

# Trademark Gospel® A monopoly on the truth: A monopoly on the truth

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [May 1, 2007](#) issue

Princípio do Evangelho® de Jesus Cristo, Filho de Deus, is the Portuguese translation of Mark 1:1, “Here begins the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.” João Ferreira translated it in 1884. But in Brazil, you could be in trouble before you even get to the second verse of *The Gospel® According to Mark*, because the word “Gospel”® is the trademark of Estevam and Sônia Hernandez, “the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker of Brazil.”

This couple is Pentecostal, but don’t blame Pentecostalism for them. They have been well covered by the press in Brazil and the U.S. and drew attention to themselves in January in Miami when they were charged with smuggling cash into the U.S. They smuggled \$9,000 concealed as a book mark in a Bible and hid \$56,467 in loose change—probably one good day’s take for “the Prosperity Gospel®,” which they preach. The couple founded the Rebirth in Christ Church a couple of decades ago and spread the gospel® through a thousand churches, TV and radio networks, a recording company, real estate, a horse-breeding ranch and the trademark on the “gospel”® in Brazil.

That last item jolted me into awareness. I checked the *The American Heritage®* dictionary, which defines trademark as “a name, symbol, or other device identifying a product, officially registered and legally restricted to the use of the owner.” I found that *trademark* is often followed by ™, so I hope I am breaking no law in this use. *Barron’s* says that ™s protect the owners from infringements and ensure continuity of the product for the public benefit. I have not checked with the patent or trademark office in Brazil, so I do not know the local rules for the Hernandezes, but I assume that they want to ensure that they have a monopoly on the term.

Something about restricting the key word in Mark’s Gospel® is unfair to Mark, whoever he was, but we have to hope that his lawyers will rise up to get a retrospective trademark™ for his literary property. Of course Mark probably was

pushing the envelope legally, since he borrowed from the Q document to draft his Gospel®.

Don't nonmembers of the Rebirth in Christ Church resent the fact that they cannot legally offer the gospel® in the most Catholic+Pentecostal nation in the world? No doubt the Hernandeses would say that Catholics don't offer the gospel® so they needed this monopoly. Still, is their monopolizing legal?

I wanted to check out the divine law enshrined in the Ten Commandments©. That became complex when I found that Judge Roy Moore owns the copyright on the Decalogue. On the back of the wood-burnt home-made Constitution-defying version on his courthouse wall is "© Roy Moore."

The Moore people do not answer questions about this copyright, but clearly they violate the Commandment© "Thou shalt not steal."

When Judge Moore's fans were rallying to keep the Ten Commandments© in the Supreme Court hall, it struck me that since his rallies were on Saturdays and Sundays, he was violating the Sabbath Commandment®. But in these days of cheap grace, all he has to say is that mistakes were made, that he is forgiven and that we must forgive him so he can go on with his work. He can even be forgiven in the approved gospel® way.

Still, some of us are ready to work around the Brazilian trademark™ and violate the business of ® and ©. If the law, based on the Ten Commandments©, finds the Hernandeses guilty and sends them to jail, we know that many will be there to soothe them with the gospel®. And that's the gospel® truth.