

advertisements present in public spaces, those that we commonly call colloquial religious advertisements are becoming more and more popular.

However, in the media or marketing literature it has been difficult to find a definition of religious advertising until recently, and many authors from different disciplines used such terms as religious advertising or advertising using religious symbols, without defining what it was and whether it was a separate type or type of advertising. Until recently, because for several months we have had a book position on the market, of which the author, Krzysztof Stepniak, fills this gap in the area of media and marketing science, and even theology, attempting to define and describe the whole phenomenon of religious advertising. And he does this in his habilitation thesis entitled “The phenomenon of religious advertising”, published at the end of 2017 by the Aleksander Gieysztor Academy of Humanities in Pultusk.

Krzysztof Stepniak, a clergyman of the Catholic Church, an assistant professor at the Pultusk Academy, until recently the Dean of the local Faculty of Sociology, also has experience of working in the media. In the years 2000–2008 he was a director of one of the Catholic radio stations. As a theologian moving in the field of media studies, he probably had many scientific reasons to deal with religious advertising. The book, which is worth recommending to both people professionally involved in advertising and students studying in fields related to the media, as we read in the cover of the review by Professor Grażyna Ulicka, is not only a theoretical consideration of religious advertising. It is based on pioneering research into the phenomenon of religious advertising, carried out in the Laboratory of Media Studies at the University of Warsaw. The author’s research concerned the phenomenon of religious advertising in the Catholic Church in Poland, which was discussed in four focus groups, in which the author presented selected static and dynamic advertisements, as well as attempted to define what was the type of advertising that everyone from the expert group (this is one from focus groups), despite their initial resistance, called religious advertising.

Stepniak’s book is a multi-aspect analysis of the phenomenon which is the communication of the Catholic Church with the broadly understood recipient, by means of advertising messages. The first part refers to theoretical findings against which the author places, as he writes, a separate type of advertising, which he often identifies with social advertising. The author, however, shows the fundamental differences between commercial and non-commercial advertising, between social and religious advertising, giving his own definition of the latter, in which the *sacrum* occupies a special place. In his opinion, the *sacrum* is an element *sine qua non* of any religious advertisement. This *sacrum* of religious advertising has been thoroughly described and classified in the work, although, as we read, “it is not a closed set”.

The second part of the book places an emphasis on the author’s focus research, in which the author indicates both the boundaries of the concept and the definition

of religious advertising (general and specific). The first concerns broadly understood religious advertising (church or religion), the latter limits the advertising to the messages appearing in the Catholic Church. In general,

religious advertising is one of the elements of communication of a given religion, church or religious denomination, the purpose of which is to provide information and promote religious values, ideas, and services, as well as to shape attitudes and behaviors specific to a given religion, church or denomination. (p. 40)

The author focuses mainly on religious advertising in the Catholic Church and clarifies, or rather specifies, what is the religious advertisement in this Church (detailed definition).

Religious advertising in the Catholic Church is a message that influences the formation of attitudes and behaviors specific for those who believe in God, who appeared in the person of Jesus Christ. This message aims to promote the knowledge of God and His revelation, teaching the truths of faith and morals, proper for the Catholic Church and religious services, using all information highways, containing some elements of the sacred. (p. 41)

It is worth noting that the element of the *sacrum* appears only in the definition of religious advertising in the Catholic Church. This definition, which I would call a definition from the borderline of theology and media science, is not the only definition of religious advertising. The publication by Krzysztof Stępniański is proof of some evolutionary thought of the author, who in the conclusions summarizing his research defines religious advertising as

a persuasive message of a religious character, containing some elements of the sacred, the purpose of which is to provide information and promote religious belief, values, ideas, and services, and to shape attitudes and views consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. (p. 212)

The author also proposes to define religious advertising on the basis of media studies. It is worth emphasizing that Stępniański distinguishes religious advertising in the Catholic Church (non-commercial), from commercial advertising. In this second one, an element of the sacred is not a necessary element. Without going into the details of this distinction, a very important typology of advertising, I just want to emphasize how important the teleological differences of both types of advertising are: religious and church.

Why is it worth reaching for this book “The phenomenon of religious advertising”? This is the first and in addition research-based study on religious advertising. The research value of a documentary and analytical work should be appreciated, showing the specificity and quality of religious advertising. The research presented by the author contributes to a significant extent to the deepening of knowledge about the religious rebrand on the basis of the sciences of the media and social communication. The proposed typology of religious advertising has a chance to become a textbook reference point for further research and classification of reli-

gious advertising. The author distinguishes four types of religious advertising: evangelization / kerygmatic, vocational, pastoral, and charity (fundraising).

It is worth emphasizing the reporting and analytical nature of the work of the abbot on the extensive empirical material. The tests were carried in an exemplary way. The asset of the work is its documentary nature and problem analysis, integrated very skillfully. The results of focus studies also present a certain assessment of the quality of religious advertisements selected for the discussion. Participants of the study pointed out, from different perspectives, both desirable and undesirable traits in religious advertising, their strengths and weaknesses, which could contribute in practice to improving the quality of religious advertisements.

In addition, it might be used in the future to develop a religious advertising guide, both for their creators and recipients.

The theme of the work is undoubtedly innovative in nature. It should be emphasized that the author has the ability to synthesize the source-documentary material by presenting it in tables, which serve for easier demonstrative display of final conclusions. The work brings an original contribution to this area of knowledge, which until now has not been studied and presented in Poland. In my opinion, there was only a wider view of religious advertising in the universal Church, and not only in the Church in Poland. It was also worth showing what a religious advertisement used by the Catholic Church looks like in comparison with other Christian Churches.

I hope that in the near future, the author will broaden his research interests with new research methods, such as surveys, eye tracking and advertising content analysis. The knowledge obtained in this way could be an excellent comparative material to the already obtained knowledge in the focus study.

The book "Phenomenon of religious advertising" is worth recommending as a compulsory reading textbook for students studying in various fields of media science, as well as for lecturers of this type presented in it.

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