

Religion, Marketing and Market: An Adjustment in the Language of Faith

José Rubens L. Jardimino*

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RESUMO

O presente trabalho se propõe fazer uma análise de categorias sociais que a primeira vista não tem proximidade, na verdade, podem, inclusive, parecer antagônicas. Trata-se das relações entre Religião, Marketing e Mercado. O trabalho se apóia num referencial teórico mais próximo das ciências sociais, todavia, considera a Religião, em sua expressão institucional – a igreja – como um empreendimento social, uma empresa dos tempos modernos. Procura demonstrar que, para aderir ao mundo moderno, plasmado pela idéia de competição e consumo da sociedade capitalista, a religião reorganizou sua linguagem para atender as exigências desses tempos, já considerados Pós-modernos. A análise é feita a partir do caso brasileiro que, como muitos países da América Latina, acomodam no seu tecido social, as mais recentes expressões da religião cristã, em especial, os grupos evangélicos que pululam as periferias das grandes cidades desse continente americano.

Palavras Chaves: Marketing, Religião, Mercado, Modernidade e Pós-Modernidade

* The author is PhD in Social Sciences (PUC, SP) and researcher on the religious theme in the Brazilian society. He has published papers about Sociology of Religion in periodicals and also the following books: *As Religiões do Espírito: Visão Histórico-Teológica do Pentecostalismo na Década de 30 (The Religions of the Spirit: an Historic-Theological Vision of the Pentecostalism in the 1930s)*. Rio de Janeiro: ISER – Instituto de Estudos da Religião (Institute of the Religion Studies), 1995; *Sindicato dos Mágicos: Um Estudo de Caso Na Eclesiologia Neopentecostal (Magician's Union: a Study of Case in the Neopentecostal Ecclesiology)*. São Paulo: CEPE - Centro Ecumênico de Publicações (Ecumenical Center of Publishings), 1994. The author has also organized the following publications: *Ensaio de Psicologia e Religião (Psychology and Religious Essays)*. São Paulo, Plêiade, 2001; *Sociologia da Religião No Brasil: Revisitando Metodologias, Classificações e Técnicas de Pesquisa (Sociology of Religion in Brazil: Revisiting Methodologies, Classifications and Techniques of Research)*. São Paulo: PUC-SP/ UMESP, 1998 and *Religión y Post-modernidad: las recientes alteraciones del campo religioso (Religion and Post-Modernity: the Recent Changes in the Religious Field)*. Quito-Ecuador: Ediciones Abya Yala, 2002. He is professor in the Post Graduation Program (MA in Education) at Universidade Nove de Julho – in which he develops researches on History and Theory of the Teaching Work, with recent publications in this field. E-mail: jrjardilino@uninove.br

ABSTRACT

The present work if considers to make an analysis of social categories that the first sight does not have proximity, in the truth, can, also, seem antagonistic. One is about the relations between Religion, Marketing and Market. The theoretical reference it is a Social Sciences, however, considers the Religion, in its institutional expression –the church– as a social enterprise, a company of the modern times. Search to demonstrate that, to adhere to the modern world, shaped for the idea of competition and consumption of the capitalist society, the religion reorganized its language to take care of the requirements of these times, already considered post-modernity. This analysis is made from the Brazilian case, that, as many country of the Latin America, accommodates in its social groups the most recent expressions of the Christian religion, in special, the evangelicals groups, that proliferates the peripheries of the great cities of this American continent.

Keys words: Marketing, Religion, Market, Modernity and Post-Modernity

The fast acceleration, the supposing ascesis of the global capitalism, the ephemerality of goods and services as consumable items and an apparent end of History are a *prelude* to the arrival in Paradise. However, the miracle that makes a capitalist more and more rich, with a simple touch in a computer keyboard, dealing with incalculable sums of money in the stock exchange of the financial markets (the virtual ones), could not give answers to the daily questions and to the most basic galls in humanity's life. Masses of miserable people lodge around the planet. Everything seems ephemeral and without solution. This appearance has opened a large path to new ways of thinking, acting and feeling, and among them a new way of expressing faith.

Most of the elements in the current religiosity work as a catalyst for the needs and the daily context of its followers, currently shaped as clients, and try to make a synthesis

between Theology and Economy.¹ Weber's thesis, which demonstrates the close relationship between religion and economic rationality, has raised constant challenges to the new generation of scholars concerning the comprehension of the existing relations between religion and market.

When speaking about religious groups of Protestant orientation (popularly called "evangelic"²) and

¹ The Theology and Economy's theme we are referring to in this paper must be understood differently from the theological criticism to the political economy developed nowadays in some research circles of the Sciences of Religion and Theology. This approach has achieved projection in some author's thoughts, among these we mention Franz Hinkelammert, Hugo Assmann, Júlio de Santa Ana and Jung Mo Sung.

² The term **evangelical**, although originally meant something related to the Gospel – a Greek word *Euangelion* that was notably enriched by new meanings – to the ancient Greeks it meant the "tip" that was given to whoever brought good news. Afterward it

their economic relations, one should not forget the Weberian arguments about the Protestantism³ influence to the appearance of a modern type of capitalism, in other words, of the relation Theology and Economy – Religion and Market. Although we cannot fail to consider the controversies⁴ that the Weberian thesis has

raised in the academic world, none of the refutations underestimated its importance to the Social Sciences and, in particular, to the religion and the modernity theme comprehension.

The Calvinist and Puritan Protestant's belief in Europe lead the faithful to demonstrate its "election" through economic activities. The economic prosperity signaled the quality of the chosen ones and assured them about the certainty of being chosen by God. Prosperity was a clear sign of predestination.⁵

The relation Theology-Economy, whichever the model of production, was always present in the religious practice. Protestantism was not apart from it; on the contrary, it centered its vocation in this relation. It is possible that current groups of Protestant orientation carry vestiges of this heritage. Nowadays, one can see an adjustment of the religious discourse by the economic approach,

started to mean a "good new", following exactly the etymology of the term. In Brazil, it acquired predominantly the meaning of **protestant**, in a reference to the Christians that adopt the **Protestant Reformation** heritage, *Sola Scriptura* (Only the Bible), *Sola Gratia et Sola Fide* (Only Grace Through Faith).

³ In the strict sense of the word, **Protestantism** designates the group of princes and imperial cities that, at the Diet of Speyer, in 1529, have signed a protest against the Edict of Worms which forbade the Lutheran teachings in the Sacred Roman Empire. From that point on, the word "**protestant**" in areas of German language refers to Lutheran churches, while the common designation for all the churches originated from the Reform is *Evangelic*. In an extensive sense, the word designates all the Western-European originated Christian religious groups which broke with the Roman Catholic Church as a consequence of the reformers' influences, such as Martin Luther, the Lutheran Churches founder, and John Calvin, the Reformed Churches founder that compose the group of Calvinists in the Western Tradition. It is convenient to clarify the distinction we make between Protestantism and Evangelic. Some non-Catholics Western Christian groups are nicknamed **Protestants**, even though the respective groups don't recognize any links with Luther and Calvin.

⁴ Weber's thesis in "*The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*" which considers the influence of a certain type of Protestantism, specially the Calvinism, in the generation of modern capitalism, along the years

has stimulated a controversial debate. Some debaters even denied its validation completely (Robertson/1933; Fanfani/1934; Samuelson/1961). However, despite the critics, it has been attributed a fundamental importance to it in the study of Protestantism by Social Sciences, and more specifically to the comprehension concerning the debate "religion and modernity". See ROBERTSON, Roland. *Sociología de la Religión*, op. cit.

⁵ Calvinist doctrine that explains the human being's salvation through a God's sovereign election from which the blessed one can never be apart from.

permeated by the reigning ideology of Neoliberalism. The consumption ideal, the great motivation for obtaining goods and of private property, all this linked to the wish of humanization occurred through the subject's entry into the market, transforms faith in a safe investment.

The Church, as a centralizing space of the religious life, assumes a mediator role of the pact that the faithful establishes with the divinity, in the plain of his financial life. The economic success and the prosperity are evident signs that God is with the faithful and vice versa. Prosperity is a sign of the divinity blessing, an election.

This adjustment of the religious discourse went beyond the frontiers of the disinheriteds' religion (classic Pentecostalism), in which the salvation with apocalyptic and millenarist emphasis assured the faithful of "sacred goods" promises, unreachable to the powerful classes. Its followers have abandoned the aspirations of a community⁶ with solidarity and

companionship spirit between brothers to express the individuality of the modern religion – everyone for himself, and God for all. They *sacralize* the market as the only fulfiller of all wishes. Such as the neoliberal discourse, they accept and spread around, sometimes naïvely, the ascesis of the market as a sacred entity. It reacts freely for the good of the chosen ones.

MARKETING, STRATEGY OF SURVIVAL

The discussion about the thematic Religion and Marketing is developed into a daily context invaded by technologization of life in the so widely called "mass society".

In this "communication age", characterized by a micro processed and technical-scientific world, in which the knowledge and the computerized information hyperbuild the world transforming it into a great show; where the image has an heuristic value and the reality turns into sign,⁷

⁶ Other studies, although recognizing in this Church the logic and the mercadological instrumental reason, consider that within all its neoliberal economic approach inside it there are people that, after refinding [in it] a sense for life, develop partly community active groups, that, if are not church in the traditional sense of the term, are, in the least, elective communities that cultivate forms of emotive share. See CAMPOS, Leonildo S. *Teatro, Templo e Mercado: or-*

ganização e marketing de um empreendimento neopentecostal. (Theatre, Temple and Market: organization and marketing of a Neopentecostal enterprise). São Paulo: Editora Vozes, 1997.

⁷ In the Post-Modern environment, we prefer the image instead of the object, the copy instead of the original, the simulacrum instead of the real, as it was well described by Jair Ferreira when he tells the post-modern

the religion understood that it didn't have any chances at all of surviving if it persisted with its roots firmly planted in the Middle Ages.

Thus, nowadays would it be possible to attribute an invasion of the religious field in the communication area (advertisement and marketing) only to the businessmen of religion experts' insights? Or the marketing translates itself into a survival strategy elaborated from a self-comprehension of the religion itself, concerning its place in a society in fast transformation?

From this perspective, we intend to discuss some "myths" impregnated in the debate of this theme, specially the ones that launch the religious actions of these religious movements in an opportunistic and charlatanistic morass.

In a so-called "Post-Modern" society, the individual, taken to accept the breaks and changes proposed in it, no matter how abruptly they are, is consequently ordered to reengineer his cosmovision. However, this post-modern wanderer vehemently refuses all and any alteration in the religious field. This fact leads us to search explanations in our religious tradition. Being resistant to changes in the religious field is part of the Brazilian "religious matrix". Thus, this difficulty in accepting the changes in the religious field may have explanations in the recognized feeling of belonging to a paradise, very common

in the Iberian-American Christian mystic. It is believed that it will always be possible to recover the lost paradise and to return to it some day. As beings in a decomposition process, because of the paradigm shifts and the fragmentation of their world, they naturally don't desire that this single legacy inherited from tradition, and untouched until the moment, also disappears in the post-modern nihilism. We shall change the world, but keeping the religion as a "regained Eden".

For this reason, it is defended, in the common sense (sometimes also in the Academy), that the place of the Church is the sacristy and the confessional, dealing with specifically religious issues.

In the analysis of the religious marketing, within the multiplication and rearrangement of religious tendencies, that currently make difficult to establish a more rigorous classification, one tends to use the theoretical instrument of analysis as a *laser*,⁸ imagining getting a globalizing vision

anecdote mostly commented: "What a beautiful child", a friend told to the mother - "Just wait till you see her colored photo", answered the proud mother. See SANTOS, Jair Ferreira, *O que é Pós-Moderno (What is Post-Modern)*, São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986.

⁸ MAFFESOLI, Michel. *O tempo das Tribos: o declínio do individualismo nas sociedades de massa (In the tribes' age: the decline of individualism in the mass societies)*, Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Forense 1987, p.116.

of the phenomenon. However, we consider that a more rigorous analysis of this subject and a wider comprehension of the history of religion in Brazil will provide safer data which will allow comprehending the insertion of the religious field into the market economy.

MARKETING AND RELIGION

As it is known, the term *marketing*, of American origin, derives from the word “market” which means, literally, the set of necessary actions to make a product (goods or services) being wished and bought in a certain market. It is a selling strategy. Therefore, in its origin, the term refers, first of all, to an essentially pragmatic management instrument, looking for a concrete result in terms of selling.

Besides the mercadological connotation, the term has also migrated to other areas. Jean-Paul Flipo⁹ indicates that, since the end of 1960s, American scholars started to reflect on and to publish studies about this theme, showing its redirection to

⁹ Flipo has established the relations between religion and marketing. His study presents an analysis about the taboos involving both terms. He tries to point out the specificity of the religion and the market institutions, and afterward presents market as a strategy of religion. See FLIPO, Jean-Paul. *Le marketing et l'église*. Paris: CERF, 1984.

other domains different from the economic. A social and political dimension of marketing was just starting to emerge.

Other social life fields have quickly started using marketing strategies¹⁰ to divulge and/or “to sell” its products. In these terms we speak about a religious marketing. Particularly about it, the best known studies in Brazil are the ones developed by Philip Kotler.¹¹ His publications animated the discussion of this theme in our country concerning the relations between the marketing and the non-profit institu-

¹⁰ When Superior Education starts to be mercadologically considered as a product in the search of potential “clients” or, in the best hypothesis, “as a service” as it’s being defined, the question of the university marketing becomes a business that moves great sums of capital. About this subject, see Almeida, C.R.S. *O Brasão e o Logotipo: um estudo das novas universidades na cidade de São Paulo (The Coat of Arms and the Logo: A Study of the Universities in the City of São Paulo)*. PhD thesis, FE USP, São Paulo, 1997; Jardimino, J.R.L e Santos, Eduardo. *Universidade e Marketing: um estudo sobre a rede particular de Educação Superior da Cidade de São Paulo (University and Marketing: A Study about the Particular Web of Superior Education in the City of São Paulo)* – researching report published in *Eccos Rev. Cient.* v.1., n.1. p. 129-144, São Paulo, Dez, 1999.

¹¹ See KOTLER, P. “*Marketing para as organizações que não visam lucro*” (*Marketing for Non-Profits Organizations*) op. cit.; and KOTLER, P & SHAWCHUCK, Normam et. al, *Marketing for Congregations- Choosing to Serve People More Effectively*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

tions, specially the religious and the non-governmental ones. The Social Sciences were mostly interested in this theme approach¹² to the so-called mass religions – Neopentecostal communities.

On the other hand, marketing professionals do reject these analyses, considering them as opportunistic ones, marked by charlatanism. Some analyses do not know the use that the marketing, in its brief history, has made of the culture in order to develop its selling strategies. Roberto Simões¹³ declares that marketing in

Brazil has used, in many opportunities, some variables of the society's religious imaginary in order to attract potential consumers and break some consuming taboos related to certain products. Considering that the Brazilian people have sharpen religious mentality, in which moral behavior patterns are sustained, advertisement and marketing didn't have "ethical doubt" in putting it into the mark of their proposals. The advertisement campaigns, in a first moment, tried to explore this people's religious mentality approach, aiming to demystify the usage of some products:

"The institutional campaign of mineral water (1974) tried to emphasize exactly the '*God's created soft drink factor*'. The '*Pope's brandy*' campaign proposed an analysis of the restricted environment that the religion establishes towards alcoholic drinks consumption: the Pope (*that nowadays appears in a Coca-Cola advertisement*) should bless the mark in the consumer's subconscious, thus amortizing the restriction imposed by the religious code. It was used in 1975 in the '*São Francisco's cachaça*',¹⁴ launch (the mark was an origin indication). The label shows a monk figure, in an obvious religious allusion towards amortizing the restriction (*and the taboo*) imposed by the Church"¹⁵ (our italics)

These and other more updated references in advertisement campaigns

¹² The debate has been very useful and the discussion is in the topics of the events involving this area. The marketing and religion theme has been object for researches in universities and there are already a considerable number of theses and dissertations in the most important Brazilian universities. Among the published ones we mention: JARDILINO, J. Rubens. *Sindicato dos Mágicos: estudo de caso sobre a Eclesiologia Neopentecostal (Magician's Union: A Study of Case in the Neopentecostal Ecclesiology)*, CEPE, 2004; MARIANO, Ricardo. *Neopentecostalismo: os pentecostais estão mudando (Neopentecostalism: The Pentecostal are Changing)*, São Paulo Loyola; CAMPOS, Leonildo S. *Teatro, Templo e Mercado... (Theatre, Temple and Market...)* op. cit., (translated into Spanish by ediciones Abya Yala Quito-Ecuador; FONSECA; Alexandre Brasil. *Evangélicos e Mídia no Brasil (Evangelics and Media in Brazil)*. Bragança Paulista, SP: Editora da USF, 2003.

¹³ SIMÕES, Roberto. *Marketing Básico (Basic Marketing)*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 1983. – One of the first national Marketing texts that try to offer a didactic vision of the mercadological relations functions.

¹⁴ Cachaça: a strong alcoholic drink, similar to white rum, produced in Brazil.

¹⁵ SIMÕES, Roberto, Op. cit. p.57-58.

try to work with the consumer's religious variable and influences. These consumers sometimes find themselves prohibited from consuming certain products (clothes, foods, leisure activities etc.) because of restrictions and religious taboos.

Thus we can notice that this theme –Religion and Marketing– isn't so new in the media; it only moves to the other pole of the binomial, in other words, nowadays it is the religion that uses the marketing variables and techniques for attracting potential faithful and consumers.

If we may consider truthful the declaration that the marketing's aim is to promote the satisfaction of wishes and needs in a consumer society, through the image seduction promoted by the product, it's natural that marketing uses, in order to put its aim into practice, the religious and cultural tendencies of a certain society.

The religion, in its turn, has noticed that a society massed by the Mass Media's empire and extremely seduced by the simulacrum, wouldn't have any chance to compete with its different market partners, when offering its products –the religious goods– if not by launching itself, body and soul, into this enterprise. Thus, to religion, advertisement and marketing were considered as a work tool for dealing with the competition for selling products, as any other in the market, besides assuring the con-

tributions (volunteered or not) of its faithful, captive clients.

Social scientists have a tendency to investigate, sometimes in a rushed way, the results of the religious economic relations. They easily elaborate severe criticism to this segment, for exposing the selling of its products into the symbolic market of goods. It is possible that this kind of attitude is involved by the common sense approach that restricts religion to the single action of what is religious.

Some of the scholars in sciences of religion have deepened, amid very intense criticism, the studies about the relations between the religion and the market,¹⁶ specifically, a theological criticism of the political economy. These analyses show that economy, specially the neoliberal modeled one, is charged of producing the symbolic goods that have been seducing the new religion's consumers – the market.

RELIGION AND MARKETING

It was thanks to the accelerated development of the mass communication media in Brazil and around the

¹⁶ About the topic "Theology and Economy", the reader may find a reasonable bibliography in Portuguese, signed by the authors mentioned in note 1, who have developed important reflections on religion e its relations with the market.

world, its domain into the society's imaginary production from the second half of the 20th century on, that we can see, more openly, the visibility of this religious mentality that permeates the Brazilian culture.

Nowadays it's possible to admit that the religion, making a self-analysis of its discourse and praxis in the face of the current times challenges, comprehended that it was being launched into emptiness. It wouldn't take too long for it being considered on the periphery of life, as the "God's death" theologians have proclaimed. Its discourse was becoming anachronistic each minute, and it wasn't answering the post-industrial man's needs anymore, to whom even the notion of time and space¹⁷ had completely changed.

¹⁷ Jameson attributes the post-modern changes to a crisis of our space and time experience, crisis in which spatial categories dominate the time ones, at the same time they suffer such a mutation that we are not capable to follow. JAMESON, Fredric. *Pós-Modernismo, a lógica cultural do Capitalismo Tardio* (Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism). Translated into Portuguese by Maria Elisa Cevasco. São Paulo: Ática, 1996. About this subject, Harvey adds: "Modernization entails, after all, the perpetual disruption of temporal and spatial rhythms, and modernism takes as one of its missions the production of new meanings for space and time in a world of ephemerality and fragmentation." HARVEY, David, *Condição Pós-Moderna - uma pesquisa sobre as origens da mudança cultural* (The Condition of Postmodernity - An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change). Translated into Portu-

At first, the religion investment and adherence to the mass communication media took place through the radio. Marketing was incipient and simulated.¹⁸ The churches weren't technically equipped for the use of modern artifacts. They had only the verbal discourse resource. The radiophonic¹⁹ programs were nothing else than the reproduction of its religious services, extremely boring and directed to a public composed by initiates. The second moment is the one that may be considered as a more formal entry into the advertisement and marketing world. Seduced by the possibility of the image, of becoming visible, they strongly adhere to the television – a phenomenon known as Electronic Church.²⁰ The pioneers of

gueuse by Adail U. Sobral and Maria Stela Gonçalves. São Paulo: Loyola, 1992, p. 199.

¹⁸ Despite of being incipient, the Evangelical marketing at the beginning of 1980s was already trying to make the religious practice of Neopentecostalism visible. When a building was bought by the church "Deus é Amor" (God is Love), in the baixada do Glicério, in the city of São Paulo, the newspaper "A Folha de São Paulo" prepared a reporting named "God is love and also profit", in which it was showed the financial interest of the "religious enterprise" and its insertion into the radiophonic communication media.

¹⁹ See CAMPOS, Leonildo Silveira, O Milagre no Ar. Persuasão a serviço de quem? (The Miracle on the Air. Persuasion Submitted to Whom?) *SIMPÓSIO, ASTE*, vol.5 (2) ano, XV, dez 1982, pp.92-115.

²⁰ Upon this subject see ASSMANN, Hugo. *A Igreja Eletrônica e seu impacto na América Latina* (The Electronic Church and its Impact on Latin America). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes 1986.

this missionary enterprise were the Americans, which built great financial empires translating the “American Way of Life” for the television. When the phenomenon is transplanted to the Great Homeland (Latin America), for not having the same technological resources required by the media, “natives”, in a first moment of this phase, reproduce in their programs, such as it was in the radio age, only its live and colored religious services. However, one must point up that these are the first attempts of applying marketing resources. Nowadays the picture seems to be changing. With the introduction of the offensive Neopentecostal, it is aimed at a technical improvement in the general media²¹ usage, in order to make public its religious products.

Currently, one can see, in some cases, that the media usage and the marketing application to religious²²

“products” have been made with some competence and, consequently, it has been successful in introducing religion in the market. It’s possible to notice this insertion of the religious “product” into the market by observing the large number of private television channels with religious programs in Brazil and Latin America. The most notorious example of this fact is the marketing developed by the Igreja Renascer (Reborn Church).²³ When we speak about the marketing usage by religion, many times we are impregnated by preconceptions that see these groups only as opportunistic ones, leading us to believe that all their actions are based on charlatanism. Sometimes we inadvertently fall into the rushed discourse transmitted by the press, or we are even persuaded by the common sense that religion must remain in the space reserved to it in society – the sacristy and the confessional. What we may infer from the analysis developed about the religion incursion into the marketing, or in any other area named “aged”, is that they reflect a ten-

²¹ About this theme, we mention Alexandre Fonseca’s impeccable work: *Evangélicos e Mídia no Brasil (Evangelicals and Media in Brazil)*. UFRJ, 1997 [MA dissertation]. Published by Universidade São Francisco in 2003.

²² In the Catholic Church we have a marketing reference in a Catholic Charismatic Institution – The Associação do Senhor Jesus (Lord Jesus Association), that applied very well the marketing techniques in order to attract clients (partnerships) specially the “three Ps theory”. See Antonio Miguel KATER Filho, *O marketing aplicado à Igreja Católica (Marketing Applied to the Catholic Church)*. Edições Loyola, 1995.

²³ About this Church, Mariano elaborated an ethnographic synthesis pointing out some elements of the marketing usage, as well as its insertion and the command of a small part of the media. MARIANO, Ricardo. *Neopentecostalismo: os pentecostais estão mudando (Neopentecostalism: Pentecostals are Changing)*. São Paulo: Loyola, 1999, p.81-88.

gency of misunderstanding the positive elements that the phenomenon shows in the game of social relations, or even in judging it simply as a manipulation factor of the misfit individuals in this mutant society. We don't understand that these single aspects are enough to turn Neopentecostalism into an attractive religion to the urban masses. The marketing usage is only another element that enables us to understand the religious adjustment of the New Religious Movements and link it to others, sufficiently interesting and that the Neoliberal economy does not take into account the dream maintenance of integrating the excluded ones into the market; the sharing relations existing between the religious and the economic discourse among others.

It is possible to notice in the Theology/Economy relation a discursive reciprocity: religion with economic discourse and economy with religious discourse.

“Now the bourgeoisie speaks only in an economic adjustment that requires sacrifices of the poor population, no more in terms of development for all... We arrived at the ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama), in other words, we discovered the secret of the human history: only the Capitalist market, without the State and the society intervention, may solve our economic and social problems. Its the Neoliberal proposal (...) The fundamental principle that moves such a market is the free competitiveness; each one must defend

his personal interests against the interests of others (the selfishness) to the perfect functioning of the system (...) the path to a solution for our social problems would be in fomenting selfishness. The market is presented as a superhuman entity capable of performing this miracle - transforming selfishness in a “common good” (love for the next one). The Neoliberal economists talk about the necessity of having “faith” in the market (...) Loving the next one is to defend one's personal interests against the other integrated in the market and, mostly, against the ‘violence’ of the excluded from the market.²⁴ – A new spirituality.”

Not even the volatility and ephemerality of fashion and products have led us to a capacity of taking into account that we are possibly under the environment of the new times. Even the sensation that “*all that is solid melts into air*”, didn't completely convince us yet that we are beginning a new age.

In terms of religion, it seems to us that these new ideas are already being absorbed, especially in Brazil. However, one must ask if what the new Christian-Protestant orientation groups present are plausible elements to a new cosmivision, or just a Post-Modernity “gloss” that determines an adequacy of its discourse to some of

²⁴ Jung mo SUNG, “*Estranhas inversões do mercado*” (*Strange Inversions of the Market*) in: *Tempo & Presença* n 268, Abril, Cedi, R.J, 1993.

its practices, giving an impression of having received this new times environment.

If one may conclude that, in many aspects, the discourse and practices of Neopentecostalism indicate signs of a “Church for a Post-Modern time” with characteristics of real exporter companies of symbolic goods, competent agencies of the religious marketing and of client/company business relations, at first one cannot conclude that these signs become just a “gloss” for covering a very old religious practice and circumscribed to the magic-religious universe.

These brief considerations lead us to some variables in a hypothesis proposed in our work:

1. To what extent the changes occasioned by the crisis of Modernity and the Post-Modernity advent alter the “religious specific” of the discourse and of the new religious expressions practices in Brazil?
2. Do these religious expressions intend to adjust themselves into these new parameters or do they only use them (marketing) as a survival strategy to attract the faithful and then domesticate them according to the religious dogma?
3. Will these new churches be able to make a synthesis between the historical Protestantism (modern

and rationalist) and the classic Pentecostalism (based on the mythical conception and on the moral of a rural cosmovision) and if they become the religion of Post-Modernity?

The following items stress the question of the new languages used by religion, allowing us to comprehend the roots of its practices.

It's important to investigate if these groups only took the elements of the market ideology in order to become attractive to the unpersonalized masses of the current context, or if this discardable religion dynamics, capable of throwing out moral values, life styles based on the solidarity ethics in exchange of daily immediate impulses, show that they constituted themselves as churches for a new time representatives of an adjustment religiosity.

NEW RITUALS, NEW LANGUAGES

The experience of this religious practice stops to be limited by the solely religious time-space. It conquers a place in the civil society scenery and becomes subject for discussion in the academy and in the mass media. It is the Neopentecostal offensive that quickly collects the sleeping religious world of the Brazilian society in a wave of seduction and reenchantment for the sacred. The religion

seems to have in its practices and actions a “fascinating Eros” of the sacred.

The first element that we recognize as innovating is the non-domestication of faith to a given space and time,²⁵ establishing, based in this element, a striking modern mark, or if you prefer, post-modern, in the religious field. Its religious proposal takes into account the time and space availability of the people who transit in the urban centers. Its religious product is offered before a consumption line determined by marketing, as any other product of the modern market.

The temples become store windows/altars where each day immolation answers to the daily anguishes are offered. Each individual programs his religious activities according to his/her time and space availability. Thus it is daily offered an always updated and attractive product for all dimensions of life. It's a 24-hour-attend-

ance church – a new modern space of convenience.

The seduction of the sacred in the Neopentecostalism do not confine itself to the promise of paradise after death as a premium for a life based on moral, but enlarges itself in a total freedom from the demonic forces that oppresses the contemporaneous man and woman and turn them into someone incapable of being completely happy. Freedom regains, here and now, the lost paradise.

Another element for being pointed out is the movement option for openly becoming a religion based on the *new*. It's possible that this option isn't based, in the theoretical form, in the post-modernity debate. However, its sensitivity toward daily events and the accurate observation of what the social masses are asking for lead it to adequate various Post-Modernity elements into its religious discourse, in order to attend the anxieties demand of the contemporaneous society.

The two considered elements bring singular characteristics to this religious discourse, which were not observed until then in other practices of the Brazilian religious field: the first of them is related to communication and language. In the past, religion was kept in the transcendent discourse approach, and consequently, out of the mass culture reality. It expressed, through its dogmas and mythical/sym-

²⁵ Time and Space are two categories which received multiple meanings and have been modified by the historical process itself. With modernity, the space-time rhythms, especially organized by the Capitalism rationality, have determined that there is a proper time and place to all human actions. Post-Modernity goes beyond this non-dynamic concept, putting it out of the modern strictness. Upon this subject see last chapter, in which we deepen the notion of time and space in the alterations of the religious field.

biblical representations, a transcendent cosmovision. This method not always reached the human rationality aims, so religion arrived to modernity trying to give a rational meaning to faith. This was well succeeding during the first centuries of the Enlightenment, but with the science and technology advent, the modern man has launched religion into anonymity; its *god* was exiled. It arrived to the 21st century as an *outsider in a strange land*.

With the fast transformations in the world, religion lost its enchantment and the power of seduction of the sacred has limited itself to small ethnic ghettos. Its meaning and language production was not already answering to men's questionings. The new movements of Christian orientation, as we see them, are nowadays, among many representatives in the Brazilian religious field, the only ones that reached a synthesis in this socio-religious vacuum: they adapted the thought and the practice of the old conceptions of the religious tradition to the new communication and language techniques. They were appreciative to what the poet Paul Valéry foresaw: "*The same way the water, the gas and the electricity arrive at our homes, coming from far away, in order to satisfy our necessities of following the minimal effort principle, we will also be supplied of visual images or activities that will appear and dis-*

*appear with a simple hand movement*²⁶".

This foreseeing of the technical-science advancement concerning the capacity of reproducing the image,²⁷ changing the concepts of time and space and its importance on the popular imaginary of the mass culture was, in a certain way, assumed by the religious groups as a strategy of seduction of the sacred. The Evangelic marketing is nowadays a considerable part of the advertisement market. It is not limited to the oral communication of the fragmented discourse. It bets on the image, on the video clip and on the esthetics. This may be a "*new inefficient remedy for an old disease*", because concerning its adaptation to the mass communication techniques, the central contents of these beliefs still seem to be domesticated by the religious tradition dogmas. The most amazing detail is that this pendulous synthesis has risen the fascination towards the sacred and contemporaneous men have being voluntarily

²⁶ Quoted by HARVEY, David. *A Condição Pós-Moderna - uma pesquisa sobre as origens da mudança cultural (The Condition of Postmodernity - An enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change)*. op. cit., p. 311.

²⁷ See BENJAMIM, W. *A obra de arte na época da reprodutibilidade técnica (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction)* in, LIMA, Luiz Costa (org). *Teoria da Comunicação de Massa (Mass Communication Theory)*. Rio de Janeiro: Saga, 1997.

seduced, such as prophet Jeremiah declares: “*Thou hast seduced me, and I am seduced*”.

The second characteristic establishes a relation between the binomial religion/economy, observing into these groups practice, although this was always present, in a masked way, in the religious experience, the Neopentecostalism assumes, in a veiled way, its classification as *market religion*, through what some scholars name currently as *theology of prosperity*. Thus, the groups that compose it do not limit themselves to preach the salvation only in a scatological sense, but impregnated with the certainty of having, as a mission, to free those imprisoned by the armaments of this century. They openly use the financial question as an essential element of faith, both in the marketing and in the religious services – the present man must *take possession* of the financial blessing offered by God, in the theologians’ language, these communities fabricate a theology of prosperity allied to the market and its demands.

INCONCLUSIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The *market religion* epithet coined by opponents and/or researchers of this new religious experience, concerning jocosity is full of meaning because the temples of the movement are turned into great *supermarkets of faith* or *convenience stores*,

where the religious goods are put inside the glasses to attract consumers. It’s not performed in a disguised way, but openly, assuming faith as an investment, as a characteristic brand mark of the movement.

These elements, quickly exposed, added to others not discussed in this work, remove religion from the eminently transcendental mark and materialize the faith of millions of individuals that were previously bargained with divinity looking through mirrors (saints, promises, pilgrimages, votes etc.), and nowadays establish a reenchantment of the sacred in a desacralized world. Nowadays, this symbolic exchange can be openly done as an ordinary investment, in which the game rules are all known and determined. These characteristics launch religion into the market in order to compete with other social institutions in the production of consumer goods that give sense to the life of masses, turning faith into a safe investment.

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