



THE RELIGIOUS CONSUMPTION FETISHISM: THE USE OF EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Religion has always been present in humanity, given that its great importance, analyze the religious aspect in human life becomes something complex and comprehensive. This study has as its theme the use of Christian religious experience. The present research tries to understand if the consumption experience presents itself as a fetish of merchandise within the Christian religious world, being in the context of globalized neo-liberalism and consumer society. For carrying out such investigative in character exploratory qualitative research, will be held a bibliographical research, thus obtaining a consistent theoretical framework, based in the social sciences and Sciences of religion.

Key Words: Fetishism; Experience consumption; Religious Market.

INTRODUCTION

Religions have always been present in human life, many scholars try to explain man has to love something, sanctifying a deity, be it an animal, an ancestor, elements of nature or even the stars like the Sun and the moon. These questions are the subject of study of various areas of knowledge as anthropology, sociology, psychology and history (GAARDER; HELLERN; NOTAKER, 2000).



The religious aspect in human life is so deep that if we analyze and compare human beings with other living beings, we find language systems developed in whales and birds, it is still possible to observe monkeys using tools similar to us humans, however never a study verified religious aspects in animals. So the religious aspect is so important in human life which becomes one of the features that most distinguish the human being from other beings (FUNARI, *et al.* 2009).

According to Berger (1985), an important feature of the religious aspect in human life is that because it is a human construct, religious practice somewhat is always collective, even internal ownership of religious practice in the life of man takes place in collective with other believers. So when studying religion is essential to realise that each religion is a worldview and collective belief. On account of this collective character inherent to religion so much building a religion as subsequent changes are never individuals.

At the beginning of Christianity, early Christianity called period corresponding to the first centuries of the Millennium, i.e. before Constantine, the Christians had turned attention to the poor, this species of Christian Praxis had inspired the life of Christ and biblical narratives written primarily in the new testament that highlight the figure of the humble, the needy, the wronged and oppressed. Also stands out in the Gospels of the New Testament, the role of the followers of Christ must not just see people as spiritual beings, but also as social beings with human needs (SILVA, 2011).

When we propose to investigate the various relations of man with the religion through science, authors such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber are basic introductory authors. These authors differ in various aspects, they were able to analyze the religion as a social phenomenon and each in their own way might propose analyses about the religious life of primitive and modern also after the industrial revolution that consolidated the capitalist system (BIZELLI, 2006).

As already said, at the end of the 19 century scholars have understood religion as a social phenomenon, Durkheim believes that religion has to maintain unity of a social group and ensure the preservation of the fundamental ideas of this group. For primitive



societies these fundamental features were, since in that context the religions were linked to the clans that needed unity among its members, this unit was by biological means, but by totemism. So for Durkheim religion is a social institution present in all societies, both in primitive as in modern, which has the power to bind the individual to the social group in which it is part (WEISS, 2012).

Durkheim (2000) points out that in primitive societies, social groups called Clans, the Union between the members is not merely biological, the author points out that this relationship is totemic, each clan has a totem, totem and this collective consisting of the representation of a sacred ancestor, or a god, through an animal or plant is the factor of unity and identification among the members of the clan.

Highlights Durkheim:

O totem é sua bandeira, o sinal pelo qual cada clã se distingue dos demais, a marca visível de sua personalidade, marca que se estende a tudo que faz parte do clã de uma maneira ou outra. (DURKHEIM, 2000:36).

Weber (2004) by analyzing the historical trajectory of Christianity, which became hegemonic religion of the last millennium, makes distinctions between Jewish root of Christianity and the Christian religion itself. The author points out that in the Old Testament figure of compactuava God with the Hebrew people collectively, with the coming of Christ and the transition to Christianity the relationship between man and God becomes individualized. The same occurs with the concept of salvation that before in Judaism was directed to a chosen people in Christianity salvation is universal, i. e not restricted to one people, but has an individual character, as pointed out by Lehmann (2012).

On account of this quoted individualization and of theological assumptions of Reformed Christian churches such as predestination, Weber writes the work "The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism". In this work the author investigates German among other things how the emergence of Protestantism boosted the growth of capitalism and contributed to this were the hegemonic system, adding that system not only an economic, but also character of moral and religious values (WEBER, 2004).



According to Ferreira and Alves (2012), for Weber the Protestant Reformation contributed mainly to the appreciation of the work from the idea that work dignifies the character of man, as a consequence the Western way of life has changed, as it was added to the work a moral value not only of the need for subsistence and the worker still financially successful and enterprising citizens are seen as people predestined to salvation, blessings as well as reforming the profit that was previously forbidden becomes seen as a sign of blessing.

The legitimate social institutions their religion by assigning a status of naturalness and ontological validity. Religions provide the institutions and the current system the sacred character and Cosmic, through its values, being these existing structures seen as divine Ordinances and wills, because of this, they should be preserved (BERGER, 1985).

In addition to the Reformation another historical process that leveraged the capitalism was the English Industrial Revolution. From this deep social transformations have emerged that event changed the design of world of Western people. These changes in worldview are related to man's relationship with time, with social relations, with the urban space and the consumption of goods, both the materials such as the non-material (STORNI; ESTIMATES, 2010).

One of the gears of modern capitalism is consumption, consumption is based not only on contemporary issues of human needs and also not only the pleasure of consuming. This constant and endless consumption has on the consumer a kind of worshiper and the consumption in this context is seen as a sacred rite. To consume, that is, participating in the "cult" is necessary for the individual between the logic of capitalism, this logic of profit, of individualism, competition and consumption (TADA, 2013).

The Act of consuming goods is not an individual need, but rather a necessity of capitalism itself to survive as economic system. So it produces increasingly somewhat superfluous goods, these are not consumed by need, but by desire, for pleasure in the Act of consuming, i.e. by fetish (STORNI, ESTIMA, 2010).



So if legitimate and preserved an economic model focused on maximum generation of wealth through the exploitation of labor and profit, this wealth is normally accumulated in the hand of a tiny rich minority. Notice that the system described above is quite different from a system where his salt by overcoming poverty and basic human needs as if you wanted the first apostles and followers of Christianity (SUNG, 1998).

Mainly between the decades of 50 and 60 of the last century produced many works and studies dealing with the so-called "theory of secularization", this theory which is object of study since the Enlightenment, based on the idea that the modernisation and the rationalisation of the modern world would lead to the decline of the dominant religions in both religious mindset that guided the way of life of the people as well as the importance of religion in society itself. We can see that this idea of religious decline was wrong, the modernisation and rationalisation process brought the Secularization of some social sectors, but that didn't mean the decline of religions as expected (BERGER, 2000).

With this dessecularização of the world, namely, the permanence of the importance of religions in postmodern life, need human and religious market fetishist feature of the capitalist system, if create religious markets. This religious market is based from the competition between different religions and different denominations of the same religion, this competition causes religious leaders and religious structures to adapt his speeches, his teachings and even their dogmas to the scenario that is most advantageous to them. Given the high informational and communicative technology in the context of the globalized world, religions overcome national boundaries, increasing religious pluralism. This increased religious pluralism coupled with the religious market may have as a result become a disposable religion, that religion does not satisfy more the wishes of a group or an individual it can be given as obsolete and could still be switched instantly (FRIGERIO, 2008).

Cortes (2014) adds that, following the neoliberal market optical, the religious market in Brazil is established from the 90 in the consumption of goods and services, gospel segment products, services geared to these religious groups etc., however this market



gets a new look when it starts offering the consumption experience, mainly based on sermons and testimonies recorded on cds and dvds. Applicants become preachers and gospel singers named as ex-wizards, ex-transvestites, ex-trafficker, ex-*macumbeiros*, they have testimony where report their experiences and life histories. Realize a transition of consumption of goods and services for consumption.

For Oliveira (2013) looking dipped in the neoliberal context many churches and religions employ marketing strategies to offer a competitive product in relation to their competitors and satisfactory for the faithful-consumer, thus attracting more and more faithful. To be able to consolidate its brand these institutions create their identity trying to differentiate itself from competitors.

In the field of this competition at the same time market and religious, religions and churches create, interpret and ressignificam strategies of marketing management, consisting of the which can be called religious marketing. This practice consists in the use of the image of religion as a strategy for the sale of goods, services and experiences. This religious image works in practice as a kind of totem. The point conquer with this marketing is the mind, the imagination, the desire and the faith of the consumer, making him a true not just of the creed which the Church follows, but also faithful to the religious consumption of this Church (MARANHÃO FILHO, 2012).

It is important to differentiate here between the consumption of consumerism, because often these two concepts are confused. Bauman (2008) clarifies that the consumption is primarily a feature and an occupation of human beings as individuals living in the capitalist system, since consumerism is an attribute that can occur in society, this attribute occurs when consumption becomes part of people's lives abnormally, so you start to consume no more out of necessity.

Bauman (2008:62) explains that:

Para que uma sociedade adquira esse atributo, a capacidade profundamente individual de querer, desejar e almejar deve ser, tal como a capacidade de trabalho na sociedade de produtores, destacada ("alienada") dos indivíduos e reciclada/reificada numa força externa que coloca a "sociedade de consumidores" em

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movimento e a mantém em curso como uma forma específica de convívio humano, enquanto ao mesmo tempo estabelece parâmetros específicos para as estratégias individuais de vida que são eficazes e manipula as probabilidades de escolha.

In this way, consumption takes on a symbolic and totemic character, both as an individual and collective act. The relationship between a group of consumers is a sharing relationship, group members share the same tastes, interests, preferences and consume the same brands. Brands that become totemized and thus sacralized, convey different social meanings, and can be a brand of social prestige or a brand that is frowned upon (RETONDAR, 2008).

Nery and Vasconcellos (2014) clarify this relationship of unity among a group of consumers is also present in the churches, today there are churches dedicated to rockers, for surfers, for homosexuals, skateboarders and other forms of distinction. One can see that in the same way that the likes of a consumer group define how are the products offered by a brand, the lifestyle and the likes of the faithful of a church define how it will be. These religious institutions act in a manner similar to the marks when seeking to convince consumers to buy their product through the marketing.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main strategy of religions and churches is internalize in faithful in churches are your problems solutions, as well as the answers to your questions and problems. Is taught in these institutions that everything can be achieved through faith and obedience to dogma defended by them. So that these precepts are taught are used various means of communication, such as the religious programs in serving radio and television and publications in religious journals (DIAS NEVES; OLIVEIRA MOTA, 2008).

Lipovetsky (2007) describes the evolution of the three ages of consumer capitalism, the first is characterized by large national and international brands and the popularization of durable consumer goods, so this is the phase of the so-called mass consumption. This phase begins at the end of the 19 century to the end of World War



II. The main products consumed were automobiles, appliances and televisions. The second phase occurred in three decades, is characterized by the fact that consumption be linked to social position, during this period the North America and the capitalist portion of Europe passed through the period known as the welfare State, in this period the population of these countries thrived, consumers spent so to be more demanding, in this way the consumption went from massive to individualized character. Before the main products were durable two phase intensifies the consumption of nondurable goods, already in this phase begins the instant consumption, which is intensified in the third stage.

The third stage also called phase of excess consumption persists to this day. This phase is marked by the change of valuation of goods, where the goods more prized passes be experiential.

Lipovetsky says:

O apogeu da mercadoria não é o valor signo diferencial, mas o valor experiencial, o consumo “puro” valendo não como significante social, mas como conjunto de serviços para o indivíduo.

[...] A fase III é o momento em que o valor distrativo prevalece sobre o valor honorífico, a conservação de si sobre a comparação provocante, o conforto sensitivo, sobre a exibição dos signos ostensivos. (LIPOVETSKY, 2007: 134).

Agrees, therefore, with Lima and Transferetti (2007) religious institutions, first and foremost are social institutions, so its operation based on the laws governing society, among them the laws of the market. Social institutions, are reflections of the individuals who constitute them, with a view to contemporary consumption society, formed by individuals who must use a form of transcendence, religious institutions adapt business practices governed by the laws of the market and the apply in the religious context. Because of this many churches have their faithful customers, like many faithful even if unconsciously have their churches as brands.



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