

## Religious Market and Its Entrepreneurs: Comparative Perspective on Brazil and Poland

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In the article, referring to the economic theories of religion by Stark and Bainbridge, the authors present comparative characteristics of the two religious markets (Polish and Brazilian), showing briefly their respective historical background, current state, as well as dynamics of growth in the religious sectors of both countries, taking as examples two important cases of innovative religious entrepreneurs: Father Tadeusz Rydzyk (Catholic Church) in Poland and Bishop Edir Macedo (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) in Brazil.

**Keywords:** religious markets, Brazil, Poland, religious entrepreneurs, corporations of faith.

### Rynek religijny i działający na nim przedsiębiorcy – ujęcie porównawcze Brazylii i Polski

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Opierając się na ekonomicznych teoriach rynków religijnych Starka i Baingride'a, autorki przedstawiają porównawczą charakterystykę dwóch rynków religijnych (polskiego i brazylijskiego), ukazując krótki zarys ich historycznego rozwoju, stan obecny, jak również dynamikę wzrostu sektorów religijnych w obydwu krajach, na przykładzie działalności dwóch innowacyjnych religijnych przedsiębiorców: Ojca Tadeusza Rydzika (Kościół katolicki) w Polsce oraz Biskupa Edira Macedo (Uniwersalny Kościół Królestwa Bożego) w Brazylii.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rynki religijne, Brazylia, Polska, przedsiębiorcy religijny, korporacje wiary.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the times of the first edition of Weber's classical "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1905), the connection of the religious sphere with economic categories and processes has been successfully developed on the ground of social sciences, allowing for, at least potentially, explication of phenomena and processes taking place in the religious space, towards which other paradigms, like the secularisation one (assuming the twilight of religion under the influence of modernisation processes), seemed in many cases inapplicable or awkward in terms of the heuristic technique (Stark, 2008; Norris and Inglehart, 2006).

Except for the possible controversiality connected with applying the economic perspective to the religious dimension, where the latter appears to be non-market driven, the mutual interference of religion and economy can be indeed examined dialectically. On the one hand, Weber points to religion as a factor determining economic development through the influence on the mentality of people and shaping their work ethics in an effort to achieve salvation, but, at the same time, emphasises the influence of religious principles on the rational pursuit of making a profit.

However, on the other hand, there appear interpretations emphasising the universality of economic laws the explanatory potential of which can also be applied to the religious sphere. In this approach, the economic arsenal and terminology are borrowed to explain the functioning of "entrepreneurship of faith" on the "religious markets" (Berger, 2005, pp. 186–196; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980, 1985, 2000). The proponents of this perspective compare religion to one of the many consumer goods sold in the markets, looking at the activity of religious institutions as enterprises conducting economic activity, bound by the rules analogous to the secular businesses driven by the maximisation of profits.

This construct, defined as the "market theory of religion", assumes, in its simplified version, that the laws of supply and demand easily apply to the religious sphere, where the believers behave as regular consumers, searching for the most satisfying offers, while the religious organisations act as companies/enterprises, rationally orientated towards achieving an economic advantage, maximising their consumer potential and their share in the market. That allows the behaviour of religious consumers to be explained through transaction or barter models applied in order to gain an advantageous exchange ratio (Stark and Bainbridge, 2000, p. 49). From the point of view of religious companies, it is connected with implementation of strategic solutions which enable them to gain a competitive advantage. However, strategies adopted by religious businesses are dependent on the conditions in which they function: religious markets, just like economic ones, can be either regulated, monopolistic or free and unregulated – pluralistic and driven by strong competition (Stark and Finke, 2002, p. 34). The latter

option, based on the religious pluralism, provides for numerous and diversified offers from which consumers may freely choose a supplier guaranteeing them a favourable rate of exchange, which stimulates dynamics in the religious market, promotes new concepts and ideas and, thus, influences religious revivals. The lack of competition provides either for a relatively stable division of consumer segments resorting to traditional Churches or religious indifference, just as it happens in the case of monopolistic State religions, depriving consumers of alternatives and lowering the quality of their offer (Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 19). Maintaining such a dominant position on the religious market is difficult, which makes monopolists implement various protective strategies, for example by means of entering into direct cooperation with the State, which, by its supremacy over cultural coercive measures, may provide them with various privileges (Stark and Bainbridge, 2000, p. 123). Still, from time to time, there usually appear, taking advantage of the existence of unsatisfied believers, new entrepreneurial alternatives with their competitive spiritual proposals (Stark and Finke 2002, p. 37; Stark, 1992, pp. 262–263), which, while not posing at once any serious threat to the monopolist, create new opportunities and market niches for both religious innovators and those susceptible to new religious investments.

The above indicated perspective of “religious economics” primarily highlights a clear analogy in functioning of religious and economic spheres, where religion and faith are presented in the categories of consumer choices determining activity models of religious companies which carry out various solutions that may influence their position, helping them obtain and maintain their market share. This includes, of course, all kinds of experiments and innovations aimed at improving their offer and popularity.

A good exemplification of reactions to the scale of challenges met by religious companies may be found both in Poland and in Brazil, which externally, and thus superficially, seem to have quite a similar religious market based on the visible supremacy of the Catholic Church. In both countries, at some point, this religious institution established a close cooperation with the state in order to maintain its dominant position and then broke the covenant almost at the same period of time (in Brazil – during the military dictatorship, 1964–1985; in Poland for a few post-war decades, most clearly in the years of Solidarity movement formation, till the redemocratisation of 1989), the implication of which involved transformation, at least from the legal point of view, of the two religious markets, which became, at least formally, pluralistic, free and competitive (Casanova, 1994; Siuda-Ambroziak, 2015).

In this article, we will try to present, in a comparative perspective, by means of qualitative analysis of statistical data and two case studies, both countries’ religious markets (including a short historical outline of the specificity of their formation) and their contemporary dynamics by

resorting to its two dimensions: firstly, the religious market structure, and secondly, examples of the activities of religious entrepreneurs indicating a clear specialisation trend aimed at specific niches emerging on both markets, highlighting the cases of two religious leaders: in Poland – a Redemptorist, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk; and in Brazil – a bishop and founder of IURD (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), Edir Macedo. We will try to provide arguments for confirming our preliminary assumptions that the two, still mostly Catholic, countries, in spite of differing considerably in their degree of pluralism on the respective religious markets (Brazil – more pluralistic; Poland – only within the structure of its quasi-monopolistic Church), have provided conditions for almost simultaneous appearance of successful religious entrepreneurs applying the rules of economics and market competition for the sake of growth of their innovative, media-based religious enterprises.

## **2. Formation of Religious Markets in Poland and in Brazil: Historical Background**

The shape and functioning of the contemporary religious markets in Poland and Brazil have been, as we assume, determined by their historical evolution, especially linked to specific characteristics of their dominant religious institution – the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church and Catholicism in Poland are an integral part of national identity, which, from a historical perspective, developed from the strong alliance between throne and altar in the Middle Ages to the notion of the Church as the guardian of norms and values, the anchor of Polishness and the promoter of liberation demands in the most turbulent history of the nation during the partition periods, two World Wars and, last but not least, the post-WWII communist regime, when the role of the Church as a major political opposition player became evident as a result of the limitations and restrictions on its activities imposed by the Kremlin-dependent governments.

However, the earlier interwar period can be treated as a time favouring the Church's activity by means of legal regulations which ensured its privileged position (Mariański, 1991, p. 38; Borowik, 1997, p. 66; Majka, 1983, p. 253). The scope of powers and responsibilities as well as the relationship between the Church and the State were defined by: the March Constitution of 1921 and the Concordat of 1925 (Majchrowski and Nawrot, 1984, p. 86). The first document guaranteed, on the one hand, the freedom of conscience and religion and the right to organise collective and public services by religious organisations recognised by the State; however, on the other hand, the status of the Catholic Church was legitimised in the Constitution, contrary to other Churches and religious organisations which were to be legitimised on the basis of separate laws, guaranteeing its

favourable position:<sup>1</sup> “Roman Catholic denomination (...) holds the leading position among equally entitled denominations” (Journal of Laws of 1921, No. 44, item 267). In addition, the Concordat precisely defined the conditions of the relationship between the State and the Church, which was ensured “full freedom”, together with the “obligation” to teach Religious Education in state schools.<sup>2</sup>

The end of World War II and the onset of the Polish People’s Republic created new conditions for the functioning of the Catholic Church, which, on the one hand, suffered great human and material losses (Borowik, 1997, p. 65). On the other, the tragic results of the Holocaust, as well as the fact of leaving the majority of the Orthodox faithful beyond the eastern borders and the removal of the Protestant German minority from the western lands due to the Allies’ political decisions, made the Polish religious market much more homogenous. However, its power and influence was successively limited by the authorities of the communist governments. The new political system, based on the Marxist ideology, apart from deep socio-economic transformations, also assumed a reduction and, consequently, elimination of religion from the public sphere (Mariański, 2013, pp. 36–37). Nevertheless, the very initial period of the relationship between the Polish People’s Republic and the Church had some hallmarks of possible cooperation. The bilateral Agreement between the representatives of the Soviet-imposed government and the Polish Episcopate as of 14 April 1950 proves that the Church, in order to guarantee its clergy their pastoral work, would “teach the faithful to respect the law and the authority of the State according to the teachings of the Church”, “call upon the faithful to increase their efforts to rebuild the country and raise prosperity”, and that the Episcopate would be guided by the “Polish reason of State”. The government emphasised the respect for religious freedom maintaining the Catholic University of Lublin, Catholic associations and publishing houses, and promising not to introduce any limitations to public worship, processions and pilgrimages, or freedom of religious orders and congregations (*Państwowe prawo wyznaniowe...*, 1978, pp. 27–30). However, in spite of such apparently non-problematic relations, in subsequent documents the scope of authority and the public role of the Church were constantly limited by the State, clearly demonstrating the policy of intentional secularisation of the society (the separation of the Church and the State was introduced in the Constitution of 1952; secular wedding ceremonies in 1958 and secular educational system in 1961), which, paradoxically, strengthened its status as an ally of the nation and defender of the Polish identity against illegitimate governments (Mariański, 2013, pp. 37–39). Such a role of the Church as a protagonist of the good cause was further stressed by the election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope (1978), and later by subsequent pilgrimages of John Paul II to the country (1979, 1983, 1987)<sup>3</sup>, which always had clear political implications (Mariański, 2000, p. 204). Actively supporting the “Solidarity” movement, which finally led

to the political transformation in 1989, made the Church a major political “player” in Poland, creating favourable conditions for its strictly pastoral and public activities. The involvement of the Church in politics resulted in building a civil society in the communist and transformation-era Poland, but at the same time it opened, of course, a new sphere of challenges with new secularisation influences of the Western culture. The coalition between the Church and the State proved to be much less effective and more difficult in the context of the new, democratic reality, but it did not really influence the statistical data concerning the percentage of people connected formally with the Roman Catholic Church (1931 – 64.8%; 1971 – 93.4%; 1982 – 96.4%; 1987 – 95.7%; 1995 – 95.5%) (Mariański, 1991, pp. 38, 50, 52; *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae*, 1995, 1997, p. 66).

In the case of Brazil, Catholic Portuguese colonisation formally meant, first of all, territorial and mercantile expansion – the religion was a political tool that enabled the legitimisation of the colonial project (Azzi, 1987, p. 33). This explains the lack of interest of the kings in any “religious investments” – Portuguese Catholicism was an ideal example of caesaropapism, in which the ruler, as a proxy of the Pope, exercised total (political, economic and doctrinal) control over the Catholic Church in its domains, focusing rather on high and fast earnings than on bearing the cost of faith propagation. It is proven by notorious problems with establishing dioceses and parishes and the fact that the religious life in Brazil was dominated by land aristocracy supporting the Church representatives and by numerous lay brotherhoods spreading the popular, medieval religiosity and syncretic rituals, far from orthodoxy, including the elements of magic and “heretic doctrines”. To fight them, the Holy Inquisition was founded in Portugal in 1536, but, contrary to its Spanish counterpart, it had an opinion of extraordinarily liberal in Brazil, mostly due to the insufficient population of the colony (Gorenstein, 2006). As observed by Fernandes (1994, p. 42), formally Catholic Brazil quickly became in practice religiously diversified, syncretic and polycentric, with the population of each region concentrated around other symbols and uncanonised popular saints.

It was, therefore, this unorthodox Brazilian Catholicism that, paradoxically, influenced mostly the formation of the pluralistic religious market in Brazil by means of the informal coexistence with other religions, cults and doctrines. When slavery was introduced, both Indians and Africans in practice continued to perform their rituals, slightly adapted to the requirements of Catholicism. The first missionaries formally condemned it, but allowed such practices, believing that sooner or later they would be subject to decline. Thus, the faith in the existence of Indian and African deities and magic coexisted with the faith in Jesus the Saviour, which explains the contemporary parallel or dualistic syncretism consisting in Brazilians proclaiming two seemingly different, yet to the believers complementary, religions and a harmonious, non-conflictual coexistence of separate spheres

of religious reality. Indian and African gods demanded sacrifices (in accordance with the rule of reciprocity) but they also “accepted” other deities into their pantheons, which caused religious openness of Brazilians (including readiness to change religious affiliation), characterised by their ability to quickly integrate new cultural ingredients and different religious practices into their belief systems.

Independence of Brazil (1822) resulted in the decisive strengthening of secular control over the Church, which, following the Constitution of 1824, was ruled by the Emperor and at the same time – the Great Master of a Freemasonry Lodge (Casanova, 1994). Catholicism was declared the official religion of the State, but other religions were also tolerated provided that they were practised in private. It was the Emperor who appointed bishops in Brazil and allowed (or refused) the distribution of Vatican-issued documents, which almost led to schisms on several occasions. The Church was treated as just one of the elements of the Empire’s administration, and the clergymen as poorly paid employees of the State (Matos, 2003, p. 32).

Following the regulations set forth in the first Republican constitution of 1891, the Church was separated from the State and deprived of any financial support. It was then that Brazil started to formally build its modern and pluralistic religious market which would guarantee freedom of religion and not involvement of the State. In order to survive, each religious offer had to count on its own strength, funds and human resources. At the same time, it was precisely when the first formal strong competitors to the Church emerged in Brazil: the republican governments started inviting European immigration, as well as foreign (including North American) Protestant missions. In 1910, the first Pentecostal community was formed, which resulted in a widespread proliferation of the movement. Until this day, the Assemblies of God are the largest Pentecostal movement in Brazil (Robeck, 2006).

Helpless against the new, growing competitors, the Catholic Church reacted by focusing on regaining its old privileges. Finally, it managed to recover its dominant position by means of again allying itself with the State (Casanova, 2005, p. 199): the government of Getúlio Vargas started supporting the Church after the hierarchs had supported his own coup. He made Catholic religion a mandatory school subject, subsidised Catholic universities, decided on the construction of the statue of Christ the Redeemer (1931), a symbol of the city, towering over Rio de Janeiro till this day, and got personally involved in celebrations of the announcement of Our Lady of Aparecida as the Patroness Saint of Brazil (1930).

One of the most significant triggers of changes in the Brazilian Catholicism became the historic Second Vatican Council whose resolutions were implemented by the Latin American Episcopal Conference of 1968 in Medellín, giving birth to the liberation theology. With it, the Brazilian Church initiated a completely new chapter in its history: the escalation of

violence by the right-wing military regime started in 1964 and deepening poverty led it towards very strong political opposition, which, during the most vehement years of the liberation theology (1967–1977), made it lose about 20% of its clergy due to excessive radicalisation of its representatives who ended up in prison or were expelled from the country (Casanova, 1994). On the other hand, paradoxically, the undemocratic regime and the acts of persecution were the main factors upholding the authority of the Church, just like it happened at the same time in Poland. However, the conclave that ended in electing John Paul II, anti-communist Pope from behind the Iron Curtain, quickly resulted in conflicts between the Vatican and the radical leftist Brazilian Church. The Pope opposed to its direct political involvement, condemning Marxist interpretations of Christianity and indicating the risk of doctrinal deviation. In the attempt to accommodate to the Vatican policy, including censorship and suspending prominent representatives of the liberation theology in their pastoral work, in the mid-80s the Brazilian Church adopted the strategy of “privatisation”, which signified the withdrawal from its public activities.

However, at the same time, a new, strong player emerged on Brazil’s religious market, which represented competition to both Catholicism and traditional Pentecostalism – Neo-Pentecostal Churches based on the local Brazilian syncretisms, traditional “reciprocity rule”, prosperity gospel and the most modern means of information and communication. One of them was registered in 1977 under the name of Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD) founded by Edir Macedo, a bookkeeper at a Brazilian lottery business, who experimented with Afro-Brazilian cults, converted from Catholicism to Neo-Pentecostalism, and finally gave up the office job and began new life as a pastor of his own Church (Siuda-Ambroziak, 2015). Catholicism gradually started losing its statistical domination – according to IBGE (2012) popular censuses, the percentage of Catholic affiliates decreased as follows: 1970 – 91.8%; 1980 – 88.9%, 1991 – 83%; 2000 – 73.6%, while, at the same time, the percentage of Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal affiliation increased: 1970 – 5.2%; 1980 – 6.6%; 1991 – 9%; 2000 – 15.4%. The Church, however, seems to have remained passive for a long time, not answering appropriately to the new competition threat, initially ignoring and disregarding it, until business-oriented Neo-Pentecostals had already gained a competitive advantage by investing heavily in mass media and successfully expanding their religious corporations not only in Brazil, but also abroad.

As can be easily noticed, while the Polish religious market became more hermetic and homogenously Catholic after WWII and during the communist regime, at the same time the Brazilian one started expanding its religious pluralism. The Papacy of a Pole, John Paul II, also brought a completely different outcome for the Catholic political opposition movement led by the respective national Churches – while the Polish one, strongly anti-com-



munist, was readily supported by the Vatican and flourished, the Brazilian one – strongly leftist and, according to the Vatican, too progressive – started slowly withdrawing, not without internal protests and turbulences, from its public (political) activities. As a result, the Polish religious market turned out to be even more monopolistic and thus, quite “competition-proof”, while the Brazilian one – more and more competitive, open and liberal.

### **3. Contemporary Religious Market in Poland and in Brazil: Comparative Statistical Overview**

Both Polish and Brazilian contemporary religious markets appear to be quite peculiar from the economic perspective – they are still statistically dominated by one religious institution (the Catholic Church) with clear monopolistic aspirations. However, while in the case of Poland, as we have already shown, this market presents a low level of pluralism in spite of its formal, constitutionally guaranteed, potential for existence, in Brazil such pluralisation quickly gained ground and has been continuously developing. These characteristics, according to the market theory of religion, should channel the Polish religious sphere towards stagnation rather than any religious revival, just like it happens elsewhere in a similar case (Iannacone, 1991, pp. 159–160), and, at the same time, make the Brazilian religious market proliferate. However, while in Brazil the religious vitality is indeed extremely high, the situation of Poland might suggest its incompatibility with such market interpretations, unless we notice that the specific aspect of its local dynamics seems to be based on seeking, implementation and more or less skilful adaptation of the market and marketing solutions by the dominating religious institution itself.

The religious market in contemporary Poland has, as mentioned before, a quasi-monopolistic character with a clearly established position of the Catholic Church and a minor market share of other co-existing religious organisations which are not competitive for the leading religious institution. It is all exemplified by the figures from the 2011 Census (GUS, 2015, p. 93), according to which 87.58% of Poles belong to the Roman Catholic Church, followed by competitors possessing smaller than 1% market share, like: the Orthodox Church – 0.4%; Jehovah’s Witnesses – 0.36%; Evangelical-Augsburg Church – 0.18 %, and other religious organizations – 0.35% (according to the figures presented – 2.41% of the population does not belong to any church and 7.1% refused to answer the question about their religious affiliation). That means that 87.7% of Poles are affiliated with Catholicism, 0.4% with Eastern Christianity and 0.3% with Protestantism. Others either had no affiliation with any confession or, for some reason, refused to reveal it (GUS, 2015, p. 95).

In Brazil, this picture is a little different: according to the results of the last population Census (IBGE, 2012, pp. 89–107), the Brazilian religious

market is still dominated by Catholicism, but the percentage of its affiliates again substantially decreased in the decade between 2000 and 2010 – from 73.6% to 64.6%. The numbers of the (Neo)Pentecostal faithful rose from 15.4% in 2000 to 22.2% in 2010, which means a giant leap from 26.2 million Brazilians to 42.3 million.

Some other important characteristics and ingredients of the Brazilian religious market are: a growing number of those without affiliation – an increase from 12.5 million (7.3% of the population) in 2000 to 15 million (8%) in 2010; Spiritualists – an increase from 1.3% (2.3 million) to 2% (3.8 million); traditional Protestant denominations – a slight decrease, from 4.1% to 4%; Afro Brazilian Cults, like Umbanda and Candomblé – remained steady at the level of 0.3%. The data on other religions also show that the Brazilian religious market is becoming more pluralistic: they all amount to 2.7% – showing a rise of 1% during the last decade. Among them are, for example: Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims.

As we can easily notice, the homogeneity of the Polish religious sphere is much more visible than in the case of Brazil – the number of Catholics in Poland in 2015 amounted to 92% (*Annuario Statisticum...*, 2017, p. 4) with just a small decrease from 96.21% in 2010 and 95.84% in 2000 (*Annuario Statisticum...*, 2012, p. 72, 2002, p. 71), which does not really affect the change of the religious structure and the position of the Catholic Church in Poland, as is the case with its Brazilian counterpart. Besides, the structural and organisational potential of this religious institution in Poland seems to show only insignificant symptoms of weakening. The year 2015 saw the total number of parishes representing the Latin rite amounting to 10,248. The apostolic forces included: 162 bishops, 27,978 priests, and 5,684 monastic priests (*Annuario Statisticum...*, 2017, pp. 5, 9). At the same time, in Brazil, in spite of its huge territorial dimensions, the Catholic Church comprising 44 ecclesiastical provinces was subdivided into only 9,192 parishes – fewer than in Poland, with 498 bishops but only 16,837 priests (including both diocesan and monastic).<sup>4</sup> The outlined figures highlight the position and organisational power of the Church in Poland, which was, as we have already pointed out, substantially strengthened, in opposition to its counterpart in Brazil, by the pontificate of John Paul II.

A selectively outlined view of the religious market in both countries highlights some clear trends: a still significant Catholic domination, in fact a quasi-monopoly in Poland supported by tradition, consolidated and manifested by the widespread and mass nature of rites and rituals; and, in the case of Brazil, increasing heterogeneity and competitiveness of the market with still evident Christian predominance. However, despite external manifestations of monolithic nature, the internal diversification of Polish Catholicism is also becoming more and more noticeable, indicating particular “internal categories” described by M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska (2004, p. 94) as: “ideological religiousness”; open Catholicism, gathering the

Catholic intelligentsia; the pillar of “the involved”, based on active members of the Catholic movements and associations; and finally, the trend of “Sunday Catholicism”, identified with traditional religiousness, superficial and non-meditative.

Market analogies might seem controversial and somewhat deprecating the attitude and nature of the approach of the faithful towards sacredness, yet they do indicate the scope of their interest in a given religious offer, at the same time revealing the effectiveness of methods of evangelisation, where more and more innovative projects (confessions arranged on the phone<sup>5</sup>, masses for singles<sup>6</sup>) and solutions started to appear and become successfully implemented in both countries – in Poland, within the Catholic Church itself (Stachowska, 2012, p. 50); and in Brazil, mostly outside it, in the most active, growing and expansive (Neo)Pentecostal syncretic Christianity. What is interesting is that such initiatives seem less and less restrained, indicating vividly not only a significant degree of religious market specialisation in both countries, but also their growing coherence with the needs and expectations of the precisely defined market segments of the “target faithful”. For the two religious markets, it may mean both growing competitiveness (though in the case of Poland still mostly internal only) and a better, entrepreneur-friendly environment for those interested in investments in the religious sector and making profit.

#### **4. Innovative Religious Entrepreneurs and Their Strategies: Father Rydzyk vs. Bishop Macedo**

An exemplification of effective management of the religious consumer potential and, therefore, an indication of successful adaptation of economic rules to the conditions of the religious competition is: in Poland – business initiatives launched by a Redemptorists, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, whose leading and most recognisable undertaking, not to say a spectacular brand, is Radio Maryja; and in Brazil – the IURD empire of faith built by bishop Edir Macedo.

Father Rydzyk and bishop Macedo started developing their religious enterprises more or less at the same time: at the beginning of the 90s, in difficult social, political and economic circumstances provoked by the uneasy re-democratisation period which started in the two countries almost simultaneously (in Brazil – 1985; in Poland – 1989) and which was marked by difficult neo-liberal reforms, galloping inflation, economic crisis, growing social disparities, and, last but not least, omnipresent lack of security. What is more, the two religious leaders started their expansion exactly in the same way: by means of finding and focusing on the needs of their “target market” and investing heavily in mass media.

The broadcasting radio station of Father Rydzyk was formally established in December 1991 by his Congregation, initially as a local station,

but in 1994 became not only nationwide but also quite popular (5<sup>th</sup> place in Poland)<sup>7</sup>. The orientation of the station is, in accordance with the granted concession, promoting Christian ideas and values, as well as presenting social issues from the point of view of the teachings of the Catholic Church, with a strong focus on the formation activity. However, the programme policy of the broadcasting station, apart from religious contents and the propagated formula of “prayer and religious instruction”, includes socio-political issues, sometimes, according to some researchers, presented in a controversial formula (Krzemiński, 2009, pp. 20–21). According to the Centre for Public Opinion Research Survey conducted in 2011, among the listeners of this radio station there were, first of all, people above the age of 65 (49%); attending church regularly (48%); living in the countryside (49%); retired (48%); declaring willingness to vote for the rightist “Prawo i Sprawiedliwość” (Law and Justice) political party (Grabowska, 2011, pp. 6–9). Concluding, a homogenous, rather elderly, rightist and conservative segment of the Catholic Church is a very well-defined target group on which Father Rydzyk consciously focused and which reacted in a positive (or even enthusiastic) way to such a well-developed and applied strategy, making it extremely successful.

The broadcasting station may be regarded as an “innovative socio-religious project”, as M. Sroczyńska (2012, p. 339) called it, especially in the context of the transformation period, which apart from integrating hopes, assumed the form of a social protest movement against the liberal and postmodern trends with a specified political potential, effectively instrumentalised by Father Rydzyk. The involvement of Radio Maryja in politics raised from the very beginning some doubts and even criticism, which does not change, however, either its orientation and political aspirations or the attempts to win favour with the station by many political parties, viewing it as a crucial tool or a platform for a potential influence on the consolidated and well mobilized electorate (Piskała and Potkaj, 2007). The so-called Radio Maryja Family is characterised by self-discipline and loyalty, which is proved by annual pilgrimages to the Jasna Góra Monastery, annual celebrations to mark the foundation of the station, as well as meetings of the circles of friends of Radio Maryja, attracting masses of the faithful. The interest of such kind in Father Rydzyk’s initiatives reflects, first of all, his very skilled management of expectations and needs of a specific group of believers, creating “a peculiar environment of religious and moral revival” (Jasiak, 1995, p. 41), while being at the same time a strategic partner in the political power game.

Radio Maryja has quickly become not only a Catholic broadcasting station, but also one of the leading media corporations closely identified with and directly managed by Father Rydzyk, with its such significant pillars as: TV Trwam, the newspaper “Nasz Dziennik” (Our Daily) and the monthly “W Naszej Rodzinie” (In Our Family). TV Trwam is run formally by the

“Lux Veritatis” Foundation established in 1998, but its founder and chairman is the Redemptorist in question<sup>8</sup>. The ideological formula of the television, which was granted concession on 13 March 2003<sup>9</sup>, is mainly connected with – similarly to Radio Maryja – spreading Christian axiology and teachings of the Church. Another mentioned undertaking by Father Rydzyk is “Nasz Dziennik”, a national newspaper issued since 1998<sup>10</sup>. Father T. Rydzyk was its initiator, and the “Spes” company is the publisher<sup>11</sup>. The last element of this media group is a monthly entitled “W Naszej Rodzinie”, which belongs to the “Nasza Przyszłość” (Our Future) Foundation established also by the Redemptorist, who is also a member of the Foundation Council<sup>12</sup>.

The religious corporation identified with Father T. Rydzyk, apart from strictly mass media investments, includes also educational initiatives, such as private Catholic schools at all levels, which formally belong to the “Nasza Przyszłość” Foundation; environmental initiatives orientated towards acquiring clear and renewable energy from thermal water deposits near Toruń, carried out by the “Geotermia Toruń” company (“Toruń Geothermal Energy”), where the majority shareholder is the “Lux Veritatis” Foundation<sup>13</sup>; educational enterprises in the form of the private College of Social and Media Culture in Toruń, established by Father T. Rydzyk<sup>14</sup>; or recreational and health resort initiatives lying within the competence of the “Uzdrowisko Termy Toruńskie” company (“Toruń Thermal Springs”), the majority shareholder of which is the aforementioned “Lux Veritatis” Foundation<sup>15</sup>; as well as a mobile network operating under the brand “W Naszej Rodzinie”, which belongs to the “Polskie Sieci Cyfrowe” company (the “Polish Digital Networks”)<sup>16</sup>. At the same time, another spectacular and large-scale investment made by T. Rydzyk has become the Sanctuary of Our Lady Star of the New Evangelisation and Saint John Paul II in Toruń, situated near the College of Social and Media Culture (completed in 2016).

All the religious undertakings coordinated by Father Rydzyk – directly or indirectly – create a whole network of entities which are legally linked in terms of capital and personnel, resembling a religious holding company. The underlying idea of this activity – at least originally – was a strictly religious formula orientated towards evangelisation and propagating conservative, traditionalistic and national contents (Sroczyńska, 2012, p. 339), but, at the same time, forming a fairly specific capital group using logos and the potential of the mentioned religious brands. These initiatives seem to be a very effective adaptation to market conditions, penetrating the religious sphere, based on the brands connected with the Redemptorists’ media, where the assumed mechanism stimulating demand is the loyalty of listeners, viewers, their families and sympathisers. This undertaking may be referred to a model of American televangelism propagating faith through the media, consolidating crowds, referring to the loyalty and commitment of the faithful. However, televangelism is already a common phenomenon in the American market, within a specific social, cultural or even politi-

cal scope, providing many benefits to its leaders. In the Polish conditions, propagating religion through the media was, till the time of implementation of Father Rydzyk's innovation, more limited. Hence, building precisely in Poland such a thriving religious holding company focused on two major media seems to be a phenomenon, since other initiatives referring to this model of evangelising influence, seeking potential success even in other Catholic countries, have so far ended rather in failure, which is proved, in case of Poland, for instance by the failure of TV Religia within TVN group or TV PULS – both TV stations were not successful in the market despite huge financial investment on the part of powerful, professional media companies. In clear contrast with that, the company of Father T. Rydzyk has become a significant exception to the rule, the success of which is based on: good timing for the product introduction; a skilful choice of the target group and its adequate diagnosis; an accurate feeling for the specificity of the Polish religiousness in a precisely defined sector; the use of professional business and marketing tools in managing the religious corporation.

On the other hand, in Brazil, the self-appointed bishop, founder and owner of the (Neo)Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD), Edir Macedo, started investing heavily in the media sector already at the beginning of the 80s when he took advantage of the possibilities of, firstly, using a paid time span on some local radio stations in Rio de Janeiro to inform about his newly founded institution and to pray with the faithful and, subsequently, buying the local Radio Cobacabana (680 AM), which became the first evangelical radio in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>17</sup> But from 1995 on, bishop Macedo started working intensively towards creating a whole network of different radios, bidding and buying them one by one (at first, radio FM 105,1 in Rio de Janeiro). In order to make it nationally recognisable, he organised the first festival of Christian Music in 1996, funding a “Troféu da FM 105” (Trophy of the FM 105) for the best evangelical song. Already in 1998, he possessed 17 local stations which he linked together on 6<sup>th</sup> June in a structure of a radio network called “Rede Alleluia – A Rede da Família” (Alleluia Network – the Family Network). In the second half of 2002, he bought a supermodern broadcasting station in São Paulo (99,3 FM), equipped with the highest standard studios broadcasting via satellite. Currently, the network of the bishop comprises 64 stations in all Brazilian regions, in 22 states of the federation, covering 75% of the national territory. The network has got clear proselytic objectives, but still produces a substantial income from advertisements, including programmes on health, lifestyles, economy and – politics.<sup>18</sup>

The mass media and, at the same time, the “faith empire” of Edir Macedo is a family religious business co-run (in a formally, as we have already shown, still mostly Catholic country) by his wife, two daughters and two sons-in-law (both pastors at his Neo-Pentecostal Church) who work closely with him in an active way promoting the Church and all its media.

Their blogs put on the websites of the radio stations side by side with Macedo's are very popular.<sup>19</sup> The Network website connects directly with a "pastor on duty", it can be downloaded via both iPhone and Android systems and is present in all social media, including Twitter and Facebook. Such investments clearly show a different profile of the target group focused on by Bishop Macedo: the Catholic population of Brazil, according to the statistical data of the last Census by the IBGE (2012), is one of the oldest in terms of age of its affiliates (Catholicism is most popular among Brazilian over 50 years old – 75.2% of this age group are Catholic), while the most competitive (Neo)Pentecostal Churches seem to be aiming decisively at much younger, and thus more competitive sector of the Brazilian religious market (the majority of their affiliates are between 15 and 29 years old).

In 1989, Edir Macedo bought a falling TV station Record, together with its broadcasting concessions. He invested heavily in the expansion of the station (possessing nowadays over 250 re-transmission stations and covering not only the whole American continent, but also other continents, including Europe). It possesses a number of highly specialised daughter companies, like, for instance: Record Internacional<sup>20</sup> with some popular, live interactive religious shows (an innovative "Fala que eu te escuto" (Speak, I am listening to you) with a call centre open 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week)<sup>21</sup>, its own brand soap operas, news channels (since 2007), a sports channel and entertainment and life style programmes, and, also since 2007, a record studio. The Record Group has been also developing its own financial services sector starting with the purchase of majority shares in the Renner Bank.<sup>22</sup> Apart from the commercial station Record, Edir Macedo also started the Church's own TV channel – TV Universal<sup>23</sup> and his own religious publishing house with, among others, such products as his own books (including his and his family's biographies) and a nationwide newspaper "Folha Universal" (Universal Paper).

In 2014, with the presence of the highest authorities of Brazil, including President Dilma Rousseff, Edir Macedo inaugurated the biggest IURD (and Christian in general) temple in the Western hemisphere: the Temple of Salomon in São Paulo.<sup>24</sup> The support of the President (impeached in 2017) was won by a substantial investment made by both Edir Macedo and his Church towards her difficult presidential campaign in 2010 (Siuda-Ambroziak, 2014). What is interesting is that Macedo, unlike Father Rydzyk (who has not invested in his own political representation, building rather strategic alliances during parliamentary and presidential campaigns), does not abstain from directly entering the political sphere, pursuing his interests with much bigger vehemence, especially since 2005, when he invested in forming, with his bishops, their own political party (Brazilian Republican Party – PRB), which successfully ran an electoral campaign of its formal leader (one of the IURD bishops and Macedo's nephew), Marcelo Crivella, for the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro in 2016.<sup>25</sup>

As we can see, both Bishop Macedo and Father Rydzyk are quite specific (sometimes considered even controversial) religious leaders, operating simultaneously in the business and religious sectors, while also investing in national politics, being constantly courted by members of political parties eager to take advantage of their media power and very disciplined voters. Both of them are also regarded as very successful entrepreneurs in terms of strictly profit-oriented investments: *Forbes* stresses that Macedo is “the richest pastor in Brazil”, with his fortune estimated at USD 950 million, and main assets including Rede Record, newspaper *Folha Universal* with a circulation of over 2.5 million daily, a news channel, state-of-art properties and a USD 45 million worth Bombardier private jet<sup>26</sup>; at the same time, in 2017, only one of Father Rydzyk’s initiatives – “Lux Veritas Foundation” – made a substantial profit of almost PLN 30 million.<sup>27</sup>

The above outlined view of the Polish and Brazilian religious enterprises indicates the interpretative accuracy of the economic theories and interpretations of religion. Both the model of Father Rydzyk activity within the Catholic Church in Poland, including developing a considerable consumer potential, and bishop Edir Macedo’s international “empire of faith” quite clearly belong to the economic religious market perspective. After all, religious institutions are treated here as investors, founders of companies and enterprises, their religious ideas and contents are presented in terms of products or services, while the faithful are clearly identified with customers choosing the most attractive offers or those which suit their preferences or tastes best, highlighting the potential of further business expansion and the strong alliance between the economy and religion, money and evangelisation, market and faith.

## 5. Conclusions

The above outlined picture of the functioning of the religious market in Poland and Brazil emphasises both the specificity of the two spectrums and clear analogies between them, connected with a still dominant position of the Catholic Church. However, in both discussed countries the visible monopolies in fact cohabit with diversification of the religious market, although it emerges or manifests itself in a different way, thus entailing varied strategies of managing the consumer potential. In spite of differing considerably in their degree of religious pluralism (Brazil – more pluralistic; Poland – only within the structure of its quasi-monopolistic Church), both markets provided favourable conditions for the appearance of successful religious entrepreneurs applying the rules of economics and competition for the sake of growth of their innovative, media-based religious enterprises.

The Polish case shows that the diversity of religious consumers’ preferences occurs within the dominant (Catholic) denomination, where the quests and attempts to choose a religious offer are most often adapted in



the undertakings initiated within the “brand” of the Catholic Church, thus contributing to reproducing a homogeneous denominational structure implying religious uniformity. The palette of religious consumer needs of Poles includes both conservative and almost fundamentalist orientations, as well as “lukewarm”, superficial or selective ones, revealing new segments and niches requiring specific actions stimulating their commitment. At the same time, the established role and position of the Catholic Church in Poland entails a certain ineptitude in managing such demand, which in the light of economic perspective on religion, is a result of the monopoly position on the market – the Polish Church is, indeed, not very adventurous or inclined to search for innovations and implement new solutions emanating a special concern for the consumer potential, highlighting rather the attachment to tradition and, above all, the stability of “intergenerational transmission of beliefs” (Libiszowska-Żótkowska, 2004, p. 90). Still, as we showed, it leaves some space for innovators – there appear internal initiatives orientated towards a chosen consumer segment with highly developed specialisation and economic rationality of undertaken activities. Such an example is definitely the religious holding company of Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, which indicates completely new opportunities for the religious market in Poland.

Different from the Polish conditions has been the development of the religious market in Brazil, which, in spite of the official, historically attained dominant position of the Catholic Church, has always been much more pluralistic, syncretic and innovative than it might have seemed from an outside perspective (especially emphasised in the light of world statistics in which Brazil still appears as the biggest Catholic country in the world). Additionally, it has recently been strongly stimulated by Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal Churches, effectively attracting the faithful (including the Catholics) by means of professional marketing tools and techniques, the use of mass media, investments in the political and financial sectors, introducing competitive mechanisms to consolidate their positions towards further expansion. Innovative strategies developed and implemented by (Neo)Pentecostal denominations such as the above described IURD of Edir Macedo are aimed at an effective increase in their religious market share, at the same time substantially weakening the position of the Catholic Church – nowadays more a follower than a trendsetter creating innovative solutions on the religious market, which is shown, for example, by its visible “pentecostalisation” revealing a quest for a strategy to block the expansion of its competitors and halt the loss of the faithful leaving for other religious offers (Carranza, 2011).

Thus, an important factor in the development of religious enterprises on both market is the strength and the character of their religious competition – Poland has got an inward-directed competition within its dominating, quasi-monopolistic religious institution of the Catholic Church, while Brazil, where the position of the Catholic Church is still strong, but nevertheless

decreasing, there is plenty of room for other, non-Catholic religious enterprises. The Brazilian market is, thus, much more competitive and pluralistic than the Polish one with the competition between different Churches and religions instead of between various subgroups of the same faith.

Summing up, it is worth noticing that all the indicated similarities and differences in the functioning of the religious markets in Poland and Brazil generally highlight the interpretative usefulness of the economic perspective on religion, proving that applying economic laws to the activities of the religious institutions, though sometimes controversial, allows for, at least partially, demonstrating the determinants of trends and changes appearing in the discussed areas of the two respective countries.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The Constitution introduced the division into religious organisations recognised and unrecognised by the State.
- <sup>2</sup> The Constitution of 1935 did not introduce changes to religious issues (Majchrowski and Nawrot, 1984, p. 108).
- <sup>3</sup> Subsequent pilgrimages of John Paul II to Poland were made after the transformation.
- <sup>4</sup> Own calculations based on figures from: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dbr2.html> (retrieved on: 15.10.2017).
- <sup>5</sup> KAI, *Spowiedź na telefon w Dolinie Miłosierdzia*, 21.03.2016: <https://ekai.pl/spowiedz-na-telefon-w-dolinie-milosierdzia/> (retrieved on: 15.09.2017).
- <sup>6</sup> KAI, *Częstochowa: poznali się na Mszy dla singli, powiedzieli sobie „tak”*, 3.01.2016, source: <https://ekai.pl/czestochowa-poznali-sie-na-mszy-dla-singli-powiedzieli-sobie-tak/> (retrieved on: 15.09.2017); KAI, *Lubcz w archidiecezji gnieźnieńskiej zaprasza na Msze św. dla szukających żony/męża*, 23.08.2013: <https://ekai.pl/lubcz-w-archidiecezji-gnieznienskiej-zaprasza-na-msze-sw-dla-szukajacych-zony-meza/> (retrieved on: 15.09.2017).
- <sup>7</sup> Radio Maryja has the largest approximate territorial coverage with 126 stations at its disposal. *Mapy przedstawiające przybliżone zasięgi stacji publicznej i komercyjnej radiofonii analogowej stan na dzień 31 XII 2016 r.*, Departament Regulacji Biura KRRiT, Warszawa 2017, pp. 67 and 68. The radio station is also available to the Polish community abroad. <http://www.radiomaryjachicago.org/onas.html> (retrieved on: 30.09.2017).
- <sup>8</sup> [www.luxveritatis.pl/](http://www.luxveritatis.pl/) (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>9</sup> [www.krrit.gov.pl/dla-nadawcow-i-operatorow/koncesje/wykaz-koncesji-i-decyzji/](http://www.krrit.gov.pl/dla-nadawcow-i-operatorow/koncesje/wykaz-koncesji-i-decyzji/) (retrieved on: 27.09.2017).
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.naszdziennik.pl/o-nas-pl> (retrieved on: 28.09.2017).
- <sup>11</sup> *Wydawca „Naszego Dziennika” ze wzrostem wpływów i zysku*, Fundacja Lux Veritatis z 29,8 mln zł zysku, retrieved on 11.09.2017, source: [www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/nasz-dziennik-i-fundacja-lux-veritatis-o-tadeusza-rydzyka-wplywy-i-zysk-w-2016-roku](http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/nasz-dziennik-i-fundacja-lux-veritatis-o-tadeusza-rydzyka-wplywy-i-zysk-w-2016-roku) (retrieved on: 27.09.2017)
- <sup>12</sup> *Statut Fundacji „Nasza Przyszłość” z siedzibą w Warszawie*: [www.fnp.pl](http://www.fnp.pl) (retrieved on: 28.09.2017).
- <sup>13</sup> KRS 0000309280: [ems.ms.gov.pl](http://ems.ms.gov.pl) (retrieved on: 27.09.2017).
- <sup>14</sup> Statute of the College of Social and Media Culture in Toruń as of 8.09.2016 (consolidated text), p. 1: <https://wsksim.edu.pl> (retrieved on: 28.09.2017).

- <sup>15</sup> B. Mikołajewska, *Uzdrowisko Ojca Rydzyka*, 17.01.2017: <https://oko.press/uzdrowisko-ojca-rydzyka/> (retrieved on: 28.09.2017).
- <sup>16</sup> The telephony network “W Naszej Rodzinie” is mentioned on the webpage of Radio Maryja as one of its works: <http://www.radiomaryja.pl/> (retrieved on: 28.09.2017).
- <sup>17</sup> Information on the transaction on: <http://www.radiocopacabanaam.com/> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>18</sup> Information provided by the network „Rede Alleluia”: <http://www.redealeluia.com.br/emissoras-2/> and <http://www.redealeluia.com.br/sobre-a-rede-3/> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>19</sup> On the official website of the Universal Church, there are six blogs, all belonging to the Bishop-founder and the closest members of his family working with him: Edir Macedo’s (<https://blogs.universal.org/bispomacedo/>), his wife’s (<https://blogs.universal.org/fonteajorrar/>), his two daughters’ and their husbands’ – pastors of the IURD (<https://blogs.universal.org/cristianecardoso/>; <https://blogs.universal.org/renatocardoso/blog/>; <https://vivianefreitas.com/>; <https://juliofreitas.com> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>20</sup> <http://recordinternacional.r7.com/>.
- <sup>21</sup> The programme appeared live for the first time on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb, 1998 and has been on ever since with very high popularity among the viewers: <https://noticias.r7.com/tecnologia-e-ciencia/videos/conheca-o-novo-site-do-fala-que-eu-te-escuto-21102015> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>22</sup> Record TV is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest media company in Latin America, employing over 10,000 employees only in Brazil, investing also in the banking sector: <http://www.valor.com.br/arquivo/636911/grupo-record-acquire-40-do-banco-renner> and <https://oglobo.globo.com/economia/grupo-record-do-bispo-edir-macedo-compra-40-do-banco-renner-3137883> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>23</sup> <http://sites.universal.org/tvuniversal/> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>24</sup> <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/inauguracao-do-templo-de-salomao-em-sao-paulo-13451900> (retrieved on: 25.10.2017).
- <sup>25</sup> <https://marcelocrivella.com.br/biografia-2/> (retrieved on: 27.10.2017).
- <sup>26</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andersonantunes/2013/01/17/the-richest-pastors-in-brazil/#3763a42d5b1e> (retrieved on: 28.10.2017).
- <sup>27</sup> *Wydawca „Naszego Dziennika” ze wzrostem wpływów i zysku, Fundacja Lux Veritatis z 29,8 mln zł zysku*, retrieved on 11.09.2017, source: [www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artukul/nasz-dziennik-i-fundacja-lux-veritatis-o-tadeusza-rydzyka-wplywy-i-zysk-w-2016-roku](http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artukul/nasz-dziennik-i-fundacja-lux-veritatis-o-tadeusza-rydzyka-wplywy-i-zysk-w-2016-roku) (retrieved on: 27.09.2017).

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