Introduction

Media are important to our understanding of religious conflicts. In the 21st century, religious violence and other religion-related terrorism and scandals have changed the way in which religion is viewed in Western societies. For instance, the conflicts in the Middle East, the bombings in London in 2005, the attack on the Berlin Christmas Market in 2016 in Europe and the Catholic Church sex abuse scandal have colored the way some people see religion. In a 2011 survey on American media reporting, the Pew Research Center stated: “When religion did make news, it was often because of accusations about extremism or intolerance” (Pew Research Center 2012, 1). The visibility of religion-related conflicts has led to questions regarding the role of the media in these conflicts. Consequently, a growing body of research has examined issues related to the media, religion and conflict in the digital age (e.g., Marsden and Savigny 2009a). At least in the German case, images have received little research attention. Overall, the research has focused on media content and texts. As a result, the so far existing research on journalism, religion and conflict has failed to examine the iconology, aesthetics and forms the visuals assume, as well as their modes of visibility.

This chapter will use the German case to advance our understanding of (visual) journalism, religion and conflict in the digital age. Three aspects need to be explained briefly. First, following Marsden and Savigny (2009b), conflict can be defined as controversy within religions or between religions and other agents, and more broadly to refer to a struggle between opposing forces, ideas and interest[s] which may or may not lead to violence. This highlights the existence and significance of a sense of ‘otherness’.

(Marsden and Savigny 2009b, 119)

Second, this chapter concentrates on religion journalism (Buddenbaum 2010) from a secular perspective, specifically the journalistic reporting on religious groups, institutions, actors and practices. Third, the term visual journalism refers to news pictures but also includes popular journalism and its diverse pictorial forms (illustrations, drawings, film stills). The reference to art becomes particularly obvious with regard to religious themes. To date, however, the
use of images in religion journalism has received little attention. Overall, journalism makes us see religious conflicts as fundamentally grounded in social, historic and economic cultural contexts. In this way, journalism construes a normative context using specific formal and aesthetic conventions, leading to the creation of visibility and invisibility.

The remaining part of the chapter proceeds as follows: In the next section, I provide a research overview of journalism, religion and conflict, placing the German case in the context of other international research on the subject. Consequently, it becomes obvious that images play a minor role in this field of research. The following section maps out a case study. Through a qualitative analysis of print magazines, the case study examines the changing conventions of visibility in religious conflicts within the context of digitalization. Specifically, I consider the visualization of religious conflicts in the media. The central goal of this section is to explore the ways in which journalism makes us see religious conflicts in the digital age. I argue that the visibility of religious conflicts in the digital age requires new modes of visual media analysis that account for the aesthetic and form of (digitalized) images. Finally, the conclusion discusses the changing relationship between visual journalism, religion and social reality.

**Research on journalism, religion and conflict**

The field of journalism and religion has received increased attention in international research since the 1990s (e.g., Winston 2012). In German-speaking countries, however, religion plays a rather marginal role in journalism studies and communication research. This lack of interest could be explained by the (assumption of) low importance of religion in the German society. Indeed, it was supposed for a long time that religion plays a marginal role in German society and media culture. In Germany, an average of 250,000 people leave one of the two largest religious groups every year (for Catholic and Protestant churches, see Schieder and Meyer-Magister 2013). It is widely agreed among researchers that religious conflicts have played an important role in bringing the subject of religion back into public and academic debate (e.g., Ahmed and Matthes 2017).

During the last twenty years, an increasing number of media and communication scholars have analyzed the intersection of religion and conflict in German media as well as the role of conflict in journalistic coverage. However, the connection between religion and conflict is not always the focus of the studies. In addition to communication and media studies, research on religion, conflict and violence takes place in other scientific disciplines, including (but not limited to) sociology, theology, religious studies, history and art history. In the following, the connection between journalism, religion and conflict will be discussed from a communication and media perspective.

**Approaches to studying journalism, religion and conflict**

There are various studies on the importance of mass media in the production of publicity for religion-related topics addressing the question of how religious groups, actors and topics are selected and presented through journalism. Primarily, the frequency and intensity of reporting on religious topics and actors are discussed (e.g., Hafez 2002, Meier 2005, Imhof and Ettinger 2007). These studies often investigate the presence and representation of religions in news journalism through quantitative content analyses, sometimes adding qualitative aspects. When the studies are based on a theoretical framework, they primarily focus on news values (e.g., Schielicke 2014), frames (e.g., Bantimaroudis 2007) and stereotypes (e.g., Poole 2002, for an overview, see Thiele 2015, 201–235).
As one long-term study on daily newspapers suggests, Christianity generally plays a more important role than other religions in German media, with the reporting often concentrating on conflicts in the Roman Catholic Church (Schielicke 2014). In the digital age, however, little media attention has been given to the representation of the Protestant Church in German media (Schielicke 2014). Islam is the religion that receives the second-most coverage, followed by Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. There is a consensus that, in German-speaking coverage of religion, conflict is an important news factor and a theme that is used to bring religion into the public sphere (e.g., Kolmer 2008). For example, Schielicke (2014) examines German newspapers between 1993 and 2009 and finds that conflicts play an increasingly important role in the reporting of religion over time. These results correspond to findings on media coverage in Switzerland (Imhof and Ettinger 2007, Dahinden and Koch 2011, Favre 2011, Trebbe 2011, Koch 2012) and other European countries (e.g., Macdonald-Radcliff and Schatz 2009, Nötzold 2009) and have been confirmed by interviews with journalists (for Germany, see Gärtner 2008, for Switzerland, see Dahinden and Wyss 2009, Wyss and Keel 2009).

This line of research conceptualizes media representation as a result of journalism practices, explicitly or implicitly characterizing media as an intermediary to the public. There is obviously no simplifying instrumentalist understanding of media, but the underlying idea is often that religious conflicts exist in reality and these conflicts are presented selectively and stereotypically by journalists (e.g., based on news factors or frames). Thus, the media has not been sufficiently studied in terms of its constitutive and operative importance in communication, for example, with regard to media aesthetic and form (Tholen 2005, 150–151). Moreover, these approaches focusing on news selection and presentation sometimes overlook the symbolic and discursive aspects of media communication.

Through journalism, the world is neither adequately or stereotypically reflected nor represented based on certain news values and selection criteria (Hall 1997). Adding a stronger discursive element to the analysis of journalism, religion and conflict opens up new perspectives on the subject. Understanding journalism as a mode of constructing social reality involves investigation of the media construction of religious conflicts and the political effects of journalism. Such approaches are interested not only in topics and content itself but also in the discursive formation of “making things mean” (Hall 1997, 24). Several studies have presented more discursive perspectives on journalism, religion and conflict in the digital age (e.g., Maier and Stegmann 2003, Klaus and Kassel 2005, Maier and Balz 2010, Døving 2012, Williamson 2014). Such studies are usually designed as case studies and focus on a particular religious community or a religion-related conflict (whereby other religious traditions are often taken into account). Next, different approaches will be presented while focusing on the findings related to three specific religious communities.

Focus on Islam, Judaism and Christianity

Over the last twenty years, considerable research attention has been paid to Islam and Muslims in media coverage (e.g., for Germany see Hafez 2002, Hafez and Richter 2009, Karis 2014, for Switzerland see Koch 2012, for other European countries see Poole 2002, D’Haenens and Bink 2006, Knott and Poole 2013, for an international overview, see Ahmed and Matthes 2017). A number of studies have shown that German-speaking media outlets tend to report negatively on Islam and Muslims, typically in crisis- and conflict-oriented contexts (e.g., Hafez 2002, Hafez and Richter 2009, Karis 2014). Consequently, investigating the conflict-oriented framing of Islam and Muslims has become a key aspect in the study of
journalism and religion. Most of the research in the European context supports the notion that Islam is often shown as a threatening and dangerous religion (for an overview, see Ahmed and Matthes 2017). There is also a large body of research on the stereotype of fanatic, radical and extremist Muslims in the German-speaking media, particularly mainstream print media and news television (for an overview, see Thiele 2015, 201–235).

In gender media studies, recent research has generally focused on how Muslim women are portrayed in the German media. Besides their portrayal as extremists, Muslim women are stereotypically shown as victims of patriarchal Islam (e.g., Hübsch 2008). Moreover, feminist studies have shown that the representations of Muslim women and men are gendered. In German media discourse, stereotypes of the violent, tyrannical male Muslim are often opposed with images of the oppressed Muslim woman (e.g., Lünenborg, Fritsche and Bach 2011). A number of feminist researchers have explicitly dealt with journalistic photographs, for example, in war and terrorism reporting (e.g., Maier and Stegmann 2003, Maier and Balz 2010, Drüeke, Kirchhoff and Klaus 2012). These studies have concluded that the German media as legitimation for the war on terror used the unveiling of the Muslim woman in front of the camera. They also examined the binary construction of a backward and violent Islamic religion versus a forward-thinking and democratic Western culture.

Another line of research focuses on specific conflict events and themes, for example, on the controversially received speech of the former German President Christian Wulff on Islam (Lünenborg and Maier 2017). In this discourse, Islam is not presented and visualized as an explicit threat to German society and Christian culture but rather as the other and the foreign in relation to German culture. This construction of a conflict between Islam and Christian and/or Western culture is also confirmed by studies dealing with integration and migration (e.g., Lünenborg, Fritsche and Bach 2011, Drüeke, Kirchhoff and Klaus 2012, Lünenborg and Maier 2017) and war and terrorism (e.g., Maier and Stegmann 2003, Klaus and Kassel 2005, Maier and Balz 2010) in visual and textual media coverage. Most of the research based on discourse analysis and theory suggests that othering is an important construction in the media discourse on Islam and Muslims. Following Said’s (1978) criticism of Orientalism implicitly or explicitly, the concept of othering describes those processes in which the definition of one’s own culture and religion as a manifest cultural entity is created by contrasting it with otherness. This process is driven and constructed in a special way by journalism (for an overview, see Fürsich 2010).

In sum, Ahmed and Matthes’ (2017) findings from a meta-analysis of international reporting on Islam and Muslims from 2000 to 2015 can similarly be applied to German reporting:

The events of 9/11 had an effect on the Western world’s perception about Muslims and Islam. Post 9/11, the international media focused intensively on Muslims and Islam and the Middle East in particular. [...] Furthermore, the murder of Theo Van Gogh (2004) and the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy (2005) raised the question of Muslim integration in non-Muslim-majority societies, while the bombings in Madrid (2004), London (2005), Toronto (2006), Mumbai (2006), and Glasgow (2007) highlighted the threat of Muslim extremism globally. Correspondingly, we found numerous studies to follow 9/11, migration, terrorism, and war themes. This thematic pattern of linking Muslims and Islam with terrorism, violence, and orthodox ideals, highlights the religion as a threat of a resurgent atavism, and calls to mind Said’s criticism of the media.

(Ahmed and Matthes 2017, 235)

However, there are also indications in academic research that the framing and discursive construction of Islam and Muslims is more complex. For example, more recent studies on
German media coverage (e.g., Hübsch 2008, Lünenborg, Fritsche and Bach, 2011, Lünenborg and Maier 2017) suggest that Muslims are depicted in connection with positively connoted themes, such as everyday culture. This seems to be particularly evident with regard to regional reporting or popular journalism (Lünenborg, Fritsche and Bach 2011). Hübsch (2008, 59–105) found emancipation and commonalities frames in the German reporting on Islam and Muslims. These results challenge previous findings and suggest a transformation of religious stereotypes, frames and conflict-related discourses under specific circumstances.

Judaism, conflict and journalism is a small field of research. Cohen’s (2014) research on Jews and Israel’s media is a vast study in this area. A number of scholars have conducted research on media representations of Judaism, generally focusing on anti-Semitism in the German news media. In the digital age, German media coverage of Judaism is often connected with the conflict in the Middle East and contains anti-Semitic criticism of Israel and Jews (e.g., Medien Tenor 2003, Kolmer and Schatz 2007, for the Norwegian press, see Døving 2016). This line of research on journalism and Judaism has established that German print and broadcasting media employ anti-Semitic stereotypes (for an overview, see Thiele 2015, 209–214) and anti-Semitic interpretations in their textual reporting (e.g., Jäger and Jäger 2003, Becker 2015, Giesel 2015). This strand of research on anti-Semitism is strongly influenced by textual analysis and linguistic approaches.

A few studies have examined Christianity, conflict and journalism in the German and European contexts. This topic has been dealt with in more depth in the American context. One early study by Kerr and Moy (2002), for example, examined the portrayal of fundamentalist Christians since 1980 in newspapers, drawing on articles from Lexis–Nexis. In the European context, researchers have not given much attention to fundamentalist Christians, although one line of research has found that Christian religions in general are more frequently portrayed in relation to conflict issues in German media coverage (e.g., Hahn, Schüller and Wode 2013, Schielicke 2014, Maier 2019). As mentioned previously, Christianity generally plays a more important role than other religions in German media coverage and the reporting often concentrates on actors and conflicts in the Roman Catholic Church (e.g., Schielicke 2014, Maier 2019). This news-factor conflict can even be found in the coverage of global celebratory church events, such as the 20th World Youth Day in Cologne (2005). Even though the festival was mainly portrayed as peaceful and happy in the German press, the conflicts between church-related sexual morals and the actual practices of young people were also considered a relevant topic (Klenk 2006, 356). However, compared to national reporting, local press reports in Germany seem to be less conflict-oriented (Meier 2006).

As Thiele (2015, 201–234) stated in a meta-analysis of religious stereotypes in the German-speaking media, there is a research gap related to the Christian religion in media and journalism studies. This was also the starting point of my previous work, in which I examined the transformation of Christian images in German print magazines between 1949 and today (Maier 2019). I focused not only on explicit religious coverage but also on non-religious contexts, such as science and technology reporting, that invoked religious images. The study aimed to analyze the media conventions of visualizing Christian religions in German print magazines, where the focus was not explicitly on conflicts. However, an interesting side finding was that, due to digitalization, a new form of image developed within the discourses on religion and conflict: the hyperpicture. Next, I will discuss the hyperpictures in media discourse on religious conflicts and how they influence the picture of religious conflicts. First, however, I will briefly summarize the state of research on journalism, religion and conflict and identify a significant research gap: images and visibility.
Looking at the German (and also the European) context, research on journalism, religion and conflict is mainly concentrated on newspapers and television, whereas print magazines (and their transformation due to digitalization) and digital media are less studied. To date, little attention has been paid to the broader changes in the reporting and visualization of religion and conflicts. In addition, the research mainly focuses on studies dedicated to media texts and textual practices, at least in the German case; visuals have received far less attention. The few studies that analyzed journalistic images focused mostly on news photography in reporting on Islam and Muslims and the construction of the other. Other pictorial genres and forms have rarely been analyzed. Overall, there is no explicit analysis of the connection between journalistic images and religious conflicts.

Making religious conflicts visible in print magazines: a case study

In what follows, I use and extend material from my previous work (Maier 2019) in examining how the topic of religious conflicts is visualized in German print media in the digital age. In this subchapter, I draw on and extend findings related to the coverage of religion in German print magazines to highlight how religious conflicts are made visible in the digital age. The theoretical framework of the case study is mainly based on journalism studies, visual communication studies, cultural studies and digital studies. Current debates on media and journalistic images in the digital age emphasize technological innovations in digital imagery and new media technologies (e.g., Manovich 2001, Ritchin 2013, Gómez Cruz and Lehmuskallio 2016). However, current research on digitalization in visual journalism and media studies tends to overlook the fact that analogue media and their images also changed in the course of digitalization.

According to Bolter and Grusin (2000), digital media do not differ fundamentally from so-called older media. Digital media integrate and repeat the aesthetical and cultural practices of older media while rearranging images in specific modes – a process they call remediation. Hypertext and letterpress, email and mail and photography and illusionist painting have such a relationship to each other. Following this argument, digital media do not simply replace older media (e.g., print magazines). Rather, they challenge the latter to respond to the new developments. Remediation is not simply an act of unilateral repetition and advancement by the new media. Instead, as Bolter and Grusin emphasize, new and old media relate to each other in such a way as to always recreate not only themselves but also the other. Moreover, remediation is not just an act of unilateral repetition and advancement by and on the part of the new media. This specific twin-logic of cultural power is an intrinsic part of two processes: “immediacy” and “hypermediacy” (Bolter and Grusin 2000). Remediation helps explain that (not only digital) images should always be understood through their interaction with other media images, analyzing the aesthetic and form of the visuals and their modes of visibility.

In addition, as current theories of visibility in the tradition of cultural studies suggest, there is an interpenetration of media and cultural conditions in society. Of interest are the relationships between images, culture and power as the politics of visibility (Thompson 2005, Schaffer 2008, Casper and Moore 2009, Maier 2019). According to these theorists, visibility is always produced in connection with social, media and discursive practices. Thus, visibility is debated through processes of negotiation. It is important to note that the concept of visibility (in contrast to the term visuality) includes the idea that the visible sphere also has another side: invisibility. Overall, this concept of visibility provides a theoretical approach that can be used productively in the analysis of religious conflicts.
The methodological approach of this case study was developed in my previous work (Maier 2019). For this purpose, a qualitative image analysis of the religious, scientific and technical reporting by the magazines *Spiegel*, *Stern* and *Bunte* over a period of six decades (1949–present) was compiled. The study is based on a motif-orientated typecast of the image material and a subsequent analysis of chosen motifs, for which iconographic-iconological approaches (Panofsky 1957) were complemented with discourse analytical tools (Rose 2007). This procedure is accompanied by and grounded in the reconstruction of the historical, social and media context of this visual material. The sample of the case study includes more than 450 cover images on the subject of religion (from the German magazines *Spiegel*, *Stern* and *Bunte* between 1949 and today). The aim is to analyze media conventions for illustrating and visualizing religious conflicts in print media, in light of digitalization.

**Hyperpictures and how they make us see religious conflicts**

As mentioned above, a systematic inventory of religious subjects and motifs between 1949 and the present was first completed (from the German print magazines *Spiegel*, *Stern* and *Bunte*). The cover pictures were differentiated based on motifs of similarity and current art-scientific classifications, depending on whether figures, landscapes or objects were the central pictorial subjects. The interesting aspect of the material is the emergence of a new form of image within the coverage of religion in the digital age: the hyperpicture.

The term hyperpicture refers to the logic of “hypermediacy” (Bolter and Grusin 2000) and the discussions on “hyperimages” (Thürlemann 2013). The use of the term picture instead of image emphasizes the materiality of the image and its mediality (Mitchell 2009, 322). According to Bolter and Grusin (2000, 34), the hyperpicture relies on a visual style of “hypermediacy” that draws attention to the forms of mediation. Hypermediacy is a “style of visual representation whose goal is to remind the viewer of the medium” (Bolter and Grusin 2000, 272).

In the context of religion coverage in print magazines, hyperpictures can be differentiated into two forms: photo collections and collages. Whereas a photo collection, an ordered pictorial form, is primarily used to depict diversity, a collage is often associated with conflicts and violence in the media discourse on religion. Such collages have appeared on the covers of *Spiegel* and *Stern* and in the pages of magazines since the mid-1990s and the frequency of their use intensified after the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. After 9/11, the German print media began to visualize religions in connection with each other more frequently. Hyperpictures came into use for visualizing several conflicting forms of faith in a single image or making violent religious conflicts visible.


The hyperpictures used in the context of such topics are a disordered and restless combination of various pictorial elements (photography, painting, drawings, etc.) whose visual
impression remediates the artistic collage. Different images overlap in hyperpictures and different image forms and types are blended: religious art, event photographs of war and terror, portraits of religious and political actors, historical paintings of religious conflicts, etc. Hyperpictures in the news and other popular media can make religion visible as a source of conflict and through their form often evoke an extremist, loaded and violent sentiment.

The hyperpictures visualize religions not only as violent and conflictive but also as being in conflict with political and social actors. In the news magazines Spiegel and Stern, such cover stories are often located at the intersection of religion and political reporting, which becomes apparent in the title stories “On Divine Mission. The Crusade of George W. Bush” (Spiegel 08/2003) and “An Eye for an Eye. The Biblical War” (Spiegel 15/2002). The former deals with the US-American war in Afghanistan, the latter with the war between Israel and the Palestinians.

Overall, the images used in these conflict-related topics make conflicts between religions, conflicts within religion or conflicts between religions and other fields, such as politics, society and science, visible. The emergence of the hyperpicture in the digital age is significant, as what becomes visible and invisible change fundamentally. Such conflict-related images do not follow the conventions of journalistic image production, which are typically associated with the claim of documentary eyewitnessing (e.g., Zelizer 2007). The concepts of authenticity, objectivity, eyewitnessing, news photography and documentary photography are fundamentally challenged by hyperpictures.

The repertoire of journalistic forms and formats has expanded considerably, triggered by social, economic and technological changes. Hyperpictures might be conceptualized as an expression of this development, especially with regard to digitalization. As mentioned earlier, the hyperpicture downplays the concreteness of the discrete images within the picture and draws the viewer’s focus instead to its own larger image and mediality. According to Bolter and Grusin (2000), a specific twin-logic of cultural power is an intrinsic part of this process: the only seemingly existing polarity between immediacy and hypermediacy. Moreover, two different viewing positions come together. As a viewer, one can look at the individual pictures and their content and then again at the entire arrangement, which Bolter and Grusin (2000) describe as an oscillation between “looking through” (33) and “looking at” (41). This development in the relationship between the visible and the invisible affects not only the form of the journalistic images and how they make us see religion and conflict but also their meanings. However, the images do not simply make an event or the actors involved in it visible; they also show the conflict and the violence itself. More precisely, they make the confusing and overlapping visible.

This leads to the assumption that certainties and distinctions – having become precarious in current societies – are negotiated within and through hyperpictures. The meanings of the images overlap – to remain in the picture – with the social developments occurring at the dawn of the 21st century, as these religious conflicts themselves are complex situations of superposition. The hyperpictures are precise and tend to embed the matter into its concept through their way of representation; the hyperpicture corresponds to these religious conflicts and the asymmetry in making the inextricable aspects of religious conflicts and the entanglement of religions, politics and power visible.

Through such hyperpictures, a conflict-oriented view of religions is created and emphasized, while concrete historical events are decontextualized and dispersed into the various parts of the picture. At the same time, Christian motifs in the middle of the hyperpictures often bring order and orientation back into the conflicts – under Christian auspices. The Christian imagery then promises crisis solutions in conflicts.
Conclusion: visual journalism, religion and conflict

To date, the research on journalism, religion and conflict paid little attention to the transformation of images and the modes and politics of visibility. To recap, in light of digitalization, remediation processes become more relevant for the analysis of media forms. The visibility of religious images and conflicts in the popular press is closely connected to the process of digitalization. Current debates on digitalization mostly emphasize the technological innovations of new information and media technologies. For example, according to Manovich (2001), the five pivotal principles of digital media are numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability and transcoding. Darley (2000) highlights simulation, hyperrealism and spectacle as central characteristics, where the loss of credibility and authenticity and the difference between image and reality are problematized in relation to digital images. However, the current studies on digital images tend to overlook the fact that analogue media and images can also produce specific forms of reality connected to problematic claims of objectivity, authenticity and being an eyewitness (Mitchell 1998).

In journalism, images have historically been seen and used as a cultural practice of testimony that gives the illusion of being an eyewitness, that is, showing things as they are. As we have seen, with digitalization, new image forms and ways of seeing religious conflicts have developed in the print media. Within the coverage of religious conflicts, we can identify editing and contextualizing that go beyond the creation of an eyewitness perspective. In hyperpictures, various images and their meanings overlap, without attempting to or succeeding in delivering definitive answers, assessments or perspectives. Hyperimages challenge the concept of eyewitnessing as a promise of objectivity and authenticity. Therefore, the curatorial and moderating functions of journalism come into the foreground.

In interpreting the emergence of the hyperpicture, we need to consider that the transformation of information and media technologies is closely connected to other processes of social change (Bolter and Grusin 2000, Jenkins 2006, Briggs and Burke 2010). As suggested by current theories of visibility, there is an interpenetration of media and cultural conditions in society. Changes in the religious landscape in Europe (especially an increasing de-churching) and social crises, such as 9/11, have certainly resulted in a new form of religious visibility in news and other media.

Sociological literature discusses whether the collapse of the Eastern bloc countries has led to a movement “back to religion and the church” (e.g., Gabriel 2009, 101) as well as whether Islam in Europe has led Christian Europeans to return to their so-called own Christian culture (e.g., Knoblauch, 2008, 3). In this chapter, however, an image approach is adopted, which assumes that the hyperpicture form corresponds exactly to this social confusion: the asymmetry, the conflicts, etc. A hyperpicture represents the interferences of cultures, conflicts and the multitude.

In the case study, the visualization of religious conflicts was not examined by means of the images but rather by their visual form. Schudson (1982, 98) stresses the importance of media forms in establishing journalistic authority: “[T]he power of the media lies not only (and not even primarily) in its power to declare things to be true, but in its power to provide the forms in which the declaration appears.” In this sense, journalism has the power to provide the cultural form to make religious conflicts visible. By decoupling images from their original clerical or religious surroundings, journalism can adopt the powers of meaning making and interpretation. The results of the case study therefore suggest subtle power shifts that enable new interpretations of pictures and perspectives on religious conflicts. Based on the findings, I argue that hypermediacy in the digital age constructs new interpretations of...
religious conflicts. Indeed, we can see an explicit effort to insert fuzziness, uncertainty and doubtfulness into the images. In such images of religion, various meanings overlap, without attempting to or succeeding in delivering definitive answers, assessments or perspectives. The montage-oriented arrangement clearly shows the viewers the construction of media images and yet the image form also produces a disharmonious view. Hypermediacy in the digital age produces new forms of seeing religious conflicts and creates ambiguities and diffusions, which has the effect of scrutinizing information on who might have the power of interpretation of images. Through hyperpictures, the journalistic authority as a privileged voice for the construction of media reality seems to lose its power. And this, in the end, happens by making the specific mediality of the journalistic image visible.

Further readings


This is a thought-provoking and influential book on practices of seeing and the perpetuation of artwork in popular culture. In his study, first published in 1972, Berger presents ideas that have lost none of their relevance to this day. The richly illustrated book offers a theoretical introduction to the visual culture of images – occasionally using Christian images.


The book presents a concise analysis of visual journalism from a cultural studies perspective, looking at key trends and developments in visual journalism.


Mitchell looks upon the “magical relationship” we have with images and repeatedly addresses the religious foundations of seeing.


This book offers a fundamental examination of popular religious images and their social and religious significance. Morgan is able to show the enormous cultural influence of the image of Christ since modern times.

References


Media visibility of religion and conflict


