

Mediatization of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media



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Abstract

The Ethiopian society is dominantly religious. The constitution of the country advocates for a strictly secular approach with a sharp separation of state and religion. This study is mainly intended to examine the transformation of religious reporting (i.e. mediatization of religion) across time and space in the Ethiopian media. The essence and practice of secularization as a guiding principle of journalism in the Ethiopian mainstream media are also assessed. To this end, qualitative and quantitative methods are used. The qualitative aspect involves in-depth interviews of 6 experienced journalists and 5 key individuals with considerable media (journalistic) experience from the different Ethiopian religions. The quantitative aspect is done by considering the religious content of three Ethiopian newspapers (*Addis Zemen*, *Reporter* and *Addis Admas*) in 1988/92, 1998 and 2008 (years in Ethiopian calendar). The findings revealed that religion is a neglected topic in the Ethiopian mainstream media. State media often report religion during religious holidays; at other times, it is reported together with such topics as peace, security, development, tourism and national integration. The practice of not considering religion as an independent subject matter is found to emanate partly from a misconception of the principle of secularism and partly from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the issue being reported. As such, the journalists were found to be *non-religious* in approach, rather than being secular. Private media are also found to give sporadic coverage of religion, and their reports focus mainly on the investigation of corruption in business activities of religious institutions. This seems to be because of lack of interest, commitment and understanding of religion by journalists and because of threats from religious institutions which seem to find it hard to take journalistic criticism and investigations positively.

The quantitative aspect revealed that across the selected years, the three newspapers altogether presented 362 articles on religion, of which 262 appeared in the state newspaper, *Addis Zemen*. Religion is found to increase in its visibility as a topic in terms of number of articles as opposed to having smaller size allotted to it. It is also found that the dominant proportion of articles on religion is presented in the form of news and that the tendency of such articles appearing in social, cultural and political columns is increasing. All Ethiopian religious traditions are found to be underrepresented compared to the proportion of their respective population. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) and Islam are, however, found to be more visible and significant compared to their Protestant and Catholic counterparts. The significance aspect of the quantitative study also revealed that double the number of religious articles deal with religion as secondary issue (N=241) showing that religion is considered significant by only half of the religious stories (N=121). It is also found that most of the main articles are reported in such mediatized forms as news and columns. Articles on religion that are not related to one of the Ethiopian religious traditions (unclassified articles) are mostly presented as additional topics, and hence much of them are considered to be less significant. In sum, the findings reveal that media representation of religion seems to be at a low level in Ethiopia.

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Chapter one: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Considerable research from the developed world has focused on the public visibility and significance of religion along with its transformation across time and space. In the western parts of the world, this delicate subject is approached through the study of the degree to which religion is available and important generally in the public sphere and specifically in the mass media. In these parts of the world, religious institutions have been in decline while the mass media have emerged as “the most important actors in the public sphere” since the second half of the 20th century (Hoover and Lundby, 1997:5). Arguably, the mass media, together with other social actors, have taken over many of the functions of religious institutions (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). For Hallin and Mancini (2004: 263), “the mass media, along with many other socialization agencies, become more autonomous of them, and begin to take over many of the functions they once performed”.

Religious institutions in Europe and elsewhere used to provide education, healthcare, and social services in the society sector and music, art, literature and philosophy in the cultural sector (Berger, 1969). Later, these and other functions emerged as separate and autonomous spheres from religious institutions (Berger, 1969). Hallin and Mancini (2004) point out that the political and social order which was previously based on religious institutions has been replaced by a more fragmented and individualized society. Hallin and Mancini (2004) relate the separation of citizens from attachment to religious and ideological beliefs and the decline of a political and social order based on religious institutions with the process of secularization.

Secularization is one of the most debated concepts in social sciences. The concept has been around the academic discourse in the social sciences for about two centuries. Many of the previous theorists of secularization considered the decline and gradual disappearance of religion and its replacement by other institutions (Beckford, 1989). This decline involves religious beliefs, practices and institutions. This view is, however, criticized by scholars (Berger, 1999; Martin, 1991; Stark, 1999) who use religious revivalism as evidence against the tendency to secularization. Likewise, Habermas (2006) argues that the world is rather in a post-secular phase, whereby religious communities make their strong presence felt in the public sphere.

According to Guinness (2010), secularization is the process by which central areas of modern society such as science, economics, technology and bureaucracy are neutralized from the socio-

cultural significance of religion. Guinness (2010: 57) argues that this process makes “religious ideas less meaningful and religious institutions more marginal”. Wilson (1966) also maintains that secularization is a process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance. This is attained through the gradual separation of the state and the economy from religious institutions (Casanova, 1994; Davie, 2013; Dobbelaere, 1999; Wilson, 1982). This involves the declining role of institutionalized religion in society and transformation of faith and religious practices to secular contexts (Bruce, 2002; Davie, 2013; Dobbelaere, 2002; Taylor, 2007).

Hjarvard (2012) further states that not only religious institutions but also political, social and cultural spheres have become increasingly dependent on the operation of the mass media. This process of growing importance and influence of the mass media is termed *mediatization* (Lilleker, 2006). Mediatization refers to the process through which the media “shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place” (Lilleker 2006: 117). Mediatization had emerged as a way to explain the growing media influence in the area of politics (Asp, 1990; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999) and society (Baudrillard, 1981; Thompson, 1995). Through time, however, it has also been applied to explain and understand how media affect cultural fields (Bourdieu, 1993) and social institutions (Giddens, 1984).

Mediatization is also defined by Faimaueal. (2018: 6) as “a social and cultural process through which the mass media influences the social changes that occur in any given society”. It is important to note here that mediatization is different from mediation. They are alternative ways of understanding the role of the media in a society (Sileshe, 2014a). Mediation denotes the neutral function of the media in conveying messages from the sender (communicator) to the receiver (audience) or in mediating or intermediating between actors or parties who are spatially, socially and psychologically different. Mediatization, on the other hand, implies how the media generate, interfere with and transform the content of messages in a way that affects the social and cultural processes in a given context (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999).

In the study of media and religion, mediatization has served as a central theoretical framework in several research works (e.g. Hjarvard, 2008, 2016; Lundby, 2009, 2014; Livingstone, 2009; Hepp et al., 2010; Lövheim, 2011; Lövheim and Lundby, 2013; Lövheim and Axner, 2011; Hjarvard and Lövheim, 2012; Couldry and Hepp, 2013; Hepp, 2013; Hepp et al. 2015; Niemelä, 2013; Niemelä and Christensen, 2013).

Hjarvard (2012) identifies three different platforms through which religion can be communicated to the wider public through the media. They include religious media; journalism on religion; and popular religion (Hjarvard, 2012, 2013; Lundby et al., 2018). While religious media are owned or influenced by religious institutions which seek to project religious narratives into the public realm, the other two operate in a secular context where religion is rather constructed from the institutional, technological and aesthetic considerations of the media in question (Lövheim and Lundby, 2013; Lundby et al., 2018). Journalism on religion is the reporting on religious issues in the regular press whereby journalists follow a certain approach towards religion based on common values such as democracy and human rights (Lundby et al, 2018). Popular religion, on the other hand, refers to the “bits and pieces drawn from institutionalized religion, merged into media, with elements from folk religion and popular conceptions, emotions, and practices that refer to supernatural or spiritual dimension of life” (Lundby et al., 2018: 202). Hjarvard (2012) contends that religious media play a marginal role in the construction of public religion. On the other hand, Lövheim and Lundby (2013: 28) maintain that the other two “influence the public agenda on religious issues in various ways that may both stimulate criticism towards institutional religion and strengthen individualized and more bricolage-like forms of religion”.

Some grand research projects have analysed the role of religion in the public sphere in Europe (Bäckström et al. 2010, 2011; Byrnes and Katzenstein, 2006; Cesari and McLoughlin, 2016; Woodhead and Catto, 2012), in the UK (Kettell, 2009), in the US (Dart, 2000), in Switzerland (Stolz et al., 2016) and in Canada (Lefebvre and Beaman, 2014). The findings from these studies show that “even if the public expression of religion is at the centre of debates in many countries, these expressions are also rooted in the history of each country” (Furseth, 2018: 3). Accordingly, Furseth (2018) argues that religion is addressed, debated, contested and handled within national states, and according to national and local traditions.

Recently, there has been an increasing interest by religious actors to use the mass media to spread religion and religious messages across Africa (Faimaueetal., 2018). However, Faimaueetal. (2018) argues, there is dearth of literature that examines the interface of religion and the media in the continent. In this study, research on public expression and significance of religion in the western world is used as a basis for examining the role of the media in presenting and influencing religion in a deeply religious society, namely Ethiopia. Hjarvard (2016) claims that mediatization of religion is dependent on specific environmental conditions. Hence, an academic contribution in this area from a predominantly religious society is assumed to add value to the already growing area of study. In light of this, this thesis is aimed at assessing mediatization of

religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media. The mainstream media in Ethiopia include state and private owned broadcast and print media outlets operating in the country under the regulation of Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority.

Ethiopia is the second most populous African nation with over 100 million people and is a predominantly religious country with over 95 percent of its people following either Christianity (61%) or Islam (35%) (Population Census Commission, 2008). Most of the followers regularly go to Church or Mosque and think that one has to believe in God so as to be considered ethical (Lugo and Cooperman, 2010: 28). In the Ethiopian society, religion - in addition to being a system of belief and practice - has become a primary public identity marker (Abbink, 2011, 2014b).

Paradoxically enough, current trends indicate that alleged government interference in religious affairs (International Crisis Group/ICG, 2016) coupled with the silence of the “(censored) press” to religious concerns (Abbink, 2014b: 348) put religion at the periphery in the public sphere. This situation has led some religious groups to express their discontents publicly. Ethiopian Muslims have, for example, been protesting widely since 2011, demanding the government to not interfere in their internal religious affairs (Mahlet, 2015). Similarly, a widespread displeasure is notable from followers of Orthodox Christianity for the two successive governments, the current and prior, “substantially marginalize and decenter it from Ethiopian national life, perhaps in the mistaken fear that it may attain political force” (Abbink, 2003: 2).

Along with this, inter and intra-religious conflicts are becoming common. Studies indicate that there are emerging polemical representations of the “other” religious groups in the Ethiopian public sphere; notably between Christians and Muslims (Abbink, 2011; Desplat and Østebø, 2013). Berhanu (2013) stated that conflict is also common among Orthodox Christians, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Muslims (Berhanu, 2013). According to Sollid (2013), a growing ‘competition’ is also observed between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church and the Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church. A study of Ethiopian religious actors in the process of making peace in the socio-cultural and land-related conflicts found that the peace building process is affected by the relationship between religious leaders and political authorities (Steen-Johnsen, 2014).

According to Abbink (2014b), the press has, nevertheless, been accused of turning a blind eye on the unfolding events or providing an overwhelmingly negative portrayal of them. Abbink (2014b) and Østebø (2013) note that the state media in particular tend to provide a negative

portrayal of Ethiopian religious traditions. Skjerdal (2012: iii) maintains that the media sector in Ethiopia is characterized by strong government “dominance” and that the journalists suffer from competing loyalties between the public, the profession and the state.

Moreover, the Ethiopian secular state faces problems from several directions. The Ethiopian constitution Article 11 proclaims that state and religion are separate and that there shall be no state religion in Ethiopia. It is also stated, within the same article, that the state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs. The degree to which the state and religious institutions are separate is still not clear. Hence, Abbink (2014b: 346) points out that the Ethiopian secular state has “no policies based on or defended by an appeal to religious arguments”. It is further stated in Article 90(2) of the FDRE constitution that “education shall be provided in a manner that is free from any religious influence”. According to Berhane (2010), the extent of this prohibition is unclear. Berhane (2010: 130) argues that for example in a university context, “it is less clear, whether it includes issues such as religious wearing of students and teachers, prayer, dietary requests and other campus activities”. According to Berhane (2010), while there is an urge by the government for the elimination of any religious symbol and practice from the public schools, there is an equally strong desire by the public to manifest them at any cost regardless of competing interests.

Abbink (2014b: 361) argues that, in the Ethiopian context, “the legal framework is not clear enough, and state law enforcement is heavy handed and opportunistic... it has trouble respecting it in practice...”. In his study of *Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of the “Secular”*, Abbink (2014a) argues that in African countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sudan, religious freedom seems to be prioritized over media freedom and political rights. Using his field work experiences and data, Abbink (2014a: 83) questions the constitutional and practical defects of secularism in Ethiopia – and other African countries - and suggests “a new kind of “secular state” that can respect the religious commitments of African populations”.

1.2. Previous studies on media and religion in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, a lot has been done in explaining: a) the influence of politics on the media (e.g. Skjerdal, 2012); b) the state of religion in contemporary Ethiopian society (e.g. Abbink, 2014b); and, c) the social movements of dominant religious traditions in their attempt to tackle religious tensions and interventions (e.g. Jep, 2015; Østebø, 2013; Steen-Johnsen, 2014).

In his study of the profile of the Ethiopian journalist population, Skjerdal (2017) points out that

slightly over 90 percent of Ethiopian journalists subscribe to a religion. He argues that the composition of the journalists' religion do not, however, reflect the faith of the general population.

Some MA graduates of Addis Abeba University from the graduate school of Journalism and Communication have also treated religion and media as an important aspect of their study (Berhanu, 2013; Girmachew, 2013; Henok, 2013; Mohammedaman, 2012; Tamrat, 2008). Analysis of religious content in the print media during selected national and international events by Berhanu (2013) reveals that the Ethiopian Muslims were portrayed negatively and that the Evangelical churches were found to be given little coverage compared to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. A study of the public trust of the Ethiopian mainstream media by Girmachew (2013) found that the Ethiopian mainstream media are not trusted by 47.8 percent of Christians and 64.1 percent of Muslims. Henok (2013) analysed a documentary film, *JihadawiHarekat*, which was about religious extremism and terrorism and was aired on Ethiopian state television in 2013. The documentary was aired when Ethiopian Muslims were protesting against the alleged government interference in religious issues. Henok's study shows that the documentary negatively and inappropriately represented Ethiopian Muslims by the time. Mohammedaman (2012) on his part identifies the challenges and opportunities media pluralism entailed in Ethiopia. The study of Tamrat (2008) was concerned with the history of a Christian radio station called *YemisirachDimts*, which is a bit far from the scope of this study.

Similar studies are also conducted from abroad (Jep, 2015; Sollid, 2013). Similar studies are conducted from abroad (Jep, 2015; Sollid, 2013). Sollid (2013) tried to study a very important and debatable issue in the recent religious landscape of Ethiopia for her MA study in the History of Religion at the University of Oslo. She tried to put the reason for the sharp decrease of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) followers from 54.2 percent of the total Ethiopian population in 1984 to 43.5 in 2007 and the counter growth in number of protestant followers from 5.48 percent in 1984 to 18.6 in 2007. She argued that the emphasis given to funding, strategic and all inclusive theological education and successful missionary activities in such public places as universities and public transportation by the Protestants - more specifically the Ethiopian Evangelical Church MekaneYesus (EECMY) - forced the EOTC to change both in figures of its followers and on its previous policies.

Jep (2015), from the University of Gent, has also studied the position of Islam in the current Ethiopian public space. It is found out that governmental intervention and crackdown,

interreligious violence and global conflicts put Islam to suffer a great deal since the current Ethiopian government took power (Jep, 2015).

From the state of previous studies, a clear research gap is identified regarding the transformation of the public representation of religion across time and through diversified media.

1.3. Research Objective

This research intends to fill the identified research gap by assessing the transformation of religious representation in the Ethiopian mainstream media across time through the prisms of mediatization and secularization theories.

1.4. Research Questions

Following on the research objective, this study is intended to answer the following four research questions:

- To which extent is religion visible in the Ethiopian mainstream media?
- To which extent do Ethiopian mainstream media consider religion as a significant subject matter?
- How is secularism, as a guiding principle of journalism, perceived amongst key media stakeholders in Ethiopia?
- How do the Ethiopian mainstream media journalists implement secularism in their journalistic work?

Chapter 2: Review of related literature

2.1. Introduction

In this part, the researcher includes a review of related literature to put the research in both a global and regional context and to identify the gap which is intended to be filled by the study. This part has three major thematic areas: assessment of the historical and current status of religion in the public sphere, a special treatment of religion in the Ethiopian public sphere, and explanation of the theoretical frameworks for studying the place of religion in the mass media.

More specifically, it begins with discussion of the relationship of the Enlightenment with religion and the Enlightenment's profound impact on the public significance of religion in the global context. After the second half of the 20th century, the mass media have arguably taken over the role of religious institutions as they have grown as the most powerful institutions (Hoover and Lundby, 1997). Hence, a discussion pertaining to mass media and religion is appropriate, followed by a brief discussion of the 'global public square'. The global public square is a term used by Guinness who introduced it as a framework to call for the necessity of giving priority to religious freedom all over the world. Then, a brief account of religious institutions and the situation of mass media's treatment of religion in Ethiopia is presented in line with the governing principle of Ethiopian state secularism. Finally, the theoretical framework of the mediatization of religion is discussed as an important element in the effort of comprehending the interrelationship between media and religion in a certain context.

2.2. Evolution of the place of religion in the public sphere

In this part, the evolution of the place of religion in society is presented, beginning with the Reformation and the Enlightenment.

2.2.1. The Reformation, the Enlightenment and Religion

The Protestant Reformation was a 16th century religious movement instigated by Martin Luther who published Ninety-five Theses in 1517 criticizing the religious practices and ideals of the Roman Catholic Church. His prior intention was to reform the Catholic Church. Later, this resulted in a schism creating two contesting religious traditions (Protestantism and Catholicism) in the then European states which then entered into the deadliest religious wars, known as the

Thirty Years' War, in European history. It is claimed to be one of the longest and most destructive confrontations in human history (Wilson, 2010).

The conflict continued for many years with the idea of *cuius regio, eius religio* - a Latin phrase referring to "whose realm, his religion", meaning that the religion of the prince (ruler) determined the religion of the ruled (Kohn, 2017). Later, the war amongst Catholic and Protestant states to impose religion on one another was not found to be a viable means of convincing others of religious ideals. The Reformation movement continued until the end of the war which was concluded by the peace treaty of Westphalia in 1648. After the treaty of Westphalia, both groups sought for a new peaceful way of attracting followers (Outram, 2005). Hence, many of the religious denominations of the time sought to construct their faith based on its apprehension by human reason. This experience is best described by Outram (2005: 118):

Over a hundred years of conflict since Luther had demonstrated to many the impossibility of convincing others of religious truths by appeals either to the authority of the churches, or to revelation, supernatural knowledge of things spiritual which could only be told to men by God through specially chosen human channels such as the prophets. Many in all religious denominations became anxious to construct a version of their faith which could be apprehended by human reason, which would thus be accessible to all men alike, and should thus convince without the need to resort to force.

John Locke's 1695 book, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, was a result of this thinking. It emanated from the idea that religion has to come to the level of individual's rationality rather than the individual simply accepting or growing to the level of the spiritual ideals (Locke and Ott, 1873).

Later, the philosophical movement of the Enlightenment (1690-1790) began and placed reason at the centre of human understanding (Barnett, 2003). The Enlightenment was a strong philosophical movement held mainly during the 17th and 18th Centuries, first in Europe and later in North America. Due to the historical and current socio-political advantages that these countries maintained over the global arena since the times of slave trade and imperialism, the ideals of the Enlightenment have easily been transported into constitutions, laws, legislations and other policies of many countries, which are in a lesser economic and political position. Its philosophical influence on religion and, in other spheres of life as well, was so profound that its legacies can be easily traced in virtually every part of the world today.

The discourse of the Enlightenment is accredited for the emergence of the key characteristics and governance frameworks of contemporary and modern societies, i.e. technological modernization, secularization, pluralisation and multiculturalization (Benedikter, 2012). The

mental makeup of the Western European and, to a large extent, North American people is also built on the Enlightenment (Zafirovski, 2010; Davie, 2013). Hence, it is imperative to deal with its legacy on the place of religion and religious practices, first in Europe and then to other parts of the world.

The Enlightenment is defined by Kant (1784:1) as “man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”. The immaturity is because of the dependence of someone on another due to lack of courage and resolution to use one’s own intellect (Kant, 1784). Hence, many Enlightenment thinkers took the notion that human beings can illuminate their own intellect through the use of such assets as reason, liberty and the scientific methods (Szalay, 2016).

In the process, the attempt was to finally create “an open, participatory, and free society, driven by technology and a rational, secular, and tolerant mind-set” (Benedikter, 2012: 485). The major canon of Enlightenment studies is that its protagonists were secular in their outlook and until 1970 there was a consensus among the academic community that the Enlightenment was characterized by *reason against religion* (Barnett, 2003).

Some, however, came to challenge the view that the Enlightenment did not affect religion as such, but the institutional arrangement, i.e. the church, which they think was abused by the intervention of human beings (Barnett, 2003). This is part of the Deistic view of some Enlightenment writers who believed that God created the world but did not intervene in worldly affairs since Creation and hence the Church’s claim to be a mediator is rather deceiving (Barnett, 2003). However, no evidence could be provided for the existence of organized Deism throughout Europe apart from the existence of individuals who were spread across one hundred years of its history – showing that the later view does not hold water (Barnett, 2003). Betts (1984: 3) argued that Deism “was never a religion in the usual sense”.

Many of the Enlightenment philosophers rather considered religion as “a matter of false beliefs” and religious doctrines, symbols, rituals and traditions as “outmoded and of little value for future social development” (Hudson, 2005: 5). This view led scholars to promote the idea that religion played an increasingly marginal socio-political role in modern societies (Riesebrodt, 2014). Eventually, there has been a visible decline of religious institutions in the western parts of the world, mainly after the second half of the 20th Century. Hoover and Lundby (1997) associates this decline with mainly two important trends. The first trend is the emergence of the mass media as “the most important actor” that condition and determine access to the realm of religion and other subject matters (Hoover and Lundby, 1997: 5). The second is the increased emphasis given

to individualism and individual autonomy that rise the authority and autonomy of individuals over their own practices of faith and belief” (Hammond, 1992).

Similarly, modern historians such as Peter Gay and Keith Thomas associate the Enlightenment with deliberate activities performed to demolish religion and its institutions. Gay (1966) argues that the Enlightenment gave way to the emergence of modern paganism by reducing the substance and form of religion and religious institutions. Likewise, Thomas (1971) maintains that the Enlightenment radically altered the religious conception in a way that people start to think that there is no such thing called spiritual power beyond human experience. Due to this, Max Weber called the 18th century a time of “disenchantment of the world” – the failure of people to see spiritual or magical power that works outside and beyond the created world (Carroll, 2011).

According to Carey (2002), various disciplines overlooked religion from their academic circles since the Enlightenment. Eventually, it had become the most neglected topic in communications, modern humanities and social sciences until the 1970s (Carey, 2002: 1). Studies conducted since the 1970s and 1980s have, however, revealed that religiosity has come back as an important component in the public sphere of modern societies (Habermas, 2006). In his preface to the first issue of the *Journal of Media and Religion*, Carey (2002: 3) underlined that “religion”, once a neglected societal constituent at the expense of secularization and some other modern world views, “has unexpectedly returned to centre stage”. Considering the public presence of religion, Peter Berger, who was once ardent proponent of secularization theory, revisited his theory. He claimed that the world is “furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever” and argued that “a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labelled ‘secularization theory’ is essentially mistaken” (Berger, 1999: 2).

The Enlightenment also caused a further schism amongst religious groups as some religious entities worked to establish and strengthen a radical form of religion “by demonstrating its rationality and accordance with natural law” (Outram, 2005: 113). During the Enlightenment, almost all major faiths in Europe had gone through an internal reformation process which resulted in schisms in the respective faiths (Outram, 2005). Lutheranism had, for example, a revival movement called Pietism in North Germany and Scandinavia where the reformers thought that Lutheranism paid “too much attention to the reform of the church, and too little to how the church might reform the world” (Outram, 2005:123). Similarly, Catholicism had its own reformation movement called Jansenism; the British Anglican Church has its revival group – Methodism; and the revival movement that left permanent impact on American Protestantism,

i.e. Great Awakening, is also one of such movements held during the Enlightenment (Outram, 2005).

Regardless of the differences between the Reformation and Enlightenment, scholars tend to agree that while the former caused division among Christians, the latter caused a shift of perception on what constructs religion and on what constitutes a decline of religious institutions in the subsequent two centuries.

2.2.2. Visibility of religion in the public sphere

It is known that religion, which was overwhelmingly present in the public sphere during the Middle Ages, was pushed away from public visibility and became restricted to a private position in the western countries during and after the Enlightenment. It has also been said to be sidelined from fields of various studies (Carey, 2002). However, religion came back as a significant element in the public sphere and academia from the 1970s. Hjelm (2014: 204) interpreted this development as a result of “political violence” across the world. Major global events such as migration, religiously associated terrorist attacks, and related factors also brought the issue of religion to the fore. There is heated debate among scholars concerning whether religion came back in the public sphere with public significance and strong spirituality, in a similar fashion with the past or as an entirely new phenomenon.

2.2.2.1. Return or new visibility?

Ward and Hoelzl (2008) tried to capture the discussion regarding the reappearance of religion into these two phrases: return or new visibility of religion. It is important to note here that return of religion does not necessarily suggest significance or dominance of some sort (Turner, 1991). Even so, for some scholars, religion has returned to the public sphere regaining its historical and traditional validity and significance. According to this line of argument, religion is assumed to be lost at a certain time and now having re-emerged with the same power and effect. In Europe, this phenomenon is related to the resurgence of traditional institutionalization of religion, and is characterized by quantitative description of the number of people who are committed to faith communities (Ward and Hoelzl, 2008). Ward and Hoelzl (2008:2) argues that this view is adopted by “conservative religious people” who see the decline of religion as cultural impoverishment.

The new visibility of religion, on the other hand, refers to the view that religion is not lost as such, but somehow transformed into a new visibility whereby an increasing awareness and

sensitivity has grown towards the religious point of view in the social, governmental and non-governmental spheres (Ward and Hoelzl, 2008). This line of thought holds that what changes is how we see religion today, not religious believing or religion; religious believing has rather been always there. Scholars who favour this view maintain that what accounts as religion today is much more nuanced and complicated than the traditional understanding of religion which is characterized by a 'traditional' institution. They also believe that the new visibility paradigm provides an opportunity to understand new forms of religious beliefs and their manifestations.

Both of the above views seem to maintain a similar outlook on their consideration of religion as a constant factor. While the earlier reaffirms the traditional role of religion, the second maintains that change pertaining to religion has not been there from the outset; rather our outlook towards it changes. A third view has it that religion, not religious believing, returned (Hjelm, 2014). In other words, Hjelm (2014) has argued that religion has rather witnessed a 'secular return' whereby it is appreciated for its social significance, not faith. Religion is rather "relevant for public discourse only by virtue of being either problematic or useful" (Hjelm, 2014: 205).

2.2.2.2. Religion and the mass media

It is evident that until recently religion was marginalized from studies of communication and media (Stout, 2012). Religion is, however, fundamental to all societies and has been an integral part of research in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and the humanities. On a par with these historical studies, the study of media and communication should also have included religion from the outset as religion is a foundation in all societies and cultures (Stout, 2012). Nevertheless, the focused study of religion and media has a history of not much more than two decades.

The absence of religion from media and communication studies contributed to the development of inadequate models of mass communication and insufficient theorization of how individuals experience media today (Stout, 2012). In an attempt of filling this gap, many scholarly works have been done in the past two decades. Stewart Hoover's writings (Hoover, 1998; Hoover and Lundby, 1997) and establishments of international conferences are considered to be the *sine qua non* of the emerging field (Stout and Buddenbaum, 2002). Such scholars as Judith Buddenbaum, Knut Lundby and Daniel Stout also played a great role in laying the foundation of the field. The commencement of journals like *Journal of Media and Religion* (2002), publication of academic books, articles and establishment of conferences surrounding religion and media have all contributed to the quickly emerging field.

Today, religion is increasingly abundant in the news media in connection with, among other things, the major global issues of terrorism and immigration. Religious institutions and leaders rely heavily on the media for their member recruitment, policy and specific legal lobbying purposes. Religious traditions are also owning and using media to get their religious and other ideas through the respective societies. According to Shah and Toft (2009) religion is today a major and growing factor in major news stories of human affairs throughout the world. Marshall (2009: 3) claims that “a journalism that ignores or dismisses the role of religion in our common life misses the greatest stories of our time”.

Amidst this, however, there are concerns on the capability of journalists to manage reporting religion at large. According to Marshall (2009: 3), “to the extent that journalists do not grasp events’ religious dimensions, both global and local, they are hindered from, and sometimes incapable of, describing what is happening”. A study that assessed the coverage of religion reporting in the secular media in the United States from 1993 to 2000, for example, revealed that few of the US religious perspectives and events were conveyed adequately in 1993 (Dart, 2000). According to Dart (2000: i), religious leaders complain of the journalists’ “shoddy, simplistic reporting and anti-religious bias” and the widespread underplaying — even downright avoidance of religious influences in news events. It has also been claimed that journalists are disinterested in reporting religion. This, as to Dart (2000), is associated with lack of expertise and experience in handling this sensitive topic, lack of confidence, even fear, and consideration of religious reporting as troublesome among news executives.

These transformations on the visibility, representation and significance of religion in the today’s world serve as sound causes for the emerging field of study – media and religion. The interface of media and religion is studied from several perspectives. The culturalist turn, the sociological perspectives and the mediatization of religion are notable in this regard. The cultural research dimension of religion and media has evolved since the second half of the 20th century. For Hoover (2002), the traditional communication perspectives could not stand and address the developing scholarly scenario, i.e. the whole range of interdisciplinary development, the scholarly focus on whole culture (as opposed to institutional and structural) and the focus on the study of both the production and reception side of the media (Hoover, 2002).

The sociological perspective of the interrelationships of media and religion has also developed since the early 1990s (Lövheim, 2011) on a par with the culturalist paradigm. On her take on the critical appraisal of the developing theoretical ideals surrounding media and religion in a modern

society, Lövheim (2011:153) maintains that she “sees religion as a social phenomenon, shaped in and by social interactions and forms as well as shaping these interactions and forms”.

Mediatization of religion, on the other hand, takes elements from both research traditions and tries to capture the long term socio-cultural transformations induced by the media in a given society (Hjarvard, 2008). Specific discussion about mediatization of religion is provided in the theoretical framework part.

2.3. The global public square

It is often argued that religious freedom is being stifled in public life in the modern world. In addition to age old oppressions by authoritarian states and by sectarian violence in different parts of the world, religion has suffered from new forms of problems. In the Western world, there is arguably a general disdain of religion instigated by “aggressive atheism”, by the strong adherence to secularism and by the dominant movement of separationism - which all advocate for the elimination of religion from public life (Guinness, 2013). Activists of the sexual revolution also view traditional religion as an obstacle to their right and hence need to see it excluded from public availability (Guinness, 2013). Guinness (2013) argues that the expressions of resentment of certain advocates of Islam are equally restrictive.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has given recognition to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as a fundamental and inalienable human right:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

This right gives individuals and groups to choose and manifest whatever religion or belief they think is appropriate or important. Nevertheless, due to widespread interference and intimidation by individuals, groups and governments, this right is today jeopardized in many places in the world. Only the extent and nature of intervention may vary.

In his attempt to bring the religious and ideological differences in the world to a common, peaceful and harmonious global context, which he calls a “global public square”, Guinness has identified three alternative frameworks that best explain the current state of the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief in the public life. They include the naked public square, the sacred public square and the civil public square. The naked public square is

where religions and religious expressions are excluded from public life on the basis of the theory of secularization and strong abhorrence to religion (Guinness, 2013). Guinness includes the USA, Greece and China in this category with relatively mild, medium and extreme (strong) levels of nakedness (absence) of religions and religious expressions in the public life, respectively. To the opposite, the sacred public square places certain religions or ideologies in a monopolistic position in the public life at the expense of everyone else. Guinness labels the Church of England to the mild end of this category. He also maintains that the treatment of religions other than the established religions of Islam - in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan - and Buddhism - in Burma - is “draconian, barbarous, a complete affront to human dignity and a monumental disgrace to the faiths they claim to espouse” (Guinness, 2013: 123). Guinness equates the level of repression in these countries to the repressions by the Chinese and North Koreans. In other words, the repression of religion and religious expressions in countries which prioritize certain religions as preferred, established or monopolistic and those which totally exclude religion, as in the naked extreme, are literally similar in terms of the level of repression of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.

Criticizing both public spheres for inadequacy in providing the necessary freedom and justice for all in today’s diversified and globally interconnected world, Guinness brings the civil public square as a third alternative and only viable means to achieve what he calls ‘soul freedom’. The civil public square, he argues, invites citizens of all faiths and none:

to enter and engage public life on the basis of their faith, as a matter of freedom of thought, conscience and free exercise, but within an agreed framework of what is understood and respected to be just and free for people of all other faiths too, and thus for the common good. (Guinness, 2013: 180-181).

He notes that the framework is a political platform (not religious) which is built on the principles of reciprocity, mutuality and universality. Accordingly, there will be no special rights, no favoured faiths and no protected beliefs here as in the case of the sacred public square. It is, therefore, the consciences of believers, rather than the contents of beliefs, which are protected in this context (Guinness, 2013). Shortly, this framework is based on the political embodiment of the golden rule, i.e. “treat others with the respect you would like to be treated with yourself, and protect for others the rights you would like protected for yourself” (Guinness, 2013: 181).

2.4. Religion in the Ethiopian public sphere

2.4.1. Ethiopia's spiritual roots

Historically, Ethiopia has been a highly religious country. It accepted Judaism, Christianity and Islam, earlier than other parts of the world. Judaism was practiced in Ethiopia long before Christianity arrived. Judaism is believed to have entered Ethiopia through the Ethiopian queen, Queen of Sheba, who made a historical visit to King Solomon of the ancient Israel (970 to 931 BC). The story is stated in the Bible (1 Kings 10: 1-13) and elaborated more in the *KebreNegest* (The Book of the Glory of Kings) - the fourteenth century chronicle. The purpose of the visit was the Queen's intention to prove the King, whose fame about the name of God she heard, with hard questions. In the *KebreNegest*, how the Kingdom of David (Ancient Israel) was transferred from Jerusalem to Ethiopia and how Ethiopia converted to Judaism are explained. It is elaborated that King Solomon desired to company with the Queen for he loved her "physical beauty and her shrewd native intelligence" (Budge, 2001:35). Using his wisdom, the King trapped the virgin Queen and slept with her. The Queen, who had reigned in Ethiopia for six years when she visited King Solomon, brought forth a man child upon arrival back in her own country. The child, Menelik I, went to Israel and met his father, King Solomon, when he was 22 years old. The child went to Israel with a letter from the Queen who wrote that in future a king should reign over her country instead of a virgin queen and that her people should adopt the religion of Israel (i.e., Judaism). Accordingly, Menelik I was anointed as King of Ethiopia and he returned back and became the first King establishing the Solomonic Dynasty, which is believed to have continued uninterruptedly until 1974, except between 1150 and 1270, when another Christian dynasty (Zagwe) was in power.

A visit to Ethiopian history provides substantial evidence that Ethiopia had also been in contact with Christianity from the first century (34 AD). As stated in the New Testament (Acts 8: 26-39), the Ethiopian Eunuch who went to Jerusalem for worship was taught about Jesus and baptized by Philip the Evangelist. The Eunuch was of a great authority and was in charge of the treasures of the Candace queen of the Ethiopians. He was reading the book of Isaiah the Prophet on his way back from Jerusalem to Gaza when Philip met him. The fact that the Eunuch went to Jerusalem for worship and that he read the book of Esaias by the time both indicate that the Eunuch was a follower of Judaism before he was baptized by Philip.

Even though Christianity was accepted by such top officials as the Eunuch, it took a while before it became state religion in Ethiopia. Since 330 AD, however, it assumed the status of established religion and stayed so until the time of Emperor Haile Sellassie I (r. 1931-1974).

Islam also entered Ethiopia and established itself before it settled in many Arabian countries. Sarbo (2009:98) claims that “Islam arrived in Ethiopia earlier than anywhere else, even before it was firmly established in Arabia.” According to Trimingham (1952) Prophet Mohammed sent his followers to Ethiopia during the 7th century (622 AD) to save them from prosecution by his own people in Mecca because he thought a just Christian leader was ruling Ethiopia by the time. From that time onwards, the followers of both religions lived for long years together peacefully.

In recent years, Christian Evangelicals and Pentecostal denominations have also been well established in Ethiopia.

2.4.2. The Ethiopian religious landscape

Ethiopia is a large, multi-ethnic and religious country. As per the projection of the 2007 Ethiopian population census, its current population has surpassed one hundred million; making it the second most populous nation in Africa, next to Nigeria. The census distinguished 86 different ethnic groups existing in the country. The Ethiopian society is strikingly religious. According to a survey carried out among African religious followers, it was found that over three of the four Ethiopians believe that it is a requirement for one to believe in God so as to be morally right, far more than in other African countries (Lugo and Cooperman, 2010). Over 96 percent of the population are followers of the two major world religions: Christianity and Islam. The religious composition is presented in the table below based on the 1984 (Central Statistical Authority, 1991) and 2007 censuses (Population Census Commission, 2008)(note that the 1994 census is not included here):

Census year	No. of Orthodox (%)	No. of Muslims (%)	No. of Protestants (%)	No. of Catholics (%)
1984	20,637,362 (54.0%)	12,569,995 (32.9%)	2,094,371 (5.48%)	374,880 (0.98%)
2007	32,154,550 (43.5%)	25,058,373 (33.9%)	13,748,842 (18.6%)	517,430 (0.7%)
Growth	-10.5%	1%	13.1%	- 0.28%

Table 1: Religious composition of Ethiopians in the 1984 and the 2007 censuses

As indicated in the 1984 census, while 54.02 percent of the total Ethiopian population were followers of Orthodox Christianity, 32.9 percent were Muslims (Central Statistical Authority, 1991). Protestants and Catholics accounted for 5.48 percent and 0.98 percent of the total population,

respectively (Central Statistical Authority, 1991). Twenty three years later, while Islam, Catholicism and Traditional faiths remained relatively stable, the number of followers of EOTC and Protestantism had shown significant changes. As indicated in the 2007 population census, the followers of Orthodox Christianity shrunk by 10.52 percent and became 43.5 percent of the total Ethiopian population (Population Census Commission, 2008). The Protestants, to the flip side, increased by 13.1 percent and became 18.6 percent of the total population.

This scenario may be linked with the government's policy and its effort of curtailing freedom of religious communities (Haustein and Østebø, 2011). While the situation enabled the Protestant Christians and Muslim communities to strengthen their position in the public arena, it further "eroded the traditionally dominant position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church" (Haustein and Østebø, 2011: 1). It has also created a more unstable atmosphere and a competitive configuration among the religious communities (Haustein and Østebø, 2011).

Furthermore, traditional or indigenous and other minority religions, such as Jehovah's witnesses, Bah`ai, Jews (also known as Bete Israel) and Waaqeffannaa constitute 5.79 percent and 2.6 percent of the total population in the 1984 and 2007 population censuses, respectively.

In the Ethiopian population census, the Protestant Christians were counted together. However, in reality, there are several diversified groups in this category. The Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE), for example, claimed to have about 22 denominations with 29,805 local churches under its religious umbrella ("Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia", n.d.). It has also claimed to have 29 para-church organizations within Ethiopia and 15 Ethiopian evangelical churches in Diaspora which are represented as associate members ("Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia", n.d.).

Its major members include: the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (associated with the Lutheran Church), the Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church (associated with SIM, Service in Mission), Meserete Kiristos (associated with the Mennonite Mission), Ethiopian MuluWongel Church (Full Gospel Church), Ethiopian Genet Church (associated with Finnish Mission), Ethiopian Yehiwot Birhan Church (associated with the Swedish Pentecostal Church), Baptist Church, Emnet Christos Church and Lutheran Church in Ethiopia ("Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia", n.d.; Berhane, 2010). These protestant groups operate under the umbrella of ECFE and sponsor or support missionary work across the nation (Berhane, 2010).

The Ethiopian population census is actually a highly debated topic. According to Abbink (2011), unlike their protestant counterparts, both the EOTC followers and the Ethiopian Muslims, for

example, were not happy with the 2007 census and they strongly protested the result saying their number is far too low (Population Census Commission, 2008).

2.4.3. Legal environment

Before the adoption of the first ‘modern’ Ethiopian constitution in 1931, the people of Ethiopia had been administered according to religious covenants. Until the advent of Christianity, the Ethiopian people were ruled by Mosaic Law; Later, the people were governed by the *FethaNegest* (Law of the Kings). The *FethaNagast* was translated from Arabic and implemented in Ethiopia from the reign of Zara Yakob (1434-1468) (Haile Sellassie I, 1968). It has been venerated, supported and applied by both the successive Ethiopian governments and the *Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church* (EOTC). The *FethaNegest* combines two sections, of which the former deals with spiritual matters and the latter with temporal. The spiritual half of the law is still applicable in the EOTC. The *FethaNegest* was officially the supreme law of the land until it was replaced by the 1930 Penal code and the 1931 Constitution.

The 1955 revised constitution guaranteed freedom of worship; yet the constitution affirmed that EOTC was still an established church of the empire. The Dergue (1974-1991), a communist military junta which dethroned the emperor, adopted a constitution that clearly separated the state and the church for the first time in the history of Ethiopia in 1987. However, as it was adopted towards the end of Ethiopia’s great revolution, the law did not get legal effect. Of course, the Marxist Dergue regime considered religion indiscriminately as an “anti-national element” and therefore “indirectly undermined” the power of religious institutions (Friedman, 1989:249).

After the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took power through military movement in 1991, separation of the state and religion was constitutionally recognized. The 1995 Constitution, in its article 11, makes it clear that the state and religion are separated and that both shall not interfere in the matter of the other. Instead, the constitution makes ethnicity at the centre of its political activities. Afterwards, ethnicity has “permeated daily life and overtaken democratic decision-making” (Abbink, 2011: 596).

2.4.4. The current situation of religion in Ethiopia

The International Crisis Group (2016) in a recent report has notes that religion is increasingly becoming a political resource in Ethiopia. The report has also points out that followers of the

two major Ethiopian religions - Islam and Orthodox Christianity- have accused the government for interfering with their religious matters.

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims alike have accused the former [the government] of undue interference in their internal religious affairs, whereas the government sees itself as holding the secular line against politicisation and extremism(International Crisis Group, 2016: 1).

Ethiopian Muslims have protested since 2011 demanding for the restoration of an Islamic college called Awolia, which was labelled as “breeding ground for radicalism and Wahabia” and hence closed in December 2011 by the government, for election of a new independent Majilis (members of Islamic Supreme Council) and for the government to stop for its alleged support for expanding a new Islamic teaching of Al-Habesh (Mahlet, 2015).

Similarly, according to Abbink (2003: 2), the EOTC has been affected during the two succeeding governments, the Dergue and EPRDF, for they “substantially marginalize and decenter it from Ethiopian national life, perhaps in the mistaken fear that it may attain political force”. Abbink (2014b: 348) has argued that the EOTC has been “effectively ‘domesticated’ by the present EPRDF” and that the government intends to repeat this with the Muslims. Tadesse (2017: ix) reveals in his study that followers of the native Oromo religion of *Waaqeffannaa* experience discrimination by government officials at different levels causing “limited freedom to worship, access land for building *galmoota* (places of worship) and *bujuba* (cemetery)”.

2.5. Ethiopian mainstream media and its religious reports

Studies on media reports of the recent Muslim protest has found that state media frame the protesters as “terrorists”, “anti-peace”, “anti-development”, “elements promoting governmental Islam”, etc. (Henok, 2013; Jep, 2015; Østebø, 2013).

Even though there is little research evidence pertaining to religious reports of the EOTC, some religious leaders from the EOTC are heard complaining about the media coverage. When the EOTC followers were celebrating the Finding of the True Cross on the 26th of September 2016 in Bahir Dar, Archbishop Abrham, the Diocese of West Gojjam and Bahir Dar, for example, criticized the journalists whom he has seen capturing the scenes of the religious ritual (EthioTimes, 2016):

I am seeing media people here. Excuse me, but I do not think I will allow you to continue doing the same in the future. Today, it is ok as it is a celebration and is for everyone. You come and interview us [fathers]. Then, you cut and paste what we say in a way that best fits your purpose and that cause hatred on us by

the people. The people hear that and say in despair, ‘we have no genuine religious fathers’.

As a result, the mainstream media have become less reliable to the extent that religious leaders are not encouraged to unveil themselves through. On the other hand, due to poor media credibility, those religious leaders appearing mainly in the state media are also considered disloyal to their faith and the followers. A comprehensive survey of African religious followers has indicated that the majority of Ethiopian religious followers (63%), uncommon even in Africa, oppose religious leaders who express their political views in the mainstream media (Lugo and Cooperman, 2010: 28).

The absence of religious issues in the mainstream public sphere has caused a “declining democratic-political debate” which gave way for religious actors to resort to alternative platforms (Abbink, 2011: 254). Especially, the fact that religious institutions are banned by the Broadcasting Service Proclamation No. 533/2007, [that is not allowing to own broadcasting stations complicates the situation] (NegaritGazeta, 2007). According to Abbink (2014b), religious concerns by Ethiopian Muslims and Christians are, therefore, mostly expressed through declarations, petitions and demonstrations and through website articles, in Internet forums and in the blogosphere.

2.5. Theoretical framework

In this part, secularization and mediatization theories are presented along with their corresponding definitions, interpretations and critique in order to apply the theories to the presentation and analysis of the later on in the thesis.

2.5.1. Secularization and religion

The emergence of secularization theory dates back to the nineteenth century and was developed by the founders of the discipline of sociology itself (Davie, 2013). The seminal thinkers of the time in the field of sociology in the Western world – Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber were preoccupied with the *decline* of religion and its gradual substitution by other social institutions and modes of thought (Davie, 2013; Beckford, 1989). Their works laid the foundation of secularization theory (Aldridge, 2013). Hence, from the outset, secularization theory was presupposed to contribute to a gradual decline of religious beliefs, practices and institutions within societies.

The consideration of the secularization thesis as a total disappearance of religious beliefs, practices and institutions, however, entertained torrent of criticisms as the reality is rather otherwise. Considering religious revivalism in Europe, American religiosity and sustainability of beliefs in other parts of the world, some researchers (Berger, 1999; Martin, 1991; Stark, 1999) have argued that secularization is a worthless theoretical framework. This line of criticism is, however, viewed as a straw-man argument that does not consider the whole picture behind the discussions pertaining to the theory (Hjarvard, 2012). Hjarvard (2012) maintains that secularization does not entail the end of religion; but rather, about the overall transformation of religion in the modern world.

Habermas (2006) argues that secularization lacks substance. This is because, the world is rather in a post-secular society, as opposed to secular, whereby religious communities unveil their strong presence felt in the public sphere (Habermas, 2006). The proposition that religion will decline altogether is not accepted by many scholars who define secularization in a different way. In their theory of media and politics, Hallin and Mancini (2004) point out that secularization implies the replacement by a more fragmented and individualized society of the political and social order which was based on religious institutions before. Hallin and Mancini (2004) also relate the process of secularization with separation of citizens from attachments to religious and ideological beliefs and decline of a political and social order based on religious institutions.

According to Guinness (2010), secularization is the process by which the socio-cultural significance of religion is neutralized from such central areas of modern society as science, economics, technology and bureaucracy. Guinness (2010: 57) has argued that this process makes “religious ideas less meaningful and religious institutions more marginal”. In line with this, Dahle (2015), for example, maintains that secularization affects the public exercise, propagation and defence of Christian beliefs in Western Europe. Dahle in his unpublished work also argues that “every worldview, including the secular ones, is based on faith commitments” (pp. 8). He explains that while secular world views are based on science and facts, the Christian worldview is based on faith and feelings. A PhD study of religious education in Sweden, for example, reveals that the taken for granted of a hegemonic secularist discourse in the classroom led to the consideration of religion, religions and worldviews as “something outdated and belonging to history” (Flensner, 2015). This view, according to Flensner (2015: 6), is “a non-religious, atheistic position ... articulated as neutral and unbiased in relation to the subject matter and was associated with being a rational, critically thinking person”.

Wilson (1966) equates secularization with loosening social significance of religion. He defines secularization as “the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance” through the processes of autonomization and differentiation (Wilson, 1966:14). Autonomization refers to the process whereby sectors of society like education, healthcare, and social services and sectors of culture like music, art, literature and philosophy emerge as separate and autonomous spheres from religious institutions (Berger, 1969). These socio-cultural transformations happened in many parts of the world as a result of the process of differentiation (Dobbelaere, 1999; Wilson, 1982). Differentiation means the gradual separation of the state and the economy from religious institutions, which were once fused all over Europe and in other parts of the world (Wilson, 1982; Casanova, 1994; Davie, 2013). In Europe, all of the aforementioned social and cultural sectors were once supplied by the churches which were literally also part of the state then. When states became more powerful and independent from the churches in the subsequent years after the Peace Treaty of Westphalia, the responsibility of providing these services in most countries was taken over too (Davie, 2013). In the American context, however, the state and religious institutions were constitutionally separated from the beginning enabling religious activity to remain far stronger than in Europe when measured by various indicators (Davie, 2013).

In addition to the declining significance of religion in the operation of non-religious roles and institutions such as education, the state and the economy, the secularization theory is attributed to the declining extent to which people engage in religious beliefs and practices (Bruce, 2002).

Still others maintain that secularization of religion reflects the continuation of religion in a different form, in a privatized sphere, in the modern age (Wilson, 1998). This view is, however, challenged by Casanova. He argues that the modern day reality in the Western world rather witness for deprivatization (Casanova, 1994).

Generally, even though secularization is criticized for lack of robustness (Berger, 1999; Martin, 1991; Stark, 1999), deprivatization (Casanova, 1994) and post-secular society where religious societies ensure strong public presence, it is still considered by many as a multifaceted theory reflecting the declining social significance of religion whereby the role of institutionalized religion in society declined and accommodated and faith and religious practices transformed to secular contexts (Bruce, 2002; Davie, 2013; Dobbelaere, 2002; Taylor, 2007).

2.5.2. Mediatization of religion

Mediatization of religion deals with the long term transformative processes of the public representation of religion (Hjarvard, 2008). The changes are meant to be seen within the interface of “media and communication, on the one hand, and the change of (fields of) culture and society, on the other hand” (Hepp et al., 2010: 223).

Generally, Hjarvard (2012) has identified three types of mediatization in terms of publicly representing religion: (1) religious media, (2) journalism on religion, and (3) popular religion (cf. Lundby et al., 2018). While religious media are those that work a more or less related activity with religious institutions, journalism on religion and popular religion operates on the secular public sphere (Hjarvard, 2012). More specifically, journalism on religion concerns with providing news, current affairs and moderated debates about religion; popular religion, on the other hand, involves religious actors to produce fictional, entertainment, consumer-advice and self-help services in the mainstream or alternative media basing the religious narratives on cultural roots (Hjarvard, 2012).

In the Ethiopian context, the religious media – mainly print media and some satellite TV stations (from abroad) that are owned by different religious traditions - have insignificant role in the wider socio-cultural and political sphere beyond strictly presenting theological contents and deeply religious issues. This is similar to Hjarvard’s claim that religious media play a marginal role in the mediatization of religion in the Nordic countries (Hjarvard, 2016). Hence, this work essentially concentrates on journalism on religion and popular religion. In the Ethiopian context, however, the mainstream-alternative classification serves the purpose better as the mainstream media is politically dominated (Skjerdal, 2012) and the religious leaders and followers use alternative media to counter-balance the alleged government interference and dominance (Abbink, 2011).

In examining the religious transformations induced by the mediatization of religion, Lövheim and Lundby (2013) identify three important variables (cf. Lundby et al., 2018). They are change in focus, form and character. Change in focus refers to the interest of the mass media in becoming a primary provider of religious information taking over the authority of religious institutions. This is mainly studied quantitatively through changes in the number, size of articles and prominence in the coverage (the space and significance given to religion) over time and space (Lövheim and Lundby, 2013). It can also be studied qualitatively through in-depth interview with religious leaders and journalists who follow the media’s focus towards religion and religious content. Change in form, on the other hand, deals with the media’s impact in shaping religious content or

symbol and is studied through qualitative content analysis or framing of the religious contents or/and a quantitative content analysis of the nature of religious content (editorial, news, feature) and its prominence (Lövheim and Lundby, 2013). The transformation in character, on the other hand, refers to the role assumed by the media in serving religious purposes which were once provided by religious institutions and can be studied by using prominence of religious material in relation to religious tradition and a complementary use of data from reception studies (Lövheim and Lundby, 2013). The researcher adapted these variables into the Ethiopian context and believes that blending the quantitative aspects under each variable with qualitative in-depth interviews will bear the best results.

The general research trend in the Nordic countries shows that while there is an increase in the public visibility of religion in recent years, the power and authority of dominant religious institutions (Lutheran churches) have been increasingly declining (Furseth et al., 2018). In addition to migration and the growing minority religious groups (Furseth et al., 2018), this growing visibility is associated with the mediatization of religion (Hoover and Lundby, 1997; Hjarvard, 2012, 2016; Lövheim and Lundby, 2013). Through mediatization of religion, “religious beliefs, agency, and symbols are becoming influenced by the workings of various media” (Hjarvard, 2006: 2).

By using mediatization of religion theory as a framework, therefore, the researcher will try to comprehend how religion is represented in the Ethiopian state and private media over the past twenty years (1988 Ethiopian calendar to 2008 Ethiopian calendar).

Chapter three: Methodology of the Study

This part deals with the selected research methods, samples, research subjects and the data collection tools and activities in line with the research questions. The data analysis mechanisms are also described.

3.1. Selection of research methods

Selection of appropriate research methods is a key factor in achieving the objective of a certain research. Dawson (2007) advises that researchers should first decide whether they consider qualitative or quantitative research methodology based on their research objectives. While the quantitative aspect involves content analysis of the religious content from the selected media outlets, the qualitative aspect involves in-depth interviews with editors and deputy editors of the Ethiopian mainstream media (defined below).

As stated earlier in the first chapter, it is intended to assess the transformation of the public representation of religion across time – i.e., from 1995/6 (1988 E.C.) to 2015/16(2008/9 E.C.) and space (between private and state media). This involves the study of the religious content from the selected media. Quantitative content analysis serves this purpose well. Neuendorf (2002: 1) wrote that content analysis is “a systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics”. The main intent of content analysis is to answer questions regarding, inter alia, “large-scale social phenomena that escape individuals’ unaided perceptions” (Krippendorff, 2004: 179). Hence, it helps to capture the transformations in religious stories in the Ethiopian mainstream media.

Answering why the texts revealed a certain tendency also needs support from a qualitative approach (in-depth interviews) for content analysis *per se* would not answer this (Gunter, 2000). Eventually, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are considered in this research. Findings from the content analysis are supported by qualitative in-depth interviews so as to corroborate the findings of the content analysis. Social scientists heavily rely on in-depth interviews with key informants, among other things, in order to validate message inferences of quantitative content analyses (Krippendorff, 2004). The in-depth interviews also serve the purpose of answering how secularization works as a guiding principle of journalistic practice in the Ethiopian media.

The theories of mediatization of religion and secularization provides the foundation of the study as the variables, themes and hypotheses are drawn from them. The content analysis adopts the research of Lövheim and Lundby (2013) who analysed mediatization of religion across time and space in the Nordic countries and provided a useful method in achieving this objective.

Accordingly, I have used quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews complimentarily to examine the change of religion in character in the Ethiopian context. The last two research questions which are about the essence and practice of secularization theory by the Ethiopian state and private media are answered by in-depth interviews with religious leaders and journalists.

3.2. Sampling and data collection tools

3.2.1. Quantitative content analysis

Sampling is one of the key factors that determine the results of a certain research. Especially, sampling is critical in a quantitative study for it can affect the reliability and validity of the research under scrutiny (Jensen, 2002). Sampling refers to the selection of subjects for a study among the total population in a given research work. The samples in quantitative content analysis should be carefully selected in line with the research topic and the unit of analysis or content (Davies and Mosdell, 2006).

This research intends to study mediatization of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media. The Ethiopian mainstream media involve the public and private, broadcast and print media which are actively operating in information production and dissemination and are licensed to do so by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority. During the data collection, there were 1 national, 8 regional and 16 local FM radio stations which are run by the Ethiopian government (FojoMedieinstitutet, 2017). The government also runs 1 national, 5 regional and 3 local television stations which are all transmitted via satellite. There were also 2 national and 8 local privately owned radio stations. The privately owned national broadcasters (i.e., *Fana* and *DimtsiWoyane*) were the largest of all the privately-owned radio broadcasters and they also had local and regional FM stations in addition to their national broadcasts. However, these stations were “controlled by interests close to the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party” (Infoasaid, 2011: 12). The other genuinely privately-owned FM broadcasters shy away from reporting critical issues fearing that such reports might upset the government (Infoasaid, 2011). As such, the broadcast media industry in the country is dominated by the state.

As far as the print media sector is concerned, there were 4 national and 11 regional newspapers, and 1 national magazine, as of May 2017, which were run by the government (FojoMedieinstitutet, 2017). There were also 13 privately owned newspapers and 6 magazines with focus on socio-economic and political matters.

Compared to the broadcast media which is still under the government, the private press has a relatively better presence in the Ethiopian public sphere. Skjerdal (2017: 4) argues that “the impact of the print publications may still be crucial as the readership consists of well-educated people, often in high positions”. This is without overlooking the stressful political pressure that forced some papers to quit publishing and some journalists to serve jail terms and others to exile (Nigussie, 2014). Overall, there were four national, state owned and eight privately owned newspapers with focus on social, economic and political affairs (Asrat, 2017). The state-owned newspapers include, *Addis Zemen* (Amharic), *Ethiopian Herald* (English), *Barissa* (Oromiffa) and *Al Alem* (Arabic). While the two oldest dailies, *Addis Zemen* and *Ethiopian Herald* had a daily circulation rate of 15, 317 and 9,165 respectively, the other two had a daily circulation rate of less than 500 each (Asrat, 2017).

There were also seven private newspapers that deal with socio-economic and political affairs (Asrat, 2017). While four were published in English, the rest three were available in Amharic language. The privately-owned newspapers in Ethiopia had a combined weekly circulation of 51,000, of which the biweekly *Reporter* (Amharic) stands as the highest circulating newspaper followed by *Addis Admass* with weekly circulation of 11, 500 and 7, 200, respectively (Asrat, 2017). Also, as to Agaredech (2013: 75), who quoted the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (2013), *Addis Zemen*, *Reporter* and *Addis Admass* were the three top readable newspapers in the country.

Hence, I selected these three newspapers purposively for the quantitative content analysis. The newspapers include *Addis Zemen* (state owned daily); and *Reporter* (Amharic) and *Addis Admass* (both privately owned). *Addis Zemen* is the oldest surviving newspaper in Ethiopia and was established on the 7th of June 1941. *Reporter* and *Addis Admass* are also relatively the oldest surviving privately owned newspapers, with establishment dates of 11th of September 1995 and 8th of January 2000, respectively; and, as stated above, they are the leading newspapers - in terms of their circulation - amongst the private newspapers. The language of all the three newspapers is Amharic, which is the working language of the Ethiopian federal government and is spoken in most parts of the country. The reason for taking two newspapers from the private media while only one from the state is that the privately-owned newspapers are published thrice a week in

total (*Reporter* 2 days and *Addis Admass* 1 day) while *Addis Zemen* has been published daily since 1958 (Nigussie, 2014).

I collected all religious content (editorials, columns, debates, news and features) from the selected newspapers. The newspapers were considered for the study if they were published during one week before and one week after the Ethiopian religious holidays which are marked in the Ethiopian annual calendar.

In order to consider a period without religious holidays for the purpose of balance, newspapers that are published in two weeks when there were no religious holidays for 2 or more months are also considered. This was done to see the tendency of religious representation by the respective media during a period when there was no religious holiday and to consider religious traditions that do not celebrate the calendar religious holidays. The Ethiopian religious holidays include *Meskel*(Finding of the True Cross),*Genna* (Christmas), *Timket*(Epiphany),*Sikelet*(Good Friday), *Tinsae*(Ethiopian Easter), *Eid al-Fitr*(End of Ramadan), *Arefa*(Eid al Adaha), *Mewlid* (Birth of the Prophet Mohammed). While the first five are celebrated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, the last three are celebrated by Muslims. *Genna*, *Sikelet* and *Tinsae* are also celebrated by the Ethiopian Catholic Church and Protestant Churches. Among the Christian holidays, *Sikelet* and *Tinsae* are celebrated in a matter of two days gap (Friday and Sunday). Hence, *Sikelet* is discarded from being considered in this study. Doing so also makes the number of public holidays by Orthodox Christians and Muslims more balanced in this study. On these religious holidays, public institutions are closed, the mass media commonly give extensive coverage of religion and the respective Ethiopian Christians and Muslims wear their religious and cultural costumes and take part in public prayers in their churches and mosques, respectively. Some of the religious holidays are also celebrated in avenues away from churches and mosques. *Timket* and *Meskel* are also celebrated in public places that are prepared for this religious purpose in every area of the country where the Orthodox followers dwell. The two Muslim religious holidays of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Arefa* are also celebrated by the Ethiopian Muslims in stadiums and other public places where they commemorate the day with prayers.

From the outset, it was intended to see the religious transformations observed across the media through three decades by considering the years 1988 E.C. (1995/96 GC), 1998 EC (2005/6 GC) and 2008 EC (2015/16 GC). While this worked for *Addis Zemen*, it did not work for the other two newspapers; because *Addis Admass* has begun publishing from January 2000 and *Reporter* from September 1995, when its number of pages per publication were fewer than they were in 1999/2000 as a weekly newspaper. Hence, the first selected year in the private newspapers is

1992 E.C (1999/2000 G.C.), followed by the other two years which are similar with *Addis Zemen*. Hence, the interval in the private media became 6 in the first break, instead of 10 as in the state media (*Addis Zemen*). The years were chosen purposively for they mark the coming into effect of the Ethiopian constitution (1995 G.C.), the massive Ethio-Eritrean war (from May 1998 G.C. to June 2000 G.C.), the most disputed Ethiopian election (2005) and the nationwide protest which is still ongoing (started in November 2015 in Oromia). These political upheavals are considered important political events in the past three decades and hence the years are believed to show the transformations in the representation of religion as induced by mediatization of religion which is driven by the general socio-political and economic changes in a given nation.

The specific dates and years when the newspapers were taken for the study are indicated in the following table:

Table 2: Distribution of the newspaper sample years and dates

Religious holiday	Date of holiday (in EC) and selected years and dates							
	1988 EC/ 1995(96)		1992 EC / 1999(2000)		1998 EC/2005(6)		2008 EC / 2015 (16)	
	Date	Selected	Date	Selected	Date	Date	Date	Date
<i>Meskel</i> (Finding of the True Cross),	17/01	21 Sep to 5 Oct/ Meskerem 10-24	17/01	21 Sep to 5 Oct/ Mes 01-24	17/01	20 Sep to 04 Oct/ Mesk 10-24	17/01	21 Sep to 5 Oct/ Mesk 10-24
<i>Genna</i> (Christmas),	29/04	1 to 15 Jan. / Tah. 22-Tir 6	29/04	1-15 Jan/ Tah. 22-Tir 6	29/04	2 to 16 Jan/ Tah. 22-Tir 06	29/04	1 to 15 Jan. / Tah. 22-Tir 6
<i>Timket</i> (Epiphany),	11/05	13 to 27 Jan/ Tirr 4 – 18	11/05	13 to 27 Jan/ Tirr 4 – 18	11/05	12 to 26 Jan/ Tirr 4-18	11/05	13 to 27 Jan/ Tirr 4-18
<i>Tinsae</i> (Ethiopian Easter),	06/08	7-21 April/ Mega. 29-Miaz.13	22/08	23 Apr to 7 May/ Miazia 15-29	15/08	16 to 30 April/ Miazia 8-22	23/08	24 Apr to 8 May/ Miazia 16-30
<i>Eid al-Fitr</i> (End of Ramadan),	12/06	13 to 27 Feb./ Yekatit 5-19	28/04	31 Dec to 14 Jan/ Tah 21-Tir 5	23/02	26 Oct to 9 Nov/ Tikemt 16-30	29/10	29 Jun to 13 July// Sen 22-Ham 06
<i>Arefa</i> (Eid al Adaha),	20/08	21 Apr to 05 May/ Miazia 13-27	06/06	8-22 March/ Yek 29 to Meg 13	01/05	2 to 16 Jan/ Tah 24 to Tir 8	12/01	16 to 30 Sep/ Mesk 5-19
<i>Mewlid</i> (Birth of the Prophet Mohammed)	20/11	20 Jul to 3 Aug/ Hamle13-27	07/10	7-21 June/ Gin 30-Sene 14	02/08	3 to 17 April/ Meg 25 to Mia 9	13/04	16 to 30 Dec/ Tahsas 6-20
Period of no holiday	27/02	31 Oct to 14 Nov/ Tik. 20 - Hidar 4	07/11	8-22 July/ Hamle 1-15	22/10	22 June to 6 Jul/ Sen 15-29	08/03	11-26 Nov/ Hidar 1-15

As indicated in the above table, some holidays overlapped in three of the indicated years. *Genna* and *Eid al-Fitr* in 2000(1992 EC), *Genna* and *Arefa* in 2006 (1998 EC) and *Meskel* and *Arefa* in 2015

(2008 EC) were celebrated in a matter of one, two and five days difference respectively. On these cases, the newspapers were considered keeping the two ends, the earlier day from the earlier celebrated holiday and the later from that which is celebrated later.

3.2.2. In-depth interviews

It is advisable to use in-depth interviews to gain insights about such things as people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences (Denscombe, 2007: 174).

In-depth interviews were also conducted with a total of 11 key informants. All interviews were conducted in Addis Abeba. Six of the informants were experienced journalists who have worked for 10 or more years in Ethiopian journalism. They are currently at a position of deputy editor or higher in their respective media. These journalists were chosen because they are believed to be knowledgeable of the guiding principle and practice of religious reporting in the Ethiopian mainstream media over the past years. Their experience and position indicate that they are aware of the operational challenges of secularism in the Ethiopian mainstream media. The composition of the key informants from the Ethiopian mainstream media looks like this: three journalists from the Ethiopian state media (a deputy editor of *Addis Zemen* newspaper, the department head of Ethiopian radio (EBC) and the coordinator of Ethiopian television news department), three journalists (anonymous editor of a privately owned newspaper, editor-in-chief of *Sendek* newspaper and editor-in-chief of *Fortune* newspaper). The key informants in this category include: GebreamlakTeka, Department Head of EBC – Ethiopian Radio; BirukYared, EBC - Television news coordinator; Daniel Woldekidan, Deputy Editor of *Addis Zemen* newspaper; anonymous editor at a privatene newspaper; FerewAbebe, Editor-in-Chief of *Sendek* newspaper; and TamratGebre-Giorgis, Managing Editor of *Fortune* newspaper.

The other five key informants are key people with considerable media (journalistic) experience from different Ethiopian religions. They are followers or leaders of the different religious traditions in Ethiopia and are working on journalism or journalism related activities and have contact with the local mainstream media. Hence, they are chosen based on their roles in both the respective religious traditions and in their nearness to the Ethiopian mass media. These informants are: Daniel Kibret, EOTC religion researcher, blogger and writer; Daniel Seifemichael, theology professor at Holy Trinity College and Director of EOTC Satellite Television (EOTC TV); MessaudAdem, Public relations and documentation head of Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia; Eyob Yishaq, Peace Office Coordinator of the Ethiopian

Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY); and anonymous Officer in the Ethiopian Catholic Church.

The key informants were presented with many open-ended questions and some close ended questions that are followed by follow up questions. Just before the recording of each interview, all of the key informants were told about the purpose of the research and were asked of their consent to participate in the research as based on the advice of Ruane (2005: 19). They were also asked whether they can be quoted by name or anonymously. Except an experienced journalist, who was working in a private newspaper, and officer from the Ethiopian Catholic Church, all of the key informants agreed to be quoted by name. A semi-structured interview guide was produced ahead of the interview and it included questions on the focus the Ethiopian mainstream media have given to religion and religious subjects, the nature of religious contents in the media and their potential impact on the audiences and the essence and implementation of secularism in the Ethiopian mainstream media. The questions also include the representation of religion over the past years and the respective positions that the different religious traditions attained in the Ethiopian mainstream media. The semi-structured interviews enabled the key informants to be flexible in responding; and, given their diversified backgrounds, allowed comparison and contrast on their responses easier (Dawson, 2002: 28-29).

3.2.3. Data collection time and place

Both the quantitative and qualitative data of this research were collected in between 14 July 2017 and 22 September 2017. Data for the content analysis were mainly collected from the National Archive and Library Agency (NALA) of Ethiopia (*Womezekeir*), which is situated in Addis Abeba.

newspapers were available there. A few missing newspapers from NALA were also found in the library of Bahir Dar University (Main Campus and Engineering Campus) and in the library of the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), which both keep record of newspapers and magazines since the 1970s. As it was difficult to identify the religious stories and finish the coding in the meantime inside the libraries during its opening hours, the stories were identified and photographed and the coding was made outside.

The in-depth interviews were also made in Addis Abeba, as already mentioned. Interview data were collected following the formal ethical procedures. The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) was asked prior to the data collection and the data collection was allowed by NSD.

3.3. Data analysis

The quantitative data were coded and analysed using SPSS. The qualitative data which comprised the in-depth interviews were thematically analysed and are corroborated with the results from the content analysis.

Chapter four: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

4.1. Introduction

In this part, the research data are presented, analyzed and interpreted in line with the research questions. First, the qualitative data are presented. Then, the quantitative data are presented, followed by a discussion of findings. In the discussion part, both data sets are analyzed in corroboration

4.2. Presentation of qualitative data

The qualitative data involves responses from 11 in-depth interviews. The informants include experienced Ethiopian journalists and key individuals with considerable media experience from different Ethiopian religions. The journalists have worked for 10 or more years in journalism and are also currently working in positions of deputy editor or higher in their respective media institutions. The five key people are, in addition to their participation as follower or leader within the respective religious traditions, involved in discussions in the mainstream media. Most of them have a function where they provide information for the mass media representing their respective religious institutions.

4.2.1. Visibility and significance of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media

Visibility of religion in the mainstream media is concerned with the availability of religion, as both doctrinal and ideological concept and an institutional entity. The mere presence of religion does not imply its actual impact in a given society. In his article about the concept of visibility of religion in the European context, Hjelm (2014) pointed out that there is prevalent confusion among scholars on the relationship between the actual presence of religion in the public sphere and its corresponding impact on contemporary society. For him, the new visibility of religion in the European context is related to the secular return of religion, “where religion is relevant for public discourse only by virtue of being either problematic or useful” (Hjelm, 2014: 203). Hence, it is important to consider religion in terms of both its visibility and its perceived impact in a given society. Accordingly, this research attempts to incorporate both aspects of religious visibility and significance by considering qualitative and quantitative data.

In light of this, the qualitative data show that both the state and private mainstream media in Ethiopia rarely report on religion. All of the informants agree on that religion is an invisible and a marginalized subject matter in the Ethiopian mainstream media. According to Frew, Editor-in-Chief of Sendek newspaper for over 7 years now, Ethiopian mainstream media's scant coverage of religious issues is a major gap that should be addressed quickly for religion is the issue of almost all Ethiopians. He says, "as a journalist who worked for over 9 years as higher producer in *Reporter* newspaper and for 7 years now as Editor-in-Chief of Sendek newspaper, I feel that religion should appear in the mainstream media in not less space than politics. However, the reality is otherwise."

Also, many of the informants claimed that religion is not even agenda of both state and private mainstream media in Ethiopia. Tamrat Woldegiorgis, Editor-in-Chief of Fortune Newspaper for 16 years now, claims that religion is reported by the state media only during public holidays or when situations are too big to ignore. He states that the private media also lack the understanding, commitment and choice of reporting religious issues in Ethiopia. Eyob Yisahaq, Peace Coordinator of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, also reckones that the Ethiopian media do not count religious issues relevant at all while journalists could rather derive and report on common values from different religions in a way that does not affect secularism. "After all, religion is not agendum to Ethiopian mainstream media;" Eyob reckons, "Rather than spending minutes to advertise alcohol via the single national Ethiopian state media, the journalists should look into what the audiences need."

Daniel Kibret, spiritual researcher and teacher in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) and freelancer in Ethiopian private newspapers also agree that religion is a neglected topic in Ethiopia. Daniel Kibret stresses that the Ethiopian religious institutions are overlooked not only by the media, but also by the Ethiopian Anti Corruption Commission and the General Auditor which check the business process of every other institution in the country. Daniel argues, "that makes religious institutions to be untouchable by the media".

The discussions above indicate that religion is not a topic of the mainstream media in Ethiopia. It does not, however, mean that religion is totally absent in the Ethiopia mainstream media. According to the key informants from the Ethiopian state media, religion is reported often whenever different Ethiopian religious traditions celebrate religious holidays as indicated in the Ethiopian calendar. They claim that, religious reporting is, otherwise, rare due to focus on other secular matters. The head of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation national radio station, Gebreamlak, states that religion is covered rarely at other times. He added that other than

religious holidays, religion is reported only when religious institutions take part in resolving societal problems, in development activities and in peace building.

The coordinator of the news department of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation national television, Biruk, also states that the Ethiopian mainstream media is not seen to have a habit of taking religion as a serious business. He argues that religion should not be given extensive coverage in the Ethiopian mainstream media for the state has no business in religion and for religion has also no business in the state as stated in the constitution. Biruk explains that he himself broadcast several religious events, especially during holidays, live in the Ethiopian Television since the Ethiopian Millennium; i.e. 10 years from now. He describes that during live broadcasting over 50 percent of the content is beyond the control of the journalist and that prayers, preaching and other religious rituals may be unintentionally covered, which he thinks is against the media's editorial policy. As a result, Biruk notes that EBC has a plan to seize live broadcasting during religious holidays in the near future. Daniel Woldekidan, the Deputy Editor of *Addis Zemen* Newspaper, also agrees that religion is often reported in the state media when there are religious holidays or events where religious institutions are involved. All respondents also underline that religious holidays are the time when religion gets coverage in the state media.

Journalists in the private media, on the other hand, point out that they report religion all through the year even though the coverage is very limited. A Deputy Editor of a private newspaper whose name is not identified in this research states that religion is covered in the Ethiopian private media in situations when invitation comes from religious institutions, when there are corruption cases in religious institutions, when there are religious holidays and, sometimes, when religious conflicts happen. The Editor-in-Chief of *Sendek* Newspaper, Frew, also agrees with the anonymous editor on that religion is covered in the Ethiopian private media during holidays and in time of corruption and bad practices within religious institutions. Frew underlines that sometimes, when religious conflicts happen, the private media intentionally ignore them for such reports could be so sensitive that they might aggravate conflict.

Both journalists also agree that religious coverage is very limited in Ethiopia. As to Frew, religion is not agenda for both the state and the private media in Ethiopia. Frew points out that this is so in the private media case due to business reasons and for fear of intimidation by the respective religious institutions. Frew states that the private media do not focus a lot on the regular happenings, even during religious holidays; but rather, on special issues that consider the interest of religious followers. Frew relates this to business-related interest of the private media. Comparing the amount of space allotted to religion by the state and private media, Frew speaks:

In the private media, a certain issue is reported if it is believed to be profitable. Otherwise, the story will be ignored for the newspaper business stands on the sale of the newspapers. But the state media has ample economic potential and space, which is not for sale. Hence, the state media even broadcast live and provide wider spaces.

Frew argues that reporting religion critically is even worse for journalists in Ethiopia than reporting politics, which is another difficult subject matter. He thinks that there is attitudinal problem, amongst followers and leaders of the respective religious traditions, of seeing critical reporting about religion negatively. He also argues that the private media rarely report religion due to fear of intimidation and physical attack from individuals and groups representing religious institutions. He mentioned himself, Getachew, Abraham Begizew and Bewketu Seyoum as examples of victims of criticism in Ethiopian religious institutions.

Frew's case is related to accusation by a defamation case filed by the Head Office of the EOTC Patriarchate in 2015 against the publication of a critical story entitled *The Patriarch: threat for salvation to believers and so for Ethiopia's security*. It was written by the renowned EOTC religious researcher and writer, Daniel Kibret, in 2016 and it was published on his own website a week ahead of its publication on Sendek newspaper. The story was about the standing EOTC Patriarch, Abune Mathias, who was blamed for overlooking critical corruption cases and bad practices in the church. Frew was accused as Editor-in-Chief and the newspaper was accused to pay compensation. Frew states that he suffered from spending time in the court and outside in relation to the case for a year before he won it on the 25th of January 2017, when the court proved that the article is critique, not defamation. According to Frew, this was based on evidence of critique of the article from the office of Communication affairs, Addis Ababa University and from a professional association after permission from the court to get the article evaluated.

Frew states that he believed the accusation was not only intended to get himself as Editor-in-Chief and Sendek newspaper fined, but also had wider implication to other private media who want to engage in similar investigations in the future. Frew elucidates:

I believe that the Ethiopian religious institutions, especially the EOTC, are anti-press by nature and approach. They don't give information. They consider journalists as tools who come and go depending on the interest of religious institutions. Hence, winning the case was not only success to me, but success to the Ethiopian press.

Frew also adds that he became hero at a moment as the case became a point of discussion on the social media.

Frew has also identified another journalist Getachew, who was arrested for a year for reporting similar corruption cases in the Church. Abraham Begizew was also another victim that Frew mentioned. Abraham was a journalist for Addis Neger, now defunct. As to Frew, he was beaten by unidentified individuals following his report on a disagreement within the leadership of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church in July 2009.

Frew also mentioned Bewketu Seyoum, author, poet and freelance journalist in the Ethiopian private newspapers, as a victim of religious reporting in Ethiopia. His case is related to a beating by a young Ethiopian Orthodox religious follower after Bewketu allegedly belittles a highly respected Ethiopian Saint (St. Tekle Haymanot).

Daniel Kibret also underscores that Ethiopian journalists' consideration of the principle of secularism as being non-religious affected their approach to journalism reporting. Daniel points out, "thanks to the Ethiopian media who ignore religious reports and investigations, the Ethiopian religious institutions have now become untouchable." Tamrat, the Editor-in-Chief of Fortune newspaper, also agrees that religion is seldom reported in Ethiopia. According to Tamrat, the Ethiopian mainstream media do not pay particular attention to religion. Tamrat argues that this is because there are no specifically trained journalists, who can report religion professionally and objectively. He states that while the state media do not show interest in reporting religion except during the time of religious holidays, the private media gives just a sporadic coverage of religion. He points out:

Religion is not publicly discussed in Ethiopia as much as I see it discussed everywhere. Ethiopians keep religious discussions in private, not preferring to discuss it publicly. But manifestation of religion is quite widespread.

Tamrat does not, however, agree with Frew's claim that religion is ignored due to fear and intimidation from religious institutions. "If it was for fear of intimidation", Tamrat argues, "you have a lot more reasons to be afraid of the power guys than the religious guys". He rather argued that the inadequacies of knowledge and understanding of religious affairs are the ones blamed for making Ethiopian journalists unwilling to cover religion properly. Tamrat maintains that it is rather the choice and determination that should drive journalists in whatever subject that they cover. He argues:

In a country where people take their religion quite faithfully, you just can't meddle in the subject matter you don't know and you don't understand. And when you do, of course, you make mistakes and the response that comes from people who know what they are talking about is strong.

Daniel Kibret also agrees with Tamrat's view. Daniel points out that Ethiopian mainstream media have no expertise in religious reporting and that he observes journalists in the mainstream media frequently when they mistakenly use titles of religious leaders and when they confuse rudimentary religious facts or stories. He also says religious reporting is missing as a subject matter in the curricula of Journalism schools in Ethiopia.

Messaud also agrees that journalists in Ethiopia have limited knowledge and understanding of different religious traditions in Ethiopia. He states that he has encountered with many journalists who were confused in both interviewing and reporting religious issues for they don't understand what they ask and report about.

Informants also state that some religious traditions are particularly invisible while others do. Eyob Yisshaq, Peace Coordinator of the Ethiopian MekaneYesusChurch argues that the Ethiopian mainstream media favour the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. He says, "it might be due to its role in the country's history and in its role as source of alphabets and dating (calendar); but the journalists favour the Ethiopian Orthodox Church". Tamrat also stresses that other than the two dominant religions, EOTC and Islam, other religious groups are not seen in the Ethiopian mainstream media. Tamrat stated that it is particularly rare to find stories dealing with Ethiopian Catholic Church. According to an informant, whose name is unidentified, from the Ethiopian Catholic Church, the Ethiopian Catholic Church has a tradition of keeping its activities unknown to others through the media for it long considered that doing so is against the value of Catholicism. She stressed, "there is, however, change of attitude in recent days that introducing good practices teach others and contribute positively. Hence, we are now inviting journalists and we are providing them with what we are doing and we think that we are getting better coverage." Daniel Seifemichael, from the EOTC, however, argues that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is not even given appropriate coverage in line with its huge role in the country's historical, socio-cultural and political makeup.

Informants also state that religious conflicts are rarely reported in the Ethiopian mainstream media. Gebreamlak points out that the state media intend not to report religious conflicts. However, he states, the media cautiously follow developments and report solution-oriented stories, as necessary, before such conflicts deteriorate. He adds that the media also report such stories if the government provides evidence that the religious institutions involved are trying to erode the unity of the Ethiopian public. Biruk and Daniel Woldekidan also agree on what Gebreamlak said. Biruk also points out that religious conflicts are reported in the state media when they are too big to leave. He says:

When the conflict becomes big and reaches to the level of killing individuals, then the government also involves itself and hence we report it from the perspective of the government and from the angles of peace and security. This is done not to blame one religious group over the other; but, to show and teach that it is inappropriate to fight over religion. We use religious leaders themselves to do that. We have done that in both Islam and Orthodox Christianity.

Sometimes, religious conflicts might involve the government itself. In the recent Muslim protest in Ethiopia and the widespread discontents amongst the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Christians, for example, the government is blamed for alleged intervention (International CrisisGroup, 2016). Seen in this light, Biruk's comments above have wider implications for they show that the strong government influence that the state media suffer from is also evident in religious reporting, especially during the time of religious conflicts. Tamrat also points out that the state media would rather report what the state says or the state claims or what law enforcement says about religious conflicts instead of reporting the actual stuff on a regular basis. He pointed out:

The state media do not cover religious conflicts at all until such time that sometimes things get out of proportion and then they become subject of conversation in the public space...The state media hardly cover the actual conflict on their own. If they do it is when situations become too big to ignore and then that is through statements made by the government, regional or federal government, or law enforcement agencies when they say they have done this and that or this happened. So you don't actually find on the ground reporting with the initiative of the media practitioners themselves or the media houses. But, conflicts can be reported in the private media much earlier than they came to light to the public arena.

In the private media also, religious conflicts are rarely reported for the journalists think that such stories are sensitive and may involve strong responses from followers. Frew highlights that there are times when they intentionally ignore reports of religious conflicts, even after final production, for fear of the repercussion after publication. Tamrat also says that journalists exercise refrain from reporting religious tensions, but when they do, they cover tensions cautiously and carefully. Eyob Yishaq, Peace Office Coordinator in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, also stresses that politics influences religion and religious reporting highly in Ethiopia. He says, "the state media does not especially report religious affairs in times when the government does not involve itself." He also maintains that if religious stories do not serve as input to the agenda of the government, religion is not reported at all. "Otherwise", says Eyob, "the story should not blame or criticize anyone".

He raises, as an example, a case when the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus underwent press conference calling journalists from the state media and telling them about the stand of the church in the killing of people in the recent conflicts in Oromia. Eyob adds that the church notified that the security is taking excessive force against civilians and advised to minimize force and harm. The section that deals with the excessive force and minimizing harm were, however, trimmed out by the journalists during reporting, according to Eyob.

As to Eyob, the state media, as a result, are losing their credibility by themselves. He also argues people are migrating from the mainstream media, as a result, and are giving more attention to alternative media, including the recent Satellite Television Channels where religion is also served independently. He states that there are currently 24 television channels being aired from abroad, of which 23 are owned by protestant churches and 1 by EOTC (22 in Amharic, 1 in Oromiffaa). This scenario goes in line with Sileshie's findings that the younger generation in Ethiopia is becoming increasingly attracted by the alternative media as opposed to the relatively less interest shown to the conventional (mainstream) media (Sileshie, 2014b).

4.2.2. Secularism

Secularism is an important concept in the practice of religious reporting. In Ethiopia, it is one of the most contentious issues amongst journalists and other stakeholders. Article 11 of the Ethiopian constitution makes it clear that state and religion are separate and there shall be no state religion in Ethiopia. Within the same article, it is also stated that the state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs. Based on this constitutional principle, the Ethiopian state media have produced explicit editorial policies which adopt secularism as a principle in dealing with the way religious reporting is made.

In the editorial policy of the single, national radio and television station - Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) – for example, it is stated that religious issues are reported in the media when they have socio-cultural values. It is also stated in the document that religious issues presented in the form of sermons and teaching will not be entertained in the media. The document also recognizes religious holidays to be reported fairly and accurately depending on their social significance without reflecting the personal belief of the journalist and those involved. It is also stated in the document that the activities of religious institutions in the country's socio-economic sectors will be reported without affecting the principles stated in the policy. The country's historical heritage and artefacts, which are the properties of different religious institutions, are also mentioned to be reported well depending on their relevance to religious tolerance and

tourism. The document also requires the journalists to keep their personal beliefs away when they report religious issues. According to the document, the journalists, during reporting from outside EBC's studio, are not also allowed to express favour to one religion through words, writing, dressing, jewels, feeling and symbols.

The policy seems to lack clarity in terms of identifying what the religious is from what is not. Plus, it seems to remain reluctant to mention religion as a subject to be dealt with independently. Considering religion secondary, the document seems to rather emphasize on such socio-cultural and economic matters as respect, tolerance, tourism and historical heritage.

In terms of the guiding principle of secularism, there seems to be differences among the respondents. All informants from the state media think that religion should be reported in line with its relevance to the country's economy, tourism, social cohesion, health issues and peace and security. Reporting religion as an independent topic does not look to be a norm in the state media. Biruk argues that as far as secularism is strict separation of religion and state in the Ethiopian context, Ethiopian mainstream media should not take and report religion by itself as a serious business. Gebreamlak and Daniel Woldekidan also agree that religion should be reported in line with its relevance to socio-cultural relevance. Three of the informants are of the idea that religion should not be reported by its own apart from its coverage in relation to other issues. This goes with Berhane's argument which calls for the consideration of the strict model of secularism as a viable option for Ethiopia (Berhane, 2010). Deputy editor of *Addis Zemen*, Daniel Woldekidan underscores:

Issues of national affairs are also issues of religious leaders. For example, when there are problems in relation to peace or during development initiatives or at times of teaching ethics to the youth, religious leaders are important and we use them in our reporting. Because we think that their messages are more influential in achieving the intended goals.

Daniel Woldekidan's remarks imply that religious leaders are used as input to achieve goals intended to be achieved by the mass media. This has, however, make religious reporting particularly annoying to audiences, especially during the time of religious conflict. Peace Coordinator of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Eyob Yishaq stated that the way the state media use religious leaders during conflict is particularly annoying to followers of different religions. "The religious leaders", Eyob claims, "are presented to react to a certain issue in a conflict situation. That makes the reporting annoying, especially at times of religious conflict".

The state media journalists also agree that if the religious should be mentioned at all, it is when the religious becomes root of the topic under discussion. “Even then,” Gebreamlak emphasizes, “we only focus on what we raise and do not go deep in to religion.” Gebreamlak elaborates that when a journalist deals with Ethiopian Calendar, for example, it is hard to not deal with religion for that is where it came from. “It is rather from the surface that we raise the religious”, says Gebreamlak. Biruk also points out, “if the issue the journalist is presenting is general to people of all religions, then dealing with the religious might not have a problem.” “However”, Biruk asserts, “we remove such sections as, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem, which religious leaders use to begin their speech with for these expressions affect the very principle of secularism”. Daniel Woldekidan also stresses that journalists should not present Biblical or Quranic stories in detail so that what they present about religion shall not influence believers of other religions. Daniel also says, “the focus of our religious reporting is not the religion, but the rituals and practices”.

This implies that the state media reports religion from the surface. Informants from the state media also assert that the editorial policy of their media and the constitution of the land do not allow them to involve in religious doctrines and philosophies in their religious reporting. Daniel Woldekidan points out:

During religious reporting, we pay a particular attention on treating all religions equally without focusing on the religious teachings and sermons. We only focus on the issue at hand. If it is Arefa which is being reported, for example, we just focus on the holiday. We don't delve in to the historical beginning and doctrine of the particular religion in detail. We do the same when we report other Christian holidays. When Gennais celebrated, we separate the cultural from the religious and report only the cultural aspect... All the journalists know this.

The state media, according to Biruk, Daniel Woldekidan and Gebreamlak, should not enter into the doctrine and philosophy of each religion during reporting. The unidentified editor at a private newspaper also support the idea that the mainstream media should sporadically report religion without entering deeply into the doctrines and teachings of different religions in the country.

Other respondents think that there is problem of both clarity of the principles of secularism and lack of expertise in religious reporting. Daniel Kibret remarks that religion is not taken as a branch of knowledge with relevance to the people by Ethiopian mainstream media journalists. Daniel also underlines, journalists in the secular media consider reporting religious or spiritual issues as favouring one religion and getting into the teachings of the religion involved.

Daniel Kibret also maintains that the statements under article 11 of the constitution need further interpretation. He states that in many meetings which he took part, he saw differences amongst participants on what constitutes non-interference to religion by the government and the other way round. Daniel asks,

When it says the state shall not interfere in religious matters, does it mean that it shall not interfere in religious beliefs or religious institutions? Does it mean that the state is not concerned when an institution is abused? When problems happen? When the institutions are too traditional in their business processing and in their structure to progress?

For Daniel, it is not clear if it implies that the state shall keep silent even when the religious institutions drag the majority of the public backwards.

Daniel expresses similar concern towards the implication of the statements to religious institutions. He also asks if religious institutions will keep silent when, for example, the government makes mistakes, when the government oppress the people, when the government is not able to respect the laws it has enacted itself, when conflicts happen and when the government is not able to resolve them.

Daniel Kibret maintains that what is observed in the media is a reflection of this confusion among different stakeholders and the power people in the government. Daniel Kibret argues that secularism is mistakenly considered by journalists in Ethiopia as if it were being non-religious. For him, secularism is rather a field where journalists give free and fair space to all religious issues and entities during reports of any religious affairs without entering them into their mind and in a way that do not engage journalists, as believers themselves, to sit and criticize other religious entities.

He states that journalists, however, only cover religious issues from certain vantage points which do not involve religion. “For example”, Daniel says:

the travel of Ethiopian Muslims to Mecca in annual pilgrimage should not be seen only from the angle of national image building. This is because the Muslims go to Mecca rather for religious benefits. Hence the journalist should not forget that fundamental reason when reporting this. However, the journalist is not required to believe or not to believe on it.

Similarly, when journalists report the Christian holiday of, for example *Meskel*, they try their level best to get it reported from the perspective of tourism alone. “However”, Daniel argues, “*Meskel* did not start and will not exist in connection with the tourists. If something happens in the

country, tourists will not come. Meskel will, however, continue to exist even so”. According to Daniel Kibret, journalists do not want to raise the culture of *Meskel*, its religious root, why it is celebrated and how it reaches today as points of discussion in Ethiopia. Daniel says, “journalists think that raising this is related to religious teaching”. Daniel believes on that journalists have to raise and report religion as an issue which has a place in the life of the society without involving themselves in comparing religious institutions and in criticizing religious principles. According to Daniel Kibret, journalists should bring religious perspectives in light together with other secular worldviews.

According to Daniel, the mainstream media are trying to keep balance in their religious reports by engaging people who are not related to the issue at hand. Daniel states that journalists interview people, during religious reporting, who have nothing to do with the issue for a mistaken fear of trespassing secularism and for wrong consideration of bringing balance to the story. Daniel says:

During religious holidays that are celebrated publicly, rather than religious leaders and followers who are knowledgeable about what is going on around, tourists are given more chances in the media. Journalists think that doing so makes the reporting freer from favouring a certain religion. They also believe they should include the views of Christians in a Muslim holiday, and vice-versa, for they think such reports answer the question of balance in religious reporting, while they basically don't. Such reports rather annoy audiences of all parties involved in the report.

Mesoud also stresses that during religious holidays, mainstream media journalists invite guests, who are by no means related to the holiday under celebration. Mesoud raised as an example the common practice invitation in the Ethiopian mainstream media; i.e. invitation of Ethiopian Artists as guests during Muslim and Christian holidays. Both Daniel and Messaud argues that this practice of the mainstream media created a feeling that something is being imposed on the religious followers.

Coming to the private media, the editorial policies of private newspapers – at least *Reporter*, *Addis Admass*, *Fortune* and *Sendek*- do not specifically deal with religious reporting. Two of the journalists on the private media, Frew and Tamrat agree that secularism, as a principle, does not deter journalists from reporting religious affairs as a topic independently. Frew argues:

The essence of the constitution in its article about secularism is to underline that government will not involve in the workings of religious institutions, such as in the decisions of the Synod in EOTC. The Synod itself makes decisions. Similarly, it requires religious institutions not to meddle into government affairs; say, for example, in enacting legislations. Otherwise, the principle does

not say that journalists would not report religion independently. The journalists, however, practice self censorship fearing the repercussion of reporting religious affairs in the country.

Similar to Daniel Kibret, Frew states that journalists refrain from reporting religion for they think that religion is a sensitive topic that might cause risk to their life and profession. Tamrat thinks that many people, including journalists, do not rather understand as to what constitutes secularism. He points out:

Beyond the declaration of intent and purpose in the constitution, beyond certain generation at a certain historical time, having internalized what secularism is all about, I don't think as many people around really understood what secularism is all about.

Other informants also agree that journalists consider religious reporting difficult and unacceptable in the mass media. Daniel Seifemichael argues that the problem is from the side of the journalists. He contends secularism is well explained by the Ethiopian government that it is not meant to be anti-religious, but to preserve values of peace, development, cooperation, tolerance, consideration of all religions equally and provision of rights to individuals to follow belief of their choice. He asserted that journalists have not, however, properly understood and lack clearly defined principles that guide their journalistic operation. Daniel Seifemichael says:

In operational terms, the principle of secularism should be clearly defined. The media should identify what is cultural and what is religious in a given religious tradition and in a given religious event. In a situation where there is no clarity, we see poor journalists in the media appearing before the public confused.

Many of the informants agree that secularism as a concept is not clear in Ethiopia and that journalists have confusion on what counts to their religious reporting and hence journalists have observable failures in reporting religion in the Ethiopia mainstream media.

4.3. Presentation of quantitative data: Ethiopian mainstream media representation of religion across time

Generally, it is now clear that religion is rarely reported in Ethiopia. It is, however, important to also examine into how rare this reporting really is. To this end, closer investigation of the number, size, relevance, genre and religious traditions involved in religious reporting is taken to be important. To this end, mediatization is an important framework. Depending on a research work on mediated religion across time and space in the Nordic countries by Lövheim and Lundby (2013), it is tried, in this section, to present the level of mediatization in the Ethiopian

mainstream media. Mediatization of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media is measured by computing the number of religious articles during the two weeks of the seven Ethiopian calendar religious holidays (one week before and one week after each holiday) and another two weeks period during which there is no religious holiday at least for four weeks before and at least for four weeks after the specific dates of the religious holidays. All the years in the analysis are indicated in Ethiopian calendar which is 7 to 8 years back from the Gregorian calendar, i.e. 7 years gap from 10-12 September to the end of December and 8 years gap during the other months. The Ethiopian New Year begins from September and each month from September to August has 30 days and the year ends with a 13th month which has 5 days thrice and 6 days once every four years. All of the religious holidays are taken from the Ethiopian calendar and the analysis is believed to be closely and simply addressed if the Ethiopian calendar is used.

4.3.1. Visibility of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media

The extent to which religion is visible across time in the Ethiopian mainstream media indicates mediatization of religion. The transformations in the number, size and genre of religious articles across each selected year and the changes in the proportion of religious articles allotted to each Ethiopian religious tradition indicate the visibility of religion.

As indicated in Table 3 below, the number of religious articles has shown an upward growth all through the selected years and across all the three newspapers. During the selected years, the three newspapers have published 362 total religious articles. The number of religious articles across the three newspapers grew from 92 in 1988/92 Ethiopian calendar to 116 in 1998 and 154 in 2008. It is worth mentioning here that the years 1988 and 1992 (both in Ethiopian calendar) are considered together. This is because the private newspaper *Addis Admass* started to be published from *Tabsas* 1992 (January 2000 Gregorian calendar). Hence, the 1988 religious articles from *Addis Zemen* (state media) and the 1992 E.C. religious articles from the private newspapers, *Addis Admass* and *Reporter* (Amharic), are considered together.

It is also indicated in the table that the number of religious articles in all of the three newspapers has shown upward growth across the selected years. The number of religious articles in *Addis Zemen* newspaper has grown from 77 in 1988 to 89 in 1998 and to 96 in 2008. *Reporter* and *Addis Admass* newspapers have also revealed a similar trend. While the number of religious articles had grown from 5 to 12 and to 30 in *Reporter*, it had grown from 10 to 15 and to 28 in the years 1992, 1998 and 2008, respectively. These figures indicate that the visibility of religion as a topic is increasing in the selected Ethiopian newspapers across the selected years.

Considering the variations across space - meaning across the state and private newspapers - close to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total religious articles are presented in the state newspaper, *Addis Zemen*. Combined, the private newspapers presented the rest share, which is slightly greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total religious articles. While religious articles published in *Addis Admass* took 14.6 percent of the total religious articles published across the selected years, the rest 13 percent are found to be published in *Reporter*. The proportion of religious articles by the state newspaper (*Addis Zemen*) is generally greater across the selected years than the two private newspapers combined. However, the percentage of religious articles in *Addis Zemen* fallen consecutively across the selected years showing declining percentage of state newspapers and a corresponding upward increase of the percentage of private newspapers, considered both singly and together.

Given the equivalence in the amount of space between the selected state and private newspapers based on the number of pages published in a week, it is safe to conclude that the private newspapers combined, generally, devote less space to religious issues than do *Addis Zemen*. This trend seems to change, however, as the proportion of religious articles by both private newspapers indicated an upward growth across the selected years while the percentage of religious articles by the state newspaper fallen across the selected years.

Table 3. Number of religious articles across the selected years and newspapers

Name of newspaper	Year in Ethiopian calendar						Total	
	1988/92		1998		2008			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Addis Zemen</i>	77	83.7	88	76.7	96	62.3	262	72.4
<i>Reporter</i>	5	5.4	12	10.4	30	19.5	47	13
Addis Admass	10	10.9	15	12.9	28	18.2	53	14.6
SUM	92	100	116	100	154	100	362	100

The size of religious articles in the selected years also gives some sort of impression on the visibility of religion in the newspapers. In this research, religious articles are coded as either large or small based on the categories set by Lövheim and Lundby (2013). Large articles, which Lövheim and Lundby (2013) referred to as *main* articles, are meant to be placed on the front pages of the newspapers in any size, or over two columns with photographs or pictures inside. Small-sized religious articles are considered to be spread over one or two columns or in less space, even in paragraph or short notice, inside the newspapers.

Accordingly, as shown in Table 4 below, the number of religious articles that are presented in the inside pages of the newspapers in less than 2 to 3 columns are almost double the number of religious articles presented either in the front pages with any size or across three or more columns inside. Small-sized religious articles have increased across all the selected years and these articles accounted for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total religious articles in 2008. Large sized religious articles decreased in percentages across the selected years and in 2008 these articles accounted for only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total religious articles. This indicates that even though the number of religious articles increased across the selected years as shown in Table 3, the selected newspapers have allotted increasingly less space to religious articles across the selected years.

Table 4. Size of religious articles across the selected years

Size of newspaper	Year in Ethiopian calendar						Total	
	1988/92		1998		2008			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Large	37	40.2	43	37.1	43	27.9	123	34
Small	55	59.8	73	62.9	111	72.1	239	66
Total	92	100	116	100	154	100	362	100

The journalistic genres through which religious articles are presented with provide input to the tendency of mediatization of religion. As indicated in Table 5 below, the highest share of the total religious articles were presented as news in the selected newspapers. Half of the total religious articles across the three selected years were presented in the form of news stories. The number of religious articles published in the form of news stories in 1998 and 2008 are by far greater than that of the articles published in 1988/92.

The second highest share goes to religious articles presented under columns, which accounts for 32.9 percent of the total articles and these articles have grown from 8.6 percent in 1988/92 to 18.5 percent in 2008. In the Ethiopian context, it is not common to see columns that are devoted for religion *per se*. Instead, many newspapers, including the selected newspapers in this research, cover religion in columns which stand mainly for social, cultural and political matters. Hence, in this research context religious articles reported in columns refer to those articles covered within the cultural, social, political sections of newspapers.

Seen in light of other journalistic genres, the proportion of news articles was highest in 1998, when it accounted slightly over $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total religious articles published in the year. In 1988/92 and 2008 also, about $\frac{2}{5}$ of the whole religious articles in the respective years were

news stories. Religious articles appearing in columns became greater in percentage than religious news in 2008.

Religious articles appearing in the form of features also accounted for 13 percent of the total religious articles in 1988/92 and dropped down to 7.7 percent in 1998 and then again slightly increased and accounted for 9.8 percent of the total religious articles in 2008.

Editorials and debates are generally the least visible journalistic genres with percentages of 5.2 and 1.7, respectively, of the total religious articles across the selected years.

Table 5. Genre of religious articles across the selected years in percentages.

Genre of religious article	Year in Ethiopian calendar						Total	
	1988/92		1998		2008			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Religious articles in columns	31	33.7	21	18.1	67	43.5	119	32.9
Religious articles in editorials	8	8.7	4	3.4	7	4.5	19	5.2
Religious articles in debates	2	2.2	1	0.9	3	1.9	6	1.7
Religious articles in news	39	42.4	81	69.9	62	40.3	182	50.3
Religious articles in features	12	13	9	7.7	15	9.8	36	9.9
Total	92	100	116	100	154	100	362	100

It is also worth analysing the visibility of each religious tradition in the selected newspapers across the selected years. As indicated in Table 6 below, the two Ethiopian dominant religious traditions (EOTC and Islam and Muslims) together with unclassifiable religious articles in terms of the respective tradition accounted for 92.2 percent of the total number of religious articles. The visibility of both EOTC and Islam and Muslims have shown slight decline across the two recent selected years compared to 1988. On the contrary, the percentage of religious articles that are difficult to be classified in one religious tradition had been on the rise across the selected years. Unclassifiable stories have grown from 26.1 percent in 1988/92 to 31 and 39 percent in 1998 and 2008, respectively.

Other religious articles that involved other traditional religious groups from Ethiopia and outside have increased from 2.6 percent in 1988/92 to 7.8 percent in 1998 and to 5.4 percent in 2008 when seen in light of the total religious articles in the respective years.

The Protestant Christian Churches and the Ethiopian Catholic Church are generally the least visible Ethiopian religious groups. The selected Ethiopian newspapers allotted space to only 8 religious articles during the selected years to the Ethiopian protestant Churches. The Ethiopian Catholic Church was mentioned independently only twice in 1998 and none of the selected religious articles in 1988/92 and 2008 independently dealt with this church.

Table 6. Religious traditions within religious articles across the selected years

Religious tradition	Years in Ethiopian calendar						Total	
	1988/92		1998		2008			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church	36	39.1	35	30.2	56	36.4	127	35.1
Islam	26	28.3	27	23.3	34	22.1	87	24
Protestant	1	1.1	7	6	0	0	8	2.2
Ethiopian Catholic Church	0	0	2	1.7	0	0	2	0.6
Unclassifiable	24	26.1	36	31	60	39	120	33.1
Others	5	5.4	9	7.8	4	2.6	18	5
SUM	92	100	116	100	154	100	362	100

4.3.2. Significance of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media: Measuring direction, form and character of religious articles

In order to measure direction, form and character variables in the mediatization of religion, examining the significance (prominence) of religion is a key issue in addition to measuring the number, size, genre and religious traditions independently across the selected years. Prominence refers to whether religion is considered as a main or additional topic in a given religious article. Religion is treated as a main topic when a certain religious belief, practice or institution is considered independently in a certain religious article. On the other hand, religion is an additional topic in a given religious article when it is treated as an additional subject matter to such other media topics as terrorism, development and tourism.

In examining mediatization of religion in a certain context, prominence is an overarching factor. It shows the distance between a given media and the religious article it has contained. It is different when religion is treated as a main point of discussion and when it is *used* as supplementary factor in a given religious article. When religion is main topic, the media is closer and high level of mediatization is probable; and when religion is additional topic, the media

keeps a relative distance to religion and hence low level of mediatization is probable. Accordingly, a large sized religious article, for example, with religion as a main topic would have greater value than an equal sized religious article where religion is an additional topic. A similar analogy may go to the genres of religious articles and to the respective religious traditions.

Accordingly, it is indicated in Table 7 below that the total number of religious articles where religion appear as additional topic is double the number of religious articles where religion appear as main topic. Across the years also, religion appear dominantly as additional topic. The dominance of religious articles with religion as additional topic stayed relatively consistent in between 1988/92 and 2008 with 2/3 majority and with a sharp increase in 1998 when 3/4 of the total stories involved religion as additional topic. This implies that religion seems to be often reported together with other major themes such as terrorism, peace and security, tourism and development and hence it seems to be considered less significant to stand by itself as a subject matter .

Table 7. Prominence of religion within religious articles across the selected years

Prominence of religion	Year in Ethiopian calendar						Total	
	1988/92		1998		2008		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Main	34	37	31	26.7	56	36.4	121	33.4
Additional	58	63	85	73.3	98	63.6	241	66.6
Total	92	100	116	100	154	100	362	100

4.3.2.1. Direction of religious articles

In order to understand the focus given to religion, the selected Ethiopian newspapers gave to religious articles more, it is important to see the size of religious articles together with the corresponding prominence of each religious article. Religious articles are coded as large or small based on the categories set by Lövheim and Lundby (2013).

As shown in Table 8 below, the total proportion of small religious articles is greater when religion appears either as a main or additional topic in the selected Ethiopian newspapers. Slightly more than half of the total religious articles where religion is indicated as main topic (N=121) are found to be small. Also, 71 percent of the total religious articles with religion as additional topic (N=241) appear in small size. This implies that the selected Ethiopian newspapers dominantly cover religious articles within 2 columns or less size inside their pages and only rarely cover religion on their front pages.

It is also indicated in the table that the proportion of large religious articles with religion as main topic decreased by slightly over half from 1988/92 to 2008. Across the selected years also, the Ethiopian newspapers allotted a fairly consistent but dominantly small space for additional religious articles.

This indicates that, generally, more prominent religious articles are increasingly given less newspaper space in the Ethiopian newspapers. Even though the number of religious articles in the Ethiopian newspapers is indicated to grow upwards across the selected years (as indicated in Table 3), the space allotted to main religious articles is decreasing across the years under scrutiny.

Table 8. Prominence and size of religion within religious articles across the selected years.

Prominence	Size of religious article	Years in Ethiopian calendar			Total in % (N=362)
		1988/92 in % (N=92)	1998 in % (N=116)	2008 in % (N=154)	
Main	Large	67.6	38.7	32.1	43.8
	Small	32.4	61.3	67.9	56.2
	SUM	100	100	100	100
Additional	Large	24.1	36.5	25.5	29
	Small	75.9	63.5	74.5	71
	SUM	100	100	100	100

As shown in Table 9 below, presented religious articles as news and within cultural, social or political columns accounted for 85.1 percent of the total religious articles with religion as their main topic having a share of half, each.

Across the selected years, the amount of religious articles presented in columns with religion as main topic increased and doubled in between 1988/92 and 2008, taking a percentage of slightly over half of the total share of the total religious articles with religion as main topic in 2008. To the flip side, religious articles appearing in columns with religion as additional topic accounted for about 1/3 of the total religious articles with religion as additional topic in 1988/92 and 2008; and only accounted for 10.6 percent of those articles in 1998.

On the other hand, religious articles presented as news with religion as main topic dropped from 55.9 percent of the total religious articles with religion as main topic in 1988/92 to 41.9 percent in 1998 and 35.7 percent in 2008. Conversely, religious articles presented as news where religion is additional subject accounted for over half of the total religious articles with religion as

additional topic and they have shown an upward increment across the selected years and took the highest share (4/5) of the total religious articles with religion as additional topic in 1998.

Religious articles presented in editorial, debate, and feature categories with religion as main topic have not shown consistent trend across the selected years. However, all of them slightly decreased in percentages in between 1988/92 and 2008. Religious articles in the form of debate rarely appear in articles with religion as additional topic.

Table 9. Prominence and genre of religion within religious articles across the selected years

Prominence	Genre of religious article	Years in Ethiopian calendar			Total in % (N=362)
		1988/92 in % (N=92)	1998 in % (N=116)	2008 in % (N=154)	
Main	Column	26.5	38.7	53.6	42.1
	Editorial	2.9	3.2	1.8	2.5
	Debate	5.9	3.2	3.6	4.1
	News	55.9	41.9	35.7	43
	Feature	8.8	12.9	5.4	8.3
	SUM	100	100	100	100
Additional	Column	37.9	10.6	37.8	28.2
	Editorial	12.1	3.5	6.1	6.6
	Debate	0	0	1	0.4
	News	34.5	80	42.9	53.9
	Feature	15.5	5.9	12.2	10.8
	SUM	100	100	100	100

As shown in Table 10, close to half of the religious articles with religion as main topic are devoted to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. Compared to other religious traditions, the percentage of religious articles that deal with EOTC as main topic have grown from 47.1 percent in 1988/92 to 60.7 percent in 2008, with a sharp fall in 1998 when it accounted only 29 percent - equal to religious articles dealing with Islam or Muslims as main topic.

Religious articles dealing with Islam or Muslims as main topic accounted for 26.4 percent of the total religious articles where religion is considered as main topic. The percentage of religious articles dealing with Islam or Muslims as main topic decreased across the selected years showing straight line downwards.

Religious articles that are not related to one of the religious traditions accounted for 16.5 percent of the total religious articles with religion as main topic and the largest share (41.5 percent) of the

total religious articles with religion as additional topic. These religious articles increased as both main and additional topic across the selected years.

Other traditional religious groups accounted for 6.6 and 4.1 percent of the total religious articles where religion is treated as main and additional topic, respectively. Except the sharp increase in 1998 in the category of religion as main topic, these stories generally decreased in percentages across the years in both categories.

The Protestant Churches and the Ethiopian Catholic Church are generally the least represented religious groups in the selected Ethiopian newspapers with only a few number of articles, as indicated in Table 4; hence, it is difficult to try to see the trends across the years. However, it is indicated in the table that religious articles related to the Protestant Churches accounted for 2.9 percent and 3.2 percent of the total religious articles presented in 1988/92 and 1998, respectively. The remaining articles are presented in the Ethiopian newspapers as additional topic in 1998 when these articles accounted for 7.1 percent of the total religious articles with religion as additional topic. All of the religious articles which are related to the Ethiopian Catholic Church are presented as additional topic in the newspapers.

Table 10. Prominence and genre of religion within religious articles across the selected years

Prominence	Religious tradition	Years in Ethiopian calendar			Total in % (N=362)
		1988/92 in % (N=92)	1998 in % (N=116)	2008 in % (N=154)	
Main	EOTC	47.1	29	60.7	48.8
	Islam	35.3	29	19.6	26.4
	Protestant	2.9	3.2	0	1.7
	ECC	0	0	0	0
	Unclassifiable	8.8	22.6	17.9	16.5
	Others	5.9	16.1	1.8	6.6
	SUM	100	100	100	100
Additional	EOTC	34.5	30.6	22.4	28.2
	Islam	24.1	21.2	23.5	22.8
	Protestant	0	7.1	0	2.5
	ECC	0	2.4	0	0.8
	Unclassifiable	36.2	34.1	51	41.5
	Others	5.2	4.7	3.1	4.1
	SUM	100	100	100	100

4.4. Discussion of findings: Transformation of religion across time in Ethiopian newspapers

4.4.1. Visibility of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media

In this research work, mediatization of religion is seen in the Ethiopian mainstream media through the prisms of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data revealed that religious reporting is limited in the Ethiopian mainstream media. Both the state and private media are found to not give ample space compared to the value of the Ethiopian society towards institutionalized religion. Except the usual reports of media during religious holidays and the occasional coverage of major religious conflicts that involve the government, the state media do not entertain religious issues. Other occasions are when religious institutions are involved in development activities, peacebuilding, security issues and development activities. Sometimes also, the state media report about renowned sites, sacred books and related artefacts that are properties of religious institutions.

The private media also give sporadic coverage of religion and religious issues in Ethiopia. Private media journalists report religion during religious holidays, at times of corruption, when bad practices are detected in religious institutions, when the media is invited and sometimes when religious conflicts happen. Otherwise, religious reporting is very limited in Ethiopia. The private media avoid reporting religious conflicts for doing so is considered to expand religious conflict.

The quantitative data also confirm that a similar concern exists. In this research, mediatization is studied also quantitatively in terms of the transformation of the visibility and significance of religion across the years 1988/92 E.C., 1998 E.C. and 2008 E.C. Both aspects are measured through changes in the direction, form and character of religion across the selected years. The direction aspect, i.e., the focus given to religion (visibility) is studied by considering changes in the number and size of religious articles across the years (Lundby, 2009). Findings from the in-depth interviews are also corroborated with the quantitative data as necessary.

The quantitative data revealed that all through the three years during the 7 religious holidays and 1 selected period when there is no religious holiday for at least four weeks before and at least four weeks after the specific religious holiday, the number of religious articles in the three newspapers (*Addis Zemen*, *Reporter* – Amharic, and *Addis Admas*) became 362. The number of

religious articles in the three newspapers altogether increased from 92 in 1988/92 E.C. to 116 in 1998 E.C. to 154 in 2008 E.C.

This increase in number of religious articles is also observed across all the three newspapers. However, the quantitative data also revealed that religion is more visible in number generally in the state media taking close to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total share of religious articles. However, the proportion of religious articles appearing in the private media is growing up across time. This can be related to the wider coverage the state media gives during religious holidays compared to the private media. As stated in the data presentation part, almost all of the informants agreed that religion is extensively reported during calendar religious holidays, especially in the state media; but is rarely covered at other times. The private media also report religion sporadically for fear of intimidation from religious institutions and for business reasons. As a result, compared to state media, the private ones report religion less even during holidays.

Generally, the growth in number shows that even though religion is still considered to be the least reported topic in the Ethiopian mainstream media, it has increasingly become a point of discussion amongst Ethiopian journalists. Paradoxically enough, the size allotted to religious articles has become increasingly small. The proportion of large-sized religious articles, i.e. articles in any size in the front pages or in more than 2 columns inside the newspapers with one or more images or pictures (large), have decreased across the years. The selected newspapers have rather allotted increasingly more spaces to small-sized religious articles across the years and these articles accounted for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total religious articles in 2008. Thus the direction aspect of mediatization revealed that, religion is becoming more visible in number and less visible in size in the Ethiopian mainstream media across time. This can be supported by findings from the qualitative data in that religious reporting is limited and is rarely reported by journalists in both the state and private media. It is, therefore, safe to consider that there is generally very limited level of mediatization of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media in terms of focus or direction.

It can be inferred that religion can be mediatized when journalists raise various aspects of it as topic. This is because there is widespread agreement among scholars that journalists do not only transfer but also interpret religious issues in their reporting (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). This, however, is considered by journalists mainly in the state media in Ethiopia as being not secular in approach. Journalists are blamed to be non-religious in approach rather than keeping the constitutional approach of secularism. The decreasing proportion of space allotted to religion also indicates that the tendency of mediatization in the Ethiopian mainstream media is limited.

Change across time in terms of the visibility of religion in a certain form or journalistic genre also indicate mediatization of religion. This refers to what Lundby (2009) calls *form* in mediatization. Generally, half of the total religious articles in the newspapers across the selected years appear in the form of news. The proportion of religious articles in the form of news was highest compared to other genres in 1988/92 and 1998. In 2008, however, religious articles appearing in columns, the second highest in total percentages, became the highest. In the Ethiopian context, there are no religious columns devoted to religious issues alone. Rather religious issues appear within social, cultural and political columns reflecting much alternative formatting similar to news and features. Features also accounted for 13 percent of the total religious articles. Yet, the proportion of religious articles appearing in the form of features decreased in between 1988/92 and 2008 by 3 percent. Religious articles rarely appear in the form of debates and editorials.

Generally, being considerate of the minimum level of mediatization in the Ethiopian context, it is safe to think that the transformation across time in terms of the visibility of religious genres indicates that religion has possibility to mediatize in the Ethiopian mainstream media. This can be shown in terms of the total share of religious articles presented in the form of news, columns and features which together accounted for over 9/10 of the total religious articles. When presenting religious articles as news, within columns and as features, journalists actively involve themselves in extensive editorial formatting.

Changes in the visibility of Ethiopian religious traditions also indicate the tendency of mediatization which is identified as *character* by Lundby (2009). As per the 1984 Ethiopian Population Census, followers of EOTC, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism accounted for 54.02 percent, 32.9 percent, 5.48 percent and 0.98 percent of the total Ethiopian population, respectively. As per the 2007 G.C. Ethiopian population census also, followers of EOTC, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism accounted for 43.5 percent, 33.9 percent, 18.6 percent and 0.7 percent of the total Ethiopian population, respectively. Seen in terms of the population percentages, the percentage of religious articles allotted to the two dominant religious traditions –EOTC and Islam - is less by close to 10 percent each.

The dominant religious traditions in Ethiopia, EOTC and Islam, took the share of 35.1 percent and 24 percent of the total number of religious articles, respectively. Also, the appearance of both religious groups slightly declined in percentages across the selected years.

The Protestant churches are not also given proportional amount in the Ethiopian mainstream media. There are about 8 major Protestant groups in Ethiopia. A visit of the coded data revealed,

however, that the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church is the most dominant in the selected newspapers; and, 7 of the total 8 religious articles that are allotted to Protestant Churches were about this specific church while the other 1 goes to MuluWongel (Full Gospel) Church. While the Ethiopian Protestant population accounted for 18.6 percent of the total Ethiopian population in the 2007, the Protestant religious tradition only took the share of 2.2 percent of the total religious articles.

The Ethiopian Catholic Church is also the least visible religious tradition. It might not be surprising to see the Ethiopian Catholic Church represented in less proportion compared to other religious traditions, considering the limited Catholic population in the country. The church's attitude towards promoting itself publicly in terms of what it did was, however, considered as an additional input that contributed to the limitation in its coverage.

On the other hand, religious articles that are not related to one of the Ethiopian religious traditions accounted for 2/3 of the total religious articles and the share of these sorts of religious articles has grown upwards across the years. The proportion of other traditional religious groups from Ethiopian and outside also increased in number all through the years.

This shows that all Ethiopian religious traditions, including the dominant ones, are not given appropriate coverage in line with their respective population proportion. The decreasing tendency of the coverage of the two dominant religious traditions, in line with their population proportion, across the years also disprove the claims that the two Ethiopian dominant religious traditions are getting better space compared to other religious traditions (cf. Berhanu, 2013). The consideration of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as a favoured religious group in the Ethiopian mainstream media seems to also be far from reality when the total amount of coverage is seen in line with the population percentage (cf. Berhanu, 2013).

The decreasing tendency of religious articles representing the dominant religious traditions and the opposite increasing tendency of the percentage of unclassified and other religious articles over the years have indicated that mediatization of religion starts to get its place in the Ethiopian context. However, as stated above, this remark has to be considered together with the general limited level of mediatization in the country.

In sum, the direction aspect of mediatization revealed that religion is considered to be a topic ignored by the mainstream media in Ethiopia. Both the state and private media in Ethiopia consider religion as a topic which is discussed rarely. State media cover religion dominantly during religious holidays, when religious institutions involve in development activities, in peace

and security, and in other issues of national affairs. Generally, Ethiopian state media tend to report religion from socio-cultural and economic perspectives rather than treating it as a topic independently. The private media also pay scant attention to religion.

Even though the number of religious articles is considered limited generally, the transformation across time is tried to be seen in this part. Accordingly, though the visibility of religion increased across time and between all state and private mainstream media in terms of the number of religious articles, the space allotted to religious articles became increasingly small. Religion has also been increasingly visible across time in more mediatized forms of journalistic genres. The character aspect also revealed that almost all Ethiopian religious traditions, including the dominant ones, have gained much less visibility in the Ethiopian mainstream media compared to the respective proportion of their followers in the 1984 and 2007 Ethiopian population census. The numbers of religious articles that are not aligned to one specific religious tradition have, on the other hand, grown up increasingly across time.

4.4.2. Significance of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media

It is discussed above that religion is a neglected subject matter in the Ethiopian mainstream media. Taking this in mind, it is, however, possible to consider how less or how more is religion considered relevant in the country. In the quantitative aspect, it is believed that the prominence of religion in religious articles shows the relative significance of the respective article. Hence, prominence has strong implication to the level of mediatization that is occurring in a given religious article. Religious articles where religion comes as main topic have stronger level of significance and mediatization than those articles where religion comes as additional topic.

Significance of religion is also seen in terms of the three variables used in the visibility of religion; i.e. direction, form and character of religion (Lundby, 2009; Lövheim and Lundby, 2013; Lundby et al. 2018). Seen in this light, the direction aspect shows that the amount of religious articles where religion comes as additional topic (N=241) doubles the number of religious articles where religion appear as main topic (N=121) showing that religion is often considered as secondary to such other issues as terrorism, peace and security, development and national integration.

When the prominence and size of religious articles are considered together across the years, however, it is found that greater than half of the religious articles with religion as main topic appeared in small size. Over 2/3 of the total religious articles where religion appeared as

additional topic are also found to be presented in small size. It is also found that while the proportion of large religious articles with religion as main topic in the Ethiopian mainstream newspapers decreased by slightly over half in between 1988/92 and 2008, a fairly consistent but dominantly small space has been allotted for additional religious articles.

This indicates that, generally, more significant religious articles are given less newspaper space in the Ethiopian newspapers across the years. This goes with the limited attention both the state and private media gave to religion in Ethiopia.

The form aspect of the mediatization of religion indicated that the proportion of religious articles where religion comes as both main and additional topic in the form of news and columns together accounted for over 4/5 of the total religious articles. In the category of religion coming as main topic, while the percentage of columns increased across the years, the percentage of news relatively decreased. Contrary to this, the proportion of religious articles appearing in the form of news is dominant across the years in the additional topic category. Religious articles appearing in the form of features are also the third highest in proportion in both main and additional categories with decreasing tendency in between 1988/92 and 2008 in both categories.

Religious articles in editorials and debates are the least represented forms and both have not shown consistent trend across the years. However, all of them slightly decreased in proportion in between 1988/92 and 2008 in both categories.

Without forgetting the limited level of mediatization in the Ethiopian context, the transformations across time in terms of the form with which the religious articles appear in the mainstream media show that religion has possibility of being mediatized in the Ethiopian mainstream media.

The character trend indicated that the EOTC has both the highest proportion (close to half) in the category of religion as main topic (N=121), compared to other religious traditions, and in the distribution of religious articles within the same category in between 1988/92 and 2008. In this category, Islam is the second highest. Yet, its proportion decreased across the years. The percentage of unclassified religious articles has shown increase in percentages in both main and additional categories in between 1988/92 and 2008. In the category where religion is considered to be additional topic, the percentage of unclassified religious articles also dominated. In this category, the proportion of both EOTC and Islam decreased across the years though these religious traditions are 2nd and 3rd in total percentages, respectively.

Other traditional religious groups accounted for a fairly less percentage in both categories with a decreasing tendency in both categories in between 1988/92 and 2008. While religious articles about Protestant Churches accounted for 3.2 percent of religious articles in the category where religion is considered as main topic, similar articles accounted for 7.1 percent of religious articles amongst similar articles in the additional topic category. It is difficult to observe trends, though for both the Protestant Churches and the Ethiopian Catholic Church are generally the least visible and significant religious traditions in the Ethiopian mainstream media.

The findings suggest that generally the EOTC religious tradition and unclassified religious articles are considered to be increasingly significant, compared to other religious traditions, in terms of their presence as main topic across the years in Ethiopian mainstream media.

4.4.3. Secularism: Guiding principle in reporting religion

Article 11 of the Ethiopian constitution deals with the secular nature of the Ethiopian government. According to this article, there is no state religion in Ethiopia and that the state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs. Basing this article, the state media in Ethiopia produced editorial policy with a section which deals religious reporting by journalists. It is stated in the policy of EBC that religion shall be reported in line with its socio-cultural significance. It is also stated that resources of religious institutions shall be presented in the media in line with their corresponding relevance to tourism. Religious holidays are also stated to be reported fairly and independently by journalists. It also requires the journalists not to reflect their individual religious beliefs both verbally and symbolically in their religious reporting.

State media journalists infer that they do not enter into religious teachings and doctrines in their religious reporting. They also try to separate the cultural from the religious and try to focus on the cultural aspect during their reporting. In order to avoid transmission of religious ideals through the mass media, the journalists in the state media intend to even avoid reporting religious holidays live. State media journalists try all their best to avoid religious reporting independently. They try to see religion in line with peace, security, national development, tourism and national integration.

This view of the journalists towards secularism is, however, challenged. Other journalists and people from the respective religious traditions think that there is widespread confusion on the concept of secularism in Ethiopia. Mentioning their experiences in national meetings, Daniel

Kibret and Tamrat Woldegiorgis emphasized that there is confusion on the concept of secularism in Ethiopia. Frew also stated that being secular does not mean avoiding religious reporting by any means. For him, it rather reflects that the state will not involve in religious decisions made by the respective institutions and that the religious institutions shall not involve in to the enactment of laws and similar activities which are exclusively the job of the government.

The confusion begins from article 11 of the constitution. When it is stated that the state shall not interfere in religious matters, it is not clearly defined or known if it means that the state will not involve even when severe problems happen within the business processes of Ethiopian religious institutions. As to Daniel Kibret, due to this confusion, the two national supervisory organizations, i.e. the Ethiopian Anti Corruption Commission and the General Auditor, do not, for example, check the activities of religious institutions.

What is being seen in the mass media is the reflection of this confusion. Journalists are not literally restricted from reporting religious ideals in the mass media. While there is nothing that prohibits religious reporting and while the government clearly stated that it is not anti-religious by approach, the journalists are hesitant to report religion and they unnaturally try to separate what is cultural from the religious. During religious holidays, for example, the mass media invites guests who are by no means related to the holiday. Presenting renowned artists is common during religious holidays in Ethiopia. This is considered as escaping mechanism from dealing with religion during this time. Presenting such people is considered by the media as keeping the secular line. Due to this approach, the Ethiopian state media journalists are counted as non-religious in approach, not secular. Non-religiosity best explains the state media's attempt of escaping the presentation of religion as an independent topic.

That affects the essence of a certain religious point and hence annoys followers of different religions in Ethiopia. As such, the state media is losing audiences in a mistaken fear of trespassing secularism. Now, different religious institutions are looking for alternative means of getting pertinent information about their religious issues.

Chapter five: Summary, conclusion and recommendation

5.1. Summary

This thesis is mainly intended to study four important themes: visibility of religion, significance of religion, the perception of key media stakeholders about secularism, as a guiding principle of journalism, and the implementation of secularism in the Ethiopian mainstream media. To this end, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods is employed. The qualitative aspect involves in-depth interviews with 11 informants, of whom 6 are experienced journalists who worked for over 10 years in the Ethiopian media industry and 5 are key individuals with considerable media experience from different Ethiopian religions.

The qualitative data revealed that, in general, religion is reported rarely in the Ethiopian mainstream media. Religion is considered to be a neglected topic by both state and private media. The Ethiopian state media often report religion during religious holidays. At other times, religion is often discussed with such other topics as peace, security, tourism, development and national integration. State media journalists try to avoid discussing religious ideals, religious teachings and doctrines during religious reporting. Presentation of the profile of known artists and authors as a norm, extensive coverage of the views of international tourists and local people of other religions during religious holidays are, for example, considered to be mechanisms the Ethiopian state media use to avoid reporting religion. Journalists think involving tourists and people of other religions make religious reporting balanced and freer from favouring a certain religious tradition. However, it is argued that religious holidays are rather celebrated amongst followers of that specific religion and making the day stuffed with people of other religions is not a question of being free and balanced. Rather it is considered to be an attempt of overlooking religion at the expense of being secular. This approach is argued to be explained rather by the concept of non-religion in approach, not being secular.

The incumbent Ethiopian government embodied secularism as its constitutional element. According to Article 11 of the current Ethiopian constitution, state and religion are separate and that the one will not interfere in the affair of the other. Depending on this constitutional principle, the state media produced editorial policy. The editorial policy also makes it clear that religion shall be reported in relation to its relevance in the socio-cultural dynamics of the nation. It has also specified religious holidays, resources of religious institutions that are sources of tourism and development and participation of religious institutions in development activities to

be focused by journalists in religious reporting. The policy also requires journalists to keep their personal belief away in terms of verbal and symbolic expressions during religious reporting.

State media journalists argue that it is worth separating the cultural and the religious so that the cultural become foci of their reporting. They also want to avoid live reporting for it becomes tough to control preaching, prayers and other religious activities, which they think is against the principle of secularism, in time of live coverage of religious events from the spot. Religious conflicts are also not reported in the media until situations become worse and need involvement from the side of the government. Even then only solution-oriented stories are presented. Such stories involve religious leaders themselves and government bodies who try to emphasize on the remedies than on what really happened.

These practices and perceptions of journalists are, however, fiercely criticized by other journalists from the private media and people from different religious institutions in Ethiopia. It is argued that the presentation of only solution-oriented stories make state media reporting reactionary, annoying several believers involved in conflict situations, particularly during times of conflict.

It is also argued that problem is visible in connection with secularism. This problem is further argued to first arise from confusion which emanates from article 11 of the constitution. As to Daniel Kibret and TamratGebregiorgis, lack of common understanding is notable amongst the media elites, politicians and other stakeholders as repeatedly observed in some national meetings. It is argued that further explanation is needed on what it is meant by when it is stated that the state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs. It is not clear if it means that the government will not involve itself even if religious institutions corrupt or ruin the country, etc. Conversely, it is not clear if religious institutions do not involve when the government oppresses the people, when major conflicts happen among people of different ethnic groups, etc. It is further argued that what is seen in the media is reflection of the misunderstanding at a general level.

Otherwise, secularism does not deter reporting religion in the mainstream media. It does not also mean taking out the religious and focusing only on the cultural. It does not also mean that the journalist should control all religious messages during religious holidays which are celebrated publicly. It is rather provision of fair space to all concerned religious institutions, groups and individuals as necessary while avoiding favouritism or unjust avoidance to any one of them. As such, the state media has a duty to serve the public by providing information on matters of which people need information about. In a country where over 95 percent of the population

believe in the presence of one God, trying to avoid religion or to separate it in to cultural and religious - while there is no clearly stated parameter - does not seem to help the media other than letting audiences look for other alternative sources (Sileshie, 2014b).

The private media are also known to report religion sporadically. Actually, the presence of privately owned media in the media market depends on their ability to stand economic challenges. Hence, these media need to select and focus on matters of public interest that could sale their space. In terms of that, Ethiopian private media journalists consider religion to be an important topic to be dealtwith. Rather than focusing on event-based regular reports as in the state media, the private media pay attention to religious stories that are challenging, critical and investigative to religious institutions in Ethiopia. Critical and investigative stories are not commonly taken positively by the concerned religious groups. Religious leaders are blamed by journalists of not cooperating and openly providing information on matters of bad practices and corruption in the business processes of religious institutions. Doing investigations and critiques are also found to be demanding for journalists for it caused legal and even physical threats from the concerned religious groups who are criticized in the stories. Some journalists consider reporting religion to be even worse than dealing with politics, which is also considered another demanding task, in the Ethiopian case. The private media, as a result, get religious reporting difficult. Tamrat also consider that journalists lack the choice and determination of reporting religion in the Ethiopian media. Many newspapers, for example, have chosen not to deal with religion. Religious reporting is not specifically stated, for example, in the editorial policies of notable Ethiopian newspapers – such as, *Reporter*, *Fortune*, *Addis Admass* and *Sendek*.

Both media are also considered to lack trained professionals in religion. In a country where religiosity is primary public identity, trained professionals in reporting any religious issue are thought to be essential. This is, however, a challenge for both the state and private media as they both lack this essential element.

The extent to which religion is visible and significant in the Ethiopian mainstream media is also studied quantitatively using the tools developed by Lövheim and Lundby (2013), who analyzed religion across time and space in the Nordic countries. Mainly, the variables of direction, form and character are employed to see the extent of religious visibility and significance in the Ethiopian mainstream media. Direction refers to the level of focus or degree of attention the media gave towards religion. Form is related to the journalistic genre through which religion is entertained. There are some genres that allow journalists to involve in editorial formatting at a higher level, and those that do in a lower level. Character refers to the level of attention each

religious tradition is given in the media. The quantitative aspect shows the transformation of religious representation, as expressed in terms of the three variables, in the Ethiopian mainstream media across the selected years of 1988/92 Ethiopian Calendar (E.C.), 1998 E.C. and 2008 E.C. Religious articles from one state owned newspaper (*Addis Zemen*) and from two privately owned newspapers (*Reporter* and *Addis Admass*) are considered for the study.

Religious articles for the quantitative study are derived from the selected media reports of religion during the seven annual Ethiopian religious holidays (4 Christian and 3 Muslim holidays) and one more moment when there is no religious holiday. In this study, articles about religion are considered if they were published one week before and one week after each holiday and in an additional two weeks period when there was no religious holiday for at least four weeks before and four weeks after each holiday in the stated years above.

The findings are categorized into those that show visibility and those that show significance of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media. The visibility aspect revealed that during the selected years and times, the three newspapers published 362 total articles; of which 262 are published by the state newspaper *Addis Zemen* and the rest 100 articles by the two privately owned newspapers –*Reporter* and *Addis Admass*– combined. The number of articles has shown upward increase across the years in all of the three newspapers. Even though *Addis Zemen* gave wider space to religion across the years than the two privately owned newspapers combined, the private newspapers seem to grow in number and proportion across the years. The findings suggest that even though religion is still a neglected topic in the Ethiopian mainstream media as indicated by the qualitative data, its visibility as a topic seems to be increasing across time.

This can also be explained further by size, genre and indicated character of each of the religious article. Religious articles could be either large or small in size. Large-sized articles are placed on the front pages of the newspapers in any size, or over two columns with photographs or pictures inside. Small-sized religious articles appear in the inside pages of the newspapers and spread over one or two columns or in less space, including in paragraph or short notice. Religious articles that are small in size are almost double the number of large ones, and there is increasing tendency of small-sized religious articles across the years.

In the Ethiopian context, news stories, religious articles under social, cultural, political columns, features are subject to higher level of editorial formatting by journalists. Editorials and debates appear mainly in traditional form; in other words, in less mediatized forms. Amongst the total religious articles in the Ethiopian newspapers, half are presented in the form of news. Religious

articles published under columns account for 1/3 of the articles. Features follow in number. Religious articles do not frequently appear in the form of editorial. It is also very rare to find religious articles in the form of debates in Ethiopia. This indicated that most religious articles appear in more mediatized forms in the Ethiopian mainstream media.

It is also found that all Ethiopian religious traditions are given less coverage compared to their population proportion. Even though the two dominant religious traditions in Ethiopia, EOTC and Islam, gained relatively higher amount of coverage, compared to other religious traditions, they are both underrepresented. The consideration of EOTC as an institution holding central position in the mainstream media seems to be far from reality (cf. Berhanu, 2013). The amount of religious articles that are not related to one of the Ethiopian religious traditions, on the other hand, accounted for about 1/3 of the total religious articles. While both EOTC and Islam slightly decreased in percentage, the proportion of unclassified stories has shown upward increase across the years. Ethiopian Protestant churches are also rarely represented by the Ethiopian mainstream media. The Ethiopian Catholic Church is found to be the least represented religious tradition in Ethiopia.

Significance is studied quantitatively in terms of the prominence of religious articles. Religion may appear as either a main or additional topic in a certain religious article. In this research work, amongst the 362 articles, while religion is presented as main topic in 121 of the articles, it is presented as additional topic in the rest 241 articles. This shows that the amount of religious articles where religion appears as additional topic surpassed those articles with religion as main topic by double. This implies religion is often considered as a secondary topic to other issues. The number of religious articles that appear in small size is both greater and the tendency of more small articles increased upwards across the selected years as religion appeared both as main and additional topic indicating that many significant stories gaining increasingly less newspaper spaces. Amongst the total religious articles where religion appeared as main topic, over 80 percent are presented in the form of news and within columns, each with almost equal share. The proportion of religious articles that appeared within social, cultural and political columns with religion as main topic increased across the years. The tendency of religious articles in the form of news stories increased as additional topic and decreased as main topic across the years. Religious articles appearing in the form of features, editorials and debate have not shown consistent trend across the years in terms of prominence. Amongst the religious traditions, the EOTC is presented in almost half of the religious articles where religion appeared as main topic (N=121). Its number also increased significantly in between 1988/92 and 2008 Ethiopian

Calendar. Islam also accounted for 26.4 percent of the total share of articles where religion appeared as main topic. Yet, its proportion in the main article category decreased across the years. Unclassified religious articles also accounted for 16.5 percent of the total religious articles in the main category. Unclassified religious stories are the highest especially in the additional topic category (N-241) and its proportion is also increasing across the years. EOTC and Islam are also presented fairly well as additional topic across the years. This all indicate that generally religion considered secondary and is given limited significance in the mass media. Relatively, amongst the religious traditions, the level of significance given to EOTC is better than other religious traditions. Islam is also given fairly well level of significance in the mass media. It is, however, equally noted that unclassified stories are considered third significant religious articles in Ethiopian mainstream media and this category is particularly identified to appear frequently as an additional topic religion.

5.2. Conclusion

This research is intended to mainly address how visible and significant religion is in the Ethiopian mainstream media. It is also sought to assess the theoretical understanding and the practical implementation of secularism in the Ethiopian mainstream media. By taking 3 newspapers that represent the Ethiopian mainstream media and by selecting 11 key informants, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods are used. Finally, it is concluded that:

- Religion is generally a neglected topic in the Ethiopian mainstream media.
- Ethiopian state media journalists often cover religion during religious holidays. At other times, they report religion in connection with peace, security, development, tourism and national integration. State media also avoid covering religious conflict unless the conflict gets worse and reaches to the level it needs the involvement of the government. Even then, the media prefers to present solution-oriented stories about the issue. That kind of reporting is considered to be reactionary and offending to followers who are involved in the conflict.
- Secularism seems to be confused as a concept at both a general level and particularly among journalists in the state media. Due to this, journalists in the state media lack the courage to report religion independently.
- Private media journalists also report religion sporadically. Even though there seems to be interest to report on investigative and critical reports towards bad practices and

corruption activities of religious institutions, due to challenges from the respective religious institutions and lack of understanding of religion as a subject matter and commitment towards the discipline deterred their initiatives.

- Both the state and private media have no professionals who are skilled in reporting religion.
- Even though it is pointed out in the qualitative data that religious reporting is generally rare, the specific tendency of the visibility and significance of religion is studied quantitatively. The visibility aspect is done by considering religious articles from *Addis Zemen*, *Reporter* and *Addis Admass* newspapers in two weeks time during the seven annual religious holidays and in one moment when there was no religious holiday in the years 1988/92, 1998 and 2008 Ethiopian Calendar. The findings revealed that, 362 total articles were published concerning religion across the stated years. Across the years, the number of religious articles increased at all newspapers showing that religion is increasingly becoming visible as a topic of discussion amongst journalists. However, it is getting increasingly less spaces. Religion is also being visible dominantly in the form of news which takes half of the total share of the stories. Religious articles appearing within social, cultural or political columns also accounted for 1/3 of the total articles. Religious articles in the form of features, editorials and debates accounted for less than 10 percent each. All religious traditions in Ethiopia are also found to be underrepresented compared to their population size. EOTC and Islam have, however, gained relatively better spaces compared to others. This makes the claims that EOTC gained a central position in the mainstream media questionable (cf. Berhanu, 2013). Protestant Churches are also less visible. Ethiopian Catholic Church is the least represented religious group in Ethiopia. This might be related to its prior perception that the church should not express all its activities in the mass media due to religious reasons.
- The significance aspect also revealed that double the number of religious articles are found to be those with religion as additional topic showing that religion is often considered to be secondary to other subject matters such as terrorism, peace and security, development and tourism. Most of the religious articles in both main and additional topic categories are given increasingly small spaces indicating that many significant stories gaining increasingly less newspaper space. Amongst the total articles where religion appeared as main topic, 4/5 of them were presented in the form of news or within columns. The trend to articles within columns as main topic has also shown upward development across the years indicating that significant religious articles are

dominantly and increasingly appearing in relatively more mediatized formats. EOTC, compared to other religious institutions, appear in close to half of the stories with religion as main topic (N=121) across the selected years. Islam is also given relatively fair significance when compared to other religious groups. Unclassified stories are mostly presented as additional topic and hence much of them are considered to be less significant. Protestant Churches and the Ethiopian Catholic Church have not shown consistent trend. Generally though, both Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church are less represented.

5.3. Recommendations

Findings of this study revealed that religion is rarely reported in Ethiopia. This is partly because there are practical challenges from the side of journalism professionals in particular and the media industry in general and partly because of prevalent confusion amongst stakeholders on the essence of secularism. It is believed that doing the following might improve reports of religion in Ethiopia:

- Journalism schools in Ethiopia should take religion as an important aspect of their journalistic training. In a country where over 95 percent of the population believes in the presence of God, it is improper to just eliminate religious reporting from the academic sphere. Hence, religion should have a share in the curricula of different journalism training institutions, including Universities. That provides the journalists with both the skills and understanding of reporting diversified religious groups in a multi-religious nation. It might also increase the interest of trainees to involve in reporting religion.
- Secularism has to be clarified as a concept at different governmental levels. The meaning and extent of separation between the state and religious institutions has to be clearly defined by joint sessions of academic institutions, legal authorities and religious institutions. The media should also clearly define in their editorial policy as to what it means to be secular when a certain journalist report religion. How would a journalist separate the cultural from the religious, for example? Whose task is it to make the separation, if it is needed at all? After all, can a journalist separate the cultural and the religious from a certain religion? A lot of related questions could be raised. And, their answers can be excessively debatable. Hence, a lot has to be done in clarifying the

concept of secularism at both a general level as recommended above and at media level. That time, it is at least possible to see if secularism is essential, at all, to the Ethiopian context.

- Religious institutions should open their doors and should provide the necessary information to journalists who want to investigate corruption and other related practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of informants

No	Name of Interviewee	Affiliation	Position in The Media/Institution	Date of Interview
1	Daniel Kibret	Agios Publishing	Spiritual researcher; blogger; freelance journalist in the mainstream media; preacher in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC)	September 19, 2017
2	MessaudAdem	Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia	Public relations and documentation head	September 20, 2017
3	Daniel Seifemichael	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church	Theology professor at Holy Trinity College; Director of EOTC Satellite Television (EOTC TV)	September 21, 2017
4.	Eyob Yishaq	Ethiopian Evangelical Church MekaneYesus (EECMY)	Peace Office Coordinator	September 25, 2017
5.	Anonymous	Ethiopian Catholic Church	Anonymous	September 14, 2017
6.	TamratGebre-Giorgis	<i>Fortune</i> newspaper	Managing Editor	September 18, 2017
7.	GebreamlakTeka	EBC – Ethiopian Radio	Department Head	August 31, 2017
8.	Daniel Woldekidan	<i>Addis Zemen</i> newspaper	Deputy Editor	August 29, 2017
9.	FerewAbebe	<i>Sendek</i> newspaper	Editor-in-Chief	August 28, 2017

10.	BirukYared	EBC - Television	News coordinator	August 28, 2017
11.	Anonymous	Private newspaper	Anonymous	August 29, 2017

Appendix 2: Interview guide

1. Interview guide for key people from different religions

1.1. English version

- a. To what extent do Ethiopian mainstream media cover religion in Ethiopia?
- b. Which issues do journalists focus on when they report religion?
- c. How fair are different religious traditions in Ethiopia covered?
- d. How appropriate are the sources used in the religious reports of Ethiopian journalists?
- e. How do Ethiopian mainstream media journalists utilize information from religious leaders in their journalistic work?
- f. How do you explain the relationship between mainstream media and religious institutions in Ethiopia?
- g. How do you reach the media to get your messages transmitted whenever necessary?
- h. How different/similar do state and private media cover religion?
- i. How do you explain the transformation of religious reporting across the past 10 to 15 years?
- j. How interested are religious leaders to provide the media with religious information?
- k. What are the media up to in employing secularism as a guiding principle of their journalistic activity?
- l. What does secularism imply in the context of the Ethiopian mainstream media?
- m. What opportunities or threats do you see in the implementation of secularism in Ethiopia as a consequence of the political situation?

1.2. Amharic version

- a. የኢትዮጵያ ብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ሀይማኖትን ምን ያህል ይዘግባሉ?
- b. ጋዜጠኞች ሀይማኖትን ሲዘግቡ የሚያነሱት ጭብጦች ምን ምን ላይ ያተኩራሉ?
- c. የኢትዮጵያ ብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ለተለያዩ ሀይማኖታዊ ተቋማት ተመጣጣኝ ሽፋን ይሰጣሉ?
- d. የኢትዮጵያ ብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ሀይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን በተመለከተ ዘገባ ሲያጠናቅቁ ሀይማኖቱ የሚመለከተውን አካል ምን ያህል ይጠቀማሉ?
- e. ሀይማኖቱ የሚመለከተው አካል ለጋዜጠኞች የሚሰጠው መረጃ በብዙሀን መገናኛዎች እንዴት ይስተናገዳል?
- f. ሚዲያው ከሀይማኖት ተቋማት ጋር ያለውን ግንኙነት እንዴት ይገልጹታል?
- g. ለሕዝብ መድረስ ያለበት መረጃ ሲኖራችሁ ብዙሀን መገናኛውን እንዴት ታገኙታላችሁ?
- h. ሀይማኖታዊ ዘገባዎች በመንግስትና በግል የብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ሲዘግቡ እንዴት ነው?

- i. ሀይማኖታዊ ዘገባዎችን በብዙሐን መገናኛዎች መዘገብን በተመለከተ በዘመናት የታዩ ለውጦች ካሉ አሁን ካለው ጋር በማነፃፀር ቢያብራሩልኝ?
- j. የሀይማኖት አባቶች ለብዙሐን መገናኛው መረጃ የማቅረብ ፍላጎትና ተነሳሽነት ምን ይመስላል?
- k. ሴኩላሪዝምን እንደ መርህ ተከትሎ ሀይማኖታዊ ዘገባዎችን ከመምረጥና ለህዝብ ከማቅረብ አንፃር የኢትዮጵያ ብዙሐን መገናኛዎች ምን እየሰሩ ነው?
- l. ሴኩላሪዝም በኢትዮጵያ ብዙሕን መገናኛ ሁኔታ ምን ማለት እንደሆነ ቢያብራሩልኝ?
- m. የአገሪቱ የፖለቲካ ሁኔታ ሴኩላሪዝምን ከመተግበር አንጻር ያለው አዎንታዊ ወይም አሉታዊ ሚና ካለ ቢያብራሩልኝ?

2. Interview guide for journalists

2.1. English version

- a. How do you explain the relationship between religion and mass media in Ethiopia?
- b. When do you report religious issues in your media?
- c. Where do you collect your religious stories from?
- d. What are the guiding principles when you report religion? Does your editorial policy specifically deal with religious reporting?
- e. How far do you think you go to satisfy the need of your audiences in reporting religious issues?
- f. Do you think that religion is reported enough in Ethiopia? Why?
- g. How fair do you think the Ethiopian mainstream media fairly cover different religious traditions in Ethiopia?
- h. How different/similar do state and private media cover religion?
- i. How interested are religious leaders to provide the media with religious information?
- j. What are the media up to in employing secularism as a guiding principle of their journalistic activity?
- k. What does secularism imply in the context of the Ethiopian mainstream media?
- l. What opportunities or threats do you see in the implementation of secularism in Ethiopia as a consequence of the political situation?

- a. በኢትዮጵያ ሀይማኖትና ብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ያላቸው ግንኙነት ምን ይመስላል?
- b. በናንተ ጋዜጣ ሀይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን የምትዘግቡት መቼ ነው?
- c. የሀይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን ዘገባዎችን ስታጠናቅሩ የመረጃ ግብዓታችሁ ምንድን ነው? ከየት ትሰበስቡታላችሁ?
- d. ሀይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን ለመዘገብ የምትጠቀሙበት ተቋማዊ መመሪያ አላችሁ? የኤዲቶሪያል ፖሊሲያችሁ ምን ይላል? (በፕዲኤፍ ካለ ብትልክልኝ)? ከሱ አንጻር ዘገባዎችን እንዴት እየሰራችሁ ነው?
- e. ለጋዜጣችሁ አንባቢ ሀይማኖተኞች ሃይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን ከማቅረብ አንጻር ጋዜጣችሁ እንዲሁም መላው የኢትዮጵያ ብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ምን ያህል ተገዝዋል?

- f. ሀይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮች በኢትዮጵያ መገናኛ ብዙሀን በበቂ ሁኔታ ተዘግበዋል ብለህ ታስባለህ? መልሱ አላስብም ከሆነ ለምን?
- g. በአገሪቱ ያሉት የተለያዩ ሀይማኖቶች (ቤተ እምነቶች፣ የሀይማኖት አባቶች፣ ምእመናን፣ ሃይማኖታዊ ሁነቶች) በበቂና በተመጣጣኝ ሁኔታ ከመዘገብ አንጻር የብዙሀን መገናኛዎች እያደረጉት ያለው ሚና ምን ይመስላል?
- h. ሀይማኖታዊ ዘገባዎች በመንግስትና የግል የብዙሀን መገናኛዎች በበቂና በተገቢው ሁኔታ ከመዘገብ አንጻር የአገሪቱ የፖለቲካ ሁኔታ የፈጠረው ተጽእኖ ካለ ብታብራራልኝ?
- i. ሀይማኖታዊ ዘገባዎች በመንግስትና በግል የብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ሲዘገቡ እንዴት ነው?
- j. የሀይማኖት አባቶች ለብዙሀን መገናኛው መረጃ የማቅረብ ፍላጎትና ተነሳሽነት ምን ይመስላል?
- k. ሴኩላሪዝምን እንደ መርህ ተከትሎ ሀይማኖታዊ ዘገባዎችን ከመምረጥና ለህዝብ ከማቅረብ አንጻር የኢትዮጵያ ብዙሀን መገናኛዎች ምን እየሰሩ ነው?
- l. ሴኩላሪዝም በኢትዮጵያ ብዙሀን መገናኛ ሁኔታ ምን ማለት እንደሆነ ቢያብራራልኝ?
- m. የአገሪቱ የፖለቲካ ሁኔታ ሴኩላሪዝምን ከመተግበር አንጻር ያለው አዎንታዊ ወይም አሉታዊ ሚና ካለ ቢያብራራልኝ?