

## UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND ITS “MEDIAS”: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ABOUT RELIGION, MEDIA AND SECULARISM

DOI  
10.11606/issn.2525-3123.  
gis.2022.182838

DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the reconfiguration of Brazilian secularism, marked by Pentecostal evangelical activism in the public sphere and the consequent decline of the hegemony of the Catholic Church in the country. From a critical review of the literature about religion, media and secularism, we consider Universal Church of the Kingdom of God's (IURD) greatest center, Solomon's Temple, as the privileged object of this analysis. Observing the media visibility of some scenes and narratives about the Solomon's Temple, we sustain that the incorporation of new media into the IURD's religious repertoire has transformed the practices of religious mediation in the country. Our objective is to demonstrate that the publicity dynamics of aesthetic formation—inspired by a mythical conception of Israel and materialized in a diversity of objects, such as buildings, ceremonies, gestures, performances and

**KEYWORDS**  
Religion;  
Pentecostalism;  
Media; Solomon's  
Temple; Universal  
Church of the  
Kingdom of God.

1. This article presents the results of the Scientific Initiation research *The televised sacred: the Solomon's Temple in perspective* [originally: "O sagrado televisionado: perspectivas sobre o Templo de Salomão"] (2019-2020), which is linked to the thematic project "Rights, Religion and Secularism: the reconfiguration of the civic repertoire in Contemporary Brazil [Direito, Religião e Secularismo: a reconfiguração do repertório cívico do Brasil Contemporâneo]" and financed by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP) (Process number: 18/21726-3)

symbols, by Pentecostal churches— became an important factor for the emergence of Pentecostalism as a public religion.

## INTRODUCTION

The visit of president Jair Bolsonaro to Solomon’s Temple, São Paulo, in September 2019, made the headlines in *Domingo Espetacular* (Spectacular Sunday), of Record television channel, which belongs to Edir Macedo: “Jair Bolsonaro visits the Solomon’s Temple and is received by Edir Macedo”<sup>2</sup>. Catarina Hong, the journalist in charge of the story, narrated Bolsonaro’s visit to the Temple, explaining minutely the meaning of each of his words and acts. The report emphasizes the friendly atmosphere of the meeting between the two public authorities, one religious and the other political. A scene highlights the bishop’s gesture of courtesy, to offer a bible as a gift to Jair Bolsonaro, saying that “the word of God... Is the best present I could give you”. Then, another scene is exhibited: both authorities walk through the Temple, and the president is guided to the *Jardim Bíblico* (Biblical Garden), a religious tourism spot, which educational purpose is to instruct visitors about the Jews sacred stories. However, one of the scenes of greatest coverage, not only on the report itself, but in the other channels and in the public opinion in general, was the religious ceremony in the Templo de Salomão, crowded with its maximum capacity (10.000 people), in which Jair Bolsonaro is *blessed* by Edir Macedo.



**IMAGE 1**  
Picture from “Bolsonaro vai ao Templo de Salomão e é abençoado por Edir Macedo” (Bolsonaro goes to Solomon’s Temple), published by O Globo—one of Brazil’s largest newspapers — September 2019.<sup>3</sup>

The report of *Domingo Espetacular* shows the moment of blessing, highlighting the speeches in which the bishop refers to Bolsonaro “as

2. The report is available on the YouTube platform at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAUu5jn4hM>. Access date: July 19, 2021.

3. Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/bolsonaro-vai-ao-templo-de-salomao-e-abençoado-por-edir-macedo-23920121>. Accessed on: July 20, 2021.

chosen by God to govern the nation”. But some of its most polemic moments, that reverberated in the majority media, which occurred just after the blessing, seem to have been left out. After the president came down from the pulpit, Edir Macedo addresses to the crowd: “He is going to rock...We shall remain praying for our president. The entire media is against him and I know how that feels, because we’ve experienced the media’s hell, its violence, once it’s the “gray” (partial) media, but today I stand here...”.

As seen in the bishop’s speech, the “media” is in the center of the contemporary political disputes about the visibility production of narratives and discourses in the Brazilian public sphere. This scene, briefly reconstructed above, of Bolsonaro’s visit to the Solomon’s Temple, seems to be significant to show how the visibility of certain discourses and performative gestures can be read as religious controversies that become the object of public debate. It is not recent that the Universal Church (IURD)—the leader of the Neo Pentecostal movement in Brazil, according to Ricardo Mariano (2004)—has been acting prominently in the production of controversies that challenge the secular legal order through its activism in the most varied public arenas. According to Ronaldo de Almeida, the group led by Edir Macedo is a religious-mediatic-political group, and is representative of the new conservative movement in Brazil (2019). Thus, thinking about how these arenas are articulated, it becomes necessary to reconsider the role that religions have been playing in the Brazilian public sphere in the latest decades.

This article aims to explore some of the concepts and theoretical perspectives towards “media and religion”, and to articulate them to the studies about “public religions”. In this analysis, we observe the public visibility of Solomon’s Temple as the object of this reflection. From a critical review of the literature about media, religion and secularism, we reflect about Solomon’s Temple in the light of the Brazilian secularism reconfiguration and its relations with larger changes in religious mediation that occurred in the country’s public arena.

According to Paula Montero (2015), the Pentecostal evangelical expansion has suspended the main founding principles of the “laicity pact”, which has been effective since the Republic was established, and has put it under dispute. Montero suggests that it demonstrates a reconfiguration of religious pluralism. Therefore, it seems that the reformulation of the classic conception of religion, derivative of catholic normative referential, has gone through a new configuration since the growing influence of Pentecostalism, especially of the Neo Pentecostal strand. In that way, the present article tries to sustain the hypothesis that the Solomon’s Temple can be thought of as a result of the Pentecostal emergency as a public

religion, since its specific form of producing its own visibility affects, at the same time, what we understand as “religion” and also as “public space”.

As Paula Montero states: “Placing the issue of public religion in terms of its publicity dynamics implies asking ourselves about the public whose attention is intended to capture” (2016, 142). The author takes the concept of public religions as it was formulated by José Casanova (1994), that is to think of the concept of religion as ways of making a public. For Casanova, a religion becomes public when it begins to act in three different arenas: “when it enters the state apparatus, when it penetrates the political system and when it becomes a mobilizing political force at the level of civil society.” (Montero 2018, 28). In this way, according to Machado and Burity, Pentecostalism became a public religion through the “adoption of a corporate model of political representation through the launch of official candidates by the IURD” (606).

In this article, we intend to think about public religions as forces that mobilize the invention and affirmation of civil society. We assume a critical perspective towards the idea in which religion means to suppose the incorporation of a collectivity of believers in a community base centered on the Church. Different authors defend the perspective that such concept would no longer be able to encompass the intense circulation of actors through the most varied arenas that act in the name of religion and the ways in which religions are presented in public space (Montero, Silva e Sales 2018; Teixeira 2019; Ciochetti 2020). Thus, the authors argue that, given the new understandings of what it means to make religion, it is insufficient to think about religion based on the relationship between the church and the faithful.

From this perspective, we assume that the incorporation of different media and its articulation with the religious and political arenas re-dimensioned the visibility of Pentecostalism in the Brazilian public sphere. As Jacqueline Teixeira argues, the different types of media “are fundamental in the exercise of the appearance of bodies and in the production of a subject who emerges from the action of his performativity with the public.” (2019, 71). Therefore, we take media as a central factor on the production of visibility of certain religious performative scenes that gain wide circulation in the public domain. As Birgit Meyer suggests, the adoption of new media in the religious repertoire involves constant negotiations (2019, 63). In this sense, we understand that the incorporation of new media by Pentecostal churches becomes an element in the transformation of religious mediation. We believe, then, that the articulation of the concept of media with the publicity dynamics of religion can be productive insofar as the media make it possible to increase the visibility of certain performative scenes, action repertoires and sensory forms that actors use to make it public.

Initially, considering media as a fundamental factor in the production of public visibility, we seek to explore the double meaning that the concept encompasses: both mediatization processes and forms of mediation of religion, highlighting some media that the IURD has incorporated into its repertoire which is considered relevant to socio-anthropological literature. From this, we seek to articulate a theoretical perspective on media and religion with the concept of public religions through the analysis of publicity dynamics and religious mediation made by the IURD on the Solomon's Temple. Finally, we analyze how this aesthetic formation spreads in the Pentecostal environment and becomes a fundamental factor on how this religious segment has presented itself in the Brazilian public sphere.

### **MEDIATIZATION, MEDIATION AND THE “MEDIAS” OF UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

Focusing on the concept of media to explore its theoretical and analytical potential, we examine some theories to think about the relationship between “religion and media”. In this field of studies, two concepts are relevant to our discussion: mediatization and mediation. In the perspective assumed by this analysis, exploring the potential of these concepts can be useful to critically access some theoretical propositions raised in the literature on the Solomon's Temple. We shall start from mediatization.

According to Livia de Silva Souza (2014), Stig Hjarvard is considered one of the main exponents of the concept of mediatization. Hjarvard argues that the concept of mediatization opened a new theoretical field that focuses on the influence of the media, in a broad sense, on society and culture (2012). In general, the author understands the mediatization of society as the process by which “... society, to an increasing degree, is subjected to or becomes dependent on the media and its logic.” (idem, 64). The author also highlights that the concept of mediatization is not to be confused with that of mediation, in which the first appears as a new theoretical perspective in relation to studies on mediations:

Mediation describes the concrete act of communication by means of a medium in a specific social context. By contrast, mediatization refers to a more long-lasting process, whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence. (Hjarvard 2008, 144)

To talk about the mediatization of religion, the author analyzes how the media operates as an agent of change and religious transformation. In this sense, through mediatization processes, the author argues that “religion is increasingly being subsumed under the logic of the media, in terms of institutional regulation, symbolic content and individual practices” (2008, 4).

Hjarvard also discusses the public visibility of religions in the contemporary world, arguing that a fundamental factor of such visibility lies precisely in the mediatization of religion. This perspective, according to the author, has been used to “claim a resurgence of religious belief in general and to denounce the idea of secularization in particular.” (2016, 2). However, opposing these perspectives, the author defends the position that it is possible to observe “a slow and gradual decline in religious beliefs and practices” (idem, 8). In this way, it would be possible to attest to the validity of the secularization thesis, in which religion would not simply disappear, but argues “modernity, including its mediatized conditions, influences the forms of religious imaginaries and practices that will prevail.” (idem).

Based on a critical perspective of the mediatization, Luís Sá Martino (2019) proposes a concept of mediatization as an *articulation* between media and social practices. Thinking about mediatization processes from the notion of articulation, suggested by the author, is opposed to the ideas of “influence” or “effects”, proposed by Hjarvard, which assume a “media-centric” perspective, attributing a disproportionate value to the power of media when thinking about its “effects” (2019, 22). In this sense, Martino argues that the term mediatization has the potential to overcome old dichotomies that treat media and society as watertight categories that operate under reciprocal influence. Thus, instead of thinking about “media and religion”, mediatization proposes a new look, as “media with” or “media in” religion, reinforcing the processual character of intertwining and transforming social practices.

Once more, in opposition to Hjarvard, Martino does not abandon the concept of mediation, since:

... the technological media element produces ways of understanding reality that go beyond the borders of the media field, moving towards mediations. They are articulated with other instances of human life, such as people’s sensitivity, their ways of perceiving the world and understanding reality from what Gomes (2006) called an ‘ecology’ of communicational practices (2012a, 224)

In relation to the processes of mediatization of religion, the author states that they have been “asserting themselves as a preponderant characteristic of several churches and religious groups, changing religious practices that are reconfigured and rethought in the context of an equally mediatized society” (idem, 220). In this case, he highlights the mediatization processes of the Universal Church:

In the Universal Church, led by Edir Macedo, mediatization was from the beginning one of the main points of the denomination, accompanied by intensively mediatic elements— derived from what Campos (1997) calls ‘theatrical’—in various aspects of its practices (Kramer, 2005) (idem, 229)

The author also emphasizes that the capital contribution of the church in the purchase of Record television channel would have changed the economic dynamics of the media field (idem, 232). Martino, therefore, concludes that the mediatization process would be a phenomenon of multiple variables, highlighting the articulation between the specific characteristics of a religious movement and the political economy of the media. In this aspect, he indicates a transformation factor, as “mediatization includes new actors in the field, contributing to new dynamics and mediations” (idem, 238).

Martino also proposes to think about how the mediatization process has allowed religion to redefine its presence on the borders between public and private, exploring some dimensions of the mediatization of religion, which is “a prominent factor for its performance in the public space as an actor of relevant influence on decision-making in a secular political system.” (2012b, 122). The author raises the hypothesis that the mediatization process helps churches not only to publicize their beliefs in the public space, but to convert their presence into decision-making.

In this sense, he argues that the mediatization of religious institutions allowed the resumption of their participation in a sphere of media visibility, converging to a new form of participation in public affairs. Martino emphasizes that “the counterpart of the articulation between these two logics is the visibility that religious institutions receive in the public sphere.” (idem, 115). Under the perspective of thinking about the visibility of religion in the public space, the communicational theories have the potential to re-dimension the debate on secularization “in which the issue of the presence/absence of religion in the public space can be discussed in terms of its media visibility/invisibility in the public sphere” (idem, 116).

Under the Habermasian conception of the public sphere, the author argues that the participation and engagement of actors in public affairs involve adapting their performance to the rules of the game on an equal footing with other participants in a deliberative democracy. According to this reasoning, the “properly religious” discourse loses validation as an argument, which requires a rationalization of its presence so that the principles defended in the public sphere cannot be based on an argumentation of a metaphysical character:

(...) in the face of other reasonings for the debate in the Public Sphere, religion must base its arguments on rationalities that, by definition, are not religious, which creates a kind of contradiction in terms and seems to reinforce, in this way, the diminution of its sphere of influence. It should be noted that a strong part of the religious discourse that populates the public space has its origins in highly mediatized religious institutions. (idem, 118)

In contrast to the mediatization perspective, the contributions of Birgit Meyer (2019) also present theoretical possibilities about how religions become public and how they assert their presence in the public sphere through the transformation of religious mediation. Meyer argues that thinking of religion as a practice of mediation makes it possible to broaden the notion of media beyond the technologies of the modern era, also including substances such as “incense or herbs, sacrificed animals, icons, sacred books, stones and sacred rivers, finally, the human body that surrenders to be possessed by a spirit.” (idem, 61). According to the author, a re-articulation of religion in the way it presents itself publicly implies some kind of transformation “through the incorporation of new media and through new forms of mobilization and connection with people.” (idem, 44). From a critical approach to mediatization studies, she proposes her line of research:

Rather than basing our analysis on an essentialist view of community or religion as things at risk of corruption - by the forces of mediatization, entertainment and market logic - it is more productive to explore how the use of electronic and digital media effectively shape transformation... both of the communities and of the religion of our time. (idem, 63)

Therefore, the author proposes to shift the perspective of “religion and media”—centered on the spectacular use of new media as a “huge rupture”—, suggesting an approach that questions how the new media interacts with previous ones that have long characterized a religious practice. Based on the understanding that the religious message is always mediated (and have always been), the ways in which people negotiate and eventually adopt new media are raised as a problem to be investigated (idem, 63).

Meyer also defends a perspective on the study of religion based on a material approach “in order to apprehend how religion and the media materialize and generate tangible forms and formations in social life” (idem, 45). Meyer calls these formations *aesthetic formations*, seeking to overcome the limitations of the notion of “imagined communities” proposed by Benedict Anderson (1991 [2008]). Problematizing the idea of community “as a fixed, delimited social group” (idem, 53), she states that it would be necessary to go beyond that approach. In this regard, the author opts for the to understand the process of constitution of a community from a broader perspective:

the term ‘aesthetic formations’ captures very well the formative impact of a shared aesthetic through which they are forged by the modulation of their senses, the induction of experiences, the molding of their bodies and the production of meanings; an aesthetic that materializes in things. (idem, 54)



The notion of aesthetics, the author explains, would not be limited to a conception of “beauty”, limited to the sphere of the arts and its disinterested observer. She follows Aristotle’s concept of aesthesis, which in short consists of engagement with the world through the human senses. Assuming that the adoption of a shared aesthetic is central to the processes of subjectivation, the author argues that the public presence of religions can be analyzed with specific religious repertoires—or *sensory forms*—that are used to mobilize people. Thus, the “imaginaries” would not be mere by-products of mental representations, but materialize and are experienced as real. Imaginaries would, therefore, be producers of sensory forms, understood as evoking and reproducing experiences, emotions and affections that are shared by *common sense* (idem, 53-54)

In this way, Meyer defines the notion of sensory forms as “relatively fixed, authorized ways of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental, thus creating and maintaining connections between people in the context of specific religious structures of power” (idem, 64). We do not seek to question the ways of accessing the “transcendental”, considering that it does not seem to be a relevant approach for this analysis. However, it is interesting to think about the question that the author raises: “how these new media impact the established sensory forms and, therefore, the aesthetic styles that form subjects and communities” (idem, 65). This approach also allows us to observe the forms of mediation of religion in the public space, establishing visibilities and modes of circulation of material and symbolic goods through which its aesthetic formation is made public—that is, what acquires relevance and public attention.

Articulating the ideas of religious mediation, in its way of producing sensibilities, with its modes of circulation and global sharing provided by the media, Jeremy Stolow (2014) argues that this line of inquiry also provides considerable contributions to the critique of the theory of secularization. In this sense, Stolow asserts that there is no insurmountable barrier that would segregate the action repertoires of religious actors from the modern secularized state apparatus, on the contrary:

even the most overtly secular institutions seem incapable of disentangling themselves from the discursive structures and performative repertoires that originate within those very religious communities that modern institutions claim to have transcended. (2014, 154)

Instead of suggesting that forms of religious manifestations would be invading a field of action that would not be proper to its social sphere, the author stands from a critical perspective of secularization theories that attribute to religion a normative role in relation to its social practices and to the place it occupies in society. In this sense, repertoires, sensory forms and forms of social action considered as “religious” or “secular”

surpasses each other and are reconfigured depending on the context in which religions and their forms of mediation become visible.

It is noted that both concepts, mediatization and mediation, provide us with analytical tools that make it possible to observe the forms of production of visibility of religions in the public space. However, although the concept of mediatization is significant for understanding the process of insertion of religions in the media, it is clear that such an approach generally assigns religion a normative role, making it insufficient to develop a critical perspective in relation to theories of secularization. Thus, such theories do not take into account the historical relevance of the role of religion in the construction and management of public space, or that its forms of action would be capable of reconfiguring the secular order itself. From the perspective of mediatization, religion would be subsumed to the logic of the media and under the influence of changes brought about by modernity, as stated by Hjarvard, or it would be unable to impose its religious values on a secular political system, demanding the adequacy of its discourse to the rules of the game of deliberative democracy, as defended by Martino.

In this sense, studies that propose to think about the Solomon's Temple under the concept of mediatization seem to assume the same presuppositions, without also taking into account a critical perspective in relation to the concept of religion. Furthermore, the approaches are restricted to a perspective that, in general, interprets religions under the metaphor of market relations, in which churches offer "symbolic goods" as a commodity to their consumers/faithful and, acting as "enterprise", are in constant dispute for the adhesion of more faithful in a competitive model.

In this way, Roberto Bazanini et al. affirm that the Solomon's Temple promotes the spectacularization of religious services so that "religion is no longer guided by the sacred..., but by the governing laws of the market" (2016, 123). Alexandre Bandeira, in turn, states that the Universal Church practices symbolic cannibalism as a way to consume the signs of Jewish traditions that are present in the Temple, defining it as "a process by which one symbol is devoured by the other" (2018, 7). In summary, the author states that the practice of cannibalism would be a survival strategy "in an increasingly disputed religious market" (idem, 18) and also as a response "to the dwindling supply of new believers in the neo-Pentecostal market" (idem, 7). Bandeira also argues that the Solomon's Temple serves various communicational and media interpretations, concluding that the Temple would be a "great communicational complex, dedicated to those who are already mediatized and inserted in the practices of coexistence through the media and the spectacle" (idem, 9).

Finally, Leticia Storto and Marcelo Figueiredo, based on the studies of argumentation and communication, investigate the meaning effects caused by the architecture and mediatization of the Solomon's Temple. The authors argue that the Temple would be constituted as a luxurious and pompous setting, providing a new persuasive symbolic capital for the adhesion of more faithful, using media resources to promote the Temple. Thus, the authors conclude, from the materials produced by the TV news program *Domingo Espetacular* (Spectacular Sunday) about the Temple, that "the interference of religion in the production of the material is evident. The analysis of the two reports makes it clear that, more than informing, *Domingo Espetacular* acts as a promotional vehicle for the headquarters of the religious institution". (2015, 272).

However, as Paula Montero (2009) argues, when conceiving the public sphere in terms of market, such perspectives assume the supposed implicit normative that religion is "out of its place". Thereby, religion would be "invading the public sphere that should be autonomous in relation to beliefs and, as a result, is itself becoming a commodity, assuming a logic proper to the profane spaces of mass consumption" (idem, 8).

Furthermore, when conceiving Solomon's Temple under the categories "faithful" and "church", such approaches seem to go against the discourse that the IURD seeks to give visibility to the religious monument: "a house of prayer open to all peoples, regardless of personal beliefs." Thus, it is believed that, more than denouncing the "interference of religion" in the dissemination of its symbolic goods in the media, it becomes more significant to think about how the church mobilizes the category "recognition" to talk about the Solomon's Temple.

As Jacqueline Teixeira states, during the construction of the Temple, the recognition category was mobilized in countless ways:

(...) The population of the city of São Paulo needed to "recognize" the Solomon's Temple as a gift, a space for everyone, and not a space for the Universal Church, at the same time that, when they looked at it, they should "recognize" the identity of the Universal Church." (2019, 61)

Mediation studies, therefore, seem to be more promising, as Jeremy Stolow argues, "to review our own understanding of religion and its place in human social life" (2014, 155). Extending the concept of media beyond the use of the communication media, that is, as forms of mediation of religion in public space, it should be noted that the construction of large religious temples in the urban space meant a paradigm shift in the way the IURD was recognized publicly throughout the 1990s by the press.

According to Edlaine Gomes (2011), until the late 1990s, most church headquarters were in rented properties. The author argues that this situation has given rise to controversies about what would be “culture spaces” and “cult spaces”, considering that part of the occupied properties would be former cinemas and theaters. According to Gomes, with the construction of its own Cathedrals, the church began to promote new notions of culture and tradition in its religious repertoire. It incorporated elements of Jewish culture and symbolism in its collective memory, adopting an aesthetic conception inspired by the biblical narratives of the Old Testament in the architecture of its Cathedrals, which the author calls Mythical Israel. This dynamic is interpreted by Gomes as a product of a policy of authenticity, in which the church seeks to be recognized in the urban space as an authentic form of religion.

In this direction, Emerson Giumbelli (2014) argues that the construction of cathedrals and temples in urban space has enabled the formation of an evangelical visual culture that would compete with the main consecrated icons of the Catholic Church in the country, such as Christ the Redeemer. The importance of religious temples for the visibility and public recognition of the IURD, therefore, would not be fortuitous, since “the initiative to build religious mega-temples had the effect of producing a dynamic of legitimacy for the IURD as a ‘religion’ in the Brazilian public sphere” (Ciochetti 2020, 5).

Considering the theoretical perspectives presented, I will devote myself, in the following pages, to the analysis of the forms of production of visibility given by the television channels to the Solomon’s Temple. Three channels stand out in particular, *TV Record*, *Rede TV* and *SBT*, which mostly presented the monument in their news programs or auditorium programs. I seek to analyze the mediatization processes in what seems to be the most relevant, that is, in relation to their ability to add more actors to the production of religious publicity dynamics. Thus, I investigate the way in which “religious content” is performed in public television, questioning how it is presented, by which actors, what they say and how they talk about the Temple. In this aspect, we think about how visibility is articulated with the religious-media-political arenas in the production of scenes of recognition, in which the actors are constantly legitimizing the Temple as a “sacred space”, but which is “beyond religion”.

At the same time, I also highlight the forms of religious mediation mobilized by the Temple, its ways of articulating the notions of religion, culture and tradition in its Jewish aesthetic formation, widely shared by the media. In this sense, we observe how the articulation between the arenas is related to the forms of visibility, circulation and sharing in the public space of certain specific objects, taking the Ark of the Covenant,

which is situated at the Temple, as an example. For this analysis, videos published on YouTube by the Universal Church are also used.

## **THE SOLOMON'S TEMPLE: RELIGIOUS MEDIATION AND PUBLICITY DYNAMICS**

In the TV news program *Domingo Espetacular*, on TV Record channel, two reports of extensive duration about the Solomon's Temple stand out: the first, in 2010 (19:33 min)<sup>4</sup>, when the construction of the Temple was announced, and the second, in 2014 (29:22 min)<sup>5</sup>, one week after its opening.

The reports tell the smallest details regarding the work from interviews with architects, engineers, designers, political representatives, representatives of the Jewish religion, with the leader of IURD himself (Bishop Macedo) and also with part of the report produced in Israel. In the speeches of these different actors, the Temple is seen as a work that impresses in all its numbers, being portrayed at all times in the report as something unprecedented in history. "A project of this nature is a challenge, as it is unique, singular, there is no other and there won't be others in the world", said Vitor Stefaneli, the engineer responsible for the project. I highlight below some lines that are presented in the reports:

The project is a good idea, as one of the characteristics of the country is that it is multicultural and multi-religious. **[Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Amorim]**

If there is a possibility for people to learn and understand the culture, tradition, ethics, history that the Jewish people brought to the world, the one that brought the idea of monotheism to the world and that is now part of Western culture, it will be very positive **[David Gorodovits, director of the Jewish Culture Center]**

The Temple will be a milestone of importance for the Jewish people, because it has to do with identity, history and alliance with God. **[Rafael Rodrigues da Silva, professor of theology at PUC University in São Paulo.]**

A work of great impact, but one that could be seen in these two, three years of the project's progress, with every care being adopted by the Universal Church. It will be one of the great temples in the city of São Paulo. It will be an equipment with important cultural characteristics, won't it? It will be a milestone! **[Gilberto Kassab, mayor of São Paulo at the time]**

Note how these actors recognize the Temple based on two important characteristics that are highlighted in their speeches. The first, expressed more clearly in the speeches of political actors Celso Amorim and Gilberto Kassab concerns its importance as a "cultural apparatus". The second, which also encompasses the first aspect, consists of its link with Jewish

4. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK-qh0XB9gg>. Accessed on: July 20, 2021.

5. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq7dMxi6uLA>. Accessed on: July 20, 2021.

culture and tradition, recognized in the speeches as “positive” and “a milestone of importance” insofar as it also contributes, as David Gorodovits points out, to learning of Jewish culture.

Although its recognition as a cultural apparatus stands out in the speeches presented, it can be seen how its cultural and religious expressions are based in the same place: in the incorporation of a mythical conception of Israel. Thus, by aggregating the speech of different actors who would not be members or leaders of the church, the IURD seeks to produce a dynamic of publicity for the religious monument through the media visibility of the link established with Jewish culture, history and tradition. In summary, this articulation can be understood in the slogan widely spread by the church: “Solomon’s Temple, a piece of the Holy Land in Brazil.”<sup>6</sup>

In another four reports analyzed, we see how TV program presenters from different stations become central actors in the forms of publicity for the Temple. The first, also produced by *Domingo Espetacular*<sup>7</sup>, presents the visit made by the presenter and owner of SBT, Silvio Santos, a year after the inauguration of the Temple, in 2015. The report portrays a “historic meeting” between Edir Macedo (who’s also the owner of TV Record channel) and Silvio Santos, 17 years after their last meeting. Macedo and Silvio, competitors in the dispute for the television audience, are presented in a friendly meeting in which the report highlights the common qualities they both have: the two, born of humble origins, had to struggle and face several challenges to become men of success. At various times, the Jewish origin of Silvio Santos is highlighted, being related to the objects and artifacts of the Temple.

Among the symbols of Judaism, Sílvio Santos remembers his spiritual roots. Silvio, in fact, is called Senor Abravanel, the name given by the family of Jewish origin. (...) In the Upper Room, Silvio finds some of the main symbols of the people of Israel from Egypt. One of them is the Manna, which represents the food that God provided to the Jews during their journey through the desert. As a good host, Bishop Macedo helps to bring out every detail. And as a good visitor, Sílvio Santos takes a camera from his pocket.

6. Slogan posted on the Temple of Solomon website. Available at: <https://www.otemplo-desalomao.com/>. Accessed on: July 22, 2021.

7. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubjW7siLC74&list=PLMaIqfllcInIXEMX-j-LCUM6nMCzjoZIQZ&index=100>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021.



**IMAGE 2**  
Silvio Santos, Edir Macedo and his wife, Esther, in the Solomon's Temple. Source: Revista Veja (Veja Magazine)

In three other reports that gave visibility to Solomon's Temple, different auditorium programs coordinated by renowned Brazilian artists in the television sector stand out, such as the *Programa do Gugu* (Gugu TV show)<sup>8</sup>, by *Rede Record* channel, TV show *Superpop*, by presenter Luciana Gimenez<sup>9</sup>, by *RedeTV!* channel, and the Raul Gil Program, by *SBT TV* channel<sup>10</sup>.

These reports are similar in two aspects. In relation to the first, it is noted that there is an emphasis on presenting the details of the Temple that associate it with the idea of a Mythic Israel from the replicas of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Garden of Olives, the stones brought from Israel and the Upper Room. These replicas, objects and spaces compose what would be a place of "religious tourism" in which visitors can learn about "the history of the Jewish people" through a themed tour guided by a church minister, dressed in the character of an ancient priest, that pedagogically explains the meaning of each artifact and object. In this regard, it is clear how this religious tourism spot is central in the way the Temple presents itself as a space for cultural diffusion.

The second consists in the fact that these publicly known personalities in the media legitimize their recognition as both a "sacred space" and a space "open to all peoples", as we can see in the fragments below:

It is impossible to walk around here and not be amazed by the beauty of the finish in each part of the sanctuary. It feels like I've gone back in time and I'm in ancient Jerusalem [presenter Gugu]

It doesn't matter which religion you're from, what really matters is love, peace, and that you can connect with something better within yourself and with God, and bring the best of you, to your family, loved ones, society, your friends. Congratulations for the work. I think that doesn't matter what form [religion has], what matters is that it reaches ev-

8. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofSM-ZGpuU8>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021

9. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChpBCxqHPxo>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021

10. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L--McKp4dj4>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021

everyone in the heart, it unites people. I leave here differently from when I came in. **[actress Luciana Gimenez]**

Solomon's temple is a wonderful place. A sacred place even those who don't know it will get to know it! You, who are from another state, when you go to São Paulo, have to know you have never seen anything like it, I'm sure, unless it's in Israel, but it's a very serious thing. Congratulations, once again, to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, to Bishop Macedo and to all the bishops and ministers. **[presenter Raul Gil]**

These highlighted speeches, broadcast in these different television programs, are significant for understanding how the discursive production made in the name of the Solomon's Temple gains wide circulation in the social world. The monument is mentioned as a place outside and beyond religion, while at the same time incorporates a form of expression of the sacred, inspired by this mythical imagery of Israel and performed in public television by different public personalities—artists, political authorities, professionals from different segments and members of other religions.

Among the material expressions of the sacred that gained greater visibility in the various reports, the Ark of the Covenant stands out. It has great importance in the biblical narrative of the Old Testament, as it would be the place where the tablets of the 10 commandments of Moses were kept. It is also noteworthy that the construction of the first Temple, built by King Solomon, would have been intended exclusively to house the Ark of the Covenant. The location of the true Ark of the Covenant is unknown and it is subject of intense debate to this day.

The forms of materialization of the sacred expressed in the replica of the Ark of the Covenant could be considered marginal if we do not observe the wide publicity that the IURD seeks to make of this object in the most diverse ceremonies carried out by the church. At the inauguration of the Temple, as Paula Montero states, the Ark became “the central and apothotic element in the sacralization of the enormous building located in the district of Brás, in the city of São Paulo” (Montero, Silva, Sales 2018, 137). According to Montero, the recognition of this religious expression by the public was exercised in articulation with the political and media arena. As she argues, the entrance of the Ark into the Solomon's Temple was carried out through a ritual performance, staged in front of a large audience composed of the highest authorities in the state—with several representatives of the executive, legislative and judiciary powers—, artists from *TV Record*, representatives of the Jewish community, media entrepreneurs and religious leaders of the church.





**IMAGE 3**  
Image of the Ark of the Covenant in Solomon's Temple. Source: Folha de São Paulo newspaper.

Besides being the central element in the opening ceremony of the Solomon's Temple, the Ark circulated through different temples of the IURD in Brazil and other countries, such as Mozambique and Angola, in Africa, Mexico (Mexico City) and the United States (California and Los Angeles). Wherever it passed, the Ark became the object of a great spectacle of religious staging, gathering crowds around the ceremonies held in many temples and cathedrals.

On its arrival in each city, the Ark was transported from the airport to the churches in a fire engine, along with priests dressed in character. In the churches, the ceremonies were prepared, with a red carpet laid out and a large crowd awaiting its triumphant entry.

In a video available on the Universal Church's Youtube channel, it is possible to see, in Mozambique, the most assiduous of the faithful following the fire truck on the city's streets. The spectacle was not only inside the churches. In Angola, it is possible to observe, in another available video, the presence of the Israeli Ambassador performing the opening of this ceremony.



**IMAGE 4**  
Arrival and entry of the Ark of the Covenant in Mozambique, photo taken from the video available on YouTube.<sup>11</sup>



**IMAGE 5**  
Arrival and entry of the Ark of the Covenant in Mozambique, photo taken from the video available on YouTube.<sup>11</sup>

The return of the Ark of the Covenant to Solomon’s Temple was carried out on the monument’s fourth anniversary, in 2018. Accompanied by a ritual ceremony similar to the ones done in the places where it passed—transport in fire engines, with a large crowd waiting for it—this event was the subject of intense publicity by the Universal Church. In addition to institutional channels directly linked to the church, the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the Solomon’s Temple was widely publicized in journalistic reports on several TV Record channel programs: on *Domingo Espetacular* (Spectacular Sunday)<sup>13</sup>, *Fala Brasil* (Speak Brasil)<sup>14</sup>, *Balanço Geral* (General balance)<sup>15</sup> and *Cidade Alerta* (City Alert)<sup>16</sup>. The newspaper *Domingo Espetacular* produced an extensive report, about 13 minutes long, which I highlight a brief fragment below:

Since its inauguration, Solomon’s Temple has had a replica of the Ark of the Covenant, an object that represents the union between God and men. In this year, 2018, the Ark traveled all over Brazil. It passed, for example, in Brasília, Curitiba, São Luís. In all these places, the entrance of the Ark in the Temples of the Universal Church attracted thousands of people. The same happened in Rondônia, Ceará. Piauí, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia. (...) The Ark also crossed the borders of Brazil. It arrived in Africa, passed through Mozambique and Angola. Now, it’s time for the Ark to return home.

11. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfHQO\\_N-nik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfHQO_N-nik). Accessed on: March 4, 2021

12. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbl2fbwT7Y4>. Accessed on: March 4, 2021.

13. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKkxTibyJFo&t=8s>. Accessed on: July 15, 2019.

14. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg475YG4azo>. Accessed on: July 15, 2019.

15. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEa1gAUnZkI>. Accessed on: July 15, 2019

16. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8WO\\_7\\_DkQs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8WO_7_DkQs). Accessed on: July 15, 2019.

As it can be seen, the church expanded its ceremonies, events and religious beliefs to “outside the church”, circulating its objects in its most different temples and giving visibility in the television media. In this regard, the modes of circulation and exposure of these objects suggest a transformation of Pentecostalism’s religious mediation in the public space, as it produces new sensory forms of devotion and engagement inspired by Jewish aesthetic formation in conjunction with religious-media-political arenas.

Such aspects of the media visibility become fundamental in the production of a publicity dynamic, which seeks to bring together the speech of these different actors—through journalistic and entertainment languages—which recognize the value of the Temple as a legitimate religious expression. Their forms of recognition and publicity for their religious expression, in turn, are specifically linked to their political engagement by capitalizing on the presence of Jewish authorities and national political authorities in the religious ceremonies.

### **AESTHETIC FORMATIONS AND THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS: THE MYTHICAL ISRAEL AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

As for the presence of Jewish agents, it is possible to observe the protagonism of political authorities directly linked to the State of Israel in other rites and ceremonies performed by the Church, which emphasizes the diplomatic figure of the “ambassador”. In addition to the centrality of the Israeli ambassador in the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Angola, two videos available in the official channel of the Solomon’s Temple on YouTube channel show us the presence of the Israeli ambassador in Brazil, Yossi Shelley. In the video *Israeli Ambassador at the Solomon Temple*<sup>17</sup>, Shelley is interviewed by a reporter from the Temple’s team. Being guided by the questions asked, the ambassador not only praises the monument, but highlights its importance to the people of Israel:

Now I’m thinking that all the leadership of Israel, as ministers, should come here to see the magnificent work that is done for the Jews and for Israel as well... Israel has a great fight against anti-Semitism. Most people don’t know what Israel is (...) it’s an opportunity for people to see Israel in Brazil.

In Shelley’s speech, it is curious how he links the Temple with the fight against anti-Semitism. The Temple is recognized as a space whose social function is to spread the tradition, history and culture of the people of Israel. In the second video, entitled *Bishop Macedo and the Ambassador of Israel - Prayer for Jerusalem*<sup>18</sup>, the ambassador is invited to a religious service in a special tribute to the people of Israel, led by Bishop Edir Macedo. Standing next to the bishop, Shelley speech emphasizes the importance

17. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiYe87lg\\_3E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiYe87lg_3E). Accessed on: March 4, 2021.

18. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij-m78oKSTY>. Accessed on: March 4, 2021.

of the Solomon's Temple and the work of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God for the people of Israel, while the bishop reinforces his message, as highlighted below:

Yossi Shelley: (...) I want to thank you (Edir Macedo) on the part of the State of Israel, for what you do for our country and for peace all over the world, not only in Brazil. Thank you!

Edir Macedo: When we pray for Israel, we are praying for the people chosen by God, of which we are also inserted. Amen, guys? Whoever prays for the peace of Jerusalem has God's guarantee: they will prosper.



**IMAGE 6**

On the left, photo taken from the YouTube video *Israel Ambassador at the Solomon Temple*. On the right, photo taken from the YouTube video *Bishop Macedo and the Israeli Ambassador - Prayer for Jerusalem*.

The visibility of Yossi Shelley's presence and his speeches become paradigmatic, as they articulate politics and religion in the sensory forms produced by Pentecostalism as a public religion. In this sense, the aesthetic formation inspired by the mythical conception of Israel has been a fundamental factor in the transformation of Pentecostal religious mediation in the Brazilian public space, so that not only a new religious repertoire is incorporated, but it is produced with the legitimization and recognition of political authorities, nationally and internationally.

### **BEYOND SOLOMON'S TEMPLE: PENTECOSTAL PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SPACE**

The production of mythical Israeli aesthetics as a form of religious expression was not restricted to the religious monuments of the IURD. This form has gained wide expression in the Pentecostal milieu in the last two decades—materialized in different objects, images, symbols, styles, soap operas and rituals—and has become one of the main forms of production of public visibility in this segment, marking a difference in relation to the Catholic imaginary and recognition by state authorities.

The current president of Brazil, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, knew very well how to capitalize the sympathy of this segment, despite claiming to be a Catholic. This political shift to the right, which was present in much of the Pentecostal field, has been diagnosed as the phenomenon of the

new conservative wave in Brazil (Ronaldo 2017), electing Bolsonaro as the “representative of the evangelicals” for the presidency.

As Ronaldo de Almeida explains, when Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment was being discussed by the Senate, in 2016, Bolsonaro was in the Jordan River, in Israel, being baptized by Pastor Everaldo, member of the Assembly of God and current president of the Christian Social Party (PSC). Since then, Bolsonaro’s presence and visibility in the Pentecostal milieu has increased. During his campaign, in 2018, he invested in an alliance with Pentecostal political and religious leaders, reinforcing his conservative discourse in defense of the family, Christian moral values and the anti-PT<sup>19</sup> (Labor Party) sentiment present in public opinion.

But their alliance, however, was not limited to the plan of rhetorical defense of Christian values. Bolsonaro has participated in various rites, events and ceremonies of different Pentecostal denominations, which have been widely publicized. At the *baptism* in the River Jordan; in the *prayer* received at the Congress of Gideons; in the *prayer* performed by Magno Malta, alongside Bolsonaro, after he won the 2018 election; in the *consecration* received by Edir Macedo in the Temple of Solomon in 2019, in the *prayer* offered by several evangelical leaders in the Planalto Palace “in favor of Brazil” in 2020 and in the *fasting* campaign carried out by the president against Coronavirus, Bolsonaro demonstrated that he was not just one spectator of religious events, but an actor engaged in the public performance of the rites and corporal practices of Pentecostalism.



**IMAGE 7**  
Bolsonaro being baptized in the Jordan River in Israel.<sup>20</sup>

19. PT (Workers Party) is one of the main parties in the Brazilian Political arena and had governed the country for 13 years, before Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment in 2016. The legitimacy of the impeachment is still the object of great debates and controversies in the country.  
20. From: Extra Globo. Available at: <https://extra.globo.com/noticias/brasil/enquanto-votacao-do-impeachment-acontecia-bolsonaro-era-batizado-em-israel-19287802.html>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.



**IMAGE 8**  
Bolsonaro received a prayer at the Congress of Gideons.<sup>21</sup>



**IMAGE 9**  
Bolsonaro praying after his electoral victory.<sup>22</sup>

21. From: JM News. Available at: <https://www.jmnoticia.com.br/2018/09/10/durante-participacao-no-congresso-gideoes-missionarios-jair-bolsonaro-recebeu-oracao-na-regiao-do-estomago-watch/>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.

22. From Folha de São Paulo newspaper. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2018/12/bolsonaro-diz-que-perfil-de-magno-malta-nao-se-enquadrou-em-ministerios.shtml>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.



**IMAGE 10**  
Bolsonaro receiving the blessing of Edir Macedo, in the Solomon's Temple<sup>23</sup>.



**IMAGE 11**  
With the presence of different evangelical leaders at the Planalto's Palace (the president's official residence), Bolsonaro prays in favor of Brazil. Foto: Isac Nóbrega/PR<sup>24</sup>.

23. From: O Estado de São Paulo newspaper. Available at: <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,bolsonaro-recebe-uncao-de-edir-macedo-e-bispo-diz-que-president-vai-arrebentar,70002992132>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.

24. Photo published on the page: <https://fotospublicas.com/encontro-com-pastor-silas-mafaiia-president-do-conselho-interdenominacional-de-ministers-evangelicos-do-brasil-cimeb/> Accessed on: July 20 of 2021.



**IMAGE 12**  
Fast for Brazil Campaign. Image taken from the video: líderes evangélicos apregoando o jejum pelo Brasil com o presidente Bolsonaro (evangelical leaders preaching fast for Brazil with president) Bolsonaro. From Pastor Silas Malafaia's Youtube channel<sup>25</sup>.

Bolsonaro was also the first president of the republic to participate in the March for Jesus in 2019, an event that takes place every year since 1993 and makes up the official calendar in Brazil since 2009. The March is an international event, being held first in London, in 1987, and brought to Brazil by the church *Renascer em Cristo* (Reborn in Christ) and is currently organized along with other Neo Pentecostal evangelical denominations. In this event, different forms of sociability are performed, making it a mixture of a religious manifestation, a political rally and a carnival celebration. Lorries playing music (*trios elétricos*), concerts with artists recognized in the Pentecostal evangelical milieu, presence of millions of people, t-shirts, flags and personalized ornaments, political authorities and religious leaders compose the stage of the March.

In 2019, in São Paulo, the religious event also served as a political platform not only for Bolsonaro, but also for Mayor Bruno Covas (PSDB), Governor João Dória (PSDB) and Senator Major Olímpio (PSL). But Bolsonaro became the main figure at the event and delivered a speech alongside its leader, the apostle Estevam Hernandez and bishop Sonia Hernandez—founders of the church *Renascer em Cristo*—, and the ambassador of Israel in Brazil, Yossi Shelley. The Israeli flag became the main icon of the March, a religious and political expression of the event, carried by several people from the audience, including Bolsonaro, at the time of his speech. In the two Marches he attended, held in São Paulo and Brasília, Bolsonaro sought to praise Israel.

[São Paulo] I always quote Israel when I have the opportunity to speak. I usually say: look what Israel doesn't have and see what they are. Now here for us: see what Brazil has and what we are not.

[Brasilia]. Our origins, our tradition, our culture is Judeo-Christian. (...) Israel only exists because its people have faith in God. It is an example for all of us.

25. Video available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhtRIh\\_v9uo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhtRIh_v9uo). Accessed on: July 20, 2021.





IMAGE 13  
Image taken from  
YouTube<sup>26</sup>.

Such speeches, besides revealing Bolsonaro's appreciation of Israel, demonstrate a new way of representing the Brazilian national identity based on Judeo-Christian culture. This narrative also took place in Bolsonaro's inaugural presidential speech, when he presented his "government plan": "We shall value the family, respect religions and our Judeo-Christian tradition, fight against gender ideology and preserve our values".

In this regard, the sacredness attributed to the people of Israel converges with its social and political importance, promoting new forms of engagement and devotion in the public space. In addition to religious events, the Israeli flag also became a symbol of the anti-democratic acts promoted by Bolsonaro at the *Palácio do Planalto*, alongside the flags of Brazil and the United States.

26. Image source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoxGBFrJuac>. Accessed on March 4, 2021.



**IMAGEM 10**  
Image taken from the article by Guga Chacra published in the newspaper O Globo, on May 4, 2020.<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We began this article with a discussion about the role that the media play in contemporary political disputes, highlighting the activism of the Universal Church in the production of controversies in the Brazilian public sphere. Exploring the different theoretical perspectives on “media and religion”, we sought to relate this literature to the ways that Neo Pentecostalism—taking the IURD as a representative of this religious movement—has been presented in the public space and tensioning the configuration of the secular legal order established in the post-re-democratization of the country.

Thus, we point out how the reconfiguration of Brazilian secularism is marked by the emergence of Pentecostalism as a public religion, analyzing the importance of incorporating new media into the IURD’s religious repertoire as a factor which transformed religious mediation practices. This way, we seek to analyze the practices of religious mediation and the dynamics of publicity carried out by the church in relation to the Solomon’s Temple. In this aspect, we analyzed the publicity of the presence and circulation of actors from different arenas, the forms of recognition of them in relation to the Temple and also the specific way that media visibility allows the presentation of the religious monument through the languages of journalism and entertainment.

As noted, a place of sacredness is attributed to the Temple, in an attempt to detach its image as a place of religious belonging at the same time. This way, it can be seen how its religious function is articulated with notions of Jewish culture and tradition, which produces both the importance of

<sup>27</sup>. Available at: <https://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/guga-chacra/post/bolsonaro-sabe-que-eua-e-israel-adoptam-isolamento-social-contra-pandemia.html>. Access date: July 20, 2021.

the Temple as a cultural and educational device for the Jewish people and an aesthetic incorporated into the Church's religious repertoire.

As seen, this aesthetic is materialized in different objects, with emphasis on the Ark of the Covenant. IURD seeks to give visibility to these objects in its events, rituals and ceremonies, in addition to publicizing them in *TV Record's* news programs. However, we also highlight how this aesthetic formation was not restricted to cathedrals, temples of the Universal Church, but has expanded among Pentecostal churches in recent decades, becoming a shared style capable of evoking sensory forms that produce new modes of engagement and devotion in the public place.

In this respect, we point out the central participation of authorities linked to the State of Israel in the production of forms of recognition and legitimacy based on the mythical aesthetics of Israel. At the national political level, it is also noted how the ascension of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency resized the visibility of Pentecostal evangelicals in the Brazilian public sphere. His engagement and initiative to capitalize the sympathy for this religious segment placed Bolsonaro as a central actor in the publicity of Pentecostal performances, practices, ceremonies and rituals. The Israeli flag, in turn, became a religious and political symbol of Pentecostalism, making its presence felt in different religious and political manifestations in which Bolsonaro was the protagonist.

Therefore, we see how the materialization of the aesthetics inspired by this Mythic Israel in the most diverse objects, buildings, ceremonies and symbols by the Pentecostal churches have reconfigured the public space around the dispute for the representation of a Judeo-Christian national identity. Despite not being a hegemonic discourse yet, its wide circulation by political authorities reveals a phenomenon of extreme relevance. In this way, the growth of the evangelical population and its insertion in the most diverse public arenas in the country has demonstrated the intention of this segment in the dispute for the representation of a national identity in the Brazilian public sphere, demarcating a place of difference in relation to the Catholic imaginary.

**TRANSLATION**  
Liam Correia Inkpin.

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Submitted: 03/04/2021  
Resubmitted: 07/28/2021  
Accepted: 11/09/2021