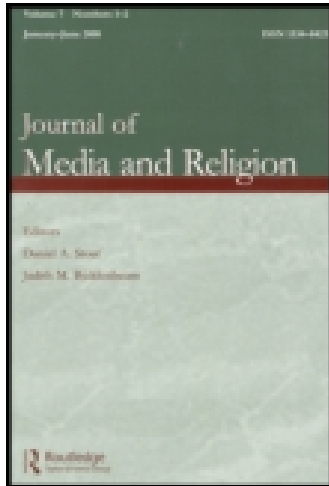


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Argentinian Religious Book Producers: Analyzing Catholic and Evangelical Publishing Houses

Joaquin Algranti

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The aim of this article is to explore Christian publishing houses (Catholic and evangelical) as a form of media communication in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Publishing houses represent the main production agent of spiritual commodities. They deploy a cultural policy that includes literature, music, films, and other areas, shaping a material culture of religious configuration. Our purpose is to delve into the productive tendencies of their companies, the consumer-believer profiles they target, and the different media they market. This work is based on qualitative research about the figure of the producer of religiously marked cultural commodities.

The religious field tends to incorporate technological innovation through its cultural production agents. They contribute to shape a specific material culture with a Catholic, evangelical, Jewish, or alternative imprint. If we think about religious commodities as a system of communication in motion (Douglas & Isherwood, 1990), then it becomes evident that the consumption of cultural goods such as films, music, DVDs, clothing, posters, office supplies, household items, etc., conform a powerful socialization force in the group's meanings and symbols. This space is inhabited by different forms of cultural industries, specialized in the art of manufacturing—on a large scale and for growing market—religious commodities.

The purpose of this article is to explore the complex world of publishing production, the division with the oldest history and largest development in Argentina. The study object is the Christian book and its variants (Catholic and evangelical). It is fundamental to highlight that the space of production of religiously marked commodities represents a larger domain than the complex of publishing houses. In sociology and anthropology of religion, especially Latin American, there are several interesting studies that address different aspects of this phenomenon. It is worth mentioning, for instance, the research conducted by Bernardo Lewgoy (2004), Pablo Semán (2006), and Leonildo Silveira Campos (2012) about production and consumption of Christian and self-help literature in Argentina and Brazil; focusing on other

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dimensions of the same problem, the works of Carlos Garma-Navarro (2000), Brigit Meyer (2006), and Eliane Hilario da Silva Martinoff (2010) show the ritual uses of evangelical music and mass media during religious ceremonies. According to the authors mentioned (De la Torre & Gutierrez Zúñiga, 2006, 2008) “the neo-esoteric offer” is a feature of popular religions that suppose the combination of different elements and knowledge of a number of traditions. They borrow practices and symbols from ancient cultures (Asian, Indian, African, pre-Columbian and Christian) and combine them with remnants of the Gnostic traditions, such as the esoteric, magic and spiritualism; they are also influenced by psychotherapeutic movements, environmental groups, indigenous and alternative health that provide mystical paths of sacred and transcendent experiences.¹ Beyond the productive diversity reflected by these analyses, publishing houses represent the most industrialized sector in Argentina. It was within its companies that audiovisual departments were early included, guided by a logic of leadership by differentiation.

This research aims to first reconstruct the underlying classification system applied by the interviewees when they locate their own companies in relation to other publishing houses. This system constructs a reference space governed by two dominant tendencies: Spiritual and Commercial. These forces will be described through the organizational model, the religious doctrine, the production areas, the financing logics, the author selection policy, the consumer profile, and the articulations with other religious institutions. Then we will identify the consumers-believers profiles targeted by publishing houses when manufacturing, distributing, and selling cultural commodities. Lastly this work explores the different ways in which books production is complemented with other types of cultural goods. This article presents the results of an ongoing research project that will be briefly described through some historical and methodological precisions.

HISTORICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

According to the latest national survey conducted in 2008 by CONICET's² department of Society, Culture and Religion (National Scientific and Technical Research Council), evangelicals today represent 9% of the population, in a cultural context in which Catholics predominate (76.5%), and a significant number of people are indifferent to religion (11.3%) (Figure 1). Evangelicals are thus the largest religious minority in the country. This is a relatively new phenomenon and raises several questions about the role of the cultural religious industry on this demographic transformation and other areas.

The Argentine Book Chamber's statistics shows that religious books represent 4% of the total publishing production during last year. Following our own qualitative research among chief editors, we can state that in terms of diversity and selling the most important religious publishing houses within the Christian market are San Pablo, Paulina for Catholics, and Peniel

¹From a theoretical perspective, it is important to mention the works of Alejandro Frigerio (2000), Chiung Hwang Chen (2011) and Airton Jungblut (2012) about the scope of the religious market theories in general and in Latin America in particular.

²It is key to stress that the CONICET is the main public institution for the promotion of science and technology in Argentina.

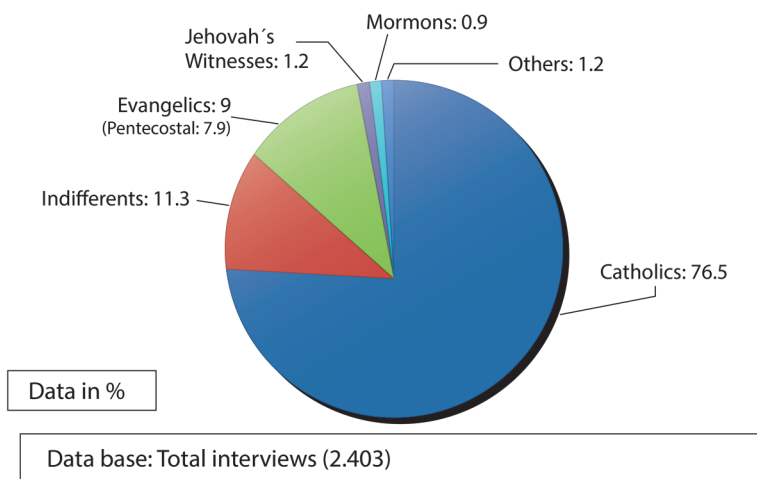


FIGURE 1 Which one is your current religion?

and Certeza³ for Baptist and neo-Pentecostal denominations. There is no updated national information concerning the readers of religious books. In order to introduce the object of our study we can briefly present the history and development of this specific branch of cultural industry over the years.

The religious book industry emerges and is established in Argentina during the first half of the 20th century, as an extension of church, temple, and synagogue life. Even though the appearance and contents of the published materials are wide, the pattern followed by different creeds is similar: Catholic, evangelical, and Jewish groups establish publishing houses as an extension of their local or foreign communities' chains of sociability. Enclosed and, many times, international production, distribution, and consumption networks comprise temples, schools, institutes and universities, foundations, and libraries, through which the reading material circulates. Not only does financing depend on commercial success, but also it relies on patronage institutions and private donations, which allow the religious book to maintain a certain distance with the uncertainties of the social market and its coordination problems (Beckert, 2009). The book—in its Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish version—is divided between a *religious-congregational* production pole and another *secular-private* production pole. The last ones tend to adopt the private model of family companies. The first ones, on the contrary, constitute nonprofit associations or foundations directly related to denominational groups and congregations of priests and nuns. In short, they are extensions of religious interdependence chains.

It is fundamental to point out that the religious book industry is a part of the publishing complex, which has undergone significant transformations in the last decades. Different research conducted by the *Observatorio de Industrias Culturales* (Observatory of Cultural Industries) and the *Sistema de Información Cultural de la Argentina* (Cultural Information System of

³San Pablo (Saint Paul), Paulinas (Pauline), and Certeza (Certainty).

Argentina), agree that the book industry has been marked by a process of denationalization and vertical concentration during the last twenty five years. The presence of large financial groups, transnational holdings, expresses the arrival of new agents, especially Spanish and German, among others, to the space of production. They acquire local companies, distribution companies, and sales points, that is, bookstore chains, contributing to the vertical integration of the production loop (Becerra, Hernández, & Postolski, 2003). The analysis made by Octavio Getino (2008) reveals a capital restructuring of the book industry and how six companies (Atlántida, Estrada, Planeta, Santillana, Sudamericana, and Emecé) control 55% of total sales in the country. It is worth noticing that the concentration movement in extended production loops and marketing channels is linked, in turn, with the emergence of small- and medium-sized publishing houses that respond to specific demand segments. Far from being an isolated Argentinean phenomenon, the general features tend to replicate in different parts of the world.

We carried out our qualitative research in this setting of changes and reconfiguration of the publishing complex, oriented to analyzing the production and circulation strategies of symbolic commodities offered by cultural industries in the evangelical and Catholic world in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The aims of this project were religious publishing houses, distributors, and producers. The field work started in early 2009, with CONICET's institutional and financial support. In the beginning it included in-depth interviews, records and reading of documents from the following Catholic and Evangelical publishing houses: San Pablo, Paulinas, Bonum, Agape, Peniel, Kairós, and Certeza Argentina. Directors and area or department managers were specially interviewed, and to a lesser extent, Christian salespersons and authors linked to these imprints. A total of 25 in-depth interviews were completed. The second phase started in late 2010 and continues to the present (2015), supported by the PICT project *Espacio de producción cultural y religión en Buenos Aires* (Space of cultural production and religion in Buenos Aires), financed by the National Agency of Scientific and Technological Promotion. At that stage, we incorporated new evangelical publishing houses to our sample. We carried out participant observation in publishing events, outreach activities, evangelical campaigns, seminars, and specialized courses to study the circulation regime of religious goods. This article gathers the first results obtained by this ongoing research.

PRODUCTIVE TENDENCIES OF THE PUBLISHING WORLD

The publishing market is a territory crossed, firstly, by two reference coordinates that allow locating the production agents and understanding their investments, calculations, risks, expectations and bounties. They may be described as the spiritual and commercial tendencies. The first one designates a cultural production policy that prioritizes religious-doctrinal accents and targets a restricted consumption network. The second one refers to a productive position that targets a broader network, the mainstream consumer, based on materials that subordinate religious motives to their commercial side (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 90). All publishing houses constitute a synthesis process and a dynamic balance between both forces.

These tendencies may be characterized based on the following dominant traits: 1) organizational model, 2) relationship with the religious doctrine, 3) strong areas of production, 4) financing logics and their marketing networks, 5) author selection policy, 6) prioritized consumer profile, and 7) arrangement of articulations established with other institutions in this

environment. The aim in this section is to explain in a concise manner the structuring principles that arrange the small cosmos of publishing life.

Spiritual Tendencies

This tendency is related to the religious pole of book production, that is, those companies that emerge as an extension of temples, synagogues, and churches. Generally, the organizational model that is best adjusted is the nonprofit association, or the foundation linked to religious movements, congregations, or assemblies. Here, the idea of the church-company prevails, under the rhetoric of the funding visionary—Father Alberione, Sister Tecla Merlo, Minister Pablo Besson, or Rebbe Menajem Mendel Schneerson. In morphological terms, this model's distinctive trait is business leadership in the hands of specialists—priests, nuns, rabbis, and ministers—who received professional training in religious institutions. It is also worth mentioning, the gradual incorporation of secular members in the internal labor division.

Regarding doctrinal accents, the spiritual tendency reinforces the idea of purity based on the importance of the Bible, its interpretations and variations. This prevails over the notion of religious experience that inhabits the opposite tendency, that is, the commercial trend. The theological focus recursively comes back on the importance of the sacred texts and their doctrinal construction as a coherent body of teachings and instructions in the hands of clergymen in charge of setting limits. For certain Jewish publishing houses an appropriate book is one that respects *kashrut* principles, one that is *Kosher*. The same happens with the process to obtain *Nihil Obstat* following Canon Law codes to publish catechism and Catholic education books, with the consequent sanctions the Vatican may apply on materials that deal with sensitive subjects outside doctrinal guidelines. This force presents itself as a consecrated guardian of the Bible and its interpretations. For that reason, the dominant publication areas, though not exclusive, are liturgy materials, pastorals, religious education, biblical studies, specialized dictionaries, documents, Bibles, prayer books, education, theology, and sexuality. There is, naturally, a supplementary extension toward the charismatic experience of faith; but this is not the specialty of this tendency, which maintains a distant attitude to religious forms centered only in spiritual experience. The areas with biggest commercial success are thus relegated.

Therefore, the financial logic rests partly in a regime of religious resources that allows it to survive based on a culture of donation and patronage. The missionary organization Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), established in 1698 by Anglicans, and the evangelical organization World Vision (WV), created in 1950, are accurate examples of external agencies that act as patrons; that is, they finance, train, and grant scholarships for publishing projects in the Protestant circle. Another mainstay is the extension of productive networks offered by religious interdependence chain. They bring competitive advantages when it comes to publishing, printing, and bringing the materials to market. They are also international settings of training and circulation where joint policies may be adopted in order to reduce costs. Red Letra Viva⁴ in the Christian-Evangelical circle or Servicio Apostólico Latinoamericano,⁵ in which Catholic publishing house Paulinas participates, are examples of large scale organizations that

⁴Red Letra Viva (Living Letter network).

⁵Servicio Apostólico Latinoamericano (Apostolic Latin American Service).

set global marketing strategies. Religious networks, unfolding their scope and thickness, give this tendency certain independence from the market and enable it to specialize in doctrinal purity.

The dominant perspective with regard to author selection and promotion aims at stimulating the emergence of local authors, from their circle, rather than translating big international personalities. This is the seedbed logic, of books written on demand, which maintains—in some sectors, not every one—an interesting presence related to the policy of *ex nihilo* creation of personalities who are unknown to the publishing world.

When it comes to classifying the offer, we observe a commercial criteria that prioritizes the needs of specialists and trained or training believers. They are cultural commodities aimed at what we will call in item three the “main core” and the “intermediate area” of the different variants in the religious world. They target an instructed consumer model, already initiated in forms of spiritual life, who is seeking to learn a technique, train their intellect, explore new senses or go deeper into the ones with which they are already familiar. This model tends to leave aside the uninstructed believer who inhabits in different ways the institutional periphery, and also marginal positions who are completely foreign to their universe of beliefs. If we exaggerate our argument a little, it is possible to say that they offer, primarily, cultural commodities made by religious people for religious people. The largest part of parishioners or followers play a secondary role.

Therefore, it is not strange that this cultural production current aims at building long-lasting relationships with educational institutions, schools, universities, institutes, training seminars, catechism courses, and so forth. There is an active principle of affinity between the cultural commodities manufactured, by trade and career, and the materials demanded by institutions professionally dedicated to cult celebration, teaching, and transmission of a religious legacy. The underlying idea is the *avant-garde* modernist concept that classifies and distinguishes between high and low culture, elite and mainstream, ministers and, the commonalty of believers. Their motto, revisiting the expression of one of the first key informers, is “*We have what’s necessary, let them come get it.*”

Commercial Tendency

To understand the space of production of religious commodities, it is necessary to reconstruct now a second cultural current that impels publishing houses: the commercial one. From the spiritual point of view, this is an area governed by the supremacy of financial or mundane criteria over religious principles. It is central to revisit the mainstays that were developed in the last paragraph.

The organizational model that tends to impose itself here is that of the family company, in the form of corporations, where having a share of the business involves the expectation for profit, once the simple and extended reproduction of the invested capital is covered. The company vision relies on the missionary or *entrepreneur* secular rhetoric, a self-made person who decides to evangelize through their work, which is continued, later or simultaneously, by their relatives.

It is interesting to point out that the profit dimension involves a degree of impurity, but this does not stem from orienting production toward formulas of success adapted to mainstream consumer demands. From a ministerial point of view, this impure nature has something to do

with these formulas changing the core of the doctrine. They relegate the Word, that is, biblical study with all its interpretative nuances, accents, and wits, and place it under the service of the experience of the sacred, told through individual testimonies. The faith experienced becomes the quintessential subject of the commercial current. It is the “internal discourse” (Voloshinov, 2009, pp. 30–35) of a person who tells the circumstances, adventures, and misadventures of his or her life in the process of encountering some form of divinity. In addition to this, the testimonial genre—in the Catholic, evangelical, Jewish, or alternative variant—enables author profiles who are foreign to core positions such as body of priests.

The financial impulse toward a broad market of cultural production speaks the language of best-sellers and, in the religious world; such language is inseparable from the experience of God and change in the valuation of negative experiences (Algranti, 2010). For that reason, the dominant areas deal with spirituality, testimonies and biographies, devotion, lives of the saints, self-help, motivation, sanity, leadership, and practical life, among others. Productive diversification also leads to the incorporation, in a complementary manner, of study materials dedicated to the exegesis and hermeneutics of the scriptures.

In terms of financing, this tendency depends exclusively on commercial success: they do not receive support from churches, federations, or international agencies. Here, the thick networks of the religious complex or the donation or patronage culture do not play any role. Hence, the publishing policy operates under the premise of bringing what works, that is, relying strongly on importation and encouraging franchising sales, once the company is positioned in the market. This model relies on, firstly, translating and imposing foreign authors, without excluding promotion of local models linked to Evangelical mega churches, charismatic movements, or celebrities from the show business. Even though the degree of institutional diversification and integration is not high enough to justify speaking of a “star system” in the religious industry, using Edgar Morin’s (1964, pp. 9–10) classic term, big publishing houses build their public profiles based on emblematic authors who become the most visible and representative face of their imprint.

In turn, the translation policy encourages the search for commercial agreements with big publishing houses or corporate groups—Zondervan group, or Herder publishing house, for instance—through which it is possible to build extended networks of production, and above all, of circulation in the Spanish-speaking market, comprising Latin America, parts of the United States, and Spain. It is evident that the dominant profile targeted here is the mainstream consumer, that is, the faithful who inhabit the periphery and even the margins of religious institutions. Even though spirituality is also consumed by religious specialists, it reaches a broader scope and acceptance among the laity, since it is many times a discourse intended for people who are far from, or even foreign to, worship.

In terms of institutional relationships, the commercial current works closely with large and middle sized churches, popular federations and events (fairs, ceremonies, meetings, and campaigns) where it can impose known or emerging authors. Here, the evangelical task of disseminating its material culture in religious ceremonies and encounters stands out. In some versions of this tendency, a strongly colonized and colonizing concept of cultural production prevails, according to which the publishing house presents itself as a satellite of large foreign companies or institutions that define the shape and contents of the products.

The methods of imperialism in publishing may obey both market demands and best sellers logic, as well as the strict control of religious contents by foreign institutions which monitor

local production. The idea of Miami as Latin America's cultural capital, developed by George Yúdice (2008), may be applied to a significant sector of the evangelical world that finds in this region a production pole of books and all kinds of Christian contents. In any case, and setting all differences apart, the questions that govern this model are: *What do people want to read? What is sold abroad? Who do they follow?*

It is worth pointing out that the heuristic value of this covert classification system depends on a contextualized analysis of publishing houses as synthesizing both types of tendencies toward the spiritual and the commercial. It may happen, and it does in fact, that in the internal history of some companies one prevails in the beginning, and then, as they continue to grow or because of a crisis that forces them to redefine their policies, the other tendency ends up imposing itself. For that reason, these are guidelines that allow us to know who is who in the space of production of religious books. To achieve this, it is necessary to understand analytically not only the static structure, the present of the organization, but also its historic genesis and dynamics through time.

CONSUMER PROFILES

The two tendencies of the publishing network combine with a possible characterization of consumer-believer profiles, which arises mostly from interviews to Evangelical and Catholic directors. This characterization tends to classify the market in a homologous manner to the forms of belonging to Christian institutions, distinguishing between religion professionals and candidates to become one. It differentiates the ministerial body of priests, ministers, seminarians, and religious persons, from laity members partially or fully committed to the organizations. It also distinguishes the large blurred area of believers that may identify themselves to a particular belief, but are far from dogmas and experience simultaneously several forms of spirituality, from the people who profess the same or other creeds as publishing houses. These social forms of tagging belong to the schemes of perception of producers. They are concerned with arranging the environment's dispersion through segmented differentiations of consumers.

It is possible to recognize four positions that characterize different kinds of relationships between the believer and the group of reference. Based on previous works (Settón & Algranti, 2010), we will distinguish four categories of believers that may be grouped under the following concepts: 1) the main core, 2) the intermediate area, 3) the periphery, and 4) the marginal sectors. These may be understood as potential consumer profiles around which the market is organized. When we think of a group of cultural choices sustained through time and introjected in forms of acting, thinking, feeling, and showing religious life, different styles that shape the identity of believers and the way they relate to their environment emerge. The notion of styles allows us to outline a well-defined aesthetics, that is, a sensitive way of capturing and perceiving the sacred based on consumption identifications (Douglas, 1998; Miller, 1999). Publishers prefigure their offering taking into account the existence of those segmented styles.

In this sense, the *main core*, composed of trained and training religious professionals, has specific materials directed precisely to the support and learning of liturgy, catechism, dissemination of church documents, and theological studies and work in different areas of the parish. The evangelical nuclear positions constitute themselves objects of a specific cultural offering that includes pastoral aid, counseling, church growth, disciple and small group creation,

preaching, and institutional reinforcement among its primary subjects. In this way, books, music, and films are the three registers combined to offer answers to the practical needs of the priests and ministers.

The *intermediate area* of active members is another defined domain in the religious commodity market. The universe of coordinators and catechists may constitute a potential consumers profile, interested in books about prayer, family, youth, sexual education, and pastoral life, following publishing categories. Though in a different manner, the same happens with cell leaders⁶ and other positions of evangelical participation, which have training materials in the areas they are involved in (disciples, youth leadership, preaching, motivation, sanity, and spiritual growth). None of these positions is, in principle, exclusive of one another; they refer to a classification criterion that articulates consumption with religious practice and degree of involvement.

In that sense, it is possible to recognize a third group composed of the *peripheral members* of every religion, the “commonalty of believers” for the evangelicals or the “Catholics my own way,” as Fortunato Mallimaci conceptually recognizes (2009, p. 21) when he refers to religious freelancing. In this realm, consumption responds to subjects related mainly to spirituality, self-help, lives of the saints, biographies, and, specially, heterodox authors who have become best sellers and who establish dialogs with other fields of knowledge, such as Ansel Grüm with psychology, Anthony de Mello with the Oriental world, Buddhism, or Bernardo Stamateas with the discourse of self-help. Periphery is built partly by cultural commodity producers in order to delimit mainstream consumers in the religious market. Far from being a compact and homogeneous block, this area presents many nuances within the mentioned zones, which we will not be developing here. It is interesting to recognize a distinction that structures peripheral consumption, between new believers, for example, people who have just arrived to Gospel, looking for a relationship with the religious community, and the people who, supported by a “logic of self-validation of belief” (Hervieu-Léger, 2004, p. 189), use the consumption of cultural commodities as a personal journey, independently from a reference group or institution.

Lastly, we have the *marginal* positions, that is, profiles of consumers foreign to the creed professed by the publisher, but who are also targeted through literature, music, and DVDs specially directed to an actively proselytizing work. There is abundant literature in the evangelical circle oriented to those people from the secular world who do not know God or who know Him in a different way. Authors born in the religious network and consecrated in the secular networks represent a way of connecting the marginal positions with a mixed discourse that can be described as halfway between spirituality and self-help.

LEADERSHIP BY DIFFERENTIATION

So far we have been trying to show that publishing houses, as economic units, tend to produce a synthesis between the spiritual and the commercial, as underlying classification principles in

⁶The members of evangelical mega-churches are organized into cells. The cell system is a model for growth and integration that arranges the members in a network of differentiated groups which act in a joint way. Each cell of eight to twelve people has a leader and a deputy leader called a Timoteo, named after St Paul’s disciple and representing young leadership in the church. They both guide the group life through meetings, personal interviews and prayer meetings.

the book industry. In turn, the way companies are organized vary according to the model of origin, where religious publishing houses related to churches, congregations, or denominations differ from lay ones, which have a strong family imprint. Following these references, it is necessary to explore the way the book-object is usually complemented by other religious goods, among which Christian music particularly stands out. Publishing houses publish four types of materials, printed strictly on paper, which have different territorial scopes and duration in time.

First, there is the publication of newspapers and booklets. They are low cost or even free publications that serve as Sunday leaflets, advertising, or evangelizing instruments. This production type is characterized by an extended circulation regime but with short duration. They are aimed at specific spaces of sociability, like religious celebrations or masses, proselytizing instances, or tasks of dissemination of activities within the geography of the temples.

Second, there is the world of religious magazines published by houses with different purposes. In some cases, they offer internal consumption materials for the church and the most committed lay sectors. In others, they aim at situational debates in which the publishing house decides to make a statement. They also function as a space for advertising and opinions, almost like a catalog from evangelical publishing houses. Finally, there are certain publications which tend to dilute religious identity, or rather try to subsume it under other areas such as health. The productive strategy aims at objects with longer duration and higher costs, that is, medium-term time structures with an extended circulation capacity that reaches even bordering countries.

Third, publishing houses manufacture office supplies and general merchandising religiously marked. They have a wide offer of appointment books, daily Gospel quote books, calendars, cards, bookmarks, biblical maps, leaflets with novenas, and posters with prayers. In the loops of religious commodities, bookstores usually crystallize points of sale with highly diversified offerings. In this sense, and leaving aside official and informal shops which sell religious images, we may say that bookstores represent one of the most established places of circulation and consumption for believers.

Lastly, there is the book-object itself. Publishing houses relegate the other three types of materials—newspapers and booklets, magazines, and office supplies—to use them in disseminating and positioning a brand which makes the book a commodity with privileged rank. Supplementary products function by stabilizing a reference system, a platform with its consequent visibility and omission regime. There, printed works appear as objects of culture. They contribute to the selective transmission of the memory and language of a religious group throughout time. The book value depends partly on the symbolic construction of its importance, and publishing houses are professionalized agents in the art of categorizing these goods over other cultural products.

RELIGIOUS MUSIC AND THE CHALLENGE OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

That said, the majors in the religious book network are publishing houses that grew under a logic of leadership by differentiation (Mendes Calado, 2010). This involves continuous work in productive innovation in media different than printed works, among which music and films

stand out. One of the implicit mottoes in commercial model is having what people want, look for, and ask for, that is, adapting the offer to the demand. That is the reason why production commercial investment relies on strategically diversifying. For example, Peniel is currently one of the main wholesale distributors of Christian music as well as offering DVDs in their stores. In this sense, they have ventured as a music label featuring Christian and evangelical artists. It is interesting to point out that, in terms of consumption, the music sales leading area is praise and worship, that is, musical productions directly related to some form of concrete experience, located in specific interaction contexts, such as religious ceremonies and campaigns.

Religiously marked commodities acquire value through their capacity to recreate experiences or known situations. There is a profile of believer who looks for the music they sing at church, and ceremonies in their church function many times like a music show. In this context, the experience of the sacred is molded through musical mediations and the feelings they evoke. Praise and worship, the dominant styles, lead one of the areas of evangelical cultural consumption that publishing houses set to provide. Here arises, in the second place, the issue of professionalization.

Unlike the Catholic ones, evangelical networks provide effective growth instances and opportunities for church bands that are trying to become professional. Large and middle sized temples, and mainly mega-churches⁷ (Gramby-Sobukwe & Hoiland, 2009; Thumma & Travis, 2007; García-Ruiz & Michel, 2011; Algranti, 2012) have ministries dedicated entirely to music and choir. They rehearse on a weekly basis, play at different ceremonies, are invited by other churches, participate in paid special activities, and their congregation are able to publish their songs formally or informally. The praise industry structure is an extension of religious life, with its learning, advertising, and financing channels. There are bands or music figures that succeed in going beyond this circle and launch in the secular network, but even in those cases, their growth platform belongs firstly to the domains of the Gospel. In turn, the Catholic cosmos presents a less professionalized, more amateur horizon of musical production in Argentina. Parishes and congregations are not fields for artist promotion. The magisterium of the church does not fully value institutionally forms of musical entertaining.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article was to unravel the knot of social relationships that are crystallized in religious commodities, studying exclusively the book-object and its production agents. To achieve this goal, we analyzed (item two) the main publishing houses of the Catholic and evangelical circles based on information recollected by means of in depth-interview. From there, we were able to identify two productive tendencies that internally strain the publishing industry. On one side, the spiritual, which produces training materials, targeted mainly at initiated people or specialists. This model is often aligned with companies managed by religious people who find

⁷In Argentina, especially since the 1990s, megachurches were consolidated within the framework of general growth of the evangelical world. Some of them are connected to foreign religious organizations that set up new branches in our country, like the *Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios*, IURD (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) or *Dios es amor* (God is love), both of them originated in Brazil. Others answer to national experiences carried out by a second generation of Argentinean neo-pentecostal leaders. Following a trend that echoes in many Latin-American countries, these megachurches share an evangelizing orientation directed to the middle and upper-middle classes in Buenos Aires.

financial support in donations and subsidies from their community, church, or external agencies. Their cultural objects focus on the purity of the scriptures and correct interpretation, and aim simultaneously at catechism and a small specialized market. On the other side, the commercial tendency manufactures spirituality materials for the mainstream consumer. Here, lay family companies which depend exclusively on sales to survive prevail. For that reason, they invest in importing foreign best sellers and publishing local model authors. The theological emphasis is placed on the experience of the sacred, that is, individual experiences transmitted through testimonial narratives. The productive forces, in turn, adjust themselves to a classification of demand that distinguishes believers-consumers according to their degree of institutional belonging. Our proposal to rename the profiles using the terms main core, intermediate area, periphery, and marginals is an attempt at distinguishing different ways of being related to religion and its material culture. Finally, we have briefly explored the diversification of the cultural offer on the printing level (leaflets, magazines, books, office supplies), including as well other media such as music.

It is critical to point out that the publisher is a selector of religious guidelines of topics, discourses, models of behavior, lessons, testimonies, and so forth, to which a privileged rank of visibility and access are granted. They exist as objects within the material culture through which a religious group defines itself. This world of cultural commodities is inhabited by goods that propose certain arrangement of the auratic experience of religion, that is, the sensations produced by the experience of the numinous. This experience, like works of art in Walter Benjamin's classic argument (1989), is able to become free from its ritual of origin—religious ceremonies, imposition of hands, sacraments, praise, or worship—through technical reproducibility enabled by publishing houses. For that reason, believers look for the music they sing at their temple, read their model priests or ministers books, and listen to DVDs with sermons and messages they have already listened to. In tune with Brigit Meyer's conceptions (2006), we may say that religious commodities allow for a recreation of the authenticity of this experience, but free from the context where it emerged, its rites, and collective experiences.

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