

around 58 billion copies of the Bible have been produced in 367 languages.

The telecommunications revolution of the 1980s and 1990s has provided the background for today's context of globalization. Electronic technologies such as mobile telephony, digital photography, and digital virtual realities linked to the Internet and Web 2.0 have greatly expanded the means for anyone to produce and distribute individual religious information, making it possible for smaller institutions and individuals to compete with larger institutions in producing and distributing Christian ideas. As the speed of communication and change has intensified, the concept of distance and boundaries between the private and public and between nations is collapsing. With changes in the nature of text from a fixed primary meaning to interchangeable alphabetic and visual text capable of multiple meanings, today's "producers" of media assume a more active role in constructing their own meaning from a variety of available sources. This is shifting engagement with religious information, products, and symbols away from religious institutions to the media marketplace, with profound implications for the previously institutional structuring of Christianity.

SEE ALSO: Cinema, Christian; Publishing, Christian; Radio Evangelism; Televangelism

## REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

- Burns, A. (1989). *The power of the written word: The role of literacy in the history of western civilization*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Edwards, M. U. Jr. (1994). *Printing, propaganda and Martin Luther*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Eisenstein, E. (1979). *The printing press as an agent of change: Communications and cultural transformations in early modern Europe*, 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gamble, H. Y. (1995). *Books and readers in the early church: A history of early Christian texts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Haines-Eitzen, K. (2000). *Guardians of letters: Literacy, power, and the transmission of early Christian literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoover, S. (1988). *Mass media religion: The social sources of the electronic church*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Küng, H. (1994). *Christianity: The religious situation of our time*. London: SCM.
- Meeks, W. (2006). Social and ecclesial life of the earliest Christians. In M. Mitchell & F. Young (eds.), *The Cambridge history of Christianity*, vol. 1: *Origins to Constantine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 145–173.
- Miles, M. (2006). The emergence of the written record. In M. Mitchell & F. Young (eds.), *The Cambridge history of Christianity*, vol. 1: *Origins to Constantine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 177–194.
- Osborn, E. (1959). Teaching and writing in the first chapter of the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria. *Journal of Theological Studies*, 10, 335–343.
- Richards, E. R. (2004). *Paul and first-century letter writing: Secretaries, composition, and collection*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Sawicki, M. (1994). *Seeing the Lord: Resurrection and early Christian practice*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- White, L. M. (2004). *From Jesus to Christianity: How four generations of visionaries and storytellers created the New Testament and Christian faith*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.

---

## mediator, Christ as

Douglas Estes

---

A significant archetypal image in the Bible is Christ as mediator. In the ancient world, a mediator would act as a negotiator between two parties or between a deity and a people group, especially in times of disagreement or crisis. The parties deemed the mediator impartial, and the type of mediation performed was broadly defined – the mediator could act as negotiator, interpreter, arbiter, witness, advocate, guarantor, ambassador, proclaimer, or some or all of these roles. A legal context is often in view in many ancient examples. Mediation between deity and people was very unusual; most ancient religions bridged the gap either through a divine herald (such as the

Greek Hermes), through disinterested demigods (such as in Gnosticism), or through a complex cultic system at the whim of a capricious deity (such as in pagan faiths). In early Hebrew society, the concept of mediator carried special significance as a go-between for God and people; Moses was viewed as the greatest human mediator (Deut. 5:5). Mediation was a part of the messianic expectation, even predating Moses' example (Job 9:32–33). The New Testament portrays Jesus as the one and only true mediator between God and people (1 Tim. 2:5).

Christ's role as mediator builds directly upon Hebrew religious customs. Moses' mediation was not simply him speaking for God or for people, but was actually an active negotiation in the sense of the development of the old (or Mosaic) covenant (Exod. 32:7–14). The NT book of Hebrews greatly develops this idea. Under the old covenant, Moses mediated primarily in a priestly context, with Aaron as his high priest, making offerings of gifts and sacrifices on behalf of the sins of the people to God. In a similar manner, Jesus as the Christ becomes the once and for all high priest, not of the line of Aaron but Melchizedek (Heb. 5–7). Jesus mediates as high priest (and as an unblemished sacrifice) by atoning for the sins of humanity to appease the righteous justice of God. The mediation offered by Moses and the Aaronic priesthood is temporary and limited, but the mediation of Jesus is permanent and complete (Heb. 7:24–25). The biblical reference to the Melchizedekian priesthood is unclear, but most scholars agree it points primarily to a mythical priestly order (as opposed to the ancestral Aaronic/Levitical order). Several key theologians such as Irenaeus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin have furthered these ideas in their writings.

Christ as mediator covers many important aspects of his ministry to people: his mantle as high priest, his bodily sacrifice for people (Heb. 9:15), his establishment and role as guarantor of the new covenant (Heb. 7:22), his personal fulfillment of the law on behalf of people (Gal. 3:19–20), his revelation as the "word [proclamation] of God" (John 1:1–18), his unique witness to both parties (1 Tim. 2:5), and his advocacy in favor of his people before God even to this day (1 John 2:1–2). Because Jesus is fully God and fully man, he is uniquely suited and capable to understand and represent both parties; he is able to reconcile

God and people. As a result, the role of Christ as mediator is exceptional among the world's belief systems – it forever redefined the relationship between God and people and remains one of the most powerful images of the Christian faith in contrast with the remainder of the world's philosophies and religions.

SEE ALSO: Jesus Christ; Redemption; Salvation

## REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

- Brunner, E. (1947). *The mediator: A study of the central doctrine of the Christian faith* (trans. O. Wyon). Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Darwish, L. (2001). The concept of the mediator in Augustine's understanding of the Trinity. *Didaskalia*, 13 (1), 61–86.
- De Lacey, D. R. (1987). Jesus as mediator. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 9 (4), 101–121.
- Gunton, C. E. (2002). One mediator . . . the man Jesus Christ: Reconciliation, mediation and life in community. *Pro Ecclesia*, 11 (2), 146–158.
- Guthrie, D. (1981). *New Testament theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Marshall, I. H. (2004). *New Testament theology: Many witnesses, one gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Robertson, J. M. (2007). *Christ as mediator: A study of the theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Athanasius of Alexandria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---

## medieval Christian legends

*Kyle Welty*

---

Legends were commonplace in medieval Christendom. Of course, most medieval Christians would not have considered the numerous tales of heroes, saints, and strange creatures that imbued their world to be legendary. The veracity of these stories was obscured because the subjects were removed from medieval Christians by time or space, and in many cases by both.