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From the cover

From Jesus to the Internet is the first systematic survey of the historical relationship between Christianity and media. Although many see the relationship between religion and media as a distinctly modern phenomenon, in this book the scholar Peter Horsfield examines Christianity through its history as a mediated phenomenon, showing how profoundly it has been shaped by the many media forms used in embodying and spreading its stories.

In a lively and engaging chronological narrative, the book demonstrates the ways in which Christianity's beliefs, rituals, theological thought, institutional forms, economic views, and political systems have been conceptualised and developed over time as a result of its media practices. It takes a broad view of media, including communication technologies and industries as well as cultural and material practices. The narrative moves through all of the major periods in Christian history and includes coverage of oral cultures, the practices of Jesus, writing, printing, material practices, visual expressions, and the present digital era. With insights into some of Christianity's most hotly debated contemporary issues, this ambitious and wide-ranging book provides an indispensable historical basis for this fast-developing interdisciplinary field.

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Reader's Comments

"It hits a high level and pace that never falters to the end of the book. There is no book like this one. It is bound to find an enthusiastic readership with its accessibility of prose and clarity of organization." Publisher's anonymous reviewer

"A compelling chronology of important issues, historical figures, artifacts, and documents. The prose is always clear and the documentation is consistently supportive." Publisher's anonymous reviewer

". . . an important book . . . a fascinating story which not only has a wide historical scope but also places the story within various theoretical frameworks which inform media analysis . . . It highlights the fact that some of the best books about PR are not about PR as such but instead look at communications in a wider sense and wider context." Noel Turnbull's blog.

"Peter Horsfield's very engaging book takes the reader on a journey through the history of Christianity. He points out that the Crusades and the Reformation were multi-media events that depended on well-planned communication strategies that would not be alien to today's public relations practitioners. I found it hard to put down this exciting and intriguing book." Associate Professor Chris Hudson, Research Centre for Communication, Politics and Culture.

"A fascinating and fresh picture of contestations, breaks and reformations in the dynamic history of Christianity. This well-written and imaginative book throws recent work on modern media and Christianity into historical relief." Prof Birgit Meyer, Utrecht University

"This ambitious, resourceful, and clearly written book makes the major contribution of showing how fundamentally integrated religion and media always have been in the history of Christianity." Prof David Morgan, Duke University

"The aim to write a multidisciplinary book covering the 2000-year multifaceted history of Christianity, and thus rewriting our understanding of both Christianity and media, might open one up for critique – as Horsfield himself points out. Nevertheless, this kind of all-encompassing book is important in order to bring new understandings to the bigger picture and to help us see the relationships between particular issues.....I wish I had written it myself." Stefan Gelfgren, *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*

From the book:

“In the religion of Christianity, Jesus the Middle Eastern peasant has been transformed into the most powerful and fecund reservoir of media resources the world has seen.”

“Although almost all of the earliest Christians were illiterate, the perspectives we have today on who Jesus was and what he did are the views of an unrepresentative group of literate Christians who made up less than 5% of the Christian community at the time.”

“It is as if Jesus was the subject of a corporate takeover, where the new company retained his name and reputation but the values and aspirations of what he started were replaced by a totally different ethos and agenda that have nothing identifiable to do with him.”

“Even by today’s standards, Origen was a media machine . . . Like a current rock star going on tour to promote his latest CD, on his extensive travels Origen took with him and distributed copies of his more than 2,000 writings from his media center in Alexandria to supplement and reinforce his personal influence.”

“In the writings of Catholic-Orthodox Party men, women were frequently associated with passions and the body, sexual immorality, heresy and wrong thinking . . . Ephiphanius, a bishop of Cyprus, wrote, ‘For the female sex is easily seduced, weak, and without much understanding. The devil seeks to vomit out this disorder through women. We wish to apply masculine reasoning.’”

“In total Augustine wrote and distributed in multiple copies more than five million words, including dozens of books and hundreds of letters, greater than any other writer of antiquity. Later in life he compiled a catalogue of his own written works . . . ensuring he left for the afterlife with a vastly better than average chance that his works would survive, be collected, and be read as his.”

“Because crusades were a voluntary service, the successful enlistment of participants depended on persuasion, and Pope Urban laid the basis with a strategic and effective marketing campaign to sell the concept and enlist support that was equal to any contemporary media campaign.”

“The Inquisition was a highly effective media strategy for reinforcing the power of orthodoxy and the dangers of going against it. Invoking also the tropes of medieval theatrical performances, it was intended to instil fear through a carefully-scripted insidious ritual drama.”

“Two media-related factors were crucial in Martin Luther’s extensive influence: one was the support given to him by the printers of Wittenberg and Northern Germany; and the other was his adoption of the vernacular and media language in his writing.”

“More than just using media extensively, contemporary Pentecostalism has relocated Christianity within a quite different sort of media culture: electronic, visual, spectacular, mobile, sloganeering, dynamic and fluid.”

“The recent uncovering of sexual abuse by Christian leaders marks a change in the previously deferential stance of news and public media towards Christian leaders and brings to the surface some of the media and communication strategies that churches have cultivated and used to project a particular Christian image into the public sphere. It also illustrates the impact that social media have had in coalescing individuals in action against powerful social institutions.”