Since the advent of modernity, the various meanings attached to the concept of the ‘market’ have undergone significant shifts and transformations. While primarily having denoted a more specific mode and physical space for the exchange of goods in premodern times, from the modern period onwards, its meaning has increasingly shifted towards a mode of social organization and mechanism of governance (e.g., Slater and Tonkiss 2001). This latter understanding of the market has gained particular momentum through the proliferation and implementation of neoliberal ideologies and policies on a global scale since the early 1980s, and the concurrent definitive establishment of consumerism as the dominant cultural ethos of late-modernity (e.g., Slater 1997: 24–25).

In recent decades, the overall impact of market logics and imperatives, neoliberal ideology, and consumer culture on late-modern social and cultural life—including religion—has become the subject of a broad, cross-disciplinary area of study. Even though consumer capitalism has long constituted a central area of investigation and ideological critique within sociology and social- and cultural theory, the contemporary relationships and modes of interplay between religion and wider socio-economic conditions and arrangements still remain a somewhat under-researched area within the study of religion in general (e.g., Gauthier, Woodhead, and Martikainen 2013: 2). Over the past decade, however, a substantial and fast-growing scholarly literature covering a broad range of different perspectives and areas of focus has nevertheless emerged on the subject (e.g., Moore 2001; Noll 2001; Carrette and King 2005; Mottner 2008; Stolz 2008). More recent studies (e.g., Martikainen and Gauthier 2013; Gauthier and Martikainen 2013; Stolz and Usunier 2014) have also highlighted how the

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rise of neoliberalism and consumerism have coincided with major shifts in the
global religious field, making it increasingly important for current and future
transformations in the field of religion to be approached and understood
“against the backdrop of wider socio-economic changes, catalysed by the
spread of consumerism and the neo-liberal economy” (Gauthier, Woodhead,
and Martikainen 2013: 24).

‘Change’, however, remains a notoriously difficult phenomenon to con-
ceptualize and pin down empirically. A focus on discourse and discursive
change, however, provides scholars with a particularly useful set of tools for
empirically exploring and highlighting the complex ways in which processes
of broader social and cultural discursive change relate to (as well as translate
into) processes of religious change. As Fairclough points out, through its
emphasis on the constitutive function of language and other modes of represen-
tation (e.g., images, symbols), discourse analysis “has the capacity to put
other sorts of social analysis into connection with the fine detail of particu-
lar instances of institutional practice in a way which is simultaneously
oriented to textual detail, the production, distribution and interpretation/
consumption of texts, and wider social and cultural contexts” (Fairclough 1993:
158). More specifically, it provides us with a particular text- and language-
focused way of more concretely pinning down and tracing changes in the
wider order of discourse in a certain social domain, such as institutional reli-

Following Fairclough, such a focus on discursive change would, on the one
hand, be concerned with exploring “the specificity of particular discursive
events, as attempts to negotiate unstable and changing sociocultural circum-
stances in the medium of language” (Fairclough 1993: 137) and, on the other
hand, with exploring changes in wider “orders of discourse in the longer term,
towards shifting discursive practices within and across social domains and
institutions as one facet of social change” (Fairclough 1993: 137). The study of
discursive change in this respect therefore needs to include a historical vari-
able aimed at drawing our attention to “qualitative differences between differ-
ent historical epochs in the social functioning of discourse” (Fairclough 1993:
138). While such a historical variable should not be included for the sake of
being able to identify “radical disjunctures” in discursive practices between dif-
ferent, supposedly clearly marked historical periods, it can nevertheless be of
great help in identifying “qualitative shifts in the ‘cultural dominant’” with
respect to the “nature of the discursive practices which have most salience and
impact in a particular epoch” (Fairclough 1993: 138). In other words, striving to
identify which discursive formations and practices appear to hold particular
prominence and salience across different social and cultural fields during a