"Human Existence, Religions, and the Digital World."

Public lecture in commemoration of World Interfaith Harmony Week
University of Melbourne, 2nd February 2016

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Thank you to Religions for Peace Victoria and Melbourne University Chaplaincy for the invitation and opportunity to speak on this occasion of the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony week.

In the invitation, I was asked if I could provide some perspectives on the relationship of religion, violence, and the media. The place and role of media comes in a lot of the current talk about religion and the threats of violence: uses being made of media by religious groups to recruit and promote their causes, by other religious groups to challenge them, and by security agencies to track and counter them. In my address today, I want to unpack some of those issues.

I come to this analysis as a scholar of media and religion, researching and teaching in a university school of media and communication. Most of my research is within a wider framework of the interaction of media and religion in general from a secular perspective. My more recent work has been on the historical interaction of media and Christianity in particular, and most of my examples come from that specific research focus.

How should we think about the relationship between religion and media?

What we think about the interaction of religion with media is heavily influenced by our attitudes towards the media. In any analysis, therefore, it is important to make explicit the presumptions we bring to the analysis. Let me look at three frameworks that have been influential in thinking about the relation of media and religion.

The instrumentalist paradigm

This paradigm, that was dominant through much of the twentieth century, conceived of media primarily as tools to be used to communicate our messages. From within this paradigm, a vast amount of research was done and is still; being done on media uses, media influence, and media effects.

Though this singular view of media has been largely superseded in media studies, it is still a common one in the thinking of religious leaders

and religious scholars. One of the reasons for that is that it provides support for the common religious practices of proclamation and evangelisation, and the theological view that religious leaders are the ones who have the responsibility and authority to decide what the distinctive revelations, texts and beliefs of the religion are, and to communicate these to their followers. Media in this view are an instrumental question of how those religious messages are best communicated.[1]

Let me illustrate this. A number of years back I taught for 20 years at a Chridstian theological school. In those ten years, I taught only one course on media – and I taught that just three times. The course was in the section of the curriculum called "Applied Theology," which was a small number of elective courses where students could study how to apply what they had learned in the core courses of Biblical Studies, Church History and Systematic Theology. Because students also had to fit in other practical courses such as religious education, pastoral care, administration and evangelism, I never had more than five students in my media course.

I don't know if theological curricula are any different today, but it reflects the common theological view that the truths of religious faith have their own distinct sources and origins which are unconnected with media. The idea that the truths themselves may have been shaped by the processes of communication used to articulate them, was never entertained.

The Mediatization of Religion

A second perspective on media that has become influential today is diagonally opposite from this, a theory of mediatization.

In this view, which builds on media perspectives that emerged in the 1950's, media are seen as being so ubiquitous and so functionally integrated that they have become a powerful and highly independent institution that is transforming, even determining, the character of everyday practices, social relations, cultural values and institutions in line with its own media logics, technological demands and economic requirements.

In this view, religion today is becoming mediatized. The representations of religious issues in society no longer originate from religious institutions but from media sources, or religious issues are channeled through media sources in a way that transforms them into mere spectacle, drama, comedy, or entertainment.

The Danish scholar Stig Hjarvard argues that under the impact of mediatization, religion today has become banal - concerned with sensationalism, superstition or primitive concerns rather the serious concerns of larger religious texts or institutions.[2]

The theory of mediatization has been contentious, but it's a view often reflected in the statements of religious leaders, even if they haven't heard of the term. Part of the reason for its appeal is the support it gives to the view that religious leaders and religious institutions are the ones who should be determining what is true about religion, not the media. It also supports the view that one of the problems facing religion today is that people are being distracted or lead astray from genuine religious faith by false religious ideas they're getting through television, the internet, video games, or social media.

You can see this view in a United States church campaign against excessive media use on the grounds that it was making young people vulnerable to corrupting influences, causing psychological problems, and distracting them from genuine religious activities. Sounds familiar, doesn't it. The point of interest is, that particular religious anti-media campaign was organised in the late nineteenth-century, and the damaging media use they were concerned about was the increased popularity of the novels of Charles Dickens.

Certainly media are influential in the way we assemble information and construct our world views. It is inaccurate, though, to talk about "media" as if it is just one thing, as if all media we access and use have one single common logic or one single set of values, or as if people are passive victims of media rather than selective and intentional users of media.

And, as I demonstrate in my historical study of media and Christianity, From Jesus to the Internet, it's also inaccurate to talk about the religious faiths we have inherited today as if they haven't themselves been shaped by the media alignments and uses of media they have made throughout their historical development.

Religions as mediated phenomena

For these reasons, a more nuanced view is necessary, one that sees religious faiths not as unmediated or media-neutral practices, but as taking form in particular cultures of communication which, as well as providing the means for communicating the ideas of the religion, have also shaped the religion's development and become part of the religion's identity and values.

Because how we communicate is such an unconscious part of our being, this contribution made by media to the identity and values of religion is largely invisible. Who was it that said, the fish doesn't see the water it swims in.

These unconscious practices and values generally only become apparent when new ways of communicating come along that do things differently. Let me give several historical examples.

For most of us, writing is one of the most fundamental and least technological forms of media. It's illuminating to note, therefore, that well into the third century of Christianity, there was still strong opposition to writing down Christian teachings. The reasons for this opposition are essentially media-related, though they also contain theological and ethical implications.

One objection was that **the personal human voice** was seen as more appropriate for communicating faith in a personal God than the impersonal, detached medium of writing. If information about God was communicated in an impersonal medium, then God would soon become impersonal. Another objection was that there was **no way of predicting** how Christian teachings that were written down would be used. Without a teacher present, anybody could read written Christian teachings whether they were ready for it or not, and there was no way of preventing an enemy from using the written information in a damaging way – a problem, incidentally, that Socrates also had with writing. Some people argued that if you couldn't see the person doing the writing, how could you tell if the author **was inspired or not**. They argued that **Jesus didn't write**, and if Jesus didn't see the need to write, why should his followers? And a final concern was that if Christian teachings were written, then those Christians who were illiterate – and at that stage it was around 95% - even if they were wise, would not be able to teach.

The Egyptian Christian teacher, Clement of Alexandria, in the first chapter of one of his books addressed these objections through what we would see today as a concept of media complementarity, seeing both oral and written teaching as working hand in hand in a total process.

Clement's view won out, and as Christianity developed and spread, writing grew in importance. But in the process of adapting itself to this new media culture, Christianity also changed, and the case put by the objectors turned out to be quite accurate. In time, being able to read and write became an essential requirement of being a leader or teacher within Christianity, and those who could read and write and became Christians were put on a fast track into Christian leadership. In the process the hierarchical structuring of prestige and power that was associated with the literate elite in the wider culture, was reproduced within Christianity. Under the impact of writing, the concept of an inclusive community and leadership that was modeled by the illiterate Jesus, was replaced by a hierarchical church.

A second example is that of the adoption of printing in Islam. Printing was not adopted within Islamic practice until several hundred years after it was adopted in Christianity. A colleague at the University of Colorado, Nabil

Echchaibi, provides an analysis of the reasons for this. Let me quote one of his passages in full.

> "Historians concur that the late introduction of print in the Muslim world (in the 19th century) was not due to the inaccessibility of printing presses or to an irrevocable phobia of mechanical technologies… at the heart of this four-century long resistance was a deep preoccupation with the impact of print on the very essence of Islamic modes of communication and transmission of religious piety and learning. Print undermined not only the substance of communication, but also its orality, its ethics, and the aesthetic values of what gave knowledge its rhetorical strength and authority. The orality of the Quran, its auditory cadence, and the ways in which it was learned through memorizing, rehearsing, and reading aloud largely conditioned the way knowledge in all other fields was approached. Writing was suspicious precisely because the reader was forced to experience learning detached from its source and bereft of the rhetorical cues of face-to-face communication."[3]

Within Christianity, similar media and religious shifts, and subsequent changes to the religion, can be seen in the alignment of Martin Luther with the new technologies and businesses of printing, the adoption of the media of popular culture by English and American Evangelicals in the 18th and 19th century, and many others.

I would argue, therefore, that the way to understand what is happening today is not that people's use of new media are undermining genuine religion, nor that religion is becoming mediatized and reduced to banality. What we are seeing, **yet again**, is a shift taking place in inherited religious identities and values that were formed within and sustained by particular media practices and values; to something new under the impact of new media technologies and practices and the reshaping of the communication web of our cultures.

The digital shift

Let's flesh this out a bit. What are some of the key elements of change being brought by transition to a digital world, and in what ways are they challenging inherited religious perspectives and traditions.

The Jesuit scholar, Walter Ong, has proposed that the influence media change exerts on social identities, structures and traditions is due to three key characteristics of media: how they handle information, the sort of social relationships they require or enable; and the way in which they address and engage our physical senses.

Information

Different ways of communicating are interested in different sorts of information and handle information differently. Because the selection, processing, storage and reproduction of information is central to the construction of social thought and social understanding, changes in media have a ripple effect across a society, and impact on such things as patterns of religious thinking, how religious meaning is constructed, and how religious thought is engaged with. How meaning is created and passed on in peasant or working class cultures, for example, are quite different from literate cultures, and are becoming quite different again in digital cultures.

One of those changes is in the volume of information that is now being produced and is accessible no matter where you are. We no longer live in an environment from which we draw information – we are living in an environment that is competitively informational and fast. This has created the necessity for all of us to develop new methods for survival and prospering in this informational flood. It is necessary to establish your own criteria for deciding what information is important to you or not, placing yourself in the flow of information to ensure you remain aware of what's going on, and skimming that information flow for relevance rather than giving all information considered attention.

New criteria have become important in this process of fast information management. One is **relevance** - is this information relevant to what I'm looking for, what I need, and where I'm going? A second is **attractiveness**, in its literal sense of catching our attention or appealing to our interests. The third is **accessibility** – is this something I can readily access? What isn't relevant, attractive and readily accessible is quickly passed over. The quick delete or archive button has become not only a survival mechanism, but a metaphor for the age. We all depart from these for different reasons at different times, but they're the rule of thumb.

Unlike written or printed documents that were a central element in our previous education, management and religious systems, digital information is readily changeable. Changing the text was also done with writing, of course – there are numerous scribal curses found in ancient documents warning people against what God will do to them if they change the text. Digital text not only allows the ready change of the text, it invites that sort of reader participation. It can be quickly cut and pasted by the receiver to give it new words, hash-tagged to give it social meaning, given new visuals that change the senses of the text, or easily reduce serious matters to trivia or magnify trivia out of proportion.

Furthermore, everything that enters the digital domain can be difficult to remove and can be searched and discovered. Political, social and religious

reputations and authority that are built on controlling information to present a particular public persona are becoming difficult to maintain.

These changes are having significant impacts on religious organisations that are built on the control and stability of text. Let me give two examples.

The power that religious organisations were able to exert in the past through in-house secrecy and control of information to cover-up sexual abuse by religious leaders, has been subverted by the redistribution of informational power that Google, Facebook and Twitter has made available to the common person to put their case.[4]

A second aspect of religious practice challenged by this media-based informational shift is the practice of theology. What theologians and other church leaders have not been prepared to acknowledge, in my experience, is that theology as we know it is a specific media practice that is symbiotic with the commercial printing industry and its associated book-based institutions. The rapid changes taking place in the industries of printing in the wake of digital and internet transformations are having major implications for print-based practices, such as education and how religions define themselves theologically. The highly respected American church historian, Martin Marty, made a prophetic observation in 1989, the year incidentally that the Internet became available commercially. He wrote:

> *"It is time to say that theological expression was reliant upon the stable, purchasable, book-length literary products of theologians in community within free societies. Those were books written by people whose vocation climaxed in reading and writing them. Now they present a fragile, endangered species…Technologically, economically, politically, religiously, and in respect of status, conception and the use of time, the concept of theology expressed through **a moderate diversity of books** is called into question by hyper-modern and counter-modern tendencies."[5]*

That does not mean that theology has become irrelevant. But how it is done, the criteria by which theological ideas are evaluated, and how they may be best communicated in order to be relevant, is changing dramatically.

Relationships

The second way in which religions are being challenged by digital technologies is in the transformations they are making to the concept and formation of social relationships and, by extension, to the structures and practices of social institutions, social authority, and political order.

I don't need to make you aware of this - you are dealing with it already. Our closest work relationships are not with the person in the office beside us, but with networks of colleagues scattered around the world. The people most people have most interaction with, and seek recognition and

advice from, are not people they meet face-to-face, but their Facebook friends. It is largely accepted, though also challenged, that it is okay to interrupt a coffee with friends to check your texts, emails, or Facebook posts when your smartphone beeps.

What can seem like a rampant individualism is more like a collective individualism, built on creating and renewing one's individual persona and presence within networked global collectives. Community has become more functional, as have relationships.

This shift in the media structures of social relationship is having major impacts on religions that have been built around an infrastructure of geographical communities that met a variety of needs for their followers: information, social contact and interaction, social identity, and practical support.

Most of those functions are now being provided for in other ways. Religious authority that was built on being the source of information and the appointed leader of those strong functional communities is losing its wider credibility, undermined further by the recent exposures of hypocrisy, criminal behaviour and what are seen as self-serving actions of religious organisations.

Authority again has to be earned, and new criteria for being recognised as a person of authority now apply - again. Interestingly, the form of authority that is emerging is one with its roots in an old media culture - oral, embodied, charismatic authority. The phenomenon of Donald Trump is a good indicator of this.

Sensory experience

The third major change being brought by digital media is in its sensory qualities. In difference from previous writing and printing-based media practices, digital media bring a sensory experience that is more visual, more auditory, more physically interactive and immersive. As a simple example, libraries are quiet, because reading books is a quiet experience (well it is now, it wasn't always). Put a desk of video games in a library and you will change the sensory environment immediately.

The sensory engagement of digital technologies is a crucial factor in their development. The rapidly expanding industries of design are all built on this realisation: it makes a difference how a technology of communication engages our eyes, our ears, our touch, our bodies. Technology companies like Apple, for example, put vast amounts of money into design of their products because they know that the physical experience of an iPhone – what the device looks like, how it feels in your hand, what the screen looks like, how easily and dependably it responds to the touch of your fingertip -

are as important as the functions it performs. Some people build their identity around the integrity of their smartphone.

Significant work has now been done on how the sensory experiences and connections a person has within a religious environment are crucial in the meaning the person gains from the religion, and the connections they make between the religious ideas and rituals and their daily lives.[6] Change the sensory nature of the environment people live in, however, and you will begin to change the meaning or relevance they draw from the sensory environment provided by the religion and the meaning people draw from that environment.

If you want a Christian experience of what I'm talking about, then I suggest next Sunday you go to the 8.30am eucharistic service at St Francis or St Paul's, and then go to the 10.00am service at Hillsong or one of the Pentecostal churches in Richmond - and **feel** the difference.

Let me then explore some of the implications of seeing religion as a changing mediated phenomenon in considering two current issues. One is the question of the relationship of media to religious violence and the prevention of religious violence, and the other is the prospects for religion in a digital age.

Media and religious violence

One thing we need to keep in mind in thinking about media and religious violence is that media reporting of violence is selective and disproportionate. Novel forms of violence, spectacular violence, or violence that fits current newsworthiness, is much more likely to be reported by news media than other types of violence.

It is valuable therefore, to keep the representation of religious terrorism in perspective. Certainly the suffering by people in the regions of current conflict is horrific. In Australia, though, the greater terrorism we face is not terrorism from Islamist groups such as ISIL or Al-Qaeda, it is terrorism perpetrated by Australian men against Australian women. More than one woman a week in Australia is murdered, not by a Muslim terrorist, but by an Australian man, the vast majority of them Christian. Many more than that number of women are terrorized and beaten on a daily basis. The corollary for social policy is that the greater threat of recruitment for terrorist purposes **we** face as a society, is not recruitment of disaffected young people to overseas terrorist groups, it is the recruitment of young Australian males to the attitude that they can terrorize or if necessary murder women with whom they cannot get their way.

It is valuable for us also to remember that the people most under threat in Australia from religious terrorism at present are not Christians but

Muslim Australians: 90 percent of the victims of ISIL activities are Muslim, and eight times as many Muslims as non-Muslims have been the victims of al-Qaeda activities. Peaceful Muslim Australians suffer further by being held vicariously responsible for activities of extremists they are in strong disagreement with, in a way Christians are not held responsible for the actions of extreme right Christian groups in the U.S., for example.

Second, the effectiveness of religion-based groups such as ISIL and Al-Qaeda is due to their recognising these operative news criteria, and being prepared to stage a number of spectacular media events that caught that media attention and thrust their existence into global public consciousness. To this point it has been a very effective media strategy. I share the view expressed by others that the more media coverage and disproportionate political response given to them, the more their aims are achieved.

But this use of media by religious groups to instigate and promote violence is not particularly new. Numerous instances of deliberate religious uses of media for violent purposes can be found in the history of most religions. Let me give two Christian examples.

Roman Catholic instigated Christian crusades, which ran for more than five hundred years and were directed not only against Muslims but also against Catholic enemies in Europe and North Africa, involved carefully planned and managed media strategies. The first crusade, called by Pope Urban II in the 11th century primarily for his own political purposes, involved **extensive lobbying of political and religious leaders**, an **extensive letter writing campaign** which included descriptions "imagined atrocities perpetrated by Muslims against Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem."[7] When the ground had been prepared, Urban held **a formal crusade launch** in the French town of Clermont, including a campaign speech by Urban in which he reiterated the desecration and destruction of Christian holy places and graphic descriptions of the suffering of Christian pilgrims at the hands of Muslims. For those who enlisted in his crusade, Urban promised **spiritual indulgences** or full remission of their sins in the afterlife (sounds awfully similar to ISIL, doesn't it). He also suggested that the crusade would solve the endemic problems of social violence in European communities by sending young Christian men to kill Muslims instead of killing other Christians.

As the crusade concept developed, so also did the effectiveness of the media strategies. [SLIDE} **A general executive office** for crusade management was established in the Papal Office. **Executive boards** were established in almost every catholic province, to manage all aspects of crusade organisation and promotion. **Local events** with dignitaries were organised and people were forced to attend to ensure a good crowd. **Aids**

were developed to facilitate coordination of messages and local officials were provided with model sermons, manuals of themes, and examples that could be referred to. **Written eye-witness accounts of terror** were produced and circulated to promote the rightness of the cause and the victories being achieved. One particularly graphic account was the widely circulated eyewitness account of the first crusade by Raymond d'Aguilier:

> *Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies, others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers, others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses… in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies…[8]*

As a second example, the graphic videos produced by ISIL have brought international horror and outrage, yet such publicly mediated executions for the purposes of creating religious terror and control also have numerous historical precedents. One can cite, for example, the Christian event called the *auto-da-fé*, or act of faith, a public spectacle carried out in various places from the 13th to the 19th century, in which those found to be a heretic, free thinker, witch or sorcerer, were publicly paraded, formally sentenced, and publicly executed. The events were carefully scripted ritual dramas designed to instill fear and enforce subservience. Bireley speaks of autos-da-fé in Spain lasting two to three days[9]. In 1239, a reported seven thousand people were present when 183 people from the Cathari movement were, as one report says, "exterminated to the triumph of holy church."[10] The burning alive in public of the condemned was an expected part of the proceedings, and concerns were expressed by organisers that attendance at the events would drop off if there were no executions. It wasn't just a medieval phenomenon - the last *auto-da-fé* was held in Mexico in 1858. What is interesting is the visual similarity of media representations of the auto-da-fé and those of similar ISIL public executions.

While it is true that we cannot tar all religions with the brush of its extremists, it is wrong also for advocates or followers of any religion simply to ignore or dismiss the evil religions have done as if it doesn't really count, or it's an aberration, or isn't really the true religion. What I came to realise afresh in the historical study I've just done is how violent Christianity through its history has been. The number of Christians martyred for their faith is nothing compared to the number of people killed by Christians in the name of their faith. This is not just violence done by people who are not

"good" Christians, but by people who have been held up as exemplary Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians because of what they achieved.

As is essential for a perpetrator of domestic violence, it needs to be honestly acknowledged that there are things in most religions that make them **liable** to violence. There is an absoluteness in many religions that associates God with exclusivity, jealously and intolerance in ways that encourages resentment and antagonism. To live in peace requires ongoing negotiation of differences, and it is very difficult to negotiate when one thinks one is absolutely right.

There are a lot of vested interests and self-interest in religious bodies that undermine altruism: institutional and personal wealth, extensive property and real estate holdings, personal privileges, status from positions within organisations, and political alignments made to protect those interests. When the defence of these personal privileges is justified on the basis that it is protecting the honour of a divine being, violence too readily becomes a justifiable course of action.[11]

It is my observation that if religions are going to be a source of peace in the world, we need to identify something of greater value that we hold in common as human beings than the self-interests of our individual religions.

Religion in the Digital Age

The final thing I want to reflect on is, what then are the prospects for religion in the Digital Age?[12]

From an institutional perspective, the digital age is bringing a pluralization of religious options and significant decline in attendance and involvement in formal religion. Religious institutions are decreasingly seen as being necessary for information about religion, for social networking, or for the practice of spirituality. The sensory experiences that were offered by traditional religions are not competitive with the alternative sensory experiences available within the wider culture. The freer circulation of information has also increased a perception among many that religions are self-interested organisations, and the cause of much of the violence in the world.

Those religious movements or institutions that are doing well or growing at the moment are those that have adapted their religious message and style to the ethos, culture, and economic requirements of the digital age. They generally reflect a charismatic rather than formal style of leadership, they present an image of being dynamic and successful, link the communication of religious meaning with strongly audio-visual stimulation, and present themselves as being relevant to the practical issues of people's

lives. If your interest is in preserving religious institutions, there are models of this sort of movement in most religions you can draw on and imitate.[13]

What is becoming apparent also, though, in the digital age, is that while people are questioning religion, they are not rejecting the concept of a reality that is bigger than ourselves. That does not necessarily mean the traditional religious theory of a supernatural being. Rather, the openness of the Internet and its affordances such as Facebook, blogs, online networks, memorial sites, Instagram and YouTube are giving greater freedom for people to explore other ways of giving expression to these transcendent dimensions of being human and their ethical implications, that in many ways have been denied or simply ignored in the focus on consumerism, rigid empiricism, self-absorption, or the dogmatic constraints of religion.

This includes qualities such as a recognition that life is a gift – encountered in such experiences as tranquility, being forgiven, innocence, beauty, love, the kindness of strangers - and we need to cherish and share it in gratitude, generosity and reciprocity. It includes how we deal responsibly with the imperatives we feel to expand and develop, to be curious, to create and to reach beyond ourselves without destroying others or the earth we live on. There are numerous explorations of what it means to be human when we are facing threats such as sickness, loss, death, disruption, and disintegration. Or how we find or build a narrative of meaning for our lives that incorporates us as individuals into the wider community of humanity.

Several years ago I spoke at a lunch meeting of a Rotary Club on the topic, "I'm not religious, but…" I said that one of the interesting things I find when people find out I'm interested in studying religion, is the number of people who respond by saying, "I'm not religious, but…" and then go on to tell me about something that happened to them that resembles what one would normally call a religious type of experience. I used the work of Karl Jaspers and the Chicago theologian David Tracy to identify some of these, what they call, limit-situations.

After the lunch, a man came up to me, introduced himself as a merchant banker, and told me this story. The previous year, for his 40th birthday, his children gave him a parachute jump. He said he went up in the plane, jumped out, the parachute opened, the plane disappeared, and he said, I found myself all alone suspended above the earth. And I had this overwhelming feeling of being extremely small, but at the same time, very important.

It was apparent that it was a very profound experience for him, with implications for how he thought about himself as a person that stayed with him, even a year later.

He then said to me, "I'm not religious, but I don't know what to do with it."

In functional differentiation of the modern, secular world, experiences such as this have been assigned to religion. But if a person rejects the various religious explanations, for any number of possible reasons, there is no other common, reasonable language available for somebody like the merchant banker to know what an experience of transcendence such as this means for him as a person, or what to do with it.

Many religious organisations and people see this as a fertile ground for recruitment. I see rather that the digital age has opened up new opportunities for people to explore their full humanity and how we might live ethically and compassionately together, not necessarily by becoming religious, but by becoming more fully human. Perhaps this is the higher value we may jointly serve. I think there are opportunities for those who are genuinely altruistic – religious or not - and without vested interests, to contribute to this new sort of exploration.

1 Well demonstrated in the quote from Ben Armstrong, the executive director of the evangelical body, National Religious Broadcasters: "I believe that God has raised up this powerful technology of radio and television expressly to reach every man, woman, boy and girl on earth with the even more powerful message of the gospel."

2 "Through the process of mediatization, religion is increasingly being subsumed under the logic of the media. As conduits of communication, the media have become the primary source of religious ideas, in particular in the form of 'banal religion.' As a language the media mould religious imagination in accordance with the genres of popular culture…" In S. Hjarvard (Ed.), The mediatization of religion: enchantment, media and popular culture (pp. 9-26). Bristol: Intellect.

3 Echchaibi, N. (2013). Islam, Mediation and Technology. In P. Simonson, J. Peck, R. Craig, & J. Jackson (Eds.), The Handbook of Communication History. Echchaibi notes further, "The case for adopting print was earnestly made by Ottoman Pasha Sa'id Effendi in 1727 amidst various fatwas against it from leading religious scholars and institutions, including Egypt's Al Azhar University. The long battle to embrace print was only partially settled when Muslims became convinced Islam as a faith was losing ground both within and outside the Muslim world and print was necessary to revive its glory and solidify a sense of a unified Ummah… Evidently, print today is widely embraced in the Muslim world, but the question that still lingers is how Muslims have reconciled their communication needs and practices with the modern values of print and mechanized transmission of knowledge. Learned scholars [ulama] in medieval Islam resisted the innovation of printing because it meant loss of control over religious interpretation, but they were also hesitant on doctrinal grounds. The written word, they argued, lacked spontaneity, honesty and immediacy and, as such, could not be trusted with its sacred exhortatory ability. The authenticity of Quranic revelation emanates precisely from its organic orality and the power of recitation…. It is this eminence of orality in the early days of Islam that later influenced the complex aesthetics of performing the reading of the Qur'an throughout Islamic history."

4 It is obvious to me that religious bodies, or those who hold power within religious bodies, have a number of ways of responding to this new situation of information exposure over which they no longer have control. One is to put a lot of money and become highly skilled in media management and manipulation, which is a now a major industry. But you will need to put more money and be more skilled at it than, for example, Volkswagen. The other way is a good deal cheaper, and I think much more effective. That is to be genuinely transparent, honest in one's humanity, ready to acknowledge mistakes and pay for the damage you do, be open to hear alternative opinions and to have something sensible to say in terms people can access.

5 Marty, M. (1989). The social context of the modern paradigm in theology: a church historian's view. In H. Küng & D. Tracy (Eds.), Paradigm change in theology (pp. 174-201). New York: Crossroad.

6 See, for example, the work of Birgit Meyer: Religious sensations: why media, aesthetics and power matter in the study of contemporary religion. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2006; From imagined communities to aesthetic formations: religious mediations, sensational forms, and styles of binding. In B. Meyer (Ed.), Aesthetic formations: media, religion and the senses (pp. 1-28). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

7 MacCulloch, D. (2009). A history of Christianity: the first three thousand years. London: Penguin, p.383..

8 d'Aquilliers, R. Historia francorum qui ceperint Jerusalem. *Medieval Sourcebook.* Retrieved from http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/raymond-cde.asp#jerusalem2

9 Bireley, R. (1999). The refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: a reassessment of the Counter Reformation. London: Macmillans Press Ltd.

10 Peters, E. (1988). *Inquisition.* New York: Free Press.

11 There is a scene at the end of the excellent Danish television series, 1864, a drama about the Danish-Prussian wars. At the end of the series, there is a scene where one of the main characters Peter, a sensitive peasant farmer, returns from the war and is joined around the table with his family and close friends. He says in reflection,

> "We're simple folk, who've seen too much in too short a time. When I looked into the eyes of the enemy my heart beat rapturously like in a wild animal. It destroyed something. I know that if we're to fear anything at all it's the evil inside us. For it takes so little to release it. A tiny scratch, a loveless child, or just a stupid misunderstanding. We must take care every single day not to release the evil, but to cultivate all the things that hold it back. Let's cultivate joy and each other. The elation when the stocks bloom, when the log splits in one perfect blow, when Laust Junior and Peter Junior lie in bed giggling. When Sophia passes me and squeezes my hand. When the lark up above tries to tell us over and over again that life is good."

12 For all of the concerns expressed about the new culture of the digital world, these concerns are no more nor no less than those that were expressed about the widespread adoption of writing, or those expressed about the new world of printing, or of the electric age.

13 See, for example, Thomas, P. N., & Lee, P. (2012). *Global and local televangelism.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.