

Uses of the “Smart Faith”: IURD’s entrepreneurial hermeneutics

Usos da “fé inteligente”: a hermenêutica empreendedora da Iurd

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Abstract: *This paper discusses the praise of the entrepreneurial subjectivity among the Brazilian Neo-Pentecostal movement and analyzes how the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD) construes certain biblical narratives. We deal with the transformation of the concept of “entrepreneur” and the context of its current massive diffusion, by arguing that one of the key tasks of the neoliberal rationality has been to shift the idea of the subject-worker towards the notion of the enterprising self. This outlook may be connected to the Prosperity Gospel’s dynamics in Brazil, such as the progressive constitution of the entrepreneurial subjectivity inspired by the Bible.*

Keywords: *entrepreneurship; neo-pentecostalism; neoliberalism; prosperity gospel.*

Resumo: *O artigo discute a exaltação da subjetividade empreendedora entre o público neopentecostal, tendo como referência empírica interpretações de histórias bíblicas difundidas pela Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus. Tematizamos a noção do “empreendedor”, sua transformação histórica e sua massiva popularização hoje, argumentando que uma das tarefas primordiais da racionalidade neoliberal consiste na substituição da ideia do sujeito-trabalhador pela do sujeito-empresa. Esse ideário parece dialogar com dinâmicas atuais da teologia*

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da prosperidade no Brasil, analisadas a partir da construção da subjetividade empreendedora sob inspiração bíblica.

Palavras-chave: *empreendedorismo; neopentecostalismo; neoliberalismo; teologia da prosperidade.*

Introduction

“The bible is rich in stories and episodes that teach us and illustrate very well how the entrepreneur should proceed to reach success” (PRESTES, 2014a). This motto took Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Iurd) to promote, in its website, a series of editorials associating biblical characters to the entrepreneurial subjectivity and praxis. Using educational and inspirational approaches, these contents mention stories in the Bible and point towards models of conduct to be followed by those who seek success in their own businesses.

Presenting these characters as paradigms for entrepreneurs, Iurd seems to do more than contribute for the promotion of entrepreneurship as a more adequate way of being in the world today: it neutralizes this subjectivity as a a-historic data. If the conversion of the subject-worker into enterprising-self rises as the first task of neoliberal rationality, the attribution of entrepreneurial characteristics to ancient creatures lead us to believe that the entrepreneurial conduct does not result from specific social and political injunctions, but it is a natural propension - if it is stimulated for men and women destined to success.

Methodologically inspired in the Foucauldian discourse analysis (FOUCAULT, 1996), this study is based in a punctual investigation of Iurd’s efforts in the field of communication responsible for establishing the interface between a properly religious ethos of their temples and the secular public sphere. We are interested in showing - in the path of researches such as Cunha’s (2012), Aires and researchers (2017), and Patriota, Casaqui and Rodrigues (2017) - that the idea proposed by the church transcends their temples, also spreading in different media platforms owned by Iurd. In order to do that, we’ve selected texts shared in the official website of the church which exhort the entrepreneurial attitude, seeking to highlight the hermeneutical bet present in readings of biblical characters such as David, Solomon and Joseph from Egypt.

In the first section of the article, we make a route that shares the emergency and the historical turns of the concept of entrepreneurship, contextualizing the demand for the massive popularization of

this model of subjectivity today. Based on recent sociological insights that point towards the conjugation between entrepreneurship and the neo-Pentecostal imaginary of the country (ALMEIDA, 2017; GUTIERREZ, 2017; DUTRA, 2015), the second section takes the texts shared by Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus as examples of an increasing religious sensitivity that promote standards of citizenship adjusted to the rarity of a state of social welfare. We begin this effort interpellating the omnipresence of the image of the entrepreneur nowadays in order to situate the historical appearance of this notion as a moral regulator of our relationship with work.

History of an idea, path of a practice

The term entrepreneur was mentioned for the first time in 1283, according to the to the French National Center of Textual and Lexical Resources.³ Even though the word was created in the 13th century, the appearance and nomination of individuals as being “entrepreneurs” would only happen in the following centuries. Richard Cantillon is one of the first thinkers to problematize this image, saying that the inhabitants of a country, with the exception of the prince and the land owners, must be divided into two groups: entrepreneurs and wage workers.

Entrepreneurs live with an uncertain income, and everyone else has income during the time they work, although their functions and categories are very different among themselves. The army general has a wage, the courtier has a pension and the servant has a wage, all of them are included into the last group. Everyone else are entrepreneurs, either establishing themselves with a capital to develop their own business, or being entrepreneurs in their own work, without any type of fund, can be considered as living in an uncertain way; homeless people and even thieves are “entrepreneurs” in their fields (CANTILLON, 1950, p. 43).

The wideness of identities associated to the entrepreneur activity result in a wide definition of entrepreneur as “entrepreneur of their own

3 Definition and ethymology available at: <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/entrepreneur>. Accessed in: March 12th, 2018.

work”. The uncertainty and the lack of bonds of subordination - what we now call “autonomy” - would be the distinctive characteristic of the entrepreneur in this first definition.

With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution around the 18th century, and the successive process of accumulation of the means of production by few individuals, the notion of entrepreneur as autonomous worker loses strength, gradually giving margin to the characterization that would mark this image during almost two centuries: the entrepreneur starts to be understood as a “individual macro entrepreneur” that person that obtains means of production, hires wage workers and is concerned with the insertion of their products (or services) in the market. If before, according to Cantillon’s definition, a big part of the population could be considered entrepreneurs, the gears of the industrial capitalism demanded a social re-order in the field of work: entrepreneurs of their own work became wage workers, and the notion of entrepreneur being restricted to few “big capitalists”.

According to the German sociologist Werner Sombart, entrepreneurs become “the only organizers of the economic process”, agents capable of “unifying capital and work, determining the direction and the volume of production, establishing the relationship between production and consumption” (SOMBART, 1902 apud COSTA, 2010, p. 24). In opposition to Max Weber, that saw moral and religious justifications for the accumulation of capital, to Sombart, “the love for the business” would be the motivation of an entrepreneur. Even though they diverge in this issue, both sociologists agreed about the presence of a practical, instrumental rationality, necessary for the adequation of the subject to the logics of the political-economical emerging system. Big capitalists of the time gathered aspects as disposition for risk and uncertainties; analytical judgement capable of reducing all processes to “cost/benefit” rationalization; and, mainly, desire for profit. Such gathering of attributes made the entrepreneur a rare individual, a “tycoon” identity possible to few people, a type of “conduct that is accessible in an unequal measure and

to relatively few people, in a way that it constitutes a highlighted characteristic” (SCHUMPETER, 1997, p. 89).

The restriction of entrepreneurial identity is followed by the width of identity of the industrial employee. The notion of job can be thought as a historic construct that arises with the concept of “right to work, inscribed in the relationship of work over time and makes it a bond of subordination between an individual and a collective identity, the company (GAUTIÉ, 1998, p. 74). Adequate to the political and economic context of the time, the idea of a group of individuals that was, at the same time, worker and consumer was maintained for many decades in an conjoint effort of the emerging states and the big capitalist companies.

However, the business model funded under Fordist concepts (hierarchization, division and specialization of work) would begin to fall in late 1960’s, and the understanding about the image of the entrepreneur would transform throughout the following decades. Two “events” constitute important keys for understanding these transformations: the first is the elaboration, in the 60’s, of the theory of human capital; the second is the self-criticism of the business world regarding the claims directed by social movements at that period.

The theory of the human capital, developed by researchers of the School of Chicago led by Theodore Schultz, transform the understanding about the “work factor”. Understood as the provision of physical strength (that, little by little, is replaced by modern machinery), the contribution of the workers begins to be increasingly associated to their knowledge and their abilities, resulted

[...] From an investment of capital made in education, in its general skills of communication and calculus required to participate in the productive process and in specific skills required by their work in particular, a capital investment variably financed by the State, by the employee or by the employer. Thus, the employee is a produced means of production, an item of capital equipment (JOHNSON, 1960 apud LÓPES-RUIZ, 2004, p. 201).

Making the distinction between inherited and acquired skills, one argues that, although the inherited skills are similar in every population, the acquired skills “have been deeply altered in countries where a modern economy was developed” (SCHULTZ, 1968 apud LÓPEZ-RUIZ, 2004, p. 208). The reason for that would be the investments of these countries in terms of school and training programs inside the job. Foucault (2008, p. 315-316), however, observes that acquired skills contain “much wider elements, more numerous than the simple school learning or simple professional learning”, such as the “set of cultural stimuli received by a child”; the ‘medical care’ and the ‘health related activities’; “the capability of an individual to dislocate oneself, and particularly, migration.”

In summary, an “acquired knowledge living in the daily transit, belonging to the mundane culture” (GORZ, 2005, p. 9) and that cannot be formalized in a specific mold of knowing. “the form of performing tasks”, the author says, “cannot be formalized, neither be prescribed. What is prescribed is subjectivity, precisely that that only the operator can produce when “giving oneself” to the task (GORZ, 2005, p. 18). This subjective prescription, as we will see, “allow us to analyze all these behaviors [skill acquisition] in terms of individual entrepreneurship, of self-entrepreneurship with investments and income” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 317).

The attention of this new theory would lie over the necessity of the worker to invest increasingly and continuously in their acquired capabilities, since such investment would be reverted into an increase of market value for their services, therefore increasing their income. Here, the notion of “self-investment” is created, which will affect not only the attitude of the subject towards his work, but, more profoundly, his perception of self. The understanding of men as capital passible of investment opens a margin for comparison with a small company, a “company unit” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 310), since it also needs applications to create future profit.

The theory of human capital interfered in the conception that the entrepreneur started to have, from the 70's onwards, to the extent that it took from the entrepreneurial identity the exclusivist character it once had - specially throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century: it was popularized, becoming gradually possible and desired for the most diverse subjects in western societies. The entrepreneur began to be a form of being in the world, an increasingly required subjectivity by any activity within neoliberal rationality. In this approach, the entrepreneur becomes the ideal man of the end of the millennium. Contrary to the wage worker from the previous century, who depended on the State and the company to survive, the entrepreneur is conceived as the one who assumes, in an autonomous way, his responsibility for his own destiny, not depending on collective networks of security, but performing a construction of self that prioritizes ideals associated to neoliberalism: efficiency, performance, productivity. According to Leite and Melo (2008, p. 45), this image is fitting to the “ideology of current capitalism, which arrives to ensure the adhesion and legitimacy to the activities that were previously devalued”, such as competitiveness and unrestricted individualism.

On the other hand, youth manifestations in the late 60's, which claimed for more authenticity and freedom of relations, are, little by little, incorporated by the liberal rationality, which renews its “spirit” metamorphosing the ideals that inspired these critics:

Thus, for example, qualities that, in this new spirit, are pawns for success - autonomy, spontaneity, mobility, rhizomatic capability, polyvalence (in opposition to the strict specialization of the old division of work), communicability, opening for others and for the new, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity for the differences, capability of giving attention to others' experiences, acceptance of multiple experiences, attraction for the informality and search for interpersonal connections - are directly extracted from the repertoire of May, 68 (BOLTANSKI e CHIAPPELLO, 2009, p. 130).

Boltanski and Chiapello explain how a radical criticism to capitalism is put in service of the own system through a “literature of the new business management”, which transforms the claims in private objectives, rejecting a deeper criticism - about exploitation. Flexibility, autonomy, polyvalence, availability, creativity, visionary intuition... The pawns of professional success in late 20th century and early 21st are confused with the new skills acquired by the image of the entrepreneur, that does not assume the only profile of the “big entrepreneur”, assuming different identities and practices.

The diversification in motivations and forms of entrepreneurial activity gives margin to more and more people to embrace entrepreneurship as a way of life. In contemporary Brazil, such phenomenon can be easily perceived through different examples: kids and young adults adventuring themselves in the online world and being named “digital entrepreneurs”, aligning profit to social well-being to their purpose; the “mompreneurs”, that say they find in entrepreneurship more time to spend with their kids; and even the Individual Small Entrepreneur (MEI - Microempreendedor Individual), legal figure created by the federal government in 2009 with the objective of formalizing 10 million Brazilians working as autonomous entrepreneur.

As we will see next, such entrepreneur ideal, praised by public opinion⁴ and shared among the Brazilian population, still aligns to one of the most visible social phenomena in Brazil nowadays: the advance of the neo-Pentecostal religious segment.

Faith enterprise

Did you know that every 27 minutes a Brazilian enters the millionaires club? There is no doubt that anyone wants to be in this number. But desire is not enough, you have to earn it. Many people already made

4 See, for example: “Os heróis do capitalismo” (Veja, Jan 23rd. 2008); “Ganhei 1 milhão na internet” (Época, Nov. 22nd. 2010); “Eike Xiaoping. The new group of Brazilian millionaires has Eike Batista as an idol, he works a lot, competes with honesty, is proud of generating jobs and is not embarrassed of being wealthy” (Veja, 18 jan. 2012); “It is time to engage. The moment was never as favorable for new businesses. Know how to use it” (Exame PME, mar. 2012).

the decision to change their financial life, reach success and, mainly, be happy. Do your part and begin to fight today towards this goal too.⁵

That is how the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus presents the Congress for Success, performed every Monday at the Templo de Salomão, in São Paulo. According to Iurd, over 10 thousand people go to the weekly meeting with the goal of “achieving victories in the financial life”⁶, since the recipe to become a millionaire would not be “taught in the economy courses, but rather acquired by using smart faith”.⁷

The invitation for the Congress for Success gives the explicit quality of statements proposing a change of lifestyle in the context of Iurd, the most known expression of Prosperity Gospel in the country.⁸ With American origin, this theological discourse was created around the 20th century, combining elements of different religious and esoterica traditions, being popularized by the preaching of televangelists.

In synthesis, we can say that the Prosperity Gospel establishes a torsion in the puritan moral that Max Weber (2005) characterized as the root of the capitalist spirit. Instead of a methodical form of conduct, which conceives work as an ascetic duty to be rewarded by God in the other world, in the theology of prosperity, the relation with the divine brings benefits for the religious person right here right now: “through the vicar sacrifice of his son, God already did what he could for humanity, forgiving the original sin and leaving His grace of health, prosperity and victory available to men in this life” (MARIANO, 1996, p. 29-30).

The Calvinist logic analyzed by Weber would define that the attainment of wealth would be a type of God’s grace for His elected people, whose disciplined conduct at work would walk along an austere relationship with money. For the Prosperity Gospel, in turn, financial success

5 Prosperity Meeting, available at: www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade. Accessed in: Feb. 4th, 2017.

6 Prosperity Meeting, available at: www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade. Accessed in: Feb. 4th, 2017.

7 Prosperity Meeting, available at: www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade. Accessed in: Feb. 4th, 2017.

8 For a description of the historic rise of the Church, see Almeida (2009) and Oro (2005).

would be presented as the fair object of search of the one who believes, aligned with an exaltation of mundane consumerism as individual right, authenticated by the heavens. Christ's sacrifice would've given a certain ontological dignity to the human creature, giving an outline to a specific logic of relationship with the divine: there would be a consortium made with God in the mode how chance is managed, form of control to which would converge the spiritual attention of each individual.

This idea of a "management of contingency" originated, in the beginning of theology of prosperity, a set of practices and beliefs of a magical character inspired on the new thought, popular cultural movement in 19th century USA that would propose certain parity between the notions of faith and positive thinking. As we will see ahead, new models of configuration of this spirituality seem to get in the current Brazilian context, among which we highlight for analysis the idea of "smart faith" promoted by Iurd.

In "Learn a faith that works" (CRUZ, 2015), the church says that "smart faith is practical and rational, and because of that it is not easily shaken. [...] It is very important that you develop in your rational life and faith, so that through that it would be possible to reach from God the wonders that He has reserved for His children". Such form of faith would prescribe a relationship with the transcendent that does not appeal for emotions, but for a search for concrete and visible effects in the life of the believer.

This uncommon way of uniting faith and reason would be applicable in the most diverse fields of life, even in marital relationships. It is what Patriota, Casaqui and Rodrigues (2017) show in a study that analyses therapeutic narratives present in The Love School, brand associated to Iurd that counts with many products such as TV programs, books, magazines, DVDs and even cruises. In them, it sets apart the "way how one processes the relationship between religion, entrepreneurship and affection in autobiographic therapeutic narratives, promoting an ideal of happiness based in a theology of results" (PATRIOTA, CASAQUI and

RODRIGUES, 2017, p. 81), in which “armored marriages” would be those where you use reason - not emotion - to solve marital problems.

Along with initiatives such as the advertisement campaign “I am Universal”,⁹ the contents to which we resort¹⁰ are an example of how the entrepreneurial spirit have been promoted by Iurd through a hermeneutical choice. We know that biblical narratives are characterized by a polysemy that, historically, was used for the most diverse theological currents. That said, it is interesting to bring to light the elements that are imposed in the exegesis proposed by Iurd of stories of the Old Testament, reinforcing the relationships between the religious imaginary and the secular demand for a specific type of subjection.

Smart faith is manifested, for example, in the interpretation given by the church to David’s story. King of Israel on the 10th century b. C., David is described as a shepherd that becomes a brave warrior, in addition to owning a poetic and musical sensitivity. Even though he is a sinner like any mortal, David would be transformed into a symbol of virtue due to his capacity of recognizing his own mistakes and sincerely seeking divine guidance: “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. [...] Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”, sings the king in psalm 51.¹¹

Central chapter in the character’s story is the unification of the Hebrew people under the form of a nation. In order to do that, it would be essential the conquest of the city of Jerusalem, whose location would allow the control over the different tribes of Israel. This event is narrated in the historical book of II Samuel, that comments the details of taking the city and David’s conscience that creates a plan traced from the

9 Since March, 2013, Iurd has a campaign titled “I am Universal”, composed by diferente vídeos shown in their channels on the internet and at Rede Record. The pieces are organized as first person interviews of supposed members of the church, telling their experiences of overcoming hardship and financial success.

10 We used texts posted between 2014 and 2015 with the tag “empreededor” on Iurd’s official website. Content available at: www.universal.org/tags/empreededor.

11 Psalm 51, verse 3 to 10. Bible Gateway, available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+51&version=NIV>

heavens: “Who am I, O god, so you brought me here?” [...] Because of your word, and according to your heart, you made all this greatness”.¹²

In “Know how to be an entrepreneur like David” (PRESTES, 2014c), Iurd says that

David acted like an entrepreneur to build his empire. He was a leader, as any entrepreneur must be. [...] Nowadays, the entrepreneur can re-do David steps to initiate his business and achieve his conquest. As Jerusalem was for David, the location has a strategic importance for the businessman. An ideal commercial spot brings up big clientele for the company and it is a form of free and constant disclosure of the business.

Tracing a parallel between the story of the king of Israel and the process of opening a company, Iurd naturalizes the entrepreneurial spirit as an attribute of David’s personality. To reach the goal of transforming dispersed tribes into a nation, the character would have employed that specific form of relationship with the divine: “David used his smart faith”. Such reading of the Biblical narrative, however, reserves the heavens a diffused role: smart faith corresponds properly here to the rationality that would conduct the action of the character and not a destination that would be fulfilled because it was written by God, as the book of II Samuel suggests.

That same rhetoric operation rules Iurd’s reading about other biblical characters whose entrepreneurial praxis as causing the reality, positioning divine intervention as a type of moral appraiser of chance. After uniting the Hebrew people, David would leave the kingdom of Israel for his heir, Solomon. If the father was known for his bravery, the son would be known for other trait: “He was the wisest of all men”, says the book of Kings.¹³ His vast knowledge would be conceived by God as a response

12 2 Samuel 7, verse 18 to 22. *Bible Gateway* available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=II+Samuel+7&version=NIV>

13 1 Kings 4, verse 29-31. *Bible Gateway* available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+4&version=NIV>

to Solomon’s order for the capacity of conducting fairly the people of Israel.¹⁴

With a 40-year-old kingdom, Solomon embodies one of the most known Biblical stories about the temptations of power. The wise king was tormented by lust and vanity, a man given to self-confidence and the passions of the flesh. Solomon was the author attributed for the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes, which consists in a philosophical approach about the lack of meaning in life, injustice, boredom and pride. The character seems to be a fierce critic of human condition, seeing himself subject to distress even if he enjoys different privileges: “To Solomon, the world is a never-ending process of boring repetitions, without variations that would attract our interest” (KIVITZ, 2009, p. 36). Facing the dilemma of existing, Solomon concludes, in his elder days, that “the end is to fear God, and keep his commandments; this is the duty of every man”.¹⁵

In “Solomon, the wise entrepreneur” (PRESTES, 2014d), Iurd builds a version of the character that does not contemplate the vicissitudes of his behavior, which take him to act many times against Divine will. Before, it is important to highlight Solomon’s spirit of leadership, responsible for making Israel a prosperous nation:

Solomon had the characteristics that a leader needs to have to win. When he took over the command of the kingdom, he eliminated conspirators. The entrepreneur must have the vision of who are his enemies, so he can face them in the best way. And Solomon knew who they were. The entrepreneur must be articulated, making alliances that can be beneficial for his businesses. Solomon established a commerce with neighboring cities and maintained diplomatic relationships with other kingdoms, which generated the progress of Israeli towns. In addition, when he married Naamah, he won a town of his father, the Pharaoh, raising his kingdom.

The king would act in a rational search for results: the achievements of the character would denote not a plan of God fulfilled through

14 1 Kings 3, verse 9-11. Bible gateway available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+3&version=NIV>

15 Ecclesiastes 12, verse 11. Bible gateway available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ecclesiastes+12&version=NIV>

Solomon, despite his failed humanity, but an author strategy for success. Thus, the wise man aware of his own weaknesses arrives as an example of statesman with clear objectives and efficient tactics, marks of an entrepreneur: “Solomon had an empire, which, in a certain way, facilitated the application of his ideas, but in the small structures it is possible to execute basic actions, mirrored in the conduct of a king, that may help the enterprise to prosper” (PRESTES, 2014d). As it happens in the reading about David, therefore, smart faith of Solomon corresponds to the attitude of a disciplined strategist, that finds in God the moral source of his success.

Another story counted by Iurd is about the character Joseph, son of Jacob, descendent of Abraham. According to the book of Genesis¹⁶, Joseph would be his father’s favorite son, creating jealousy amongst his other children. When he was 17 years old, Joseph was surprised by a trap and sold by his brothers as a merchandise in a caravan of Egyptians. After years working as a slave and being unfairly isolated in a prison, Joseph reaches freedom and the protection of the pharaoh due to his gift of interpreting dreams. The character becomes a powerful man and, in the moment in which Canaan, his original land, starves, he has the opportunity to meet with his brothers again.

In the biblical narrative, the character has the chance to avenge his brothers, but is compelled to forgive them when he understands that the suffering he went through was part of a divine plan: “não vos entristeçais, nem vos pese aos vossos olhos por me haverdes vendido para cá; não fostes vós que me enviastes para cá, senão Deus”.¹⁷ Filled with symbolism, the story inspired Thomas Mann to write the tetralogy “Joseph and his brothers”, book centered in the mythology of forgiveness: for Mann, Joseph is foreshadowing Christ himself, that would sacrifice himself in favor of his traitors (SCAFF, 1998).

16 Genesis 37. Bible Gateway, available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+37&version=NIV>

17 Genesis, 45. Bible Gateway, available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+45&version=NIV>.

In his presentation of the story, Iurd defines that “the example of the biblical hero must be brought for our present days, where the entrepreneur must have similar characteristics of Joseph: be persistent and committed; know to listen to learn; plan; calculate risks; establish goals; and systematically monitoring his operations” (PRESTES, 2014e). To Universal, when he stops being a servant to occupy an important position for the pharaoh, Joseph of Egypt would correspond to the contemporary figure of the entrepreneur. We highlight there the correct “usage” made by the character of the gifts given by the gods: “The entrepreneur cannot have the talent to interpret dreams like Joseph, however, he must have other abilities given by god and must enjoy them. Another important detail is to seek for divine inspiration” (PRESTES, 2014e). The transcendent puts himself, thus, in the condition of detail, when he remembers that “it is *also* necessary that the entrepreneur has a pact with Jesus” (PRESTES, 2014e, our highlight).

Examples like that suggest a possible disenchantment of the neo-Pentecostal sensitivity: instead of a “abracadabra” spirituality of the first story (MARIANO, 1996, p. 30), which claimed blessings of the heavens through magic statements and positive thinking, the theology of prosperity seems to instigate an imaginary based in the exercise of ethics in tune with the demands of the current labor economy.

Final considerations

The discourse analyzed illustrate the argument of our debate: the orientation of the moral scope of biblical narratives towards the presentation of subjectivity and entrepreneurial praxis as a-historic data. This fact is verified in the way Iurd frames the behavior of characters in contemporary principles of conduct: in “Saul, David and Solomon used the management of performance” (PRESTES, 2014b), for example, it is said that “biblical stories brings lessons that prove that Christian leaders already used ways of solving their difficulties even before these means were quoted in manuals of business procedures”. Such anticipatory

capability is what would make the Bible a “sacred manual”, in which teachings would ask revivals for the vocabulary used on our time.

This hermeneutic proposed by Iurd seem to be a typically Brazilian phenomenon, resulting from the meeting between our Christian cultural matrix and the commodification of faith from the age of spectacle. However, we suggest that the success of prosperity theology in Brazil is not exceptional to our social reality, but a response to a certain political and economic rationality that demands the constant invention of subjective technologies. We talk about what Michel Foucault (2008) named “governmentality” which proposes, in the scenario of our liberal democracies, a renewed encounter between religious sensitivities and praxis of the market.

As Rudnycky (2011) shows us in an extended ethnography performed in Indonesia, a similar imperative is installed in the Islam. Rudnycky analyses a human resources program called Spiritual and Emotional Quotient, used in a steel company in the moment where the company in the country had more flexible models of production and governance. Debating about how this ascending reality in the world of work also requires a new type of worker, the anthropologist indicates the existence of a process of “spiritual reform”, that repays the practices and beliefs of Islam to make them compatible with the premises of self-help manuals and Western coaching. Presenting Muhammad as an example of CEO, Emotional and Spiritual Quotient materializes the convergence between capitalism and Islamic tradition:

In the contemporary Indonesia, Islam is called to produce subjects committed with standards of efficiency, productivity and transparency. [...] Islam works as a mean through which this spiritual reform evoke subjects responsible for themselves, their families, their job and their nation (RUDNYCKY, 2011, p. 139).

The premise of individualization of responsibility which marks neoliberal governmentality seems to seek, amongst the most diverse religious imaginaries, a certain symbolic source to justify the types of subjects they intend to produce. As a form of being in the world possible

for everyone, entrepreneurship appears as a bow in this process, and the crescent naturalization of this conduct as an a-historic data in the context of Iurd points toward the reach of this outlook in contemporary Brazil.

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