



*Characteristics of a Relevant Church  
Confronting the Missionary Needs  
In the City of Curitiba, Brazil.*

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## **DEDICATION**

To my dear wife Cleusa, who even through her sickness, gave up her time with me so that I could finish my studies.

To my children Michel and Silvana; Kelly and Leandro, for being my pride and joy.

To my grandchildren Nicolas, Benicio and Nina for always being a motivation to me and giving me great pleasure.

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## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is the result of my own research and that it has not been partially or totally submitted to another educational institution to obtain an academic degree.



Paschoal Piragine Junior

January 25th, 2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This study aims to try to understand how a local church may be relevant in the context of the city of Curitiba. The research tries to discover elements of relevance that can be perceived through the social sciences in the presence of the church in society. It looks at the history of the church in Brazil seeking to understand whether the sense of relevance is unique, or if it undergoes changes as social dynamics change, and whether there are preponderant contours that are able to withstand time. In biblical terms, starting from the biblical images of the church in the New Testament, it attempts to delineate the sense of relevance identified in them. Through selected theologians in historical periods and distinct contexts, it seeks theoretical paradigms of the relevance of the church. Finally, it focuses on research in order to understand the city of Curitiba, its soul and its missionary needs in order to propose actions of relevance obtained through previous studies.

Conselor: Antonio Carlos Barro

162 words.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Research planning:**

Urban growth is a fact recognized worldwide. In the 1900s about 10% of the Brazilian population lived in the cities, however, this number has increased to 85% in recent years (L. M. Barbosa & França, [s.d.]). This fact is enough to motivate us to try to build a socio-theological vision of the cities in order to better fulfill the mission of the Kingdom of God in the city.

The majority of people are born and live in big cities; I myself am a result of this urbanization movement. As a descendant of Italian immigrants who originally came to Brazil with the purpose of replacing slave labor in the countryside, my previous generation chose stay in the metropolis and suffer the pressures of a big city instead of suffering the injustices of landowners in the countryside. Likewise, I was born and raised in a metropolitan area.

However, when we look at the phenomenon of urbanization we need to consider a lot of other variables that occur in the large population centers such as: globalization, poverty, emerging cultural changes, crime, failure of the family and the many other factors that comprise the needs and anxieties of the growing urban population.

These variables need to be understood both through lens of the social sciences as well as through the Word of God and the historical experience of the church. In this way we can understand the role church has played in the past in building this social model as well as the role that church must develop today as an instrument to transform human beings and the cities they build.

In recent years this phenomenon has been studied and the missiological theology of the cities has been slowly developing. However, each city has its own culture, problems, and challenges which originate from its particular characteristics and from diverse variables which include its geography, history, economy and social problems. For this reason, this theology is in



continuous development as it searches for biblical answers that will guide churches' actions in the cities.

As pastor of the same church for twenty-nine years in the metropolis of Curitiba, I felt I should understand my city and try to learn how a church can be a relevant social instrument to the needs of the urban person in his and her multiple dimensions. The urban dweller is a unique individual, diverse in his or her characteristics, yearnings and needs. Daily, this person is confronted by the benefits and problems of urban life.

For this reason, the development of this thesis is organized in five chapters. The first chapter introduces the main research proposals.

The second chapter presents a review of the literature which refers to the theme of sociology and religion, as well as the history of the church in Brazil. In this chapter, we intend to find what are the relevant elements that social sciences can observe in the church's participation in society.

Through the history we will try to understand if the relevance remains the same, or if it changes when the social dynamic changes. This chapter also will help us to visualize those which are the main aspects that are resistant to time and social changes.

In chapter three we want to understand the importance of the Church as is illustrated through biblical figures. This will help us understand the biblical sense of the Church's ongoing social relevance.

A review about the importance of the Church in theology is an extensive undertaking. For this reason, it was decided to adopt some criteria to limit the scope of this inquiry. I will be presenting only some theologians who represent different historical periods and who had a notable influence on the concept of church and in the vision of its mission. Our goal is to find a basis in the history of theology that would permit the creation of theoretical paradigms relevant to the life and ministry of the church.

In the fourth chapter we will study what I call the "*alma curitibana*" which describes the heart and soul of the citizenry of Curitiba. Through the lens of

the history and **ethos** of the city we will try understand feelings and religious attitudes from Curitiba's citizens. We will then research the main missionary demands from its urban reality which will require a significant response from the church.

The final chapter presents all the conclusions and recommendations that this study identified concerning the importance of the church in the city of Curitiba.

## **1.2 Defense:**

Despite best efforts of great authors such as: Raymond Bakke, Timothy Keller, Roger S. Greenway, Harvie M. Conn and Charles Van Engen, the theology which deals with the church's mission in the urban world is still a compilation of articles, personal experiences or collections of sermons which deal with the importance and the means of understanding this contextual reality.

Even though research exists in the missiological field about urban challenges, the justification for this work is the need to develop academic research whose results will contribute to the construction of a theology of ecclesiastical engagement so that the church can be relevant in the city of Curitiba. In addition, inferences will be made concerning possible applications that can be tested in other urban concentrations.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to identify the reasons for the increasing loss of historical relevance of the Church as both a formative and change agent of society. In many ways, the local church is seen as an excuse for the maintenance of the "*status quo*" and not as an element of social transformation. In fact, there are some who believe that the inexistence of the church would help in the construction of a more just and less oppressive society.

For this reason, Karl Max stated:

Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real

suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (Marx, 2008, p. 6)

Based on these presuppositions, Max Weber came to the point of projecting that one day religion would no longer exist and that its role played throughout history would be exerted by the social sciences. (Negrão, 2005, p. 28). Given this context, research is necessary to determine whether or not the role of the church is still relevant in the cities of the 21st century.

It is also necessary to understand the incarnational role of the church in the cities of the 21st century. In other words, it is an attempt to describe the ways in which the values of faith in Jesus can be transformed into concrete actions of transformation leading both to human flourishing as well as to the construction of a better and more just social order.

The model must be Jesus Christ who manifested himself as the perfect image of God to human beings during his incarnation. Because he is deeply connected to human reality He can be at the same time both the answer to eternal salvation as well the transforming Lord of life and social contexts.

At a time when the Church has turned to a mystical spirituality disconnected from reality, its incarnational mission is to be a spiritual reality manifested in substantive action. This must be understood if we wish to find the relevance of the church for our present time.

The incarnation, in the words of Orlando Costas, is "The historical rootedness of Jesus Christ in the pain and afflictions of humankind and its impact on the growth of the Church. In other words, at what point has the church experienced a growth that reflects the understanding, commitment and presence of Christ among the helpless and dispersed crowds?" (1982, p. 13)

### **1.3 Proposal:**

Our proposal with this study is:

To understand the characteristics and mission challenges of the city of Curitiba;

To map the culture of its people that for more than three centuries of existence have been formed by a mixing of people from different ethnic heritages;

To describe which kind of religiosity has been constructed over the years and the contribution of the religiosity that has contributed to the formation of city's social structures;

To compare collected data with biblical teachings about the church's mission and its historical practice in society;

To contribute to the formation of this new theological understanding by seeking to delineate its sense of relevance to the local church;

To provide tools to help facilitate reflection on the role of the church, faith, and religious expressions in order to solve the urbanization problems, considering them to be both opportunities and challenges in the construction of a society for this new century.

#### **1.4 The big question:**

Our greatest concern is to answer the question: What are the characteristics of a relevant church facing the missional needs of the city of Curitiba?

#### **1.5 Specific objectives:**

To describe the history and the **ethos** of the citizenry of Curitiba.

To characterize what are the motivating ethical-religious factors that lead people to engage in societal transformation.

To understand what are the praxeological marks of a relevant Church.

To construct from the biblical metaphors of the church a relevant hermeneutical model.

To propose transformative actions that lead the church to carry out its relevant mission in the city of Curitiba.

## **1.6 Research Questions:**

What are the characteristics of a relevant Church to which history and Brazilian sociology bear witness?

What are the aspects of ecclesiological relevance that theology and the biblical models of the Church recommend?

What are the missiological needs of the city of Curitiba that require pertinent action on the part of the church?

What are the praxeological issues that come to the fore as a result of critical reflection and the analysis of information from the three previous questions?

## **1.7 Definitions:**

### **1.7.1 Church:**

Although definitions of some of the main terms need to be expanded and are the focus of our work, by means of introduction, I would like to explain the meaning we will assume for some of these terms in this research.

The Church of the Lord Jesus, according to the New Testament, is the body of Christ, the people of God from all ages and the expression of His Universal Kingdom (Ringwald, 2002, p. 284), visualized in a congregation of baptized believers unified to God by an experience of God's saving grace and associate with one another by an agreement of faith and communion based on the sacred scriptures. Each local congregation operates under the Lordship of Jesus through consensus that involves the whole community, which is the priesthood of Christ among humanity, in order to worship and serve Him through the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to embody His gospel demonstrating His love to society and transmit his message to the ends of the earth through a mutual cooperation between the brothers of several congregations. ("Antonio Olinto - Nossa História", 2007).

### **1.7.2 Relevance:**

We understand by relevance of the local church, its degree of importance and utility in the context of the society in which it is inserted.

This relevance shows its influence by adding value to life, customs, family, relationships and social interaction.

This relevance manifests itself in a capacity to develop, in its context, an incarnated spirituality, which is capable of helping to promote personal and social transformation appropriate to the time and the geography where it is inserted.

### **1.7.3 Hermeneutics:**

Hermeneutics relates to the way in which we make connections between the biblical text and the social context in which we are placed. It seeks in the word of God the answers to the needs of justice, truth, faith and values that a society experiences. (Barth, Bromiley, & Torrance, 2004, p. 242–264).

## **1.8 Theoretical framework:**

Our research is part of the specific discipline of what is called the ecclesiology of urban mission, which in turn is one of the components of the broader discipline of holistic mission. It can be described as the *missio Dei* in the urban reality. (Guimarães, [s.d.], p. 2).

Although the mission is the same, the strategies of how we can execute it differ from context to context. This contextualization, however, cannot lose the Biblical references and the limits they establish to define the strategies, but they must help to define which type of church the world in which we live needs.

Perhaps one of the great questions that dominated the discussions in this field was whether the scope of this contextualization should be limited exclusively to the proclamation of the gospel message or whether the message should be proclaimed and embodied through actions that could respond to the demands that came from the context that transformation, both personal and social, could occur simultaneously.

Our objective here is not to deal with these discussions but to present the most influential thoughts and authors, because in one way or another, they provided the hermeneutical lenses through which we did our analyses.

The hermeneutic lens we have decided to adopt has as its main line, the theology of holistic mission, as described by Orlando Costas, with the addition of some aspects from the perspectives of Howard Snyder and Joel Scandrett, described in the book *Salvation of All Creation* (2016).

### 1.8.1 Understanding Orlando Costas thinking:

Orlando Costas helps us to understand that a relevant church is not just a conglomeration of actions disconnected from each other which serve institutional, personal, or even political purposes. The essence of being a church has its mission defined by the sacred scriptures, but also can be evaluated through a graph showing three basic characteristics which manifest themselves in five distinct dimensions.

Spirituality					
Fidelity					
Incarnation					
	Numerical	Organic	Conceptual	Diaconal	Liturgical

Figure 1 Qualitative Indicator /Dimensions

### 1.8.2 Qualitative Indicators / Characteristics:

#### 1.8.2.1 Spirituality:

Spirituality is related to the presence, purpose and dynamic power of the Holy Spirit promoting life and natural growth.

Orlando Costas sees the Holy Spirit as an internal and external force in evangelization process which will promote the growth of the church. To him, external force means the anointing of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus and later in the disciples' lives. Inner strength means the operation of the Holy Spirit enabling the human mind to understand the mysteries of God, because without this operation, evangelistic effort is a useless activity. (Costas, 1989, pp. 77–78)

As a quality control indicator of the life and effectiveness of a church, we need to see the motivations that lie behind a church's actions to see if they

proceed from the action of the Spirit who has as His purpose the glory of the Father and the Son<sup>1</sup>. The final purpose of the church's mission is none other than the glory of God.

It is also necessary to see if the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, which is the preponderant mark of His presence and action, can be seen in the life and in the actions of the church. The spirituality that produces true relevance will never be disconnected from life; instead, it can be seen and felt in relationships, ethics, words and actions.

At this point it is appropriate to remember the words of Ricardo Barbosa in defining spirituality as "spiritualities," an action of the Spirit that provokes reactions of the human spirit.

First of all, it is good to remember that when we speak of spirituality, we are referring not only to the work of the Holy Spirit, but also to the movements of the human spirit in the search for identity and meaning. In this sense, we can speak of spiritualities. It is not a reality, but several realities, with different expressions and forms.(R. Barbosa, 2008)

In this sense, true spirituality is the movement of the Spirit that incarnates and assumes varied and appropriate forms to the context in which the Church is inserted, being a divine response to the spiritual needs of a certain people at a certain time.

#### **1.8.2.2 Incarnation:**

According to Orlando Costas incarnation is:

The historical commitment of Jesus Christ in the pain and afflictions of Humanity and its impact on the growth

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<sup>1</sup> John 16:13(NIV) But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.



of the Church. In other words, at what level is the church experiencing growth that reflects Christ's understanding, commitment and presence among helpless and dispersed multitudes? (Costas, 1982, p. 13)

Through the incarnation of Jesus, we can know a perfect image of the living God<sup>2</sup> and how His love is related to our reality. Through the incarnation, we can know how He can be the answer to our eternal salvation and also be the transforming Lord of life and in the contexts in which we find ourselves placed.

It is spirituality made visible. For that reason, incarnation is the natural consequence of spirituality.

Although spirituality is mystical, in the sense of a search for God acting and manifesting in us, through the incarnation, it is tremendously relevant and transforming. It is, in fact, an eternal and transcendent response of God to the temporal and contextual demands of existential reality.

In our mission to incarnate, internalize, proclaim, and celebrate the Gospel in the world today, the good news of salvation must become flesh, communicated and celebrated in every part of the human mosaic. (Costas, 1961, p. 396)

A church that embodies this type of living and incarnate faith will grow in grace among the people just as the Jerusalem Church grew and was capable

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<sup>2</sup>Col 1:15(NIV) The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

of generating a holy fear of God among those who accompanied the visible and concrete manifestations of that faith.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.8.2.3 Faithfulness:**

Faithfulness is a quality that promotes coherence between this incarnate faith and God's purpose for His people. Through this test, we observe "at what level a church responds to God's actions in the Bible and its designs in history" (Costas, 1982, p. 13) .

Faithfulness helps us see if what the church lives is consistent with the Word of God. It also helps us see if our relevance is not the fruit of a mere religious syncretism produced by our incarnational efforts or the mysticism of an incoherent spirituality mixed with the nature and purposes of the eternal God.

God's mission is not fixed in metaphysical speculation neither is it fixed in theoretical abstractions inspired by classical Greek philosophy; on the contrary, it is based on its historical achievements. We wish to understand the God of the Christian faith in his missionary activity in history, in his relation with the world, and in his proposal for humanity (Costas, 1994, p. 26).

Without this standard, the relevance of the church can be a great illusion of religiosity as is portrayed in the book of Ezekiel<sup>4</sup> and defined by God as incapable of producing life and salvation, but it is a dangerous mistake that leads to death.

Faithfulness as our standard obligates us to check to see if the activities of a church leads to a holy involvement with what God is doing in history and

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<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:47 (NIV) Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek 33:30 (NIV) As for you, son of man, your people are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, 'Come and hear the message that has come from the LORD.

whether the transformation inherent in the presence and purpose of the Holy God can be perceived therein. Otherwise, the apparent relevance may not be beneficial or approved by the author and finisher of our faith.

The three qualitative indicators proposed by Orlando Costas can be summarized as follows:

Spirituality – This refers to the work of the Holy Spirit, enabling the human being to understand the divine mysteries;

Incarnational – The concept that the values of faith are manifested concretely and reveal God's answers to the needs of a particular cultural context;

Faithfulness – This describes the level of coherence between the Church, the Word, and God's purposes throughout history.

Looking at these three qualities, we can understand why Bryant Myers defined holistic missions as "the ministry in which compassion, social transformation and proclamation are inseparable"(Yamamori, 1998, p. 13).

### **1.8.3 Dimensions of Growth:**

Costas understood that these three qualitative indicators alone would not be an adequate tool for the analysis of the Church, so he proposed five dimensions in which each of these characteristics should be visibly displayed. Integrating the five dimensions and correlating them with the qualitative indicators of growth will help us build a model for a relevant church in the urban context.

#### **1.8.3.1 Numerical Dimension:**

This dimension expresses the obligation that every believer in Jesus Christ has to be God's minister on earth, proclaiming the gospel of salvation.

Costas describes this in the following terms:

Numerical growth is the reproduction experienced by the people of God in proclaiming the gospel and calling men and women to repentance of their sins and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives; to

incorporate into a local community of believers those who respond affirmatively and to include them in the struggle of the kingdom of God against the hosts of evil (Costas, 1982, p. 13).

Growth, according to Costas, is a fundamental signal of the truly pertinent church and confirms that the church is participating in the Spirit's action in the expansion of the Kingdom of God (Costas, 1979, p. 37).

Numerical growth is an integral part of the vision of what it means to be a church, especially when we see it as an apostolic church and a sign of the kingdom of God on earth. However, it cannot be seen as the only dimension of its mission.

#### **1.8.3.2 Organic Dimension:**

The organic dimension portrays the internal development of the community of faith. As the church grows, people are added not to an institution, but to a body, to a living organism. This is what makes us feel like a community of brothers and sisters.

If a church focuses only on numerical growth, without being concerned about fellowship, shepherding, and relationships, it will become too impersonal and distant, resulting in it naturally losing its relevance in the community.

As a living organism, the church cannot be satisfied merely with the reproduction of its cells. It needs to be concerned with the effective functioning of all its component parts which make up the whole life system. These component parts need to be strengthened, looked after, stimulated and well-coordinated for the church to carry out its overall duties adequately. Otherwise, its reproductive labor may be wasted and its pilgrimage of faith frustrated or turned aside from its goal. (Costas, 1982, p. 13).

Included in this dimension are factors like the church's form of government, its financial structure, its patterns of leadership, the type of activities in which it invests its time and resources, and its liturgical celebration.

When we think organically, in a practical way, we are preparing the saints for the exercise of their personal ministry <sup>5</sup> so that the whole body can function properly. In practice, we cannot fail to include all the effort we will make to guide and prepare these ministers of God, so that the Church may be relevant and a sign of the kingdom within its ministry context.

Another aspect has to do with the structure itself, because a church needs to know how, where and when to carry out its ministry. It is clear that the Church, a living organism, is to be a church at all times and in all places. Yet, we understand that its community aspects require some kind of structure that will require planning, creativity, optimization, investment and a sense of relevance in the context in which it is inserted.

#### **1.8.3.3 Conceptual Dimension:**

This dimension has to do with the ability of the church to both reflect its faith and explain the reason for its faith. <sup>6</sup> Without this ability, the pertinence of the church may be lost to the next generation.

This has been the lesson drawn from the history of spiritual awakenings: one generation experiences the transforming impact of faith on personal life and in society while the next generation takes the path of unbelief and even

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<sup>5</sup> Eph 4:11 (NIV) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet 3:15 (NIV) But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

disillusionment.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, a church that does not invest in the growth of its critical, theological, objective and rational capacity of faith will soon be destroyed by false doctrine or it will lose its creative ability to maintain ongoing relevancy within a changing cultural and social context.

This dimension is described by Orlando Costas in the following terms:

Conceptual growth implies expansion in what in theology is called the intelligence of faith. It involves the deepening of the church's self-understanding and its knowledge of the faith, including its understanding of the Scriptures, the historical development of Christian doctrine and the world in which it lives (Costas, 1982, p. 13).

Not only does this dimension empower us for the future, but it also helps us to be the prophetic voice of the present and to be relevant to our people today. The world around the church always has new questions which demand new answers. If a church is not able to understand, in the light of faith, the world that surrounds it, and if it is not able to find the answers of our Savior for the sheep that are torn and skinned by the present life, those individuals will remain like sheep without a shepherd.

It is interesting to see how Orlando Costas recognizes the church's ability to do theology. For him, this commitment to "doing theology" represented a significant growth opportunity for his generation.

Theology is not an intellectual exercise for leisure time; rather, it is a committed reflection. It is not something that someone repeats or memorizes, but something that

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<sup>7</sup> This was an interesting argument presented by Dr Luiz Roberto Silvado to his pastors in Curitiba, as a result of the studies carried out in England about the post-revival in his sabbatical semester.

someone does. It is the connecting of the ultimate ends of our existence, from the perspective of one's faith. That is why every generation has to think through their faith. This is also the reason which explain why theology cannot be understood as being equal to faith. Theology needs to relate faith to the context of life. We do theology, we do not act just like a tape recorder that reproduces what the old and new giants of theology are saying (Costas, 1979, p. 50).

To be relevant in the conceptual dimension is to enable the church to reflect theologically on life, both in its eternal and its temporal dimension. In that way, the church becomes a sign of the Kingdom for a generation and a culture.

#### **1.8.3.4 Diaconal Dimension:**

In this dimension, the Church is concerned with incarnating Jesus, his redeeming love and his ethics within actual life contexts.

We understand by diaconal growth the intensity of the service that the church renders to the world as a concrete demonstration of God's redemptive love. This dimension covers the impact that the church's reconciling ministry has on the world; the degree of its participation in the life, conflicts, fears and hopes of society, and the extent that these expressions contribute to the effective alleviation of human pain and the transformation of social conditions(Costas, 1982, p. 13).

This reminds me of a small community in post-war Germany. With their city destroyed, the survivors realized that not only did the houses need rebuilding, but also the church in that community as well. Working together, they struggled with the reconstruction efforts when one of the workers said to

the project leader that the image of Jesus on the door of the church could no longer be used. The image of his hands had been destroyed in the bombardment. The leader thought and then had a brilliant idea. He took a piece of cardboard and charcoal and wrote these words: "We are the hands of Jesus". He concluded, "Now you can put it back in its usual place."

Without this dimension, the church loses its authenticity and credibility. Only to the degree to which the church is able to give concrete visibility to its vocation of love and service can it expect to be heard and respected (Costas, 1982, p. 13).

When we look at Jesus' actions in the gospels, we see how Jesus ministered to the helpless of his time, those who were marginalized, the "low-cast," (as they are called in India), and those He called "little ones". They were ministered to in such a way, that filled with the Spirit, touched by grace, filled with a wisdom that came from above, these actions confused the wisdom of the wise and powerful people of their time.

In the diaconal dimension, we simply continue the work that He began; we are his hands, feet, lips and heart. We minister to a people that, afflicted and battered by life, continue to walk on this earth like sheep that have no shepherd.

A church that lives this dimension of ministerial relevance, demonstrates in a visible and concrete way that Jesus is our good shepherd.

To grow in the diaconal dimension is to become pertinent to people's lives, in a certain place and at a given time. It is to demonstrate ethical standards in a corrupted world; it is to change the face of things even if everyone says that it is impossible. It is to love even when they do not want us to love. It is to walk contrary to society and establish in this land, in the words of John Stott: "A Christian counter-culture" (Stott, 1985) .



#### **1.8.3.5 Liturgical Dimension:**

The liturgical dimension is included progressively in the writings of Orlando Costas. In his explanations of the dimensions of growth, he does not clearly explain this concept. However, this subject is mentioned with more detail in his book *The Integrity of Mission: The Inner Life and Outreach of the Church*. Here he reveals the need to associate the integration of mission with worship.

We can better understand his concerns if we look at Antonio Carlos Barro's analysis on the subject:

"Costas understands that the Church has two main purposes: liturgy and mission." The primary purpose of the church is the praise of the glory of God's grace (Eph.1: 6). "Praise is the *raison d'être* of the church", and " ... praise ... is its primary purpose". We should notice that for Costas "Praise is the purpose behind God's saving actions". Therefore, praise becomes an integral and indispensable part of the mission. Costas sees praise as an event that celebrates the past (God's saving and liberating acts in history) but it is also as an event that draws attention to the present. "This is the moment in which the church openly declares to the world everything that is communicated to its members, that is, the good news of the salvation that God offers in Christ is available to all who hear and believe". Praise is distinguished in two other aspects. First, it is corporate. It is not under the dominion of the clergy but it is a service that all God's people render to Him. Second, praise reflects the ministerial context in which the Church finds itself. The reason is that "singing, praying, and confessing faith in the language of the

people enables congregations to have a ministry turned outward toward the world even when they are praising and praying to God". (A. C. Barro, 1993)

For Costas, mission and worship are two dimensions of the same reality. I understand then, that another dimension of relevance for the church is worship. Growing in "worship is more than celebrating certain religious rites; it is above all, to proclaim and live a message" (Costas, 1979, p. 89).

John Stott criticizes churches that have lost these dimensions of their mission.

Many churches are sick because they have a false image of themselves. They still do not understand who they are (their identity), nor for what they were called (their vocation). ... There are at least two images of the Church today. The first is the image of the religious club (or introverted Christianity). ... They consider themselves religious people who love doing things together. They pay their monthly payments, so they feel entitled to enjoy certain privileges. What matters to them is the status and advantages of being a member of the club. They evidently have forgotten the significant statement attributed to William Temple that the Church is the only society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members. ... Our primary responsibility however it is our worship to God and our mission in this world. (2005, pp. 268–269)

The Word of God challenges us to be the worshiper on mission in this world.

This matrix helps us to follow the life and mission of the Church so that it does not lose the objectives outlined by sacred scripture and at the same time does not disconnect its ministry from a concrete reality.

#### **1.8.4 Understanding Snyder & Scandrett's Thoughts:**

In the course of this study we have discovered that the construction of an assessment must not be made based only on Costas' thoughts since this could compromise some important aspects of the research.

Costas built a matrix based upon the church as starting point. Even though he used two great vectors in his analysis, one of values and another of practical actions, a third vector was missing. In order for us to analyze the data collected here, we need to understand the needs of those who are outside the church.

This is what we find in Snyder & Scandrett's work (2016) In their theological construction, they call these needs, "alienations from sin which need a healing that only Jesus can give but which have to be ministered by the church, the living body of Christ, so that all creation can be saved".

This idea was born from the writings of Francis Schaeffer who in 1970 described the four negative consequences of sin and the Fall as follows:

The fall, as the theology of the Reformation always emphasized, not only separated man from God, but also caused other deep separations. It is interesting that almost the whole "curse" in Genesis 3 is centered upon the outward manifestations. It is the earth that is going to be cursed for man's sake. It is the woman's body that is involved in the pain of childbirth.

There are other divisions. Man was separated from God. first; and then, since the Fall, man is separated from himself. These are the psychological divisions. I am convinced that this is the basic psychosis: that the individual man is divided from himself as a result of the Fall. The next division is that man is divided from other men; These are the sociological divisions. And then man is divided from nature, and nature is divided from

nature. So there are these multiple divisions, and one day, when Christ comes back, there will be a complete healing for all of them, based on the "blood of the Lamb" (Schaeffer, 1982, pp. 38–39)

#### **1.8.4.1 Needs Around the World:**

This concept of Snyder & Scandrett help us to understand the missionary plan of the church which involves four basic expectations as is outlined in the following (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, p. 113):

##### **1.8.4.1.1 Spiritual Needs:**

Alienation from God is something that can only be healed through the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

The relevant church is the one that understands that its mission is to lead people to be reconciled with God through faith in Christ. This is the urgent need of every human being. If a Church loses the essence of its spiritual mission, everything else will be irrelevant (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, p. 113–117).

##### **1.8.4.1.2 Psychological Needs:**

The same sin that alienated us from God also produced alienation within ourselves. It is a kind of inner psychosis, an ambivalence with the desire to do both good and evil; it results in worry, fear, guilt, and inner conflict. No one escapes from this type of alienation that is manifested in form of psychological, emotional, sociocultural and physical symptoms. These are not only emotional affections, but are the result of alienation from God and need to undergo a process of spiritual and inner healing that begins with conversion, through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It takes experiential form of the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself in sanctifying power during the course of the Christian's life with the support of the communion of the body of Christ within the Christian community (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, pp. 120–121).

#### **1.8.4.1.3 Social Needs:**

Sin separates us from each other. It began in the first human family, when man and woman blamed each other for their own respective sins. It was evidenced in the two brothers, Cain and Abel. In time, sin overtook all peoples and nations. The healing that God offers in Christ is more than merely peace with God. It is reconciliation, the “shalom” of God, which can and should be initiated by his Church, although the completion of this will only occur with the Second Coming of Jesus (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, pp. 117–120).

#### **1.8.4.1.4 Alienated Creation:**

Sin has affected man's relationship with both creator and creation. Because of this, the earth was cursed and still awaits its redemption ( Gen 3<sup>8</sup>; Hos 4.1-3<sup>9</sup>; Rom 8.20-22<sup>10</sup>; Acts 3.21<sup>11</sup> etc.) (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, pp. 124–128).

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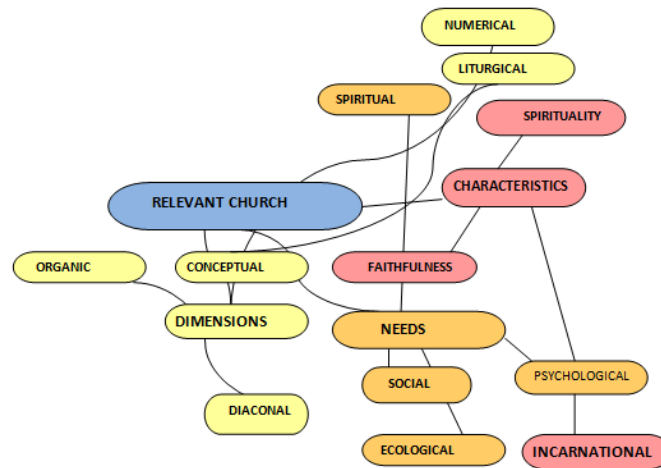
<sup>8</sup> Gen 3:17 (NVI-PT) And to Adam he said, Because you gave ear to the voice of your wife and took of the fruit of the tree which I said you were not to take, the earth is cursed on your account; in pain you will get your food from it all your life.

<sup>9</sup> Hos 4:1-3 (NVI-PT) 1 Give ear to the word of the Lord, O children of Israel; for the Lord has a cause against the people of this land, because there is no good faith in it, and no mercy and no knowledge of God in the land.2 There is cursing and broken faith, violent death and attacks on property, men are untrue in married life, houses are broken into, and there is blood touching blood.3 Because of this the land will be dry, and everyone living in it will be wasted away, with the beasts of the field and the birds of heaven; even the fishes of the sea will be taken away.

<sup>10</sup> Rom 8:20-22 (NVI-PT) 20 For every living thing was put under the power of change, not by its desire, but by him who made it so, in hope 21 That all living things will be made free from the power of death and will have a part with the free children of God in glory.22 For we are conscious that all living things are weeping and sorrowing in pain together till now.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 3:21 (NVI-PT) 21 Who is to be kept in heaven till the time when all things are put right, of which God has given word by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been from the earliest times.

Figure 2 Relevant Church



For the Christian who by God's grace in the power of the Holy Spirit believes in the scriptures, a significant part of salvation's benefits can be seen and experienced in the here and now, but its final consummation will only occur when Jesus returns. For that reason, a relevant church is one that looks at its transcendent and intrinsic mission simultaneously. Look at what is your responsibility here and now and await the Lord's promises by faith (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, p. 112).

That is why those issues having to do with nature, ecology and sustainable development are also a part of our mission as God's servant.

In light of the concepts of holistic mission delineated by these authors we built instruments to analyze the data of our research.

According to the graphic (Figure 2) we can see how several characteristics, dimensions and needs are connected to each other.

Although all of the characteristics intersect to some degree with all areas in a relevant church we can see that the characteristic quality of incarnation is directly related to the social, psychological and environmental needs while simultaneously relating to the diaconal dimension of the Church.

Thus, the church that becomes the hands of Jesus on earth, living its diaconal dimension, will be relevant because it will meet the social, psychological and creation care needs of its community

Figure 3 Quality of Incarnation

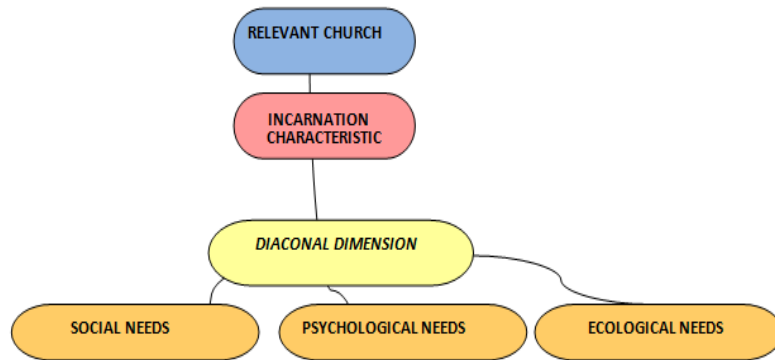
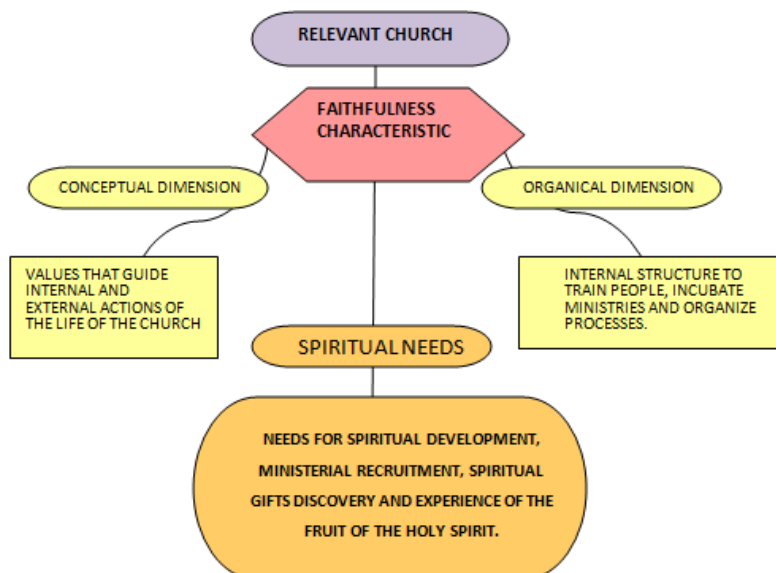
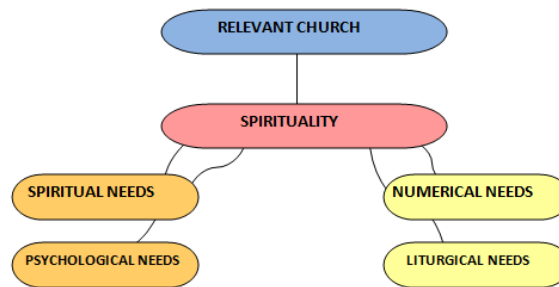


Figure 4 Quality of Faithfulness



Faithfulness relates to conceptual dimension, making the guiding values of all of your actions, both internal and external, grounded in the scriptures and fulfillment of the mission that Jesus left for his Church. The relevance of the church is evidenced by its fidelity to the purpose for which it was created.

Figure 5 Spirituality



The spiritual characteristic is directly related to the numerical and liturgical dimensions in addition to the spiritual and psychological needs of each person. It is the manifestation of the fruit of the spirit and the fullness of it that will produce the inner healing that we seek in Jesus.

With these purposes and tools at hand, we will now develop our research.

In the next chapter, we will review the sociological literature and history of the Church in Brazil. This review will enable us to know which are the elements of relevance that social sciences can observe in the presence of the Church in society, as well as if this sense is unique or if it changes throughout the history.

## 1.9 Conclusion:

I will begin the next chapter by giving an analysis of the social sciences and historical perspective seeking to determine the characteristics of a relevant church. At the same time, this research will help us to understand



how and why the church, throughout its history, has lost its primary role as the main formative and transformative agent of society.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION AND THE WITNESS OF BRAZILIAN ECLESIASTICAL HISTORY**

In this chapter, we seek to answer the question: What are the characteristics of a relevant church according to Brazilian History and Sociology?

### **2.1 A review of the literature in the field of sociology of religion:**

The question of the relevance of the church has been discussed since the 19th century, when Auguste Comte preached that as a result of modernization, society would evolve from the theological stage and the sociological sciences would assume the role of religion as the basis for moral judgements. (Dillon, 2003, p. 97)

As we shall see, other great sociologists, including and the father of psychoanalysis, Freud, were convinced that religion would disappear with the development of science and modern rationality. (D. Siqueira, 2008, p. 426–427)

Max Weber advocated what he called disenchantment of the world, that is, a growing process of secularization, that would negatively affect the attitude towards religion (1992, p. 439). Most of his interpreters argue that Weber believed that in the modern world, religion would maintain its space but it would be extradited from the public sphere to the private sphere. The secularized state would have the predominance of the public and would be legitimized by rational law and bureaucratic administration. In this type of society religion would persist as one of its spheres, but no longer with the same power as before; it would be restricted to the individual and family spheres. (Negrao, 2005, p. 28)

There is no doubt that an evolutionary reading of progress prompted various thinkers to imagine religion as an anachronism. Faced with the advance of science, technique and of secularization, its days were numbered.

(Ortiz, 2001, p. 62). Among them, renowned anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace, emphatically stated that the evolutionary future of religion was its extinction <sup>1</sup>. (Dillon, 2003, p. 97)

These and many other theorists of modernization understood that the natural consequence of industrialization, urbanization, religious rationalism and pluralism, would be the decline of religion. For that reason, in the late 20th century, Lilliane Voyé <sup>2</sup> defended the successful attempt by science to remove all form of anthropomorphisms from our thinking, transformed the traditional concept of God as a person into the belief in a power, a power of the spirit. Gradually, agnosticism and atheism would grow, and the religious practices would decline. (Dillon, 2003, p. 98)

Today, we find various sociologists that defend the Disenchantment Thesis.

Weber`s analysis was valid for a certain period of Western History: the apogee of rationality in a disenchanted world in which the sacred exiled. More recently we`ve been living in a period of the so-called return of the sacred, or God`s revenge, in which this world somehow re-enlivens itself. Even if we considered the the reality of the third world in general, and of Brazil

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Francis Clarke Wallace was a Canadian-American anthropologist who specialized in native American cultures, specially the Iroquois. His research expressed interest in the intersection of cultural anthropology and psychology. For more information:  
<http://www.amphilsoc.org/collections/view?docId=ead/Mss.Ms.Coll.64a-ead.xml>

<sup>2</sup> Liliane Voye is a specialist in sociology of religion and urban sociology. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the Catholic University of Louvain. She has developed an exceptional career in the same university, where she is a "Titular Professor", the highest degree of European Academic curriculum. For more information:  
<http://www.rec.ulaval.ca/rectorat/Honneuretdistinctions/docteurshonoriscausa/NotesbiodesDHC/notesbioDHC0102/Voye2001.htm>

in particular, in which the sacred persisted, it is undeniable that religion could be revitalized, in parallel with the first worldly re-enchantment. (Negrão, 2005, p. 33)

The advocates of this approach suggest that not only there has been a revival of religion, but also a disenchantment with science. They note in particular science's failure to fulfill all of its promises, as well as some of the damaging collateral effects of its development.

Even though there is an extensive defense of theorists about the effects of modernity on religiosity, consequently leading to the decline of the church, statistical and historical data have shown that the effects of urbanization, industrialization and pluralism effects have actually contributed to the growth of religious movements. This was evidenced by the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. In both The United States and In England, the cities were where revival began.

### **2.1.1 Reasons that determined a new sense of meaning of the Church`s relevance:**

It is interesting to note some of the reasons that contributed for the revitalization of the sense of relevance of religiosity.

#### **2.1.1.1 Religious pluralism:**

According to Lesslie Newbigin, one of the main things to be understood about the contemporary Western culture is that it is "pluralistic". This means that in our context, there is a wide variety of cultures, religions and lifestyles and that this plurality is deliberately celebrated, approved and appreciated. (1989, p. 1)

Recent studies have shown that contrary to what was thought about religious pluralism, "a society not controlled by an accepted dogma but characterized rather by the critical spirit which is ready to subject all dogmas to critical (or even skeptical) examination" (Lesslie Newbigin, 1989, p. 1) by breaking the hegemony of a single religion in society, a stronger religious

conscience resulted. This is due to the fact that membership became a personal decision, no longer a mere influence of the family context or even an expression of culture. This resulted in what we call religious nominalism, when one claims to belong to a certain faith without understanding it nor knowing why they belong to it. Religious pluralism forced many people to transform their faith into an object of personal conviction (Dillon, 2003, pp. 98-99).

The basis of this pluralist thought which strengthened religious adherence as a conviction of life and faith and strengthened the relevance of religion, unlike what the former sociologists thought, was defined by Newbigin:

Every supposed truth must be critically examined afresh. Old traditions and dogmas must be exposed to the acids of critical doubt, and only what survives is to be retained. The rest can be thrown away. That is the only safe path from the darkness of superstition, dogma, and tradition to the clear light of truth (1989, p. 28).

#### **2.1.1.2 The ethical need:**

Another reason was advocated by one of the classics of social thought, ethical necessity:

Durkheim, when discussing the supremacy of science over religion, argued that, in fact, religion, from an explanatory point of view, lost ground to scientific thought. However, because science was considered by him “moral without ethics”, that is, an interpretative universe unable to give meaning to collective actions, the potential of religions, as a form of orientation of conduct, of an ethical action in the world, remained entirely valid. (Ortiz, 2001, p. 62)

From this perspective, various social scientists, thinkers and theologians advocate the new relevance of religion for the possibility of building a global ethic that would help solve the world's problems.

Thinkers such as philosopher Karl Apel (Apel, 2000) agree with Durkheim, arguing that global problems should be equated using a basis of values that can be shared by all. Similarly, theologian Hans Küng (Kung, 1999) advocates basic rules of human behavior in all religions and can help build a global ethic.

For example, the Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Chicago in 1993, was promoted by the Catholic Church, in order to bring together members of multiple religious orientations. The statement that was drafted at that time is suggestive. I present here a summary of the same written by Ortiz:

The world today is in deep crisis: poverty, political corruption, unemployment, hunger, racial and ethnic conflicts, organized crime, anarchy in large urban centers, drugs, and the collapse of the ecosystem. In the face of this chaotic picture, it emphasizes some points, several of which I would point out: a) "that a better global order cannot be created only by conventions and framed by laws; and b) that rights without morality cannot last and that there will not be a better global order without a global ethic." As the signatories of the document assume that universal religions already have a set of common ethical values, the conclusion is the following: in the constitution of a planetary consensus, in the elaboration of moral bonds between people who share the same fate, these religions would play a fundamental role. (Ortiz, 2001, p. 68)

The declaration points out the fact that the legal institutions, in order to function in a fair and coherent manner, need a moral foundation stemming from transcendent, and therefore, religious values.

### **2.1.1.3 The effects of globalization:**

#### **2.1.1.3.1 The relation between the state, the nation and religion:**

It is undeniable that the advent of globalization has transformed the scenario where social events occur. In the beginning of modernity it was believed that the state / nation was the ideal place for modernization processes to materialize. However, in a globalized world, the relationship between nation and modernity is over, because the world overflows the existent boundaries, transforming the State, previously seen as a universally privileged place, into a small and limited locus. This weakens it, deprives it of power, and its capacity for action is limited in a context where transnational order decisions are increasingly more important.

Globalization fundamentally changed contexts, the way people and cultures perceive themselves, how people think, and the means available to reach them (Pocock, 2005, p. 24).

This change in the scenario open doors for the church, which previously had a transnational calling and now can act in a more comprehensive manner, with less constraint of the local forces. (Ortiz, 2001, p. 65)

#### **2.1.1.3.2 Religion`s new political role:**

For many the relationship between the Church and politics has been considered as unethical, since sociologists viewed the modern and secularized state as the promoter and manager of public affairs and considered religion as something to be restricted to the private domain. However, the process of globalization has favored religion by broadening its public influence, where religious norms generate commitments that are not restricted to the private life of the individual, but are the basis of collective actions. Due to the extent of religion, it acquires a political force that it did not previously have.

It is interesting to understand the extent of this influence in Ortiz's thinking:

If we understand power as potentiality, the ability to achieve certain objectives in certain concrete situations, in the contemporary world, religious institutions and the transnational companies, because they define themselves as “beyond borders”, have the potential that is favorable to them to act in a global scale (Ortiz, 2001, p. 67).

A reinterpretation of this political role as an integral part of the mission, when is associated with this sociological thought, as we understand that spiritually our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities that use political power and the worldview of a society in order to maintain a level of social injustice. Therefore, when proclaiming the gospel and defending the Christian worldview in a pluralist society, we contribute to the building of a more just society and fight a true spiritual battle.<sup>3</sup>

#### **2.1.1.3.3 Search for identity:**

Numerous authors have demonstrated that the issue of identity becomes crucial with the globalization process. The crisis of national identities paves the way for an explosion of ethnic identities, individual or global identities, built by transnational consumer channels.

This search for an identity reminds us what Durkheim understood by religion. He differed from Weber, who saw religion as a salvation enterprise. For Durkheim (Durkheim, 1970) the preponderant element was the solidarity that binds people within a church and affirmed that all religion is a place of memory and identity when it provides its participants with a common ground and reference in which identity of the group is expressed. He also believed that religious beliefs were “collective consciences that agglutinated what was once scattered”.(Ortiz, 2001, p. 62)

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<sup>3</sup> For a better understanding of this theme I suggest reading: (Lesslie Newbigin, 1989, pp. 198–210) e (Linthicun, 2000)



In this sense, the relevance of religion grows by its ability to aggregate people, create social bonds, link interests and coordinate collective actions, giving simultaneously, language, ideology, symbols and worldview (Ortiz, 2001, p. 66).

This is also the thinking of Lesslie Newbigin in understanding religion as an integral part of the identity culture of a given people (1993, p. 4).

#### **2.1.1.3.4 Symbolic capacity maximized by the media:**

The media contributes to the growth of globalization, making available to the churches a collection of resources which allow for a global reach. Examples such as: religious programming, online literature, theological education and the coordination of public activity help to reach places that are diverse and distant with an efficiency far superior to the past. (Ortiz, 2001, p. 66)

#### **2.1.1.4 Conclusion:**

The review of the literature concerning the relevancy of the church among the social scientists has shown that despite previous beliefs, there is now a revival of the search for faith. This is a result of several factors such as the disillusionment with science and secularism as a solution to the problems of humanity, the need for ethical axioms to delimit the state's actions, a social pragmatism that has been created by modernity and the effects of globalization which has altered the scenario by which the where and how of social relations occur. Thus, these elements must be taken into account when searching for the meaning of the relevance of a church ministering in Curitiba in the 21st century.

#### **2.1.2 The statistics:**

In academic literature, we can also find a great deal of statistical information gleaned from research done in religious communities. This data offers analysis of the issue of relevance from a negative point of view.

Many faith communities, especially in the United States, have noticed, for example, their difficulty in keeping teenagers and young adults committed to

the church. They have worked hard to try to understand the reasons for the loss of the church's relevancy for this particular audience.

Because we did not find similar documents in the context of the city of Curitiba, or even Latin America, we will use the data from the American surveys as contributions to be studied in our research. Therefore, our purpose is to summarize the most important data of this research so that, in the subsequent chapters, we can use some of the elements obtained in those surveys as a parameter and a methodology of comparative analysis in relation to what occurs in the context of the city of Curitiba.

#### **2.1.2.1 The unchurched American:**

In 1978 the Gallup Institute developed a survey of unchurched Americans and discovered that 46% of the Americans stopped participating in their local churches at some point in their lives. Since this phenomenon happened with greater frequency during adolescence the likely causes were:

A decrease of parental influence, because of the independence process;

A growing sense of the impression that the church had little to offer in terms of relevance of interest for teens.

They also found that the decline in membership in mainline Protestant denominations in America was due to the small participation of young adults in faith communities.

Roof e McKinney (1987) found that 59% of the unchurched in the USA were around 35 years of age and 80 % were under age 45. (R. L. Dudley, 1999, pp. 20–31)

#### **2.1.2.2 Church abandonment by university students:**

Caplovitz and Sherrow interviewed 33,000 college graduates and concluded that their exodus from the church was linked to several factors: a rebellion against the status quo, secularization and career focus. (1977)

Other researchers tried to discover the effects of higher education, especially secular schools, on religiosity. Their data revealed students who

demonstrated less religious commitment, unbelief and moral and religious relativity. (1999, p. 22)

In Brazil, research was conducted by a Brazilian university, Unisinos, in the cities São Leopoldo and Novo Hamburgo with High School students. This survey showed a trend among students in their last year of high school to have a diminishing interest in faith (Dick, Ferreira, & Cerveira, 2016, p. 48).

#### **2.1.2.3 Among Catholics, Southern Baptists and Methodists:**

Among Catholics, Southern Baptists and Methodists, Hoge and Petrillo affirmed that church attendance was related to parental influence, family pressure, the type leadership in the church's youth ministry and the quality of religious education. (1978, p. 359–379)

They also found that among Catholics young people leave the church between adolescence and age 20. The main reasons are non-rational and interpersonal, with a strong emphasis on feelings of belonging. (1999, p. 23)

#### **2.1.2.4 Among Wesleyans, United Methodists and American Baptists:**

Among Wesleyans, United Methodists and American Baptists, Laurent and Dudley (1989, p. 408–420) argue that the exodus of youth from the churches was related to non-pleasurable experiences with the church, poor involvement, uninteresting sermons, poor personal devotional life and religious restrictions on lifestyle. (1999, p. 24–5)

#### **2.1.2.5 Among Presbyterians:**

Hodge, Johnson and Luidens (1993, p. 242–255) surveyed Presbyterian churches and found that religious socialization during childhood and the cultural formation in religious schools were weak ties of religious involvement.

The strongest prognosis of religious commitment occurs when one observes conservative religious beliefs accompanied by recent family adult experiences such as marriage, divorce and having and raising children. (1999, p. 26)

#### **2.1.2.6 Among families:**

Wilson and Sherkat (1994, p. 150–151) assert that the highest risk of faith abandonment occurs among male children who do not have a strong bond with their parents and did not develop strong religious habits during their childhood. The greatest conclusion is that family is the mechanism of commitment to the church. (1999, p. 28–29)

This trend is also found in the Unisinos studies, where 53,3% of those interviewed affirmed that their family exerts great influence on their religious faith. (Dick et al., 2016, p. 43)

#### **2.1.2.7 Conclusion:**

In review the research, we can state that church becomes relevant for teenagers and young adults when their parents are not merely church goers, but are, in fact, committed members who intentionally transmit their faith to their children and maintain a positive relationship with them.

A second significant characteristic has to do with religious activities that develop loving relationships. It is obvious that regular church attendance depends upon the development, maintenance and nurturing of interpersonal relationship.

Thirdly, we see that relevancy is more easily perceived when the characteristics of the target audience, their needs, questions and language preferences are taken into account by those who are responsible for the religious activities.

We can also conclude that the need for a spirituality that is the fruit of personal experience, not merely the practicing of a tradition requires evangelism on the part of the church. It is through evangelistic activities that a church is able to construct conceptual elements and help in the formation of personal identity.

### **2.1.3 Social studies on the relevance of religiosity in Brazil:**

Social scientists, when analyzing Brazilian religiosity see that what Weber called the demystification of the natural order, a supposedly inevitable consequence of secularization, did not, in fact, occur in Brazil.

The notion of an enchanted world can still be seen in the Brazilian worldview. However, in spite of this, Brazilian society is highly secularized as well: there is a separation between church and the State. Administration is carried out through legal codes and secular executive bodies, without any decisive influence from religious groups. Science, technology and rational analysis preside over productive economic activities. Thus, we can affirm that Brazilian religiosity is a social anomaly of which the Weberian method is not able to fully account. As a result, a fuller explanation is needed.

The fundamental question posed by these scholars is: why has the experience of Brazilian secularization failed to reduce belief in the transcendent in the minds of most of the population? There are still no definitive answers, but several hypotheses have been suggested. Among those, I would like to highlight Negrão's:

My hypothesis explains this cognitive dissonance as being a result of our modern rationalization being, in itself, extra-religious. Notwithstanding the prior results of rationalization that led to greater social demystification/disenchantment, modernity was introduced with greater efforts by its agents, especially the state. Perhaps because of this in some episodes of the nascent republic - I am referring to Canudos and the Contestado - it was achieved through the power of arms and the military power of the army. But the state also knew how to act more subtly, for example, with the massification of the rudiments of rationality - reading, writing elementary math, procedures of scientific

knowledge. With the increasing universalization of the basic education system the state and its private allies, such as groups of producers of goods and services, national and international citizens, mass communication mechanisms succeeded in building a secularized nation, with the economy founded on the capitalist instrumental of rationality. But such rationality is relative, since it lacks the foundation of a truly secular mindset. Perhaps this could be the best reason why the middle classes and the well-educated and professional elites, performing functions related to the latest technology, feel attracted to esotericism, New Age discourses, and religious philosophies of Eastern origin? (Negrão, 2005, p. 35)

This polarity between modern thought and the maintenance of religious relevance, along with the search for the transcendent, requires that the general theories of sociology of religion be tested in the Brazilian context.

This task has been carried out specially in the large urban centers by cross-referencing census data and research carried out by social scientists. Even though there are no documents of this sort in the city of Curitiba, it is worth summarizing the main conclusions of a study done in the metropolitan area of the city of São Paulo, developed by the *Centro de Estudos da Metrópole*, the Center of Studies of the Metropolis (CEM)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **2.1.3.1 Transitive religious practice:**

The multiplication of religious alternatives and the transit of religious ideas and practices has generated religious practice which is more fluid and less faithful to a single religious system. This is more notable among young people

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<sup>4</sup> This study was coordinated by Ronaldo de Almeida, PhD in Anthropology from the University of São Paulo.

and adults from the lower and lower-middle classes in the large urban centers. (Almeida, 2004, pp. 15–17). Below is the comparative religious distribution data for the period of 1991 to 2000 from the São Paulo census, which illustrates this migration:

**Table 1**

**Declaration of Religious Affiliation in the metropolitan region of São Paulo (%)**

	<b>1991</b>	<b>2000</b>
1 Catholic	78,92	67,05
2 Traditional Evangelical	2,36	2,81
3 Pentecostal Evangelical	6,18	13,59
4 Kardecist (Followers of Alan Kardec)	1,83	2,24
5 Afro-Brazilians	0,69	0,41
6 Oriental Religions	0,97	0,75
7 New Age	0,04	0,05
8 Other	1,26	3,53
9 Non-religious ("Nones")	6,5	9,23
99 Non-declared	1,25	0,34
	100	100
<b>Total Population of RMSP</b>	<b>#####</b>	<b>17.879.997</b>

**Figure 6 Religious Migration censuses 1991/2000**

### 2.1.3.2 Characteristics of mobility:

The characteristics of this mobility points to the weakening of Catholicism<sup>5</sup>, as one of the axes of social organization. It also points to the diffusion of those practices deemed to be more spiritual, with a strong emphasis on emotionalism, and also an increase among those claiming no religious affiliation<sup>6</sup>. (2004, p. 17)

<sup>5</sup> Only half of those who said they were Catholic have strong ties with the church other than baptism, weddings and funerals.

<sup>6</sup> At first, it was thought that those who declared themselves as non-religious were secularist atheists. However, most scholars understand this expression in Brazilian context as those who neither attend religious services, nor are actively engaged with a community of faith, yet still maintain a religious disposition before the world, especially in situations of physical, emotional, familial and financial insecurity... Therefore, this data affirms an institutional disaffiliation process, without necessarily compromising religious or faith practices. (2003, p. 97)

### 2.1.3.3 Migration trends:

Migration trends point to the fact that Catholics<sup>7</sup> are a type of universal donors, whereas non-religious and Pentecostals are universal recipients. See the migration illustration bellow.

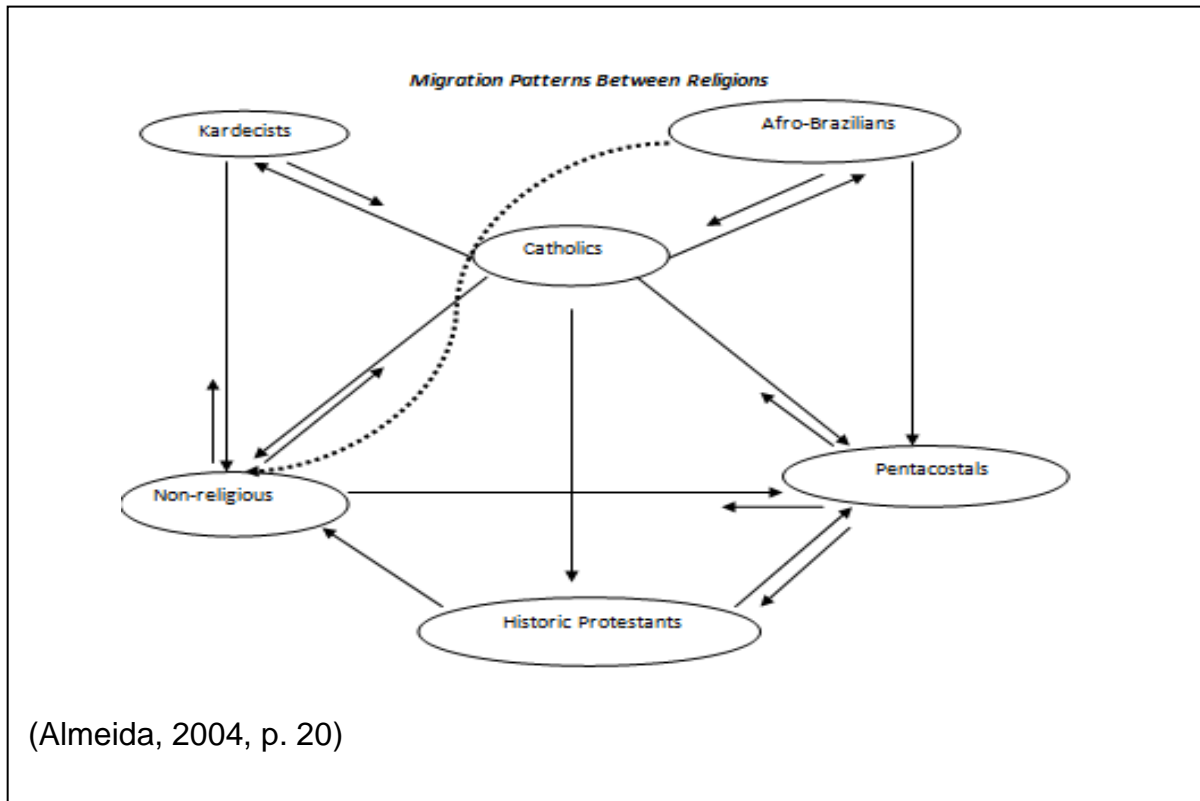


Figure 7 Migration Patterns Between Religions

### 2.1.3.4 *Evangelicals are considered to be the ideal religious people:*

The research revealed that evangelicals can be considered to be the ideal religious people; that is, their declaration of faith is in agreement with a uniform set of ideas, rituals, behaviors, world view. They demonstrate a well-defined self-identity and exclusive boundaries of belonging. However, this

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<sup>7</sup> Of the few that stated a claimed to have become Catholics, the majority of those who did so came from the group of the non-religious. Much of this “return” to the catholic church occurred via the charismatic movement.



kind of religiosity is incorporated with, and incorporates ideas and practices from other segments with which it is in constant competition (2004, p. 19).

#### **2.1.3.5 The Afro-Brazilian:**

Afro-Brazilians receive followers from the Catholic Church, but lose followers to Pentecostals and those the “Nones”. Curiously, there is no significant flow between Afro-Brazilians and Kadicists (2004, p. 19).

#### **2.1.3.6 Historic Protestants:**

Historic Protestants receive followers primarily from Catholic backgrounds and lose followers to the “Nones”<sup>8</sup> and the Pentecostals<sup>9</sup> (2004, p. 19).

#### **2.1.3.7 Relationships between migration and change of religious affiliation:**

Among the poorest populations, the evangelical churches have a dense network of relationships of solidarity and social engagement<sup>10</sup> that attract people from more vulnerable backgrounds. This is especially true of immigrants from the northeastern part of the country. This supports the idea that migration affects change of religious affiliation. (2004, p. 21–22)

#### **2.1.3.8 Solidarity networks in evangelical churches:**

Evangelical networks are beneficial in that they promote a sense of value for the individual, help develop a sense of appreciation in interpersonal relationships, foster positive self-esteem, aid in increasing an

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<sup>8</sup> A third of those who abandon Protestantism are among the non-religious, or “Nones”. Scholars believe that this is the fruit of rationalism applied to religion and leads to apostasy and/or agnosticism.

<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, this reflects a search for more emotional and cathartic experiences; on the other hand, it shows greater theological reflection, more or less moralism, environmental difficulties, cultural modernity and etc.

<sup>10</sup> The survey revealed that among the poorest who participate in an association of some type, about 70 % of those participate in a religious association. Thus, associativism among the lower economic classes is predominantly religious.

entrepreneurialism and a strengthen a sense of mutual trust and faithfulness<sup>11</sup>. At times, they operate, as trade networks that involve money, food, tools and services, human resourcing and job references, among others (2004, p. 21–24).

#### **2.1.3.9 Evangelicals leisure time spent in worship services:**

Evangelical churches offer alternative activities clamoring for the leisure time of their members. These churches supply their members with entertainment including groups that focus on music, drama, and sports, related to worship and religion.(2004, p. 21–24)

#### **2.1.4 Conclusion:**

This data collected in this research allow us to conclude that, instead of the church's sense of relevance diminishing, as predicted by the great social scientists in the past, the church's sense of relevance is actually increasing among Brazilians. The increase in religious mobility shows that people are searching for something more than merely belonging to a religious institution or professing a faith that represents their culture heritage. There is a deeper search for a transcendent experience, an encounter with God and with people. Their search for identity is based upon experiences and relationships.

We can conclude that relevance is revealed in the mutuality of actions where one is both the recipient of blessings (or benefits) while simultaneously being an instrument of blessing (or benefits) to others. The relevance becomes so meaningful, that people are willing to invest their leisure time in

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<sup>11</sup> These are not philanthropic programs like those offered by the Catholics and Kardicists; rather, this describes the reciprocity that exists between church members and pastors, symbolized by the biblical principal of helping a "brother in the faith" (members of the same congregation). Furthermore, many of these "brothers (and sisters) in the faith" may actually be related to one other through marriage within the church family. At times, family members become "brothers (and sisters) in the faith" as a result of evangelism efforts of the church. In short, there is often overlap between many of the family and religious networks.

religious activities or social activities with their others who are like-minded in their faith. These associations are obvious at many levels.

On the other hand, we can see that nominal and merely traditional religiosity, which does not evoke an experience with the Divine, does not create significant relationships, and is losing relevance. A rationalist faith, which distances the mystical aspect of encountering the Divine from the scope of practice of faith, is also losing relevance.

#### **2.1.5 Understanding the concept of relevance of the church from the social sciences perspective:**

In reviewing literature from the social sciences, we find that, although the theorists have affirmed the decrease of the church's relevance, the data has shown otherwise. The data attests to a growing sense of relevance of religious experience. This relevance is due to both the role it plays in the life of the individual as well as its influence in society in which it is inserted. Several areas of relevance are noted here:

The church shows itself relevant in its ethical ability to provide transcendent regulatory elements needed for value judgments necessary to sustain life and society;

The church shows itself relevant in its emerging political influence. Since it is no longer politically allied with the state, the church has become the social conscience, providing its member with values to fight for, and the goal of building a more just society. It promotes and sustains essential values in the midst of immoral secularization;

The church shows itself relevant in that faith provides a sense of personal and community identity; it also demonstrates the aggregating power of building meaningful relationships;

The strength of free association is characterized by the choice of faith through a transcendent personal experience where clergy and laity unite as ministers of the faith and join together for community action.

Perhaps the greatest lesson which is clearly obvious from the perspective of the studies in the field of social sciences is this: the church that is relevant is the one that has the capacity to readapt itself in its form in order to attract those who are seeking a transcendent meaning of life. They do so, however, without giving up their distinct content to the secularized world, and do so through experiential, relational, ethical, and practical faith. They do so while simultaneously being an object of and an agent for religious action.

## **2.2 Brazil's ecclesiastical history as a witness to the relevance of the church:**

The second area of science that refers us to our literature review is the history of the church in Brazil. This study will help us to see whether the sense of relevance of the church in Brazil is unique, or if it undergoes changes social dynamics change. It will also help us visualize those preponderant contours that are able to withstand time and social changes.

### **2.2.1 The relevance of the church during Brazil's colonial period:**

#### **2.2.1.1 Portuguese Messianic Ideology:**

Portuguese nationality was shaped by the reaction against the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula. The expulsion of the Muslim population was completed under a popular mobilization under the sign of the Catholic Church. The binomial pairing of Lusitanian culture and Roman Catholicism was established from the beginning. In other words, it was the efforts of both the sword and the cross; it was the belief that one could not evangelize without first conquering. (Silva, 2006)

Portuguese legends and traditions attributed a divine origin to the Lusitanian Monarchy. According to one such legend, a virgin said to Dom Afonso Henriques, founder of the 12th century Portuguese kingdom: "Because my son wants it (the Portuguese Kingdom) to destroy many enemies of the faith". Another legend claimed that Christ himself appeared in the battle of Ourique, confirming the Portuguese throne and making him the mouthpiece of the message of faith to all nations. (Silva, 2006)

Teachings cultivated and propagated mainly by the Jesuits let the Lusitanians to believe that Christ was the founder of the Portuguese Kingdom, and his mission, based on an interpretation of Daniel 2, was to be the fifth empire which would absorb the world, and be the temporary reign of Christ.

This messianic vision of the origins of Portugal shaped the mindset of the people and profoundly affected the entire process of colonization and Christianization undertaken in the colonies.

The concept of “Sacred Society” is a primordial element of the model of Christianity. From this perspective, the Portuguese colonial project is identified with the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

The donation of new lands to the Lusitanian monarchs and royal dignity was seen as evidence of the grace of God. Royal power, according to this view, emerged from the omnipotent divine power.

In this spirit, the defining element of Christianity becomes the conquered territory in its geographic expanse and not the evangelical transformation of humanity through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Both medieval Christianity and colonial Christianity represented political concretizations in Augustine’s “City of God”, where Christianity stands in opposition to non-Christianity. The way of implementing God’s Kingdom was through war. Their enemies’ losses, both in terms of body and in terms of property, was not only permitted, but also considered a duty (Silva, 2006, p. 31).

In this understanding of evangelical mission, there are three basic concepts: The first is that the land is the inheritance of God, be it in the motherland or in the New World; the second is the sacredness of the royalty, where the King rules by divine right and is a true representative of God; and the third is the divine election of the Portuguese people, chosen to build a Christian society, in order to accomplish the kingdom of Christ on earth. ·

Living in colonial Brazil meant being integrated into Portuguese Christianity. Consequently, this meant that they lived their lives according to the pattern established in the Luso-Catholic (Portuguese-Catholic) tradition.

In this sense, the church was relevant in conferring a messianic ideology of and conquest, where faith, nation, and conquest are preponderant elements.

#### **2.2.1.2 Royal Patronage:**

Within medieval understanding, the Pope was one who possessed spiritual and temporal authority over the globe as a whole, and he had the right to yield to whomever he wished. It is in this context that the Royal Padroado (Royal Patronage) emerged.

The origins of the *Padroado* (Patronage) system began around in the 5th century, when the faithful, lay aristocrats, began to be called upon to help in ecclesiastical administration. They were tasked with the responsibilities of building churches and chapels and encouraging the creation of associations and other religious tasks. This development continued until the medieval period when it then became the right of Padroado Régio (Royal Patronage). According to this system, it was the king's responsibility to implant the Christian faith in recently discovered lands. This regime is the result of colonization as evangelization (Silva, 2006).

In this system, the king was delegate of the Pope, having the power to send missionaries to the New World, to appoint bishops and to fill higher clerical posts, to build churches and convents or to authorize individuals to do so, to found parishes and dioceses, to subsidize the worship services, to pay clerical salaries, and to collect the ecclesiastic tithes (Silva, 2006).

The Royal Patronage contract was signed with the King of Portugal in 1454 and with the King of Spain in 1493. In the documents it is stated that the respective monarchs are given the right to invade, conquer, subdue and to subjugate all those people who were out of the Christian faith to perpetual servitude.

The ecclesiastic administration in Brazil was made by the Table of Conscience and Orders an organ directly related to the Crown. The clerics were government officials, paid by the government. The rights for controlling the Church given to the King were so great, that no papal document could be published in America without the consent of the Crown.

The Patron promoted the conscience between the governors and the governed, between missionaries and the laity. In that way, the work of the “expansion of the Empire” coincided with the propagation of the faith.

The secular colonial clergy filled chaplaincies in the mills, on ships, and at the entrances of the indigenous settlements <sup>12</sup>. Those who were not part of these chaplaincies and had a parish, were paid by the ecclesiastical tithes that the Crown collected and distributed through the governors. Thus, the people were dependent either on local lords or on the imperial system.

The ecclesiastic structure became subservient and religion was confined to the sphere of powerful families, who usually dictated the rules of conduct of clerics and the church. This generated a state of almost insolvency of the religion in colonial Brazil, due to indiscipline and degradation which affected the clergy (Silva, 2006).

During this period of history, the church’s relevance was purchased by the state and by the social elites; it was a system of social control. This distortion, in character and purpose, marked by clandestine scandals and the oppression of the masses, diminished the church’s relevance before the eyes of the

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<sup>12</sup> Among the facilities of the sugar mills, there was always a chapel which regularly maintained religious service. According to Priest Fernão Cardim, in a letter dated from the 16th Century, there was a priest among the sugar mill owners, workers and slaves, who was paid. Priest Cardim also affirmed that: “Priest Quirício Caxa and I preached sometimes in hermitages that almost all sugar mill owners have on their farms, and some support the chaplain at their expense, giving them forty or fifty thousand *réis* a year and food for their table”. (Iansen, 2014)

people. A type of mystical, popular Catholicism assumed the institutional role of the church.

Therefore, faith, as a spiritual quest, continued to be relevant, but dissociated from the clergy, it was led by the laity. Religious syncretism, religious festivals that began to carry syncretistic elements, demonstrated its value as hope in the face of misfortune and it provided a sense of community with experienced through the religious festivals.

### **2.2.1.3 The Jesuit missionaries:**

The Portuguese expansion was financed by the Order of Christ and the Jesuit mission. It was created by Dom Dinis (1279 - 1325) when Pope Clement V decreed a suppression of the "Order of the Templars", a medieval order whose goal was to gather soldier-monks to fight on the First Crusade (1119). Over time, it became a wealthy Order, serving practically as a bank for financing the popes.

The Order of Christ held the right of spiritual jurisdiction over the islands of the Atlantic, as well as the coast of Africa and India. The Portuguese colonies were seen as patrimony of the Order and the king presided over them.

Even though they were not the first missionaries to arrive in Brazil, the Jesuits were certainly the ones who marked the religious experience in the course of colonial Brazil. In 1549 the first six Jesuits, arrived in America along with the first general governor, Tomé de Souza (1549-1553). They laid the foundations of the colonial missionary church in Brazil.

As the first official missionaries of the Lusitanian Crown, the members of the Society of Jesus were the ones who imbued forced indigenous Christianization the most, representing Christ's soldiers in combat against the enemies of the Christian faith.

The terminology that Inácio de Loyola used when founding the "*Societas Jesu*" was reminiscent of the Spanish Army, as he himself was a soldier of Carlos V.



For the Jesuits, conversion meant Romanization. Conversion was closely related to the adoption of strictly European ways of acting and thinking. Missionary action, therefore, had two major emphases: to Romanize and to civilize!

The relationship between missionary and colonizer was not only marked by the alliance, but also by tension, because the missionary opposed the colonizer with respect to the enslavement of the indigenous population. This contradiction goes deeper during the Jesuit project of the reductions, due to their economic and military strength. This tension culminated with the expulsion of Jesuits from Brazil in 1759. The Portuguese settlers appropriated the indigenous considered to have been civilized during reductions (Silva, 2006).

In the Jesuit version, the church was relevant because of its ability to impose culture and technological advancements to people they considered inferior. The church as an agent of civilization, where faith and culture were two sides of the same coin.

#### **2.2.1.4 The Dominicans:**

The Dominicans and Montesino friars abandoned their swords and used preaching as an evangelization method. This, in turn, had deep effects in the conscience of social justice.

#### **2.2.1.5 The Franciscans:**

The Franciscans, on the other hand, fell in love with the indigenous culture and saw native peoples as innocents who should be protected, as well as their culture, for here was paradise on Earth. Their evangelization was based on enculturation, so they adapted to their culture, language and food.

#### **2.2.1.6 Conclusion:**

During this period, the church was not seen as a community of believers, but rather, as an administrative structure at the service of the State (Silva, 2006, p. 27), where the King is the employer and the church works for him as an agent of social control. The state pays for its services, ensuring the

clergy's support and the costs for expanding the faith, but the church pays its tithes to the state. Faith was compulsorily understood as one of the basic elements of colonization. They tried to do what they had never done before, that is, evangelize someone from a culture that is totally disconnected from Christianity.

However, in this context of having an official religion, an incipient church emerged, represented by pastors whose purpose was to minister spiritually to these new people. They were the ones who would mold the Latin American Catholic Church ecclesiology in the future.

The continuous conflict between the official Church and the incipient church marked the dichotomy observed in Latin American ecclesiology, where institution and faith have tremendously different connotations when it comes to theory and practice. This ecclesiastic thesis and antithesis creates a type of synthesis known as popular Catholicism, marked by syncretism and festivals, proclaiming hope in the face of misfortune and providing a sense of community experienced through the religious festivals.

## **2.2.2 The relevance of the church in the Republican period:**

### **2.2.2.1 The Roman Catholic Church context:**

It is interesting to see how, during the Republic period, how the thought of modernity permeates all religious movements. Catholics see the necessity to express their faith in a more rational and objective way. The end of the patronage means they will need sustain the institutional church, since, with the proclamation of the Republic, the Brazilian state becomes secular.

The Church perceived its detachment from the popular strata. Therefore, it initiated a movement of "re-Catholicization" for the country, since religion was in the hands of the laity (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 75–76).

The first step was to impose the notion of independence of both powers, from the Church and the spiritual, and from the state to the temporal.

Lustosa states that:

The civil government needs to provide for the temporal of the State; the Church is responsible for the administration of spiritual things; and it has all rights to claim its independence in the spiritual sphere, as it is the first to maintain and sustain as inviolable the independence of government in the temporal sphere. The State must, using reciprocity, respect the freedom of the Church in the administration of spiritual things, and not consume them (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 74).

The new catholicization began on April 27, 1892, through the Bull of Leo XIII, *Ad Universas Orbis Ecclesias*: when several Brazilian dioceses were created.

There were two main concerns of the Church to redeem its relevance in our context: the reform of the clergy and the reform of the Christian people.

The first sought the formation of a pious and holy clergy, who did not take office in politics. It also focused on theological preparation, since many seminaries, under the direction of the religious from Europe, were closed. This concern stems from the feeling of lack of pastoral care among the population. Relevance would be regained to the extent that the Church, through a pious and prepared clergy, cared for the hearts and souls of the people.

As for the Christian people, the fundamental concern was to distance the faithful from Luso-Brazilian Catholicism which was mystical and syncretic, and to guide them towards the practice of Roman Catholicism, with emphasis on the doctrinal and sacramental aspect. The reason for this was, "the people claimed to be Catholic, and received the sacraments, but did not know the doctrine of the Church" (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 77–78).

They understood that relevance would come when the Catholic faith ceased to be a mere cultural element and became a personal alliance based on a doctrinal conviction.

### **2.2.2.1.1 The matter of relevance in the context of Catholic Charismatic renewal:**

The Charismatic Catholic Movement began in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States, at the University of Duquesne, directed by the "Fathers of the Holy Spirit" foundation. In 1966, two lay teachers of theology from Duquesne, Ralph Kefer and Bill Storey, began a search to live spiritual experiences in the Pentecostal style, which led them to read the books "*The Cross and the Switchblade*" by David Wilkerson and "*They Speak in Other Tongues*", by John Sherrill (Melonio, 2005).

From Duquesne University the movement expanded to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, where the first participants were led by Ray Bullard, a member of the Assemblies of God and president of the Full Gospel Business Men's Association of South Bend. The experiences of these early charismatic Catholics led them to initiate a movement within the church in order to evangelize the baptized; in other words, they emphasized the preaching of the new birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit for those born in the Catholic tradition. The early theology was clearly evangelical and Pentecostal. He proclaimed conversion, not in the sense of changing religion, but of a new meaning to a merely nominal faith (Teixeira, 2005, p. 19–20).

A very peculiar characteristic of the Catholic Church is its flexibility to assimilate new trends without dividing. This happened with the Catholic Charismatic Movement which reached its apex in the 1970s. Over time, however, the Catholic hierarchy began to give some direction to the movement to become more Catholic (J. G. Gomes, [s.d.]).

In Brazil, the charismatic movement arrived in 1974, in the city of Campinas, State of São Paulo, through Jesuit Father Harold J. Rahm. The movement grew rapidly among Catholics, despite restrictions imposed by the Brazilian clergy, who never sympathized with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). Almost in clandestinity, it became practically a lay movement, since few priests supported it.

Today it is the largest practicing Catholic group and has won the support of the clergy, who sought alternatives to Catholic evasion, which in the last years has been 1% of the population per year. They had to adapt to various traditional demands, such as a greater emphasis on participation in Mass and the Eucharist and in the veneration of Mary.

When they began to be pressured, many left the Catholic Church and moved to evangelical churches. Most, however, willingly accepted the demands, trying to adapt their beliefs to the positions advocated by the Pope and the old hierarchy. Thus, part of the movement became spiritually cold and became a mere department of the Catholic Church, with the purpose of holding the believer within his own church and restoring his practices and beliefs, making him a practitioner of faith, and infusing a new pride of being Catholic.

For those wanting to be a more engaged part of the movement, however, the old and tiresome liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church was replaced and by a joyful Pentecostal evangelical worship; this was characterized by music, prayers, gestures, clapping of hands and a lot of other expressions of popular participation.

The use of the Bible by the CCR has become something more precious. The faithful are not ashamed to carry a Bible. Once an exclusive practice of evangelicals, now carrying a Bible has become something of great value to charismatic Catholics.

Prayer also experienced a great advancement for Roman Catholics, since in many cases rote prayers have been replaced by personal prayers that seek inspiration from the Holy Spirit and are addressed to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. But Mary still maintains a preponderant place in prayers too.

The effects of change can also be seen in the preaching, where the difficult message given by the "cultured Roman priests" is now replaced by a colloquial, easy and practical language uttered by priests, laymen and even women. The erudite sacred songs are replaced by popular choruses, filled

with much allegory, and easily memorized. The direct language style and use of the media, especially TV, give conditions for rapid expansion.

Young, good-looking priests who are often athletes, weightlifters, surfers, soccer players and singers, accompanied by many artists and entrepreneurs, help to build a new image of Latin American Catholicism, where the central idea becomes "Catholic pride" expressed through effect quotes published by the media such as "Thank God, I am Catholic, " or "I am happy to be Catholic" (Stefano, [s.d.]).

The question of relevance, at the height of the movement, rises from a search for a personal experience of faith with God. But secondly, it has become a marketing tool for the institutional Church, seeking to alleviate differences with competitors, update the liturgy, encourage participation of the laity, and maintain, through the veneration of Mary, a connection with the old way of being Catholic in Brazil.

The CCR is viewed with both joy and fear by the traditional Catholic Church, since the experience of contact between the laity and the sacred generates an autonomy of the institutionalized church. At the same time, there is a diversity of liturgies within the Church (Teixeira, 2005, p. 20).

Another danger is the ease with which religious syncretism takes shape in this movement, generating an amalgam of beliefs and practices of Brazilian religious experiences, as Teixeira states:

Some ethnographic works have surprisingly pointed out the occasional experiences of groups or members of the CCR who move through other religious traditions, or access fragments of other traditions, recomposing their religious map. One can see influences of the evangelical tradition (the encouragement of spiritual gifts, glossolalia, healing and exorcism), the Spiritist tradition (the belief in reincarnation) and neo-esoteric circuits linked to the New Age, as well as traces of

popular Catholic culture (worship of saints and Marian apparitions) (Teixeira, 2005, p. 20–21).

#### **2.2.2.1.2 The issue of relevance in the context of the Liberation theology movement:**

Liberation theology, in its preferential treatment of the poor, has its concept of salvific mission centered on the liberation of (or freedom from) social and political oppression. In this theological line of thinking, the church is relevant when it assumes the role of a socio-political agent of societal transformation.

The mobilizing agents were the Ecclesial Base Communities: small groups of people who, living in the same neighborhood or in the same villages, met with one another to reflect upon and transform their reality in light of the Word of God, motivated by their religious beliefs and Marxist philosophy. This occurred during the difficult years of the military dictatorship in Brazil. Inspired by the Paulo Freire's method of adult literacy training, a similar methodology was utilized which led from awareness to action (Casaldáliga, 2009).

Although it was an extremely popular movement in the 1970s and 1980s, it was persecuted by the state and stifled by ecclesiastical leadership, since political transformation involved not only society but also the two-thousand-year-old structure of the Catholic Church. Motivated by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), proponents fought for greater involvement of the laity and a more participatory decision-making process.

The movement was concerning to the US State Department as well. They saw liberation theology and its cells (Basic Ecclesial Communities - BECs) as representatives of a political doctrine - with a Marxist / socialist approach - disguised as a religious belief, anti-papal and anti-free enterprise. They saw the purpose of the movement as that of weakening societal independence in favor of state control.

Despite having played a relevant role in the redemocratization of Brazil, today it is a movement which is almost inexpressive. It has been de-voided of its relevance due to a number of factors. Some of these factors are: the bankruptcy of the Marxist utopia, Brazilian conjunctural changes, and reductionism of the transcendence of the faith to the mere socio-political movement (Casaldáliga, 2009).

The BECs that have survived the crisis have expanded their scope of work. Their focus is now on their political-social-religious awareness and the challenges related to culture, ethnicity, gender, ecology and interreligious dialogue (Teixeira, 2005, p. 21)

#### **2.2.2.1.3 Conclusion:**

The relevance of the Church in the republican period occurs among Catholics at three levels: institutional, political and popular.

In the institutional arena, the separation of church and state generated a need for the institutional church to readapt. The Catholic Church shifted from being a mechanism of state control of the masses, to a more directed attempt to try to be “church”. The process was one of Romanization through dioceses which included a breakdown from its subservience to power structures and a re-evangelization of Brazil focused on doctrine and dogma.

This reform affected not only the structure of the Catholic Church but also the clergy itself. The result was a need to regain a level of pastoral character, and to seek to influence people morally and spiritually through the example of a pious life. This change was a matter of life or death for the Catholic Church. If it did not regain its sense of institutional relevancy, it would not be able to sustain itself, since the Republic had lost the financial resources of the state and was now being supported directly by the faithful.

Recovering the relevance of the practice of the sacraments became a great source of financial sustenance for the Church. By charging for baptisms, marriages, funeral services and other religious services, financial support for parish priests and their parishes was raised.



In the middle of the 20th century, the church sought a new sense of relevance. This was developed by the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, which became militant in the challenge of both the new socio-political accommodation of the church and the strong presence of social injustice covered by the Brazilian military dictatorship. A new conception of popular church was outlined, where a reinterpretation of the Bible in the BECs, with an emphasis on Marxist and politico-militarist approach, sought the liberation of the social oppression of the lower classes. Being religious represented being a political activist, and faith became a revolutionary ideology.

It should also be recognized that some traditional evangelical sectors also sought a new sense of relevance in the political-religious movement. To the dismay of both Catholics and evangelicals, many of these lay or religious activists were denounced by church authorities who did not want to engage in open conflict with the state. The actions of the Catholic church, in turn, influenced the evangelicals, in their ideological determinations, dictated by the headquarters of their missions, most of which were based in the USA.

The revolutionary sense of the church's relevance soon declined, both as a result of changes in the Brazilian socio-political context and of the fall of the Marxist utopia worldwide; the repressive action of ecclesiastical politics was also a factor in this decline.

In its attempt to regain its relevance in the midst of a growing and highly competitive religious pluralism today, the Catholic Church today offers an alternative practice. It is a new form of popular Catholicism, highly syncretistic, developed in the light of its major competitors: Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal movements.

### **2.2.3 Protestant presence in the colonial context:**

Protestant presence in Brazil began in the 16th century with the arrival of the French when they founded the French Antarctica colony, known today as Rio de Janeiro.

Following that was the arrival of the Dutch who in the northeast of Brazil in the 17th century. The Dutch established strong catechetical work among the native indigenous peoples. These two attempts of colonization and implantation of the faith were Calvinistic in origin. Both the French and the Dutch were expelled by the Portuguese, not allowing the evangelical faith to remain in Brazil.

We should note, however, the beginnings of an Anglican presence in this period, due to treaties made with England by D. John VI in 1810 (Treaties of friendship, commerce and navigation) (Mendonça, 2005, p. 53).

### **2.2.3.1 Protestant immigration:**

The exodus from the Portuguese court to the Colony (Brazil) opened the ports to friendly nations in 1808. But it was only in 1824, two years after independence was declared, that Lutheran immigrants began arriving in Brazil.

Germans represented approximately 5% of the immigrants who sought a new homeland in Brazil. Over the course of one hundred years, 250,000 Germans arrived in Brazil. Currently, the number of German descendants on Brazilian soil is estimated at five million.

The profile of these immigrants, according to data registered at that time, showed that they were predominantly farmers, workers and skilled craftsmen, teachers and political refugees (Seyferth, 2000, p. 273–314). They were young people who sought to improve their way of life. During the second half of the 19th century, they played a very important role as journalists, politicians, teachers, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs (Gertz, 2001, p. 17).

These evangelicals, in their home country, would have been religiously affiliated with churches such as Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptist or perhaps even spiritual renewal movements, such as those among the Pietists and Moravians (Wirth, 2005, p. 68–77).

The so-called "Protestant Immigration" had, as one of its main characteristics, the provision of spiritual assistance to patricians and

descendants. There was no great concern for evangelism, since all forms of proselytism were forbidden. Thus, they showed no interest in propagating their faith; instead, they limited themselves to the practice of piety and worship in their native language (Mendonça, 2005, p. 53).

The early faith communities of this period were poorly structured and autonomous, without hierarchical ties, and independent of any authority outside the community itself (Wirth, 2005, p. 68–77). They were the fruit of a faith based on free association of the individuals. Therefore, they organized their communities and chose one among themselves as a pastor. In addition to performing traditional religious services (baptisms, weddings, burials), the pastor was also given the task of literacy. For this reason, many of these communities have the lowest rates of illiteracy in Brazil (Gertz, [s.d.], p. 17).

The Protestant religion saw to it that that members of their community were literate, for without this requirement it would be impossible to practice devotion. Singing hymns, reading the Bible, studying the catechism to be confirmed in the faith were all necessary elements of practicing their faith. Literacy took place, preferentially, in the German language.

German Protestantism was characterized by the fusion of religious and ethnic elements, incorporated into the German language which served as the liturgical language; to lose it meant “dechristianization”.

Another important fact is that they not only preserved German culture but also influenced the Portuguese-Brazilian culture of the regions where they settled. There were influential both in socio-political issues as well as in religious thought. This was due, in part, to the freedom and self-management of these communities of faith which were a solid criticism of the Catholic Church that was strongly aligned with and controlled by the empire (Reyes, [s.d.]).

The influence of Protestant immigration in the relevance of the church was linked to ethnic identity and preservation of a culture. Therefore, faith became a system of cultural festivals and social gatherings that gave the

religious community a sense of purpose, especially in terms of leisure and social interaction (Gertz, [s.d.], p. 18). To the extent that the children of immigrants married Brazilians, the church gradually it lost this function and, therefore, its relevance in this sense.

Another ethnic group along this same model were the English. In 1820 they settled in Brazil motivated by trade and services. Religious services were held in a church built in Rio de Janeiro. Later the presence of the English was observed in São Paulo, during the construction of a Railroad between the cities of Santos and Jundiaí (Mendonça, 2005, p. 53). In 1950 more English people arrived in the state of Paraná to work on the construction project for the city of Maringá. They were also very involved in the urbanization of the northwest part of the state of Paraná.

It is important to emphasize that, unlike the rest of Latin America, the English did not have a great influence during this period. This was due, in part, because the Lancaster Literacy method was not incorporated in Brazilian schools as it was in several Latin American schools, especially in Argentina.

Another group of this period were the North Americans who fled the effects of the American Civil War. They settled mainly in the state of São Paulo, where they founded two cities: Americana and Santa Barbara do Oeste.

But as with the Germans, these other groups experienced similar aspects of relevance and loss of relevance. This shows that the church as a missionary of culture, loses its contextual relevance in some generations. By contrast, we see that the establishing of schools and the construction of a system of education, parallel to those state-owned and administered by the community, has been preserved and remains relevant to this day.

#### **2.2.3.2 Protestant missions:**

In the mid-19th century a new type of Protestantism arrived in Brazil, focused on the evangelization of Brazilians. Therefore, it is referred to as Protestant missions.

This period coincides with the republican movement and the neoliberal thinking that was characteristic of this time period around the world. Protestantism presented itself as a renewing force, often allied with Freemasons and their liberal thinking. This is evidenced in the secularizing vocation of separation between church and state, in the liberal emphasis in education, as well the desire to help Brazil reach progress.

The missionary strategy of the various evangelical groups that arrived in Brazil was to create educational institutions where children would be educated outside the Roman influence. They would evangelize and educate the children of the Brazilian elites, impregnating society with the values of the evangelical faith.

Their relevance was felt insofar as they offered a solution to the difficulties families had in educating their children <sup>13</sup>, in the light of precarious public education alternatives and a high level of illiteracy. These schools were able to provide an affordable alternative because their missionary workforce was funded through mission agencies abroad.

Justin Spaulding, the first Methodist missionary in Brazil, mentioned by Duncan, reports on this:

Under the recommendation and request of some of my friends here, I opened a daily school ... Usually, it is believed that the establishment of schools of learning

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<sup>13</sup> Here is a short passage from a letter written by Reverend Boys, an English chaplain who lived in Rio de Janeiro for a long time due to his wife's illness: "There is a population of 300,000 people here that, with the exception of very few Europeans, in total darkness with nothing that can give them even a distant glimpse of liberation. A place that professes to be a Christian but does not even possess the weapon of holiness, since its own ceremonies are worse than those of the pagans. There are no schools and no Bible which are visible, except occasionally, here and there, in the homes of European merchants. Of course, this is too sad - should not our Christian world focus on this place (?) (Duncan, 2003, pp. 55–56)

on broad and liberal principles is one of the most direct means of access to the people of this country. There are many who value learning, and because they cannot educate their children here, they send them to other countries. If we could provide them this service, I believe that with the blessing of God we might approach them to render a great service, but the greatest service is to direct them to the “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (2003, p. 100).

Thus, the Evangelical Church and its missionaries were seen as people who contributed to the solution of the problems of the people with whom they worked. The contact with the children’s family made the deficient pastoral care of the Catholic Church more evident and the linkage of the mission to educational development, something more sympathetic to the times of modernity (Vedoato & Status, 2000, p. 15–20).

The high quality of teaching and the pedagogical renewal of these schools attracted the children of non-evangelical families. Some would be converted, and still others would be tremendously influenced, as was the case of the educator Gilberto Freyre (Strieder, 2002, p. 113).

Sunday Schools were powerful tools in the preaching and teaching of the Word. Initially, many of these encounters were held in the homes of those who were interested in studying the Bible. This allowed a lay person not only to hear the message but also learn to read and interpret the Word, with the help of both the missionaries as well as other lay people.

The call to free association, the freedom to read and interpret the Scriptures, the commitment to education and development, resulted in growth among all evangelical denominations. In addition, there was an increase in organizations that mobilized the work of evangelism and social ministries.

It was not a popular gospel, in the sense of popular Catholicism, but it made practical and effective use of the strength of all believers for the

advancement of the Kingdom, not just the work of foreign missionaries or the early pastors in this land. In fact, some of the laymen were invited by their congregations to assume pastoral roles and responsibilities, together with the missionaries, serving as bi-vocational pastors. Several of them were professors or prominent professionals in the city and used their influence to bring the gospel to others.

Another characteristic of relevancy among the Protestant missions' movement was the liberality demonstrated in the area of contributions for the advancement of the Kingdom. This was notably different from the Catholic Church which received subsidies from the state during the Colonial and Imperial periods and experienced difficulty in generating financial support necessary to sustain the ecclesiastical system during the Republic period. The Protestant pastors preached that the church should be maintained by the faithful. From the beginning, they personally and generously participated in building the communal goals of the faith. It is worth noting here what the publication, *National Missions Magazine*, published by the Presbyterian Church, dated October 1912 says about this. There is a photograph of the church building in Curitiba which appears with the following caption :

This building, the most beautiful of our temples, was built by the free offerings of the people. There were such generous offerings that the pastor had to tell several families who contributed to the church that their resources were needed at home. Principal among those most generous was the late Carlos A. Cornelsen. In addition to this noble believer and worker, the entire fellowship received the blessings associated with those who gave joyfully (2 Corinthians 9: 7)(Vedoato & Status, 2000, p. 28).

These and other innovative characteristics of experiential faith had an impact on Brazilian religiosity, causing many to question faith which was merely traditional, devotional and mystical.

Even without a change of religion, religious tolerance grew. Along with this growth, the possibility of finding errors in the doctrine, life and structure of the Catholic Church also began to be considered.

Evangelical schools began to spread the value of the Scriptures; people began to seek the knowledge of the Word of God. That is why we can find, in Brazil, many practicing Catholics who are daily readers of the Holy Scriptures.

However, the ecclesiological emphases of the missionary churches were often limited, in that many became a copy of the denominational practices of their countries of origin. This resulted in their organizing a Brazilian Church which was, however, disconnected from the culture and sometimes even from the people themselves. In this regard, Alberto Roldán states:

We could say that for many decades the ecclesiologies were directly related to the denominations transplanted to our countries. The form of “being church” means an adaptation to the denomination’s mother church in its respective country. This is how one can speak of “Baptist ecclesiology”, “Methodist ecclesiology”, “Presbyterian ecclesiology”, “Plymouth Brethren ecclesiology”, etc. For a long time the theological, ministerial and worship characteristics were copied from what the churches were in the countries where these denominations originated. (Roldan, 2003, p. 1)

This act of copying from an international model prevented a Brazilian ecclesiology. That is to say, it impeded the development of a Brazilian form of being church, with its theology and elements of Brazilian ministry and worship, emerge. I believe that this is one of the reasons why, after more than a



century of evangelical presence in Brazil, we are still in search of an ecclesiological identity for our local churches.

This reality has led to some tension in regard to dependence and autonomy of the headquarters of some missions' agencies. Although many of these denominations have achieved political autonomy, financially others are still not independent. This leads to a departure from Brazilian cultural and social reality. (Mendonça, 2005, p. 66)

In the postwar period, we see a search for social relevance among evangelical churches. This movement began among the young university students and seminarians who understood the realities that Brazil faced between the years 1950-1964, during what was known as the *social revolution*, and tried to understand the role of the church in light of this context. One of the leading figures in this movement was the American missionary Richard Shaull, a professor at the Southern Presbyterian Seminary in Campinas (Mendonça, 2005, p. 55–65).

This Brazilian movement, a result of the historical and political world which culminated with the revolution of 1964, was opposed by many. Some of its leaders were even expelled from their denominations. I believe, however, that a seed of it remained and germinated years later the so-called holistic missions movement, where the proclamation of salvation, the care of humankind as a whole, and social justice are seen as an integral part of the same gospel.

In this period, the relevance of the church could be perceived in the sense of its evangelistic mission. Conversion and eternal salvation are often confused; through the strength of free associations and self-management of communities of faith, the laity and the clerics have equal value. These communities represent an appeal to modernity.

I believe that we cannot ignore the relevance of the church in the social sphere with the creation of confessional schools and universities, evangelical hospitals, and the holistic care of the human being.

### **2.2.3.3 The pentecostal Movement:**

The Pentecostal movement throughout Latin America has become the greatest emerging religious force. In Brazil, the group with the greatest growth and influence is the Assemblies of God (AG.), representing about 50% of the Brazilian evangelical population. Therefore, in analyzing the influence and relevance of the Pentecostals in Brazilian religiosity, we will focus our observation on this group that originated in Belém do Pará with the arrival of two Swedish missionaries, Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg. Vingren and Berg, originally Baptists, migrated to the United States in 1902 and 1903 respectively. Both claimed to have received the gift of the Holy Spirit in 1909 (Oliveira, 2013, p. 148).

Pentecostalism, developed by the AG, was originally a fundamentally urban phenomenon. It had characteristics of a popular movement and was focused primarily on those belonging to the marginalized classes of society. It identifies itself as the Church of the Poor.

Mariano observes the ability of the Pentecostals to take advantage of contextual pressures in order to reach the heart of the masses.

Pentecostal churches knew how to seize and exploit effectively the socioeconomic, cultural, political and religious contexts of the last quarter century in Brazil. In this sense, it is particularly important to highlight the worsening of social and economic crises, the rise of unemployment, the upsurge of violence and crime, the weakening of the Catholic Church, religious freedom and pluralism, Brazil's political openness and redemocratization, and the rapid diffusion of mass media (2004, p. 122).

This practice involved a strong emphasis on manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit, such as healing, deliverance and miracles. But they also brought forgiveness, acceptance, love and companionship to those who felt

abandoned by society. At the same time, faith infused a confidence and a sense of possibility that led, through a strong work ethic and values, to a social and cultural upward mobility. They believe that the solution to all of society's problems is in the preaching of the Gospel.

The fact that they are not subsidized by international organizations means that local leaders have a voice and a space, creating an autonomy where they can create their own symbols and images.

Notable among these are:

- Baptism in the Holy Spirit - which promoted a democratization of gifts of the Spirit and a new sense of value and usefulness in the expansion of the Kingdom. All hope of solution or response was not dependent upon any other person or preparation, but rather the powerful intervention of God in human reality. The result is a search for a sanctification marked by very strict personal moralism, theological fundamentalism and literalism. It is also marked by a kind of anti-intellectualism and consequently a lack of formal preparation of pastors.
- Faith is a deeply relational expression, first with God and then among the brethren.
- The home is a place of prayer, not only for the immediate family, but for all the neighbors and relatives as well.
- Holiness, or piety, is a way of life, and the ministry of the blessings of God is the work of all. This is due to the democratization of spiritual gifts.

The religious movement produced by the AG churches has demonstrated the ability the church has to help urban centers discover their multicultural identity, finding ways to express their character with tolerance, respect and appreciation. Perhaps glossolalia (the phenomenon of speaking in an unknown tongue, especially used during religious worship), may have helped this process. Glossolalia, a Pentecostal practice, may have been confused

with several foreign languages that merged in large cities in the early 20th century, as a result of the great flow of immigration that occurred in Brazil.

These unique characteristics of the AG churches isolated them from other Christian groups, whether Evangelical or Catholic. But, at the same time, allowed for the development of an ecclesiology more in tune with the Brazilian reality (Deiros, 2007, p. 10).

In the Pentecostal movement, the church has become relevant in democratizing the gifts of the Spirit, making it possible for all to be instruments of God and missionaries of his kingdom. In this way, there is a sense of transcendent value that results. At the same time, a sense of belonging is experienced by foreigners and migrants from other regions of the country who come to the great urban centers in search of better living conditions. For these people, the church is the expression of their value, identity, family and influence.

#### **2.2.3.4 The Neo-Pentecostal Movement:**

Neo-Pentecostalism appeared in the Latin American context around the mid-1970s. Neo-Pentecostalism, also known as popular Protestantism, cultivated a new way of being Protestant; it focused more on the masses and their immediate needs for health, prosperity and love (Oliveira, 2013, p. 149)

The “Universal Reign of God” (1977, RJ), “God’s Grace International” (1980, RJ), “Evangelical Community, Heal our Land” (1976, GO) and “Reborn in Christ” (1986, SP), all founded by Brazilian pastors, are the main representatives neo-Pentecostalism churches in Brazil (Mariano, 2004, p. 123–124).

The theology of this movement reflects individualist fundamentalism and Pentecostal Arminianism, but breaks with the practice and customs that represent traditional Pentecostal holiness (Mariano, 2004, p. 124). It has a strong emphasis on the emotional and mystical, accompanied by teachings emphasizing healing and financial prosperity. It easily developed nuances of religious syncretism together with the traditional beliefs of its context.

Another prevailing theological element found among Neo-Pentecostals is the dualism expressed in the concept of spiritual warfare. The experience of faith is expressed in a mystical and cosmic confrontation with the demonic forces, where prayer, preaching and worship represent a true confrontation with the forces of darkness. This is proven by the dramatic manifestations of exorcism.

Worship experiences are true epiphanies and manifestations of victory in the face of obstacles, and represent a faith focused on daily life in the city, developing a flexibility of mind in the face of contradictory situations of life or conflicting interpersonal relationships. (Deiros, 2007)

The liturgy developed by the movement has its focus on the presence of God, with the expectation that this presence will be seen as an explosion of power among the people. In this sense, one does not talk about God, but speaks with the almighty God who reveals himself in his environment, which allows for freedom evidenced in manifestations of joy, corporal expression and music in the Latin American popular style. These encounters are on a massive scale and take place in spacious worship centers, with special effects lighting, and in some cases, accompanied by food, giving the worship experience the feeling of a big Latin-American party. This is considered to be an appropriate way of reflecting the culture and language of the people.

In terms of ecclesiology, the movement is very flexible and dependent upon the figure of a charismatic and authoritarian leader. But at the same time, they are authentic communities of the Spirit, more so than communities characterized by knowledge. The laity, through the manifestations of the charismatic gifts and other ministries, practice a sharing of power, thus resulting in an openness to all things new, both in terms of liturgy and practices. They also tend to demonstrate a certain repudiation of institutionalized religion.

Some scholars believe that the movement has grown out of a result of the inability of traditional churches to accommodate different social classes within

them. They also note an inadequacy between Christian practice and the needs of popular groups within congregations as one of the possible factors of growth. (Deiros, 2007)

The concept of preaching is viewed differently here as well, where there is a symbolic recovery of discourse. In traditional Protestantism, truth is a logical elaboration and people need to be convinced of that religious truth. However, in popular Protestantism the arrangement of the discourse is simple and magical in the sense that words by themselves have power. This is the reason it is not elaborative preaching, but rather preaching that is repetitive and testimonial.

The truth is experienced through the witness of visible events. The truth is factual and not demonstrative and the liturgy takes on a dramatic character. Faith does not think, it acts! And the largest and most influential pulpit of this movement is electronic media (Deiros, 2007).

It is interesting to note the analysis that Mariano's makes in this respect:

Unlike the churches whose programs emphasize the diffusion of doctrinal teaching, or transmit preeminent sermons or theological lectures, the *Universal Church of God* highlights the transforming power of God in the lives of men, exhibiting propagandistic testimonies of cures, miracles, interventions, and divine blessings of every kind. In addition, its electronic evangelism seeks to act as a transmission line for public worship activities, urging listeners to attend church services, events and campaigns. In this way, it aims to attract the listeners and viewers to the places of worship, the locations where they can effectively be persuaded that they need to be freed from demonic powers, that they need to have an encounter with Christ, that they should obey God and finally that they should remain faithful in

the church as a necessary condition for their securing salvation (2004, p. 130).

The relevance of the church in this movement is manifested through the help given to people so that they can live out their experience of faith. For them, faith is not just a tradition or a doctrine, it gives a sense of power and promotion to lower socio-economic classes; through the strength of their faith they are motivated to progress in socio-economic spheres, overcoming cultural stigmas.

Despite an explosive growth, especially among the lower classes, Neo-Pentecostalism has demonstrated some weaknesses which are dangerous to future generations. Evangelism is strong, but tremendously superficial in terms of guiding values of faith. This often results in ethical weakness, lack of prepared leaders, ecclesiastical isolationism, charismatic absolutism, and practices that distance the faithful from the New Testament vision of faith.

#### **2.2.4 Conclusion:**

When we began our historical literary review, we sought to understand whether the sense of relevance is a unique concept or whether it undergoes changes as social dynamics change. For us it became very clear that the concept of church relevance is something dynamic and depends upon various temporal and cultural factors.

Yet, this study also helped us to realize that there are certain characteristics that determine the relevance of the church that are applicable to in any age or social conditions. These characteristics are:

- the church's ability to offer a motivating ideology;
- the mission of helping people discover the transcendent meaning of life and their connection with God;
- the potential to produce a sense of identity and belonging and a sense of mission among its faithful. In this sense, a church may be more or less relevant as it democratizes the gifts of the Spirit and

makes the administration of the institution more flexible by including the laity in its management;

- Its political strength lies in the awareness of values and guiding principles that its faithful followers defend as the parameters of social justice;
- Its universal language allows connecting and giving a sense of community to people of different ethnicities and social classes, being a powerful instrument of social coalition in the cosmopolitan context of big cities.

The literature review in the context of Brazilian ecclesiastical history has helped us to realize that although the sense of relevance is dynamic and presents several different facets as society changes, there are immutable elements that are always readapted to the needs of the people. This holds true for any period of time, and in whatever ways or manners the church uses to reach its people.

On the other hand, it is clear that the relevance of a church is lost when it becomes a force allied with the state for social control. However, when it follows this harmful course, there are always movements of faith that occur with the purpose of returning to those elements of relevance that the church, as an institution, has abandoned.

In the next chapter, we will look at the main biblical figures, or images, found in the New Testament, that show the elements of the church's relevance. We will look first at what is advocated in the New Testament and later at the theoretical paradigms of relevance that theologians of different ages have identified.



## **CHAPTER 3: LESSONS OF CHURCH RELEVANCE RECOMMENDED BY BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL MODELS**

The fundamental question that we seek to answer in this chapter is: What lessons can we learn concerning church relevance from the biblical and theological models?

Although history and sociology try to provide answers to the search for a relevant church, they are not to be considered the sole authority upon which one builds the values system determinative the life of the church. A simple inversion of the ecclesiastical context of such principles, could result in an institution that loses sight of its spiritual mission as revealed in the New Testament. Or, even worse, such an inversion of principle could quite possibly result a mere caricature of what was originally designed to be “church”.

### **3.1. Distinguishing characteristics illustrated through the biblical images of the Church:**

The Church is described in the New Testament through a series of metaphors; Paul Minear, in his work, collects 96 of them (1961). It would be impossible to explore all the images of the Church in the New Testament in this chapter so we will choose some of them which we consider essential to infer aspects of Church’s relevance. And we shall avoid repeating elements which, although inherent to it, have already been mentioned in the description of other images.

#### **3.1.1. The Body of Christ:**

In 1 Cor. 12:27, Paul affirms: “Now you are the body of Christ, and every one of you the separate parts of it”. This image is used in the New Testament to demonstrate various practical aspects of the faith community.

##### **3.1.1.1. An organism more than an organization:**

The first lesson to be learned from this image is that the Word of God describes the church as an organism, rather than an organization.

It is natural that every human gathering needs structure and organization. But in the Bible, structure was not the most important factor to be considered. In the Bible, we see the structure developing even as the church develops, according to the historical, social and circumstantial needs of the moment the church finds itself in. Therefore, we can say that the structure of the church revealed in the New Testament was dynamic, not dogmatic.

In this sense, the Catholic Church has experienced, at times, a theological contradiction. This can be seen especially in the example where Pius XII stated that Christ's mystical body is identified with the ecclesiastical structure of the Catholic Church. (Dulles, 1975, p. 23)

However, the main characteristic described with this image, is that of a living organism, where the life in the Spirit, which we attain through faith in Christ, is illustrated through the many parts and functions in the body.

The relevance of the church is evident here in the spirituality that enables each person to have a living relationship with Jesus. This is something so deep and personal that it transcends mystically. Christ is the head, the absolute Lord, and his Spirit is the soul that gives life to this body. (Dulles, 1975, p. 22)

The church is not a mere set of dogmas and rites that we practice due to tradition or social expectations. It is a personal and direct experience with the author and finisher of our faith: Jesus

#### **3.1.1.2. The church: universal and local:**

The term is also used by the apostle in the sense of a local congregation (1 Cor. 12-14). It is also used to refer to Christians in general (1 Cor. 12:13), that is, all who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in Colossians and Ephesians, the image of the body denotes a divine entity made up of all the people who came to Jesus as Lord and Savior by faith, (Hawthorne, Martin, & Reid, 1993, p. 127) both those who are alive and those who have died. This is why the author of Hebrews talks about a great *cloud of witnesses* who, through faith, are all part of this body (Hb 12.1).

The visible church is local, but the invisible and eternal church is universal. Even though we may be far from the local church where we hold membership, we can fellowship with members of other local churches, since we are all part of the same body.

The distinguishing characteristic of the relevancy of the church here is its inclusiveness. There is a place for everyone; the only criteria to be included is personal saving faith in Jesus Christ.

### **3.1.1.3. Unity and diversity:**

Another aspect of this image is its capacity to show us the unity of the church, since we are all a small part of the same body; yet, at the same time, there is also a great diversity in this same body, since the different parts have different functions. The catalyzing element of this unity is the Holy Spirit who provides the energy for all charismatic actions (Sousa, 2012, p. 61).

Without unity there would be no body, but only a collection of parts; and without the individual parts the church would not be a body. This is Paul's theme in 1 Cor. 12: 27-27.<sup>1</sup> Great human differences are leveled through the grace that is produced the body (1 Cor. 12: 12-20).

The diversity of gifts, the diversity of ministries and the diversity of operations (ἐνέργημα<sup>2</sup>) described by Paul reveals the image of the unity of the trinity in the Church, that is the body. The beauty is not in the uniformity, but in the way the Head, that is Christ, gives life to this body which at the same time is both mystical and concrete. Christ moves every part of this body to perform His will on earth.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 12:27 (NVI) 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and every one of you the separate parts of it.

<sup>2</sup> “ἐνέργημα *energēma*; gen. *energēmatos*, neut. noun from *energēō* (1754), to effect. Effect, working. The suffix –ma makes it the result or effect of *enérgeia* (1753), energy. In the NT, used only in 1 Cor. 12:6, 10 of the results of the energy of God in the believer. Though *energēma* is translated “operations,” it is actually the results energized by God’s grace” (Zodhiates, 2000)

The church becomes relevant when diversity can become unity without turning into uniformity.

In a world of racial, ideological, cultural, economic, political and religious ghettos, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can see those who were irreconcilable become reconciled. This is what Paul taught in the letter to Ephesians and Colossians, when he affirmed that in Christ, Jews and Gentiles were one (Minear, 1970, p. 210–212).

Recently I heard an interview with a mother of two Coptic Christians who were beheaded in front of the television cameras for the whole world to see. She answered the following question: What would you do if you found the man who slaughtered your sons in the street? She replied: I would bring him to my house, offer him a cup of coffee and talk about Jesus' love. My sons are already with Christ, but he [the assassin] needs Jesus (Fayez & Kamel, 2015).

#### **3.1.1.4. Mutuality:**

The church is more than a political or social organization composed of people who wish to achieve the same goals (Sakenfeld, 2006, p. v1 661). It is a community of *charismas*, which literally means grace gifts. It is the living body of the Lord here on earth, where the head is Jesus and each part is unique but at the same time interacts, through the movement of the Holy Spirit, with all the other parts, producing an interdependence. All are unique, all are useful, all are indispensable, and each depends on the other (1 Cor 12: 12-27; Rom 12: 4-5).

Spiritual mutuality generates a sense of usefulness, meaning, grace and connectivity, since it happens in the manifestation of *charismas* (signs of grace). It makes people dependent upon one another, not for their social positions, financial resources or education, but for something that was communicated by Jesus. Apart from the body each one is incomplete, because individually one is lacking something that was distributed by the Holy Spirit to another.

The relevant church is one which embodies a spiritual democracy of *charismas* where all, through the grace of God, are both blessed and a blessing to others.

#### **3.1.1.5. Capacity for Growth:**

Another sign of relevance is the capacity for growth (Minear, 1970, p. 212–213) that this image reveals in Col 2.19<sup>3</sup>. This refers to the growth that is given by God to both the individual and to the congregation. This growth is manifested to the extent that every individual part, and the body as a whole, live out the principles of faith as explained by Paul in Col 3: 15-17

And let the peace of Christ be ruling in your hearts, as it was the purpose of God for you to be one body; and give praise to God at all times. Let the word of Christ be in you in all wealth of wisdom; teaching and helping one another with songs of praise and holy words, making melody to God with grace in your hearts. And whatever you do, in word or in act, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving praise to God the Father through him.  
(NVI)

We see this same meaning in another image, the image of a building. That image illustrates the building up of each and every community, helping members to grow in their faith, their knowledge of the word, moral values, the process of sanctification, strengthening them in the face of life's struggles, and helping the members of the community to position themselves in a structured society within the church or in another context.

One of the characteristics we share as humans is the desire to develop and progress. The relevant Church is one that grows as a community helping

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<sup>3</sup> Colossians 2:19 (NIV) They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

each individual to grow in all aspects of life: spiritually, emotionally, in familial relationships and other social contexts, etc.

#### **3.1.1.6. Incarnation of Faith:**

The figure of the body of Christ reveals to us that the resurrected one, who is seated at the right hand of the father, continues incarnate, acting on this earth through his body that is the church. That is why he is the head. We can only enter this body because we were baptized into it by his Holy Spirit; we can only serve in this body by means of his grace gifts. We become part of his body through baptism and serve in the body through the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is the incarnation of our faith, making it more than a theory and being witnesses of its truthfulness, by which we demonstrate who Jesus is, alive to the world and to each individual.

During the reconstruction of a German church in the post-war period, the local community decided to rebuild it using the remaining debris. Someone told the leader of the project that they could not use a particular image of Jesus because the hands had been destroyed. Contrary to what was expected, the master builder simply took a piece of wood and with a piece of charcoal wrote: "We are the hands of Jesus".

The incarnation of faith revealed in the figure of the body shows that we are the hands, the feet, the mouth, the eyes, the whole visible body of Christ on earth. It is essential that a sense of commitment, identity and response to local need exists wherever the church is inserted. One question must always be answered by the relevant church: What would Jesus want to do here?

#### **3.1.2. People of God:**

Another image that will help us to understand the relevance of the church is the image of the people of God. This is a rich image that in the biblical text is connected to a lot of metaphors of the church.

Before looking at these aspects it is necessary to understand that this figure has its roots in the history of salvation. The sacred authors understood that the church as the people of God is connected to the choice of Israel as

God's chosen people in the Old Testament. Further, we see that in Christ, as the elect of God, we have been chosen to be His people. (Minear, 1970, p. 81). This brings us to the first quality of relevancy of this image.

#### **3.1.2.1. Conversion:**

In the past, birth and circumcision were requirements for becoming part of God's people. Now, however, conversion alone qualifies us to become part of God's people. We can only become God's people if we listen to the call of God and respond by identifying ourselves with Christ Jesus by faith ( Rm 9.24-26; 2.29; Fl 3.3)

Peter makes this clearer when he calls them "God's special possession" (1 Pet 2.). The key element here is conversion by faith as well stated Van Engen:

When a person is called to be part of the "people of God" it means much more than to just go to the altar, burn incense and to begin to take part in worship and adoration. Our understanding of conversion must be broadened. Conversion is the total change of those who previously were not the people of God, but became the missionary people of God, the active and serving body of Christ. (1 Peter 2:10) (1 Pedro 2:10).(Van Engen, 2004, p. 166)

A church is relevant when its members are the result of a living faith that leads them to a change of mind through an unconditional surrender to Jesus.

#### **3.1.2.2. Identity:**

Each people group has its own identity, in terms of language, culture and/or ethnicity. This is also true with the people of God. This identity is expressed in the law of God, which is no longer written on tablets of stone, but rather, written upon their hearts of God's people (Rom 2: 28-29; Heb 10: 16-17)

In a world where daily we see people struggling to understand their identity, a community of faith is a place where Christians joyfully live out their identity as God's people, without becoming a isolated “ghetto”. Here, one relates to the world around them, serves and loves others. This type of environment is certainly extremely relevant and will help people find, in Christ, the frame of reference for their own identity.

#### **3.1.2.3. Faithfulness:**

Just as a Jew understood that he ought to be faithful to his people, so the Christian is called to be faithful to the new covenant (Bowland, 1999, p. 285). This covenant was signed in the blood of Jesus, and if people feared God's judgment in the old covenant how can they not take seriously the new covenant which came at such a heavy cost to our Savior? (Heb 10: 28-29).

In a world where people shy away from formal commitments, there is great admiration for those who have the courage to be faithful in the commitments they make. We yearn for others to also value the making and keeping of commitments.

#### **3.1.2.4. Proclamation:**

Peter makes clear the purpose for which God has made us his people:

<sup>9</sup>Mas vós sois a geração eleita, o sacerdócio real, a nação santa, o povo adquirido, para que anuncieis as grandezas daquele que vos chamou das trevas para a sua maravilhosa luz;<sup>10</sup>vós que outrora nem éreis povo, e agora sois de Deus; vós que não tínheis alcançado misericórdia, e agora a tendes alcançado. <sup>4</sup>

Proclaim the majesty of Him who has called us out of darkness into the light. A church is relevant when it fulfills its mission that is to proclaim Jesus as Savior.

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<sup>4</sup> 1Peter 2: 9-10 ( NIV)



Some churches lose their relevance when they dedicate themselves exclusively to doing good deeds that others are already doing and yet fail to do what only the people of God ought to be doing. They alone are qualified to testify what Jesus has done and is doing for them.

The proclamation tells us about a savior who has brought us out of the darkness of sin, eternal death and even the influence of the evil. It is not simply philosophical, even if it is doctrinal; is experiential and something that we can testify to. The people of God are witnesses to the lost of this world, those whom God is calling to salvation through Christ.. (Jn 15: 26-27) <sup>5</sup> For this reason, He made us all priests, ministers of God in this land, a missionary people of God, without distinction between clergy and laity.

The word “laity” must be used in its biblical sense “the People (Greek laos) of God”; with distinction in terms of purpose, function and way of ministering, but without distinction as to sanctity, prestige, power, or commitment to the missionary activity of the membership.(Van Engen, 2004, p. 165)

There is no other way to be more relevant than to help people come to know God, to be forgiven and transformed by grace. This is the reason why He made us his people.

When thinking about the importance of this theme Van Engen writes: Mission calls us to a radical reexamination. If mission is part of the essence of the Church’s nature as the body of Christ and the people of God, then it ought to be at the top of the list (1991, p. 100).

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<sup>5</sup> John 15:26-27(NIV) <sup>26</sup> “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

### **3.1.3. Community:**

There are a number of biblical figures that highlight the church as a community, and each of them emphasizes different life aspects of this community. Some of these aspects can help us to understand the church's sense of relevance, both to the individual and to society. For that reason, we will look at some of them here.

#### **3.1.3.1. Community of Saints**

The Church is identified as the community of saints in 100 different biblical passages in 18 different books of the New Testament (Minear, 1970, p. 136). They point to a group of people who identify themselves with Christ and were called by him to be saints (1 Cor. 1: 2). For that reason, the church depends on the holiness of God and this is what it shares with the world (Heb. 1: 15-16, Heb 2: 11, Jn 17:19). Other images are also used to describe this reality, for example, the temple of the Holy Spirit, a holy nation, etc.

In the action of God who purified us by the blood and sanctified us in his holy spirit, he bestowed to his church grace gifts so that his holiness, through his people, could result in the common good.

To be holy means to act as a saint, reflecting the character of God with compassion, meekness, patience, forgiveness and love. It is a non-legalistic ethic, but one which is embodied and also communal (2 Cor 7.1; Rm 12.1; Cl 3.10).

The relevance of the church in a relativistic world is to be the guardian of divine ethics among men. This is not to be done as a legalistic imposition, but rather with the possibility of internalizing values and practices that can bless both the individual as society as a whole. That is why they are called salt of the earth and light of the world.

#### **3.1.3.2. Community of believers:**

Another figure is described as the community of believers, sometimes translating *πιστοῖς* as believers (Cl1.2).

This is the community in which the faith we already have in Jesus is strengthened, this strengthening produces boldness (Acts 4) before the enemies from within and enemies from without. Here too, we pray and praise God, and God manifests his grace and power (Acts 4: 32-33) (Minear, 1970, p. 140).

The relevance of the Church described here lies in its ability to propagate, maintain, strengthen and experience the faith that is embodied in people and in the community.

We are constantly confronted by our faith in certain places and historical moments, and even, at times, persecuted. But, the community of faith is refreshing and encouraging; it challenges others to believe in the God of the impossible, to renew hope and to focus on the eternal purpose of God. It helps others to understand that in shared humanity it is possible also to share the victories of faith, because the presence of Jesus in this community is tangible and contagious. This is why the Bible affirms the importance of a Christian community and reminds us not to abandon the congregation of faith (Heb. 10.25).

#### **3.1.3.3. Community of Justice:**

The Bible describes the Christian community as a community of justice. Because we were justified by Jesus, our righteousness does not come from ourselves, but it is the fruit of the grace of our Lord Jesus. Because of him we were called to practice righteousness (1 John 3: 7) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8: 4). Since we understand that if we are part of the kingdom of a just God, righteousness must be in us (Rom. 14:17), and not only this, but we will be blessed if we become the advocates of justice on this earth in the broadest sense (Mt 5: 6). Consequently, our justification in Christ and sanctification in the Holy Spirit makes us servants of righteousness on this earth (Rom. 6:18) (Minear, 1970, p. 144–148).

The relevance of the church reflected in this image is the church's mission before the oppressed and wronged, as well as its untiring work for justice in an

unjust society. We see several examples from history of Christians and religious communities, that even amidst criticism and persecution, some leading to the point of death, have made positive impact in the building of a more just society. A notable example worth remembering is the life of Martin Luther King. King, along with countless other brothers, attended their churches sang hymns, boycotted segregationist buses, marched in front of dogs, and without any violence, led to the overthrow of unjust laws impacting the society of their time.

#### **3.1.3.4. House and Family of God:**

The Bible describes the Church as the family of God (Eph 2:19) and the house of God (1 Tim 3:15, Heb 3: 6, 1 Pet 4:17). It is the community of the children of God (Mat. 23:9), the fruit of Jesus' mission (Jn 1:12, Jn 11:51-52).

This image has a strong appeal to communion; this is evidenced in that we are called brothers and we are summoned to be fraternal in our suffering, empathy, humility, hospitality, generosity and love in all its implications.

A relevant church expresses this type of communion in the relationships it encourages and promotes. To be welcomed, to be important to someone, to have a sense of true belonging and not just mere existence in that environment, to be supported in pain, to celebrated in victory, to understand one's value to God through the love of brothers is something so distinct and welcoming that is rarely found in other contexts. A church that is able to incorporate this kind of communion in its DNA will certainly be extremely relevant to those who participate in the life of the church.

#### **3.1.3.5. Serving Community:**

One of the biblical images resurrected in contemporary theology is the image of the Church as God's servant in the world (Dulles, 1975, p.95-110). It does not serve God only when it proclaims the word, but when it gives continuity to the ministry of Christ on earth (Lk 4:18-19). As Bonhoeffer said: "The church is only church when it exists for others" (Bonhoeffer, 1967, p. 203).

This is clear when Jesus proclaims his eschatological sermon (Mt 25:31-40) where he affirms that as we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, take care of the sick, and look after the little ones of this earth, those who have neither power nor strength (Moltmann, 1993, p. 128–129), we are doing this for him. Jesus also taught this principle through parables like that one about the Good Samaritan.

This value was deeply absorbed by the early church and we can see it in the book of Acts (Acts 6). In the book of James, we see that the early Christians had a clear understanding that living by faith needed to be demonstrated to the world through acts of service by the church (Jas 1:27, 2: 17-18).

The church demonstrates its relevance when it leaves its spiritual ghetto, and as missionary of love, enters in the neighborhoods of the society in which it is placed.

A few years ago, I, along with seven other pastors from the largest churches of Curitiba, were summoned by the commander-in-chief of the military police of my state for a mission that would be ineffective unless he could count on help from society at large. He said that he had sought other organized social groups to help him, but all of them denied assistance, since the mission was to take away the slums of the city out the hands of the drug traffickers. He said that he could send a contingent of the military police force into those places to expel the traffickers, but if no one took on a role of transformation nothing would really change. He called upon churches because he realized that they were already in those places and could be more effective in helping those people.

The servant church is the one that goes where others are reluctant to go; it is one that arrives armed with love, not weapons, and with the transforming power of Jesus. It is relevant because it makes a real difference.

### **3.2. Distinguishing characteristics of the church illustrated through theological literature:**

A review of the relevance of the church in theology is an extensive undertaking. For this reason, we decided to limit the scope of our study presenting a selection of theologians who represent different historical periods with a notable influence on the concept of church and its missiological vision.

Our goal is to find supporting evidence in the history of theology for the creation of theoretical paradigms of relevance for the church.

#### **3.2.1. Augustine and “The City of God”:**

The reason why we decided to include the thought of Augustine expressed in the work "The City of God" in this paper is due to the longstanding impact of this work in Christian thought. Long after his death, one can still see the evidence of a political Augustinian ideology <sup>6</sup> that would influence the social structures of the middle ages as well as puritanical thinking of society.

##### **3.2.1.1. The Historical Background of the work:**

In 413, Augustine began his work, *City of God*, concluding it in 426, four years before his death. His motivation for writing such a work was the invasion of Rome by the Visigoths in 410.

To the pagans, the fall of what they considered to be the eternal city, had no other explanation than the adoption of Christianity and the abandonment of

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<sup>6</sup> “Augustinianism: After St. Augustine, the topics of the city of God and the earthly city became a creature that was freed from the creator, producing the ideology of the political Augustinianism that came to confuse the city of God with the institutionalized Church, something that was never admitted by Augustine, who even admitted that the *civitas diaboli* also circulated within the Church. Thus, from the pope Gelasius and Saint Isidore of Seville, arises a certain type of theocratic thought that generated the submission of the temporal power of the kings to the spiritual power of the Church and that reached its peak with Egídio Romano. (Maltez, 2003)”

the gods. When Augustine decided to write this book, he did not respond to a generic audience, but to the pagans. His interlocutors are living, concrete people, Roman refugees who arrived in Africa fleeing the invasions; they are known people with whom Augustine used to talk with about the views of the Roman intelligentsia. They were, in general, pagan officials of a Christian state. To these people, the dogmas of Christianity either were irrational or were already in the pagan tradition. So why convert? To believe in dogmas as incarnation and resurrection would be the same as believing in ghosts.

This is the scenario that Augustine faced and led him to pose questions such as: Why does evil exist? What is the biblical view of history? How can one help pagans understand the collapse of their civilization?

### **3.2.1.2. The two cities of Augustine:**

Augustine is the first Christian author to develop a Christian philosophy of history which he defines as: the period in which the drama of redemption is being staged. At the beginning of history is the Fall and in conclusion, the Final Judgment. Between these two events the most crucial of all events occurs - the entrance of the eternal God into time as a man, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his consequent ministry, death, and resurrection. God, then, is vitally working in and through history. (Santos, 2012)

The City of God is the heavenly Jerusalem and no earthly city can be compared to it; this is the eternal city and not Rome. The city of God is invincible and will continue to triumph and fulfill the will of God. It is guided by and loved by God, especially marked by humility, and finds its highest glory in God. Its beginning is in the heavens, even before the existence of the material universe. Earthly cities can rise and fall, but the city of God remains forever and conquers all. (Santos, 2012)

The city of man is founded upon the love of self, glorifies itself, and is against God. It has its origin in the rebellion of Satan and the other fallen angels. The different natures of the two cities can be seen in the different characteristics of its two first inhabitants: Cain and Abel. Cain was an

inhabitant of the City of Man, whose "desire is against him" and "dominates" (Gen. 4.7). He then murders his brother, and desires to rule alone, building his own city. Abel, on the other hand, "was a pilgrim and stranger in the world," belonging to the City of God. He was predestined by grace, chosen by grace, by grace was a pilgrim here, and by grace a citizen from there.

Through the course of the history of these two cities, when they stand side by side, God is working to deliver men and women from the first city and make them part of the second. Although the ultimate citizenship is in the City of God, we cannot at present identify people according to it. God foresees. We do not. The sinner may be a saint of tomorrow, and vice versa. Professed members of the Church on earth will end up in hell. Outsiders will end up in paradise. The City of God, by the grace and power of God, will eventually replace the earthly kingdoms in the heavenly city on the occasion of the second coming of Christ. And until then, the City of God will be a hidden spiritual realm that exists whenever and wherever the will of God wills it to happen. The final separation will occur when, at the Last Judgment, the City of God will enter into eternal joy, and the City of Man will be hastened to hell. No earthly society or human institution can, however, be fully identified with any of these two cities, because they pervade all of humanity, past, present and future. Augustine, then, rejects any sort of fusion of the Kingdom of God with any particular human society. The central idea of Augustine is: the City of God is not affected by the decline of the Roman Empire, because



this city, strictly speaking, is not of this world (Santos, 2012)

The tragic fall of Rome is interpreted by him within God's sovereignty that allowed the city to grow and serve as a means for the propagation of the gospel. Now God made Rome follow the fate of all human kingdoms receiving the just punishment for their sins and selfishness, Rome would never be the city that would satisfy the human heart. Only the city of God could do this. No mere human institution can. Only the City of God has perfect order. Christianity offers no comfort or success in this life, but inner peace and an eternal destiny. Therefore, while the unbeliever loves what is in the world, the Christian loves God.

In spite of his eschatological vision, he understood that each member of the City of God certainly has his historical responsibility that begins in intercession and proclamation. As such, he was able to be grateful to God for Rome, and to pray for Rome's remaining citizens in their paganism. "Let them experience a spiritual birth, and let them pass on with us into eternity." The end will come. Only God and his kingdom are eternal. That is why Christians should firmly hold to their hope in God. But its historical role was not only this. Christians could not remain insensible to the sufferings of those around them. They should be instruments of God and his city especially in those times of crisis. Augustine understood the power of the testimony of love that good actions produce, so he urged Christians to do what Christ ordered and this way would be responding very well to the accusations of the pagans.

Augustine was able to see that the collapse of the political and social infrastructure of the Empire was not simply a historical event. He offered an anchor with his biblical view that history is God's workshop. For the people of God, that suffering had redemptive purposes. Augustine defended and exposed, therefore, the sovereignty of the reign of Christ in history. The

kingdom of God is eternal; his triumph is certain; and nothing can stop it! Sharing such triumph is a great privilege a human being can enjoy. And even in his death, in the context of a destroyed social order, Augustine held a firm hope of the celestial kingdom and the resplendent "City of God." In the middle of his last fights, huge and affirmative, he expected *"the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God"* (Santos, 2012).

In conclusion, two cities are two ways of living life in time. To live according to the flesh or according to the spirit are two ways of realizing human existence. They are, in a sense, two vocations, two ways of being human; they explain the love of God and self-love. These two forms of love, these two vocations, generate two distinct ways of building coexistence among human beings. "Two loves built two cities, the city of God and the city of man. The earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self." (Agostinho, 2005, p. XIV, 26)

### **3.2.1.3. Historical Implications of Augustine's Thought for the Relevance of the Church:**

Throughout the history we have seen that Augustine's vision gave rise to antagonistic thoughts.

#### **3.2.1.3.1. The City of God on Earth:**

The first historical implication of Augustine's theology saw the possibility of building the City of God here and now in two ways: through the church subjugating the empires or through city-states governed by Christian principles. For these the mission of the church is to implement the values of the Kingdom by the political power coming from the fusion of the Church-State.

This was the predominant thought, both in the middle ages and in the early days of reformation. Yet, it failed to construct utopia, because according to Augustine, the City of God and the City of Man are fixed in time and are characterized by two different loves. And even if they live under the same dictates these loves will reveal totally different peoples. Thus, history has shown that the Kingdom cannot be institutionalized.

#### **3.2.1.3.2. The City of God in Heaven:**

A second historical application of Augustine's theology and completely antagonistic to the first is the eschatological view that the Church's only mission in the world is to proclaim the gospel. Promoting a kind of disincarnated and decontextualized faith, almost a cultural ghetto, without connection with the suffering and demands of the people to whom it ministers.

If the City of God is only heavenly and the earthly city is doomed to weakness and judgment, then it does not matter if we work for peace in the earthly city, since the world will only continue to proceed from bad to worse. That being the case, it is better to concentrate on salvation of souls and allow the chaos to grow.

Thus, for the followers of this thought the church demonstrates its relevance through the proclamation; its concretization is in the eschatological kingdom. This line of thinking has caused the church to move away from social questions, even the most obvious, and become like a monastery without walls, completely disconnected from the reality and cries that surround.

#### **3.2.1.3.3. City of God in the City of Man:**

A third historical implication is based on Augustinian dualism. According to Augustine, the City of God was part of the Earthly City, it is not seen as something separate, yet founded and ruled under the God's Sovereign values, while at the same time very different from the Jewish theocracy or Roman Constantinianism.

The City of God is here on earth the city of virtue while the City of Man is the city of addiction.

Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all (Agostinho, 2005, p. XIV, 26)

These two wills that divide men, these two loves that constitute two cities have a very clear social dimension. They demand an incarnated spirituality of the church in order to make a difference in its day and time and to be a witness of God in history

Although he has not deeply probed this question, Augustine makes clear that proclamation and action are part of the City of God and coexist in time with the City of Man and carries out a mission that is both transcendent and immanent within a given social context.

That is why the church in the city must be the City of God in the City of Man that proclaims the centrality of salvation and eschatological judgment, but also works for peace, justice and love for all. The church cannot love only itself, otherwise this love would not be the type of love that builds the city of God in us.

The relevant church is seen in two worlds: the transcendent, from which emanate the values of faith and the certainties of eternity, and the immanent

where it carries out its mission of proclaiming eternal hope, which maintains the guiding values of life and example of altruistic love which represents and incarnates.

### **3.2.2. The Relevance of the Church in Calvin's Theology:**

The Protestant Reformation was an eminently religious movement linked to the spiritual dissatisfaction of the faithful. They found no opportunity to manifest their faith, nor spiritual nourishment in the theological, moral, and spiritual decay of the Roman Catholic Church.

The main objective of the Reformation was the return to the Holy Scriptures. This was especially important as revelation had been replaced by reason.

The starting point is not man, but his dignity to have been created in the image of God. And the church's mission is to positively proclaim the gospel of Christ by bringing life transformation, worship, and doctrine in the light of the Word of God. (P. Siqueira, 2009).

It is in this context that Calvin develops his concept about church and its importance in society.<sup>7</sup> Following in the steps of Augustine, he is concerned with showing the tension and the relation between the two poles of his ecclesiology: the invisible Church, which is spiritual and eternal, composed of all the elect; with the visible Church: a local congregation which is a mixed body composed of wheat and tares. (Calvino, 1985, p. 22–27,33)

The institutional church can be recognized as true through the manifestation of some distinctive marks: the correct preaching of the Word and the faithful ministry of the sacraments (Calvino, 1985, p. 53–63), which should result in sanctification as the process and goal of the Christian life. Thus, the context of sanctification is the visible church, in which the elect participate in the benefits of Christ not as isolated individuals, but as members of a body, part of the "holy community". (Alderí Souza de Matos, [s.d.] )

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<sup>7</sup> These ideas are presented in Book IV of the Institutes.

For Calvin, the relevance of the church lies in its mission to be mother and school. (Calvino, 1985, p. 28–32)

The church is the mother of all believers because it brings them to the new birth through the Word of God. It also educates and feeds them throughout their lives. This maternal character of the church is seen especially in its ministration of the sacraments.

The church is also a school that instructs its students in the path of holiness.<sup>8</sup> This instruction is present throughout one's entire life and also targets rebellious students, hoping that they will be transformed one day.

The church has relevance within the framework of the society in which it is placed. Calvin rejected the Anabaptist concept that the church should isolate itself from the surrounding society and culture (Calvino, 1985, p. 455). The relationship between the church and the world includes both tension and interaction. Calvin's understanding of God's governing civil authority and Christ's sovereignty over all creation, not just the church, led him to defend the church's participation in society. Since Christ is Lord of all human existence, it is the duty of the Church to give attention to social and political issues.

His mission was to take the city, "from darkness to light," in order to make it the city of God. Thus, the church's social mission was to conquer and transform the world based on the Word of God.

The Reformers understood that the Gospel should not be tied to dogmas or purely ecclesiastical realities, but rather be accessible to the ghettos, slums, and even the palaces of our world. God has a purpose for the world.

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<sup>8</sup> According to Augustus Nicodemus the didactic ministry of the church "was to be exercised through its pastors and teachers. It consisted in public and private instruction, through sermons and individual guidance, concerning the biblical teaching on the administration of the goods granted by God to the State and to the individual. In other words, Christian Stewardship "(Nicodemus, [s.d.], p. 3).

Men are called to live the experience of love in an ethical community in order to glorify his name on earth (P. Siqueira, 2009).

For Calvin, the relevance of the Church was demonstrated in four distinct but deeply interconnected fields: spiritual, didactic, political, and social.

According to Calvin, the church has a role to play in the political field. He understood that it was the church's role to pray for the constituted authorities (1Tm 3.1-2). It was the church's responsibility to warn the authorities when they forgot their divine duty, abused their power, or committed injustice, either actively, or passively, as when they turned a blind eye to injustices against the poor, weak and oppressed. Failure to warn the authorities of such actions was seen as connivance and noncompliance with the political mission of the church (Nicodemus, [s.d.], p. 4)

After his time in Geneva, Calvin used his organizational and legislative skills in construction of a new city, which would serve as inspiration for other Christians in various places. (Faria, 2009)

But in general, he understood that Christ' kingdom should manifest itself ideally through godly civil rulers. The magistrates should maintain civic order and religious uniformity. However, church and state have separate and autonomous spheres of action. Christians should obey the rulers who oppress the church, praying for their welfare, because they were instituted by God. (Alderí Souza de Matos, [s.d.] )

These values spread throughout Europe and resulted in the rise of a nonconformity and puritan attitudes. Many Christians who were persecuted because of their beliefs crossed the Atlantic to establish in America a society founded on nothing less than the implantation of the kingdom of God on Earth. (Faria, 2009)

In addition to its political ministry, the church responsibility in the realm of social ministry. This is directly connected to the care for the needy and less fortunate. This ministry is based its social ethic according to the biblical premise that all the gifts of creation belong to God are destined to for the

purpose and use of mankind. Therefore, the community must distribute the resources given by God for the common good. It is inexcusable that some have abundance and others are in need. However, this must occur as an expression of Christian solidarity and generosity and not as mere obligation or legalism; it must occur as an act of compassion, spontaneity and liberality (A. S. Matos, 2004).

André Biéler makes an interesting observation about how Calvin's doctrine dealt with this subject:

In God's plan, therefore, the unequal distribution of wealth among persons does not seek to arbitrarily favor one group of persons to the detriment of others. This inequality, on the contrary, intends to provoke the continuous redistribution of goods from the richest to the poorest ... the motor of the circulation of wealth is love, capable of provoking the disinterested donation of goods that the rich makes to the poor. In the Gospel approach, the rich is the one who is in a privileged situation in relation to his neighbor, whatever the volume of his wealth. We are always wealthy towards someone. The rich man therefore has a providential economic mission: to communicate to the poorer part of his wealth, in such a way that the poor man ceases to be poor and he ceases to be rich. On the other hand, the poor himself also has his spiritual mission: he is destined to be close to the rich, the one who, on the part of God, encourages the rich to dispose of their assets helping them free themselves from slavery to money(2009, p. 32–33).

The search for the common good as the greatest good is the main idea of Calvin's social thinking. Each person must participate in the building of the



City of God; that is, helping to bring about of the kingdom of God among men (Gomes, 2002, p. 7)

Contrary to how it might appear, the reformer did not advocate paternalistic assistance. He valued work as the usual means of providing for the support of the individual and the family. He considered business as a legitimate way of serving God and working for his glory. He saw the circulation of money, goods and services as a concrete form of communion of the saints, and argued that those who engaged in business should aim to help the poor and the rich. Loitering was prohibited by law: foreigners who did not have the means to work should leave Geneva after three days of their arrival. The vagabonds of the city should learn a trade and work or face the penalty of imprisonment.

He also advocated some intervention by the government for the protection of the common good, so that “men breathe, eat, drink and keep warm” (Calvino, 1985, p. 453). He and the other pastors in Geneva interceded before the Council in favor of the poor and workers by raising wages for workers, reducing working hours and creating vocational courses for those who wished to enter the labor Market. (Ferreira, 2005, p. 7).

### **3.2.3. The Relevance of the Church in Friedrich Schleiermacher's**

#### **Theology:**

Schleiermacher regards religion essentially as piety, which he defines as a feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher, Mackintosh, & Stewart, 1999, p. 12). This feeling is universal and can be recognized by anyone who has a minimum of introspection (Schleiermacher et al., 1999, p. 13).

Piety is a constitutive element of human nature and its religiosity. For that reason, it is necessary to express it in a social way, since the pious person seeks fellowship with others who have similar religious feelings (Schleiermacher et al., 1999, p. 26). Schleiermacher realizes that the church, as a community, consists of people who share the same religious views (Mannion & Mudge, 2008, p. 108–109).

Schleiermacher follows Luther's thinking by seeing the church as a community of believers united by their relationship with God, and institutional structures as secondary, although necessary (Doyle, 1996, p. 469) .

For him, the church is the promoter of this piety by being the place of religious communion and the essence of community of faith (Mannion & Mudge, 2008, p. 109–110).

The new life of each individual springs from the community as an agent of faith, while the life of the community springs from no other individual life than that of the Redeemer (Schleiermacher et al., 1999, p. 525) The Holy Spirit is understood as the promoter of the unity and fellowship of the Christian, a moral personality, his common spirit (Schleiermacher et al., 1999, p. 535) Each community has its own special form of piety - its set of experiences, beliefs and practices - that makes its faith distinctive.

Therefore, the community of faith is in constant self-renewal<sup>9</sup>, brought about by religious self-consciousness and the spread of the emotions of faith. The contextual limits of the previous generation and other faith communities serve to limit, organize and systematize the community of faith. The result produces an understanding of that to which individuals belong: this he designates as church .(Schleiermacher et al., 1999, p. 29)

His concept of church allows us to infer that it is relevant because it is both the place of and the promoter of a transcendent experience by means of the Redeemer. It is the community of those who identify with a self-awareness of their own faith together in free association with other followers.

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<sup>9</sup> He names this self-renewal "palingenesis", a purification of the corrupting Church. See what he says: "New ambassadors from God will be required with exalted power to draw the recreant to itself and purify the corrupt with heavenly fire, and every such epoch of humanity is a palingenesis of Christianity, and awakes its spirit in a new and more beautiful form."(Schleiermacher, 1893, p. 251)

The great contribution of this theologian was his ability to observe that the relevance of the church is maintained in future generations by the church's ability to self-renew without becoming syncretistic with society. This is accomplished by allowing herself to be critiqued by previous generations, by other communities of faith and by the Holy Spirit, one's moral conscience, and also for having certain unchangeable elements which he calls the foundations of faith.

#### **3.2.4. The Relevance of the Church in The Jürgen Moltmann Theology:**

The relevance of the church and its theology in today's world is one of the concerns of this theologian, motivating him to write a book exclusively about this subject, *God For a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*" (1999).

Moltmann understands that in order to discuss relevance one needs to understand and critique implicit theology within our modern worldview. He refuses to fall into the trap of pluralistic argument, which assumes that theology and faith are limited to the particular religious society without any meaning for society as a whole. (1999, p. 2)

The church will be relevant if understands that the center of theology is the Kingdom of God, which will require a public, critical and prophetic proclamation based upon hope in God. (1999, p. 5)

The ideologies of our time have failed in generating new hope; their social, political, ethical and ecological perspectives are chaotic as well. This has caused a crisis of confidence never seen before: - In the future, because we do not know whether there is still any future; - On earth, because it has turned into a rubbish dump; - In mankind, because he has shown that he is not good by nature, as we previously believed, and we have to live with our ancient heroes who have proved themselves mass murderers; - In knowledge, which we thought would be our power, but which proved to be our lack of power. (1999, p. 16–17)

The sum of our uncertainties generated a distrust of God. We lost him and he left us and what was left was the chaos of suffering that we ourselves caused. But worst of all, despite everything this we remain unmoved.

It is necessary to change the fundamental values of society, to develop a new praxis, a new understanding of mankind and an alternative economic system. (1999, p. 15)

The church, as an agent of the Kingdom of God, will be relevant if contributes to the construction of this new value system. Moltmann's proposed actions for a relevant church involves the following:

**3.2.4.1. A return to God, to one another and to life:**

The mission of the church as an agent of God's Kingdom is to help humanity discover the Christ who lives with each person (1999, p. 18), The Barmen Theological Declaration (1934) states, in its fifth thesis, that is the mission of the church to bring men's mind to the Kingdom of God, his commandments and righteousness, including responsibilities to both rulers and those they rule. (1999, p. 220)

**3.2.4.2. Helping society to recognize the equality of all mankind:**

The message of a relevant church should lead society to recognize that every human being is created free and equal. That equality in a social sense implies social and political justice. Without justice there is no peace between men and nations. (1999, p. 21)

**3.2.4.3. Working to promote creation care:**

Our world needs to move from the economic age to the ecological age, leaving the anthropocentrism of the Western world behind and adopting the understanding of God as the center of the universe. The church cannot merely be concerned only with the salvation of the soul, but must also be concerned with the salvation of the cosmos, and specifically the earth. (1999, p. 225)

**3.2.4.4. Rediscovering the Kingdom in the church:**

The church can only act in a relevant way at this time if it is able to rediscover the Kingdom of God within itself. This is accomplished by

identifying the mature congregation in spiritual terms, so that it can be an agent of these values in all fields of society, through the sharing of gifts. In this way, we can see a church truly aligning itself with the Kingdom of God. (1999, p. 219–222)

#### **3.2.4.5. Rejecting the church's being reduced to a "commodity" of the market economy:**

The great problem of the church today is no longer one of church and state, but rather church and marketplace.

The church will not be relevant if it allows questions of faith to be seen as a commodity driven by market economies or as a provider of world market services. The church must not allow the economy to determine the measure and value of all things, including human dignity.

The church needs to announce the message of grace that gives worth to mankind and contradicts the values of the marketplace. (1999, p. 223)

#### **3.2.5. The Church's relevance in Latin American Theologies:**

##### **3.2.5.1. Liberation Theology:**

The first line of Latin America's representative theological thought is the liberation theology. For obvious reasons of time and space, we will not make a complete analysis of this movement, but we will try to look at the ideas that influenced the Church's understanding and its relevance.

##### **3.2.5.1.1. Ecclesiological applications of Dussel:**

Enrique Dussel in his fundamental hypotheses of the ethics of liberation (1984, p. 249–272), does not explicitly mention the word church or the construction of an ecclesiology as such. He does, however, introduce the subject of the ethics of liberation through an application of a hermeneutic of suspicion to the works of Barth, Tillich and Niehbur.

Reviewing the ethical assertions elaborated by Karl Barth in his work *Barth's Church Dogmatics*, Bartian Christology can be interpreted on the basis of a concrete socioeconomic praxis in which the poor is the place of the

epiphany of God in Christ and it is God's favorite place to call humanity to justice. (Villamil, 2007)

Thus, Dussel makes use of the dogmatic proposal drawn by Barth for the Church, but adds to it a series of ethical concerns about the role of the church in society, such as:

Does the church have anything to do directly with poverty?

Is marginalization and poverty a direct concern for the church?

Does the church work alongside the state, in cooperation with the state, in responding to the problem of evil and poverty?

According to Dussel, answering these and other ethical concerns applied to the church will help us to reflect ecclesialogically and help us to build a pertinent and relevant church in Latin America. In the context of a consumer society, a capitalist economy and neoliberal government, such a church would emphasize its practical mission of social and economic reordering, even if by subversive means to the poor and oppressed. (Villamil, 2007)

#### **3.2.5.1.2. Leonardo Boff and Basic Ecclesial Communities:**

Another perspective of liberation theology is the proposal presented by Leonardo Boff of an "ecclesio genesis": an ecclesiastical alternative that seeks to reinvent the church through Basic Ecclesial Communities. (2008)

He proposes a church that is made flesh among the suffering people, a church that becomes people among the poor. This is its relevant mission.

The new element introduced by Boff is the ecumenical characteristic of these BECs. Yet, his understanding of ecumenism is a review of what had been proposed earlier by Karl Rahner. Where injustices are suffered by the poor, the church is anonymously among them, being church, being birthed in and among them. (Villamil, 2007)

Boff does not classify the word church, but incarnates it, relativizes it in terms of its historicity in the world. Ecclesio genesis is, therefore, the result of the praxis of the incarnate God who came to free the oppressed, the poor and the excluded.

### **3.2.5.1.3. The ecclesiological reflection of Álvaro Quiroz:**

According to Quiroz, the relevance of church occurs in the observance of four indispensable components for the understanding of an ecclesiology. They are: intentionality, self-awareness, understanding of reality and praxeological affirmation. (1983)

He develops these four components through a dialogue with the ecclesiological thinking of both Hans Küng and Jorgen Moltmann.

In the intentionality component, the challenge is to intentionally to highlight ecclesiology. Expanding on Küng's thoughts about the church in relation to society and its ties to a long-abandoned past, his systematization leads him to interpret what the church was in the beginning and what it should be today. The result: the relevant church is the church contextualized.

Quiroz also uses Moltmann's thoughts about the identity crisis suffered by the church today and its need to return to its roots. In other words, its In terms of self-awareness Quiroz he uses Küng's thoughts and his reconstruction of ecclesiological paradigms from the early church to the present day, including the new fields that have been added to it, such as pastoral, didactic, apologetic, rhetorical, and other ecclesiology.

With this in mind, Quiroz concludes by asserting that the church's consciousness corresponds to its historical essence, an important foundation in the theology of liberation.

Still based on Moltmann's thoughts he uses the political significance of ecclesial change, as a sign of his self-understanding throughout time. This reflects the spirit of the times, the economic, political, and cultural circumstances of the communities where he was inserted. (Moltmann, 1999)

With this, Quiroz advocates the analysis of the church's historical articulations with the world around it and in which it operates.

The third component, the understanding of reality, rejects the concept of poverty seen in the light of the European community made by Küng and

enters into discussion with Moltmann's discourse about how the church should understand and act in society.

These questions lead to the concept of sensitization that tries to understand society from an empathetic point of view concerning the world of the poor and those who are marginalized.

Finally, Quiroz introduces the idea of the historical, ecclesial and theological subject. "Who" is the one responsible for the transformative role that is an essential in liberation theology?

In his dialogue with Küng, Quiroz concludes that for the German theologian the subject responsible for the process of transformation is the theologian. The theologian drives ecclesiastical renewal. (Kung, 1968, p. 244)

Moltmann, however, proposes the believer as the protagonist of the transformation, saying that it is he who calls justice through the prophetic announcement. This concept closer to the liberation theology. (Moltmann, 1999, p. 66)

With this, Quiroz tries to facilitate a theological dialogue between liberation theology and contemporary German theologians, trying to discover common and discordant strands in liberation theology in search of an ecclesiology that is wide enough to embrace Latin American theological thought.

### **3.2.6. Theology of the urban mission:**

#### **3.2.6.1. Urban mission in Charles Van Engen:**

Charles Van Engen understands that the relevant church is one that develops a mission theology to the city based on seven steps, as summarized below (2009, p. 241–270):

##### **3.2.6.1.1. Approaching reality:**

In order to be relevant, the ministry needs to understand the city. This involves understanding their structures, the people who live there and the lifestyle. To do this, one must enter the city and understand its reality. (2009, p. 253–255)



#### **3.2.6.1.2. Listening the Reality:**

The second step is to use the anthropological technique of participatory observation. Listening to their stories (oral or written) - stories not only of the past, but also of the present. Through listening we will capture elements for the analysis of the context where we want to be relevant (2009, p. 255–257).

#### **3.2.6.1.3. Context Reading:**

The third step is the examination of reality through tools provided by the social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, economics and etc.

The purpose is to reread the context in terms of symbols, meanings, and perspectives that were there all the time, but that may have gone unnoticed.

This rereading with new hypotheses, new agendas and a new way of looking at things will help us to discover that we have new questions that need to be answered in the scriptures (2009, p. 257–258).

#### **3.2.6.1.4. Rereading Scripture:**

With this data in mind, let's go to the Word of God. We are looking for a way of bringing a new set of questions to the text, questions that can help us see in the Scriptures what we have previously missed. Doing so places our reading of the Word within the real context of people's lives <sup>10</sup> (2009, p. 257–258).

#### **3.2.6.1.5. New perspectives of the mission:**

A new reading of the Word of God will generate new ideas, new values and new priorities. These will impel us to new perspectives of action which in turn will call us to reexamine the motivations, means, agents and objectives of our urban missiology (2009, p. 259).

#### **3.2.6.1.6. New Missionary Action:**

It is a movement from text to community. Through the focusing mediation of the integrating theme, we now

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<sup>10</sup> This new approach to writing is what David Bosch called "critical hermeneutics"(2002, pp. 43–46,627)

restate the new insights gained from a rereading of Scripture as contextually appropriate missional orientations of the church in the city(2009, p. 261).

The perspectives that the Word of God evokes, call for engagement in new actions of incarnation of the gospel.

#### **3.2.6.1.7. Retell the History:**

This is the time when theology takes the form of transforming actions in the city in such a way that the initial story can be retold from the perspective of the transforming power of the gospel (2009, p. 262–264).

#### **3.2.6.1.8. Conclusion:**

Van Engen's vision of urban mission theology helps us build a practical and contextual model of action for a church to be relevant in any context in which it is inserted.

#### **3.2.6.2. Theology mission urban by Jorge Barro:**

"The church that lives for itself, according to Barth, tastes like death. What death? The death of your reason to exist"(2004, p. 180).

Jorge Barro defends the idea that the church exists for the mission (2004, p. 181) in the face of the realities where we are inserted. The goal and content must be the Kingdom of God, like the ministry of Jesus.

He states that:

Jesus knew that the message of the kingdom of God would bring confrontation and transformation to the cities and villages through which he would pass. "The kingdoms of this world" (Lk 4: 5) are influenced by the "authority and glory" (Lk 4: 6) of the Devil. The devil's proclamation has to do with the kingdoms of this world, permeated by powers and political systems, involving all kinds of manipulations and social relationships aimed at spreading the anti-program of the Devil's mission. In proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus showed us that

the only way for the world, with its demonic kingdoms, to be transformed, is through the powerful message that penetrates, saves, heals, liberates and forgives. Those who wish to be effective in their efforts to reach the city should be warned that the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God is central to the irruption of transformation (2004, p. 185).

But to carry out such a task it is necessary to do exegesis of the biblical text, as well as the exegesis of the city or urban reality, so that actions can be oriented to the concrete situations in which people live in order to reach them with the redemptive love of God.

However, these actions are contextual; that is, they depend upon the specific circumstances of each context. What makes the church's action relevant, creative, and effective is its ability to be contextual to the point of embodying Jesus in that particular geographic space (2004, p. 188–189).

It is necessary to invest in the kingdom of God. The church's resources should be applied to the fulfillment of the task, in the transformation of society, in the redemption of its city. This makes the community of faith a neighbor to the neighborhood (2004, p. 199).

Van Engen calls this type of mission the *church-with-the-city* and defines it in the following terms:

#### **3.2.6.2.1. Develop a prophetic ministry:**

His idea is that the church should take a prophetic posture in the face of all evil in the city, be it spiritual, social, economic or political. The church is the moral and ethical consciousness placed by God in that context (2004, p. 204).

#### **3.2.6.2.2. Incarnation in the city:**

The church that participates in the life of the city is similar to Jesus who became man and dwelt among us to reveal the glory of the Father. He defines incarnation in the following terms:

Incarnation is compassion that identifies itself, which reveals that we are a close people, who love, who seek the lost, who are a point of reference, who indicates the way forward. Jesus, in pointing the way to God, approached us (2004, p. 205).

#### **3.2.6.2.3. See beyond the here and now:**

The relevant church is one that has the capacity to live the tension of the “already and the not yet” eschatology, bringing hope to a world without hope. He states:

The one that helps (eschatology) is the one that teaches us to live the tension between the “already and the not yet”. We have already witnessed the kingdom of God, but not yet in its fullness. The not yet (kingdom to come) should be our encouragement to live the “already”, here and now. Many people reverse this process. They live the not yet without the already. Others live the already without the not yet. Our challenge is this: to bring the not yet into the already (Isa 65: 17-25). It is to make the New Jerusalem a model and paradigm for the Old Jerusalem (our city) (2004, p. 206).

#### **3.2.6.2.4. Have a positive and inspiring vision of the city:**

To be relevant we need to be able to see the wounds of the city without losing sight of the good things it has.

We must learn to be in favor of the city and its people.

We are against sin, whether it be personal or structural, but always in favor of people (2004, p. 207).

#### **3.2.6.2.5. Be committed to the geography where God has placed you:**

It is necessary to be the church that is committed to the place where God inserted it, to make a difference there. The lack of this engagement "will have

serious consequences for the visibility and credibility of the church in the future”(2004, p. 208).

#### **3.2.6.2.6. Conclusion:**

Barro's proposal of *church-with-the-city* is the key to make it relevant in the context in which it is inserted.

#### **3.2.7. Conclusion:**

In this chapter, we looked at various theologians and some of their teachings in order to better understand the church's sense of relevancy. The work here reflects not only the times in which they lived but perhaps the way they saw the greatest demands church had to face.

The biblical images, which are normative for the construction of any ecclesiology, are perceived by the theologian in all nuances of the demands of his context.

Certainly, there is a lot to learn from each one of them, but if we want to understand the meaning of relevance for a church in the city of Curitiba at the beginning of the 21st century, it will not be enough to apply all the ideas collected here without first understanding more about the city. What is this city like and what are its needs? Therefore, in the next chapter we will try to get to know Curitiba better. How do the people experience religiosity? What are the main spiritual, psychological, social and ecological demands?

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE NEEDS OF THE CITY OF CURITIBA THAT REQUIRE THE ACTION OF A RELEVANT CHURCH**

It is necessary to understand that every city has its own worldview, rich in cultural meaning. This worldview influences the formation of its values, its social relationships, religious understanding and the ways in which people live out their faith.

When we search in the social sciences to gain an understanding of the city, we find an extensive range of approaches and different visions. It is as if we were looking into a kaleidoscope that, as we turn it against the light, we can see numerous different color formations. In this analogy, the positions in the kaleidoscope are determined by the ideologies and referential matters that the researcher applies to define his studies.

In order to better understand this, I would like to quote some of the concepts of city summarized by Souza :

The city, according to HEGEL, is a historical stage, following that of the organization of the family unit, which constitutes the period of civil society, where the selfish interests are confronted, but where rationality operates announcing the coming of the State as an idea of morality... For MACHIAVEL, the city is a man to be governed, arsenals to be filled, walls to be fortified and defended against any instrument of power...For WEBER, the great modern city is the time and place of the encounter between technique and culture... the city of Kant is conceived as a collective outfit for the free humanity (1997, pp. 5–8).

In the social sciences context, the city is a work of human hands, a world of objects produced by procedures determined by materialities and governed

by precise intentions. For that reason, human intentionality is technique that is first and foremost practical knowledge derived from work.

The city is a dense co-existence of the technical-scientific complex, of the instances and the cultural fields, of politics and economic production. Yet, at the same time, is the meeting place of differences, of freedom, of equality and faith. The city is the place, the geography of existence (M. A. A. Souza, 1997, p. 1–10).

As we look to the complexity of all its related variables we can affirm that it still needs to be defined and perhaps we can draw the same conclusions as Mumford:

There is no definition that applies solely in all its manifestations nor isolated descriptions isolated that covers all its formations, from its embryonic social core to the complex mature forms and social disintegration of its old age (Mumford, 2004, p. 9).

But popular ideal refers to the city as an urbanized area which differs from the villages and the other urban entities through various criteria, which include population, population density or a legal status.

Our objective here is to understand this huge complexity of variables that compose the city of Curitiba. Our focus is its “*ethos*”, its soul. After we do this we will look to its main principle missional needs, because a church will only be relevant when it is God’s response to the needs of a given time in a specific place.

Therefore, we will initially use a historical approach to try to build a religious profile that is based upon a number of different influences in the over time. We also will consider statistical information, developed by national and local institutes. This data provides a valuable tool to help us understand the values, worldview, problems and challenges. This religious and sociocultural

snapshot will help us understand the challenges and needs, and possible strategic opportunities for the advancement of God's Kingdom there.

In this research project, we will use the four basic needs described by Snyder, as previously explained in chapter 1 in the treatment of the theoretical marks, which are: spiritual, psychological, social and environmental needs.

#### **4.1. The Soul of Curitiba – History and Formation of the “Ethos” from the Capital City:**

##### **4.1.1. Colonial Curitiba:**

The first inhabitants of the fields of what would later be the city of Curitiba were the Brazilian Indigenous peoples from the linguistic families Jê and Tupi-Guarani. These groups included the Kaingang, Xoclengue e Tingüi <sup>1</sup>. (“Tradição Cultural em Curitiba”, [s.d.] )

For the Portuguese, the prosperity meant gold. Because of that, gold miners walked from the *Litoral*, the coastal region, (Paranaguá, Cananéia and Santos), gold miners walked through the *Serra do Mar*, the mountains of the sea, creating the *Caminho Itupava*, the Itupava Trail. They settled in the surroundings of the Atuba River, around 1630.

The quest for gold called more gold miners to a place that, according to the legend, was blessed by Our Lady of Light. It is said that she looked toward the shore along the Belém River and that understood by the residents of that region that the desire of the saint was that a church be built there. (“Curitiba - Cidade de Passado Rico”, 1992, p. 8)

The residents looked to their chief, Tindiquera, asking him to show them the place to build the chapel. He stuck a stick into the ground, under the shadow of the pine trees; Today, that location is known as Tiradentes.

Legend says that the words that the chief used to describe the place were “*Kuryt*” (pine tree) and “*Yba*” (large amount), they represented, according to

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<sup>1</sup> The name would mean people from the thin nose, in translation from Tupi to English (Macedo, 2016, p. 26)



the indigenous culture, a sign of prosperity. In time, the official name of the place became known as "*Nossa Senhora da Luz dos Pinhais*" (Our Lady of the Light of the Pine Trees).

These early accounts from Curitiba's history point to two different religious realities that combined in the formation of the people of this land.

The first religious characteristic evidenced from the indigenous population in the region is messianism. Professor Igor Chimyz affirms that the change in location among the indigenous settlements was encouraged or directed by religious beliefs in which the shaman instilled in the minds of his people that they should march in one specific direction looking for the earthly paradise. (Chimyz & Ribeiro, 2008, p. 12)

That is why the scene described by the historians explaining how the place was chosen by the tribal leader for the church building points to the practice of messianic shamanism, indicating the migratory movement of the villages.

The second reality has to do with popular Catholicism, practiced by the Brazilians from the 17th century. The Portuguese and Spanish colonies, during the time of ecclesiastical patronage, lived somewhat removed from the theology of the official religion. In its place, there grew a type of syncretic-cultural Catholicism, deeply mystic and magical.

It is defined by Steli as:

"A set of beliefs and practices socially recognized and shared by a significant number of Catholics that kept a relative independence from the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the intellectual pictures attached to them. From a subjective point of view, we can understand it as a peculiar religious way of a group or an individual to live their faith. In an objective way, it is a religious system focused on the worship of the saints, understood inside

a contractual logic of interpersonal relation, and kept by a diffuse body of lay religious agents " (Steil, 1997).

A fundamental characteristic was the devotion to the saints, angels and martyrs, understood as intermediaries between human yearnings and God's omnipotence. Among the most invoked saints were the warriors - Santo Antônio, São Sebastião, São Jorge, São Miguel etc.; the healers - São Roque, São Lázaro, São Brás etc.; and the Virgin Mary in her various denominations - Nossa Senhora das Dores, da Conceição, do Parto etc (Capelari, 2001, p. 67).

Another characteristic was the magical and mystical sense full of superstition, connected to luck and blessings, particularly, that of the healing. Priests would cut a piece of ribbon, measured to match the images of the saints and those ribbons were tied around waist in order to remove pain, sickness and otherwise accomplish the requests of the wearer. The scapulars, the figures and medallions of saints and the written prayers, after being blessed by the priests, were placed between books, under pillows or folded and sewn in the shape of a little bag, carried next to the body in order to combat the evils and guarantee protection to the penitent (Capelari, 2001, p. 67–68).

Another syncretistic element in the indigenous belief system was the worship of defiled nature. The shaman developed a means to access and manipulate powers from the world of the dead and the spirits inhabited the woods. Through rituals they sought to heal diseases, they expelled evil spirits that resided in the body and they undid evil spells cast by their enemies.

Ingesting certain foods and fermented drinks had a ritual function in many groups. Even the cannibalism that characterized the Tupinambás was based in an understanding of sacredness. They believed that if they ate their enemy's flesh they would empower themselves with their enemy's strength and courage (Capelari, 2001, p. 69).

Indigenous conversion was granted certain allowances, unspoken or declared, on the part of the catechists, that included using elements from their native culture, such as the ritual ingestion of cassava flour, the association of Tupã with the Christian God, etc.

Professor Chimyz reminds us that the Jesuit catechetical method presupposed the utilization of traditional beliefs, such as messianism, as a tool for the ongoing Christianisation of the indigenous population. He affirms that the Indians from Curitiba and Paraná, were evangelized through syncretism with a native legend about the Peabiru Path; This was a trail that, according to their beliefs, could take them in the direction of earthly paradise. In this syncretistic understanding, St. Thomas the Apostol would have been its builder and stones of the trail had his footprints (Chimyz & Ribeiro, 2008, p. 13).

Even though they were influenced by the catechesis, by which they ceased to be pagans and entered the Christianity, the Indians didn't abandon all of their beliefs in the spirits of the woods or in the ancestral spirits. Rather, in some ways they introduced their pagan beliefs into popular Catholicism (Capelari, 2001, p. 69).

This fact is documented by the historians from the city and witnessed by the ancient provincial governors:

A representative feature of a *Curitibano* [a resident of Curitiba] from the 17th century was one of a man from the fields and the wastelands; a horseman. half Indian half Castilian, with his thoughts always turned to the horizons, always looking for adventures (Alfredo Romário Martins) ("Curitiba - Cidade de Passado Rico", 1992, p. 8).

"The people from Curitiba are very similar to the Indian in customs and manners, accustomed to the use of horses, audacious in endeavours and prone to deserting

to the side of the Castilians, due to similarities with them. (Dom Luiz Gonzaga, Governador de São Paulo) (“Curitiba - Cidade de Passado Rico”, 1992, p. 8)

#### **4.1.2. Curitiba in the empire:**

Until the date of the Proclamation of the Republic, in 1889, Brazil was officially Catholic. Other religions were allowed only in private domestic worship. Religious liberty only occurred in 1890. According to the census data from IBGE<sup>2</sup> in 2010 (G1, 2012a), around 64% of Brazilians are Roman Catholics. That makes Brazil the nation with the largest Catholic population on the planet.

At that time, Curitiba was still known as the village of Our Lady of the Light of the Pine Trees. Developmental marks were still tenuous in Curitiba. Yet, according to French chronicler Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, who visited the city in 1820, a change could be noted in the profile of the people.

In no other region of Brazil have I encountered so many genuinely light skinned people as in Curitiba. The residents of this region speak Portuguese with no alteration in pronunciation. I mentioned previously their mixture of the Caucasian race with indigenous. Generally speaking, they are tall and well constituted, they have brown hair and light skin; their manners are affable, their physiognomy is frank. (...) Compare to other regions of the country that I have visited, the women have the most delicate features; they are less arrogant and their conversation is pleasant (Mayhoff, 1906, p. 243).

According to historians Cecília Maria Westphalen e Jayme Antônio Cardoso, in the 17th century the fields of Curitiba would have been almost entirely populated by white skinned Portuguese and Spanish, coming from the coast and from other districts of the captaincies (Cardoso & Westphalen, 1981, p. 12).

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<sup>2</sup> IBGE, the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics, is responsible for the collection of data and tabulation of census in Brazil every 10 years.

Even so, there wasn't a notable change either in the religious sense, nor in technological development, in the region. In 1880, the emperor Pedro II stayed overnight in the place and didn't like what he saw. "It is a city of country people", he complained (L. Gomes & Silva, 1993, p. 69).

Significant change will only begin to be seen in the city's religiosity with the advance of immigration.

#### **4.1.2.1. German immigration:**

In order to better understand the German influence in the area of religious thought in the city of Curitiba, we have to consider the German immigration as a whole. German immigration has taken place on several occasions and over several periods of time encompassing both the Empire and the Republic.

Out of 50 million European emigrants that left the Old Country from the 19th century until the Second World War (1939-1945), Brazil attracted only 4.5 million of these immigrants. The German represented approximately 5% of the immigrants who sought a new homeland in Brazil. Over more than one hundred years, approximately 250 thousand German arrived in Brazil. Currently, there are an estimated five million German descendants in Brazil.

There were many groups that settled in many different places of the nation. The first ones arrived in 1818 and settled in the south of the state of Bahia. In 1824, the first German colony was established in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the city currently known as São Leopoldo. In 1827 German immigrants settled in São Paulo, in the neighbourhoods of Santo Amaro, Itapeperica, São Roque, Embú and Rio Claro. In 1829 a German colony was established in the state of Santa Catarina, in what is now known as the cities of São Pedro de Alcântara and Mafra and in the city of Rio Negro, located in the state of Paraná. (Deutsche Welle, 2004)

In 1833 a couple by the name of Michael Müller and Anna Kranz, arrived in Curitiba from Santa Catarina. That was the beginning of the German migration in Curitiba. (da Cruz & da Cruz, 1993, p. 244)

The German predominance in the first consistent immigration projects is due to the presence of influential individuals of German descent in the Imperial Government. Questions arose, however, concerning the choice of the German ethnicity in the projects because they were Protestants coming to a Catholic nation. (Seyferth, 2000, pp. 273–314)

With the politic emancipation of the Brazilian state of Paraná, in 1853, Curitiba was chosen as capital of the recently created province. It was in this condition that the city began to provide many economic opportunities. They began attracting immigrants already established in other regions of the Empire. For this reason, the German colony in Curitiba acquired an urban profile, but with characteristics of a homogeneous nuclei (ethnic and religious), thus contradicting the official policy that sought mixed colonies. (Vechia, [s.d.], p. 3)

These profile of these immigrants according to the records of that time, was predominantly that of farmers, skilled workers, craftsmen, other urban workers, teachers and political refugees. (Seyferth, 2000, pp. 273–314)

They were, general speaking, in a better position economically and intellectually than those who had participated in the political movements of 1848 in Germany. They were young people who sought to make their living in Brazil. During the second half of the 19th century they played a very important role as journalists, politicians, teachers, that is, as intellectuals, and also as businessmen. (Gertz, 2001, p. 17)

The opposition to the evangelical creed in Brazil was well known, so from the moment of their arrival in Curitiba, these immigrants began to face certain discrimination from a religious as well as a social point of view. One of the discriminatory issues had to do with their children's education. For a period of approximately fifteen years they received no governmental assistance for the development of schools. They gradually began to organize their community life disconnected to the local society. In 1866 the Community of the German Evangelical Church was founded. This was the first evangelical church on

Curitiban soil. Shortly afterwards, as a result of its evangelical influence the German school was founded. (Vechia, [s.d.], p. 2)

It is necessary to understand that these evangelicals in their country of origin could have been religiously affiliated to a liturgical church, like that of the Lutherans or Calvinists, or to one of the dissenting groups resulting from the Great Reformation like the Anabaptists, or even as part of a movement of spiritual renewal, such as Moravian Pietists (Wirth, 2005, p. 71). Yet, the first faith communities from this period in Brazil were unstructured and autonomous, without hierarchical ties and independent from any authority outside the community itself (Wirth, 2005, p. 71).

They were the fruit of a faith based on the free association of individuals. Therefore, they organized their communities and chose one among themselves as pastor. In addition to performing traditional religious services (baptisms, weddings and funerals), he was also given the task of teaching the children (Gertz, 2001, p. 17).

The Protestant religion placed saw to it that the members of the community were literate, for without this requirement it would be impossible to practice devotion: the singing of hymns, reading the Bible, studying the catechism to be confirmed in the faith were all essential. Literacy preferably took place in the German language. German Protestantism was characterized by the fusion of religious and ethnical elements, incorporated into the German language which served as the liturgical language; to lose it meant dechristianization. Therefore, they sought to create schools that would adequately attend to the educational needs of their children. The alphabet would be taught first in the German language and education would be conducted according to the precepts of the Protestant religion.

Pastor Johan Friederich Gaertner opened the German School of Curitiba on November 11, 1866. But, it was soon closed due to allegations that he admitted students of both sexes, among them some Catholic Brazilians,

contrary to Articles 104 and 95 of the Regulation of April 8, 1857 (Vechia, [s.d.], p. 1–4).

In Brazil, the only valid birth certificate was the baptismal certificate issued by the Catholic Church. Due to a lack of Protestant pastors many parents were required to baptize their children with Catholic priests. Thus, the daughters of the immigrants and the children born in Brazil were not allowed to study at this school. That is why in February of 1867 they sent a declaration of formal complaint to the President of the Province protesting against the impediment of educating their sons and daughters according to their religious beliefs.

“It is with pleasure that an evangelical pastor, the Rev. Johan Friederich Gaertner, in keeping with our desires, has not only been responsible for the actions of the church, but has also promised to educate and instruct our children in accordance with religion and morality, but the cure for our souls in this was prevented by Mr. Inspector General of Public Schools [...] and now Mr. Inspector General wants to communicate to us that our children, through our precision and abandonment were baptized by Catholic priests, should remain Catholics and cannot attend our evangelical schools .... “As a servant of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I have an obligation to teach daughters even more than boys, before being confirmed, in the evangelical religion, in accordance with the Holy Bible, and because there is not yet a school German evangelical school of primary education, I also think it my duty to open, for all the children of the evangelicals, a school of primary education, so that in general they receive the instruction and the education, which is intended for them in order



to be considered worthy members of the evangelical community (Vechia, [s.d.], p. 5–7).

It so happened that because of the good organization of the school, its quality of education offered, the possibility of girls studying and greater religious freedom were all factors which worked together to attract a part of the German Catholic clientele, and even some Brazilian Catholics. They began to enrol their children in the school of the Evangelical Community, becoming the first evangelical element in Curitiba to be truly evangelistic, by placing Bibles in the hands of German and Brazilian children of Catholic origins.

Father Franz Auling arrived in Curitiba at the end of the year, 1895<sup>3</sup>. Upon noticing the German Catholic community, he immediately asked the *Deutsche Schule* (German School) Board for permission to teach religion to the Catholic children; his request was denied. He decided to establish a school for German-speaking Catholic children. The school, which was called “*Katholische Deutsche Volkes-Schule*” (Catholic German People’s School), was inaugurated on May 11, 1896 (ARNS, 1997, p. 19).

The emphasis on this aspect of the communities of that time is very important; it was from these precarious beginnings that a school system was developed that was later “nationalized” during the World War II. It also gave birth to a deep-rooted school culture, whose effects are still felt today. Many of these communities have the lowest rates of illiteracy in Brazil (Gertz, 2001, p. 75).

The schools not only preserved German culture, but also influenced the Portuguese-Brazilian culture of those regions. This was true both in social and political matters, and even in religious thought as well (Willems, 1980, p. 415).

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<sup>3</sup> 11/23/1895

The presence of the German community of Curitiba provoked the hastening of the Catholic movement linked to Rome. It was less popular and mystical. This was seen as a reaction to the Protestant threat.

This presented a new model of greater freedom through faith communities, based upon free association and self-government. This turned out to be a criticism of a Catholicism that was deeply connected to the state and served as the moderating arm of the empire.

Religiosity was closely linked to the question of German identity, which was further intensified with the unification of the German states in 1871, and the nationalist ideology that supported it. The preservation of the Germanic character of the communities became the main identity-defining element of this type of Protestantism (Wirth, 2005, p. 74). Thus, the influence was not in the form of conversion. Similarly, Portuguese-Brazilians also characterized their Catholic faith with the feeling of “Brazilianness”.

Pastor Max Dedekind, a theologian active in the German colonization regions of Brazil, delivered a speech before the Colonial Congress in Berlin, in 1910. His speech demonstrates the symbiosis between religious identity, Germanic culture and late colonialism:

“Every German family abroad is a valuable link to our people. With each emigrant settling in the distant forest, the German people move forward on the globe. Each of these families carries the German culture and character. And every German family abroad provides new markets for German trade, while this family remains German”(Wirth, 2005, p. 74).

As ethnic identity was thought to be a continuation or an extension of the German nation on Brazilian soil, there was no theology organically bound up with these communities. It assumed that their German character was sustained by racial continuation, confusing ethnicity with a biological matrix.

Theology was the fruit of ecclesiastical structure and so the church as an agency of faith was divorced from the people's reality" (Wirth, 2005, p. 75).

Faith became much more a system of cultural festivals and social gatherings that gave the religious community a function, especially recreational (Gertz, 2001, p. 18).

#### **4.1.2.1.1. Conclusion:**

German immigration impacted the religiosity of Curitiba was more in secondary aspects. It was not primarily influential in the transformation of the practice of faith.

The belief that individual effort as the only solution to the problems of society, a belief that was part of Protestant thinking, combined with the question of ethnicity, was perhaps was the greatest transforming factor..

Associated with this were some paradigms shifts such as: teaching women, the value of knowledge, the concept of free association, a challenging and critical spirit, a sense of pride among the people, land and organizations all certainly influenced the way of how people thought and acted in Curitiba. These factors worked together to form a cultural style in the city.

We can thus affirm that German immigrants were missionaries of their culture and not of a gospel that would transform people and society. Yet, an interesting aspect of this influence was the linking of faith to the concept of family and loyalty, which generates, among the people of Curitiba, a certain religious traditionalism that identifies itself with the sense of belonging to a family.

#### **4.1.2.2. The Polish immigration:**

Sebastian Wos Saporski came to Brazil in 1867, via Buenos Aires. From his conversations with Fr. Zielinski, who participated in the tour of Prince Maximilian of Mexico, he had the idea to follow the German example and encourage Polish emigration to this region of Paraná. The proposal met with great resistance from the Germans. Nevertheless, after a hearing granted to Saporski and Fr. Zielinski by the Emperor, the Polish question had a positive

result and in April, 1871, the City Council of Curitiba gave Polish immigrants land near the city (“Poloneses no Brasil - O Início de uma grande história”, [s.d.]).

At the time of emigration, Poland was experiencing the division of its territory and political subordination to Prussia, Russia and Austria. This time is described by Ruy Christovam Wachowicz, as the “emigration fever”. There was sizeable displacement of his people fleeing not only from poverty but also from persecution (Benthien, 2005, p. 3).

Saporski welcomed the first Polish emigrants. They had arrived in 1869 from Upper Silesia on the ship Victoria and were living in impoverished conditions among the German immigrants in the neighboring state of Santa Catarina. This was the beginning of the first Polish colony in Brazil, located in Curitiba, and called Pilarzinho. From that moment on, waves of the Polish farmers arrived. They were attracted by the promises of free land and agricultural organizational assistance. Thousands of Polish emigrants arrived in Brazil – most of them from overcrowded regions and villages (“Poloneses no Brasil - O Início de uma grande história”, [s.d.]).

A large number of Polish immigrants settled in Brazil between 1869 and 1920. It is estimated that approximately 60,000 Poles, 95% of them settled in Paraná (“Imigração Polonesa no Brasil”, [s.d.]).

“The majority were humble, honest people, dedicated to work, with great faith, Catholics who were devoted to “Our Lady of Monte Claro”, as well as orderly, unshakable in their decisions” (Tramontini, 2005, p. 138). They were also distinguished by the deep patriotism that developed deep bonds with their country of origin and by their solidarity (Foetsch, 2007, p. 61).

Brazil was seen as a place where they could be free Poles, that is to say, without the restrictions imposed by the Russians. This was particularly evidenced in the exercise of their Catholic religion and freedom from oppressive taxation (Tramontini, 2005, p. 149).

#### **4.1.2.2.1. The Polish Catholic soul:**

Tramontini did some interesting research involving twenty-nine letters from the early Polish immigrants. Through excerpts from these, he helps us to perceive the soul of the Polish immigrant, his concerns and his desires. Notable among them are the expression of happiness in being in a Catholic country and thus to be able to exercise Catholicism without persecution. Yet, we also see the difficulty related to the fact that the local priests did not speak the Polish language (Tramontini, 2005, p. 138).

Another subject that we see addressed in these letters is that in all the colonies there is news regarding measures taken for the construction of the church. The writers also noted the promises of the Polish parish priests, and the fact that they would be exempt from paying taxes for several years (Tramontini, 2005, p. 143).

The sense of Polish Catholic Pietism made one see the struggles in the new land through the eyes of God's sovereignty. For example, Stanislaw Tartass, mourning the death of his son and brother-in-law, commented: "We are very saddened. God acts as He pleases. God, who has mourned with us, will also comfort us. His divine will will be done"(Buchmann, 1995, p. 38).

For this reason, religion for the Polish immigrant stands as the intermediary between the peasant and his reality. It establishes an identification of religion within the family sphere, of the priest as a father figure, of his protectors, one who is humble but confident. Only a spiritual father, with his power, could overcome the difficulties that the immigrant presented in the new land (Buchmann, 1995, p. 77).

As with the Germans to whom the culture assumed a religious meaning, so too for the Polish. To be a Catholic was an expression of his Polish identity. The parish not only had a religious function, but it was also the center of the community (Benthien, 2005).

Sunday Mass was a meeting place for the Poles, where they could catch up on all the news. They arrived at the church more than an hour before

services. After Mass, they there were things to buy and sell: the men had appetizers, the children and women drank *capilé* (a lightly sweetened, subtly perfumed, refreshing drink) and ate cookies, and the conversation flowed. On Sunday afternoons, it was customary to visit relatives (Mika, 2003, p. 7).

But religiosity was not only instilled at Mass, it was part of the daily life of the family. The main room of the house was the oratory, where there was an altar with statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary and the paintings of Our Lady of Monte Claro and of Saint Izidoro, the protector of the farmers. Every night the family gathered for the prayer of the rosary of Our Lady. When the neighbors came to pray together at the little

chapel of Our Lady, there was always food and drink after the prayers (Mika, 2003, p. 8).

The celebration of Pentecost Sunday was the day that the house was decorated both inside and out on the porch with cedar branches (Sikora, 2016). Easter was celebrated with a deep religious spirit and immense joy. Everything should be new or renewed. The walls received new paint in light



Figure 8 Blessing

and cheerful colors. The interior of the houses was decorated and impeccably clean, just as

the soul was cleansed after the Lenten confession. (“Tradições de Pascoa na Polônia”, [s.d.] )

They also celebrated the blessing of food on the “Saturday of Alleluia” (the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday). For them, food was sacred and eating was a holy act. For this reason, each family carried food (bread, smoked sausage, roasted meat, painted eggs, salt, pepper, cream and buttered lamb, representing the Risen Christ himself) to be blessed by the parish priest. These foods would make up the Passover table. This blessing

represented gratitude for the goods we received from God, which are necessary for our sustenance. After the Resurrection Mass, everyone returned to their homes for the ritual of the Happy Easter Vow. The meal began when the father of the family divides an egg into several parts and gives them to all members of the family ("Culturarte Polonesa - Início | Tradições", [s.d.]).

The wedding was a celebration consisted of a week of preparations and three days of celebration. One of the interesting religious observations was the farewell to the bride and groom. The bride and groom's parents did not go to religious wedding at the church because they were busy with the preparations for the party. Those who accompanied the bride and groom on the trip to the church were the godparents, the earls and the ladies. For this reason, there was a ritual of farewell to the bride and groom from their parents. In this ritual, poems and prayers were recited, interspersed with religious songs. Three times, on their knees, the bride and groom asked for the blessing of their parents; the parents, crying, laid their hands on their children's heads and traced the sign of the cross (Mika, 2003).

Funeral services and burials were a most respected ritual. On the night of the funeral, the Rosary of Our Lady was recited- 15 dozens of Ave-Marias - as well as litanies and appropriate songs.

The Polish Catholic soul lived out its faith as an expression of life. Everything was linked to faith: life, death, work, production, fellowship, community life. In many ways, it could be compared to the faith expressed by the American Puritans and the blessing of food on the day of Thanksgiving, only expressed in Roman Catholic language and clothing.

It may seem strange to dwell on the traditions of these early Polish immigrants, but the fact is, they have decisively influenced the way of being a "*Curitibana*" (one from the city of Curitiba). These practices resulted in a type of Catholicism different from what is common in Brazil. In this Catholicism, religiosity and life are mixed every day, producing a demand for spirituality

even in the context of a capital city that is home to one of the oldest universities in the country.

#### **4.1.2.2.2. Pastors are needed for the flock:**

However, getting Polish-speaking priests was not an easy task at the end of the empire. It was difficult to persuade so many priests to leave Europe to come to Brazil. At the beginning of the Republic, it was not in the interest of the Brazilian government to perpetuate communication in the mother tongue. (2008)

On July 3, 1903 (Gumieiro, 2013, p. 28) three priests and one religious brother (“NOSSAS ORIGENS”, [s.d.]) arrived in Brazil. The Polish Vice-Province was created in Brazil in the year 1921. From 1921 until 1969 Poland sent more than 62 priests to Brazil. Some returned to their homeland for health reasons, some died, others went on to the diocesan clergy and some abandoned the ecclesiastical state. The first purpose of the Polish missionaries in Brazil was to give religious assistance to the Polish immigrants wherever they were. The best way for them to do with was to establish popular missions. (Gumieiro, 2013, pp. 77–90).

The first Daughters of Charity were sent to Curitiba in October 1904, in response to the appeal of Dom José de Camargo Barros, then bishop of the region. They came from Poland on a special mission to work with Polish immigrants who expressed a desire for Christian and Catholic education for their children. The Polish Sisters Luiza Olszynska, Natália Zietak and Leocádia Suchoswiat were prepared for the work that awaited them; they possessed higher academic degrees, with specializations in music and arts. The work of the Sisters produced great results and in a short time new houses emerged (“Colégio Vicentino São José - Institucional”, [s.d.]).

There was always concern that these Houses were opened where the presence of the Lazarist Fathers was assured, which guaranteed the spiritual assistance, according to the Vincentian Charism.



In addition to the pastoral ministry and monthly services in the interior communities, with celebrations of sacraments and catechesis, the missionaries in the parishes dedicated their time and talents to the construction of churches and chapels. In the beginning, these were made of wood and later transformed into masonry construction. Polish missionaries contributed great spiritual, cultural and material wealth through their dedication, apostolic zeal, availability and generosity, serving God's people and His kingdom.

It is worth noting that they exerted a great influence in cultural terms,. In addition to the schools, they created an organization called "BURSA" in Curitiba. It is a hostel, of sorts, for students from the interior or rural areas of the state. Thus, the children of agricultural parents were able to carry out their studies in the capital city and to train in the city's universities. Many illustrious men emerged from there who greatly benefited the Polish and *Paranense* community ("Poloneses no Brasil - O Início de uma grande história", [s.d.]).

Curitiba gradually became the intellectual center of the Poles in Brazil and a kind of unofficial capital of Polish immigrants. This gave rise to several organizations such as: The Tadeusz Kosciuszko Society, founded in 1890; - a foundation of the Polish primary schools, and the of "Mutual Assistance" box in 1891. In 1898 the First Polish Congress was held in Curitiba, with the purpose of creating the "Polish National Association of South America". The meeting was attended by all the Polish communities in Paraná, Santa Catarina, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro ("Principais Acontecimentos Cronológicos na História da Sociedade", [s.d.]).

Perhaps the most relevant fact of the arrival of the new congregations in Brazil has been the insertion of a new religious life model, no longer centered on privileges, but on the service of those most in need. This new religious and ecclesial spirit seems to have infected the

old orders that underwent a process of renewal and reorganization (Gumieiro, 2013, p. 45).

#### **4.1.2.2.3. Conclusion:**

The faith of the Polish people had a great impact on the *Curitibano* religiosity and in a certain way rescued something that the Portuguese-Brazilian Catholicism had lost in the mysticism and the enchantment of the Indigenous. It was able, little by little, to attract the urban dwellers, who were not of Polish origins, to their celebrations. To this day, every Sunday morning you will find Catholic parishes crowded with people who want to experience a little more of their faith.

It is still customary to carry the little chapels from home to home, in the city with the invitation for the neighbors to go to the house or apartment that receives it. There, they can pray together, and many are pleased to attend and conduct themselves respectfully. The choirs of laymen have influenced the singing in the churches and attract faithful to the Sunday Mass. Weddings, both among Catholics and among Evangelicals have a solemnity that is not found in other regions of the country. These are complete with instrumental musicians and choirs. It is inconceivable that the reception following the ceremony would not include a formal dinner for all the guests.

The identity of the Polish Catholic did not disappear; to the contrary. It remained alive to the point of causing others to participate. (Foetsch, 2007, p. 70). But the most compelling element of their influence in Curitiba's religiosity is a sense of fear of God and a sincere religious piety that is deeply connected to the concept of family and community.

#### **4.1.3. The republican period:**

In the Republican period, the social transformations that occurred throughout Latin America were also experienced in Curitiba. Liberal economic doctrine, the search for development, the need to create a secular state and the end of slavery, formed the new scenario. This new scenario was also a strong influence for all the city's religious movements.

#### **4.1.3.1. The “re-Catholicization” of Curitiba – diocesan Catholicism:**

At the end of the 19th century the Church showed signs of institutional decadence, with priests not well suited to the exercise of priestly ministry, precarious seminaries, generally abandoned worship, religious orders diminished by lack of candidates, and especially the lack of preaching the gospel.

This is also explained by the fact that, for centuries, under the patronage regime, the Brazilian population was clothed in a lay religiosity that was far from the one expected by Rome, composed of rituals of feasts, with manifestations that similar to those of the pagans, with excess of drinks and food, processions, songs, ornaments, dances and true moments of "*carnavalization*". This type of religiosity was organized in lay associations, sometimes outside the official Church.

The Church perceived its detachment from the popular sector. Therefore, it initiated a movement to “re-Catholicize” the country. Religion was in the hands of the laity (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 75–76).

The Proclamation of the Republic marked the beginning of a new phase in Catholic life in Brazil, due to the institutional rupture with the patronage regime. The first step was to impose the notion of the independence for both powers. the Church with the spiritual, and the state with the temporal. Lustosa states:

The civil government is responsible for the temporal issues of the States; the Church is responsible for the administration of spiritual things; and it has all the more right to claim its independence in the spiritual sphere, as it is the first to maintain and sustain as inviolable the independence of government in the temporal sphere. The State must, therefore, using reciprocity, respect the Church’s freedom in the administration of spiritual

affairs, and not ingestion by way of some of them (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 74).

On April 27, 1892, the new Paraná Catholicization began, through the Bull of Leo XIII, "*Ad Universas Orbis Ecclesias*": together with other Brazilian dioceses, the "Diocese of Curitiba" was created, dismembered from the bishopric of São Paulo.

It was an arduous task, for during this period the Diocese of Curitiba covered the entire territory of the state of Paraná and also that of the neighboring state of Santa Catarina, an area of about 300 thousand square kilometers. There were 78 parishes for a population of approximately 700 thousand inhabitants and for this entire contingent, only 47 priests. The first bishops of Curitiba, Dom José de Camargo Barros (1894-1904), Dom Duarte Leopoldo e Silva (1904-1907) and Dom João Francisco Braga (1908-1935), experienced the great difficulties in their "sacred space" where nearly everything needed to be done (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 80).

There were two main concerns of the Church at that time: the reform of the clergy and that of the Christian people. The first sought the formation of a pious and holy clergy, where priests held no political office. It also was focused on theological preparation, since many seminaries were closed under the direction of the religious who came from Europe. The second reform concerned the Christian people. The fundamental concern was to distance the faithful from Portuguese-Brazilian Catholicism and to guide them towards the practice of Roman Catholicism, with emphasis on the doctrinal and sacramental aspects of the faith. The reason for this was, "the people claimed to be Catholic, they received the sacraments, but they did not know the doctrine of the Church" (Zulian & Pereira, 2006, p. 77–78).

This period is known by scholars as the Brazilian Catholic reform. Azzi, cited by Zulian & Pereira comments on this subject:

"The mentality that dominates the reform is the need to create in Brazil a new Church of Roman apostolic

character under the inspiration of the Tridentine, replacing the Luso-Brazilian Church of the colonial and imperial period, dominated by the *Padroado*”(Zulian & Pereira, 2006, pp. 77–78).

#### **4.1.3.2. The arrival of faith missions:**

It is interesting to see how the modern thinking permeates all the religious movements in the city. It is not only Catholics who find themselves in need of expressing their faith in a more rational and objective way, but the same is true with the missions of faith that arrived in the city. They practiced an apologetic preaching focused on knowledge of God's Word. They tried to demonstrate the danger of the creeds and the myths of popular Catholicism.

Prior to their arrival in Paraná and in Curitiba were the colporteurs, the book peddlers of the Bible Society. Thanks to their efforts, we have the first records of the city's spiritual and religious condition, from the evangelical perspective.

One of these reports is provided by the Rev. Eduardo Carlos Pereira: Six days ago, I came back from a trip through the backlands of the Iguassu River, where our book sellers spent the past year. The vast and beautiful woods are populated with very primitive people. Few can read, and some of them say they have no religion. Many illiterates, however, purchase Bibles, esteeming them better than the scapulars. In Vila do Triunfo, on the occasion of the Second Conference, I was invited to go to the City Hall and there, both the outside and the inside the house was filled, as most of the inhabitants of the village were in attendance. They had such thirst for the Holy Book, previously unknown to them, that they bought many copies and even took some Testaments

from the table without money and without any commutation (Vedoato & Status, 2000, p. 10–11).

In 1883 Rev. Alexander L Blackford, an agent of the American Bible Society, also visited Paraná. He was accompanied by a colporteur, and led a conference in Curitiba. There, he managed to distribute several Bibles and New Testaments, and found some who were sympathetic to his cause.

The first preachers were widely opposed by Catholic authorities who, using circular letters to parish priests and newspaper publications, warned the faithful about the danger of Presbyterian missionaries. These Presbyterian missionaries were the first missionaries to arrive in the city, but we can find similar records about other missionaries, such as Baptists. For this reason, apologetic preaching and the publication of pamphlets and texts in periodicals was used to respond to the Church's claims. These methods were also used by the missionaries to confront the people with the abuses and superstitions of popular Catholicism, such as the one that circulated about the trail near Curitiba which was taken by Joseph and Mary when fleeing to Egypt. (Vedoato & Status, 2000, p. 10–11)

Another characteristic of this time was the use of mission schools as a means of spreading the gospel and penetrating the community. Difficulties with public education and the high rate of illiteracy can be contrasted with the inexpensive costs of these mission schools. Since these schools had a missionary workforce, and therefore were funded by foreigners, this enabled the missionaries to be seen as people who offered solutions to the problems faced by the people with whom they worked. The contact with the families of the children made the deficient pastoral care seen in the Catholic Church more evident. The connection between the mission and the educational development, was seen as something more in tune with modern society (Vedoato & Status, 2000, p. 15–20).

Here we can see the relevancy of the church in relation to the demands of the time, both in the area of education and in the pastoral family ministry.

Evangelical churches and their missionaries also received support from Freemasonry in various parts of the state and also in the city of Curitiba. The Freemason's network of influence opened doors for worship services.

Sunday Bible schools were powerful tools used in the preaching of the Word. In the early days, many of their meetings were held in the homes of people who were interested in studying the Bible. This allowed the lay person not only to hear messages but to learn to read and interpret the Word with the help of the missionaries and other laymen as well.

The call for free association, freedom to read and interpret the Scriptures, commitment to education and development, were responsible for the influx, of organizations in all evangelical denominations that mobilized the work of evangelization and social ministry. It was not a popular gospel, in the sense of popular Catholicism, but it harnessed the strength of all believers for the advancement of the Kingdom, not only the work of foreign missionaries or the early pastors in this land. In fact, some of these lay people were invited by their congregations to assume pastoral positions alongside the missionaries as bi-vocational pastors. Several of them were professors or prominent professionals in the city and used their influence to bring the gospel to others.

Another relevant feature of this time was the generosity in contributing to the advancement of the Kingdom. Due to the fact that they never received any subsidies from the state, and preached that the Church should be maintained by the faithful, they practiced personal generosity early on, as is evidenced in building the communal goals of the faith. This was in contrast to the Catholic Church; during the Colonial and Imperial period the Church was maintained by the state and in the Republic period it faced the difficulty of learning to raise resources to support the ecclesiastical machine. In respect to this, it is worth noting a publication that praises this fact in the *Revista das Missões Nacionais* (the National Missions Magazine), from the Presbyterian Church, dated October 1912. In this publication is the photograph of the temple in Curitiba, and the following words:

This building, the most beautiful of our temples, was built by the free offerings of the people. There were such generous offerings that the pastor had to tell several families who contributed to the church that their resources were needed at home. Principal among those most generous was the late Carlos A. Cornelsen. In addition to this noble believer and worker, the entire fellowship received the blessings associated with those who gave joyfully (2 Corinthians 9: 7) (Vedoato & Status, 2000, p. 28).

All these innovative characteristics of the faith missions impacted the way people experienced their faith and it had an impact on the religiosity of the city. This, in turn, caused the merely traditional, devotional and mystical faith to begin to be questioned. Even where there was no change of religion, or increase of religious tolerance, the tendency to find fault with the doctrine, the life and structure of the Catholic Church began to be reconsidered. The evangelical schools began to disseminate the value of the Scriptures and the people began to seek to know God's Word. For this reason, we can find many practicing Catholics in the city who read the Holy Scriptures daily.

The Impact can be better perceived in the *IBGE* (Brazilian Census) statistics that show a significant growth in the evangelical population from the end of the Imperial period to the beginning of the Republic period. In the 2000 Census data, the city's evangelical population represented 20%; in the 2010 Census it grew to 24.2% of the population (Ibge, 2010). It is clear that this data needs to be considered in light of another major religious influence: the Pentecostal movement.

#### **4.1.3.3. The Pentecostal movement:**

The Pentecostal movement throughout Latin America has become the greatest emerging religious force. The group that has had the greatest growth and influence in Brazil is the Assembly of God, both in terms of number



members, and by virtue of being one of the first Pentecostal groups in Brazil. For that reason, as we analyze the influence of Pentecostals on the religiosity of Curitiba, we will focus our observation on this group.

The history of the Assembly of God in Curitiba began in a different way from other evangelical mission groups. It was not an American missionary who arrived in the city, but rather, a Polish immigrant. He was a layman, a resident of the city of Petrópolis, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, who claimed to be moved by the Holy Spirit with a desire to get to know the city. Bruno Skolimowski arrived in Curitiba on October 19, 1928 (Conde, 2008, p. 249).

While touring the city he discovered that there was no other Pentecostal group in the city. He also discovered that the Polish colony was large and desirous of spiritual leaders who could speak their language. In addition, there were many other immigrants who had similar pastoral aspirations (Conde, 2008, p. 250).

Despite being a simple man, Skolimowski had the ability to speak several other languages, including Italian, German, Ukrainian and Portuguese. This put him in contact with almost all the significant waves of immigrants in the city, in addition to the Portuguese-speaking people.

In this light, he seemed to be the ideal minister for the multinational city of Curitiba. It seemed there was no one element that unified the souls of so many different people. Up until that time, faith was deeply aligned to the immigrant's native culture that had been left behind.

From the time of his arrival in October 1928, until the end of March 1929, when his family joined him in the city, he cooperated with the Congregational Church. However, soon problems arose, for he began to preach to the members of that church, the distinctive Pentecostal doctrine, Baptism by the Holy Spirit. Some of those members followed this new doctrine and joined Skolimowski in prayer meetings at his house and in evangelism efforts in the colonies. In October of 1929, his church was registered, celebrating worship services at different times, in Portuguese and in languages of the other ethnic

groups. It became a multi-national church where it was possible to hear people praying in Portuguese, German, Italian, Ukrainian and Polish (Conde, 2008, p. 249–251).

Even though an apologetic message was present, the focus of the preaching was on the power of God. Prayer was the hallmark of the community. Most influential were the healings that took place, not as an expression of a religious campaign but as the fruit of a piety of faith that was demonstrated by the manifestation of God's power. When healings occurred, whole families became Christians.

In 1939, when Pr. Skolimowski left the Church, it had 200 members; in 1962, there were 1800 members; in 1979, 23000 members; today it has approximately 70,000 members. The greatest growth occurred during the ministry of Pr. José Pimentel de Carvalho (1962-2011) (“História da IEADC”, [s.d.]).

The religious movement produced by the AG Church in Curitiba showed the church's ability to help the city get in touch with its multicultural identity, finding ways to express its character with tolerance, respect and appreciation. Perhaps glossolalia (the speaking of static and strange tongues), a Pentecostal practice, which may have been confused with the various foreign languages pronounced in the prayers, helped in this process.

Another item of interest was the fact that they built a liturgy that was multicultural while, at the same time, allowed for freedom to practice various charismatic manifestations. Thus, the AG church exhibited Brazilian informality, worship choruses and intense Polish religiosity, a German tone, Italian festiveness and spontaneity, and Russian sentimentality, among other things.

Faith was expressed in a deeply relational manner. First with God, then among the brethren. The house was the place of prayer, not only for the family, but of all the neighbors and brothers and sisters in the faith. Piety was a lifestyle and the ministry characterized by the blessings of God was

considered to be the work of all, for the democratization of gifts of the Spirit. Thus, this community became the face of the future *Curitibano*. This was the result of the welding of so many different ethnic groups.

The influence of the AG did not come from the schools, or from philosophical groups, but from the ability to find unity, love, and hope in a God who ceased to be the exclusive expression of one culture or one nationality and could be experienced transculturally. Religiosity underwent profound changes during the Republican period. This was true among both Evangelicals and Catholics. It is clear that part of these changes was the result of modern thought that began to question their faith and look for reasons to confirm their beliefs.

The Pentecostal element warns us that a faith which only reemphasizes reason, or is a mere expression of a tradition, will not have life in itself to transform culture and produce true communion. This is what the faithful and the immigrant desire.

#### **4.1.3.4. Conclusion:**

In an attempt to build the religious profile of the *Curitibano*, we took a look at the history in order to determine the main influences that helped to shape the soul of the *Curitibano*. Certainly, there many other influences from other ethnic groups in the city which have not been mentioned, including: the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox, Muslim Lebanese, Jewish, Afro-Brazilians, and the Italians with their own style of Catholicism. In addition to these influences, it would also be necessary to study medieval, modern and now postmodern thought so that the portrait could present a even greater number of tones and shades.

However, the issues that have been addressed here allows us to make some observations about certain aspects of the religiosity of this people of this city. *Curitibanos* are proud of their city, their customs and traditions. Trust and loyalty must be gained before incorporating new elements into one's life. They are resistant to change for the sake of change, although they do not fear

innovation. However, it is first necessary to prove the validity and effectiveness of the change.

The greatest influence is relational. Strong religious feelings and beliefs occur in the midst of a friendly community of solidarity, brothers and companions. A religiosity that does not allow for the strengthening of personal relational ties and a church that is not representative of this type of encounter, that of the celebration and the mutual care of one another, seems distant and cold and does not attract devotion. Music, festivals, eating together and offering one's home to host these celebrations are an integral part of religious expression.

The family is still of significant value because it is there that the experience of faith is celebrated. That is why a church that is relevant in the city is the one that develops programs of partnership with the family. The relevant church needs to strengthen the family, improve children's education, and prepare an environment in the community that allows the family to experience the same sense of community that the early immigrants remember.

Prayer is the visible expression of a living, vibrant piety. The *Curitibano*, may not accept an invitation to a biblical debate, but he easily moved if we pray with him. In this sense, there is a very strong mystical element of faith; to the *Curitibano* faith can move mountains.

But although this element of faith is strong it does not a thoughtless faith; studying and growing in life through hard work contributes to the nature of this faith. Therefore, the reason for one's faith must be understood; when it is, it is experienced with passion and work. For this person, working for the advancement of their faith is a pleasure, whether it is a work involving material or devotional things. Work is a value characteristic of all the immigrants of this land.

The arts are part of religious expression. Many of these people learn music in order to be able to play in the liturgical celebrations. They use dance,

painting, sculpture and all forms of artistic expression in the celebration of their faith.

Many other elements could be addressed here because even though the soul is finite, it is rich in beauty and diversity, and in some way, though distorted, it reflects the image of the God who is infinite. Such is the Curitiba soul.

#### **4.2. The Principal Missional Needs in the Urban Context of Curitiba That Require a Response from the Church:**

In order to understand the needs that require a relevant action in the city of Curitiba, we have already addressed certain historical aspects. Now we will turn our attention to the use of current statistical data collected by the city. Perhaps that will help us as we reflect upon some of the answers God is providing to the questions this generation is posing.

Developing field research of this magnitude requires more resources and time than we have within the limits established for the conclusion of this work. For that reason, we decided to use the data previously collected about Curitiba provided by the main research institutes of Brazil: the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the Institute of Applied Economic Research, the Paraná Institute for Economic and Social Development, the Institute of Urban Planning and Planning of Curitiba as well as official data from Curitiba's City Hall and other organizations. We will be using only statistical data that has been previously validated and officially recognized so we do not have to be concerned with any validation errors at this point in our research.

Our aim here is to try to identify which needs within the four classifications we extracted from Snyder & Scandrett in our theoretical framework. This will serve as a limiting filter of our work. The four classifications are: spiritual needs, psychological needs, social needs and environmental needs.

Of course, we realize that many of these interconnect in the realities that will be presented. The Church's response to these needs has often been one

of “standard solution problem solving”. Whereas it ought to be a holistic and integrated response. Now let us describe them.

#### **4.2.1. Social Needs:**

##### **4.2.1.1. Drug Addiction:**

The numbers related to the problem of drug addiction are shocking and the trend is growing, making it one of the great needs of our city. Official data shows that drug addiction begins in the elementary school stage, as early as 10 years of age. Nearly 50% of all the children surveyed had experimented with drugs (Carlini, Noto, & Sanchez, 2010, p. 275) .

<b>Sociodemographic characteristics of 2,090 elementary <sup>(1)</sup> and middle school students in public and private networks in the city of Curitiba</b>			
Sociodemographic characteristics	Public %	Private %	Total%
Gender			
Male	52.0	47.2	51.0
Female	46.5	51.8	47.6
No information	1.5	1.0	1.4
Age Range			
10 to 12 years	27.4	34.8	28.9
13 to 15 years	43.2	54.6	45.5
16 to 18 years	24.4	9.6	21.4
19 years and above	2.6	0.0	2.1
No information	2.3	1.0	2.0

The same survey reports that if we remove tobacco and alcohol from the list of drugs used by these students the number will still be alarming, at somewhere close to 31%. (Carlini et al., 2010, p. 276)

Use of psychotropic drugs (except alcohol and tobacco) among 2,090 primary <sup>(1)</sup> and secondary school students in public and private networks in Curitiba, according to the types of use, according to gender and age group.					
Demographic characteristics	Types of use % <sup>(4)</sup>				
	Life <sup>(2)</sup>	Year <sup>(3)</sup>	Month <sup>(3)</sup>	Frequent <sup>(3)</sup>	Heavy <sup>(3)</sup>
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	31.9	16.4	9.7	2.1	2.2
Female	31.3	16.0	8.5	1.0	0.7*
Total	31.6	16.1	9.1	1.5	1.5
<b>Age Range</b>					
10 to 12 years	14.3	7.7	4.8	0.5	0.5
13 to 15 years	31.9	17.9	9.7	1.4	1.6
16 to 18 years	49.5	22.0	12.7	3.2	2.8
19 years and above	76.7	29.5	11.8	3.5	0.0
Total	31.6	16.1	9.1	1.5	1.5
Note: Public network encompasses municipal, state and federal schools. (1) From the 6 <sup>o</sup> grade (2) Marijuana, cocaine, crack, amphetamines, solvents, anxiolytics, anticholinergics, opioid analgesics, steroids / anabolic, opium / heroin, LSD, ecstasy, methamphetamine, ketamine, benflogin®, energetic with alcohol. (3) Marijuana, cocaine, crack, amphetamines, solvents, anxiolytics, anticholinergics (4) Weighted and expressed data in percentage * indicates statistical significance expressed with $p \leq 0.05$ . Chi-square test					

When comparing similar data on drug usage from previous years the research shows an upward trend (Carlini et al., 2010, p. 331). According to research and data technicians from Curitiba's City Hall, based upon data gleaned from the health system and other entities in the city, it is estimated that 10% of the population has some type of chemical dependency(Belo, 2013).

Both researchers and government agents understand that the challenge of drug addiction can't be solved by government intervention alone. Rather, it will require a coalition of efforts from across society. This was affirmed by the director of the Department of Public Policies on Drugs in Curitiba, Elcio Felipe Fuscolim<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Elcio Felipe Fuscolim, director of the Department of Public Policy on Drugs, worked for 28 years with the Federal Police, in the roles of federal agent and delegate, and was coordinator of the Coordination of Analysis and Strategic Planning (Cape) of the Secretary of State for Public Security (Sesp- PR), from 2011 to 2014.

The partnerships will mark the performance of the Department of Public Policy on Drugs in the City. "We will take on shared responsibility, which is the call of all municipal, state, organized civil society and also third sector to work together to implement these drug policies" ... The department will have specific projects to address the issue of combating drug usage and drug prevention with schoolchildren from 8 to 14 years of age. There will also be projects for the age group from 15 to 29 years (Prefeitura de Curitiba, 2017).

Not only does society clamor for the church to be engaged in this matter, but it also recognizes that the church is one of the most effective social organizations in dealing with drug addiction. The church adheres to the vision that God's plan involves all life and all aspects of life. In a book published by the Ministry of Justice of Brazil the subject is treated with examples of these actions. Following, we see some of the observations made by the specialists of the Juiz de Fora Federal University who pioneered this research:

The most striking "social question" of contemporary modernity is the formation of a population of irrelevant and disposable individuals for almost all social institutions (from family to politics, through school age to the job market and the justice system), which results in a cumulative process of disadvantages in different social spheres ... The only social system that does not reinforce this process of accumulation of disadvantages would be religion ... unlike social systems that confirm the trajectories of exclusion, religion can reverse this process because of its specific vocation to integrate individuals with a high degree of social disconnectedness ... Two factors seem to be of



particular relevance in order for this to occur. In the first place, religious sociability has a positive influence on reconstructing the habits of individuals. It is not a matter of nullifying the past, but of transcending socially the accumulation of negative social expectations, embodied in the form of negative expectations about oneself, through the attribution of positive expectations, in a long and arduous work that aims to lead to incorporation of new expectations and the genesis or activation of dispositions to act in accordance with the new social gaze cast on the individual. In second place, this process of reconstruction of individuals' social person facilitates their inclusion in networks of personal relationships (increasing what Bourdieu calls "social capital"). That is, through networks of reciprocal relations and favouritism, religion is relatively stable and regular with other social systems, structuring the chances of social inclusion for its members that cross the frontiers of religious life and thereby producing a perspective of the future that includes, in addition to careers in specifically religious institutions, links with other fundamental institutions of social life. This is very clear in the trajectory of "problematic users of crack" who have managed to reverse the "destiny of fate". After losing "everything" (family, work, friends, sense of self-worth), whether because of an early trajectory of disadvantage in primary socialization or because of later events that led to the vicious circle of cumulative exclusion, individuals succeeded to rebuild their lives on the basis of the new social person attributed to them

by means of religion. The "born again" in religion refers very prominently to two decisive institutions in the production, reproduction and reversion of trajectories of social exclusion: family and economy ... In this sense, the social practice of religion works effectively as an experience of rupture with the process of accumulation of exclusions in other systems and institutions of society. Here it is not about an ideological device to mask social ills. It is a real social occurrence, whereby individuals who have never been on the receiving end of positive social expectations, and who in general have never been able to incorporate a sense of self-worth, are treated as a valuable social person, as a recipient of social expectations founded in the capacity of transcendence of religion in relation to the social abandonment experienced by individuals in the immanent social reality. This is manifested in the motto "God has a plan for your life," or as one leader of a religious unit of crack recovery users told us: "To say that someone is hopeless is to doubt the power of God" (J. Souza, 2016, p. 211–214).

Although these experts do not necessarily understand what we believe about the power of God, they can verify, based upon the data collected, that drug addiction is one of the needs that requires action of a church that wants to be relevant in the urban context of Curitiba.

But as we said earlier drug addiction is actually at the core of a series of needs that are interrelated. These other needs are also a call for action from a church that wants to be relevant. To better illustrate this point, take a look at the following diagram that shows how these needs are interrelated.

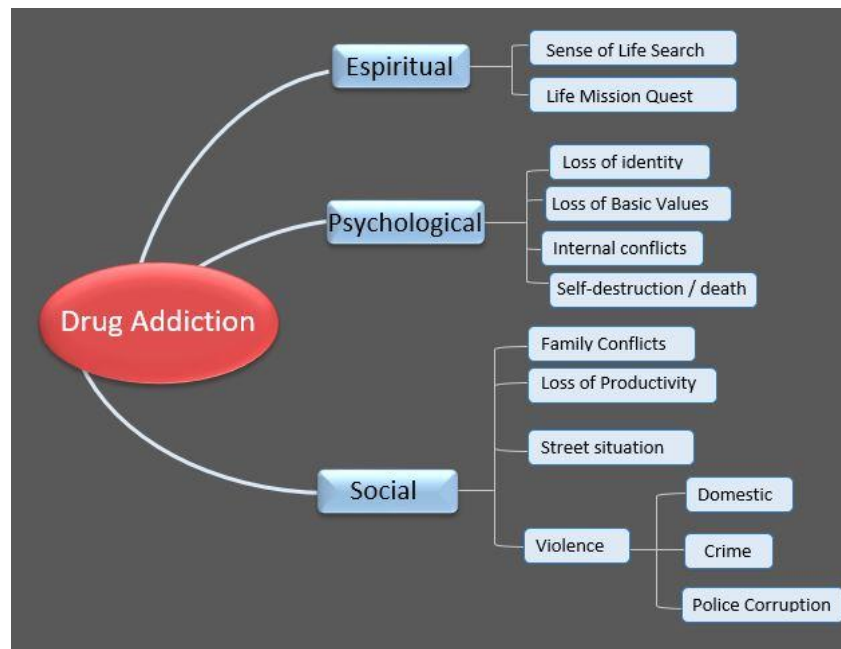


Figure 9 Drug addiction and its implications

#### 4.2.1.2. Violence:

Another social need of our city concerns the level of violence. Recent research released by the Mexican NGO, Citizen's Council for Public Social Security and Criminal Justice, names Curitiba as the 44th most violent city in the world (Gazeta do Povo, 2016).

This ranking takes into account the homicide rate, which is the number of deaths per year for every 100 thousand inhabitants, where Curitiba shows 34 deaths per 100 thousand. But, if we include the entire metropolitan region, this number increases to 46 deaths per 100 thousand inhabitants. In comparison, the city of São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil has a rate of 11 deaths per 100 thousand. Curitiba is three times more violent than São Paulo and is equal to Rio de Janeiro in terms of violence (Peres & Ribeiro, 2010).

Curitiba without the Metropolitan Region		Curitiba and the Metropolitan Region		São Paulo		Rio de Janeiro	
Population	1.851.215	Population	3.307.945	Population	11.037.593	Population	6.186.710
Homicide	63	Homicide	1.523	Homicide	1.235	Homicide	2.155
Homicide Rate	34	Homicide Rate	46	Homicide Rate	11	Homicide Rate	34.8

Figure 10 Violence in Curitiba compared to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

These statistics are corroborated by the publication of FLACSO BRASIL<sup>5</sup>, where Curitiba appears as the 15th most violent city in Brazil in terms of homicides with firearms (Waiselfsz, 2015, p. 30).

According to the Curitiba Police, Homicide Division, 77% of these cases are related to the use of drugs (Aníbal, 2011). This affirms what was said previously: many of these social needs are interconnected.

Violence is not limited to murder, but is manifested in a number of other segments such as robbery, the depredation of public and private property, domestic violence against women, the elderly, and children. The Secretary of Public Security reports that every 15 minutes there is an assault in Curitiba (Ribeiro, 2016). In 2016, 400 cases of aggression against the elderly were registered, 75.1% of them in a family environment. (RPC, 2017).

Data from the Pequeno Principe Hospital, a respected paediatric hospital in Curitiba, shows that the number of cases of suspected violence against the children treated there grew by almost 50% in ten years, from 282 cases to 415 in 2015. In only one year, from 2014 to 2015, there was an increase of 42 occurrences - in 2014 were 373 cases. Nearly one half of this total refers to sexual violence (Ohde, 2016).

When we think of violence we imagine that the only solution is legal enforcement by the police force. However, legal enforcement in Brazil is limited by the bankruptcy of the penitentiary system. Simply stated, the

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<sup>5</sup> The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Flacso) is an international, autonomous and intergovernmental body, founded in 1957 by the Latin American States, which welcomed a recommendation from the 11th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). At present, it is composed of 19 member states that carry out academic activities, research and cooperation modalities in 14 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Spain, as decided by the last meeting of the General Assembly of the entity, in May 2014, in Guatemala. All these units make up the Flacso System. ("Quem somos | Flacso", [s.d.]

prisons are full and have no more room for additional prisoners, and there are no rehabilitation programs. There is a lack of credibility to the system, due to high levels of corruption among the police and even the judicial system. This results in criminals who don't go to jail, or even if they do, corruption still reigns. This is often seen among inmates who continue as "*Capos*" of the Old Italian mafia while behind bars.

In this sense, one can almost hear the groaning for help, the cry for transformation, and see the need for hope to provide answers for a failed society and chaotic social structures. Again, the church has a divine response when it realizes that the gospel can enter the situation with transformation where the apparatus of the state can only enter the situation with restraint. In fact, the church is already present in these villages, slums and hills and they can help in the reconstruction of values and of life itself. The church is a natural agent of change, a response from God himself, for the transformation of a culture of crime culture into a culture of community. Society cries out for the church to get involved with the city's problems. Society wants the church to not just preach about the problems, but to take God's answer to those who are lost and oppressed by demonized structures such as have been described here.

Concerning domestic violence, in all its variations, the church is certainly in a position to carry out a response of grace and transformation. Many of these cases are shrouded in mantles of family secrets. There is shame and protection. It is difficult to expose abuses and even more difficult to expose oneself publicly. This is why pastoral action, or the action of spiritual leaders, is often welcomed and seen as a response to an otherwise hidden cry for help in many cases.

If we look at the preventative role that teaching, values formation and even walking alongside one another through life's challenges, is developed and implemented by the church, one can certainly see how the relevance of the church is demonstrated.

#### 4.2.1.3. Endemic Corruption:

Corruption in Brazil is an endemic disease, as it permeates all spheres of society. According to the classification of the World Economic Forum, Brazil is ranked 4th in the listing of most corrupt countries in the world, following behind Venezuela, Bolivia and Chad ("World Economic Forum - Competitiveness rankings", 2016). The scandals revealed by the operation "Lava Jato"<sup>6</sup>, based in the city of Curitiba, made what was popular knowledge, something public and notorious for the whole nation. On the other hand, the citizens of Curitiba have experienced a sense of pride as a result of these investigations in their city. This is due primarily to the tenacity of the investigators led by Attorney Deltan Dalagnol and the firmness of Judge Sérgio Moro which generated a sense of fear of trembling among this powerful group in Brazil. This point is illustrated by ex-President Lula, who quite sarcastically called our city the "*Republic of Curitiba*", as if it were, in fact, another country, or at the very least, another Brazil.

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<sup>6</sup> **Operation Lava Jato (Car Wash)** is a set of ongoing investigations by the Brazilian Federal Police, which carried out more than a thousand warrants for search and seizure, temporary arrest, preventive detention and coercive conduct, related to the establishment of a money laundering scheme involving billions of reais in bribes and payoffs. The operation began on March 17, 2014 and has 41 operational phases, authorized by Judge Sérgio Moro from the federal branch of Curitiba, during which more than 100 people were arrested and sentenced. The investigation includes crimes of active and passive corruption, fraudulent management, money laundering, criminal organization, obstruction of justice, fraudulent exchange operation and receipt of undue advantage. According to investigations by the Lava Jato Task Force, those involved in the scandal include administrative members of the state-owned oil company Petrobras, politicians of the largest parties in Brazil, including presidents of the Republic, presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate, and governors of states, as well as entrepreneurs of large Brazilian companies.

Behind corruption is what we call the “*jeitinho*” or the “Brazilian way”, which can be defined as follows:

the way, to find a way, the way to find an answer, an exit, to a situation that in general is not wanted or cannot be faced; is to get rid of a situation; is to make things go according to one's desires; is to close your eyes to situations that may harm the individual; is to circumvent the norms; is to take advantage of a situation; In other words, it is to make way for things to happen as it is wanted.(Rega, 2000, p. 42)

In Brazil between the can and the cannot we find this “way”, a way to reconcile interests and to circumvent the rigor of the law. What we want is to find the junction between the can and the cannot which allows all sectors of society to operate a legal system that almost always has nothing to do with social reality. The way calls for the emergence of specialists who may be differently nominated as: trickster, dispatcher, lobbyist etc. Most of the time this person is seen as a type of godfather, a mediator between the law and the person, who can find the solution to my problem (DaMatta, 1984, p. 83–87).

The “way” is the “*caixa 2*” of a company which results in extra profits (an illegal means of internal accounting by which funds are siphoned off for fraudulent and illegal purposes and companies gain) Other examples include running the red light at night, because it is very dangerous to stop with so many thieves on the streets; trying to find a way to always get along in everything; it is the so-called Law of Gerson<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The expressions “Gerson effect” or “Gerson law” are used today by the Brazilian people to say that one wants to take advantage of something. These expressions arose from 1976 due to a series of twelve commercials for the cigarette Vila Rica, transmitted during three years in the written and spoken press. The protagonist of this series was the then Brazilian soccer player , Gerson Nunes de Oliveira.(Rega, 2000, p. 82)

According to Trigueiro the “Brazilian way” has its origins in the very formation of the Brazilian people:

Joining the social conditions of the colonizer who ventured overseas - devoid of ties, family, planning and standards - to the extraordinary process of miscegenation that occurred in the land discovered among whites, Indians, and blacks - non-contemporary contemporaries, from anthropophagous Tupis to exiled criminals, from feudal nobles to African slaves -, we will have a sample of decisive factors in the formation of a culture with enormous plasticity. In addition to these interweaving of disparate ethnicities and customs, logistical difficulties to occupy a continental territory without means of communication, and administered according to the centralizing and despotic Iberian tradition, also provided varied social behaviours, legal or not, to overcome challenges and unforeseen (Trigueiro, 2009, p. 219).

Faced with this reality of making the Brazilian people see “the way” as social evil because of the *Lava-Jato* Operation, among other examples, and the great opportunity that God is giving us for using Curitiba as the seat of ethical reform, the church, more than ever, needs to be relevant when presenting Christian ethics as an example for moral change in society. There is a hunger and thirst for those who can present practical ethical values for life, be it in the commercial, political, family, or any field of human relations in society.

People do not just want to know, they want to live; they want to mobilize for social transformation. A church that has the courage to position itself ethically with the values of God’s Word will be relevant in this historical moment that the inhabitants of Curitiba and all of Brazil find themselves in.



#### **4.2.1.4. Unemployment:**

The economic crisis that plagues the country is also present in the city of Curitiba ( news article from the newspaper Redação Gazeta do Povo, 2016). The data collected by the IBGE shows that, in Curitiba, the numbers follow the national indices (Ibge, 2017), indicating that 11.5% of the population available for work, has nowhere to work.

The situation is worsened by large companies closing their doors or deactivating units in the city. HSBC bank dismissed more than 3000 specialized staff from its headquarters; these employees were not assimilated into the work force by the Brazilian bank chain, Banco Bradesco in the buy-out. The same was true with the employees of the multinational company, Bosch, that deactivated part of its unit in Curitiba. These workers had a specific, highly qualified role and did not find employment in other companies.

This condition generates the need to adapt to the reality of the market, professional requalification, new learning of family economy, and synergy of the whole family for the sustenance of the house. In some cases, this might even include reversal of roles previously established in those families. Therefore, the issues are not only financial, but also psychological and relational.

Once again, the church can be relevant when it uses its networks to facilitate re-entry into the labour market, when it supports the family in finding synergy, and a new economy with a decrease in the standard of living and also in the change of familial roles. The ability to demonstrate the values of God's Word, to build a sense of community, to extend a helping hand, not merely in assistance or welfare, although at times it needs to do so, will certainly make the church relevant in the life of a community plagued by unemployment.

#### **4.2.1.5. Life on the Streets:**

One of the problems of any metropolis is the "homeless", men, women and even children who wander the streets of cities and sleep in the open, or

under the marquees of buildings and stairways of churches. They are present, yet often seem invisible, simply because we do not know how to solve the problem.

Usually when we think about attacking this situation we imagine that the reality is so great that we cannot solve it. In order to debunk this myth and call for the help of society, especially the churches in our city, the municipal government of Curitiba developed research and disseminated the data to show that it is possible to find a solution to this social reality.

The survey revealed that there were 1,715 people living on the street: 89% male, 11% female; 60% are in the 25-44 age group; 58% declared themselves from another city or state, while 42% are from Curitiba; 55% have close relatives in the city. When asked about the reasons that led them to their situation on the street, the four main reasons were: involvement with drugs, 27%; alcohol, 24.7%; family conflicts, 22.3%; and unemployment, 9.9%.

The authorities of our city recognize the importance of the church's involvement in this area. They are encouraging churches to work in cooperation with governmental services so that these people can regain their sense and see themselves as valued citizens.

#### **4.2.2. Spiritual Needs:**

When we look at the spiritual needs of humanity that point us to the pursuit of eternal salvation, meaning of life and understanding of their life's purpose and mission, we deal with the same theme that researchers used in describing the recovery of drug addicts: we are trying to help humanity find "God's design for each individual". If we cannot statistically prove a spiritual need, we can certainly demonstrate that it is somehow present in the psychological, social, and even ecological conflicts that each person in their social context faces.

There is no other organization than the church, the body of Christ instituted by God, to respond to these demands. But, it is possible that the church has lost its relevance in some contexts. This is not because it does

not have God's answers to the spiritual needs of modern or postmodern humanity, but it may be because it attempts to present God's answers decontextualized from the needs of this modern and postmodern world.

Therefore, one of the great challenges of a church that wants to be relevant in the 21st century is to know the needs of those in your neighbourhood and seek to bring God's solutions to those needs. The Church that does so will certainly impact the society in which it is inserted with the incarnational gospel and the power of God for all who believe.

#### **4.2.2.1. Salvation:**

I want to emphasize here that evangelism is the focus of holistic mission, for without it everything else we do is meaningless when we look at it from the perspective of eternity. It is reconciliation with God that allows us a true reconciliation with ourselves, with others and with nature itself. It is the redemption of all creation in Christ, including man, which gives meaning to the existence of the Church, without which the church would have no relevance. (Snyder & Scandrett, 2016, p. 12–13)

In Christ, there is a call to the people of God to be a healing agent and community of compassion and restoration of all creation toward God.

The Church becomes relevant when it is an agent of healing at all levels of the redemptive work of God, even though the totality of healing can only come about at the return of Jesus.

#### **4.2.2.2. Spiritual Growth:**

The Church is spiritually relevant not only when it proclaims salvation in Christ Jesus, but also when it understands its mission of discipleship. Just as Jesus taught by means of relationship with his followers (Morgan, 1897, p. 11), the church helps each follower of Christ to experience in a practical way the values of his faith.

It goes beyond offering biblical knowledge or even a pedagogical program; biblical discipleship helps people follow Jesus in every situation because Jesus is the real “program” (Bonhoeffer, 2015, p. 19).

He wants us to follow him, personally, affectively and practically so that knowledge becomes the experience and ardour of one's faith .

This type of discipleship helps each follower of Christ understand what it means to follow Christ whether as a worker in a factory, or a family man, or a merchant in the city. Discipleship is what connects biblical truth more concretely to the context of the time and place of those who live the faith. (Bonhoeffer, 2015, p. xxiv).

A Church that is not relevant in the area of discipleship runs the risk of becoming, as we have seen in previous chapters, a mere cultural depository, a patron of popular and nominal religion, or a social club.

#### **4.2.2.3. Missions:**

A third aspect of a church's spiritual relevance is its level of engagement in missions. Missions exists since eternity, was revealed in the Garden of Eden, confirmed in Abraham and commanded by Jesus in the New Testament. Missions is from God and we are supporters of his mission (Mejía & Carvalho, 2006).

A relevant church is missionary. It understands that the meaning of its existence is the engagement in the work of God on this earth in all its dimensions.

It exists to make a difference, to present a living and transforming faith, to proclaim salvation and the healing of all creation in all its spheres. It is to be present where Jesus would be today, for we are the living body of Christ on earth. Through the church Jesus is manifested in a concrete way to humanity. A church that has lost its sense of mission is dying and has no sense of relevance.

#### **4.2.3. Psychological Needs:**

##### **4.2.3.1. Family:**

Problems in the family are numerous and varied. Among the list of problems are divorce and marital separation. In the year 2015 in Curitiba, there were a total of 3,557 divorces and separations registered and 10,731

marriages registered (Ibge, 2015). Of the 780,000 registered unions recorded in the last decade, 30% were civil unions having no type of civil or religious ceremony. This type of informal relationship represented, according to the 2010 census, the option of choice of 235,000 residents of Curitiba (G1, 2012b).

This type of fluid union has generated a fluid type of paternity, where 12.8% of families with children are cared for and supported by only one parent (Ibge, 2016).

Other problems are also frequent, such as domestic violence and drug addiction, as we have already mentioned in the data concerning social issues.

As we look at this data we see how the values of the God's Kingdom are tremendously relevant because they lead us to seek committed relationships and challenge us to build families that can leave a moral legacy in the lives of our children.

#### **4.2.3.2. Suicide:**

On April 19, 2017 revealed a problem that was hidden in the context of the families. On this day 7 teenagers attempted suicide motivated by the game Blue Whale<sup>8</sup>.

But official data from 2015 indicate that Curitiba has approximately 5 suicides per 100,000 inhabitants and they appear as the fourth largest cause of death among external causes.

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<sup>8</sup> The "blue whale game," which has become a matter of concern in different countries, consists of a series of 50 daily challenges sent to the participant by a "healer." There are simple tasks such as drawing a blue whale on a sheet of paper to other much more morbid, such as cutting the lips or piercing the palm of the hand several times. As a final challenge, the player must kill himself. <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/policia-investiga-sete-tentativas-de-suicidio-de-adolescentes-em-curitiba-21224871> Accessed in 06/26/2017

The records show that the majority of suicide cases occur in males as can be seen in the following table (Savaris, 2015).

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
2002	58	76.3	18	23.7	76	100.0
2003	65	75.6	21	24.4	86	100.0
2004	67	69.8	29	30.2	96	100.0
2005	58	65.2	31	34.8	89	100.0
2006	68	70.1	29	29.9	97	100.0
2007	59	79.7	15	20.3	74	100.0
2008	51	67.1	25	32.9	76	100.0
2009	23	54.8	19	45.2	42	100.0
2010	39	66.1	20	33.9	59	100.0
2011	55	75.3	18	24.7	73	100.0
2012	55	68.7	25	31.3	80	100.0
2013	55	66.3	28	33.7	83	100.0
2014	41	736.2	15	26.8	56	100.0
2015	70	76.1	22	23.9	92	100.0

**Figure 11 Suicides in Curitiba**

However, the number of suicide attempts, self-inflicted wounds or mutilations reported in that year was 1514 cases, 80% of which occurred among adolescents age 15 and over (Savaris, 2015).

These figures show people crying out for help, hoping someone who can hear them. They are truly sheep without a shepherd, having been closely sheared by life.

Certainly, the church can and should act with relevance not only by proclaiming the gospel message but by treating the wounds of the soul of those whose lives have become hopeless.

#### **4.2.4. Environmental Needs:**

As we have seen in previous chapters, environmental needs, or creation care, has only been cited as part of the Church's mission very recently. Although the doctrine of Christian stewardship dealt with the subject, it seems to me that it does not seem so urgent, or even especially relevant to a church

that was still discussing whether or not social action was a mission of the church. This was evidenced in the first Lousane Conference where the predominant eschatology did not even encourage prayer for world peace, for worse it became, the faster Jesus would return.

Global warming and the reality of how man has destroyed the planet has led society as a whole to rethink the role of the church in the context of creation care. I have to confess, that until recently, this was not a ministerial concern for me. However, I have been awakened to the role of relevance that the church can have in raising awareness and coordinating relevant actions in this regard.

#### **4.2.4.1. Garbage:**

I want to highlight the issue of garbage, as this is a problem of the whole metropolitan region. Where can we put all the garbage we produce? Considered by many as the "Ecological Capital" of Brazil, Curitiba has faced serious problems with the city's solid waste management. From the closing of garbage dumps to the low level of public participation in recycling campaigns, the problems add up and ask for an urgent solution (Simon, 2011) <sup>9</sup>



Figure 12 Environmental problems in the garbage dumps

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<sup>9</sup> <https://portoimagem.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/2797-610x370.jpg> accessed in 06/26/2017

To get an idea of the size of the problem, only 5.7% of the waste produced in Curitiba is separated for recycling, and only 57% of that is effectively recycled (Felix, 2016).

Certainly, the church can be relevant in this matter when it teaches, mobilizes, and practices selective garbage collection as part of its vision of environmental mission and creation care.

#### **4.3. Praxeological applications – case studies of churches that are relevant:**

In order to demonstrate the relevance of the church in the contexts presented, I will describe some of the projects developed by the First Baptist Church of Curitiba.

##### **4.3.1. Drug Addiction:**

###### **4.3.1.1. Project Reap:**

This project is a therapeutic community founded on May 16, 2003 by deacons Makenson and Claudia Santos, with financial resources from their own company. The purpose of the project is to provide shelter, treatment and rehabilitation for people suffering from chemical dependency. The church provides support for the director, gives the philosophical direction of the institution. Through cooperation with professionals committed to the gospel from the fields of psychiatry, psychology, pedagogy and pastoral counselling, designs the program of recovery. The program aims to "rebuild life" through the values of the gospel. The target of the program is not only those who are chemical dependent, but also includes their families. Family members are often overwhelmed by the drug drama and this has generated a series of other problems. As a result, a process of family chaplaincy has been implemented that involves counselling and home visits during the period of hospitalization and treatment.

The results are surprising. We have already received 1484 hospitalizations and the recovery rate is 60% of those who complete the treatment and remain drug free one year after discharge.



#### **4.3.1.2. Tough Love:**

Tough Love is another project with the objective of dealing with the issue of drug abuse. In working with those with chemical addictions, we have found that in many cases, the addict resisted treatment and the family did not know how to handle issues within the family. This project trained leaders and welcomed others to the meetings of "Tough Love", an organization that offers support and guidance for the families of dependents and also for people with inappropriate behaviour. Through meetings based on mutual help that develops precepts for family organization through twelve basic, ethical and spiritual principles (Biancheti, 2016).

In addition to training leaders, many of the church's small group (cells) became involved. Many of these felt called to embrace members of the community who were suffering. They welcomed them into the program, allowing them to be loved and cared for spiritually in the midst of the battle they faced.

#### **4.3.1.3. Narcotics Anonymous:**

In the same way, we challenge church members who have recovered from addiction to become familiar with the organization's processes.<sup>10</sup> In this way, they can be able to help those who struggle with addiction and either have no desire or are unable to go through a long period of hospitalization for treatment. They also can encourage others who are already "clean", to continue to stay clean.

The purpose is not merely to provide a meeting place for the group at the church, but to become involved in their lives. The purpose is to befriend, to disciple, to lead to life-on-life involvement in the small group. We understand that God uses the intentional investment of a life in another person's life to

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<sup>10</sup>For more information about the organization access:  
[http://www.na.org.br/o\\_que\\_e\\_narcoticos\\_anonimos\\_problemas\\_com\\_drogas\\_nos\\_podemos\\_ajudar.html](http://www.na.org.br/o_que_e_narcoticos_anonimos_problemas_com_drogas_nos_podemos_ajudar.html) accessed in 06/26/2017

make a difference and bring transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **4.3.1.4. Celebrating Recovery:** <sup>11</sup>

In the programs, Tough Love and Narcotics Anonymous we follow the guidelines of the organizations that created them and the evangelistic activity that takes place in and through those relationships. This happens by way of personal discipleship and in the cells and small groups. But, in Celebrating Recovery, we approach this with a spiritual program of the church that deals with interior healing (healing of the soul) and liberation from addictions through the Word of God, communion with the Lord, accountability to our support group and constant revision of life. One of the blessings of this program is that we see ourselves in the same condition as those who must overcome their inner obstacles. While that seem insurmountable to our eyes, with the Lord's help we may face them.

The effects in terms of growth, maturity and grace to address personal weaknesses can be measured by the number of participants today. After 3 years of activities, without any advertising other than word of mouth in the church, every Thursday more than 500 people in 72 groups of 7 people gather together.

#### **4.3.1.5. Prevention among Children, Teenagers and Young Adults:**

As previously noted in the statistical data, experimenting with drugs starts very early. For this reason, we believe that the best strategy we can develop is one of prevention. This is true not only pertaining to the issue of drugs, but especially in introducing the power of grace and the values of faith as early as possible to our children, teens and young adults. This program is based on discipleship, accountability and passing on the mission.

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<sup>11</sup> For more information access the video: <https://youtu.be/RD5q7HHvDT8> accessed in 06/26/2017

Currently, we have about 3000 children through age nine enrolled in the cells and small groups. Among teenagers and young adults, 70% of them are the only believers in their families. They are the ones evangelizing their parents.

Prevention and education projects against drugs are taken into the schools, but it is not the pastors who are the speakers. Rather, it is these boys and girls who boldly speak in the auditoriums of their schools to 250 or 300 teens. They organize and lead cells and small groups as the fruit of this work, they disciple the new converts.

In May 2017, at a service commemorating the 103rd anniversary of the first Baptist Church of Curitiba, one of these teens, Felipe Gabardo, a 15 year old, preached to an audience of about 1500 other teens from various schools in the region. There were hundreds of decisions.

The university network has reached out to 28 universities in the city with weekly meetings and personal discipleship.

I have realized that living, vibrant faith and the values of the kingdom are the greatest prevention that we can offer society.

#### **4.3.1.6. A Place for Life and Music:**

This is a program offered by the church's praise and worship ministry that aims to use music as a social tool particularly geared towards at-risk children. Communities controlled by drug trafficking, are particularly targeted for this ministry in hopes of offering a different perspective for life for those inhabitants.

The project supported by entrepreneurs, social organizations, public schools and First Baptist Church of Curitiba. Currently, there are 270 children participating in the program. Example of the fruit produced by this project, are the orchestra of the state-run school *Senhorinha* that boasts 100 members and the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra of Curitiba.

In addition to music lessons, children participate in life mentoring provided under the leadership of the project's chaplain. Cultural encounters bring not

only music, but also the Word of God to families and to the schools that receive them.

After eight years of activities our students graduate from high school. So far, eight of them have been awarded university scholarships. Several of these boys and girls were previously known as “*aviõeszinho*”, translated literally as “small planes”<sup>12</sup> or couriers in the drug trafficking activities in their neighbourhoods.

#### **4.3.1.7. A Place for Life and Dance:**

Following the same philosophy of the project, A Place for Life and Music, the project, A Place for Life and Dance, was created for those children who had no musical aptitude. Dance is a very natural artistic expression in the Brazilian culture. Thus, we use ballet as a tool to build social rapport and to build positive relationships. But, we believe that the true transforming element is the power of the gospel.

#### **4.3.2. Violence:**

In the context of violence, our church has developed several programs for social transformation.

##### **4.3.2.1. Chaplaincy in Prisons and Juvenile Detention Centers:**

The church maintains a full-time prison chaplain and supports the work of two others who are supported by our denomination. But these are not the only ones involved in this ministry. There is also a group of volunteers that work in several prisons, including one which is a maximum-security penitentiary. They present the Word of God and the life rehabilitation program that we use in the Reap Project, mentioned previously.

In most Brazilian prisons, inmates are not allowed to work in groups or collaborate collectively. Because of that, the method we use is one of personal discipleship or small groups of up to 5 people. When someone converts to

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<sup>12</sup> Children who are trafficked to take the drug from one place to another.

Christianity, we train that detainee to become a spiritual leader within the prison.

It is interesting to note the respect that the prison authorities have for the work done there. In fact, they recognize that we are one of the few organizations whose purpose is to rehabilitate and reintegrate these citizens into society.

Juvenile detention centers function as prisons designed for minors under the age of eighteen. In some of them it is possible to have closer contact with the detainees that involves celebrations; some even allow us to take food, but this is not the case with all of them. It is wonderful to hear these volunteers talking about each of these children, praying for them as they struggle to they build a new life.

The philosophy of the work is the same in both cases and the methods used are very similar. There are adaptations and modifications made to suit the needs of the different age groups.

#### **4.3.2.2. Half-way House:**

As the ministry was developing and those recently converted to Christianity were being released from jail, a new problem arose. Where would these people live? Where were they going to work? It may seem simple to say that they should seek their families, but in many cases either they no longer had families or their families did not want them. In some cases, if they returned to their families they would simple be re-entering a den crime.

Employment is another problem because if they cannot sustain themselves quickly, the tendency it to return to the practice of crime. Thus, the Half-way House was created in a cooperative effort with our denomination. The Half-way House is run by a pastor who is a member of our church. His purpose is to house the former detainee, help him maintain the disciplines of life and faith, to use his relationship contacts from local churches to help find employment opportunities. In this way, that the social reintegration takes place

at various levels at the same time. Often, marital reconciliation occurs here as well as ministry to other dysfunctional family members.

#### **4.3.2.3. Home for Brazilian Women:**

The Home for Brazilian Women is a social organization of the federal government, administered locally through the City Hall of Curitiba. It is designed to provide assistance to women who are victims of domestic abuse.

There, in a special division of the women's police station, in a special section of the forum, was created the Maria da Penha patrol, a detachment of the municipal police specializing in domestic violence. The infrastructure found there includes social workers, psychologists and temporary shelter for women and children at risk.

Even though we shared common concerns with upper echelons of the public administration, due to ideological reasons, there was resistance from those professionals regarding the role of a religious chaplaincy there, even one that was fully funded by the church. Nevertheless, they had a big problem. They did not have the public funds necessary for the support staff, receptionists, doormen, caretakers of the children, telephone operators, etc. This provided an open door of opportunity for the church to enter. A group of volunteers began to donate time on a weekly basis to fill these roles. They serve as the “chaplains” of that entity in they are the ones who first receive those who are suffering. They are ones who comfort them, who pray with them, and who seek support in the community of faith for the needs of those women. The shelter the women receive is only temporary, but the community is permanent.

#### **4.3.2.4. Support Groups:**

Over time we have discovered that the issue of violence is very broad and that it requires many diverse and specific approaches. Because of this, the church maintains support groups such as ministries specifically geared to needs such sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and legal aid for families in need.

#### **4.3.3. Corruption:**

As for corruption and the “Brazilian way”, what we need is the shock of what Stott called a Christian counterculture (Stott, 1985). This is the culture of the gospel radically conflicting with the culture of “the way”. But how do we do this? Trying to answer this question led us to develop the following programs.

##### **4.3.3.1. Holy Hauer:**

This is a men’s program that meets every Monday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for the purpose of developing Christian ethics in business and family relationships. This is done through lectures offered by experts, business consultants, entrepreneurs, professionals and pastors, who in a practical and objective way, deal with the ethical issues of a society of “the way” from a Christian perspective.

##### **4.3.3.2. Courageously Ethical: 13**

This is an international network of people, companies, organizations and government agencies who are willing to make a formal commitment to live the following values:

- Be completely true in everything I say
- Be faithful to my family ties
- Do nothing out of mere ambition or fraud, but care for the interests of others
- Refuse to raise, accept or pay bribes and encourage others to do the same
- Be diligent without being harsh, and strive to the utmost to be precise and just
- Be a peacemaker
- Do my job with all my heart.

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<sup>13</sup> For grater information consult <http://corajosamenteeticos.com.br/> accessed in 06/26/2017

Be submissive to just and ethical governmental authorities

Remember the poor and needy by investing generously and sacrificing myself for the community at large.

Collaborate with my colleagues to impact our community and our nation ("Statement of Individual Commitment", "Courageously Ethical", [s.d.] )

#### **4.3.3.3. Discipulado Pessoal Com Prestação De Contas:**

We live in an individualistic world where ethics, despite having social effects, is seen as part of each individual's private world. In a way, this concept was brought to the church and therefore it ceased to be a community of faith when it comes to dealing with the ethical deviations of the individual. In Brazil, in some cases, ecclesiastical discipline itself is subject to a legal process.

But, if we want ethical transformation in society we need to start at home. As parents educate their children according to the Kingdom principles and through the church by means of conscious and on-going discipleship. In our church, we decided to use the term mentoring, since many understand the term discipleship as referring to a program of biblical lessons taught to new believers.

Mentoring begins with pastors giving an account of their spiritual, family, and ethical lives to spiritual people who pray for them daily. I have long since chosen ten couples, people of prayer, not necessarily the institutional leadership of the church, and invited them to be my personal intercessors and gave them authority to check up on my life. This mentoring also happens in our cell networks through pastors, supervisors, and cell leaders who mentor each other.

In specific cases, we have experienced and specially trained men and women who adopt people who need more attention on their walk, so that they



can continue to climb one step at a time, and do not get side-tracked in the middle of the journey.

#### **4.3.3.4. Engagement in Popular Movements Aiming at the Ethical**

##### **Transformation of Our Country:**

Prosecutors wrote a document calling for the introduction of various anti-corruption laws called "10 measures against corruption" <sup>14</sup>. When such movements arise, it is necessary for the church to be involved and to understand that this is also part of the mission of transformation. Our silence before sin is a sin of omission. As a result, we have been actively engaged in initiatives that we understand can bless our nation.

#### **4.3.3.5. The Discipleship and the Accountability of Public Servants**

##### **Connected to The Church:**

It is interesting to realize that there are many evangelicals linked to politics, or working and high government levels. Sadly, we see some of them linked to shockingly sordid scandals.

Just as many of them understand that they can ask for our votes, we must also understand that as a church we need to accompany them in their decision-making processes, but especially in their spiritual and ethical life. If the system is as corrupt as we are led to believe, then they need much more help, guidance, prayer, and personal accountability. I have walked alongside our city councilmen, military police commanders, firefighters, state and federal deputies, because I see that this is also part of the mission of the church.

#### **4.3.4. People on the Streets:**

One of the programs recognized by the city hall of Curitiba is called Solidary Soup. It functions basically as a soup kitchen which prepares hot food and distributes it every Tuesday, downtown, centre city to the homeless.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information, see:

<http://www.dezmedidas.mpf.mp.br/apresentacao/artigos> accessed on 06/26/2017

But the soup is only part of the mission; we want to get to know those living on the street and get to know their story. We want to help them get out of the situation they find themselves in on the street.

As some volunteers cook and distribute the hot meal, other volunteers sit at the table with them and begin the work of recovery by building relationships. This is not a single meeting, but sometimes goes on for weeks and months. When the person shows interest in getting off the street, we take them to a recovery center if the problem is drugs; if there are migration issues, we try to provide shelter, documentation, and employment as needed. Often, we help with health care issues, treatment and spiritual issues such as the demonic, and deliverance.

But above all we carry the message that Jesus loves them and has a special plan for their lives. This project has already registered more than 120 people who have left life on the streets. Some of them can be seen in the corridors of the church, as members, perfectly integrated into society and life. If they did not tell their own story one would never know where they came from.

#### **4.3.5. Unemployment:**

Alarming, unprecedented unemployment rates that our nations is experiencing call for quick action by the Church. But what should be we do and how should we do it?

It was in trying to answer this question that several small programs were created. I will only mention some of them: distribution of food baskets, professional requalification in partnership with universities of the city, entrepreneurial courses, courses home businesses, creation of an employment data base supplied with the church members information and working in cooperation with human resources departments of several companies, through this network of solidarity. What we learned is that it is always possible to do something. But, in everything we do we also carry the faith, hope and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **4.3.6. Family Problems:**

We have had two major approaches, the first is proactive and preventative, where we want to avoid evil before it happens. In that light, we have developed several programs and also use several good programs available in the evangelical world. Such as: pre-marital counselling, marital counselling and strengthening marital relationships, parenting courses such as educating children God's way, biblical money management and financial planning, biblical masculinity and femininity, in addition to retreats, lectures, workshops and couple's meetings.

The second approach involves help for those facing of marital struggles by offering a network of counsellors who are willing to mentor those who want help.

#### **4.3.7. Suicide:**

In this area, we have developed a group of volunteer psychologists and psychiatrists who donate time to personalized care not only for those who have attempted suicide, but also for those suffering other emotional or mental disorders. We also offer support groups, as we have already mentioned.

In particular there are two courses we offer that have been tremendously positive for people living with depression. They are: The Immeasurable Love of God, a course that deals with the sense of divine fatherhood and the emotional and relational life of God's children; the second is Repairing the Gaps, which looks at the moral, spiritual and relational holes that generate the feeling of not having truly experienced life. They are all taught through lectures, but involve mentoring in small groups of five to seven people, where the wounds of the soul can be treated.

There is also what we call a life review retreat. This is where a group of about fifty people spend two days re-evaluating their lives and projecting where they would like to come with God's help.

#### **4.3.8. Garbage:**

With regard to garbage, we have developed, together with SESI – PR<sup>15</sup>, training for 600 residents of a community located on Raza Island. The focus is on garbage collection, recycling and composting. We have already reached an agreement with the Municipality of Guarequeçaba concerning the removal of the trash that could not be treated on the Island from the island .

The young people of the Church were used and the project was prepared and supervised by SESI-PR technicians. The highlight was the formation of 25 Mirin Environmental Agents that allowed the culture of the best waste treatment to be maintained by the community itself.

#### **4.3.9. Conclusion:**

Our objective in this chapter was to understand more about the city where we want to be relevant. We first talked about the soul of a Curitibano, a resident of Curitiba. By means of a historical approach we tried to understand the religiosity of Curitiba, how it deals with faith, and which are the prevailing values of faith among the residents.

Then we attempted to find out what were the main needs that call for relevant action on the part of the church, from the perspective of the four basic needs of the humanity: spiritual, psychological, social and environmental as described by Snyder.

We then attempted to demonstrate that the church can be relevant when it seeks to be God's response to the needs of a people at a given time. That is

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<sup>15</sup> Social Service of Industry, created and funded by the employers' union of the industries in July 1946, aims at the humanization of the relations between employers and employees and also the individual improvement and quality of life of the worker, through incentives to good nutrition, literacy, health and hygiene care, culture, leisure and sports. For more information see: <http://www.sesipr.org.br/o-sesi/conheca/FreeComponent20081content169665.shtml>. Accessed on 06/27/2017

why we presented ministries and or actions that First Baptist Church of Curitiba has carried out from a perspective of holistic mission.

In the next chapter our aim is to draw, from all that has been elaborated so far, the conclusions and recommendations regarding the relevance of the church. We will look at how we can apply some of these findings that can be tested in other urban concentrations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

At this point you may be wondering: But what makes a church relevant, after all? The purpose of this chapter is an attempt to answer this question through a systematic organizational analysis of the studies presented in the previous chapters. In this chapter, we will offer some critical and practical. Naturally, our focus is the city of Curitiba. However, I believe that the principles which characterize a church's relevance here could, and should be tested in other contexts. Following are the 12 main aspects of church relevancy as revealed by our systematic analysis.

#### **5.1 Principles which characterize church relevancy:**

##### **5.1.1 A church that develops a transcendental spirituality:**

The search for a transcendental spirituality was a common theme throughout all our research. We found it in the history of the Brazilian Church, both in the mysticism of popular Catholicism and in the Catholic charismatic renewal, in Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism.

On the other hand, though our study of the social sciences we notice that a rationalistic faith that removes the mystical aspect of meeting with the divine from the scope of the practice of this faith, loses its relevance.

Through the biblical images, we saw that the presence of and communion with the Holy Spirit is what gives vitality the body of Christ. Among the theologians, Schleiermacher for example, sees in piety, a transcendent dependence, the essence of all religion. Jaques Ellul take this a step further. He believes that if there is no confrontation of power, where the gospel is a miracle, the city will not convert to the Word. See Jaques Ellul's argument below:

The Gospel miracle is first a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. As a manifestation of power, it is a necessary weapon for the warfare with the power

represented by the city. We can see in it a kind of confrontation between two powers. The city as an expression of the spirit of power, her self a material and spiritual power, is vanquished and convicted only by a manifestation of power (2011, p. 118).

In our description of the soul of Curitiba's citizens we can observe that this transcendent and mystical element of faith is one of the most poignant for the people of our city. They feel deeply moved and thankful when we simply pray for them.

Reflecting on these aspects we can conclude that a relevant church is one that understands, above all things, that it exists to lead people to live an intense, intimate and personal relationship with God, through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This value has a direct effect on:

#### **5.1.1.1 Worship in our church services:**

Worship is more than music, or any other element of the religious service. Worship is more than the practice of a set of principles of a religious tradition. Worship is the response of the individual who has been redeemed by grace and restored to the ultimate purpose of creation and to the purpose of his mission: the glory of the living God who is among his people.

Therefore, as leaders, we need to plan our services in order to lead people to an intense relationship with the living God. We have to think how these activities can build a relevant experience of faith. We need to think how they can help our people to taste something greater: the presence of the living God.

It is interesting to note that this was also one of Schwarz's conclusions in his book, "Natural Church Development," which states that one of the quality

characteristics of a growing church is an inspiring worship service.<sup>1</sup> (1996, p. 30–32)

Worship, that is a response to the presence of the living God among his people, is also a powerful testimony to those who neither know him nor have ever experienced his glory. The marks of the presence, purpose, and power of the wonderful Lord whom we worship, become impregnated in us and are astonishing to those who have never experienced communion with the living God.

If you look at the book of Acts, you will find the church of Jerusalem falling from favor with all the people while simultaneously instilling a sense of a holy fear and awe of the Lord in those who were joining with them. This was because it was impossible to enter into that atmosphere of worship and not perceive the presence of the one who was worshiped among them.

Worship was the great motivation of missions. How could one stop talking about what they were seeing and hearing? In adoration, they entered into the presence of their resurrected savior. Jesus himself taught that the mouth speaks of what the heart contains. Worship is an integral part of missions because it reveals to the skeptics who approach the worshipers, the improbable, the intangible and the unimaginable; the presence of the living God among them.

God is seeking worshipers! Our role is to be his instrument in this process. We are to be a vehicle of spiritual awakening, leading people to this intense relationship with God, in spirit and in truth. But how do we do this?

All our activities need to reflect the search for the living God. They should give testimony to our having met with him; they should reflect a celebration of

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<sup>1</sup> The word "inspiring" needs clarification. It must be understood in the literal sense of "inspiratio" and means the inspiration that comes from the Spirit of God (Schwarz, 1996, p. 31)



his interventions <sup>2</sup> in our past, present and future history; they should reflect an expression of our voluntary surrender in sacrifice of praise. Through these activities an observer should see evidence of the redemption of our culture to the Lord, an intentional conformity to his holiness by submission to his will and an expression of love and service to others in his name. In this sense, we, as a church, are the promoters of a counterculture, a new lifestyle that I call "commitment to worship".

#### **5.1.1.2 Prayer life in a church:**

If we seek a transcendent spirituality, then one of the hallmarks the of a relevant church is its prayer life.

We need to prioritize prayer, to make it an integral part of the lifestyle of each member, as well as of the church as a whole. The blessing and power of prayer needs to be experienced with soul searching intensity.<sup>3</sup>

Reading such statements, you may be thinking that there is no great revelation here. It is true, this is nothing new. But, if we do not intentionally work to develop our prayer life, both personal and corporate, it simply fades away and leaves our hearts cold.

In my ministry, my biggest challenge has been to preserve the integrity of my personal prayer life. I have failed and sinned many times because stagnation and spiritual coldness settle. This illustrates the principle of what happens when we abandon our intentional search for the living Christ in us.

A few years ago, I took part in a postgraduate course on the history and theology of revivals. It was interesting to note that the great revivals of history, especially in the United States, had diametrically opposed theological lines.

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to remember that the research also revealed that the rediscovery of the public witness of God's acts is part of the incentive to seek this transcendent communion. See page 87.

<sup>3</sup> Jr 29:13 And you will be searching for me and I will be there, when you have gone after me with all your heart.

The big question was, what did they have in common? The finding of our research group was that the search for God, the longing for his presence, his touch and his action were the what each movement had in common. The reasons for their quest stemmed from different theological substratum, but the target of the quest when found was manifested by outpouring of grace that saves, transforms, and produces growth.

The key question we need to answer is: How can a church that seeks to be relevant through a transcendent spirituality incorporate the concept of prayer as a lifestyle for both the believer and the community? Here are some suggestions:

**5.1.1.2.1 Help the Leaders of your Church to make Prayer an Integral Part of their Lifestyle:**

If we wish to teach the church to learn to pray, then we who are the leaders of the flock need to be model prayer. The persuasive words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon reflect the need for prayer to be a priority in the lives of church leaders.

“Of course, the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians else he were disqualified for the office he has undertaken. If you as ministers are not very prayerful you are to be pitied. If you become lax in sacred devotion, not only will you need to be pitied but your people also, and the day cometh in which you will be ashamed and confounded. Our seasons of fastings and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven’s gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central glory” (Spurgeon, 1905).

#### **5.1.1.2.2 Develop a prayer ministry in the church:**

The creation of a prayer ministry, one that permeates all other ministries, is a powerful tool that church can use to motivate its members to experience prayer as a life style. In our church, the mission of this ministry has been outlined in the following terms: The purpose of the prayer ministry is to lead people to experience the power of God through their prayer life, to love and serve others through intercession, and to cry out to the Holy Spirit for the people and peoples who need to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

#### **5.1.1.2.3 Prayer room:**

When we prioritize dedicated space for prayer on the physical property of the church campus, we are demonstrating physically that prayer has importance. It becomes a natural environment of the ministry of prayer and a place where people can go, both to pray and to receive prayer at any time.



**Figure 13 Prayer room**

#### **5.1.1.2.4 Provide opportunity for people to receive intercession during worship services:**

This is a very important aspect of Brazilian culture, people yearn for someone to pray for them. Usually, in traditional churches, this is done collectively at a specific time during the worship service. I have learned that it is important to listen to other's sufferings, to get involved with their pain. I invite people to come forward to receive prayer. Then, brothers from the church join them, ask how they can pray for them, lay hands on them and have a time of prayer together.

#### **5.1.2 The evangelistic church:**

A second important characteristic of a relevant church is evangelism. This finding also appeared with many nuances throughout the research provided here.

According to the social sciences evangelism is a reason for strengthening the religious consciousness by the fact that adherence to the group is the fruit of a personal decision and not merely repetition of a tradition.

This same principle is repeated **on page forty-seven** where we saw the progress of both mission evangelicals and of the CCR<sup>4</sup> movement. It appeared again in the images of the church where we came to realize that we can only be God's people if we listen to his call to identify ourselves with Jesus Christ by faith (Rm 9.24-26; 2.29; Fl 3.3).

We also see this principle through our study of the theologians. We observed this principle especially in Calvin by identifying the role of the church as the mother of all believers. Moltmann too emphasizes this when he states that the relevance of the church in postmodernity is its mission of leading people to return to God.

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<sup>4</sup> Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

When we look at the soul of Curitiba's residents we see it them the need to live an intellectual faith, something that is the result of thought and a personal elaboration. Faced with these findings I would like to make some practical reflections about the church that evangelizes.

#### **5.1.2.1 The evangelistic church is the one that understands its focus is on the reconciling mission of God:**

One of the major problems faced by any person or organization is the loss of focus of their mission, to lose focus of the reason for their existence. Every time this happens there is a great danger of losing the sense of existence itself.

A good example of this is the *Young Men's Christian Association* (YMCA) created at the time of the great evangelist, D.L. Moody.<sup>5</sup> Used as a tool to reach young people for Jesus through sports, it later lost its vision. It became a club and because of that it no longer exists (at least not with the same purpose) in many locations.

Looking at recent history, I recognize that in some parts of the world the church has lost its relevance when it forgot that its focus is on the reconciling mission that God has entrusted to it. For some people, this may seem a redundant to affirm that reconciliation with God is the focus of the church's mission, but this reconciliation, according to Snyder & Scrandt, is holistic and involves man with God, with himself, with his neighbor, and with nature (2016, p. 112–128).

In any case the essence of the church's mission is to glorify and manifest God among men. When we lose this focus, we lose our mission.

See Antônio Carlos Barro's defense of this principle:

The church is on mission in these two dimensions: to glorify God and to manifest God through his multiple

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<sup>5</sup> For more information see: <https://www.slideshare.net/batore06/a-biografia-do-evangelista-moody> , accessed in 06/27/2017.

ministries ... God's ultimate desire is that people from all over the world know who him and that he be glorified as God in the midst of all peoples... Glorifying God is the ultimate mission of the people of God ... We can then conclude that the ultimate reason for the existence of the church is to glorify God ... While in the world, the church is called to participate in the redemptive project of God, the *Missio Dei* ... . It is in this redemption of life for God that the church develops its penultimate missions. Penultimate here does not mean of minor importance. The implication here is regarding the time (Kairos) of these ministries, since they are realized while the church is a pilgrim in this world ..... The problem of believers is that there is no such understanding in the community, consequently their activities are inside the walls of the church and the resources are likewise used, for the most part, for the comfort and well-being of the members of the community. There is little left for ministerial practice with those outside.(2013, p. 84–87)

A Church to be relevant cannot lose the focus of its mission, and must, as the minister of reconciliation, glorify and manifest the glory of God.

#### **5.1.2.2 A church that makes daily life the "locus" of living and proclaiming the faith:**

The second practical reflection it is about where we live and proclaim faith. It seems irrelevant but for many people, faith is lived in the temple! The evangelizing church is the people who, inserted in all contexts of life, manifest in a practical way their faith and proclaim reconciliation with God.

In this context evangelism is not an ecclesiastical event, but a lifestyle of the members of the community of faith.

Michael Green, in analyzing evangelism in the early church, made the following historical observation:

One of the most impressive aspects of evangelization in the early days were the people who were engaged in it. Transmitting the faith was not considered the privilege of the most dedicated or officially appointed evangelists. Evangelization was the prerogative and obligation of every member of the church. We have seen apostles and itinerant prophets, noble and poor, intellectuals and fishermen, all participating with enthusiasm of the main task conferred by Christ to his church. The common people of the church regarded it as their profession; Christianity was above all a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries. The clergy of the church also considered evangelization as their responsibility: bishops and elders, church doctors like Origen and Clement, philosophers like Justin and Tacian, all had the proclamation of the Gospel as their main concern. The spontaneous commitment of the whole Christian community gave a tremendous boost to the movement from its beginning (1984, p. 335–336).

These brothers simply lived their faith, shared the joy of knowing the Risen Christ. They could hardly contain themselves, they had to tell others about the miracles their Savior had done in the last days.

They simply spoke of what filled their hearts.<sup>6</sup> If one's heart is filled with Jesus and his grace, testimony will become a natural and spontaneous occurrence. Our lifestyle will be one of worship and will be a reflection of the abundant life that overflows our heart.

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<sup>6</sup> Mt 12:34

One of the most impressive evangelistic tools of our time has been the cells groups. Here we see community outside the walls of the church and takes the proclamation of the Word into the homes in the community, to the workplace, to the school, to the sidewalks, to the cafes of the city and makes every believer an agent of proclamation commissioned by God and by church. In our church, I have seen true miracles. I have seen children gathering under trees in the schoolyard to share their faith with other children. I have seen businessmen stopping their work to pray and share their faith with their employees. I have seen families inviting friends and relatives over just to share their faith with boldness and deep solidarity.

In the face of this reality, living a mature life of faith is essential. These agents of faith are accountable every day for what they live and what they proclaim to those who know them so well.

#### **5.1.2.3 A church concerned about sharing the faith with the next generation:**

An evangelistic church cannot lose sight of the challenge of communicating faith to the next generation. When we study the history of revivals we find that some of them have not lasted beyond the next generation. The faith movement has aged and has not been renewed.

A few years ago, I was in Korea for a worldwide evangelization consultation. Eighty pastors from all over the world were present, among them pastors from some of the largest Presbyterian, Methodist churches, and also the Full Gospel Church of Seoul. Among a lot of other subjects, we talked about the concerns of the next generation. They recognized with sadness that they were losing young people in their churches.

This is a dangerous moment experienced by many churches. How easy it is to lose a generation! In our church, we found that the times of transitions were especially challenging; they were a time when many left the church. When a child, teenager, youth, young adult or young married couple made a transition of ecclesiastical activities from one age group to another age group,



some dropped out. It would appear that they lost the feelings of community and belonging.

When we realized this, we revised some things, making the transition times special moments of challenge, discipleship, life, mission and faith. The results were surprising.

Another thing we learned was that if we want to win the next generation we need to invest in the formation of leaders in this generation. They are the best agents of proclamation, as they speak the same language, they experience the same problems, they understand the needs of their generation and they can transmit God's answers to their generation.

We teach Christian parents that in order to reach their children they need to not only instill doctrine or tradition into their hearts, but they also need to help them to know the power of God in their lives. This is done by having experiences of faith together in prayer, experiencing God in their lives, through the conviction of the Word and through Christian service. We challenge them to experience the power of God together with their children.

#### **5.1.2.4 A church that makes the practice of discipleship its most powerful weapon:**

We live in the era of outsourcing. We outsource the education of our children and the care of the elderly to caregivers and schools. We outsource missionary work to agencies or specialized people. So, it is not difficult to understand why we want to outsource spiritual parenthood as well.

Discipleship and mentoring are essential elements of Christian parenting. People who are born again in Jesus Christ need spiritual fathers and mothers to accompany them on their journey of faith. They need others who are mature who can help them face the new challenges of their faith and help them work through the conflicts of a new world view. They need others who can help them put into practice what they have learned and experienced through their years of Christian service.

Discipleship is not just a set of lessons given to the new convert. It is a process by where we teach, love, do life together, and give and receive mutual accountability. A lack of discipleship creates immature believers.

#### **5.1.2.5 A church that uses specific ministries to reach homogeneous groups:**

For many years the School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, under the leadership of Donald McGavran<sup>7</sup>, has taught the homogeneous unity principle. He stated: "Homogeneous unity is a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common"(2001, p. 114).

The principle of homogeneous unity observes that people feel more comfortable among others who are like themselves.

In our church, we recognize the power of strategies for specific groups, so we encourage the development of different ministries, such as those that are geared specifically for: blind, deaf, mentally handicapped people, athletes, lawyers, teachers, teens, youth, couples and more.

#### **5.1.2.6 A church that uses all means of communication for the proclamation of the faith:**

Finally, an evangelistic church is one that understands that all the available resources can and should be used in the context of the mission of reconciliation to reach each current generation. This would seem to be a natural principle, but when we study the history of missions we find that although it seems natural, it has sometimes been the subject of much discussion in the Church.

. Adoniran Judson was tremendously criticized by his first mission partners in China simply because he wore the Chinese-style clothing and hair style as a mean of drawing closer to them in order to communicate the faith.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald\\_McGavran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_McGavran) accessed in 06/29/2017

Today we are living at a time of great technological advance and we must not miss the opportunity to carry the gospel through these revolutionary resources.

Note the scope of these tools. Our Saturday and Sunday services are viewed by more than 30,000 people on YouTube and Facebook channels. Our radio programs are on 24 different stations spread throughout Brazil. We have five hours of time each day on a local TV network. We encourage our members and followers to share messages, thoughts, texts, and programs through their social and personal networks.

The Reformers had only the printing press as their mass communication resource, but God has placed at our disposal numerous tools to make the gospel travel faster and farther to all people.

#### **5.1.3 A church grounded in the Word:**

The third principle of a relevant church is that it is grounded in the Word. A church grounded in the word enables its members to understand and articulate conceptual elements of their own faith. All of our research affirmed this principle.

We saw this principle applied in our study of history when Catholics felt the need to re-catholicize the Catholic people in Brazil who did not what it really meant to be Catholic, now why it was important. Another example we noted was among the mission evangelicals who founded churches by studying the Bible in Sunday Schools taught by lay people.

Social scientists have shown us that one of the elements that make a church relevant is the capacity of the church to strengthen the identity of the individuals in its society. One of the tools for strengthening identity is the conviction that the concepts of faith are produced through the free examination of the scriptures.

The biblical images of the body of Christ, God's people and community of faith have taught us several things: Growth is a natural part of life. Fidelity to the God of the Bible is an integral part of our calling. Developing and

practicing the ability to propagate, maintain, strengthen and experience our faith is what characterizes us as a community.

With Calvin, we learned that a church, is a school of holiness, by means of the Word. With Moltmann, we were challenged as a church, to rediscover the Kingdom of God in ourselves by the Word.

We have also seen that while the heart of the citizen of Curitiba is touched by the desire to meet God and by relationships, it is only through the conviction of the Word that one understands the meaning of transforming faith. In light of all this, we can conclude that a relevant church is one which is grounded in the Word and enables its members to understand and articulate conceptual elements of their own faith. If we really want to be like this there are some values that need to be pursued:

#### **5.1.3.1 The Word of God is our ultimate authority:**

In a world where there are no *absolutes* we need to understand that there is absolute truth revealed in the Word of God. This absolute truth guides all things. Without it, all the effort of contextualization runs the risk of becoming religious syncretism and our doctrine and ethics will become circumstantial.

Recently I had two friendly meetings with the rabbi of our city, he visited our church for a colloquy and I visited the synagogue. We talked about the Torah and how the Jews understood some precepts of the law and he stated that although the law was one, there were so many different interpretations that it was impossible to know what was really true. I was left to reflect on what he told me and I thought that many evangelicals today think in the same way and consequently are led to seek answers through various doctrines, but the relevant church is one that can confidently affirm what the Word of God says and therefore makes the Word its ultimate authority.

#### **5.1.3.2 A church that helps its members to develop conceptual elements of faith:**

A second value for the relevant church is to be able to help each member develop conceptual elements of their own faith. I believe that this begins in the

pulpit of the church through biblical, preferably expository, preaching. The teaching must also continue in small groups where those values announced from the pulpit are applied to life, giving opportunity for their personification.

But it cannot stop there. I believe that the whole church must have a Christian education program focused on the transformation of each believer into a minister of the kingdom of God on this earth. For me, the key is the intentionality of the process. The program does not exist to generate mere knowledge, but to develop practical mission experiences and opportunities to connect knowledge gleaned from the Scriptures to practical application

and the elaboration of the reason for the faith one practices.

#### **5.1.4 A Prophetic Church:**

The fourth principle of relevance is its prophetic ability. The church must be the transcendent consciousness of a society.

This principle was found in the values of holistic mission, in the social sciences, in the ethics of the community of the saints, and in the writings of Augustine, Calvin Moltmann and Barro. This principle points to the following actions of relevance:

##### **5.1.4.1 The ethical conscience of society:**

Social scientists see, as one of the relevant characteristics of the church, its ethical ability to provide transcendent regulatory elements for the value judgments necessary to sustain life and society. They also believe that legal institutions, in order to function in a fair and coherent manner, need a moral foundation stemming from transcendent, and therefore, religious values.

I believe that when Jesus taught us that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world he was challenging us to be the ethical conscience of society. We are to be the City of God in the midst of the City of Man, showing what he can build or destroy.

This awareness is born of a Christian worldview that understands that the best that can happen in human fellowship is described in the scriptures. When

we break these transcendent patterns, humanity and society will reap the harmful fruits of this breakdown.

The prophetic action of the church, in this sense, is not the imposition of faith; rather, it is the defense of values and principles which, if broken, will endanger social coexistence. I believe we will always be criticized and even persecuted for this, as were John Baptist and Jesus. But this is part of the mission we have received from our Lord.

When we look at history we can see the great social transformations that have occurred as a result of this prophetic action of the Church.

Wilberforce fought against the government to end slavery. Miss Fry devoted herself to prison reform, where conditions were inhumane. Florence Nightingale exerted all her influence to convince the military chiefs that something should be done for the soldiers, and went alone to the Crimean War to begin nursing services. Shaftesbury took up the cause in favor of the street children in a Victorian society that allowed child labor, even in the coal mines. All these people were believers. They were neither subversive nor apolitical. They spoke boldly to the most powerful government in the world at that time, as witnesses to a God of justice, who looks upon the orphan, the widow, and the poor ... The same can be said about the United States in the last century. Social involvement was the fruit of evangelical faith and twin brother of evangelism. This can be clearly seen ... Charles G. Finney, was firmly convinced that the gospel "liberated a powerful impetus toward social reform," and that the church's neglect about the social reform saddens the Holy Spirit and become a hindrance to revival. "The great business of

the Church is to reform the world" ... in general the missionaries were responsible for protecting the native peoples against exploitation and injustice by governments and commercial companies ... They played a very important role in the abolition of forced labor in the Congo. They resisted the slave trade in the South Pacific. They fought fiercely for human rights in the fight against opium, binding feet (also known as "lotus feet") and the exposure of the newborn girls in China. They declared war on the burning of widows, infanticide, and sacred prostitution in India: and, above all, they broke the social and economic slavery of the caste system that affected the underprivileged and marginalized. (Krukliis, 1998, p. 20–21)

#### **5.1.4.2 Transformative political action:**

This could almost be considered a natural consequence of what we saw earlier. If we act prophetically, at some point we will see ourselves in the condition of turning words into concrete actions and this will call for political mobilization.

What does the Apostle Paul's vehement appeal "do not conform to this world" mean? Would it not involve attitudes and actions such as: not complying with injustice, violence, arrogant demands, institutionalized corruption, movements in favor of the moral destruction of the society, drugs running loose on the streets, at times even being supported by police and political forces, and so many other problems that we are faced with?

The political action we advocate is that described by Comblin:

The return to the true meaning of politics means to renounce of the collective movements of power, domination, and resentment embodied in ideologies. It means the discovery of true human works ... Moved by

the church, the city also changes. It discusses its historical deformations. It discusses their traditional customs and policies. It tends to become a communion of men. He does not simply live in his past anymore. He operates by the forces of the future. The salvation of God begins to penetrate it (1991, p. 12,47).<sup>8</sup>

I believe that being committed to seeing and articulating these issues in our land is a liberating action. It is one based on love, motivated by the courage of our faith and that will manifest the power of the Holy Spirit to convince men of sin, justice and judgment. We will be the transforming agents of society. I believe we will be practicing what the Bible teaches: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you".

But we cannot remain silent, if we do not mobilize, if we do nothing to register our resistance, what do you imagine the enemy will do? If we are complacent and perhaps even conniving, the enemy will not only control the scene, but will make our land the place of his destruction.

I do not think we should be violent or use the same tactics used by the enemy; if we were to use them we would be defeated. But we need to become the task force of salt and light, the prophets of hope and faith that transform people and social structures, on the basis of love and grace.

Holistic mission calls us to live a radical commitment to God. This will be demonstrated in our actions of love towards men, while at the same time becoming a resistant witness against Satan in all his fields of action. We do this because we believe and live the transforming power of Jesus.

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<sup>8</sup> See how interesting is Comblin's vision of the politics practiced by the various parties and the policy that the church can and should carry out in the city. "What was called politics was nothing more than rivalries and struggles for the conquest of this instrument of power which is the State and which all parties pursued as protection, refuge against the anxieties provoked by the existence of that same State" (1991, p. 145).



#### **5.1.4.3 Working for the formation of a Christian identity among its members:**

It is not possible for the church to be prophetic and engage in the political questions of transformation of society without its members developing a strong Christian identity. The Christian worldview<sup>9</sup> should permeate the perception of each of its members. For this reason, the relevant church works for the formation of this identity.

We have learned that when our young people go to university without this identity or worldview very well consolidated in their lives, there is a great risk of succumbing to the various philosophies that surround them today. Therefore, one of the objectives of university student ministry is to review these various philosophies in the light of the Christian worldview. They should be studied in light of what they can contribute and in what ways they contradict the values of our faith.

#### **5.1.5 A Church as a fellowship of believers:**

This may have been one of the principles that appeared most frequently during this research. It has been described in some way in all the research fields as building strong interpersonal ties which generate a feeling of family and community.

If we are the body of the living Christ acting on this earth, we need to experience the dynamics of the unity of the body. We need to feel as one, and at the same time act synergistically as one.

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<sup>9</sup> The term, “Christian worldview” refers to the special way in which anthropologists describe the way in which a cultural community asks the fundamental questions of its existence: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? From where do we derive our values? (Donner, 2004, p. 17)

But even though this is a wonderful vision, our practical experience has taught us that if we do not work to build this spiritual unity day by day, all the action of a church to carry out its mission in the world will be compromised.

When I look at the book of the Acts of the Apostles, I can see how numerous were Satan's attacks upon that church. Satan's attempted to destroy the spiritual unity of the church that impressed the world by the love it portrayed to one another through its fellowship. First, there was the problem between Greeks and Jews; then, there were issues with the Gentiles. Subsequently, the permanent action of the Judaizers, as if trying to destroy the missionary initiatives of the apostle Paul.

Working in such a way that unity in the Spirit is experienced in the context of the visible community of the saved, the local church, serves as a permanent solution that can make difference in the community. It serves as an example of the power of God to unite all and as evidence of his gracious love, acting among men.

The early church relied upon a twofold witness as the means of reaching and impacting a cynical and unbelieving world: *kerygma* (proclamation) and *koinonia* (fellowship). It was the combination of these two elements that made the church's witness so powerful and effective. Pagans could easily shrug off the proclamation as simply another "doctrine" among many; but they found it much more difficult to reject the evidence of *koinonia* (fellowship). This is what caused the much-quoted remark of a pagan writer: "How these Christians love one another!" (Stedman, 1974, p. 107)

The model of spiritual fellowship that we seek to build is the trinity itself. This can only be built by the through the power of the Holy Spirit that allows us to practice love, serving one another, in the name of Jesus.

Our role as leaders of the flock is to help the people of God build a relationship of interdependence, where all minister to their brothers, and at the same time, are ministered to, by God, through their brothers. The goal is to promote inclusive relationships in the church; the church must belong to everyone.

In working towards this fraternal communion, this fellowship of believers, we want to be a church for everyone, where the whole gospel is preached, for the whole person and for all people. If we do not have this kind of maturity, we will never understand the meaning of the unity of the Spirit that is ours in the bond of faith. For those who lack kind of maturity, communion will be merely be fraternal relationships with others, much like those experienced in a social club. But when we live the unity of the Spirit, our communion becomes a testimony to the power of God, by breaking down the barriers of society and building a new community. This new community, tenuously, yet visibly, reflects the new heavens and the new earth that Jesus is building for us.

Therefore, developing fellowship is an on-going goal to be pursued intentionally. It will be necessary for leadership to develop well defined and creative strategies in order for this type of inclusion to actually happen. But, in order to do justice to the research we need highlight particular two aspects of this communion that have emerged with a certain importance.

#### **5.1.5.1 Reaching immigrant and special needs populations:**

Understanding the history of the Assembly of God church in Curitiba, has led us to think about how the reception of immigrants fostered the rapid growth of that church in such a short time. Even though many years have passed, significant minority communities remain among us and need to be welcomed if we want to be relevant today and in future generations.

There are a lot of Haitians in Curitiba today, fleeing hunger in their country. Certainly they need welcoming communities. Syrians are also coming fleeing from the war in their country. In addition to these ethnic groups, the city is also home to many who are deaf, blind, physically and mentally

handicapped, those who live on the street, etc. They are the little ones of this earth today, to whom we have been sent to minister to by Jesus. This is why one of the marks of a relevant church is related to its ability to welcome and build strong interpersonal ties with all people.

#### **5.1.5.2 A church that develops a strong system of pastoral care:**

The second area that I would like to highlight concerns the type of communion that can be seen through a strong pastoral care system. In this way, each person can feel that they are a part of the whole, can feel cared for, and can feel unique.

I believe that the traditional pastoral care system, where one person is hired to be the caretaker of the souls of all the others, reaches its limits quickly. I think it may work well in rural communities and small congregations, but in urban centers, the revival we experienced and the use of the media has allowed the formation of larger congregations. This has effectively eliminated that old model of pastoral care.

I am pastor of a congregation that currently has ten thousand, five hundred members, with a weekly attendance of twelve thousand people. How can I care for the hearts and souls of all these people whom the Lord has placed under my care? It's impossible! I am a strong supporter of the strategy that uses small groups (or cells) for fellowship and evangelism. The reason is simple: is possible to care for 15 people much more effectively than thousands. The various networks that are connected to the ministries make these groups units of easy mobilization for the exercise of the Lord's work among us.

The Catholic church example which has lost millions of members a year in Brazil, is more than enough to demonstrate that the lack of pastoral care causes the back door of many churches to open wide, making them lose many of the people they have already evangelized. And the worst thing is that these people are hurt as a result, and find it enormously difficult to return to the fellowship of any other church.

#### **5.1.6 A contextualized church:**

The contextualized church understands that in order to communicate the gospel it needs to overcome some of the barriers posed by the culture<sup>10</sup> of its people or from the social group it wants to reach. In the research, sociologists pointed to the observation that a church becomes relevant when the target audience's characteristics, necessities, questions and language codes are taken into account by those responsible for the religious activities (L. R. Dudley & Laurent, 1989, p. 408–420).

Schleiermacher emphasized theology when he made the observation that the relevance of a church is maintained in the generations to come by its capacity to renew itself contextually without becoming syncretic with the society and allowing itself to be evaluated by the previous generation, other communities of faith and the Holy Spirit. He also emphasizes its role as the moral conscience, possessing unchanging elements, which he called "the foundations of faith"(1999, p. 29). Quiroz did the same thing when affirming that relevant church is a contextualized church, but its contextualization cannot deny its essence (1983).

Although it was not explicit in the biblical images of the church, this aspect becomes clear when we look at the book of Acts, the church of Antioch and the Gentile churches. One of the basic rules of missiology is that the missionary is responsible for overcoming the cultural barriers that prevent him from communicating the gospel. Contextualization is the process of overcoming these barriers (Pate, 1987, p. 116).

This is clear when we speak of proclaiming the gospel to the indigenous peoples of the Amazon region; yet, we sometimes forget to cross cultural

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<sup>10</sup> "Culture is the total system of learned norms of behavior that are common to the members of a particular society, and which are not the result of man's instinctual biological nature" (Pate, 1987, p. 113).

barriers of the different tribes of our own city, or even other generations in the church. To make matters worse, some churches continue in the culture of the missionaries who planted it, totally disconnected from the culture of their land.

The work of contextualization is not so simple. All cultures are embedded with certain elements, placed there by God himself, as a way for Him to be known and glorified. Yet, there are also other elements in all cultures that reflect the sin and the fall of man. This was the conclusion of the opinion of the Lousane commission which dealt with this problem:

Developing of strategies for world evangelism calls for imaginative pioneering methods. With God's blessing, the result will be the emergence of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be judged and proven by the Scriptures. Because men and women are God's creation, part of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because men and women are fallen creatures, all of their culture is tainted with sin; some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any one culture over another, but evaluates all of them according to its own criterion of truth and justice, and insists on the acceptance of absolute moral values in all cultures. Missions have all too frequently exported an alien culture along with the gospel and churches have sometimes been submissive to the dictates of culture rather than to the Scriptures. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God ("Pacto de Lausanne", 1974).

Therefore, for a church to be relevant, it must constantly be discovering the barriers of communication that need to be overcome in order for its message to effectively minister to the people it wishes to reach.

#### **5.1.7 A church that practices the democratization of the gifts:**

One of the teachings of the biblical image of the body of Christ is the gifts of the Holy Spirit that make all members unique, useful and indispensable. The field of sociology has helped us to understand the power of mutuality taught in the scriptures, where one can see that it is possible to be both blessed and an instrument of blessing, simultaneously.

If we want God's people to accomplish God's mission on this earth, we need to mobilize and empower them based on spiritual gifts so that they can develop their ministry. This is the primary function of the spiritual leaders of the Church.<sup>11</sup>

The Church should help believers to know their spiritual gifts and to engage in ministries in which they can use these gifts for the establishment of the kingdom and the consequent glory of God. One aspect of the great restoration of the true faith promoted by the Reformation was the rediscovery of the universal priesthood of all believers. Even though this doctrine has been well elaborated by the Reformers, we still lack practical initiatives to help each believer discover and practice his gift.

The words of Moltmann are of great value in helping us understand the reasons that make this task so important.

All members of the messianic community received the Spirit and, consequently, are “ministers”. There is no separation between those who hold the ministries and the people. There is no separation between the “ministerial” Spirit and the free Spirit. Nor is there an

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<sup>11</sup> Eph 4:11-12

essential difference between the different charismatics and their functions. The widow, who does the work of mercy, acts charismatically as the bishop. But there are functional differences, for unity does not mean uniformity at all. The energies of the Spirit of the new creation are as pluriform as the creation itself. Otherwise his charismatic revival would not be possible. That is why freedom, diversity and brotherhood prevail in the community. It is precisely the equality of rights of all members before God that creates the varied richness of their good pleasure (1978, p. 350–351).

If all are ministers, then our role is, in an intentional, programmed and permanent way, to mobilize them through the training and awareness of their personal ministry. How great it would be if all the army of believers that God placed under the leadership of the pastors became an effective contingent in the battle of the establishment of the kingdom. Perhaps this is one of the great practical marks of Pentecostalism revealed in the history of the Brazilian church (Deiros, 2007, p. 10).

The difference between this aspect and the one on the topic of evangelization lies in the focus that a relevant church gives to the work of the laity in all areas of ministry. A relevant church works hard to break down the differences between the clergy and the laity. A relevant church also promotes the understanding that while there are different functions, there are not sacred men, among the multitude of those who are saved, who are the only ones who can be authorized to perform sacred actions. This paradigm shift is liberating from the reins that sometimes hold God's people in the fulfillment of their mission.

#### **5.1.8 A church able to readapt its structure with agility:**

One of the problems with strategic planning is the tendency we have to become inflexible in the face of new and unforeseen opportunities. Inflexibility



is the result of an attempt to focus actions on what is a priority for the vision. without taking other factors into consideration. The vision needs to be a reflection of the "*Missio Dei*", and not the mission a reflection of the vision.

When we perceive the action of the Spirit guiding us in directions that are not following our preconceived ideas we must be flexible to alter our route, otherwise we will turn away from the purpose of the Lord of the church in the name of vision. This was what happened several times in the book of Acts, when the church had to revise its understanding of what they were to accomplish as new facts and persons, whether they were Samaritans or Gentiles in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria or the ends of the earth, were incorporated into it. The Church of the New Testament understood that its structure should be dynamic rather than dogmatic, and that diversity could live in unity without necessarily being uniform.

Without flexibility, mobility is lost. The mission that Jesus delegated to us was to take care of his sheep<sup>12</sup>, not to administer his patrimony, nor to be keepers of tradition. One of the great dangers of any organization is surreptitiously to divert people to focus on themselves or other things.

Leonardo Boff calls this attitude of flexibility of ecclesiastical structures the permanent conversion of the church.

No community subsists without a minimum of institution which give it unity, coherence and identity. The institution does not exist for its own benefit, but as a function in favor of the community of faith. As a result, it is always derived, it must walk the same pace as the historical transformations through which the community passes, it must face the ruptures and find adequate institutional responses. To this historical process of

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<sup>12</sup> Jn 21:15-17

fidelity and service, to the community and the Lord present in it, we call permanent conversion. This implies an attitude of selflessness and inner poverty that allows the institution to drop glorious achievements when it realizes that to serve the community and the Lord acting in it, it is imperative to leave them. Only in this measure of permanent conversion will the community and its institutions be a salvific service to the world (1981, p. 93).

We must always review our actions and decisions so that we do not fall into this common mistake that distances us from the purpose of the mission and gradually, makes us irrelevant.

#### **5.1.9 Church that works for the spiritual, economic, social, cultural and environmental growth of its members:**

Growth is one of the characteristics of the body. This was observed not only through a biblical and theological observation of the research, but also through historical and social observations. Relevant churches are those that help their members grow in all dimensions of life.

That is why Calvin saw the church as a school, and the Reformers were concerned with teaching their members to read and write. In addition, they taught the workers to be the best in their professions because everything they did was for the glory of God.

Thus, we are challenged to grow spiritually in our communion with God, in the knowledge of his Word and in the life of Christian service. But we are also challenged to exercise the cultural mandate instituted by our Lord. This mandate was very well explained by Robinson Cavalcanti:

Christians know that the earth is the work of the Creator, destined for humanity so that it, obedient, is a continuation of creation, exercising its cultural mandate, its task of caring for, multiplying and developing forms

of coexistence, institutions, customs and technology. This mandate was affected, in quality, by sin, but was never revoked. Born again Christians, as part of their role of the sanctified, their responsible, creative, and ethical exercise of this mandate of managers of the earth, with lives – personal, communal, and institutional - with purpose, guided by the Word, enlightened by the Spirit, in the exercise of their gifts and vocations, exercise their faith by good works, which “God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”(2006, p. 34).

A relevant church teaches, helps, and challenges its members to fulfill this cultural mandate as good stewards of Christ, whether in ecological matters, or in growth in self-understanding and interpersonal relationships, or by understanding that their profession is part of the Christian vocation. So, helping others to grow is a characteristic of a relevant church.

Assim ajudar a crescer é característica de uma igreja relevante.

#### **5.1.10 A church engaged in the social problems of its context as the incarnation of faith:**

Another principle that indicates the relevance of a church in a particular social context is its ability to engage in problem solving within its local context.

Our mission is not only to be the mouth of Jesus on earth, but also his hands. It is to reflect His heart before men. It is the mission of the Church to serve this world in love as the incarnation of faith, thus continuing the work of our Savior on this earth.<sup>13</sup>

Incarnate mercy was part of the new lifestyle of God's people. Love was not a rhetorical figure of a faith that is not capable of bringing about change and social transformation. Rather, it was a reflection of immeasurable grace

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<sup>13</sup> Lk 4:18-19

that moved the people of God to practice the gospel of love, to help the afflicted, the orphans and the widows.

It was a counterculture in action, because the culture of accumulation and the culture of "every man for himself" has always been humanity's "*modus vivendi*". But the Church understood that it was its mission to make a difference in the lives of others, even if that meant material detachment and personal giving. The church of the New Testament lived out a principle that many of us only preach: "People matter more than things".

To live out this incarnation of faith, we must be where things happen and see reality with our own eyes in order to clearly identify our task. The necessity of the people determines the content and occasion of Christian action. The vision of necessity will generate in us the sense of responsibility. We are the agents of God who will demonstrate our Lord's response to the needs of time and place. That's why we are here. Without engagement we can never incarnate our faith!

But it is important to understand that our mission is not only for the family of the faith, our mission is part of the mission of God. He is the Lord of the mission. For that reason, the mission is wide enough and deep enough for the whole man and of all of humanity.

As we incarnate faith in these dimensions, we are soon faced with economic problems, much like the disciples faced with the challenge of giving bread to the multitude. But, sometimes we forget that when we incarnate the faith we enter in the divine economy and only see the little that we have in our hands which serves only our own purposes. The Father's economy will always teach us that incarnate faith comes from the certainty that any intervention comes from the Spirit of the Father; is a miracle of grace and results, a testimony to the powerful love of the Father.

If we have the courage to approach our context by embodying our faith, surely the God of mission, by his Holy Spirit, will pour out the necessary gifts and create ministries that will be instruments of personal, social and political

transformation. He will make us be salt of our earth and fleches of the light of Jesus in this world. We will work so that the glory of the Lord may fill this land, as the waters fill the sea.<sup>14</sup>

#### **5.1.11 A church that rejects being a commodity in the market economy:**

This principle of relevance is discussed by Moltmann as follows:

Religions become the spiritual services on offer in the religious supermarket of the modern world. Individual religious liberty is certainly a powerful protection for every person's own human dignity, but because of the typical Western concept of the consumer's freedom to choose or dispose, that same freedom has turned religion into a commodity, where the customer is allegedly always right. Marketed religions take on the characteristics of goods on sale. They are on offer optionally, without obligation, and with discount as 'religion light', like the offers on the shelves for esoteric literature in the bookshops. Everything is possible, nothing is taken seriously... reducing religion to insignificance (1999, p. 251).

In a secularized world where economics becomes the measure of all things, there is an attempt to make the church one more commodity and its ministries, products that can be customized according to customer preference. But if the church becomes like that, it will lose what sets it apart. It will lose the ability to bring people to true reconciliation with God, to teach others to live a life of holiness from God, that which sets one apart as His peculiar people.

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<sup>14</sup> Hab 2:14 For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the sea is covered by the waters.

I confess that this reductionism is a great temptation and, at times, it makes us lose focus. I remember that at the beginning of our ministry of communication within the church, the resources that sustained it came from the sale of messages recorded in physical devices. Suddenly, from one day to another, people were able to download these messages in mp3 format, totally free of charge. From that moment, we had to reevaluate our real motivation. Was it the spread the Word or the sale of religious products?

Although I understand the value of contextualizing the message to reach the greatest number of people, I believe that the reductionism of the church and its ministries to the level of mere custom-made religious products for clients, makes the church irrelevant by cheapening the values of grace and disfiguring the gospel of Jesus.

#### **5.1.12 A church that practices and teaches generosity for the advancement of the Kingdom of God:**

The next principle that indicates the relevance of a church emerges during the study of the history of the church in Brazil. It has to do with how it saw the question of the church's sustenance, the application of its current resources, and the preponderant influences in the understanding of its mission.

For a long time, the Catholic Church was sustained by the state or by great dignitaries of the country. This prevented the church from fulfilling several of the relevant aspects that we have seen throughout this study because it was reduced to the political interests or interests of the great dignitaries of the nation.

Later, with the Republic, there was the commercialization of the sacraments, but this was also not the best solution, because selling the blessings of God would be understood as a way to barter or negotiate the Word of God, and not "Freely you have received, freely give"<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Mt 10.8

It was only with the arrival of the missions that the principle of liberality was rediscovered. And it was this that allowed the church to be free and accomplish God's purpose. Only then could it be relevant in its context, both spiritually and financially, because the projects, whether social or evangelistic, depended only on the immeasurable God for its sustenance. I know that especially in Latin America the theology of prosperity has turned this principle into a profitable business, but I fear that because of the abuse of some, the principle will be lost.

Another issue that worries me is the frequent invasion of management concepts from the secular world to control the church's mission. This makes it lose its sense of faith, and the freedom to accomplish the impossible that only God can do. The practice of generosity must be associated with a vision of the mission and methods of God and not merely the techniques of the secular world.

Dodd's words can illustrate what I'm trying to say:

We have hungered after the world's wisdom and stuffed ourselves on secular practices, techniques and buzzwords. A caricature of this trend appeared in a recent news article, which reported that leaders of two declining mainline denominations had gathered at the Disney Institute: "Speakers from the Disney Institute have been urging the local church leaders to think more creatively to stem declining memberships.". What? Mickey Mouse is going to help us shore up our slumping market share? That's correct, even though we know that churches devoted to biblical Christianity are the only ones experiencing growth. This made the old joke hit too close to home for me: "What's the difference between the church and Disneyland? Disneyland has the real Mickey Mouse!" ....The best place to look for a

renewed understanding of leadership is in the pages of Scripture. One wonders if much of Christian leadership literature is a Trojan horse from the enemy camp, since so little space is spent on what the Bible says. Paul's words to Timothy are still true:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2Tm 3-16,17) (2005, p. 8–11),

A relevant Church is sustained by God through the liberality of his servants and is administered according to spiritual principles, which may use techniques of other sciences, but which cannot be reduced to these business techniques. If this happens, the vision of the kingdom of God is lost and surely the mission will suffer. Let me illustrate.

At the beginning of my ministry I stopped at a traffic light at a crossroads near the church that I pastored. A boy came to my car and asked me for a handout. I started talking to him and then asked him where he lived. He pointed to an overpass ahead of us and he said, "There!" "Under the viaduct", I asked? "Yes". I continued, "Are there any more children living there?" "Yes, more than forty!" The traffic light changed and I went on my way. But that conversation did not leave my mind. Every time I went down that street, and this was almost every day, I heard the voice of God telling me: You are their shepherd. What are you going to do for them?

With the help of some church leaders, we developed a plan to take those children off the streets, enrolled them in a public school just behind the church. We served them lunch and dinner and during the afternoons we used to give tutor them and offer and other activities that could help with their economic and social development as well as the development of their families.



Nevertheless, the project required church approval! At that time, I was only twenty-one years old and pastoring a 50-year-old church. I was excited to tell the leaders what we could do for street children around the church. But to my surprise I realized that this was not welcome news to them. What I soon learned was there was quite a bit of administration involved, strategic planning, and excuses made regarding both finances and property. The children would spoil the material goods gained through such hard work by the church brothers.

The audacity of my youth made me ask for something they did not expect. I just want you let me use the church premises Monday through Friday, I do not want any other resources, staff, or materials. If this work is from God he will sustain it!

During the years that I was pastor of that church all the forty-one children living under that viaduct were supported, studied and had their lives totally changed, just because the church learned the principle of liberality and the administration of resources not for the building of club for the church members, but rather for the fulfillment of the purposes of the mission.

It was a surprise to the leaders when they saw the reports and realized how much had been collected, not only in the church, but also among the merchants of our surrounding neighborhood. They contributed generously, because these children were the one who had previously stolen from their stores but who were now developing as citizens. The bakery provided all the milk and bread, the owner of the shoe store, all the shoes. Others contributed financially, church ladies cooked, and church employees asked to use their free hours as volunteers. If a church wants to be relevant it needs to know and practice the economy of God.

## **5.2 Conclusion:**

Certainly, these twelve principles do not exhaust the whole dimension of our theme, but surely, they can contribute to the construction of a relevant church in the context of Curitiba. I hope they can benefit others who wish to test these principles elsewhere.

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