

Summary

KATARZYNA SZEWCZYK-HAAKE (Institute of European Culture at The Adam Mickiewicz University) / *The Bible* and a billboard. On rhetorics of a religious advertisement and situation of a missionary in contemporary culture

The article presents an analysis of a visual and verbal sphere of texts which show structural similarities to commercial advertisements and which “advertize” some kind of religious beliefs or rituals. A context for such analysis is, on the one hand, the Christian visual tradition and the European tradition of rhetoric, and on the other hand – the contemporary theory of advertisement, due to which the advertising is considered a realm of art and a subject to scientific research, held by both visual and cultural studies. The analysed materials are announcements published in Polish press and on billboards in Poland between the year 2009 and 2013. On that basis one can describe a certain tension which appears when a religious content is confronted with a function of an advertisement in the social space. Discussion about the rhetorical effectiveness of the examples given clears the way for concluding whether this tension intensifies or makes impossible a persuasive effectiveness of “advertising” the religious essence. Analysis of the examples leads to differentiating between two main strategies of authors of the “religious advertisements.” The first one is a missionary strategy which turns to each and every member of the society, trying to inspire a reflection on human values, and its contents equalises Christianity with a widely understood existential attitude. The other one resembles most of the contemporary advertisements, which aim at dictating standards and ideas, and its persuasive effectiveness seems questionable due to the rhetorical contradictions in which it is involved.