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The Media Revolution of Early Christianity: An Essay on Eusebius's "Ecclesiastical History"

Doron Mendels

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This study by respected historian Doron Mendels attempts to understand the literary genre of Eusebius's The Ecclesiastical History, by situating it in the broader context of ancient historiography and by applying the analytical tools of modern media studies.What type of history writing does The Ecclesiastical History represent? Were Eusebius's aims and methods the same as those of a Herodotus or a Thucydides? Should we think of him simply as "the Christian Josephus"? Mendels argues that Eusebius invented a new type of history writing, "media history", and that Eusebius viewed the rise and spread of Christianity itself as a media revolution. Eusebius worked much like modern journalists do in selecting, shaping, and presenting stories for popular consumption.Mendels examines Eusebius's presentation of martyrdom, heresy, missionary efforts, and other factors that contributed to Christianity's victory over its pagan competitors in the marketplace of ancient religion. As Mendels's striking study demonstrates, in the hands of Eusebius history writing itself became an important publicity tool in promoting the media revolution of early Christianity.

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