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## Chapter 7

# The Branding of Faith

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Religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and world view that relate humanity to spirituality and sometimes also with moral values. It may be said that it is a belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe. Many religions have narratives, symbols and sacred history and traditions that are intended to give a meaning of life or to explain the origin of the life and the universe. They tend to drive morality, ethics, faith and religious laws and or preferred a lifestyle from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature. But in the present world religious faiths are treated like a brand. The process of branding involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. In a society overrun by commercial clutter, religion has become yet another product sold in the consumer marketplace, and faiths of all kinds must compete with a myriad of more entertaining and more convenient leisure activities.

## The Meaning of Faith

The first question we have to ask, "What is faith?" The following entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy focuses on the nature of faith, although issues about the justifiability of faith are also implicated.

"The concept of faith is a broad one: at its most general 'faith' means much the same as 'trust'. This entry is specifically concerned, however, with the notion of religious faith—or, rather (and the difference is important), the kind of faith exemplified in religious faith. Philosophical accounts are almost exclusively about theistic religious faith—faith in God—and they generally, though not exclusively, deal with faith as understood within the Christian branch of the Abrahamic traditions. But, although the theistic religious context settles what kind of faith is of interest, the question arises whether faith of that same general kind also belongs to other, non-theistic, religious contexts, or to contexts not usually thought of as religious at all. It may perhaps be apt to speak of the faith of—for example—a humanist, or even an atheist, using the same general sense of 'faith' as applies to the theist case.

Philosophical reflection on theistic religious faith has produced different accounts or models of its nature. This entry suggests that there are three key components that may feature, with varying emphases, in models of faith—namely the affective, the cognitive and the volitional. Several

different principles according to which models of faith may be categorized are noted, including

- How the model relates faith as a state to faith as an act or activity;
- Whether it takes its object to be exclusively propositional or not;
- The type of epistemology with which the model is associated—'evidentialist' or 'fideist';
- Whether the model is necessarily restricted to theistic religious faith, or may extend beyond it.

There is, of course, no 'established' terminology for different models of faith. A brief initial characterization of the principal models of faith and their nomenclature as they feature in this discussion may nevertheless be helpful—they are:

- *The 'purely affective' model:* faith as a feeling of existential confidence
- *The 'special knowledge' model:* faith as knowledge of specific truths, revealed by God
- *The 'belief' model:* faith as belief that God exists
- *The 'trust' model:* faith as belief in (trust in) God
- *The 'doxastic venture' model:* faith as practical commitment beyond the evidence to one's belief that God exists
- *The 'sub-doxastic venture' model:* faith as practical commitment without belief

- *The 'hope' model:* faith as hoping—or acting in the hope that—the God who saves exists.<sup>1</sup>

## The Branding of Faith

Faith branding is the concept of branding religious organizations, leaders, or media programming, in the hope of penetrating a media-driven, consumer-oriented culture more effectively. Essentially, faith branding treats faith as a product and attempts to apply the principles of marketing in order to "sell" the product.<sup>2</sup> Faith branding is a response to the challenge that religious organizations and leaders face today regarding how to express their faith in a media-dominated culture.<sup>3</sup> The understanding that in today's hyper-competitive culture, where people are being bombarded with other messages, that it's vitally important that we know how to share our story with our community, audience, customers, or donors. To get our organization on the radar of today's culture, we need to articulate our story in a way that connects and makes them respond. As John Maxwell likes to say, "Many communicate, but few connect."

*How do you define a brand?* In *Branding Faith*, Phil Cook definition of a brand is simply a compelling story that surrounds a person, or a product, or an organization. In other words, what do people think of when they think of you? We all have a brand. We all have a perception. Starbucks Coffee has a brand. Nike tennis shoes have a brand. First Baptist Church in your town has a brand.<sup>4</sup>

## Historical Background

The concept of faith branding is not a new concept; it has a long history as some young religions of the world have. This citation from Wikipedia clearly shows what Mara Einstein, a thinker of this concept discuss in her famous book *Brands of Faith* discuss, "The idea of branding has been around since the 1400s, back then the most prominent book that was being sold was in fact the Bible (Einstein 67). The advertising strategy was to be up front and frank about what it was that the individual was trying to sell. For instance they would say what the produce was, that people could buy that product right that moment, and how much it cost, these series of statements became known as direct sale messages (Einstein 67). As centuries past by the direct sale messages were used up until the industrial revolution of the 1800s and the marketing chain began to expand and change to adapt to the revolution. Companies and manufactures began to change the way that they advertised their products to the consumers, they now talk about the physical features and how the product will benefit the consumer as they said that it would "make things simpler" (Einstein 67). In today's media driven society these same procedures have lived and are becoming more apparent with each and every new product that is released to the public."<sup>5</sup>

The usages of faith branding are common although we are not aware about it. In the era of scientific development and mass communication it has some popular usages. It can be said in this way that, "This process has been refined to meet

several different applications from religious groups to non-profit organizations that need help to become publicized and gain a voice of who they are and what their goals are. By utilizing commercial and advertising organizations to help promote the "product" (for example their Faith) they can make themselves known to the local area and even to the world. Due to the big media biz of the twenty first century, many people are not aware of how often the process of Faith Branding is used and how it affects them day to day."<sup>6</sup>

## Contributors to this Conception

Faith Branding although an ancient conception but there are only some thinkers who discuss this conception in length. Here we will discuss two thinkers who gave a primary data and also give a direction to other thinkers of this field. Mara Einstein, the author of *Brands of Faith* and Phil Cooke, the author of *Branding Faith* both describe the ways that faith branding is used throughout the world and how successful this type of marketing can be when you do the steps correctly and follow the plan. These two authors teach the subject of how faith branding can be used to break through the media that dominates most of the world's lives and how it can be exploited. Here we will discuss some more about above mentioned books.

### Brands of Faith by Mara Einstein

*Brands of Faith* argues that in order to compete effectively faiths have had to become brands – easily recognizable symbols and spokespeople with whom religious prospects can make immediate connections. Mara Einstein shows how religious branding has expanded over the past twenty years to create a blended world of commerce and faith where the sacred becomes secular and the secular sacred. In a series of fascinating case studies of faith brands, she explores the significance of branded church courses, such as Alpha and The Purpose Driven Life, mega-churches, and the popularity of the televangelist Joel Olsteen and television presenter Oprah Winfrey, as well as the rise of Kaballah. She asks what the consequences of this religious marketing will be, and outlines the possible results of religious commercialism – good and bad. Repackaging religion – updating music, creating teen-targeted bibles – is justifiable and necessary. However, when the content becomes obscured, religion may lose its unique selling proposition – the very ability to raise us above the market. The above is a very short introduction of the book content and below we can find an analysis of the conception.<sup>7</sup>

Ashley Palmer review this book and added the following observation regarding the content development, "Einstein describes the transformation of religion from a product of enlightenment to one of entertainment and enterprise by introducing the concept of "faith brands." These are religious products and services which, like their secular

counterparts, serve to distinguish them from others in the religious marketplace and assist consumers in making a personal connection with the product.

The book is organized into three sections in which a series of case studies of faith brands is sandwiched between an exploration of the proliferation of religious marketing and an examination of the consequences of this trend. Einstein first takes the reader through the growth of religious marketing by way of a discussion of the development of consumer culture. She explains that, in the transition from an industrial economy based on mass production to a personalized economy tailored to individual preferences, advertising shifted from a vehicle used to disseminate product information to a means of product promotion through the sale of image and identity. Through increased exposure to such advertising, consumers have come to expect convenience and entertainment from marketers.

According to Einstein, these expectations have spilled over into the realm of religion. And this is the fundamental point she makes: when marketing is introduced into a category, it alters the assumptions of that category. More pointedly, she argues that with the marketing of spirituality comes the idea that religion, like any other good, is a product for which consumers can shop. As a consequence, producers of religious goods modify their products and services to fit consumer preferences, transforming religion into "religion lite" (14).

A 20-year veteran of the marketing industry, Einstein combines professional experience with participant observation and in-depth research. Through a series of case studies of faith brands including *The Purpose Driven Life*, Joel Osteen, Oprah, and Kabbalah, Einstein shows how producers of religious goods have utilized marketing strategies, modifying their products in an effort to appeal to a larger segment of the market. Ultimately, she maintains, the use of such tactics has developed a consumer base that constitutes a sizable voting block such that faith brands wield significant political power.

While *Brands of Faith* provides a unique perspective on the intersection of consumer culture and religion, a few qualifications are merited. First, while Einstein uses the broad term "religion" throughout the book, more often than not she is referring to evangelical Christianity and seeker-sensitive churches and religious products.

An exception to this is the chapter devoted to Kabbalah in which the concept of faith brands is extended to Judaism. However, the Catholic and mainline/ liberal faith traditions are essentially left out of the discussion altogether. This omission could mislead readers unfamiliar with the geography of the American religious landscape to conclude that the patterns described are applicable across religious traditions. Whether or not this is the case is a separate question, but it is one that is not addressed.

In addition, that non-traditional forms of spiritual practice like the consumption of religious media are supplanting traditional ones is an oft-repeated claim throughout *Brands of Faith*, one that is used to advance the argument that marketing has become a necessary competitive tool for producers of religious goods. Yet, while available alternatives to conventional religious practices such as religious television have indeed increased, some scholars have found that such practices typically supplement traditional practices rather than replace them. It might be more accurate to assert that increased religious marketing stems from perceived rather than actual competitive pressure.<sup>39</sup>

After a good discussion of the content Ashley Palmer evaluate its impact in the following lines, "Bearing these considerations in mind, *Brands of Faith* nevertheless makes an important contribution to the area of consumer culture and religion and would make an interesting read for scholars of religion and media studies. The faith brand concept is a useful heuristic for understanding the intersection of media and religion and the rise of evangelicalism through use of marketing strategies. But it also makes a broader statement about the implications of marketing for spiritual depth in an over-stimulated society. Einstein explains that the type of religion promoted through religious marketing emphasizes a "consumer-friendly, feel good, easy listening type of Christianity" (179) that masks the reality of the product. The implication is that this brand of religion both dupes newcomers into a set of conservative

values and also leaves them with a religious worldview which is ill-equipped to cope with life's disappointments. To some, these will be startling suggestions; for others like Einstein, they are foregone conclusions."<sup>9</sup>

Aaron K. Ketchell evaluates this book in the following lines, "Einstein offers her primary criticism of religious branding. As faith increasingly becomes a commodity like all others and as groups struggle with each other for members, religion has changed from "what people need to what people want" (192). Harkening upon social gospel approaches, Einstein decries a mounting inability to censure the machinations of capitalism or more generally speak to life's problems. Many of the most popular faith brands are now so thoroughly embedded within a market approach prefaced on positive messages that they offer overly facile solutions to tribulations or avoid them all together. Ultimately, *Brands of Faith* is a welcome addition to the larger body of work on religion and consumer culture. Because of Einstein's business acumen, she offers a perspective unavailable to most religion scholars. Although she lists in a contentious direction at times, the book is nevertheless a lively read that will enlighten those looking for an interpretive lens through which to view the spectacular success of contemporary religious commodities."<sup>10</sup>

## Branding Faith by Phil Cooke

The second book is *Branding Faith* written by Phil Cooke, he said that the premise for *Branding Faith* is that the church has lost its story and until churches can identify their compelling brand, they're going to continue suffering the consequences of a good story told badly. There are two significant issues I take with Phil in this book. First is his suggestion that "the pastor or ministry leader is the hub of the brand. Everything else revolves around his or her role." Phil admittedly doesn't like this either—and neither do I—but that doesn't mean we should settle for this reality, regardless of the culture we live in. Phil's media ministry lens is obviously a contributing factor to his line of thinking.<sup>11</sup> Cooke has consulted with many of the most recognized churches and non profits in the world, and in *Branding Faith: Why Some Ministries Impact Culture and Others Don't*, he shares his road-tested strategies for using media and marketing to make your mark on people's minds and hearts. Whatever the size of your organization, his helpful hints and insider know-how will give you the tools to set your ministry's strategies ablaze.

## Examples of Faith Branding

Since society is so caught up in media today many have become distracted from other important issues. Another example of mass media taking over the lives of everyday people including Christians who according to the standards set by their worldview chooses to place priorities out of

religious order, and even non-believers who choose to live by the standards that are set forth by the media and accept that as their life style. Take the major companies that dominate the shopping industry and look closely at their marketing techniques they use to advertise their products. During a religious holiday is when they are at their worst, in this case look at the Christian holiday known as Christmas. Ever since the man in a big red suit and a white beard started appearing in story time, Companies have taken this time to pull all of the stops out to sell their products in large scale by telling every individual that they deserve bigger and better things. This is not what Faith branding is used for at all.<sup>12</sup>

### Negative Aspects and Precautions

The above mentioned thinkers developed this conception, but here is another aspect of this conception which discusses that, "Faith Branding does not always work as intended its methods are subject to debate. Branding in general does throw up some red flags especially when the topic of branding is about faith or even culture. Most people believe that the procedure of making something more apparent in the media would be solely for the corporations that produce and sell consumer goods that would be purchased and used by an individual, and the subject would develop a "bad reputation" (Cooke 160). In Cooke's book he states that there are three dangerous areas that need to be revealed when it comes to the process of faith branding, they are "technology, chasing relevance, and conflict with

the concept of marketing" (Cooke 160). Cooke discovered these issues so that when organizations are faith branding then they know what they should be cautious when they use the techniques for breaking through the ever evolving media age of the twenty first century.<sup>13</sup>

Above we discussed branding of faith according to western world. In eastern part it is also dominant several religious institutions use this conception since a long time. Every religion or sect of religious institution treats its concept as a brand and there is a competition to sale it more than other. Day by day this competition is increasing and religious groups are getting more violent regarding the propagation of their ideas. Krishnamurti was a philosopher whose passionate search for the 'good society' was not grounded in any particular religious or philosophical tradition. He did not seek to follow any specific path for bringing about 'goodness' in both individuals and society. In this sense, he did not rely on an external instrument or tool for existence but on an inner discovery that sought to go beyond the physical body and bring about a 'mutation' in the human mind. Change was therefore not possible through external means, whether these were political revolutions or social movements, but only through a complete transformation of human consciousness. This transformation did not include the use of mechanical practices, such as any form of religious ritual or attachment to a dogma.<sup>14</sup> For him any kind of faith branding is not a good step towards religious development or even he don't agree with any kind of faith and criticize this conception of religious faith.



According to Krishnamurti "Religion, the etymological meaning of that word is not very clear, but it's generally accepted, religion to be that which is going on in the world, the Christian religion, the Muslim, the Islamic, the Hindu, the Buddhist and so on, with their temples and mosques and churches or cathedrals and all the rituals that go on inside them, and all the things that are in the temples, in the churches, in the mosques, and follow, having certain faiths, belief, and the repetition of certain phrases, doing puja, rituals and so on, the whole structure of superstition - that generally is what is understood to be religion." (Talk 1, Madras, 31 December 1983, par. 2) "Religion is not the acceptance of some dogma, tradition, or-so called sacred book. Religion is the inquiry to find the unknown." (Talk 1, Madanapalle, 12 February 1956, par. 19) While many statements made by Krishnamurti assert that true religion consists in various features, I think that many of those features are better understood as the effects that arise in the mind that is following the pathless path of 'true religion.' One is what he calls an 'inner revolution' "I am talking about an inner revolution, a revolution within the mind itself, whether it be a Christian mind, a Hindu mind, or a Buddhist mind; for without this revolution, this freedom, surely there can be no deep understanding." (Talk 1, Athens, 24 September 1956).<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion we can say that religious faith is an intrinsic element of human experience and all type of branding is negative as it has not much to contribute in the understanding of any religion and practitioners. Religious

faith propagated by these activities has only a little effect on human life.

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