into account other contextual factors than media itself.

Authority Online

Early research within the field labeled as "digital religion" reflects previous notions about how "cyberspace" challenges existing rules and authorities in an almost deterministic way. Still, there are just a few focused studies over the years based upon empirical evidence, but the number is growing and studies are becoming gradually

more nuanced.

When speaking about authority one almost needs to go back to Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of the discipline of Sociology. According to him there are three categories of authority (Weber 1962): First there is "rational-legal authority", which is based upon the rules and principles written down in constitutions, laws and regulations within the framework of the national state, or maintained through formal merits. Secondly there is "traditional authority", which is passed down from master to apprentice, through generations, by habits or customs with a continuity throughout time. Thirdly, charismatic authority is based upon the charisma of the leader/ authority—that is, an authority derived from a "higher purpose" mediated through the representative of the power. In addition, "professional authority" is sometimes mentioned in this context to refer to authority that is given through expertise and professionalism within a given field. Modern society is, to a large extent, founded upon rational-legal authority, while more traditional societies rests upon traditional authority (which goes without saying). Depending on denomination and traditions, churches have, speaking in general terms, a mix of rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority. As can be seen in the difference between the role and position of, for an example, a priest within a Catholic tradition and a preacher within the Pentecostal movement. There is a difference in legitimacy and authority based upon established systems for authority in the case of the priest and on charisma in the case of the preacher.

When Mathieu O'Neil studied authority online, in different collaborative online projects he highlighted the fourth characterization, "professional authority," as a new component in online collaborative environments (O'Neil 2009). In projects such as the online encyclopedia Wikipedia or large open source projects as the operative system Linux or the software package Debian, O'Neil claimed that in such large collaborative projects expertise and professionalism are the ground for authority. Merits according to an established education system, tradition, or charisma do not matter. What is important is the work carried out. Results and how individuals function in the system is the most important, and if participants show professionalism and skills, they rise in prominence and hierarchy. These individuals have an over-arching understanding of the project and the technical skills give power to include or exclude persons, skills or code. One should not assume these projects are un- or anti-hierarchical. These projects are indeed hierarchical, but founded on other form of hierarchies and authority.

We can see how the internet is a platform for negotiating church authority, where formal merits, legal-rational authority, and even charismatic authority are challenged by those who have expertise within other fields—such as computer skills, information and communication technology competence, or abilities from the area of public relations or public information (Cheong, Huang, & Poon 2011). At the same time, professional expertise is not enough as the following cases will highlight.

Authority Negotiated—Four Case Studies
The following studies show the diversity regarding the use of digital media within

the institutionalized Christian sphere, and also show how media is used in different "branches" of the Christian Church. The first case, "The American Televangelist" deals with the use of social media within and in relation to a charismatic Protestant free church. The second study, "The tweeting (fake) Archbishop" deals with how digital media is used in the negotiating process regarding authority within the Church of Sweden, a former state church. The third case, "To construct a (virtual) Church", highlights an environment where there are no constraints regarding established structures, and how media is used to build new structures, but at the same time reflects old structures. And finally, the fourth study, on "A technology resistant church", deals with how one movement deliberately and with great awareness restricts their use of digital media, and how structures restrain their use of digital media.

An American Televangelist scrutinized in real time

The first case deals with the American healer and televangelist Benny Hinn and his visit to Uppsala, Sweden, the summer of 2010 (Gelfgren 2013). He is, according to some, a controversial person surrounded by financial issues, fake healings, an unorthodox theology, a divorce, and an alleged love affair, among other things. His proponents, on the other hand see him as God's anointed tool.

As soon as the Swedish charismatic denomination "Word of Life" (Livets Ord) announced Hinn's appearance at the so called Europe Conference (an annual meeting for the denomination, Europakonferensen in Swedish), discussions took off in social media. His status was discussed as well as whether or not it was appropriate to invite him given his controversial position. In blog posts, Facebook updates and on Twitter this was discussed from different angles. Weeks before the actual event the Word of Life announced the official hashtag, #ek10 (as in EuropaKonferensen 2010), for the event. A couple of weeks before the event an alternative hashtag, #hinn10, emerged on Twitter, with the purpose to discuss Benny Hinn and his appearance. There were three meetings during one weekend, and they were all livestreamed via Word of Life's web platform, so anyone with a computer and the link to the stream could follow what was going on in Uppsala. The first meeting was rather uncontroversial with some unorthodox theology expressed during the service, and the online discussion on Twitter was rather moderate. For the next meeting people geared up behind their screens and anticipated something more elaborate to happen. In the ongoing #hinn-discussion there was a mix of people including journalists (from the Christian press), preachers/clergy, a mentalist, a Word of Life defector, some proponents for the Word of Life, and other interested people. On a forum for the Swedish secularist movement there was a call to join forces to look at, and scrutinize, what was going on, so there were a few secularists as well.

Throughout the event, Hinn's acting, healing and preaching was studied and commented on live. Theologians discussed his theology, the mentalist studied his healing tricks and how the whole set up was constructed, the defector commented the Word of Life and the mentality in general, the secularists commented how disturbing the whole event was, and so on. The few proponents were pretty much

in the background of the conversation. The hashtag trended on Twitter and after a while other curious spectators jumped in. The discussion was rather critical about the whole event, and official representatives for the event never intervened in the discussion. After the second service, the Word of Life's pastor and founder, and an old friend of Hinn, Ulf Ekman, took the stage and explained that the audience had to reflect upon the message and what we had all experienced. Later, he also commented on the event on his blog and video blog. These posts got a lot of comments and were spread through different social media channels. Ekman, however, never engaged in any discussion. This choice indicates a rather elaborate awareness of how to handle media, according to media strategy guidelines (cf Coombs 2007).

This event shows how technology both opens up previously closed events, and how such openness gives the possibility for others, with different competences and standing points, to see and scrutinize what is going on.

The Fake Archbishop
In the summer of 2012, during the Olympic Games in London, the Archbishop of the (former state) Church of Sweden suddenly started tweeting (Gelfgren 2015). Only hours after his appearance, his choice to begin tweeting was greeted by enthusiasm and encouragement. Many expressed hope for a new openness from the Church and a new dialogue-friendly mentality. His group of Twitter followers grew steadily. Within 24 hours after the first tweet, however, the Archbishop's office responded via Twitter, saying that this new Archbishop's twitter-account was a fake, and that someone was impersonating him. Twitter Inc. was contacted and the account was closed down because, in accordance with Twitter's regulations, to "impersonate others through the Twitter service in a manner that is intended to or does mislead, confuse, or deceive others" violates the user agreement ("The Twitter Rules," n.d.) Just before the account was closed down, the person behind it declared s-/he intended to hand over the account to the Archbishop at a ceremony, and it would thereafter be free to use in any way the Archbishop wanted.

Soon after the closing of the account, a discussion emerged on Twitter with the rather humorous hashtag #biskopsriot (humorous since it was not much of a riot to talk about). The discussion focused on the Church, social media, and openness—and whether or not the Church was apt, prepared and adjusted to the new society internet just brought. People discussing the subject agreed, to a large extent, that the Church was not prepared for this "new paradigm" (as one twitterer put it). The discussion was rather harsh and did not turn out in favor of the Church. Instead, the Church was characterized as outdated and out of contact with contemporary society as well as the people it is supposed to serve. Only a few voices defended how the Church had responded to the fraud, and those voices represented mainly the Archbishop's office. A few weeks later the person behind this venture revealed his identity in public, through the Church's own newspaper, expressing his aims and motivation. He was working as an information officer for the Church of Sweden in a local parish. The aim was to highlight the use of social media for the Church, to stir a discussion on the issue, and

to push the Church into the direction to start using social media to a larger degree.

To some extent the hoax did pay off. There was a discussion in favor of the use of social media within the Church—on Twitter and blogs, in the Christian press, and it was even mentioned in news media. But if one looks at the people active in the discussion, arguing for a more social media-active Church one notices that these actors are not coming from the traditional structure within the Church. Most of them are involved in the work of the Church—some of them are working for the Church, and some of them as active members—but within information or information technology. By knowing how to "spin" the web and to use his position as an information officer, he could get attention, and thus bring the use of social media to the agenda, supported by people outside established power structures. On one hand, we see how digital media is used to undermine established structures but on the other hand structures in place can resist and act against such initiatives.

To Construct (a virtual) Church
The next case concerns Churches and other Christian places in the virtual world of Second Life (SL) (Gelfgren 2014). Second Life is an open computer generated 3D world. Users access this world by downloading software, through which they enter the world. Each user is represented by a so-called avatar—a digital representation of the individual. Users can rent land to create landscapes, create buildings, garments and other goods, to use themselves or to sell to others. In SL people live and socialize in various forms, similar to "ordinary" life, and while SL resembles a computer game there is no game engine (meaning there is no game narrative or goals to achieve).

In a study on how Christian places are constructed in SL approximately 120 places for Christian worship, socialization and amusement were found. (Gelfgren & Hutchings 2014) At focus were how they could be classified in terms of tradition or transformation, realism or innovation. Many of them are build and run upon personal and non-institutional initiatives. The places looked differently—some were built to look like medieval villages, others had a modern urban setting, some were constructed as exotic islands, while others had more imaginative landscapes. It is possible for anyone to construct any kind of environment, but it was noticed that as many as seven out of ten places (71%) had erected a traditional church building, with easily recognizable attributes as stained glass, alter, pulpit and pews. At most places with a church, the church was only one part of the place, with other areas for socializing (camp fires, rings of cushions or sofas, dance floors, and so on), amusements (games, fishing spots, roller coasters, etcetera), and lodging (huts, houses, cells, or apartments to rent for shorter or longer says). One out of ten places had a more imaginative structure than a traditional church to fulfill religious functions, and a few more places did not have a church at all, but, instead, used the landscape itself as the context for religious practices and beliefs.

A follow up study, based upon questionnaires and interviews, focused on the constructors of these places. It sought to understand who they were and their motivation and aim for constructing their Christian sites. The study also examined

how the constructors and their different places related to offline churches, different church traditions, and to change. They usually wanted to create a space balanced somewhere between the offline institutional and the online mediated and more personally oriented. On one hand the constructors wanted something well known, but on the other hand they strove for the new, inclusive and subversive in relation to the churches they knew from the physical world.

The study found that most constructors had an offline religious affiliation (85%), and that their affiliation was reflected in the environment they created online. As constructors, they had responsibilities including preaching and caring obligations online, but most of them did not have such a position offline. Their motivation for going online was often that they wanted to do something slightly different compared to what was done in the offline world, or they wanted to be a Church and a Christian meeting place in the virtual world in similar ways as in the physical world. (cf Hutchings 2010) Many emphasized the openness and tolerance in Second Life, and that SL gave them possibilities to meet and reach out to other people online compared to their offline church. Some of the constructors went online since they experienced intolerance and a too narrow framework in their offline context. Even though rather traditional forms for worship were common, the constructors greeted the possibilities to socialize among fellow believers from all over the world. In that way, they expanded and negotiated the concept of being a Church and practicing their religious faith.

So while most constructors and owners were part of an offline congregation or other Christian context, they had other roles in Second Life, and while their places resembled offline churches, they wanted to create places slightly different from the places they knew from the physical world.

A Technology Hesitant Church
The fourth case deals with the use of digital media within the Laestadian denomination—a Swedish conservative Christian denomination, conservative in both terms of theology, family values and technology. (Gelfgren, 2017) This confessional revivalist movement dates back to the early 19th century, and grew out a critique of the former Swedish state church (The Church of Sweden). The founder Lars-Levi Laestadius (1800–1861) emphasized, through his alleged colorful preaching, the need of conversion to Christ, a moral and modest life, and the need of the conventicle (the small group of believers) within the Church of Sweden. Originally the Laestadian movement had its stronghold in the northern part of Sweden (within the Sapmi area) and in Finland, but today the movement has spread over Scandinavia, to USA, and other countries too.

This case focused on why the use of information technology seemed quite restricted, and differs in that aspect from the three previously mentioned studies. Authority is still a matter of how digital media is used. This study was made through "scanning" and mapping the web for online activities and web presence and then conducting semi-structured interviews with a selected number of representatives for the movement.

After the death of Laestadius the movement split into three different branches,

with slightly different orientations that grew out of controversies around the turn of the century 1900. When looking at the web presence for the different branches and congregations, it is striking how static the web pages are. Some congregations, especially within the most conservative branch, have only one contact page, others have their own webpages. There is, in general, contact information and how to get to their meetings, an schedule for ongoing and upcoming activities, and some overall information about the congregation, its' activities and faith. Some of the pages have links to other pages within the movement and other resources such as Bible and Hymnbook apps for Android and Apple smartphones. There are no social media at all, which is usually found at other sites connected to churches and denomination—there are no blogs, Facebook groups, Twitter accounts, or Instagram pictures. Hence, there are no possibilities to interact with or within the congregation on the official webpages.

Individual use of digital media within the movement was not addressed in the study. However, in the interviews it was mentioned that people within the movement use social media, even though the outspoken aim was to have a low use since it interfered on the more important aspects of life, such as spending time with your "real" family and friends in the physical world. One representative said that "we use digital media when it is better than other means of communication." Representatives expressed the sense that it is not possible or favorable to build social relations over internet. For them, important relations happen, and can only happened in the physical world. Accordingly, the message of God cannot be distributed online. Digital media is not rejected per se, and tools like email, Skype, Dropbox, Google Drive, search engines, and the internet in general are used frequently—but mainly for professional or administrative work. The internet is seen on the one hand as a great, and maybe underused, tool for communication, but on the other hand as a means for tempting misbehavior, stealing time from more important aspects of life, and for opening exposing the movement to internet trolls (which has been the case in the past, according to the informants).

In contrast to the other cases where focus was on the "un-authorized" use of digital media, the different interviewed representatives here described the structure and the authority in the movement. In this case, the representatives expressed a consensus within the movement that it was possible for anyone who wanted to take initiatives to develop the use of the web and other digital tools. But if there is anything controversial, it would have to go through the official structure. They envision an increasing use of digital media with the coming generations and an even more media saturated society. In other words, the Laestadian movement is trying to balance, to find a middle way, between the advantages and disadvantages of internet communication and this quality of the movement actively relates to the double nature of internet.

How to Interpret the Diophysite Nature of the Internet

These four cases illustrate the dyophysite nature of the internet and digital media. The internet does neither undermine nor strengthen the institutional power of religious

authority. It can be either or, or both, at the same time depending on the preconceived opinions regarding for example history, faith and context. It is nevertheless noticeable how new groups of actors rise in prominence and interpretive power in these cases. Through being skilled within technology and information, rather than theology, information officers, computer aficionados and webmasters become more important from within the sphere of the Churches, and thereby undermine the established structures rather than pose an outside threat. On the other hand, representatives of institutional power, and institutions, can counteract these subversive powers, and try to keep their position—hence the negotiating process. There are some features to emphasize where the previous interpretative prerogative is negotiated.

For example, Heidi Campell proposes a fourstep model for interpreting the use and implementation of digital media within religious contexts (2010). She emphasizes the importance to take tradition and theology into consideration—which is an important for an understanding of how digital media are used and perceived within religious institutions. In traditions where the established structure is important such as in the Catholic Church or more Fundamentalist movements like the Laestadian, there is combination of legal-rational and traditional authority, to use Weberian terminology. In these cases, there is larger chance that the established framework might take counter actions against outside voices. If the theology, the religious beliefs and practices, are rooted in such structures, the questioning of those structures is not encouraged. In traditions like the Pentecostal movement or other revivalist and charismatic movements like the Word of Life movement, Charismatic authority is intertwined with the conventional structural authority and the constitution of the movement is rooted in an upheaval against structures. In these kinds of movements, charisma and reform occur to a larger extent in the open and thus become an accepted living condition within the movement.

New voices
In the first three abovementioned case studies, it is evident how new actors and voices are heard and become a part of the negotiating process. At the same time, it is obvious how established structures are in place which the new actors relate to and also have to be accounted for online. In the last case, the established structure claims that there is no immanent need to create any online presence and it seems to be in charge of the situation. As a result, new initiatives are scarce.

In the case of the American televangelist, several new voices are heard. One reason is the openness the livestream brings. This gives an opportunity for actors who would probably not attend a meeting with a healing pastor to get involved in such an event. With Twitter constituting the forum where it is discussed, a hundred and thirty-three different users tweeted with the #hinn10-tag (and several more were involved in blogs, blog-comments and Facebook posts). Many of them with only a few tweets, but still a large number for such a discussion—and most of them were critical of what they saw and heard.

When we look at the case of the Second Life-places, we note that there is at least

one person per place (approximately 120 persons) who would not be able to construct a church of their liking in the physical world. Their intention is to reach out to new groups of people, but also to do something different from what established churches offline do. Often tolerance and openness is emphasized in contrast to what they experience in their offline context.

In the discussion concerning the tweeting bishop, about 135 persons actively discussed how and to what extent the bishop and the Church in general and the Church of Sweden in particular should be more involved and present online. Once again, most participants tweeted just a few times and the majority of tweets are written by a minority of twitterers.

All in all in the three cases which involves actors outside the structures, about one hundred were involved in each case. New voices were evidently present and heard.

Who are Behind the New Voices?

Once we have established the fact that internet and digital media allow new voices to be heard, it is interesting to further dig into what kind of voices we hear. Who are they, from what position do they speak, and are they really new? The rhetoric surrounding online democracy claims that anyone can be heard, and all of us are equally important in the online world, with the same ability to come through in the public discussion—as if internet in itself undermines established authority. But such suggestions need to be nuanced. For example, when Mathew Hindman (Hindman 2008) discusses online democracy within the political sphere, he is quite skeptical of such general claims.

First of all, there is, by comparison, very little political content on the net, and most of that traffic in political content is concentrated to a few top sites. In addition, most voices heard in the political discussion come from a relatively homogenous group of people; belonging to a group of white men who are well educated and already established within politics and media. It is a difference between talking online and to having a presence online that is actually heard. There are thousands of political bloggers and commentators, but only a small fraction, an elite so to speak, generates a large amount of the traffic. Campbell has found similar patterns in the Christian blogosphere (Campbell 2010). Thereby it is a bit hollow to claim that the internet gives equal rights to everyone. Offline position, merit, status, and competences are still of importance. That is to say that legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic authority still powerfully operate.

Our four cases differ in character. Three are Swedish, one is global; three are about the abundant use of digital media, one about the restricted use—but still we can see a pattern of who the supposed new voices are. Let us look into the different cases. In the twitter discussions regarding Hinn and the Archbishop, the most active individuals in those discussions were those already active on Twitter. There were a hundred active twitterers, but, at a closer look, the most active, and the most re-tweeted actors were the already-established voices—among them two Twitter-active journalists (working within the Christian press), a pastor, a mentalist, communication officers from the Church organization, a social media expert, a Word of Life dissent (and an active social

media user), and the PR manager of Word of Life. There were other voices involved indeed, but they were not as active, and they did not receive the same attention in terms of re-tweets or mentions. The most re-tweeted accounts belonged to two journalists well known from Twitter and the Christian press. Among the top 10 twitterers in the #ek10-network, we also find a figure central in the (online) Swedish secularist network. What is worth note in a discussion of online democracy and empowerment, is that he and the other secularists involved in the discussion formulated their own, detached network, meaning that they were present in the discussion, but they discussed, mentioned, and re-tweeted, among themselves and with like-minded others.

When we consider interests and profession, which we get access to through the twitter-biographies, questionnaires, and interviews, we also see a pattern. There is an over representation of people working with media, communication and information and communication technologies. This might not be a surprising fact, but it is nevertheless important to note in a discussion regarding who the alleged new voices belong to. In the discussion about the tweeting bishop, there was a clear bias toward being critical about the restricted use of social media within the Church of Sweden. When we consider those involved, we note that actors who think it is of the utmost importance for their Church to be active in social media tend to work with communication within the Church or have other similar interests. Fifteen out of the top 20 twitterers describe themselves as working in communication and, among the same 20 twitterers, thirteen work with communication within the Church of Sweden. There were, however, very few involved in the discussion who belong to the traditional structure of the Church, such as the clergy or theologians. Apart from three actors working at the bishop's office, arguing against the hoax, there were only a couple of others representing the established structure. Only two persons from the top 20 cohort seem to have no particular interest in communication or working within the Church, but had a narrow interest in how the Church communicates in general and through social media in particular.

In the Laestadian case, all seven informants belonged to the established structure as representatives for the movement. Church affiliation was also already mentioned in the #ek10 and the #biskopsriot cases. Most people involved in this discussion were Christians and were involved in established churches and denominations apart from those who came from the secularist movement and those who "popped by" after #hinn10 trended on Twitter. In the Second Life case, where there are actual statistics in this matter, only 15% stated they have no church affiliation outside SL. About 74% said that their place is affiliated with a specific church tradition, and 80% stated that it is the same as their offline affiliation (this question had however the lowest answering frequency).

There is also a gender aspect to these cases. In the Benny Hinn-case, a majority (eight out of the top ten) were men. In the case of tweeting bishop there is a slight majority of men, 12 out of the top 20. Among the constructors of Christian places in Second Life, there was not such a big majority of men, but still a male majority. Among the Laestadians, all the informants were male. Without doing a thorough examination

of the age span of the active actors one can conclude that most voices belong to people between approximately 30 to 50 years—meaning that the young and the old were not represented. In the Second Life-study, 65% stated they are between 41-60 years of age and only 2% were between 21-30 years of age.

In short, people involved in these endeavors are mostly middle-aged males, who work with or have an explicit interest in information and/or communication technology, and they have an affiliation with established church structures. We also see other groups and actors, raising concerns, questioning structures, adding alternative voices, and thereby undermining a likeminded and monopolistic discussion in line with established structures, but they are not as dominant and active.

Negotiating Authority—Through Online Competence AND Offline Position

Through the abovementioned cases, the duality, or even complexity, of the internet is emphasized in terms of authority. These four disparate studies show: 1) the difficulty of finding generalizable patterns specific for online environments, and 2) there are ongoing negotiations of religious authority in virtual communities to which digital media contributes itself. This possibly seems to be a paradox, but it only shows how the issue is not a black or white matter. A nuanced discussion is needed in order to comprehend what digital media do, and have the potential to do, in terms of authority and its supporting structures. Instead of a landslide toward one side or another, it is a matter of nuances and balancing. It is difficult to claim that one side is in favor of the other, and to come to a verdict—to say that the nature and implications of digital media is either this or that. As previously shown in this article, these findings are in line with the dual origin of the internet—as both rooted in the militarism and the counter-culture of the 60s.

The Laestadian case differs from the others in that there are, according to the interviewed representatives, no tensions between different interests regarding the use of the internet and where the authority lies. Traditions are still strong and the structures in place support established authority. However, the informants can see changes coming even though they are not sought for or really desirable. With young people growing up our contemporary media saturated society, there will probably follow a changing attitude and use of digital media within the otherwise conservative movement. Still they can partly resist and restrict the use of digital media within the movement—both on an official level and on a private level through teachings and doctrines. Traditional authority, still resides, so to speak.

In the three other cases, it is easier to see how digital media constitutes a platform and an arena where established power structures within the traditional church institutions are contested. On the other hand, we can see how "new" actors use established structures offline to legitimize their voice. In the Second Life case, new places are created with clear resemblance to old established physical churches, and the places are built in line with existing practices and patterns in denominations and churches. The reason is that it is a church, and therefore they build a church (an easily

recognizable structure for people), and it is primarily used as a church. By connecting the virtual structures with known structures, the builders make the online activities seem legitimate and trustworthy.

In the cases related to Benny Hinn and the tweeting fake archbishop, we have noted how new voices are involved in the discussions. In both cases we do however see how most voices belong to actors already established within media or in the church structure who are working with information and public relations. It goes without saying that in social media it is important to know how to handle media and thus how to reach out to a broader audience. That fact explains why journalists and information officers are so often heard in these online examples. Proponents for the established structures of Church of Sweden (in the #biskopsriot case) and the Word of Life (in the Benny Hinn case) are questioned by these critical voices. These voices, however, are also quite scarce and remain more in the background during the discussions.

In the cases overall, we see how the lowest common denominator among those who act for a new order in relation to established authorities is predominately based upon legal-rational and traditional authority. They are that they are skilled in handling information and communication technologies in one way or another. They use established structures to be assertive against the structures they want to question. In the Second Life case for example, churches (as buildings and institutions) are used to legitimize the activities in the virtual world; in both the #Hinn10 and the #biskopsriot cases actors are given legitimacy through their position within the press or the church.

Having expertise or a high level of knowledge about media is both a basis for challenging established structures. Further, individuals argue that as more people have more expertise in media that change will continue to occur. In the bishop case, actors skilled in information argue for a more media active church. From their point of view as media experts, this makes sense. The Laestadian representatives think change will come with the more media-active younger generation after the old generation has lost their grip over contemporary media practices. In Second Life, we see how the owners and constructors of the places use new forms of technology to bend the rules and boundaries of the established church. In the Hinn case, journalists and other media-active proponents are the main activists.

In order to question and undermine the ruling authority, we see how critical voices are raised by actors with authoritative position in areas outside the traditional Christian power structure—but it is just not anybody who is randomly given a voice. Authority is a complex phenomenon, but probably not as categorizable in three types as Weber suggests. However, the combination of an authoritative position in Weber's three-sided typology, being an expert on digital media, and being an avid user of digital media, all give individuals the potential power to challenge, diversify, and hence undermine the institutional framework by adding more voices. "New" authority is not given to, or taken by, those who have a total lack of power (online or offline). Instead, is redistributed among those already in power. Therefore, going back to the original discussion concerning the diophysite nature of internet, it is not possible to

claim that the internet deterministically does either support or undermine structures in place. The internet does, in these cases, neither. Instead, it is a tool to support the rearrangements of power structures in the hands of already media-skilled actors.

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