

Grounded: in the Body in Time & Place, in Scripture

Christianity in Contemporary Australian Media: “Get Your Rosaries Off my Ovaries”

Enqi Weng



Meet the author

Dr Enqi Weng completed her PhD from the School of Media and Communications at RMIT University. Her monograph *Media Perceptions of Religious Changes in Australia: Of Dominance and Diversity* was recently published with Routledge. She was born in Singapore and has over seven years of industry experience in marketing communications.

Chapter overview

Enqi Weng demonstrates a particular sensitivity to the “narrowly informed institutional, gendered, and racialized perspectives” that repeatedly inform discussions of religion in the Australian media. She outlines the way that Christianity has adapted to changes in media, from the Apostle Paul’s use of written letters, through the invention of the printing press, to today’s digital technology and social media. The author describes key theories of the relationship between the intersecting fields of religious and media studies, are also described. Then she draws on her analysis of selected episodes of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Q&A current affairs program. She notes an over- representation of Catholic, white, male participants in the panel discussions, and that Christianity was frequently identified with moralism, which she traces to Australia’s British colonial history. The chapter ends with a challenge to Australian churches to engage carefully with the new media.

General Study Questions

Question 1

Do you see the Australian media as an obstacle or opportunity for the gospel?

Question 2

In what sense does “Get your rosaries off my ovaries” encapsulate references to religion in media discourse?

Question 3

Have you experienced the presentation of Christianity in Australian media as coming from “narrowly informed institutional, gendered, and racialized perspectives” (p.220)? What are the implications of this?

Question 4

In what ways do you think “contemporary media... have superseded the role and function of institutional religion to become the centre of social meaning making” (p.221)?

Question 5

In what ways do the beliefs and practices of Christianity “embody aspects of the culture where such beliefs and practices are expressed” (p.221)?

Question 6

Do you think Christianity is frequently associated with moralism today?

Question 7

Why do you think there is a “disconnect between media representations of religions and lived religious experience” (p.224)?

Question 8

How could greater diversity in Christian perspectives in the media be achieved?

Question 9

Do you think Christian beliefs and practices can be “translated into digital spaces” (p.231).? In what ways?

Question 10

If you have the opportunity to represent your faith in the media, what qualities do you aim to demonstrate?

Academic Questions

Question 1

What do you think are the implications of Catholic perspectives being over represented (with a lack of distinction between Catholic and Protestant) in the Q &A television program?

Question 2

Why do you think the program presents 'male anglo' as the normative Christian framework? Do you see any problems with this?

Question 3

In what ways, if any, might it be possible for engagement with Christian theology in such programs to be anything other than "limited and repetitive" (p.228)?

Question 4

Should we expect the current Australian media environment to be religiously hostile, or are there any ways this hostility might be reduced?