

UNSOLICITED RELIGIOUS E-MAIL  
RESEARCHING NEW CONTEXT OF  
RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

*by*

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*Most of the unsolicited e-mail is usually of business character and thus interpreted as something what teases and intrudes the privacy of mailboxes. It often ends in thrash folders, since it is considered as junk mail. However, specific number of the e-mails, labeled as spam, is represented by the messages with religious content. Religious spam mail represents entirely new form of religious communication and religious behavior - thus it deserves the attention of scholars, working in the filed of study of religion on the Internet. This paper deals with the descriptive typology of religious spam mail, distinguishing especially the missionary e-mails, chain letters and hoaxes in the new context of religious communication and Internet. The study also tries to analyze the scheme of production and distribution of religious spam, including the impact to the recipients. Analysis centered to both sides of process (producers and consumers), should be employed here due to the fact of interactivity of the Internet. Also the topics of stigmatization (black listing) of spam senders, attitudes of official religious authorities and "popular" question of cyber terrorism (terrorism online and online terrorism) are discussed here in the context of methodological notes.*

**KEYWORDS**

*Unsolicited religious e-mail, religious communication, individual religiousness, religious studies, new media studies, internet missionary activities, apocalyptic messages, cyber terrorism, religious spam, religious hoaxes, religious urban legends, culture turn*

## INTRODUCTION [1]

Unsolicited e-mail messages advertise various commercial products, pitch all sorts of services, promote the presence of websites. They pretend being intended personally but they are sent in bulk. Sometimes they start with warm and kind addressing, sometimes on the contrary with very aggressive formulations. They are wasting recipients' time and overcharge the Internet traffic... Both IT experts and average Internet users accustomed labeling these messages as 'spam'. Almost everyone finds spam in his/her mailbox today – latest statistics of reputable anti-spam companies state that the proportion of unsolicited e-mails to solicited "clear" messages incoming to mailboxes is 12:1.<sup>1</sup> In the dependence on the quality of anti-spam protective systems, this sort of electronic mail often ends in computer or web trash folders, since it is uninvited, wasting time, distractive and intrusive similar way as 'junk' mail in offline letter boxes. Reception of the term 'spam'<sup>2</sup> indicates that it is considered being something with 'low nutritive value', maybe even something 'disgusting' or something what occurs in flood.

Nevertheless, in huge number of unsolicited e-mails there is a group of those, which are not of commercial character. They carry the political, ideological or - which is the most interesting here - religious message. Statistic data show that the occurrence of religious spam is less frequent, if compared with commercial one<sup>3</sup> and it is also much younger phenomenon – first spam of business character was registered in 1978<sup>4</sup> (then the boom of spamming started in 1994), while the first mass occurrence of religious topics in unsolicited electronic mail was spotted in 21st century.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the statistics on the website of MessageLabs, retrieved from: <http://www.messagelabs.com>, retrieved on November 17, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> It is said that the reception of the term 'spam' is involved with one of the popular TV sketches of Monty Python's Flying Circus. SPAM is actually registered trademark of lunch meat by existing Hormel Foods Corporation.

<sup>3</sup> Germain, J. M. 2004 (December 18), Spiritual Spam Becoming More Active. See the website of TechNewsWorld, retrieved from: <http://www.technewsworld.com/story/38962.html>, retrieved on November 17, 2007. According to the author of this article (referring to MessageLabs expert analysis) the proportion of religious spam was about 2% of all spam in 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Specter, M., 2007 (August 6), 'Damn Spam: The Loosing War on Junk E-Mail', *The New Yorker*, Annals of Technology, retrieved from: [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/08/06/070806fa\\_fact\\_specter?printable=true](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/08/06/070806fa_fact_specter?printable=true), retrieved on November 17, 2007.

However the number of religious spam e-mails is low or high, it represents an interesting issue of up-to-date religious communication. Religious spamming is not in any case singular phenomenon; therefore it should be included into the subject of religious studies. Religious content of unsolicited e-mail messages and religious motivations of their senders are the new products of Internet era and since the religion on the Internet became a part of the modern cultural studies, this issue is supposed to be the new subject of culturally oriented study of religion too, according with the principles of so called culture turn in study of religion.<sup>5</sup> Both the production and the reception of unsolicited religious e-mail deserve the detail attention of scholars working in the field of study of religion. This entirely new type of religious behavior is the representation of (mostly) individual religiousness, emerging last few years in the framework of substantial social/cultural changes, brought by the Internet. Raising an objection that the research of individual religiousness is irrelevant in the academic study of religion is not appropriate here. Neither negative attitude of official religious authorities, nor the indifferent approach of existing scientific research to individual religiousness can in any case change the indisputable fact that religious spam is a new form of religious expression, whose popularity is still growing...

That is why this paper aims to present the concise typology of religious spam and to propose a definition of new religious manifestation. Few methodological notes to the analysis of religious spam are presented here as the introductory thesis. The need of new approaches to this issue is pointed out too, of course with respect to necessity of further research.

## **TYPOLGY [2]**

In (relatively) large amount of various religious e-mail messages it is possible to define at least two major types of spam: (1) missionary messages and (2) hoaxes, where the hoaxes can be further divided into three sub-

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<sup>5</sup> The term "cultural turn" represents variety of streams, influences and developments in the humanities across almost all the discipline. It is not easy to provide a simple reference for this concept. This shift occurred over a prolonged time, but particularly since the 1960s; in the study of religion it became more popular around the turn of the century, but no elaborate works were published yet. Culture turn as the concept is not a work of one researcher or one school - anyway most noted theoretical general works come from Stephan Michael Schröder, Michael Lackner, Michael Werner, Charles Percy Snow, Clifford Geertz, James Clifford etc.

groups: (2a) apocalyptic messages, (2b) chain letters and (2c) religious urban legends.

Usual content of missionary e-mails is quite expectable – these messages are the demonstration of missionary effort of religious groups, realized by individual believers. The messages with direct links to religious websites, professions of faith or appeals for proselytism are the typical examples of missionary mail. Following text is an excerpt from very popular religious spam, urging to accept God / Jesus, which is still occurring on the Internet in many versions from 2004. It demonstrates the typical content of missionary e-mails: ‘Say: Come into my heart, Jesus; come on in, Jesus. Come on in! If you meant it, He has come. If you meant it, Jesus is yours. Start reading your Bible, pray daily and believe that somebody is listening. His name is Jesus.’<sup>6</sup> Some religious groups utilize this type of communication more than others – especially in the course of Christianity and Islam – but also some new religious movements employ the ‘advantages’ of computer-mediated communication for the distribution of their religious ideas. Usual attitudes of competent religious authorities to these individual missionary activities are either vague or refusing, but there are some exceptions – as it is seen on the example of the policy of disseminating the ideas of Universe People,<sup>7</sup> new religious movement based in Czech Republic. The official document entitled ‘How to Spread the Information’,<sup>8</sup> located on the website of Universe People, provides complete directions for the use of various media for spreading the information (including the Internet) to non-members, employing the spam tactic as it is evident in this excerpt: ‘Very suitable is the advertisement in Czech language *people.gif* and in English language *people\_e.gif* (and in other languages), which you can effectively spread by e-mail and post on your websites.’<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The excerpt is from *Spiritual Spam Sample*, published on the Internet. See the website of *Technology News*, retrieved from: <http://www.technewsworld.com/story/38962.html>, retrieved on October 31, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Translation of the Czech name: *Vesmírní lidé*. See the website of *Vesmírní lidé*, retrieved from: <http://www.vesmirmi-lide.cz> or the mirror website of *Universe People*, retrieved from: <http://www.universe-people.cz>, retrieved on October 31, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Translation of the Czech title: *Jak šířit informace*.

<sup>9</sup> Translation of the Czech text: ‘Zvláště vhodná je také inzerce v českém jazyce *people.gif* a v anglickém jazyce *people\_e.gif* (a jiných jazycích), kterou můžete efektivně šířit e-mailem a umístit na svých www stránkách.’ See the website of *Vesmírní lidé - Jak šířit informace*, retrieved from: <http://www.vesmirmilide.cz/jaksirit.htm>, retrieved on October 31, 2007.

Second major group of religious spam is represented by the hoaxes, usually of apocalyptic character, so called chain letters and urban legends with religious topics. The outstanding feature of apocalyptic e-mail messages are the urgency, warnings, threats or predictions of forthcoming wars, catastrophes or other disasters in the context of particular religions. Authors' referring to 'relevant' religious texts (Bible, non-canonical Gospels, prophecies etc.) or references to the statements of official religious authorities (e.g. Vatican Holy See) are one of the characteristic elements of religious apocalyptic hoaxes, no matter whether their contents are true or false. Typical example of apocalyptic hoaxes is the notoriously known (so called) prophecy of Nostradamus, which is passed on for very long time in lot of text versions on different social and cultural occasions, and of course not exclusively on the Internet.

Also chain letters are not exclusively a product of Internet – they used to be here in paper versions long time before the Internet; World Wide Web and the service of electronic mail had only extended effective ways of forwarding chain letters. Request for forwarding the message on chain<sup>10</sup> or pyramid<sup>11</sup> scheme as well as definition of quantity of subsequent recipients are the most typical features of chain letters. 'Send this mantra by e-mail to at least five people and your life will get better.'<sup>12</sup> While the apocalyptic and missionary e-mail messages usually come from the Christian or Muslim surroundings, authors of chain letters are not limited by any particular religion.

Probably almost every Internet user had registered at least one urban legend in his life – the story of alligators in drainpipes, warnings of impending computer infection or request for the help for lonely and sick child, where the help consists in excessive forwarding of original message. These stories are passed on orally as well as in writing; also Internet became a channel for transmission of these messages in last few years due to the possibilities which it offers (sending in bulk, fast transmission, anonymity, accessibility etc.). Despite the fact that majority of the messages claim the con-

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<sup>10</sup> The chain scheme of forwarding: sender – recipient 1 – recipient 2 – recipient 3 etc.

<sup>11</sup> The pyramid scheme of forwarding: sender – recipient 1 – recipient 2 and 3 – recipient 4, 5, 6 and 7 etc.

<sup>12</sup> Translation of the Czech text: 'Pošlete tuto mantru e-mailem alespoň 5 lidem a Váš život se zlepší.' The excerpt is from the e-mail message retrieved by author on October 25, 2000.

tent is undoubtedly true, they are on the contrary usually false and alarming. Specific number of these urban legends represents the messages with religious content. Likewise in apocalyptic hoaxes with religious topics in the religious urban legends are not omitted various religious authorities – texts, persons, institutions; they supposed to support the authenticity of messages. The following text is an excerpt from the e-mail message with the subject ‘shahada in trees’. The e-mail presents a story of God’s miracle, a story of the branches of trees lining a path, which were distributed in the shape of declaration of the Islamic creed in the Arabic language. ‘This is a scene on a piece of cultivated farmland in Germany. Many Germans embraced Islam upon seeing this miraculous sight. The German government put steel fences around that part of the farm to prevent people from visiting and witnessing this miraculous sight. The discovery is no surprise. Allah has revealed in the Holy Qur’an...Brother Nor Razak of M.U.I.S. (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore) has confirmed that both Mr. Hasan Asyur and Dar Al-Iktisam are reliable sources...’<sup>13</sup> This message was, by the way, intercepted by the authors of the website of Answering Islam<sup>14</sup> and was labeled as spam / hoax; the web discussion on this topic was set-up too.<sup>15</sup>

There are, naturally, spam letters with religious content, which cannot be subsumed in any of categories defined above. It concerns mainly the group of e-mails, which could be labeled as imprecations. Their purpose is – very briefly - the cursing the imprecations to the ‘enemies’ of certain faith. I have spotted few texts containing the prayers for downfall and destruction of unbelievers, renegades or adherents of other religions. Since I have not registered enough of original material, I could not analyze this type of religious behavior properly (I have found more of these speeches in blogosphere than in e-mail space) and I have omitted it in the typology. Nevertheless, it is evident that these e-mails are the remarkable manifestation of the role of anger in spirituality and on that account it deserves elaborate analysis in future.

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<sup>13</sup> The excerpt is from the e-mail retrieved by author on October 6, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> The website of Answering Islam: A Christian-Muslim Dialog, retrieved from: <http://www.answering-islam.org>, retrieved on November 17, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> See the website of Scrutinizing Rumors And Exposing Hoaxes. See the homepage of Answering Islam: Christian-Muslim Dialog, retrieved from: <http://www.answering-islam.org>, retrieved on November 17, 2007.

As for the definition of religious spam it must be stressed that there is no universally valid and acceptable definition of spam yet. Some of the existing definition attempts emphasize the fact that the message is sent in bulk, some of them highlight the commercial character or technical aspect of disseminating the message etc. It is possible to adopt very simple but pregnant definition of spam published on web by The Spamhaus Project,<sup>16</sup> which says that 'the message is Spam only if it is both Unsolicited and Bulk.'<sup>17</sup> Thus the message is religious spam if it is of religious content, unsolicited and bulk. The term 'religious spam' applied to e-mail means here unsolicited religious bulk e-mail. As the problematic point could be seen the emphasizing of religious content, because there are positively some messages with religious content, but without religious motivations. These fake religious e-mails are using the religion only as the disguise, as it is seen in this example, retrieved from the Internet: 'Never allow to any pregnant woman or girl to sell out herself by shooting pornographic video and by prostitution as on [www.sexytehulka.cz](http://www.sexytehulka.cz). It is DEADLY SIN from which profit only heathens and perverts!!! Faithful Catholic.'<sup>18</sup> The e-mail was not, as it is evident from the weblog commentary on the website, the religiously motivated message, but the commercial advertisement for pornographic website, abusing the recipients by religious content. Hence the definition must be corrected: the message is religious spam if it is both of religious content and religious motivation, and if it is both unsolicited and bulk.

### **ANALYSIS [3]**

The crucial question is how to analyze these e-mails in the context of academic study of religion? What methods of analysis should be employed to explore religious spam?

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<sup>16</sup> See the website of The Spamhaus Project, retrieved from: <http://www.spamhaus.org>, retrieved on November 17, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> See the website of The Definition of Spam. See the homepage of The Spamhaus Project, retrieved from: <http://www.spamhaus.org/definition.html>, retrieved on November 17, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Translation of the Czech text: 'Nikdy nedopusťte aby se jakákoli těhotná žena či dívka zaprodala natáčení pornografického videa a prostituce jako na [www.sexytehulka.cz](http://www.sexytehulka.cz). Je to TĚŽKÝ HRÍCH ze kterého mají užitek jen neznabozi a úchylové. Věřící katolíci.' Retrieved from the website of Katolický pornospam, retrieved from: <http://jilm.blog.lupa.cz/0609/katolicky-pornospam>, retrieved on October 27, 2007. See the website of Lupa: Server o českém Internetu, retrieved from: <http://www.lupa.cz>, retrieved on October 27, 2007.

Likewise in the examination of 'traditional' written sources the text analysis should be applied here first of all. For instance the texts of spam messages show the signs of language change, typical also for other Internet 'literary genres' – new spelling (e.g. linx instead of links) or use of popular shortcuts familiar to users only (e.g. LOL – lots of love and/or laughing out loud).<sup>19</sup> Using minuscule in names (john, peter instead of John, Peter) is recognized in weblog or chat language too, but using capitals for the religious subjects like Bible, Lord, Allah etc. survives in religious spam – it is possible to assume the confessional motives here. Use of upper case for the whole or major part of the text and excessive use of exclamation marks (both forbidden by the netiquette as a result of typography change brought by Internet generally) demonstrates the urgency and strong missionary drive.<sup>20</sup> The graphic analysis must be inseparable part of complete text analysis too – for example in the e-mail texts using HTML tags (which are not rare these days) it is possible to recognize the texts with use of colors. According to the conclusions, draft by the psychology of cyberspace experts,<sup>21</sup> this sign could show the creativity, narcissism, emotional expressing etc. I have collected large number of e-mails, usually of apocalyptic character, using red color excessively. Excessive use of (red) color, bold and italics fonts, centering the lines etc. are the typical graphical features of missionary mail messages and it is possible to presume that in the context of religious behavior it indicates the urgency, typical for the missionary activity.

The translations of the original text versions of distributed spam messages also have to become the subject of study. Number of messages is distributed, besides the original language version, in national languages too, which means that there has to be someone who translates them. The quality of translations, the effectiveness of obtaining the translations, the speed of spreading the new

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<sup>19</sup> It does not mean explicitly that all the shortcuts are the products of Internet – their popularity preceded the popularity of "Internet language" (cf mobile phones etc.). Said in other words – significant is not the use of shortcuts, but the increasing number of shortcuts in text presentations.

<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact of breaking the rules of netiquette generally, it seems the authors of religious spam usually respect the e-mail empathy rule, at least as for the flow of text (dividing the text into the small paragraphs for easy reading). It seems that the observance of e-mail empathy rule is (very pragmatically) involved with the effort of attracting the highest possible number of readers.

<sup>21</sup> Suler, J. 1998 (2003), E-Mail Communication and Relationships, retrieved from: <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/emailrel.html>, retrieved on November 17, 2007. See the website of The Psychology of Cyberspace, retrieved from: <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/psycyber.html>, retrieved on November 17, 2007.



language versions are the questions which should be answered. Who are the translators of the texts? Enthusiastic recipients who just follow the instructions for example in chain letters and forward the message to certain number of other recipients, but as they know, they could not understand the original version, they rather translate it? Or the authors of original versions make the alternative language versions by themselves? How to analyze the texts of the religious spam messages containing the quotes from authoritative religious texts like the Bible or Qur'an which are not respecting the canonical versions of them (when they are shortened or simplified for example)? The contrast between 'static' religion (fixed by authorities) and 'dynamic' religion (lived by believers) should be studied carefully.

Investigation of social context can also answer some questions. For example IT experts are pointing out a period of the calendar year which is characterized by the yearly rapid increase of commercial spam number – they call this time 'Black September'. It is the time, when the students are coming back to their computers after holidays. Analogically, the beginning of December (Advent time) is the time of the year when the amount of Christian religious spam is highest. The extraordinary and unpredictable social-historical events, like for example war conflicts, play a key role in momentary escalation of spam messages with religious motivations and content.

Analysis of the primary motivations of religious spammers should be also stressed. When the religious content and religious motivation are presented here as the condition of positively detected religious spam, the recognizing the religious motivation could be uneasy task. The motives of some spam messages are quite clear and not complicated – they are written, sent and probably even forwarded with the evidently expressed purpose of mission. But some spam messages, usually hoaxes with religious topics, are not the products of believers necessarily. There is a serious suspicion that some e-mails carrying the religious message can be spread with the primary motive of discredit, in order to deliberately damage the reputation of certain religions or religious groups.<sup>22</sup> Some part of uninvited religious e-mails can be interpreted even as a combat action, especially in the case if it leads to the disruption of mailboxes, to the interruption of communication (with the

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<sup>22</sup> Robinson, B. A. (year unknown), Introduction to Christian Urban Legends. See the website of Religious Tolerance, retrieved from: [http://www.religioutolerance.org/chr\\_cul2.htm](http://www.religioutolerance.org/chr_cul2.htm), retrieved on June 5, 2000.

special scheme of sending: sender 1 – recipient 1, when the number of messages sent and delivered is excessive). Then it is possible to talk about online terrorism, which should be distinguished from the terrorism online. The distinction of these terms is based on former Helland's distinction between the online religion and religion online.<sup>23</sup> Online terrorism, employing the multi-excessive spamming to mailboxes, chat rooms or message boards with the aim of destroying the communication, covers only the realm of communication, while the region of terrorism online, presenting the terrorist activities on the Internet, is much larger. E-mail space, as the sub-space of cyberspace, becomes a new battlefield with special rules without the analogies in offline wars - for example it is indeed dangerous to answer the spam bombs, using the same tactic, it could be turned back and it could lead to larger harms.

Analysis of 'classical' categories like age, gender, nationality, education or profession of the spam senders is no longer valid for the study of religion on the Internet, especially not for the researching religious spam. Anonymity of Internet allows the users to present themselves by nicknames or complete alter-identities, thus the 'real' data does not give evidence of anything and they are simply not relevant. Besides, anonymity of cyberspace, however partial or controlled, is not the only one reason why it is usually useless to investigate spammers. Spam distribution strategy is using lot of various programs, abusing the Internet identities of 'innocent' people – consequently, tracing the name and address of spammers leads to nothing. Instead, the methodological turn from spam senders to spam recipients (including re-senders) ought to be applied here. The Internet is highly interactive media of communication, thus the research of spam communication processes should be focused on both ends of communication process. Concentrating solely on the producers' side of spam communication process and omitting the side of consumers (the impact of spam to recipients or their following activities) would be fatal mistake.

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<sup>23</sup> Helland, Ch. 2000, 'Religion Online / Online Religion and Virtual Communitas' in *Religion on the Internet: Research, Prospects and Promises (Religion and Social Order)*, eds. J. K. Hadden & D. E. Cowan, JAI Press / Elsevier Science, London, pp. 205-224. (Revised in 2002 and 2005).

#### **APPROACH TOWARDS RELIGIOUS SPAM [4]**

In the context of turn to recipients' side of communication process, mentioned above, it is necessary to concentrate on the issue of approach to the religious spam. As for the law and legality it must be said, that while commercial spamming is prohibited under many local or trans-national regulations,<sup>24</sup> the situation concerning the religious spam is different and not figured out yet. Internet users, i.e. recipients of commercially motivated spam, rate the uninvited messages as bothering and intruding, whereas the recipients of unsolicited religious messages not, at least not all of them. Also the imperative of religious freedom and tolerance is another reason for absence of the religious messages in the subjects of legally based restrictive regulations. There is an important question – whether the constantly growing number<sup>25</sup> of religious spam messages will influence the current juridical situation or not. Despite the fact that production and distribution of religious spam is not regulated by law globally, the Internet users still have a possibility to protect the privacy of their inboxes individually by way of anti-spam products. Anti-spam companies deal with the question 'to filter or not to filter religious messages broadly?', but the individual users have the freedom of choice, same way as they can refuse for example the meeting with Jehovah's Witnesses on the street. Some activities of anti-spam organizations, based on professional IT platform or maintained by enthusiasts, are at least disputable if concerned with religion, as for example the method of publishing the 'blacklists' of notorious spammers. Religious freedom is probably one of the reasons why the identities of religious spammers are not published globally (while the identities of commercial spam senders are) - stigmatization of this religious behavior would be in contradiction with fundamental religious rights.

IT experts assert that it is not possible to eliminate the spam (neither commercial nor religious) these days; instead it is possible to regulate it. Very effective way of regulating the spam is the prevention. Various pre-

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Czech specific spam law: 'Certain information society services act' (Czech: zákon 480/2004 Sb.). See also the website of The Office for Personal Data Protection - Úřad pro ochranu osobních údajů, retrieved from: <http://www.uoou.cz>, retrieved on October 27, 2007. For other country laws see the website of OECD: Task Force on Spam, retrieved from: <http://www.oecd-antispam.org/countrylaws.php3>, retrieved on October 27, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> From the year 2004.

ventive activities should be aimed at the all elements of communication process – (1) at senders (individual believers as well as religious organizations and religious authorities), (2) at communication channel (Internet providers, anti-spam companies with technological anti-spam products), (3) at recipients and their feedback (believers as well as unbelievers, anti-spam coalitions<sup>26</sup> with public education activities).

Not only preventive public education provided by anti-spam alliances, but also the paradigm shift in attitudes of experts from the field of study of religion and theology are the necessary steps for dealing with religious spam. As for the study of religion, first of all new unbiased terminology should be developed to be able to describe, analyze and interpret the phenomenon of spam, especially in the context of (religious) communication. For example: using the term Unsolicited Religious E-Mail (URE) instead of spam (because some spiritual spam can taste as ham) or not rating apocalyptic messages as hoaxes etc. Awareness of the fact that the production of religious message is no longer exclusively in hands of religious dignitaries, but believers themselves, is a starting point of culture turn in up-to-date study of religion. Laicization of these days is not conditioned only by confession (e.g. evangelicals versus Roman Catholics), but by Internet literacy and accessibility too. The task for theology is to accept new form of religious communication, which is here computer-mediated and thus with some special features as well as with special consequences for the religion itself.

Researches from both academic disciplines have to handle different issues involved with the existence of unsolicited religious e-mail, but the activities centered to laying foundations of new interdisciplinary studies should be common. Practically oriented new media studies could be unprejudiced answer to up-to-date situation in the religious communication.

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<sup>26</sup> See for example the website of Messaging Anti-Abuse Working Group, retrieved from: <http://www.maaawg.org>, retrieved on November 17, 2007 or the website of Hoax, retrieved from: <http://www.hoax.cz>, retrieved on October 27, 2007.

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