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GIFTIVE DIALOGUE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE GIFTIVE METAPHOR IN
THE PLURALIST CONTEXT OF THE LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY OF BRAZIL

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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October, 2019

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To my mother, who was God's first bearer of the gifts of *faith, hope* and *love* into my life, and
“*agora tem um filho doutor.*”

“We are more than conquerors of other peoples, more than harvesters of souls, more than winners of metaphysical arguments: we are the bearers of gifts. We bring to the world the greatest of all gifts, the story of what God has done for the world through Jesus Christ.”

Terry C. Muck and Frances S. Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 162 (Kindle).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AELBRA	The Lutheran Educational Association of Brazil
CELSP	“São Paulo” Lutheran Church (a congregation affiliated to IELB)
CEL-CF	“Castelo Forte” Lutheran Church (a congregation affiliated to IELB)
IELB	The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil
PDI	The Institutional Development Plan
RGS	The Rio Grande do Sul state
TKR	Two Kinds of Righteousness
ULBRA	The Lutheran University of Brazil

ABSTRACT

Silva, Maximiliano Wolfgramm. "Giftive Dialogue: An Analysis of the Use of the Giftive Metaphor in the Pluralist Context of the Lutheran University of Brazil." Ph. D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2019. 189 pp.

Modernity's secularization project and specific characteristics of Brazilian history have promoted pluralism to the status of a moral demand, especially in the academic context. Such a situation posits challenges and opportunities for ULBRA's campus pastors. That is so because ULBRA's chaplains' pastoral ministry is the most visible and symbolic expression of ULBRA's confessional identity. Because of the claims made by Christianity, that identity has exclusivist traits. Therefore, it becomes necessary to develop or systematize approaches that can inform the exercise of the pastoral ministry in that specific context. While not limiting the possible approaches to one option, this dissertation argues for the use of Terry C. Muck and Frances S. Adeney's *giftive metaphor* as a tool that promotes an embodied presence of the Christian faith in the confessional university, one that is both culturally sensitive and theologically sound. The dissertation affirms that the *giftive metaphor* suitably relates to Lutheran theology's most remarkable theological accent: forgiveness/salvation is graciously given by God as a free gift. It also argues that the relationship God establishes with us is giftive in nature, and that that same giftedness is expressed in his creation and it is part of what we are as human creatures. Because of that, in every human relationship, including those between people from different faiths, gifts can be and are exchanged. Assessing the giftive metaphor through the lens of the Lutheran Two Kinds of Righteousness distinction, the dissertation affirms the uniqueness of the gift of the Gospel and qualifies the gifts Christians receive from other religions, locating them in the horizontal dimension of our relationships. Finally, the dissertation exemplifies how that giftive dialogue can take place making use of two distinct religious traditions: Christianity and Afro-Brazilian religiosity.

CHAPTER ONE

PLURALITY AND PLURALISM: CONTEXTUALIZING THE DISSERTATION'S QUESTION

The question this dissertation aims at answering is: How will the *giftive metaphor* assist the campus pastors at ULBRA¹ for them to faithfully maintain and promote their specific Lutheran identity as they interact in a context that demands and even cherishes pluralism? This question considers a specific context, that of ULBRA, but it is located in a much broader reflection on how Christianity should deal with the reality of other religions or other expressions of human spirituality.²

The recognition and even collision of world religions becomes more evident in certain contexts, such as that of a confessional Christian university in Brazil. Confessional universities in Brazil function at the edge of a religious tradition's institutional endeavors, trying to convey their faith in one of the most secularized institutions of Brazilian society. Therefore, those involved in chaplaincy work at confessional universities need to understand the phenomenon of religious pluralism, its motivations and implications, and identify approaches that can serve them in their call. To that end, this dissertation considers the specific pluralist context of ULBRA and the challenge it represents to its campus pastors. It will advocate the use of the *giftive metaphor* as a prominent tool in that endeavor.

In its first chapter, the dissertation will explore the phenomenon of religious pluralism. This study will be enriched by a brief presentation of Christian approaches to religious diversity and a limited description of Brazilian pluralist religiosity. From that wider frame, the chapter will

¹ Universidade Luterana do Brasil.

² Spirituality is here understood as human search for the meaning and purpose of our very existence.

work on ULBRA's specific context, delineating its more significant characteristics, arguing for a pro-active posture of campus pastors towards inter-religious dialogue.

Religious Pluralism: The New Paradigm

Today's Zeitgeist Towards Religious Diversity

That different religious manifestations co-exist in our world is common knowledge among most people in the contemporary world. This has always been the case in Western society.³

When individuals and social groups live in time and space, different meanings and values are assigned to objects, natural phenomena, and experiences. Those different meanings and values generate multiple understandings and diverse interactions with reality. Consequently, one can easily notice that different social groups display different cultures and, if spirituality is specifically considered, different religious manifestations.⁴

Those differences are not only perceived as one compares groups we conventionally name and distinguish, such as Western and Eastern, Indigenous and Europeans, black and white. They are also present in those groups' cultures as subcultures, displaying understandings and values in relationships that involve both complementarity and rivalry. Therefore, diversity has been an intrinsic characteristic of humankind interaction with reality. What changes from place to place, from culture to culture, from time to time is the way people respond to that diversity.

What is becoming evident through the last decades is that the way the Western World

³ Even though there is controversy involved in the specifics of the term, in this dissertation Western society/culture is understood as those cultures which meaningfully bear the influence of Ancient Greece through philosophy, democracy and science; of Ancient Rome through law and republicanism; of Christianity and its Judaic and Hellenistic Philosophic traits; and of Renaissance, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. Geographically, the main reference is to Europe and America.

⁴ Even though the object of study of this dissertation distinguishes cultural diversity from religious diversity, those dimensions are in no way unrelated. Religiosity does not take place in a cultural vacuum, and cultures are usually impregnated with religious ideas and values. A clear cut distinction is not possible even though it is theoretically intended, and that will show up in the research's text at times.

responds to diversity in humanity and, more specifically to the topic of this research, to religious diversity, has changed. By the end of the Middle Ages, with the expansion of the Western World, non-Christian religions were usually seen as inferior or demonic forms of spirituality that should be wiped out. Today such an understanding is considered highly immoral and fiercely fought against. Through the last century the Western World has grown increasingly intolerant toward faith-centrist⁵ statements. Therefore, one of the fundamental characteristics of pluralism today is that it is not simply a term used to refer to a reality where diverse beliefs coexist. It has become a value onto itself, a moral demand, a principle that many believe must determine one's reflection and interaction with the world.⁶ Religious plurality refers to the self-evident reality that diverse religious beliefs and manifestations co-exist in our world. Religious pluralism is today's response to that reality, a theological, political, ethical⁷ movement towards the recognition of the

⁵ Faith-centrism is here understood as the attitude where an individual or group of individuals points to his/their specific faith (*fides quae*) as the rule to judge all other religious beliefs and practices. In today's postmodern ethos, such an attitude faces high criticism because of its claims of absolute truth and, as most people believe, a tendency to an oppressive posture. Historic Judeo-Christian claims related to the idea of particularity (God chose a particular people to give a particular revelation about a particular way to God) fall into that kind of criticism. Christian theology recognizes the resistance to the Christian claim that God entered human history in a localized way through a specific individual in a particular moment in history. It usually refers to that resistance as the scandal of particularity.

⁶ Working on the definition of pluralism, D. A. Carson suggests three kinds of phenomena to which the word usually refers. 1. Empirical pluralism, which points out the growing diversity in our culture, a fact that can be easily perceived. 2. cherished pluralism, which refers to the perception of diversity as a good thing, which must be retained. Here, plurality is celebrated, approved and cherished. Pluralism is then seen as a value in itself. 3. philosophical or hermeneutical pluralism, which expresses the understanding that "any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong. The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism." D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 121–28.

⁷ Such differentiation is supported by study areas such as political theory, with the following quotation as an example: "The existence of deep religious differences and disagreements in societies around the world is a descriptive fact: it is simply how things are. In itself, such diversity is neither a good or bad thing, something that we should promote or bemoan, or that the state should respect or limit it... Standing in clear distinction from this plurality is the idea of pluralism, core to the political project of liberalism. That is, in democratic and liberal societies, a normative commitment to pluralism means that we do not only observe that citizens disagree about many different issues, but also that we believe that such disagreement is not problematic in itself and that the state should not impose on all citizens one single view or way of doing things ... Accounts from political theory highlight, then, a clear distinction between descriptive plurality and normative pluralism, and thereby call attention to the frequency with which the two approaches are confused. Our view is that it is more accurate and certainly productive for scholars to make a clear distinction between descriptive and normative concepts, and that the terms 'plurality' and

equal value of every religious manifestation against ideas of totalitarian intents. Because humanity and what it produces through its interactions with reality is varied, religious diversity must be seen as a characteristic of what it means to be human, in a way that religious pluralism becomes a principle justified by itself.⁸

Accepting religious pluralism implies negative and positive assertions, an understanding furtherly developed by Griffin.⁹ In the negative assertion, the idea of absolute claims of truth and the understanding that one's religion is the only spiritual path that leads to fullness of life is denied. In the positive assertion, others' religions are valued for what they are, in a way that they also may offer meaning and purpose to people.

This change characterizes the contemporary Western World. Even though such a change of thought is the consequence of a complex matrix of causes, a general and helpful description of the process can be done as we connect it to the major cultural change enacted by the Modern Age and its project of secularization. The roots of religious pluralism can be traced back to the end of the Middle Ages and the cultural and political changes that followed it. The process of secularization, here understood as the declining scope of religious authority,¹⁰ prompted increased individual autonomy.¹¹ Consequently, the consideration of pluralism as a value in itself based on a logical assumption: one's power of choice is sustained in the recognition of other's power of choice.

'pluralism' capture this distinction simply and effectively." Aurélia Bardon et al., eds., *Religious Pluralism: A Resource Book* (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, 2015), 1–2.

⁸ Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 254.

⁹ David Griffin ed., *Deep Religious Plurality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 3–38.

¹⁰ Mark Chaves, "Secularization and Declining Religious Authority." *Social Forces*, 72, no. 3 (March 1994): 749–74.

¹¹ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Open Road, 2011), 107–08.

The term secularization/secularism has been used in different contexts and it has been aligned with different goals. For many it stands for the liberation of modern man from religious tutelage; for others it represents the paganization of society.¹² Even though its morality can be disputed, its role in Western society shows a major change in which sectors of society and culture were removed from the rule of religious authority. It involved the emancipation of education from ecclesiastical authority, a decline of religious content in cultural expressions, and the rise of science as the main source for the understanding of reality. More to the point of this chapter, secularization has a fundamental aspect: subjectivity. That is, as “there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness.”¹³ That means that secularization significantly contributed to the value of individual autonomy and liberated people from Christendom’s dominance. Subsequently, it liberated them to choose their own spiritual way among multiple and ideological non-coercive options.

Secularization in the Modern Age – From Monopoly to Plurality

Even though we can talk about Europe in the Middle Ages using a term such as Christendom,¹⁴ the fact is that different and conflicting forces were taking shape inside of it centuries before its break-down. As those forces grew, confrontation became inevitable. In great part, that confrontation questioned the *magisterium* of the Roman Church, declaring that *Roma*

¹² The term secularization/secularism has been used in different contexts and aligned with different goals. In more recent times, it has been employed as an ideological concept. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 105. For a comprehensive discussion on the use of the term and revision of its reliability, see Alexandre Brasil Fonseca, *Relações e Privilégios: Estado, Secularização e Diversidade Religioso no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Novos Diálogos, 2011), 13–26.

¹³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 107.

¹⁴ Even though the term can display different meanings, here it highlights the understanding of a territorial and political kingdom where Christianity dominates or prevails. It stressed the sense of the Roman Church and, therefore, Christianity as a geopolitical and monopolistic power.

locuta, causa finita was not accepted as an absolute norm anymore.¹⁵ Different voices questioned that *magisterium*,¹⁶ but one can hardly be compared to Martin Luther and the movement he became a leader of – The Reformation.¹⁷

Concerned with the question “How did the practically universal assumption of God Disappear?” James Turner reflects on the process of religious retreat that occurred during the 16th Century. He identifies the Reformation as a force that shattered the Church’s unity and compromised its authority.¹⁸ For him, the Reformation broke down the idea of a singular Catholic Church as different churches emerged out of the reformatory movements. As divergent religious convictions and growing political drives mixed together throughout Europe, tension and conflict took place. “Wars ravaged France, the Low Countries, Germany, and England in the century after Luther posted his theses... and the toleration eventually imposed to reestablish civil peace, compromised church authority and accelerated a process of secularization already under

¹⁵ Attico Chassot, *A Ciência Através dos Tempos* (São Paulo: Moderna, 2004), 129.

¹⁶ From the 11th to the 13th century, diverse reformatory movements took place in Italy and France, which emphasized apostolic poverty and criticized the richness of the Church. Some of those movements were violently silenced, as it was the case with the Waldensians and the Albigensians. Even though those yearnings were silenced in part of Europe, they became salient in England through John Wyclif and in Bohemia through John Hus. Hus’ death, for example, was interpreted as martyrdom and was still alive at Luther’s time. Martin N. Dreher. “Entre a Idade Média e a Idade Moderna: A Localização de Lutero e de sua Reforma,” Portal Luteranos, accessed August 18, 2018, <http://www.luteranos.com.br/textos/entre-a-idade-media-e-a-idade-moderna-a-localizacao-de-lutero-e-de-sua-reforma>.

¹⁷ James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1985), 119. Martin Luther can be a controversial character when it comes to religious freedom and his late writings on the Jews exemplify that. Martin Luther, “On the Jews and Their Lies.” *Luthers Werke*, 47 (1971), 268–71. However, historians agree that the movement led by him became a cornerstone of the expansion of individual freedom experienced from 16th century on, which caused religious freedom inside the Christian Church. Luther primarily thought of freedom in religious terms, emphasizing the gracious forgiveness we receive in Jesus as what enables us to freely serve in love, not being anymore imprisoned by the condemning power of the divine Law. It was motivated by that faith that, after presenting his theology of the cross at the Heidelberg disputation, Martin Luther wrote a letter to a friend which he signed as Martinus Eleutherius, Martin the freed-one. Martin Dreher, *De Luder a Lutero: Uma Biografia* (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2014). The freedom searched for and experienced in a personal level became one of the cornerstones of Luther’s fight against everything that threatened that freedom, especially the Roman Papacy.

¹⁸ Turner, *Without God*, 9.

way for other reasons.”¹⁹ What was first a disagreement led to debate, tension, mutual condemnations and finally a rupture inside the Christian Church. These ecclesiastical disputes, violent conflicts and bloody wars that took place in Christendom increased the number of voices which called for religious toleration based on freedom of religion inside Christianity.²⁰

As it is usually the case, the disputes were never only religious; they were also political. As the Reformation became one of the most significant historical events that contributed to the weakening of the Roman Church’s domain, it also strengthened the political power of nation states and their monarchs. Consequently, the Church lost much power to establish the limits of people’s thoughts and their endeavors.²¹ Mark Chaves argues that “secularization is most productively understood not as declining religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority.”²²

The changes provoked by secularization led scholar Phillip Rieff to affirm that the old Jewish-Christian ethos has lost its influence in Western society. As a consequence, a new ethos

¹⁹ Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*, 9.

²⁰ Joseph Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation* (London/New York: Association Press, 1960), 495.

²¹ Emblematic in the process that reduced the ecclesiastical authority are discussions on geocentrism versus heliocentrism. They do not only represent the search for a more accurate astronomic understanding of the universe, but especially a rupture with common sense and religious fundamentalism. Chassot, *A Ciência Através dos Tempos*, 136. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) started a change in thought that was advanced by Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), Tycho Brache (1546–1601) and Hohannes Keples (1571–1630). However, it was in the life of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) that the pernicious limiting power of the Roman Church became highly evidenced. For proposing a different understanding of the relationship between earth and the heavenly bodies, which was considered anti-biblical, Galileo was intensively interrogated and even tortured. By the end of Roman inquisition’s judgment, he was forced to publicly deny his propositions. Chassot, *A Ciência Através dos Tempos*, 136–50. What was considered a victory of the Roman Church’s domination over thought and life became a powerful rhetoric image against the Church’s pernicious monopoly over the understanding of reality. If on the one side, the Copernican revolution and Galileo’s emblematic life evidenced the need and sustained a rupture with the religious monopoly of thought, on the other side, it was the Enlightenment that established people’s capacity and right to freely think without an institutional tutoring, and Enlightenment did that through secularization. Another prominent expression of the declining scope of religious authority towards the emancipation of individual thought is found in Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). For furthering reflections on this, Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutics: Uses of Faith After Freud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

²² Chaves, “Secularization and Declining Religious Authority,” 749.

arose, one “dedicated to the supposedly salvific power of personal freedom as an end in itself.”²³ Because the new ethos focuses on the self, which becomes the moral center of one’s life, it automatically leads to a denial of external sources of authority and their consequent imposed morality. Such an ethos generates a will to freely experiment and, therefore, better understand and deal with one’s internal impulses. As defended by Jung, this leads to “essentially private religiosity,” which is characterized by being “anti-institutional” because institutions tend to become a negative factor in the process of “individuation.”²⁴

In time, such a rationale leads to a pluralism of values. Every culture’s religious expression is unique to that culture because of the meaning it has for that culture. Equally, every person’s religious belief is unique to that person because of the meaning it has to that person. There are as many religious beliefs as there are humans, and every one of them is equally valuable because of what it means to the one who holds to it.²⁵ That generates the need for tolerance, one that identifies differences and respects differing religious expressions for what they represent. Power over my own choosing depends on recognizing the power of others’ choosing.²⁶

Working from a sociological perspective, Peter Berger arrives at similar conclusions, demonstrating how the *demonopolization* of religion and the rise of pluralism is both a social-psychological and a social-structural process.²⁷ Reflecting on secularization, he works on the

²³ Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutics*, 226.

²⁴ Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutics*, 114.

²⁵ Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutics*, 111–12.

²⁶ Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutics*, 51. Rieff’s reflection implies that in ethics one must function as a tourist, who knowing his own homeland is able to relate, without attachment, to other people’s homelands, which are their very beings. A healthy relation to foreign territory takes place through tolerance. There are many values, they are all valuable in their unique ways, therefore, we have a polytheism of values.

²⁷ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 152. In Berger’s analysis it is possible to say both that secularization produces pluralism and that pluralism produces secularization. That is so because of the “intrinsic dialecticity of the phenomena under scrutiny, and indeed of social-historical phenomena in general.” Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 155.

concepts of *subjective* and *objective* secularization. The first takes place on the level of individual consciousness, valuing individual autonomy. The second refers to the social fact that numerous religious conceptions and other reality-defining agencies compete for people's allegiance or attention. Since secularization implies the denial of coercive forces, pluralism becomes a social-structure correlated to the secularization of consciousness.²⁸ *Subjective* secularization brought religiosity to the personal realm, allowing different, multiple, temporary and/or non-existent alliances to religious traditions. By dismissing religion from its historical position as a binding institutional force which generated a common plausibility structure to understand reality, secularization *ipso facto* led to pluralism.²⁹ As one approaches that reality in a dialogical way as suggested by Berger, "religion might appear as a formative force in one

²⁸ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 127.

²⁹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 131–35. Other authors, such as Catroga, arrive at similar conclusions. For him, secularization caused changes in the political, social and cultural order, and consequently also impacted the religious dimension of our society. Believing still is a possibility to the modern human, but that is freely made from the control of an ecclesiastical/religious institution, assuming more subjective and consequently pluralist contours. The following quotation summarizes Catroga's thought: "During the last centuries, secularization has been a process that is both de-structuring and structuring. It changed the relationship between the Churches, the (new) state and the society, it also gave rise to profound cultural transformations. And these became ideas, values and expectations that have changed the way in which individuals and groups come to realize the meaning of history, to justify their actions in the world, to fundament their projects and strategies, to populate their imagination, to justify their social vocation, and to live their own religious experience. Effects that have increased the inadequacy of the authority of the Churches and, therefore, the distance of the society from the institutionalized religion, strengthening the differentiation between the public and the private, the intimate and the community, the subjective and the institutional. That has made the representations of the world and of life more complex, secularizing the meaning of history and of individual life itself and giving a decisive role to the mediation, even before the religious, the individual freedom and human action in the world... if the phenomenon of 'believing' did not disappear, it is true that it has multiplied and diversified." Original text: "Durante os últimos séculos, a secularização tem sido um processo ao mesmo tempo desestruturante e estruturante, pois se ele alterou o relacionamento entre as Igrejas, o (novo) estado e a sociedade, também deu origem a profundas transformações culturais. E estes objetivaram-se em idéias, valores e expectativas que transmutaram a maneira como os indivíduos e os grupos passaram a perspectivar o sentido da história, a justificar as suas ações no mundo, a fundamentar os seus projectos e as suas estratégias, a povoar os seus imaginários, a justificar a sua vocação sociabilitária, e a viver a sua própria experiência religiosa. Efeitos que fizeram aumentar a desadequação da autoridade das Igrejas ao século e, portanto, o distanciamento da sociedade em relação à religião institucionalizada, a crescer a progressiva diferenciação entre o público e o privado, o íntimo e o comunitário, o subjetivo e o institucional. O que tornou mais complexas e plurais as representações do mundo e da vida, secularizando o sentido da história e da própria vida individual, e outorgando um papel decisivo à mediação, mesmo perante o religioso, da liberdade individual e da ação do homem no mundo... se o fenómeno do 'acreditar' não desapareceu, é facto que ele se multiplicou e se diversificou." Fernando Catroga, *Entre Deuses e Césarés. Secularização, Laicidade e Religião Civil* (Coimbra: Almedina, 2006) 460–61.

situation and as a dependent formation in the situation following historically.”³⁰ If, on the one hand, one can talk of concepts present in religion, in this case more specifically in Christianity, which played a role in the process of secularization, on the other hand, it is possible to see religion reacting to the reality of secularization, with theological pluralism as an expression of that.³¹ Such a move is also noticed in Christianity as we see pluralist approaches occupying more and more space in theological circles.³²

In summary, for a long time the Christian faith was a chest and all the drawers of social values and human knowledge had to fit into it. But then secularization, as one of the main characteristics of modernity, turned the Christian faith into just one more drawer among others.³³ In that process, religion lost its monopoly in the West in a way that not only the Christian church

³⁰ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 128.

³¹ Rodrigo Portela, “Religião, Sensibilidades Religiosas e Pós-Modernidade: Da Ciranda entre Religião e Secularização”, *Revista de Estudos da Religião’s* website, accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.pucsp.br/rever/rv2_2006/t_portella.htm.

³² Further, Berger argues that one of the natural consequences of secularization is the separation between religion and state, in a way that the state is put in a position of “impartial guardian” of the social order and of the relationship between those forces which compete, in a non-coercive way, for people’s allegiance. In that scenario, the state is seen as an expected neutral authority that will regulate the competing forces that aim at attracting people’s alliance in a world of multiple options. In order to accomplish that, it is necessary that the state is understood as an essentially laic institution, which is responsible to secure people’s freedom to choose and to regulate the action of the competing religious groups. On the state is placed the responsibility of articulating political liberalism and freedom of religious public manifestation. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 130.

³³ The metaphor was originally proposed by Herivelton Regiani. Dealing with the mediatic nature of religion, he uses it to express the struggle of religion to find its place in a society where it does not occupy a central position anymore. He says, “Imagine that society could be conceived in its structure as a chest, composed of several drawers (family, education, justice, state, health, etc.). In traditional societies, what defined the format, fittings and contours for each of the drawers was religion. All other spheres of society, in order to gain legitimacy, should fit in according to religious dictates. In modernity, an immense displacement occurs. Religion, previously imbricated in the structure of the dresser, becomes only one of its drawers, and it must conform to determinations coming from another source. Today, in the design, fittings and molds of the social chest preponderantly act the mediatic logics.” Original text: “Imagine que a sociedade pudesse ser concebida, em sua estrutura, como uma cômoda, composta de várias gavetas (família, educação, justiça, estado, saúde etc). Nas sociedades tradicionais, o que definia o formato, encaixes e contornos para cada uma das gavetas era a religião. Todas as demais esferas da sociedade, para obterem legitimidade, deviam se encaixar seguindo ditames religiosos. Na modernidade, ocorre um imenso deslocamento. A religião, antes imbricada na estrutura da cômoda, torna-se apenas uma de suas gavetas, devendo se adequar a determinações vindas de outra fonte. No desenho, encaixes e moldes da cômoda social hoje atuam, de forma preponderante, as lógicas midiáticas.” Herivelton Regiani e Viviane Borelli, “A Natureza Midiática da Religião e o Processo de Midiatização da Sociedade,” *Portal Intercom*, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://portalintercom.org.br/anais/nacional2018/resumos/R13-1819-1.pdf>.

itself was impacted, but also and especially the way people understood reality. As the Enlightenment emphasized reason's capacity to explain reality apart from religious doctrine, new ways to explain social, psychological and natural phenomena became available.³⁴

What can be seen so far is a growing commitment to plurality as a value in the Western World. First, inside the Christian church itself as a way to deal with the innumerable dissident groups that had origin in the reformatory and political movements of the 16th century. Second, in the Western culture through the rupture from a monopolistic view of reality towards the diversity of knowledge prompted by Enlightenment's valuation of human reason and the need for freedom to present diverse findings concerning the understanding of reality.

(Post)Secularism: Not Elimination of Religion, but Religious Pluralization

Considering the cultural changes that secularization brought about, at one time sociologists generally agreed that the influence of religion on public life would weaken to the point of completely losing its relevance. For many, the liberal ideal of a rationalist society freed from the imprisoning authority of religious traditionalism would be no longer a desire but the description of the reigning reality.³⁵

While secularization did weaken the importance of religion as a structural element of society, it also generated a pluralized comprehension of reality that fostered religions. On the one hand, that process reduced Christianity's role as a source of authority. On the other hand, it

³⁴ "O ser humano moderno, ao olhar o mundo, já não absolutiza a dimensão religiosa e, portanto, observa a realidade fora dos limites impostos pelo modelo religioso medieval. Se antes o seu olhar era unívoco, agora ele é plural" (The modern human being, as he/she looks at the world, she/he no longer absolutizes the religious dimension and, therefore, observes reality outside the limits imposed by the medieval religious model. If before his/her look was univocal, now it is plural). W. Lopes Sanchez, *Pluralismo Religioso: As Religiões no Mundo Atual* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 2010), 41.

³⁵ "... simply launched religiosity into the private space and hoped that the march of reason and science would end up eliminating religion." Marilena Chiauú, "O Retorno do Teológico Político," in *Retorno ao Republicismo*, org. Sérgio Cardoso (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2004) 93–134, 109.

prompted diverse expressions of religiosity and forced the competing religious forces to reinvent themselves in order to attract people's alliance. Through secularization, "the religious phenomenon is repositioned in the affirmation of the subjectivity freed from Christendom's tutelage, allowing free access to the religious option and diversity."³⁶ In that process of reinvention, religiosity found a way to keep its relevance for the Western society.

Along with pushing religion to reinvent itself, secularization also contributed to a repositioned but still influential presence of religion in the Western culture by raising the need to respond to challenges that have become more and more acute in our contemporary world. As technology shortens distances; as political instability, civil wars and social-economic pressures cause migration; as global concerns such as ecological sustainability bring nations together; differences become more latent and the need to avoid conflict more acute. A world that values difference and at the same time brings the different together must enforce the value of toleration. Since the relativizing of claims of absolute truth is becoming more and more a part of popular reasoning, the need for peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths and cultures is now a fundamental principle. Because of the power that religion has to influence peoples' values and the meanings they attribute to things and situations, the role of religion coping with today's challenges has been more emphasized.

Thus, the growing importance that religion has received not only in society but also in the university has questioned the understanding that religion will be eliminated from society and has proposed a new paradigm for the comprehension of today's trends – *post-secularism*. In that paradigm, a prominent role is attributed to religion. In the words of one of post-secularism's

³⁶ Original text: "o fenômeno religioso é redimensionado na afirmação da subjetividade livre da tutela da cristandade, permitindo o livre acesso à opção e à diversidade religiosa." Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, "Um Olhar sobre o Atual Cenário Religioso Brasileiro: Possibilidades e Limites para o Pluralismo." *Estudos da Religião*, no. 2 (July, 2013): 53–71, 63.

most prominent proposers, Jürgen Habermas, post-secular societies are those where “religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear worldwide in the course of modernization is losing ground.”³⁷ In post-secularism, therefore, there is a recognition of the importance of religious ideas and/or institutions in informing discourses and influencing cultural and political courses in society.³⁸

Therefore, this change in the way religion’s role is seen in contemporary western society is related to the upsurge of a more diverse religious reality and the debate on humanitarian rights connected to it. The change that can be perceived in Habermas’ thinking on what concerns the role of religion in society, for instance, is rooted in philosophical discussions on social justice and the resurgence of religion in Europe through the increasing visibility of Islam.³⁹ This increasing religious diversity not only prompts such a discussion, but it also makes the role of religion in that discussion more and more significant, especially because of its role in shaping peoples’ understandings of reality. Society faces ills that both religious leaders and social scholars denounce, such as consumerism and increasing social inequality. In that context, religion becomes a resource that may help people to deal with “a miscarried life, social pathologies, the failures of individual life projects, and the deformation of misarranged existential relationships.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Notes on a Post-Secular Society,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 4.

³⁸ Ola Sigurdson, “Beyond Secularism? Towards a Post-secular Political Theology,” *Modern Theology* 26, no. 2 (April 2010): 177–96, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost. For more on post-secularism: Karen Amstrong, *Em Nome de Deus. O Fundamentalismo no Judaísmo, no Cristianismo e no Islamismo* (São Paulo: Schwarcz, 2001). Paulo Barrera Rivera, “Desencantamento do Mundo e Declínio dos Compromissos Religiosos. A Transformação Religiosa Antes da Pós-modernidade,” *Ciencias Sociales y Religion/Ciências Sociais e Religião* 4, no. 2 (October 2002): 87–104.

³⁹ Michele Dillon, “Can Post-secular Society Tolerate Religious Differences?” *Sociology of Religion* 71, no. 2 (2010): 142, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁰ Virgil Nemoianu, “The Church and the Secular Establishment: A Philosophical Dialog Between Joseph Ratzinger and Jurgen Habermas,” *Logos* 9, (2006): 26.

What one sees, then, is that in post-secularism there is an implicit critique of rationalism, where reason is the only venue to explain existence, alongside with a process of deprivatization of religion and the estimation of its role in people's life and society. Ari Pedro Oro, commenting on those who are aligned with Habermas' proposal, affirms:

For these authors, in the last decades, instead of the announced “death of God,” “end of religion,” “decline of religion,” “eclipse of the sacred,” “linear and irreversible secularization,” what one sees is the “return of the sacred,” “God's rematch,” “the eclipse of secularization,” “the crisis of secularization,” “the end of the secularization paradigm,” and so on. That is, the current mediatic visibility of religion, the eruption of new religious movements, the success of spiritual literature are interpreted as a strengthening of the sacred in the context of a modernity that proves itself incapable of solving the deepest problems of the humanity and cannot overcome its own internal contradictions and ambiguities. In this perspective, secularization is understood as a recomposition of religion, confronted with rationality.⁴¹

Of course, Habermas' new paradigm proposal has been critiqued.⁴² However, no one in Brazil would deny the influential role religion has played in Brazilian public life. In that appraisal of religion, there is room for good or/and for ill, and that makes discussions on religious diversity in Brazil even more necessary.⁴³ As hegemonic religious views are minimized by current pluralist trends and religious discourses receive more validation, the existent religious

⁴¹ Original text: “Para esses autores, nas últimas décadas, ao invés da anunciada “morte de Deus”, “fim da religião”, “declínio da religião”, “eclipse do sagrado”, “secularização linear e irreversível”, constatam-se o “retorno do sagrado”, a “revanche de Deus”, o “eclipse da secularização”, a “crise da secularização”, o “fim do paradigma da secularização”, etc. Ou seja, a atual visibilidade mediática da religião, a irrupção de novos movimentos religiosos, o sucesso da literatura esotérica, são interpretados como um fortalecimento do sagrado no contexto de uma modernidade que se mostra incapaz de resolver os problemas mais profundos do ser humano e não consegue superar as suas próprias contradições e ambiguidades internas. Nesta perspectiva, secularização é entendida como recomposição da religião, confrontada com a racionalidade.” Ari Pedro Oro, “Políticos e religião no Rio Grande do Sul–Brasil,” *Horizontes Antropológicos* 7, no 15 (July 2001), 161–79, 162.

⁴² Dillon, “Post-secular Society,” 139–56.

⁴³ The following news are just a few examples of the influential presence of Pentecostal evangelicals in politics. Andrea Dip, “Bancada Evangélica Cresce e Mistura Política e Religião no Congresso,” Uol Notícias, October 19, 2015, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2015/10/19/bancada-evangelica-cresce-e-mistura-politica-e-religiao-no-congresso.htm>. Jarbas Aragão, “Bancadas Evangélicas Crescem nas Capitais,” Gospel Prime, October 5, 2016, <https://noticias.gospelprime.com.br/bancadas-evangelicas-crescem-nas-capitais>. “Número de Políticos Ligados à Igrejas Deve Crescer em 2018,” JM Notícia, April 18, 2017, <http://www.jmnoticia.com.br/2017/04/18/numero-de-politicos-ligados-igrejas-deve-crescer-em-2018>.

diversity in Brazil tends to be more freely expressed. As it usually happens, that diversity generates opportunities and challenges, including for the specific context of the Lutheran University of Brazil.

The reflections on post-secularism here presented only begin to describe the role of secularization in the modern world and the process that has changed the Western paradigm concerning its attitude towards religious diversity. Post-secularism is both a consequence of secularism's emphasis on individual autonomy and a concomitant/resistance movement with/against the branch of secularism derived from its emphasis on reason and the consequent scientific dogmatism that may come from it. As Oro affirmed, here secularization is also understood not as the end of religion, but as a reconfiguration of it. Because it recognizes and values the role of religion in society, post-secularism emphasizes the need of peaceful interaction among religions in order to promote social justice. The general understanding is that such a peaceful interaction is only possible if the value of all religions manifestations is recognized. Therefore, if secularism caused a change in the reigning paradigm prompting religious pluralism, post-secularism reinforces that reality by recognizing and valuing the social role of religious manifestations.

If the new paradigm proposed by Habermas shows itself tenable, the importance of religion in the civic realm will increase opportunities and challenges to campus pastors. Opportunities are generated by a repositioning of religious knowledge as a viable and significant source of understanding of phenomena, as well as a prominent view to positively influence diverse communities. That has been recently felt, for instance, as theology finally gained academic citizenship in the Brazilian university system.⁴⁴ In addition, as a more pragmatic role of religion

⁴⁴ “Dez anos após reconhecimento, MEC já credenciou 43 cursos de teologia,” Portal Guia-me, January 28,

is emphasized in the post-secular society, those who conduct their ministry outside ecclesiastical walls will be more and more challenged. Indeed, religious leaders will have to show the benefits they can bring to society, do that in an intelligible way to those who do not share the same universe of meanings, and be tolerant to those who think and propose things differently.

In a time of rapid transitions, the knowledge acquired through the interaction between the secularist and post-secularist concepts will push for a better understanding of our surrounding religious pluralistic reality and the complexities related to it. Any proposed approach will demand a pro-active engagement in the civic realm of the university, promoting justice, bringing with it the contributions of the Christian theology and its historic richness, and reinforcing the significance of the religious knowledge of the Christian heritage.

Classic Traditional Christian Approaches to Religious Diversity

Different schemes have been proposed for a Christian approach to religious diversity,⁴⁵ but Alan Race's work has become the classic typology in theological circles.⁴⁶ Race's work argued for a tripartite description of how Christianity had historically dealt with the reality of non-

2019, <https://guiame.com.br/gospel/mundo-cristao/dez-anos-apos-reconhecimento-mec-ja-credenciou-43-cursos-de-teologia.html>.

⁴⁵ As one thinks of Christian attitudes towards other religions, Owen C. Thomas' work deserves to be mentioned. Living during the fears of the Cold War, Thomas already identified in his generation something that was unprecedented in human history: for the first time the world was facing a pattern of civilization that was effectively universal, "a unitary global society based on industrial production and rapid communication." Owen C. Thomas, *Attitudes Toward Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 1. Here Thomas was referring to what many today call the global village, the world seen as a single community, especially because of the link produced through telecommunications. Thomas understands that, as we deal with the reality of the global village, the religious dimension of it must be considered. That is so, because he saw religion as "the foundation of culture." Thomas, *Attitudes Toward Other Religions*, 2. For him, reflection on Christian attitudes toward other religions must walk the whole way of theology, dealing with themes such as revelation, salvation and ecclesiology, but also addressing the ethical principles and moral values that will guide one's interaction with people of other faiths in the regular activities of life. In summary, because the theme "involves attitudes and actions in relation to other persons, it can be interpreted also as a question in Christian ethics." Thomas, *Attitudes Toward Other Religions*, 10. In that sense, Thomas makes an important contribution to this dissertation's argumentation.

⁴⁶ Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982).

Christian religions: *exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism*.⁴⁷ Even though his broad typological framework does not lack critique, it became the traditional way of expressing Christian patterns in the theology of religions.⁴⁸

Reflecting on Hendrik Kraemer's contribution to the theology of religion, T. S. Perry notes that Race's typology had an epistemological emphasis, since it aimed at assessing religious truth.⁴⁹ In Race's typology, exclusivism sees "the revelation in Jesus Christ as the sole criterion by which all religions can be understood and judged."⁵⁰ For inclusivists, "all non-Christian truth belongs ultimately to Christ and the way of discipleship which springs from it."⁵¹ In pluralism, "knowledge of God is partial in all faiths, including the Christian. Religions must acknowledge their need of each other if the full truth about God is to be available to mankind."⁵² However, Gavin D'Costa's work published in 1986 dealt with the typology soteriologically.⁵³ After that, the typology became a standard as one sought to deal with Christian understandings concerning religious diversity, and it was mainly understood in a soteriological way, as follows.

Exclusivism is defined as the position that argues for the unavoidable need for the knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ's person, teaching and deeds. Not only the Christ event per se, but faith in what it accomplished is necessary to (re)establish the relationship with God.

⁴⁷ There are other typologies that attempt to organize in theoretical constructs the way Christianity has related or should relate to other religions. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 23–6.

⁴⁸ David Pitman, *Twentieth Century Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2–3. Others typologies were proposed after Race's, but they are usually variations of his traditional structure. Pitman, *Twentieth Century Christian Responses*, 5.

⁴⁹ Tim S. Perry, *Radical Difference: A Defence of Hendrik Kraemer's Theology of Religions* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 12.

⁵⁰ Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, 11.

⁵¹ Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, 38.

⁵² Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, 72.

⁵³ Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

God's ultimate revelation to humankind takes place in the Christ event, and the Christian religion is the one that bears the testimony to that. That approach, therefore, excludes any other attempt to establish a relation to God besides faith in Jesus, the Christ.⁵⁴

Inclusivist approaches usually recognize the need of the Christ event as God's act of reconciliation with humankind, but do not argue for a cognitive knowledge of Jesus' life and teachings, faith in him, nor worship of his person. They understand that what God accomplished in Jesus is of universal value and the benefits secured by Christ are available to all of those who, even if practitioners of non-Christian religions, incarnate Jesus' teachings in their lives.⁵⁵

Even though there are still those who work (with different degrees of commitment) towards the affirmation of the significance of the Christ event, much of what has been written lately works towards a defense of a pluralist approach.⁵⁶ That approach does not recognize any special particularity of the Christ event, nor of Christianity, arguing for an equal validation of any kind of religious manifestation. It is not only the recognition of religious diversity; in its more extreme

⁵⁴ The exclusivist approach finds expression in the thought of theologians such as Karl Barth who strongly emphasized the need of God's revelation in Christ through the Spirit, which is evidenced by his rejection of natural theology. It should be added, though, that there is in Barth's thought, especially if one considers a soteriological discussion, a speculative doctrine that presents tendencies to universalism, which is mainly perceived in his reflections on election. More on the discussion on Barth's position can be found in the text "Is Barth's Theology Exclusivist?" *Philosopher Kings*, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.philosopherkings.co.uk/Barthexclusivism.html>.

⁵⁵ Karl Rahner is probably today's most well-known example of this approach, as it is evidenced in his concept of the *anonymous Christian*, the one who walks in Jesus' ways even though he has never heard of him. Influenced by his thought, Vatican II displays that same inclusivist tendency as it states that Jews do not need to believe in Jesus in order to be saved. The theology there presented renewed this understanding of the relation of Christianity to other religions. The world renown Brazilian Catholic Theologian Leonardo Boff also breaks the connection that binds salvation to the knowledge of Jesus. Because of the libertarian assumptions that structure his theology, I understand that his thought displays a panentheistic view that holds the whole creation together in relation to Christ, despite their religious manifestations. Karl-Heinz Weger, *Karl Rahner: Uma Introdução ao Pensamento Teológico* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1981); Karl Rahner, *Vaticano II: Um Começo de Renovação* (São Paulo: Editora Herder, 1966); Leonardo Boff, *Evangelho do Cristo Cósmico: A Busca da Unidade do Todo na Ciência e na Religião* (Goiânia: Rede, 2008).

⁵⁶ That drive has been strengthened by the present reality of the global village, the political situation in the West following World War 2, and the ascendancy of non-Christian faiths.

forms it is a movement against any kind of faith-centrism and an affirmation of the value of all and every religion.

The pluralist approach is usually built either on theocentric assumptions or on anthropocentric convictions. In the first case, the involved epistemology recognizes the existence of a transcendent reality that is perceived and experienced in the immanent world in multiple ways. This form of pluralism recognizes multiform manifestations that stress different but equally valid nuances of that transcendent reality.⁵⁷ Pluralist approaches based on anthropocentric assumptions usually deny or are indifferent to the idea of a transcendent reality. They rely on anthropological and sociological findings, recognizing religious manifestations as socially constructed realities that aim at giving meaning to different phenomena experienced by people.⁵⁸

Both cases argue for an equal validation of the world's religions with a posture that goes

⁵⁷ John Hick is an example of that approach. He denies the common literal understanding of God's incarnation in Jesus because, in his opinion, that would make Christianity God's religion, and therefore the only correct one. For him, Christ's incarnation must be understood metaphorically in the sense that Jesus incarnated in his life the essence of God, as other non-Christian religious leaders have also done. He bases his affirmation on recent research on the historical Jesus, which, according to him, has shown itself unable to prove Christians' claims on Jesus' divinity. For Hick, it just does not make sense that God and human are one in Christ. Therefore, the literal sense of God's incarnation in Jesus must be left behind. In his opinion, that would open promising doors to the understanding of Christianity's relation to other religions. John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006). Paul Knitter is another prominent scholar who argues for a pluralist approach for the reality of the world religions. He criticizes the ecclesiocentric model, but directs much of his efforts against the Christocentric model, which gave birth to the book *No Other Name?* Like Hick, he defends the theocentric model as the most helpful interpretation of Christian doctrine as one considers the need for an authentic inter-religious dialogue. Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985).

⁵⁸ Wilfred Cantwell Smith can be cited as an example of that approach. He argues that none of the world religions' leaders (with the exception of Mohamed) aimed at creating a religion, and that their practitioners only regard what they have as a religion (in the European concept of the term) in the need for self-understanding caused by the relation to other cultures and the necessity of self-affirmation. Therefore, the concept of religion emerges from a political-apologetic process. The implied sense present in his argumentation is that of a relativistic view of religion accompanied by a criticism of the assumed use of the term religion. Cf. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). James C. Livingstone, "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Religious Truth in Wilfred C. Smith," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, accessed February 13, 2017, <http://www.jcrt.org/archives/04.3/livingston.pdf>.

against any kind of faith-centrism. The recognition of the value of every religion and the need for peaceful and respectful relationships among them is a growing force in theology. Inter-religious dialogue has become a moral demand, and calls for the establishment of a dialogical relationship among different faiths to promote life and ensure peace among groups and nations.⁵⁹ On one hand, that represents a move towards mutual respect of human dignity and peace; on the other hand, it represents the relativization of religion claims and/or the downplay of doctrinal essentials, thereby weakening Christocentric convictions.

As was mentioned, Race's typology faces diverse criticism. Particularly, T. S. Perry's reflections as he describes the typology as a "polemical device that caricatures actual exclusivist and inclusivist theories while masking problems in pluralist ones."⁶⁰ Race's proposition describes a shift from exclusivism to pluralism, reinforcing the pluralist approaches that gained force through the last decades. According to those who defend that view, the differences among religions must be seen through the greater overall unifying understanding that all of them have at their core the common experience of the Ultimate Reality, which is variedly expressed in their cultures.⁶¹ "The irony of this position is palpable, for it claims at bottom that the only way to preserve religious diversity in practice is to deny it in theory."⁶²

Diversity must be recognized, and not relativized. Otherwise, the very goal of inter-

⁵⁹ Faustino Teixeira, inspired by Hans Küng, affirms that there are only two options for those who face the reality of religious plurality: religious rivalry and war or dialogue and peace. Cf. Faustino Teixeira, *Teologia das Religiões* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1989). Joining efforts with those who seek dialogue, Bruno Forte develops ways through which otherness generates enriching experiences to those who seek inter-religious dialogue. He invites people to decentralize themselves and make their contribution in the fight against intolerance. Cf. Bruno Forte, *Teologia in Diálogo* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 1999). Raimundo Panikkar works on the importance of a necessary exchange among religions, which will allow religions to more deeply understand themselves as they relate to the difference of others. Cf. Raimon Panikkar, *Entre Dieu et le cosmos* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

⁶⁰ Perry, *Radical Difference*, 4.

⁶¹ Perry, *Radical Difference*, 2.

⁶² Perry, *Radical Difference*, 2.

religious dialogue loses its meaning. In dialogue, Christian theology opens itself to the riches of God present in creation, understanding, valuing and appropriating God's blessings which are manifest in every culture. But, to be relevant in the dialogue, Christians must have a distinctive contribution to offer. Distinctiveness, therefore, becomes a primary characteristic of religion if one wants to sustain the importance of dialogue. If understandings that reinforce the uniqueness of Christ are simply characterized as exclusivists and, therefore, closed to relationships with those who are different, we lose sight of a variety of approaches that affirm Christ's singularity and at the same time are willing to positively interact in love and open to learn from others' experiences. Leslie Newbigin declared, "we [Christians] have no business trying to domesticate within our cultures, or rational projects and programmes, no business trying to confuse it with the so-called Christian civilization of the west. The gospel is unique, sovereign, unbound. Our business is to bear witness to it."⁶³

A Brief Description of The Religious Scenario in Brazil

With this description of pluralism in a post-secular context, this dissertation now turns to the religious context of Brazil. Rather than a full history, the brief description of Brazilian religiosity here presented will consider the last five hundred years of that history, with an emphasis on the Catholic Church's impact in Brazil. Unfortunately, Brazilian research lacks works that deal with the history of the Brazilian culture with the religious dimension as the central element of the reflection. However, most research dealing with the Brazilian religious dimension usually agrees that syncretism is a remarkable trait of Brazilian religiosity.⁶⁴

⁶³ Lesslie Newbigin, "A Sermon Preached at the Thanksgiving Service for the 50th Anniversary of the Tambaram Conference of the International Missionary Council." *International Review of Mission* 77, no. 307 (July 1988): 325–31, 327.

⁶⁴ "... the Brazilian is markedly religious and that is reflected in his daily life, in the capacity to express

The Portuguese crown officially arrived in *Terra brasilis*⁶⁵ in April 22, 1500, with the sea fleet of the navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral. With it also arrived the Roman Catholic Church.⁶⁶ Along with political domination and economic exploitation, the Portuguese colonization also involved what Andrade calls the *salvationist project*, a strong emphasis on the catechization of the indigenous population, settlers and enslaved Africans.⁶⁷

Reflecting on Gilberto Freyre's masterpiece, *Casa Grande e Senzala*,⁶⁸ Robério Souza highlights that the *português quinhentista*⁶⁹ was characterized by *plasticity* or *malleability*. One of the elements of that *plasticity* is *miscibility*, the condition of being miscible, of mixing things together forming a homogeneous substance.⁷⁰ Influenced by those aspects of the Portuguese culture, the form that the Catholic faith took in Brazil and the religiosity it prompted became remarkably syncretic.

multiple forms of religious faith, in a way that his conduct and religious beliefs are a fundamental part of the ethos of Brazilian culture." Maristela Oliveira de Andrade, "A Religiosidade Brasileira: O Pluralismo Religioso, a Diversidade de Crenças e o Processo Sincrético," *CAOS–Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais* 14, (September 2009): 106–18, 108.

⁶⁵ The term refers to Brazil prior to the European arrival/colonization. It can be understood as *the indigenous peoples' land*.

⁶⁶ Jacqueline Hermann, "Cenário do Encontro de Povos: A Construção do Território," in *Brasil–500 Anos de Povoamento*, ed. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística–IBGE (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2007), 20.

⁶⁷ The Catholic presence in Brazil can be better understood as one considers the impact of the Council of Trent on it. Held between 1545 and 1563 in Trento, northern Italy, the council was in great part a reaction to the Protestant Reformation. With the support of the kings and being highly influential on the ecclesiastical and social life in Portugal, the council had a significant impact in Brazilian history. It reinforced the agreement established between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Portugal, which is traditionally referred to as *Padroado* (patronage). The agreement guaranteed to the Portuguese crown the autonomy to appoint bishops and to structure the church in its territories, which included its colonies. In exchange, the crown committed itself to the defense and expansion of the Catholic faith throughout the world.

⁶⁸ Gilberto de Mello Freyre (1900–1987) is one of the most notable among Brazilian intellectuals. A polymath, Freyre received many national and international awards such as the Aspen Prize, the Order of the British Empire and Prêmio Jabuti. His book "*Casa Grande e Senzala*" was first published in 1933. It criticized social and racial determinism and valued harmonic inter-ethnic relationships, pointing out that Brazilian slavery history as being less segregating than the American.

⁶⁹ Expression that designates the Portuguese population of the 16th century.

⁷⁰ Robério Américo do Carmo Souza, "O Hibridismo na Construção da Religiosidade: Repensando a Contribuição de Gilberto Freyre para o Debate," *Revista Angelus Novos* 3 (July 2012), 291–309, 294.

Indigenous and African religiosity were characterized by diversity in their expressions and understandings. They involved diverse forms of polytheism, ancestral worship and, most of all, animism. The ethnic groups that were subjected to the process of catechization assimilated the Portuguese religion in their own and multiple ways.⁷¹ The colony was officially and also remarkably catholic (Christian), but its religiosity was also composed of varied elements in a way that Brazil's population did not see contradictions among them. It is important to state that this syncretism was tolerated in Brazilian soil. In Brazil, religiosity was built under Portuguese and Catholic domination, which did not allow the free expression of the Indigenous and African religiosity. But there existed a spirit of tolerance towards a more syncretic form of popular piety, which included masses in Latin but also animistic rituals involving the power of herbs. Even though they were in a context of subordination, the enslaved Africans had opportunity to celebrate public festivals, which kept the basic social structure of their homeland.⁷²

The plastic character of Portuguese Catholicism and culture, the syncretic process that marked religiosity in the Brazilian colony, the modern emphasis on individual autonomy, and the growing diversity of religious manifestations that took place since the Proclamation of the Republic⁷³ (intensified by migratory movements and the reality of the global village), contributed to today's Brazilian form of pluralism. That pluralism is not demonstrated by the balance

⁷¹ The expression used in Portuguese is *projeto salvacionista*. Andrade, "A Religiosidade Brasileira," 108.

⁷² Souza, "O Híbridismo na Construção da Religiosidade," 303.

⁷³ The end of the Catholic monopoly after the Proclamation of the Republic in Brazil (1889) did not mean a discontinuity of that syncretic trait of Brazilian religiosity. In fact, it generated opportunity for a more explicit expression of the latent religious pluralism. The Protestantism of migration gave place to the Protestantism of conversion. Kardecist spiritism spread over the country, mainly through a syncretic process with Catholicism. Afro-Brazilian religious manifestations became more organized, giving birth to an authentically Brazilian and highly syncretic religion—Umbanda. Santo Daime puts together Amazonian Indigenous religious rituals, elements of Catholicism and spiritism. Added to that, in the last few decades religiosity in Brazil has experienced a growing visibility of Eastern religious groups, an affirmation of the Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian religions, the renovation of Catholicism through the charismatic movement and the growth of evangelical groups. Ribeiro, "Um Olhar sobre o Atual Cenário Religioso Brasileiro," 60.

between the number of adepts of the existing religions,⁷⁴ but by the privatization of religion that prompts multiple understandings of faith and spirituality. In a religious market where there is an offer of varied symbolic goods, people can move from one institution or group to another in a somewhat free religious transit. A person can even feel comfortable being nurtured by different faiths, living a kind of double religious citizenship. There are even those who chose to deal with their spirituality without submission to any institutionalized religion.⁷⁵ That way, even though some authors see significant changes in Brazilian syncretic processes,⁷⁶ today we can talk about individual syncretic movements and the new forms of religious pluralism that they prompt in Brazil. Today, Brazil exhibits a cultural pluralism that appreciates the diversity of options present in the religious market, building an internal cultural resistance to totalizing discourses. In Brazil this process of individualization led to an intensified individual syncretic process.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Official Brazilian census points out that 64.6 percent of Brazilian population is Catholic; 22.2 percent Evangelical (Protestants, Pentecostals and Neo-pentecostals); 8 percent irreligious; 2 percent Kardecists; 0.7 percent Jehovah's Witnesses; 0.3 percent Afro-Brazilian cults; 1.6 percent other religions such as Jews, Islamic, esoteric, Wiccan, etc. "Censo 2010," Portal do IBGE, accessed October 21, 2018, <https://censo2010.ibge.gov.br/noticias-censo?id=1&idnoticia=2170&t=censo-2010-numero-catolicos-cai-aumenta-evangelicos-espiritas-sem-religiao&view=noticia>.

⁷⁵ Ribeiro, "Um Olhar sobre o Atual Cenário Religioso Brasileiro," 62.

⁷⁶ Authors such as Maristela Andrade and Claudio Ribeiro also identified, along with syncretic process, growing fundamentalist movements in Brazil. These movements can be seen in all three great Brazilian religious matrices: Indigenous, African and European. In Andrade's thesis, that is a consequence of the necessity of differentiation in the highly competing religious market. Ribeiro, on the other hand, emphasizes human suffering and disappointment with the myth of Positivism as a fertile soil for questions that aim at clearly distinguishing good from evil, right from wrong. Maristela Oliveira de Andrade, "A Religiosidade Brasileira," 106–18. Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, "Um Olhar sobre o Atual Cenário Religioso Brasileiro," 65.

⁷⁷ Fonseca, *Relações e Privilégios*, 44. The process of religious individualization that produces a different form of pluralism is not a Brazilian peculiarity. Reflecting on individualism and religiosity in America, Robert Bellah tells us about one person his group interviewed whose name was Sheila Larson. In the interview, Sheila named her religion after herself—*Sheilaism*. About it, she declares "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." According to Bellah, Sheila Marson represents what has become more common in the USA as religion has become more private and, because of that, diverse. Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2008), 220. Unlike what happened in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, in the English colonies of North America there was not a dominant religious group. Baptist groups, Quakers, Lutherans, Dutch Reformers, Catholics, among others, settled in the English colonies, so that there was no dominant church over all of them. However, the process of individualization and its

As syncretic forces and secularization's emphasis on individual autonomy worked together, subjective forms of religiosity became a significant phenomenon in Brazil and contributed to the reinforcement and expression of a Brazilian form of pluralism. Because of the value given to individual freedom/expression in the university's context, such a reality assumes even more challenging contours to the work of the campus pastor. Not only does popular culture tend to value pluralism or to operate in a pluralist way, but also the modern spirit, highly influential in academic settings, protects and reinforces those pluralist elements of its society. Indeed, the combination of those forces can be seen in the specific context of the Lutheran University of Brazil.

The Lutheran University of Brazil: A Pluralistic Learning Community

A Brief History of the University

In 1905, the Reverend Henry T. Stiemke initiated missionary work in the city of Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul state. In that same year, the Comunidade Evangélica Luterana São Paulo – CELSP was founded. As the number of members grew, it became necessary to build a chapel or church temple. Another growing need was the creation of an Evangelical Lutheran school, since all the existing schools were either public, with classes in Portuguese (at that time Lutherans' primary language was still German), or Catholic.⁷⁸ In 1911, the congregation was able to build a

consequent pluralization which delineates American religiosity also shapes Brazilian religiosity. If in the USA that individualizing drive joined forces with the spirit of religious freedom that marked North America's colonization, in Brazil it worked together with its population malleability and syncretic tendency.

⁷⁸ Because of the impact of the Council of Trent on Brazilian history, Portugal and Spain tried to prevent the entry of the Reformation in their territories. However, the social and political changes that took place in Europe through the Napoleonic wars and in the Iberian America as the colonies became independent altered the scenario. Migration took place, turning Brazil into a nation that boasts the largest number of Lutherans in Latin America. Walter O. Steyer, *Os Imigrantes Alemães no Rio Grande do Sul e o Luteranismo* (Porto Alegre: Singular, 1999), 13. Even though there are records of a Lutheran named Heliado Eobano arriving in Brazil in 1532, Lutheranism's more significant presence occurred only in 1824 when many Evangelical German immigrants settled in Southern Brazil. In 1904, through the work of American Lutheran pastors, it was founded the 15^o District of the Deutsche

chapel, which also was used as a school classroom. Many pastors and teachers worked at the church/school through the years, but the institution's history had a major turn when, in 1966, it called Reverend Ruben Eugen Becker. He and ULBRA's history are deeply connected, in many ways joined to each other, for better and for worse.⁷⁹

Rev. Becker's call included, besides the parochial work, shifts at the congregation's school. By that time, the school faced a serious financial struggle and many leaders of the congregation wanted to close it. In the face of that situation, Rev. Becker proposed an expansion plan instead. As time passed the school's situation changed, expanding its field of action to high school, giving birth to the Colégio Cristo Redentor and, later, to the Faculdades Canoenses.⁸⁰

In 1988, the Faculdades Canoenses had their status changed from college to university, becoming the Universidade Luterana do Brasil – ULBRA.⁸¹ Rev. Becker, who was already in charge of the administration of the whole educational system, was elected the university's president.⁸² As the years passed by, ULBRA became the brand that identified CELSP's schools, colleges, hospitals and its other enterprises all over Brazil. In the nineties, CELSP's educational arm experienced a boom. In its heyday, ULBRA administrated four hospitals, one TV Channel, one Radio Station, South America's largest car museum, professional sport teams (some of them

Evangelisch-Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, which fifty years later became the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil–IELB. Steyer, *Os Imigrantes Alemães*, 14.

⁷⁹ Lauro Patzer, *Ruben Becker: 70 Anos de História* (Canoas: Nova Prova, 2006), 159.

⁸⁰ Patzer, *Ruben Becker*, 159. The congregation's educational expansion created and absorbed the administration of the other three schools in the city of Canoas. However, Rev. Becker's focus and leadership aimed at higher levels. His entrepreneurial spirit gave birth in 1972 to the Faculdades Canoenses, an undergraduate institution which rapidly became significant in the educational scenario of the region. That institution expanded and sought an official accreditation that would transform the college into a university.

⁸¹ Nestor L. J. Beck, coord., *As Origens da Universidade Luterana do Brasil* (Canoas: Editora da Ulbra, 1994), 33–55.

⁸² The role of ULBRA as the administrator of CELSP's whole educational system is attested to by its 1989 statute as it declares that the “atividades dos estabelecimentos de Ensino serão administradas pela Universidade Luterana do Brasil ULBRA e seus órgãos selecionados.” ULBRA—Universidade Confessional (Canoas: Editora da ULBRA, n.d.), 81.

have become national champions several times), seventeen schools, one university and fifteen college campuses, spread across six different Brazilian states. It held more than 150,000 students and 10,000 employees, becoming the largest Lutheran educational institution in the world.⁸³

In 2008, however, CELSP's educational arm started showing that its situation was not as glorious as it seemed. That year, one of Brazil's most successful educational projects gave signs that it was suffering from a terrible disease. A crushing financial crisis hit the institution.⁸⁴ Rev. Becker suffered from different accusations⁸⁵ and the tension finally led him to resign before his imminent dismissal.⁸⁶ After Rev. Becker's resignation, a new university's president was elected. Rev. Marcos Fernando Ziemer was highly praised for his courage and committed spirit to the congregation's educational project as he assumed the administration of the whole educational complex at an extremely difficult time.⁸⁷

⁸³ "Comunicado sobre Mudanças na Relação CELSP-ULBRA," Portal da ULBRA, April 16, 2014, <http://www.ulbra.br/canoas/imprensa/noticia/8690/comunicado-sobre-mudancas-na-relacao-celsp-ulbra>.

⁸⁴ The crisis limited, among other things, the institution's capacity to pay wages to faculty and staff. The causes indicated at the time were varied and mostly involved fiscal indebtedness and high debts with bank loans. In November, the teachers' union voted for a strike. The tension intensified in the beginning of 2009, and many students, staff and faculty members demanded the removal of Rev. Becker from the position of president of the university. "Funcionários da ULBRA Fazem Manifestação em Canoas," Portal G1, April 14, 2009, <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Vestibular/0,,MUL1084782-5604,00-FUNCIONARIOS+DA+ULBRA+FAZEM+MANIFESTACAO+EM+CANOAS.html>. Brazil's National Educational Department also pressed the institution for Rev. Becker's departure.

⁸⁵ Rev. Becker was officially sued by Brazilian Federal Police. He was accused of corruption, money laundering, misappropriation and illicit enrichment. A few months after his resignation, Rev. Becker was excommunicated. <http://www.ulbra.br/canoas/imprensa/noticia/8690/comunicado-sobre-mudancas-na-relacao-celsp-ulbra>. Several criminal cases against him are still ongoing. He and his daughter have been recently convicted of money laundering. "Ex-reitor da ULBRA é Condenado por Lavagem de Dinheiro," Portal Band Notícias, January 18, 2018, <https://noticias.band.uol.com.br/cidades/rs/noticias/100000896448/ex-reitor-da-ulbra-e-condenado-por-lavagem-de-dinheiro.html>.

⁸⁶ "Reitor da ULBRA Renuncia após Pressão do MEC," Portal Extra, April 17, 2009, <https://extra.globo.com/noticias/brasil/reitor-da-ulbra-renuncia-apos-pressao-do-mec-269140.html>.

⁸⁷ The institutional crisis became almost overwhelming. The tax identification and several debts with banks and other creditors were higher than the institution's financial value. The whole educational project was one step away from bankruptcy. Three of the hospitals were closed, and the largest one was adjudicated, becoming federal government property ("JFRS Transfere Propriedade do Hospital Universitário de Canoas à União," Portal da JFRS, March 12, 2014, <https://www2.jfrs.jus.br/jfrs-transfere-propriedade-do-hospital-universitario-de-canoas-a-uniao/>). The number of students was radically reduced, more and more legal proceedings pressured the already scarce

Despite the highly challenging scenario, many still believed in the educational project and put together diverse efforts to save the university, colleges and schools.⁸⁸ Part of CELSP's educational restructuring involved what was technically called *segregation*, a move that represented the legal separation between the congregation's religious activities and its educational arm. That action put an end to the legal entity called CELSP and gave birth to two new and legally independent institutions: the Congregação Evangélica Luterana Castelo Forte – CELCF, which embraced all the religious activities, and the Associação Educacional Luterana do Brasil – AELBRA, which assumed the administration of the whole educational system.⁸⁹

Even though the new institutional maintainer was a civil organization, it committed itself to keeping the educational project's confessional character.⁹⁰ Today, AELBRA administrates ULBRA and its nine campuses, four other college campuses in Northern Brazil, fifteen schools, one TV Channel and one Radio Station. It has about 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students, including distance learning. At one time, the university was considered an elitist institution by many, but today 1/3 of its undergraduate students come from a lower social class, assisted by governmental scholarships. AELBRA's schools hold about 6,000 students from

financial resources, all the institution's properties were pawned ("Justiça Federal Penhora Restante dos Bens da ULBRA," Website Gaúcha ZH, April 14, 2011, <https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/geral/noticia/2011/04/justica-federal-penhora-restante-dos-bens-da-ulbra-3275817.html>). Lack of investments and close to zero maintenance in the campuses' and schools' facilities also impacted the institution as whole.

⁸⁸ "Ulbra Adere ao Programa de Reestruturação do Governo Federal," Portal ULBRA, January 3, 2013, <http://www.ulbra.br/torres/imprensa/noticia/5793/ulbra-adere-ao-programa-de-reestruturacao-do-governo-federal>.

⁸⁹ "ULBRA Confirma que Terá Nova Entidade Mantenedora," Website Diário de Canoas, April 30, 2014, http://www.diariodecanoas.com.br/_conteudo/2014/04/noticias/regiao/39503-ulbra-confirma-que-tera-nova-entidade-mantenedora.html.

⁹⁰ AELBRA was originally composed of eight associates, all members of the now extinct CELSP (today three of them have resigned). They committed to maintaining the confessional character of the university, colleges and schools. "Comunicado Sobre Mudanças na Relação CELSP-ULBRA," Portal ULBRA, April 16, 2014, <http://www.ulbra.br/canoas/imprensa/noticia/8690/comunicado-sobre-mudancas-na-relacao-celsp-ulbra>. For more information on ULBRA's crises: Angelo Estevão Prando et al., *ADULBRA 30 Anos: História, Memória e Valor Cultural* (Canoas: Editora Carta, 2016). Also, Marcos Antônio Meyer Jacobsen, "Uma Reflexão sobre Processos de Identidade Vividos durante a reestruturação da Celsp-Ulbra no Período de 2008/2 a 2014/1," Portal da Unisinos, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.repositorio.jesuita.org.br/handle/UNISINOS/6212>.

kindergarten through high school. Two of its schools were closed in 2017 and two of its college campuses in Northern Brazil were sold in 2018. In general, as it is the case with the whole educational system administrated by AELBRA, ULBRA's financial situation has not improved and its indebtedness has only increased. The university fights for survival in a highly competitive field, but still stands thanks to the competence of its faculty and general commitment of its employees.⁹¹

Through all the ups and downs, joys and struggles and major shifts of the university, one element has been always present. Sometimes it was questioned by some, other times it was unnoticed by others, but it has always been active and most of the time recognized as the most distinctive and differential trait of the university: its confessional character. The next section of this research will focus that character, and will reflect on the challenge generated by it as one considers the pluralistic ethos of our time.⁹²

Highlights on ULBRA's Confessional Character

Since its beginning, ULBRA has recognized its connection to the Christian/Lutheran faith, declaring itself to be a communitarian-confessional educational institution. The first Article of its first statute declared: "The university is guided by the Lutheran doctrine, which is based on the Holy Scriptures and expressed in the confessional documents gathered in the *Book of*

⁹¹ "Ulbra é Ouro e Prata no Prêmio Nacional de Gestão Educacional," Portal Ulbra, March 22, 2018, <http://www.ulbra.br/canoas/imprensa/noticia/25342/ulbra-e-ouro-e-prata-no-premio-nacional-de-gestao-educacional-pnge>. Accessed November 1, 2018.

⁹² After the first chapter of this dissertation was written, the struggle for institutional survival led AELBRA to a change in its status before Brazilian government. In May 2019, the civil association became a joint-stock company. That was necessary in order for the institution to make use of the Brazilian legislation concerning judicial reorganization (receivership). "Ulbra Pede Recuperação Judicial," Portal G1, May 7, 2019, <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/noticia/2019/05/07/ulbra-pede-recuperacao-judicial-para-renegociar-divida-de-r-24-bilhoes.ghtml>. Accessed October 14, 2019. AELBRA still awaits for its judicial reorganization request.

Concord.”⁹³

The concern with the confessional character of ULBRA’s educational project is also attested to with its chaplaincy. All of ULBRA’s nine campuses have a pastor called to the specific position of university chaplain. These pastors teach undergraduate courses, lead devotional moments, celebrate services, offer pastoral care, take part in the university planning teams, and develop social intermediation projects.⁹⁴

In the description of ULBRA’s confessional character, one must also consider the university’s Bachelor of Theology Degree.⁹⁵ ULBRA’s Theology Department has an important role in the construction of the university’s confessional ethos. The interaction with other departments, the events promoted, the spreading of Lutheran theology are some of the many contributions that the Theology Department aims at achieving. It also must be mentioned that since 1994 a significant part of the Synod’s pastoral training takes place at the university, multiplying the seminary’s students’ experiences and, consequently, their learning.

⁹³ Original text: “A Universidade orienta-se pela doutrina luterana, baseada nas Escrituras Sagradas e exposta nos documentos confessionais reunidos no Livro Concórdia, de mil quinhentos e oitenta.” ULBRA—Universidade Confessional, 167. Among ULBRA’s goals listed in that same statute, one will find “Preservar a tradição cristã confrontando-a com outras concepções veiculadas na sociedade e propondo-a como alternativa de interpretação do sentido da existência humana” (ULBRA—Universidade Confessional, 168.). Another goal is framed in the following words “Promover a formação integral da pessoa humana em conformidade com a filosofia educacional luterana, como ente eticamente responsável, cuja existência se desenvolva na presença de Deus, o Criador” (ULBRA—Universidade Confessional, 168).

⁹⁴ At the beginning, CELSP’s pastors were involved in different, but not full-time pastoral activities at the university. For some time, the Pro-rectory of Community Matters was also responsible for the confessional activities that took places at ULBRA’s campuses. However, in 1995 a pastor was called to the specific function of organizing and developing the university’s chaplaincy. The position created, ULBRA’s Head Chaplain, was responsible for the pastoral work at the university main campus but it was also the leader of all those who were engaged in positions at ULBRA that were characteristically pastoral. In a few years the institution experienced a significant growth of its chaplaincy. For more information on ULBRA’s Chaplaincy: www.ulbra.br/pastoral.

⁹⁵ Brazilian higher educational system was highly influenced by positivistic ideas and the intrinsic anti-clerical spirit present in the French revolution. (Luiz Antônio Cunha, *A Universidade Temporã. O Ensino Superior da Colônia à era Vargas* [São Paulo: UNESP, 1980], 132). The French secularism’s influence on Brazilian higher education is seen in that only in 1999 did Brazil’s Ministry of Education accredit, for the first time in its history, an under-graduate degree in theology. That accreditation was granted to ULBRA.

The university's chapel is also an important element of ULBRA's confessional character. Begun in 2003, ULBRA Chapel's nave is surrounded by twelve doors. It invites people from every place and background to join the community of faith. The Chapel became the testimony of an educational institution which, inspired by the Christian Lutheran tradition, values spirituality as an essential dimension of our humanity and believes that faith and reason contribute to the enhancement of humanity. ULBRA's Chapel, therefore, is a place of faith and learning. In it, people come together in a continuous process which puts our hearts and our minds before God.⁹⁶

Also worth mentioning is the book *ULBRA—Universidade Confessional*, probably the most representative publication on ULBRA's confessionalism. The document presents the institution's understanding of education. It states that as the institution considers the spiritual dimension of our humanity, it also promotes an integrated process of learning. Through its statutes, its logo, its chaplaincy, its cultic and devotional events, the theology degree it offers, its chapel, the insertion of a required course on religion for all graduate students, the university expresses the faith that is part of its DNA.⁹⁷ Acting according to this confessionalism, the institution gives testimony to the Christian faith. However, that has always been done as a witness. No one who works or studies at ULBRA is forced to accept the faith. Affiliation to the faith is not a necessary condition of hiring or enrollment. "Through its confessional personality, ULBRA bears witness to the Truth. The eventual conversion to the Christian faith is the work of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ "A Capela," Webpage da Pastoral da ULBRA, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.ulbra.br/pastoral/a-capela>.

⁹⁷ ULBRA—Universidade Confessional, 21.

⁹⁸ Original text: "Através de sua personalidade confessional, a ULBRA dá testemunho da Verdade. A eventual conversão à fé cristã é obra do Espírito Santo." ULBRA—Universidade Confessional, 21. That way, the document aims at distinguishing what is academic activity from what is a religious activity. They interact, but the distinction must be kept. The academic programs follow specific regulations, making use of diverse areas of human

Therefore, it is expected that the university's confessional vision impacts the practices of those who work and study at the university.⁹⁹ Even though it does not demand an embracement of the faith personally, it is expected that all of those who work at ULBRA act accordingly to the morality that emanates from its confessionality. Of course, the desire is that such a posture will be present in the teaching-learning process, such that ULBRA's students are also impacted by it.¹⁰⁰

This summary leads to a significant reflection on ULBRA's motto, which is a stylized expression of Martin Luther's seal.¹⁰¹ It keeps the seal's main elements such as the cross, the heart that embraces the cross and the rose, but it substitutes the golden ring with the words of John's Gospel: "*Veritas vos Liberabit*" – *The Truth will set you free*. Considering that the university is a confessional institution, that motto can be seen in two dimensions, the vertical and the horizontal. In the vertical dimension, ULBRA's confessional character is highlighted. The truth John refers to is Jesus, the Christ, who through his vicarious life and death set us free from sin's imprisonment and the law's condemnation. In the horizontal dimension, ULBRA highlights the transformative education it aims at. Humans are imprisoned in many ways, and ignorance is one of the worst because it imprisons us in a way that we do not even realize we are imprisoned. As we acquire knowledge and learn more about nature and human existence, we free ourselves to ethically explore the multiple possibilities God makes available to us.

In 2009, by selling part of its properties, ULBRA was able to attend the most pressing

knowledge. As a university, it is open to any question and it gives voice to any proposed answer. On the other hand, being confessional, the institution publicly manifests its Christian understanding of reality.

⁹⁹ ULBRA—Universidade Confessional, 33.

¹⁰⁰ ULBRA—NYUniversidade Confessional, 36.

¹⁰¹ "Logotipo da ULBRA," Portal ULBRA, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.ulbra.br/canoas/espaco-academico/logotipo-da-ulbra>.

demand: to pay the back wages.¹⁰² After the university put its essential activities on track, it worked on finding ways to re-structure the suffering institution. One of the moves was to involve the whole community in the university's strategic planning. The first step was to define the strategic pillars, which involved people from different areas, and showed how important to the community is ULBRA's confessional character. Among the four strategic pillars, one was "to strengthen Lutheran identity."¹⁰³

Thus far, we have attested how much the history of the university is marked by its confessional character. However, this dissertation has a specific focus, which is the challenges brought by today's religious pluralism to ULBRA's campus pastors. Having described historically the Brazilian form of pluralism and affirming ULBRA's confessional character, we will more directly address the dissertation's problem.

¹⁰² Surely, the crushing crisis lived by ULBRA since 2008 has impacted it in many ways, also affecting the view many have of its confessionality. After all, the former president, who was a pastor, has been accused of and convicted of many crimes along with other members of his staff. The dignity of ULBRA's confessional character has been questioned. The financial crises and all the limitations it imposes have impacted many lives; employees' pay arrears came to three months; three hospitals were closed and those who sought medical treatment were left unattended; students and their families have been concerned about the future of the university and all the time and money invested in the classes already taken. The impact of ULBRA's crisis on Brazilian Lutheranism was so intense that it forced the then presidents of the two major Lutheran synods in Brazil to make official pronouncements. The public statement of Rev. Paulo Moisés Nerbis, president of IELB, declared in 2009 that the synod "deeply regrets the fact that the name of the Lutheran Church—as an institution—was deprecated before public opinion and within the Church itself; the negative repercussion of the name "Lutheran" due to ULBRA's crisis, since the university is linked to the Church; the consequences of such facts on the lives of those who work or render services to the university, or make use of its services, such as health plan clients, hospital patients and students." Original text: "Lamenta profundamente os fatos que provocaram depreciação do nome da Igreja Luterana—como instituição—perante a opinião pública e dentro da própria Igreja; a repercussão negativa do nome "luterano" a partir da crise da ULBRA, uma vez que a Universidade está ligada à Igreja; as consequências de tais fatos sobre as vidas das pessoas que trabalham ou prestam serviços à Universidade, ou dela usufruem, como clientes do plano de saúde, pacientes dos hospitais e alunos." "Pronunciamento da Igreja Luterana," Portal Metodista, September 13, 2013, <http://www.metodista.org.br/pronunciamento-da-igreja-luterana>. For the public statement of Rev. Walter Altmann, president of the Igreja Evangelica de Confissão Luterana do Brasil, the largest Lutheran synod in Brazil: "Nota de Esclarecimento sobre Caso ULBRA," Portal Luteranos, April 17, 2009, <http://luteranos.com.br/conteudo/nota-de-esclarecimento-sobre-caso-ulbra>.

¹⁰³ "VI Planest é Realizado em Manaus," Portal da ULBRA, August 3, 2015, <http://www.ulbra.br/canoas/imprensa/noticia/19630/vi-planest-e-realizado-em-manaus>.

An Accidentally Pluralist University: Reflections on the University's Confessional Status under Robert Benne's Typology

In his 2001 book, Robert Benne reflected on how six premier colleges and universities kept faith with their religious traditions. For such an achievement to take place, Benne identified three components of the Christian tradition that must be publicly relevant in the university: its vision, its ethos and the persons who bear that vision and ethos.¹⁰⁴ Vision refers to how the comprehension of reality is articulated; to how life and its multiple elements and dimensions are understood. Ethos has to do with the expression of that vision as a way of life, which involves rituals and ethics. Finally, the third component points out to those who, because of their personal commitment, bear that vision and ethos.

Based on the significance of those components, Benne proposes a typology that locates church-related colleges and universities in stages of the secularization process. Even though the limitations of endeavors such as typologies are recognized by Benne himself, his chart is helpful as it highlights important elements that work together towards the construction of an institution's confessional character. Benne's typology considers a North American educational reality, which is significantly different from that of ULBRA's. However, as one keeps that in mind and shapes the major divides of the typology accordingly to one's own context, Benne's proposal is helpful at putting the institution's situation in perspective.

Benne presents four types of church related colleges/universities: Orthodox, Critical-Mass, Intentionally Pluralist, and Accidentally Pluralist. In the first two, the Christian vision and ethos are the "organizing paradigm for the life of the college or university."¹⁰⁵ In the second two, "the

¹⁰⁴ Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 6.

¹⁰⁵ Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 51.

religious paradigm has been dethroned from its defining role by the secularization process.”¹⁰⁶ In my own analysis, ULBRA falls under the third category – *Intentionally Pluralist*. As I consider the ten criteria indicated by Benne, in eight of them ULBRA is better characterized as *Intentionally Pluralist*.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, I will argue that ULBRA fits into that position in Benne’s typology. When necessary, I will adapt the typology’s rationale since I have the Brazilian reality in mind.

As one considers the courses offered at the university, the religious paradigm is not normative. The diverse departments’ pedagogical projects and their many courses’ syllabi operate independently, being essentially aligned with a liberal education. They display a postmodern framework where overarching religious paradigms are rejected or not seen as effective. Even though there is a general sense that the religious character of the institution is important and must be considered, in many cases the practical implications of that character do not take place. Even though there are attempts that aim at making the religious vision known by everyone, they are minimal and, unless directed by chaplains, tend to emphasize the humanistic aspect of the tradition, not its transcendent faith. The university operates out of “a different

¹⁰⁶ Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ The ten criteria suggested by Benne’s with a brief description of ULBRA’s position follow. Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 49. In the first eight, the description given fits ULBRA in the *intentionally pluralist* type. In the last two, in the *critical-mass* type. The order here presented is different from the original. 1. Major divide: secular sources are the organizing paradigm, at least pedagogically. 2. Public relevance of Christian vision: the Christian vision is an assured voice in an ongoing conversation; 3. Public rhetoric: the institution is presented as a liberal arts school with a Christian heritage; 4. Membership requirements: there is intentional representation in very few positions; 5. Religion/theology required courses: one required course focused on the religious phenomenon; 6. Chapel attendance: voluntary at unprotected times, with low attendance; 7. Ethos: open minority from sponsoring tradition finding private niche; 8. Support by Church: indirect support, very small minority of students from the Synod; 9. Religion/Theology Department: even though that is a small department at ULBRA, with most of its students coming from the synod’s seminary and with minimal academic influence over or connections/interaction with the other departments, its theology is characteristically Lutheran; 10. Governance: the board of directors of the institutional maintainer is exclusively formed by members of the Synod, with two of them ordained pastors. The president of the university is also an ordained Lutheran pastor, even though the other two members of the rectory are not Lutherans (one of them is a Catholic lay leader, and the other is said to come from a Baptist tradition).

paradigm than the Christian story, but its continuing relation to the religious tradition reminds it that the tradition's perspective is legitimate and important."¹⁰⁸

Since Brazilian law forbids religious affiliation to be considered as a hiring requirement, policies that aim at regulating how many persons committed to the Lutheran tradition work at ULBRA are not even considered. However, even if such hiring policies were legal, the synod would not be able to provide enough qualified personnel to fill all the positions. Because of that, the vast majority of ULBRA's faculty and staff do not have personal commitments to the Lutheran theology. The number of Christians is unknown, since the university does not keep track of that. Only one of the many courses offered at the university stems from its religious tradition. The organization of that course is under the supervision of the Head of Theology Department and the Head Chaplain. Pressures to turn the syllabus into a more pluralist enterprise are felt from time to time. The university's chapel is surely a beautiful and highly significant symbol of the Lutheran faith at ULBRA's campus. Its location puts it at the center of the campus life. Attendance is not required, and one of the campus pastor's great challenges is to make the building significant for the community's life. One devotional rite is held every week-day and close to a 100 percent of those who attend them are professors and students from the Theology Department. With the exception of those events which are led by campus pastors, in general the atmosphere on campus is significantly secular. There is no Synodical program present that aims at encouraging members of the church to attend the university. At the present time, the church does not give any financial support to the university and is not involved in its governance.

Benne's definition of an intentionally pluralist university seems to fit like a glove.

The intentionally pluralist college or university respects its relation to its sponsoring heritage enough that it intentionally places members of that heritage in important

¹⁰⁸ Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 55.

positions, starting with the president. There is a straightforward or tacit commitment to representation of the vision and ethos of the tradition here and there in the school's life. This approach does not establish or privilege the tradition as the guiding paradigm of the school, but does privilege it in the sense that persons from sponsoring heritage are the ones who are intentionally and strategically placed around the school. For example, in this model a full-time chaplain from the sponsoring tradition is employed. Similarly, special attention is given to making sure that members of that sponsoring tradition are sprinkled through the faculty. This strategy is accommodated within a fundamentally secular model for defining the identity and mission of the college, but which often seems satisfactory to both school and sponsoring church. Christian presence, though very much disestablished, is nevertheless guaranteed in some form.

However, this strategy has a certain level of fragility. Sufficient numbers of persons in this educational community must continue to be convinced that representation of the sponsoring heritage is a good thing... [some schools] may retain the intentionally pluralist strategy because key leaders in the college are simply committed to guaranteeing a voice for the sponsoring tradition in the life of the school.¹⁰⁹

The previous section highlighted the value attributed to ULBRA's confessionality as its institutional strategic plan defined as one pillar "to strengthen Lutheran identity." However, such a definition implies but not necessarily refers to a strengthening of a Lutheran vision and ethos that is clearly connected with faith in Christ. That is attested to by ULBRA's Institutional Development Plan (Plano de Desenvolvimento Institucional – PDI).¹¹⁰ When it lists its strategic pillars, it establishes as goals for the strengthening of the Lutheran identity: "To increase ULBRA's presence at the community" and "To promote the practice of institutional values and the code of ethics."¹¹¹ Here, Lutheran identity is understood in a more humanistic manner, focusing on relational attitudes and not making a clear and solid reference to faith in Christ as a distinctive character of the Lutheran identity. In the document, the more direct reference to the

¹⁰⁹ Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 52.

¹¹⁰ Legally required institutional document that defines the institutions' mission and the strategies it will undertake to achieve its goals and objectives.

¹¹¹ "PDI ULBRA," Portal da ULBRA, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.ulbra.br/upload/fa0c1cd2e347b7e4959972cc680467d7.pdf>, 39.

Christian faith positions it as one among other worldviews by stating that ULBRA's confessional identity involves the "[p]rofession of the Christian faith as a proposal to understand reality."¹¹²

As it tries to accommodate the Christian Lutheran vision and ethos in a context characterized by diversity, the PDI reinforces the understanding that, according to Benne's typology, ULBRA displays an intentionally pluralist character.

For many different reasons, which are not the goal of this dissertation to describe and analyze, what has been presented so far displays in general lines how the Christian Lutheran tradition is expressed at the Lutheran University of Brazil. The next section will further explore how ULBRA's external and internal context challenges its campus pastors as representatives of that tradition.

Learning in Community

In Brazil, Law No. 10,861 of April 14, 2004, establishes the National System for the Evaluation of Higher Education – SINAES. The system works on three main categories: the evaluation of the institution, the evaluation of the departments/degrees offered, and student's performance.¹¹³ One of the main elements to be considered in the institutional evaluation is its PDI. Basically, that document defines the institution's mission and the strategies it will undertake to achieve its goals and objectives.¹¹⁴

As an institution works on structuring a PDI, one of the fundamental steps is to define its mission, which deals with its vocation as an educational institution. ULBRA's 2017–2022 PDI

¹¹² Original text: "Profissão da fé cristã como proposta de compreensão da realidade." "PDI ULBRA," Portal da ULBRA, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.ulbra.br/upload/fa0c1cd2e347b7e4959972cc680467d7.pdf>, 40.

¹¹³ "O Que é o Sinaes?" Portal do INEP, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://inep.gov.br/sinaes>.

¹¹⁴ "Formulário do Plano de Desenvolvimento Institucional PDI," Portal do MEC, accessed November 1, 2018, http://www2.mec.gov.br/sapiens/Form_PDI.htm.

defines its mission as “To be a learning community that is effective and innovative.” I imagine that a more fluid translation into English would place the adjectives “effective” and “innovative” before the subject “learning community.” However, that would not entirely catch the emphasis of the mission as it is stated in Portuguese, which places “learning community” in the first position and, therefore, emphasizes the main character of the university’s vocation.¹¹⁵

In Brazil, three areas of activity are understood to be the essence of a higher education institution’s action: Teaching, Researching, and Extension. Teaching refers to the learning process whereby knowledge is appropriated. Researching refers to the production of new knowledge through recognized scientific methodologies. Extension is concerned with the identification of social demands and academic involvement in the search for solutions. That triad is understood to be inseparable, and it structures all the university programs.

However, in the last few years the order of the elements of that triad has changed in a significant way. If for a long time the position of “teaching” in the triad expressed the institution’s emphasis on lectures and seminars as the main activity in the learning process, now the order has been purposefully reversed to Extension, Researching and Teaching. This restructuring positions the relationship with the university’s surrounding community as the starting point of the learning process. Extension programs are no longer understood primarily in interventionistic terms, which emphasize the university’s action towards the community, but in

¹¹⁵ The Lutheran tradition present in the confessional character of ULBRA brings with it an emphasis on the importance of vocation. Popularly understood as an inclination to religious service or a natural disposition towards a given activity, in the context of Lutheran theology the term acquires new elements of meaning. Put simply, for Lutheran thought we are all called (vocatio) by God to, wherever we are, meet the needs of other people. As we all have different roles, gifts, knowledge, skills, and at the same time different yearnings, demands and needs, we are all called to, in community, exercise our vocation. That way we grow in the relationship with other people and affirm the importance of each person to the social fabric. Each one brings his gifts, which meet the needs of the other. Each one brings their needs, which can be met by the gifts of other people. Vocation then becomes the place where gifts and needs meet. Tom Christenson, *Who Needs a Lutheran College?* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2011), 10. By doing this, we fulfill our vocation.

interactive terms, where the university is co-participant, along with the community and other organizations, and is aimed at dealing with social issues. In that interaction, which involves three main actors – professors, students and society – education and learning takes place. Thus, society is not seen as a passive receiver of the university’s benevolence, but as an active participant in the learning process. Extension, then, generates the questions that will be answered through Researching and that process will generate the knowledge that will be appropriated through Teaching. In such an approach, the construction and acquisition of knowledge is basically seen as a relational enterprise, and the university as a place where diverse members of the society are brought together to interact and, therefore, create, expand and socialize knowledge. For ULBRA’s mission, that is how learning happens. Those are the constitutive elements and the implications of its vision of “To be a learning community.”

As ULBRA aims at being efficient in that learning process, it will have to consider its internal and external contextual demands, which have been shown to be characteristically pluralist. As it aims at being innovative, it shows itself open to new possibilities, adapting itself to current forms of thought that see change and transformation as intrinsically good. Because of that, it is the understanding of this dissertation that the institution’s vision generates both challenges and opportunities for its campus pastors.

Campus Ministry, Distinctiveness and Pluralism – Stating the Problem

The Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil has traditionally used the word *commissioning* to refer to the synodical recognition of a pastoral function that is not the result of a congregational call. In practice, a called pastor and a commissioned chaplain can perform the same pastoral activities. It is the nature of their position, which specifically considers their ministry context, that will differentiate one from the other.

The Diploma of Commissioning, issued by the Synod in response to AELBRA's request, defines the expectation of the Synod but also of AELBRA on what concerns the pastoral ministry on campus. The latest version of the document declares that it is expected from the campus pastor as he carries out his ministry

proclaiming the Word of God in all its truth and purity, as contained in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, and defined in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, gathered in the Book of Concord of 1580 ... that as an Evangelist, he commits himself in use of his gifts to fulfill the purposes of the Church of Christ, considering the School as a strategy and instrument to bring people to Christ ... doing all that by the grace of God is within his capacities, within the limits of his vocation, to the edification of the Kingdom of God.¹¹⁶

The document clearly declares the campus pastors' responsibilities to carry out a ministry committed to what is true and to what is pure as one considers Christian faith and Lutheran theology. The norm that regulates truth and purity is identified with the Holy Scriptures and systematized in the *Book of Concord*. The commissioning also implies a commitment to what characterizes Lutheran Theology: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The campus pastor's function as evangelist is highlighted, which is understood as the living witness of the Gospel in order to lead people to Christ and to edify the kingdom of God. The school is clearly recognized as a space and instrument for such an enterprise.

Aligned to that are AELBRA's documents, which express how the chaplaincy service is to be understood. ULBRA's campus pastors are not commissioned by the Synod as a response to a university's request. AELBRA requests the Synod their commissioning in order for them to

¹¹⁶ Original text: "proclamando a Palavra de Deus em toda a sua verdade e pureza, como contida nos livros canônicos do Antigo e Novo Testamento, e definida nas Confissões da Igreja Evangélica Luterana, reunidas no Livro Concórdia de 1580... que como Evangelista empenhe-se, no uso de seus dons, em cumprir as finalidades da Igreja de Cristo, considerando a Escola como estratégia e instrumento para levar pessoas a Cristo... fazendo tudo o que pela graça de Deus estiver ao seu alcance, dentro dos limites de sua vocação, para a edificação do Reino de Deus." "Diploma de Comissionamento," issued to Mário Rafael Yudi Fukue by Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil, Porto Alegre, RS, August 2, 2017.

serve on specific campuses. Therefore, the chaplains are commissioned to AELBRA, and not to ULBRA. Because of that, they are first hierarchically subordinated to AELBRA, and only then to ULBRA as one of the schools administrated by AELBRA. In part, that explains why, despite its confessional character, ULBRA does not have any official document describing the role of its campus pastors. Therefore, we must turn to AELBRA as we reflect on the chaplain's role on campus.

AELBRA's 2015 statute presents a clear description of the association's confessional character. The second paragraph of its first article affirms: "AELBRA declares itself indissolubly inspired by the confessional precepts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), which it will make explicit in all its institutions, solemnities, documents and printed material, both by itself and through its held institutions."¹¹⁷ Therefore, if one wants to know what AELBRA's faith is, the place to look is the Synod's confession of faith. Since AELBRA affirms its identity with the Lutheran faith, it is natural that it will make use of its visible arms, the educational schools it owns and administers, to express that identity. The most evident expression of that commitment is the fact that in every one of ULBRA's nine campuses a Lutheran pastor is working as a commissioned university chaplain, becoming the figure of ULBRA's confessional expressions. Therefore, even though ULBRA's chaplaincy should not be confused with its confessionality, it is a vivid and visible expression of it, which arises from AELBRA's indissoluble commitment.

However, AELBRA itself does not have an official text that defines and regulates the chaplaincy service that takes places in its schools. When requested by its chaplains to present

¹¹⁷ Original text: "A AELBRA declara-se indissoluvelmente inspirada pelos preceitos confessionais da Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil–IELB, o que explicitará em todas as suas instituições, solenidades, documentos e impressos, tanto por si quanto por meio de suas Entidades Mantidas." AELBRA. *Estatuto da AELBRA*. §2, 2015.

such definitions in an official manner, it reacted by saying: “Gather your expertise and make a document proposal.” The task was gladly accepted and in 2015 the group of AELBRA’s chaplains presented a document titled “Institutional Confessionality: Definition, Principles, Strategy and Practice.”¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, so far, the document has not been studied by the members of the association, and no official opinion on it has been given. The reasons for that are many, and at the moment I restrain myself to mention the most pervasive one: the institution’s financial crises and the distressing and always present possibility of bankruptcy it brings, which occupies the focus of the association members.¹¹⁹

Even though that is not an official document, it represents the chaplains’ own understanding of their role at the university, including the challenges they face in their pluralist context. Mainly constructed from diverse definitions of confessionality and from the above mentioned book *ULBRA—Universidade Confessional*, the document establishes principles which are based on AELBRA’s confessional character, affirming a confessional commitment to the Bible, the Lutheran Symbols, justification by faith in Christ, transforming and quality education, and the cultivation of the Christian virtues and the noble values of humanity (as an expression of a Christian Humanism), among others. The last principle presented institutionalizes the campus chaplaincy by stating that “The institution offers regular opportunities for contact with its Lutheran Christian Confessionality. Each university, college and school will be under the care of a Chaplain, IELB’s Pastor, who will be responsible for

¹¹⁸ Capelania Geral da ULBRA, *Confessionalidade Institucional—Definição, Princípios, Estratégia e Prática* (ULBRA’s Chaplaincy Digital Archives).

¹¹⁹ It is possible to find in the university chaplaincy’s digital files what is a 2012 version of CELSP/ULBRA’s Chaplaincy Statute. However, that is not part of any official publication. Because it is considered outdated, it does not describe the institutional confessional character, and when new document was proposed in 2015, that statute fell into disuse by ULBRA’s pastors. Anyway, aligned with the rationale that this section of the dissertation develops, that document also clearly refers to the campus pastor’s ministry as one that points to Jesus’ saving grace and watches over the institution’s confessional character.

leading AELBRA's Christian confessional actions."¹²⁰ Thus, the document recognizes the campus ministry as AELBRA's most visible and practical expression of its confessional character. The chaplain is responsible to lead projects and actions that articulate AELBRA's confessional character within the context where the association is present, making AELBRA's vision known and operative in the university.

Conclusion

What has been presented shows that, at ULBRA, the campus pastor is a central figure when it comes to the expression and maintenance of the university's confessionality. The documents clearly indicate how specific that confessionality is, pointing to salvation in Jesus Christ through faith as chaplaincy's defining goal. ULBRA's campus pastors have a fundamental role as facilitators of the process that makes ULBRA's confessional character vivid, organic and operative. They incarnate ULBRA's confessional character in their very position, and are responsible to articulate and, if necessary, defend that character. The existence of their ministry is the most vivid expression of ULBRA's commitment to the Christian faith and, through their work and personal testimony, they are fundamental pieces of ULBRA's institutional character.

On the other hand, ULBRA's campus ministry takes place in a highly pluralistic context. Externally, that pluralism establishes itself through our age's spirit, which affirms individual autonomy and the pluralistic expression that emanates from it. That spirit is reinforced by the Brazilian openness to diverse religious experience, such that Brazilian pluralism is remarkably syncretic, at least in its popular expressions. Internally, pluralism establishes itself through the

¹²⁰ Original text: "A instituição oferece oportunidades regulares de contato com sua Confessionalidade Cristã Luterana. Cada mantida estará aos cuidados de um Capelão, Pastor da IELB, que será o responsável por liderar as ações confessionais cristãs da AELBRA." Capelania Geral da ULBRA, *Confessionalidade Institucional*, 15.

kind of confessional identity that ULBRA has built through its history. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to analyze the process that led ULBRA to be what Benne calls an *intentionally pluralist* institution. However, the fact is that the way ULBRA operates opens itself to more secular approaches to life and education. The university does express its faith publicly through religious celebrations, devotional moments, the building of a chapel, and so on, but its educational programs operate mainly under modern and post-modern assumptions, and most of the classes hardly express a direct, evident connection with the Christian faith. Very often, confessionality is primarily understood as ethics or expressed as a kind of humanism that makes use of a religious vocabulary. The prevailing approach does not establish or privilege the institutions' religious tradition as the guiding paradigm of the university.¹²¹

Considering the internal and external context of their ministry, ULBRA's campus pastors have as an important part of their ministry the establishment of relationships with people of different faiths or people who lack any kind of religious belief. In that way, they will act according to the university's mission, promoting the creation and expansion of knowledge through the diverse relationships established in the academic community. As they do that, they are committed to serve in faithfulness to their beliefs as representatives of a specific church body. At the same time, pressures related to the tension of being in a place where openness to

¹²¹ The previous section commented on how ULBRA's PDI defined the strategic pillar "to strengthen Lutheran identity." It was argued that in ULBRA's PDI that identity is comprehended in a more humanistic manner, focusing on relational attitudes and not making a clear and solid reference to faith in Christ as a distinctive character of the Lutheran identity. The more direct reference to the Christian faith presented in the PDI virtually positions it in a major body of world views, as it indicates that one of the elements of ULBRA's confessional identity is the "Profissão da fé cristã como proposta de compreensão da realidade." As the institutional maintainer's head chaplain, I was part of the group that worked with PDI's section where ULBRA's confessional character was included. Even though some other people contributed to its final version, that specific part of the document is my redaction. One of the pressures that I personally felt was to state the university's Christian identity in a way that was conceptually digestible for a pluralistic audience and at the same time sufficiently distinctive on what concerns the Christian faith. The fact that the "pen" of that section of the PDI was put in the hands of the institutional head chaplain and that he felt personally pressured to accommodate the Christian vision to secular approaches shows that the vision is not commonly shared, and that pluralism's pressures constantly challenge campus pastors in different ways.

other religious beliefs is valued, even demanded, continually challenges them. In the face of that situation, unless those campus pastors deeply understand and properly deal with that tension, they may, in a polarized description of the situation, (a) compromise, in the relationships they establish, the Christian faith they represent, perhaps even to the point of living a secularized ministry, becoming evangelically irrelevant or; (b) become, by secular standards, academically unreliable, fundamentalists, contextually insensitive, disrespectful and therefore ineffective in their role on campus.

The reality of pluralism displayed so far represents a growing challenge to the Christian Church with even more acute implications to the Christian university,¹²² which operates at the border between the Church and State/culture. In the face of today's skepticism towards affirmations of absolute truth, campus pastors risk compromise by a spirit of self-criticism that may break with the Christological faith presented since Apostolic times. Following that path, they would weaken central confessions of faith and lose their saltiness (Matt. 5:13). At the other side of the spectrum, if they deny the need of constructive dialogue, they risk becoming blind fundamentalists incapable of properly communicating and, therefore, properly giving testimony of the faith that is light to the world (Matt. 5:14). To avoid these two pitfalls, the proposed dissertation aims at helping ULBRA's pastors as they deal with today's pluralism, affirming two essentials, (1) the importance to firmly hold on to the fundamentals of the Christian faith; (2) the importance of being open to constructive interaction with people of other faiths, generating opportunities to mutual knowledge, joint humanitarian work and confident testimony.

¹²² James Burtchaell, for example, in *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), presents an extended analysis of how prominent Christian colleges and universities walked away from their religious heritages due, among other things, to the drive of secularization. Eric Childers deals with similar issues as he investigates how three AELCA colleges deal with their Christian identity. Cf. Eric Childers, *College Identity Sagas: Investigating Organizational Identity Preservation and Diminishment at Lutheran Colleges and Universities* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012).

Lutheran campus pastors at ULBRA still have to deal with (a) a variety of conceptions of what to be a confessional university means in practice; (b) a lack of a unifying institutional guideline; (c) especially in social sciences, but also in theology, the growing tendency to recognize the value of every religion and the need of peaceful and respectful interaction among them through inter-religious dialogue, and; (d) the lack of a substantial academic research from within that deals with the confessional character of the institution and its intricacies.

Therefore, this study will propose one avenue for how campus pastors at ULBRA can faithfully maintain and even promote their specific Lutheran identity in a cultural, educational and legal context that demands pluralism. The proposal will advocate giving the *giftive metaphor*¹²³ a prominent role in the inter-religious dialogue ULBRA's campus pastors are engaged in at the university. It will argue that their work involves the establishment of personal relationships where gifts are exchanged. The dissertation will maintain that the gifts exchanged in those relationships can be of different natures, by the theologically discerning use of the *giftive metaphor*. The theological lens by which the *giftive metaphor* will be evaluated and advocated for will be the doctrine of the Two Kinds of Righteousness. That lens will allow the establishment of what is characteristic in Lutheran theology as an essential reference point (passive righteousness) and at the same time the appreciation of the gifts given to all people and received from non-Christians (active righteousness).

The aim is not to reduce the campus pastors' approach to a single option. Instead, the

¹²³ *Giftive metaphor* is the essential concept of Terry Muck's and Frances S. Adeney's proposal developed in *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). It understands the Christian relationship to non-Christian faiths through the means of gift exchange. It emphasizes that a Christian's call is that of sharing with other people the gifts that have been received. The main gift to be shared is the story of Jesus and the testimony of God's grace operative in it. However, that giftive relation also includes the promotion of people's well-being. In a similar way, Christians receive gifts from non-Christian people, which can take varied forms. Through the *giftive metaphor*, human interaction is primarily seen as a relation where gifts are exchanged. It is believed that such an understanding enhances peaceful relations among people of different faiths.

dissertation will propose the *giftive metaphor* as a significant and helpful approach to ULBRA's campus pastors' work, after evaluating its implications and enriching its theological foundations through the use of the doctrine of the Two Kinds of Righteousness. Considering the significant role of ULBRA in the Brazilian educational scenario and in the formal education of the IELB's ministers,¹²⁴ the proposed research may significantly benefit the Brazilian Lutheran theological reflection by engaging Lutheran theology in the social phenomena of religious pluralism.

¹²⁴ As the result of an agreement between the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB) and AELBRA (the association that maintains a significant number of educational institutions in Brazil, including ULBRA), every IELB's seminary student has a significant part of his ministerial education taking place at the university, from where he receives an accredited bachelor's degree in theology and a *lato sensu* degree in Pastoral Ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

WALKING THROUGH THE WAYS OF GIFT: A PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTIVE METAPHOR

The previous chapter described today's religious pluralism, tracing its roots back to the end of the Middle Ages. It argued that Modernity's secularization project did not put an end to religion, as many had assumed, but prompted more individualistic expressions of faith and, consequently, promoted pluralism. In the specific case of Brazil, syncretism was posited as a fundamental characteristic of its religiosity, giving Brazil its own expression of pluralism. The already established pluralist context took a more localized shape as, by the use of Robert Benne's typology, the dissertation argued for characterizing ULBRA as an *intentionally pluralist* institution, especially considering the role of the Christian essentials in the construction of the academic programs.

In this highly pluralist context, ULBRA's campus pastors serve as God's ministers, being the most visible and operative expression of ULBRA's very specific faith. The situation described points out the need to develop or systematize approaches that can inform the exercise of their ministry in that context. Any approach to a cultural phenomenon such as religious pluralism must be contextually sensitive, and the complexity of today's world calls for concepts to which people from different cultures and religious traditions can relate. While not limiting the possible approaches to one option, this dissertation will argue for the use of the *giftive metaphor* as a tool that promotes an embodied presence¹ of the Christian faith in the confessional

¹ An embodied presence takes place when the Christian consciously gives a confident testimony of his faith through words but also through deeds that point out to Jesus, promoting peoples' well-being and the cultivation of good habits and virtues. The kingdom of God is not detached from bodily practice, therefore, "the new habitus of the believer—the new perceptions, goals, dispositions, and values—can become effective only in practice;" John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 516. That understanding is aligned with the Lutheran idea of vocation and the Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kinds of Righteousness. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 518–19.

university. This second chapter, therefore, will focus on the rationale of that approach. It will do so by introducing the gift paradigm through the presentation of Marcel Mauss's influential work on gift. Its focus, however, will be to advocate Muck and Adeney's *giftive metaphor* as a paradigm for how Lutheran campus pastors might encounter pluralism at ULBRA. The paradigm will be strengthened by a brief presentation of George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's *cognitive linguistic view of metaphor*.

Marcel Mauss and *The Gift*

When it comes to sociological theories on the practice of gift-giving/receiving, the world's major figure is the French ethnographer Marcel Mauss. Born in 1872, Mauss was Émile Durkheim's nephew. As the references to their relationship seem to show, their bond was solid because of their kinship, but also because of their common work.² Greatly valuing his uncle's research,³ Mauss experienced the fresh air provided by the then two new academic disciplines of ethnology and sociology, but also the turbulence caused by two major wars. Certainly, those experiences contributed to his drive at critiquing his society and proposing new forms of life in community. Probably that criticism was more vividly expressed in his socialist militance, but aspects of it can also be identified in his writings. That does not mean that he mixes politics and science, something he consciously tried to avoid,⁴ but that his longing for new ways of social interaction was also present in his texts.⁵ Among those texts, Mauss's most influential work is

² Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 9.

³ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 2.

⁴ Marcos Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss e o ensaio sobre a dádiva." *Revista De Sociologia e Política* 14, (2000): 173–94, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCOhost (accessed October 4, 2017), 174.

⁵ For a long time, Mauss's work was appreciated mostly by anthropologists, but developments in Western Society have invited scholars to consider other ways towards social cohesion. Those movements mainly refer to capitalism, the individualistic postures it generates and the need to foster a culture of peace in a global village that

surely his reflection on the paradigm of gift. In this section, I will highlight the main statements made by Mauss's writings. Throughout the section, Mauss's connection to this research's topic will be demonstrated, both implicitly and explicitly.

As was common at his time, Mauss sought to identify overarching patterns present in cultural institutions, classifying the organization of social facts.⁶ This led him to publish *Essai sur le don: Forme et Raison de l'Échange dans les Sociétés Archaiques* (in the English publication, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, from now on referred to as *The Gift*). The article was first published as an essay in the 1925 edition of the journal *L'Année Sociologique*.⁷ It is usually considered required reading for anthropology students, and it was highly praised by researchers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and George Gurvitch.⁸ It is recognized as igniting modern reflections on gift and gift giving/receiving.⁹

Mauss never did field research, and his reflections on *The Gift* are based on ethnographic studies made by other researchers. Even though some aspects of those studies have been revised by later researchers, they provided enough information to support Mauss's reasoning and to exemplify his conclusions. Contrary to what his essay's title may suggest, Mauss's work is not

evidences difference and fears of the destructive power of intolerance. It is in that context that Mauss's work gains a recognition that goes beyond those interested in the classics of ethnography. It is true that most of his writings are letters, articles and diverse unfinished texts, but his enormous influence cannot be denied. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 4. Mauss was a creative scholar who never stopped being a student. That posture brought to his interest many different topics and generated a significant amount of texts. Richard Warms L. and R. Jon McGee. *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2013), 534.

⁶ Warms and McGee. *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 535.

⁷ Founded by Emily Durkheim, the journal dedicated a great deal of attention to the study of the religious phenomena which, according to Durkheim, was one of the major regulating organs of society. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 37.

⁸ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 1.

⁹ Alan D. Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (NY: Routledge, 1997), 4. Certainly, there is significant criticism of his work, and that comes mainly from post-modern theorists such as Jacques Derrida and George Bataille. They argue that Mauss's work on gift fails to address the significance of difference. Carl Olson, "Excess, Time, and the Pure Gift: Postmodern Transformations of Marcel Mauss' Theory." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 14, no. 3/4 (2002): 350, JSTOR Journals, EBSCOhost.

marked by a romantic view of archaic societies, neither did he propose a nostalgic return to their practices. His study points to the practice of giving/receiving as a *total social fact*, a practice that pervades society and can be perceived in its most diverse dimensions, such as economic, legal, religious and political. For him, even though gift giving/receiving/reciprocating can take different forms and be ruled by diverse norms, the practice is present in every society and is a fundamental block for social cohesion. Starting with what he calls archaic societies,¹⁰ Mauss demonstrates its pervasive nature and invites us to a moral reflection as we consider the presence of the gift in our modern society. At least, that is Mauss's declared objective with his study.

this morality and organization [that operated in archaic transactions] still function in our own societies, in unchanging fashion and, so to speak, hidden, below the surface, and as we believe that in this we have found one of the human foundations on which our societies are built, we shall be able to deduce a few moral conclusions concerning certain problems posed by the crisis in our own law and economic organization.¹¹

For Mauss, a gift is any valuable, tangible or intangible, that is given/received in a web of social interrelationships. Gifts are not just physical entities such as goods, meals and objects, but also involve intangibles such as demonstrations of kindness, dances, tutoring of techniques and public acknowledgement. Therefore, his concept is more pervasive than that of a present.¹² It is not limited to an object that is given, but to anything that is *presented* from one to another as social interaction takes place. As Mauss reflects on gifts, he wants to better understand what the practice of giving/receiving tells us about members of a community and the social relationships

¹⁰ The practice is also present in capitalist systems such as one finds in Western society. In those contexts, sometimes the gift is carried in the system, other times it is belittled by the system, as that which reinforces alienation, individualization, and threatens more equitable social cohesion. It is with this assertion that one sees in Mauss's work a strong criticism on English Utilitarianism. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (New York: Routledge, 1990), x-xxi.

¹¹ Mauss, *Gift*, 5.

¹² Olson, "Excess, Time, and the Pure Gift," 352.

they establish. He wants to understand what is that thing in the gift that demands reciprocation¹³ and what role does that place in creating and solidifying human bonds. Therefore, the use of the word *gift* refers much more to the practice and to what it accomplishes than to the very things that are given/received.

One of the most fundamental aspects of Mauss's concept of gift is that even though a gift may appear free and disinterested, it always involves forces between both sides of the interaction in a way that the practice of gift giving is located in the giving-receiving-reciprocating cycle. For him, there is in the gift a power that demands reciprocation. Giving, receiving and reciprocating are different elements that form a unity. Social interaction takes place in that exchange process and social cohesion rests on it. Because we relate to other people by giving and receiving gifts (and here one must have in mind Mauss's broad definition), gifts seem to be free but are actually the result of forces that bind them to social interaction.

The obligatory nature of gift transactions are dissimilar to those of buying and selling in which a buyer is only obligated to pay for what is purchased from the seller, a transaction that terminates any further obligation or relationship. The obligatory nature of the gift does not mean for Mauss that a gift is never free; it does, however, suggest that by fulfilling the obligation to give it is recreated by the reformation of the social relationships of which the obligation is a part from the commencement of the exchange.¹⁴

In that way, Mauss's reasoning on gift is marked by symbolism. It does not directly deal with the thing that is given/received (it is not his intention to deny that that is important, quite the opposite), but to what the thing and act represent/communicate as people interact with one another, what messages are transmitted, and how those messages impact interaction.

As Mauss reflects on the obligation to reciprocate, that symbolism is also present in the

¹³ Mauss, *Gift*, 4.

¹⁴ Olson, "Excess, Time, and the Pure Gift," 352.

practice. That is because the gift/act of giving is an expression of who the giver is, and it bears something of his very being. Therefore, in a symbolic way, the giver gives something of himself and the receiver receives something that is from the other. Because of what is symbolically communicated in gift exchange, someone does not give an object, she gives a part of herself. Thus, because the gift is connected to the giver, that generates a bond between persons and consequent reciprocation.

When I welcome someone, I am making myself a host, but I also create, theoretically and conceptually, the possibility of becoming a guest of the one that is now my guest. The same exchange that makes me a host also makes me a potential guest. This is because "giving and receiving" implies not only a material exchange but also a spiritual exchange, a communication between souls. It is in this sense that Mauss's anthropology is a sociology of symbol, of communication; it is still in this ontological sense that all exchanges presuppose, to a greater or lesser degree, some alienability. In giving, I always give something of myself. When accepting, the recipient accepts something from the donor. He stops, even momentarily, being "the other"; the gift brings them closer, makes them similar. The ethnography of exchange gives new meaning to social etiquette. However much they vary, they always reiterate that in order to give something properly, I must put myself a little in the place of the other (for example, of my guest), to understand, to a greater or lesser degree, that by receiving something from me, he receives myself (as his host).¹⁵

According to Mauss, the giving-receiving-reciprocating cycle stimulates the circulation of wealth throughout society. Here again one must have in mind Mauss's broader definition of gift. By showing people's interdependence the cycle strengthens their interconnectedness. Their lives take place and are structured in the interpersonal relationships that are established. That can be

¹⁵ Original text: "Ao receber alguém estou me fazendo anfitrião, mas também crio, teórica e conceptualmente, a possibilidade de vir a ser hóspede deste que hoje é meu hóspede. A mesma troca que me faz anfitrião, faz-me também um hóspede potencial. Isto ocorre porque "dar e receber" implica não só uma troca material mas também uma troca espiritual, uma comunicação entre almas. É nesse sentido que a Antropologia de Mauss é uma sociologia do símbolo, da comunicação; é ainda nesse sentido ontológico que toda troca pressupõe, em maior ou menor grau, certa alienabilidade. Ao dar, dou sempre algo de mim mesmo. Ao aceitar, o recebedor aceita algo do doador. Ele deixa, ainda que momentaneamente, de ser um outro; a dádiva aproxima-os, torna-os semelhantes. A etnografia da troca dá ainda um novo sentido às etiquetas sociais. Por mais que estas variem, elas sempre reiteram que, para dar algo adequadamente, devo colocar-me um pouco no lugar do outro (por exemplo, de meu hóspede), entender, em maior ou menor grau, como este, recebendo algo de mim, recebe a mim mesmo (como seu anfitrião)." Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 176.

perceived in the several stages of life, since childhood (where the baby represents/gives one's legacy and earthly extension of life even after death and receives the indispensable care for growth and survival) to senescence (where wisdom is reciprocated with respect and social recognition, just to cite two examples). What we have here established is the principle of reciprocity, which is considered universal. This reciprocity is what characterizes the gift as a *total social fact*.¹⁶ Because there are binding obligations which are created in gift giving/receiving, the practice itself builds connectedness and its consequent social stability. Thus, gifts are not just presents given out of generosity, but are essential blocks of the social structures, "*mechanisms of social cohesion*."¹⁷ Gifts promote reciprocity and consequently strengthen people's ties.¹⁸ Mauss's thesis, therefore, presupposes and values relatedness as a fundamental element of humanity.

Another concept that is helpful from Mauss's thesis is expressed in the word *alliance*. Affirming the discontinuity present in Mauss's work as a whole, authors such as Marcos Lanna¹⁹ identify that same discontinuity in his *The Gift*. However, Lanna also identifies an element that connects all the parts of Mauss's various works, which he calls *alliance*. For him, that is a characteristic of the French Anthropology and the central argument of Mauss's essay. Because of its pervasive nature, the gift is *present* in every dimension of human life, going from the food offered to ancestors in religious rites, which reinforce family ties both in an immanent and in a transcendent sense,²⁰ to the taxes paid to governments. The gift produces the most diverse

¹⁶ Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 173, 178.

¹⁷ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 2.

¹⁸ Paulo Henrique Martins and Cattani Antonio David, "Sociologia da Dádiva," *Sociologias* 16, no. 36 (2014): 15, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCOhost.

¹⁹ Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 175.

²⁰ Food given to the dead in *Cinco de Mayo* connects family members in a spiritual way, a connection that

alliances, being political, religious, economic, legal, diplomatic, and so on.²¹ *The Gift*, therefore, has as its central thesis a continuous cycle of exchange. Not to give or to receive means to reject the bond, the alliance. It means rejecting the similarity with the other, reinforcing the difference, creating an understanding of the other as being impersonal, opening opportunity to conflict and war. Because the gift is personal, it is linked to the giver's identity, and it cannot be simply rejected. "To refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept... is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality."²² Therefore, the way society should follow is the one where it exchanges more, and it fights less.²³

Another aspect of Mauss's thought to emphasize is *duality* — some may call it a *paradox* — since he seems to affirm distinct and conceptually contradictory realities. If on the one hand people are free to give according to what they are/have, benefiting the receiver, on the other hand the very nature of our social interaction demands that such giving happens and it recognizes/values the benefits brought to the giver himself. As we deal with human interaction, both realities are true and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

For Mauss, the gift is a happy and obligatory act. The study of the gift would allow sociology to overcome the deep dualities of Western thought, between spontaneity and compulsion, between interest and altruism, selfishness and solidarity, among others.²⁴

Mauss's ideas were a late entry in Brazilian scholarly work. It mainly occurred through his

becomes an integrative part of one's identity. In Candomblé, food is offered in order to gain the Orixás' favor. In religious systems marked by incarnation, the gift given here to the living, to the dead or to the gods can even accomplish its reciprocation in another life.

²¹ Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 175.

²² Mauss, *Gift*, 17.

²³ Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 192.

²⁴ Original text: "Para Mauss, a dádiva é um ato simultaneamente espontâneo e obrigatório. O estudo da dádiva permitiria à sociologia a superação relativa de dualidades profundas do pensamento ocidental, entre espontaneidade e obrigatoriedade, entre interesse e altruísmo, egoísmo e solidariedade, entre outras." Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 176.

pupil, Lévi-Strauss. Strauss was a member of the French mission that participated in the founding of the School of Philosophy, Science and Letters of São Paulo's University, the most influential Brazilian university.²⁵ Added to that, are the publications of “*Nem holismo, nem individualism: Marcel Mauss e o Paradigma da dádiva*” (Neither Holism, Neither Individualism: Marcel Mauss and the Gift Paradigm) by Alain Caillé (1998) and “*Introdução à Dádiva*” (Introduction to the Gift) by Jacques Godbout (1998), both of which are considered important moments in the dissemination of Mauss's ideas on Brazilian soil. Since then, his ideas have been applied in fields such as economy, health, education, and religion, among others.²⁶

As I consider my research question, two basic statements of Mauss's essay must be highlighted. First, gift-exchange builds communication, socialization, interaction, inter-subjectivity. A basic assumption of this dissertation is that relatedness is an essential characteristic of our humanity. That relatedness is mainly built through the many varied and

²⁵ Carlos Alberto Steil, “A recepção de Marcel Mauss no Brasil,” *Horizontes Antropológicos* 3, Iss 7, 144–57 no. 7 (n.d.): 144. Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCOhost (accessed October 4, 2017).

²⁶ Martins and Cattani, “Sociologia da Dádiva,” 17. Mauss's political tone is aligned with the influential Brazilian academic left, in a way that the use of Mauss's ideas in Brazilian academy is usually connected to a criticism of European totalizing forces. Paulo Henrique Martins, “O ensaio sobre o dom de Marcel Mauss: um texto pioneiro da crítica decolonial,” *Sociologias* no. 36 (2014): 22. SciELO, EBSCOhost (accessed October 8, 2017). So far, my research has not found a meaningful bibliography on practices of gift giving-receiving in Brazilian culture except that related to Mauss's work. In that field, there is diversity in the use of his ideas, but they usually deal with economics or revolve around Mauss's emphasis on relatedness and reciprocity. Martins and Cattani, for instance, criticize today's focus on fads and consumerism and the mono-logical reasoning that reduces social life to a utilitarian and economic motivation. They understand Mauss's work on gift as a pioneering reaction to such a situation. Martins and Cattani, *Sociologia da Dádiva*. Gilmar Rocha articulates Mauss's ideas to education highlighting Mauss's work as a professor and researcher. Rocha focuses on the importance of reciprocity in the learning process inherent to social interaction. Gift exchange generates and cement human interaction, turning any community into a learning community. Gilmar Rocha, *Mauss e a Educação* (Belo Horizonte/São Paulo: Autentica, 2011). George Ruben uses the idea of reciprocity present in Mauss's concept of gift to analyze dominant themes in Brazilian love songs, problematizing man-woman relationships. George Oliven Ruben, “Mauss in the Tropics: Love, Money and Reciprocity in Brazilian Popular Music,” *Revue Du MAUSS*, 36, no. 2 (2010): 437. Cairn.info, EBSCOhost (accessed October 8, 2017). Salles and Sales study the organization of the tourist activities in traditional communities in Northeast Brazil through the giftive relations established among the locals. Maria do Rosário Rolfsen Salles and Gabriela Arantes Ferreira de Sales, “O Sistema da Dádiva nas Relações Comunitárias e a Construção de Alianças pelo Trabalho Tradicional,” on the UESC's website, accessed October 8, 2017, <http://www.uesc.br/revistas/culturaeturismo/ano6-edicao2/2.aliancas-comunitarias.pdf>.

multiform exchanges that take place in human interaction. This assumption challenges a limited understanding of our humanity that focuses on individualistic assertions and belittles the essential social dimension. At the same time, it values reciprocity and, consequently, the diverse human experiences and the gifts that they generate. Second, gift-exchange can be understood as a total social fact because it permeates every dimension of human life in society, being present in politics, aesthetics, economy and religion. This universality demonstrates the importance of studying gift giving/receiving. Hence, highlighting its importance, framing its understanding, strengthening its social cohesive elements, and making the gift paradigm operative can bring benefits to human life in a multi-dimensional way. As that is done in a religious framework, it reinforces that theological reflection on diversity, while it must deal with Christology and soteriology, cannot forget the ethics it should promote as Christians interact with people of diverse faiths in the communalities of life.

Even though Mauss is not a theologian and his rationale does not consider the transcendent dimension, it is my contention that his thought is aligned with the Christian understanding that social cohesion is not just a desired reality, but it is an integral element of the Creator's purpose for his work. Creation operates in interconnectedness, in a way that all creatures contribute to cohesion as they give accordingly to their nature, or, in other words, accordingly to the gifts they have received from their Creator. As people mutually share what they have, they strengthen social bonds. Such a rationale values the role of gift giving in society, supporting the understanding that the *giftive metaphor* is a powerful force as we reason about human relationships and interact with people.

By emphasizing the binding nature of gift and also identifying its cycle, Mauss fights the egocentrism connected to economic profit and the utilitarian spirit that fails at doing justice in

wealth distribution. Economic justice is not the topic of this research, but as Mauss's ideas fight a life centered in itself, it also supports the understanding that the Christian faith does not allow Christians to focus selfishly on themselves, but to direct their attention to the other. One way or another we all receive, either from other people or from God himself. To receive without giving breaks bonds and generates death. It is in the context of that rationale that Mauss reminds the very common belief that "he who consumes without giving (that is, without being consumed) is regarded as someone who consumes poison ... If hoarding is associated with death, giving is associated with life."²⁷ If one understands ethics in its idealistic sense as the pursuit of happiness, Mauss will affirm that human happiness is nowhere else but in giving and receiving, "in the mutual respect and reciprocal generosity."²⁸

Metaphor: The Cognitive Linguistic View and Its Performative Character

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the *giftive metaphor* as a guiding approach to the chaplain's work in the context of religious pluralism. Therefore, having presented Mauss's theory on gift giving/receiving/reciprocating and its main implications, we now turn to a study of metaphor, which is a foundational element of this proposal. It is not the dissertation's goal to provide an extensive study of metaphor, but to focus on the *cognitive linguistic view of metaphor* as presented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, explaining how that understanding furthers the dissertation's thesis.²⁹

²⁷ Original text: "aquele que consome sem dar (isto é, sem ser consumido) é tido como alguém que consome veneno... Se o entesouramento é associado à morte, o dar é associado à vida." Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 187.

²⁸ Original text: "no respeito mútuo e na generosidade recíproca." Lanna, "Nota sobre Marcel Mauss," 192.

²⁹ For further developments on the theory, Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

The Cognitive Linguistic View of Metaphor

As a theoretical concept, metaphor *per se* is not a new subject for most of those who have had elementary formal education. The theme is studied in Portuguese/English classes as a type of figure of speech or in literature classes, being usually treated as a stylistic device that can bring life into texts and/or rhetorical strength to ideas. However, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have proposed that metaphors are more integrative and performative elements of our cultures and lives than most people realize.³⁰

In *Metaphor in Culture*, Zoltán Kövecses defines culture as being “a set of shared understandings.”³¹ He recognizes this is not a comprehensive definition, since it leaves behind real objects that participate in culture. However, the definition does include a large portion of culture, namely, “the shared understandings that people have in connection with all of these ‘things.’”³² Those shared understandings deal with people’s conceptions, with how they understand themselves, their world, their very reality. Socially or individually, those understandings form conceptual systems, which are not only a matter of the mind’s activities, but elements that govern the way we function in everyday life. We act upon reality based on who we understand we are, what our surrounding elements are, and how the interaction between all those entities should take place. It is essentially our mental processes, our capacity to evaluate our own thoughts and actions, the reasoning that characterizes human beings, the feelings and emotions triggered by these processes, that define the way we interact with ourselves, other people and nature’s entities. “Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our

³⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

³¹ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

³² Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 1.

everyday realities.”³³

Since communication is based on our conceptual systems, which usually operate unconsciously, they can be studied through language.³⁴ That understanding sees our metaphorical utterances as an expression of the conceptual metaphors active in our cognition— metaphor “exists in language because it exists in thought.”³⁵ We speak not exclusively with metaphors, but we understand the world in a metaphorical way. To put it in another way, we speak metaphorically because our conceptual systems operate metaphorically. Metaphor goes beyond the level of utterance. Metaphor structures our thought, the way we experience reality and act upon reality. In summary, Lakoff and Johnson argue that our conceptual system, which involves both the way we think and act, is metaphorical in nature.³⁶ This is what is called the *cognitive linguistic view of metaphor*.

Many aspects of the reality we live in are abstract or not clearly delineated, such as feelings, ideas, time, etc. Therefore, our conceptual system makes use of concrete or more clearly delineated elements of our reality in order to reason, understand, act upon that which demands more abstraction.³⁷ Metaphor comes into play here. Through metaphor we understand one thing in terms of another. In that process, we have what can be called the *source domain*, which is usually more physical, and the *target domain*, which is usually more abstract. In the process, we speak of more abstract concepts through the reasoning related to things or events that are more physical. A mental mapping process connects what we experience in the physical world

³³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

³⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

³⁵ Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 8.

³⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

³⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 115.

to those experiences we face in more abstract ways. Thus, we understand one thing with the knowledge built through the experience we had with another thing. Based on the study of William Nagy, Lakoff and Johnson propose, through suggestive and plausible accounts, how our relation to the concrete world shapes our ability to understand and, consequently, use our language. Two examples will be given in order to illustrate the argument.

- Metaphorical Understandings: Conscious is *up*; Unconscious is *down*.
- Metaphorical Utterances: Get *up*. Wake *up*. I'm *up* already. He *rises* early in the morning. He *fell* asleep. He *dropped* off to sleep. He's *under* hypnosis. He *sank* into a coma.
- Physical basis for the metaphors: Humans and most other mammals sleep lying down and stand up when they awaken.
- Metaphorical Understandings: Having control or force is up; being subject to control is down.
- Metaphorical Utterances: I have control *over* her. I am *on top* of the situation. He's in a *superior* position. He's at the *height* of his power. He's in the *high* command. He's in the *upper* echelon. His power *rose*. He ranks *above* me in strength. He is *under* my control. He *fell* from power. His power is on the *decline*. He is my social *inferior*. He is *low* man on the totem pole.
- Physical basis for the metaphors: Physical size typically correlates with physical strength, and the victor in a fight is typically on top.³⁸

These illustrations affirm that our thought is metaphorical in nature. Our experience with the more physical reality metaphorically structures our understanding of more abstract realities.

³⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 15.

As our experiential knowledge and reasoning work together to systematize metaphors and give them coherence, our understanding of the world is shaped in thought and expressed in language.³⁹ Because language is governed by thought, the metaphorical character of our mental system is expressed in metaphorical utterances.

Metaphor and Performance

In the previous section, we presented the *cognitive linguistic view of metaphor*, which affirms that our thought is metaphorical in nature. That sets the reasoning for the main thesis of this chapter concerning metaphor. Metaphor is not just a matter of style or rhetoric, but it has a performative character. As metaphors become operative in our culture and minds, they shape the way we perform as we interact with reality.

The more sophisticated the metaphorical process becomes, the more we move beyond a spatial metaphorical thought, showed in the examples above, to a more diverse and complex repertory of metaphorical thinking and, consequently, utterances. When Renato Russo⁴⁰ sings “*love is fire*,” for example, he is defining *love* through the conceptual field of a concrete thing, *fire*. *Love* and *fire* are not the same things, but in that song, *love* is understood and experienced in terms of *fire*. The metaphor aims at describing a non-physical reality, *love*, which can be both inviting and repelling, pleasant and painful, real but not palpable. If that metaphor becomes the dominant concept to define love, people will talk in that way: “*Love hurts*,” “*That flame that burns inside me*,” “*Love warms people’s hearts*,” and “*Be careful not to get burned*.” However, even more than that, they will act accordingly. Because *love is fire*, it is prudent not to get too

³⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 17.

⁴⁰ Renato Russo (1960–1996), a Brazilian singer and writer, was the founder and leader of Legião Urbana, one of the most important bands of Brazilian punk rock. The excerpt here quoted is part of the song *Monte Castelo*, whose lyrics are inspired both by Luís Vaz de Camões’ sonnet 11 and by the biblical text of 1 Cor. 13.

involved with someone else and risk getting hurt, but still be close enough to enjoy the relationship. Therefore, the metaphor could encourage enjoying the relational warmth and sexual heat but also an uncommitted romantic relationship. Therefore, even though metaphorical thinking is usually viewed as a matter of literary style, it goes beyond that to structure our mental system. Metaphors are active in both our language and performance.

Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.⁴¹

Therefore, metaphors have a performative character. They not only express understandings of reality, but they also create reality as the mental process triggered by them shapes the way people interact with reality.⁴² That is so because “the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.”⁴³ The more basic elements of our conceptual system are grounded in our spatial experience as embodied entities. “Concepts that emerge in this way are concepts that we live by in the most fundamental way.”⁴⁴ As we consider Western culture and its basic spatial metaphors based on orientations such as *up-down*, *in-out* and *central-peripheral*, we see that metaphorical thought and language point to understandings such as *more is up*. This understanding plays a role in the way people live out their values.

⁴¹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

⁴² The power of metaphors at shaping the way we interact with people is well illustrated when the authors reflect on the conceptual metaphor *argument is war*. When *war* becomes the source domain for us to understand what the target domain is, in this case, *argument*, we act accordingly to it: we plan, we attack, we win or lose, we abandon the battle and regroup/reorganize our forces, and so on. There is a sense of defending and attacking, losing or winning, and that determines the way we interact with people during an argument. But what if we change the source domain and work with the conceptual metaphor *argument is a dance*? Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4.

⁴³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 22.

⁴⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 57.

Further, while our more basic metaphors are structured through the possibilities and limitations imposed by the physical world, our metaphorical thinking is not so limited. It is also based on how those possibilities and limitations are experienced individually and collectively. Thus, metaphors are grounded not only on the physical dimension of our existence, but also on the way we experience it and reason about the experience, individually and culturally. Because the way we experience reality is varied, the aspects of reality emphasized or hidden by metaphors can be varied.⁴⁵ Metaphors are grounded in the physical world but are not determined by it. As specific metaphors take place in individual and collective mental systems, the concepts then highlighted will shape the very way people interact with reality. Thus, metaphors allow us to conceptualize preexisting realities, but at the same time, they may expand and/or limit our comprehension of and performance towards those realities. Take an example given by Lakoff and Johnson, the *puzzle metaphor*, which seems to be common in our culture.⁴⁶ In that metaphor, our daily problems are puzzles to be solved and once they are solved, they stop existing. But what if we used a *chemical metaphor* that understands the utterance “*the solution of my problems*” in a different way? Through that metaphor, our problems would be a large volume of bubbling and smoking liquid, which could be dissolved but not, necessarily, definitely solved. That could, for instance, help people to understand that they do not have control of every element that is part of that bubbling solution and they must/can not solve all their problems. Sometimes it is just a matter of dealing with challenging situations as they come and go, since they are part of the *solution* (chemical metaphor) we all face daily.

The idea that metaphors can create realities goes against most traditional views of metaphor. The reason is that metaphor has traditionally been viewed as a matter of

⁴⁵ For more on how universality and variation is present in metaphorical thought among cultures, see Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*.

⁴⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 144.

mere language rather than primarily as a means of structuring our conceptual system and the kinds of everyday activities we perform. It is reasonable enough to assume that words alone don't change reality. But changes in our conceptual system do change what is real for us and affect how we perceive the world and act upon those perceptions.⁴⁷

Therefore, this dissertation proposes the *giftive metaphor* by affirming the performative character of metaphors. That means that they do not just describe realities in a poetic or pictorial way, but they change and create realities as they become active in the way people perceive, understand, and reason about their realities. The importance of metaphors' performative ability now becomes evident in inter-religious dialogue. Since metaphors shape the way we think and act, we must critically evaluate what metaphors we use as we interact with people of other faiths and reflect on the role of inter-religious dialogue in our pluralistic world.

To talk about the relationship among peoples of different faiths in terms of a dialogue is, itself, a metaphorical way of understanding the interaction. Of course, dialogue demands the sensorial event of conversation, but it goes beyond that as it metaphorically affirms ideas of mutuality, empathy, interconnectedness and equality.

As we use the expression *inter-religious dialogue*, the relationship is primarily understood as being established *through the word*. However, as we understand that dialogue through the means of gift, we realize many other elements that are exchanged through dialogue, both tangible and intangible. Indeed, we will affirm that dialogue involves conversation, but it goes beyond that as respect, knowledge, goods, appreciation, public recognition, feelings, time, and so on are exchanged. Therefore, as inter-religious dialogue is understood and experienced in terms of gift giving-receiving-reciprocating, we affirm its dialogical aspect where tangibles and intangibles are exchanged as constructive relationships are built.

⁴⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 145.

Since the conceptual system used to understand an interaction will influence the way we talk about it and the way we act upon it, a metaphorical approach represents a significant resource. As will be demonstrated below, to use the source domain of gift to understand the way ULBRA's campus pastors interact with the pluralistic reality they face is a powerful way to shape the interaction. It can help them to faithfully maintain and even promote their specific Lutheran identity in a cultural, educational and legal context that cherishes and even demands pluralism and, at the same time, it can encourage them to actively carry out the unavoidable dialogue that is part of ULBRA's very mission.⁴⁸

Muck and Adeney's Giftive Metaphor: A Contextualized Paradigm

In their book *Christianity Encountering World's Religions*,⁴⁹ Terry Muck and Frances Adeney propose the *giftive metaphor* as a paradigm to shape a Christian approach to today's pluralism. The book is part of *Encountering Mission*, a six-volume series designed to explore issues and developments in today's world missions. Most of the book is dedicated to building a culturally sensitive approach to mission, emphasizing the potentialities and limitations of our ways of doing mission work.

Interpreting today's situation as a free marketplace of religious ideas, Muck and Adeney propose a model that goes beyond competition and cooperation in that market. Based on the role of metaphors in molding people's minds and attitudes, they argue for the *metaphor of gift* for the church's presence in a pluralistic world. Their book aims at guiding missionaries as they witness to their faith in contexts dominated by non-Christian religions. It reinforces an approach of an

⁴⁸ The recently approved ULBRA's Institutional Development Plan states that the university's mission is "to be an effective and innovative learning community." Being a community demands interaction and dialogue, and the mission denotes that it is through that interaction and dialogue that learning must be built.

⁴⁹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 99 (Kindle).

embodied faith which focuses on other people by promoting their well-being, valuing their lived experiences, but, more than that, confronting those experiences with Jesus' story.

Even though the book specifically addresses cross-cultural mission work abroad, its fundamental thesis can help ULBRA's campus pastors as they reflect on and react to the pluralist reality they face. Recognizing the unique climate and consequent challenges of today's religious situation, Muck and Adeney propose an approach to deal with the reality of many religions, which is based on the use of the *giftive metaphor*. Because the approach shows itself to be both culturally sensitive and evangelically committed, it directly addresses this dissertation's question, proposing one effective way to understand and to act upon the pluralistic context faced by ULBRA's campus pastors.

The Metaphorical Character of Muck and Adeney's Proposal

Muck and Adeney work with what they call a *complex view of metaphor*. In that concept, they want to position themselves between (a) those who see metaphors simply as a literary device and, (b) idealist philosophers who see everything as metaphor, arguing that reality is just a product of our mind determined by our language.⁵⁰ Muck and Adeney thus display the influence of Johnson and Lakoff, affirming that

metaphors do have literary properties in that they are interesting and insightful ways of talking about something. They enable us to learn more about an object than if we insisted on sticking to what we might think is purely descriptive, scientific language. But metaphors do more than illumine. They also have creative properties. When we use a set of related metaphors to describe a human activity, what were at first simply ways of talking about that activity over time gain strength and become themselves determinative of the activity itself.⁵¹

Therefore, as they propose the *giftive metaphor*, they are not just suggesting a pictorial way

⁵⁰ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6492 (Kindle).

⁵¹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6492 (Kindle).

to understand the interaction; they aim at modeling the interaction by changing the way we practice it. They aim at changing the conceptual system in order to improve the performance as Christians interact with people of other faiths. In doing so, Muck and Adeney emphasize the relational character of our humanity, affirming the importance of the construction of positive relationships where the goods granted by God are exchanged among people, opening space and opportunity for mutual sharing and growth. Their proposal is the affirmation of a dialogical interaction with people of non-Christian faiths, a relation that is seen as a two-way street where things are given and received. In dialogue, Christian theology opens itself to the riches of God present in creation, understanding, valuing and appropriating God's blessings which are manifest in every culture. At the same time, they see that the possibilities of *giving* are as wide as the forms of an embodied Christian presence in this world can be.

Here, embodied presence is understood as the purposeful and constant testimony of Christian values and principles in whatever Christians do. It is an affirmation of our physical existence and of space and time to live that created existence as a gift. Christians are called to be salt, which can only become a reality if they purposely live and interact with the created world. Therefore, as Christians work, travel, shop, spend their leisure time, they are to be committed to a visible manifestation of God's love by promoting care for creation and people's well-being, whatever their culture, ethnicity or faith.

At the same time, the metaphor demands an open attitude, which values the diversity of God's creative hand in the world's cultures. It works to not confuse the Gospel with the Western culture. It affirms that diverse understandings and expressions of our God given humanity are developed as a consequence of God's innumerable gifts. It defends that when those understandings and expressions of our common humanity do not oppose the Gospel, they must

be received as gifts even if their development has not taken place within a Christian culture. Such a posture has the power to open channels to Christianity's unique contribution to the dialogue as one considers our relationship to God—salvation in Christ—while being sensitive to the demands of specific contexts. Hence this dissertation emphasizes the *giftive metaphor* as a relational model for interacting with people of other religions and furthering Christianity's engaged presence in the world through words and deeds of faith, hope and love.

Assessing the Context: Inter-religious Interactions and the Marketplace Metaphor

As Muck and Adeney analyze today's religious scenario, they recognize that the pluralist context we now face is not new to Christianity. They emphasize the fact that “radical changes in the political, economic, and cultural configuration of the world's nations”⁵² have drastically affected the way religions interact in the contemporary global village. For them, today's interaction can be characterized as a free marketplace of religious ideas, a powerful and pervasive metaphor that has impacted both inter-religious and inter-denominational interactions.

The free marketplace metaphor is not just a literary way to describe a theoretical idea, but the expression of a reality that is present in the most varied dimensions of human life. In that sense, capitalism is not simply understood as the structural way through which we exchange goods and services, but as an ideology that pervades every aspect of human life. It operates in an intricate system that involves other concepts such as consumerism and individualism. It locates life in a “huge shopping bazaar,” where “we act as if everything in our lives runs according to the ‘laws’ of buying and selling.”⁵³ Muck and Adeney call that ideology economism.

Because of the varied symbolic goods that became available in the global village, religion

⁵² Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 228 (Kindle).

⁵³ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 261 (Kindle).

also integrated that system. First, unintentionally, because contemporary individual autonomy has freed people to choose whatever they want for their lives, which includes religious symbolic goods. Second and more recently, intentionally, as religious groups aim at positioning themselves in ways that would attract people's alliance. They did that by emphasizing what makes them different, highlighting their supposedly universal principles and being attentive to peoples' more glaring needs.⁵⁴

Religions have become commodities like any other, and religious people behave more like consumers than congregants. We buy a religion—and continue to purchase it—if it works for us. If it doesn't meet our expectations, we choose another religious or denominational product.⁵⁵

Such a new positioning of religious interaction in society did not only strengthen traditional religious manifestations. It also brought forth religious expressions from the past, such as paganism, and prompted the proliferation of new religious movements, many of them customized to people's specific needs and desires.⁵⁶

Following the laws of the marketplace, religions must show the value of their “product” if they want to grow and conquer their space in this highly competitive scenario, and the way to do that is through performance. Therefore,

Religions are usually measured not on truth value alone but on their capacity to satisfy individual and social spiritual needs. Global citizens are free to choose whatever religion satisfies their individual needs. Religions are not life-and-death matters that hold sway over us but commodities to be chosen according to their utility. The invisible hand of the marketplace replaces the mysterious hand of God.⁵⁷

Even though Muck and Adeney recognize the pitfalls of such a metaphor, they also affirm

⁵⁴ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 255–88, 498 (Kindle). Along with that, one can also perceive growing fundamentalist movements in the world. That is seen as consequence of the necessity of differentiation in today's highly competitive religious market.

⁵⁵ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 265 (Kindle).

⁵⁶ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 310 (Kindle).

⁵⁷ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 351 (Kindle).

that Christianity cannot simply act as if it does not exist. That is so because

we cannot place ourselves outside culture and escape the thought forms that dominate us. What we can do, however, is clearly identify the common metaphors of the age and by so recognizing them, ensure that the essences of our religious teachings are not lost in the virtual ideas of a complex metaphor. Christian missionaries, for example, would be foolish to think they can avoid the implications of economism in their work. This is how people think. It is how missionaries themselves think. But even as we think in that way, we must show how the essence of the gospel can both participate in this way of thinking and at the same time supersede it.⁵⁸

In other words, Christians cannot ignore the challenges secular culture imposes on the body of Christ. As Jesus has called his church to be salt and light, it is not an option for Christians to withdraw from mainstream society's world of meanings, but instead interact with it, understand it, make use of its opportunities and overcome its limitations.

The marketplace competition metaphor

is based on fear—or perhaps a better twenty-first-century word is anxiety. Anxiety about losing ground in building God's kingdom. Anxiety that the unsaved will be forever lost. Anxiety about the spiritual opportunities that our children, and their children, will have. Anxiety is not the best basis for preaching. If anxiety is our motivation, then it becomes part of our message. And more anxiety is not needed in the world today. The real need is the opposite of anxiety: hope. And hope is a much more biblical motivation for witness.⁵⁹

For Christianity, hope is not a passive wait, not just an emotionally healthy expectation that something good will happen, but the conviction that God does what he promises. Our hope is established by his Word, a Word that is said, is written, but is also incarnated in Jesus Christ. This event of incarnation has personal implications, because the blessings that it prompted are personally given to me. But it also has a cosmic implication, which directs the life that was transformed by the gifts it received to the lives that are also the object of God's love.

That is how a giftive approach can participate in today's marketplace scenario and, at the

⁵⁸ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 358 (Kindle).

⁵⁹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 8049 (Kindle).

same time, supersede it. The gift giving metaphor

replaces fear with hope. It puts a desire for relationships ahead of making a sale. It is two-way rather than one-way. And it is more compatible with the way God acts toward us—with grace or free gift—than the business model allows.⁶⁰

In that understanding, the Christian pastor's success is not defined by the number of conversions, since conversion is essentially a transcendent, God-initiated act, but through his fidelity as the one who uses whatever gift he has received "to serve others, as a faithful steward of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10), since "it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

Therefore, in a world dominated by competition, in a context where the need of differentiation in the marketplace can easily lead to varied forms of radicalizations, Christianity must identify an appropriate metaphor to guide its reasoning and shape its performance in such a complex context. Because of its pervasive presence in cultures, its disruptive power and its Christian foundation, the *giftive metaphor* is proposed as a prominent avenue for how Christianity can face today's religious pluralism in the world's marketplace of religions.

The Giftive Metaphor: A Simple and Powerful Proposal

Muck and Adeney's proposal is relatively simple, but at the same time powerful. In a world concerned with religious rivalry, in an age when we long for peace and kindness through words and acts, for a religion (Christianity) marked by the sin of violent authoritarianism when in a position of power, the *giftive metaphor* reminds us Christians that

we are more than conquerors of other peoples, more than harvesters of souls, more than winners of metaphysical arguments: we are the bearers of gifts. We bring to the

⁶⁰ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 8067 (Kindle).

world the greatest of all gifts, the story of what God has done for the world through Jesus Christ.⁶¹

The proposal's simplicity and power rests on three main facts.⁶² First, it makes use of a metaphor that is significantly present in the biblical text. A theological reflection on gift starts in the very creative and free act of God which gave existence to creation. Being God sufficient in himself, his creational act speaks of his giftive nature.

The primary question of the Old Testament is the question of creation. Why would an all-powerful, self-contained God create a world, an act of giving to human beings that really has no justification or rationale, at least as seen from our limited human point of view?... The only conclusion one can reach is that giving is part of the nature of God; and since we are created in God's image, it must be a part of our nature also, if we are to realize the divine intent inherent in our being. To be fully human, we must give.⁶³

As Psalm 19 teaches, creation manifests the glory of God. For created beings, that is expressed in their very existence and in the relational character of their nature. Just as God is the primary and ultimate giver, his creatures are to resemble their creator and his giftive character. But as they realize that, what should his creatures give? For Muck and Adeney the answer is simple: *they should give according to what they have received.*

In that context the Old Testament's tithe plays an important role. God does not need our gifts. All that exists already belongs to him. But in order for his people to relate to him, they must give to God according to what they have received. When it comes to human beings, we also give according to what we have received. God has given us his very creation in order for us to take care of it. Along with his creation, he has given us all that is necessary for us to flourish physically, cognitively, mentally and socially. From what we have received, "we can contribute

⁶¹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 162 (Kindle).

⁶² Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6397 (Kindle).

⁶³ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6818 (Kindle).

wherever possible and wherever the occasion presents itself to support the well-being of humans. The proverb sums it up well: “If he is thirsty, give him water to drink” (Prov. 25: 21).⁶⁴ But the gifts we have received from God go way beyond his creational act. Even though we humans rebelled against him, he gave his very Son in sacrifice, so we could also receive forgiveness, and along with it salvation and eternal life. But because it is his nature to give, he also sends us his Holy Spirit and along with him many spiritual gifts which are all expressions of God’s giftive character. That is why, as Christians, we can give much more than material sustenance, we can give spiritual gifts.⁶⁵

For Muck and Adeney, besides giving testimony to God’s giftive nature and how that characterizes our own existence as human beings, the Bible also talks about the benefits associated with the practice of gift giving.

[The Bible] talks at length about some of the inherent benefits of giving. For instance, it says we personally receive much in return for giving. Giving gives great joy, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 8:2. Giving increases our understanding of the world and its needs— and its blessings— as the early deacons who helped with the distribution of food to widows learned in Acts 6:1–7. Giving teaches us important work values— before learning to give, Zacchaeus took and suffered for it (Luke 19:5). Philippians 4:12 assures us that giving and getting lead to personal contentment for both giver and receiver. And blessings of all kinds come to the giver of gifts⁶⁶.

Second, the *giftive metaphor* is intrinsically connected with a Christian theology of grace, an accent that characterizes Lutheran theology. Grace is the root metaphor as one thinks of God’s activity among us. “We do not earn our salvation through fighting the devil or because of good deeds. We are given it by God. Grace. It is a gift.”⁶⁷ All the gifts we have received, with a special focus on forgiveness and salvation, graciously come as free gifts from God’s hands.

⁶⁴ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6833 (Kindle).

⁶⁵ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6830 (Kindle).

⁶⁶ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6898 (Kindle).

⁶⁷ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6898 (Kindle).

Using gift giving as a metaphor cluster for mission has more than strong biblical warrant. The Christian theological tradition has recognized significant resonance in gift giving and the way the church has conceptualized God's word over the years. This is most apparent in the way the doctrine of grace has been used as a shorthand description of how God relates to the world through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Grace in this view belongs to God. In fact, it is the very nature of God to be gracious, to give this free gift to everyone regardless of merit.⁶⁸

Of course, one may question how specific is Muck and Adeney's definition of grace.

Considered from a Lutheran perspective, we see that they add to the concept of God's grace God's providence, which benefits his creation despite people's religiosity.

We are all "born of God." Grace is not just a gift given to Christians; it is a gift given to all people. All people have access to this free gift, whether they be Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim. God's grace is not a matter of "I have it and you don't," but a matter of "we all have it" through God's provision.⁶⁹

However, the specific terminology present in Lutheran theology concerning salvation cannot stop one from using the word *grace* in a broader way, one that embraces the entire action of the Triune God for the benefit of all his creation. It does not matter if it is God's work in creation, salvation, or sanctification, all of them come from a gracious hand and benefits those who do not bear any merit in themselves.⁷⁰

Third, even though gift giving/receiving is ruled by diverse social rules throughout the world, the practice of gift-giving is present in every culture. Members of all societies display different kinds of tangible and intangible gifts. That pervasive presence is perceived in the most basic relationships, like that between parents and children, to the most complex ones, like in the different manifestations of the religious phenomena throughout the world.

⁶⁸ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6991 (Kindle).

⁶⁹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 7002 (Kindle).

⁷⁰ At the same time, it is important to keep that definition in mind, especially because those two definitions of grace materialize in people's lives through different means. That distinction, however, will be dealt with in this dissertation's third chapter.

Although different cultures view gift giving in sometimes very different ways, the fact that it is a ubiquitous practice means that it can be used as a fruitful common ground for discussion and relationship building.⁷¹

That characteristic makes the giftive metaphor an approach that can be suitably adapted to the most diverse cultures, making use of meanings already present in them. Because gift giving is always present in human social interaction, the overall similarities make it possible to draw conclusions that will guide one's interaction with people of different religious cultures.⁷²

On Christian Responsibility Towards Peoples of Other Faiths

Muck and Adeney's book has this guiding question: "What is Christianity's responsibility towards peoples of other faiths?" As the authors work on building an answer, they try to avoid two possible extremes: (a) Do nothing more than help people in the realm of human well-being (water, clothing, shelter, justice...) and, (b) wipe-them-out, do whatever you can do to eradicate the non-Christian faiths.⁷³

Even though those positions seem to be hypothetical exaggerations, the authors understand that today's tension among religions is leading people to choose to one of those extremes,⁷⁴ either in an act of self-defense or as a path to expansion and domination. The pitfalls of both extreme positions must be recognized and avoided, and Christian theology needs to look for other grounds as it aims at guiding Christians through the challenges they face today. Theological thought does that by being biblically committed and historically relevant. Very much aware of the challenges posed by current pluralist trends and aiming at building on sound theology, Muck and Adeney propose a model that intends to be biblical as it establishes itself on the *metaphor of*

⁷¹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6396 (Kindle).

⁷² Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 7089 (Kindle).

⁷³ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 99 (Kindle).

⁷⁴ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 109 (Kindle).

gift. They posit that the metaphor is essentially based on God's grace manifest in Jesus Christ. They declare, "We believe that Christian responsibility begins with giving witness to what God has done through Jesus Christ to offer us the gift of salvation."⁷⁵ As Christians interact with other people, they hold to a call to bestow that gift to others. Christ's salvation is a unique gift, the most important contribution Christianity can bring to inter-religious dialogue and the most transforming present it can give to people's lives. But equally true to Christian theology is that bearing witness to what God has done in Christ for us is not the only gift that can be given. Christian ethics also asserts that God's love has much to add to an interaction that aims at displaying the richness of gifts present in the Christian faith.

The dominant language we want to focus on involves the actual "giving of the gift of the gospel" to others. The universality of the "giving" and the universality of the scope of the "others" is revealing. As people shaped by grace, we are in the giving mode all the time, and everyone we meet is a potential receiver of our largesse (actually, God's largesse channeled through us). In other words, we give all the time to everyone.⁷⁶

Because we give all the time, we give through the commonalities of life, as we interact with people of other religions in a daily basis. We give through the witnessing of our faith, but also give solidarity, compassion, donation, sensibility, recognition, empathy, respect, appreciation, help, and so on. Therefore, as we operate based on the *giftive metaphor*, we see our role as Christians as the bearers of gifts of faith, hope and love. Besides that, we see people from other religions also as bearers of diverse gifts to us. Since dialogue is the basis for relating to other faiths, the gift giving is reciprocal, and is part of the personal relationships that are established with them. For Muck and Adeney, as seen with Mauss's theory that posits gift giving/receiving as an essential part of people's interconnectedness, such gift receiving must also

⁷⁵ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 99 (Kindle).

⁷⁶ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 7649 (Kindle).

be a part of the *giftive metaphor*'s use by the campus chaplains.

African practice of long religious meetings full of praise can become a positive influence on the missionary's views of worship. The sincere and specific prayers of Indonesian Christians may teach the Western missionary to rely more heavily on God in everyday affairs. The Buddhist practice of meditative silence can help the Christian learn a new attitude of prayer. The evaluative process [of other religious cultures] reaffirms Christian identity and suggests patterns of growth while marking areas of religious need and outlining possibilities of creative connection.⁷⁷

Such an understanding gives opportunity for the strengthening of relationships where diverse gifts are exchanged. In a world suspicious of coercive attitudes and potentially oppressive institutions, this kind of approach demonstrates respect for what is different. Among other things, a giftive approach demands a good deal of humility demonstrated through the openness to receive gifts. That openness expresses personal needs and fosters interdependence among people. It put people at the same level, granting them both status of givers and receivers.⁷⁸ "Learning to receive graciously what the community can provide balances the power between the giver and the receiving community."⁷⁹ At the same time it balances power, giftive approaches also generate opportunities for the witness/sharing of the gift Christians receive from God in Jesus Christ.

The Spiral of Knowledge

The paradigm established through the use of the *giftive metaphor* is a very simple one: we understand human relationships through the lens of *gift exchange*. Even though that is a very simple concept, making it practically effective and theologically viable demands a reflection that will establish the fundamentals of a giftive attitude. Here, attitude comprehends the internal

⁷⁷ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 4837 (Kindle).

⁷⁸ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 4722 (Kindle).

⁷⁹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5230 (Kindle).

response to external realities as well as the actions that that response generates.

For Muck and Adeney, in order for a giftive attitude to take place, one must put in movement what they call the *spiral of knowledge*. The *spiral of knowledge* is the process where one, as he “circulates” around a topic, gains and matures knowledge by passing through/considering different perspectives (*context*, *text* and *pre-text*, as explained below). In the process, he is enriched by those perspectives and expands his understanding. According to Muck and Adeney, while the spiral fosters Christianity’s knowledge, it recognizes the limitations of human understanding and also values knowledge that is constructed by cultures not influenced by the Christian ethos. Hence, the spiral is committed to building a culturally sensitive approach to Christians’ interaction with people of other faiths, working on the potentialities and limitations of our knowledge as the primary resource to answer the challenges imposed by current trends.

One source of knowledge highlighted by Muck and Adeney is *context*. Context involves our time and place, our culture and the meanings it gives to reality, the challenges and questions raised by our generation. Such knowledge connects us with other human beings, allowing substantive interaction through the common meanings shared by those who live in and are influenced by the same context. It carries with it the knowledge built through many generations, expanding what we would know beyond our own generation. However, because this knowledge is limited by time and space, it must not be confused with reality *per se*. It is an expression of what reality is, but it does not limit what can be known of reality nor how reality can be experienced.

Exploring our own culture and recognizing that our experience is not universal but is bounded by family views, social mores, Christian theologies, economic expectations,

and other cultural influences is a first step toward valuing the differences we will find in another society.⁸⁰

Taking context into consideration will make us more open to others' gifts.

Another source of knowledge is the pre-texts. That source considers our theological presuppositions, our personality, the values and thought forms that are active in our minds as we interpret whatever is presented to us. The key word as we deal with *pre-texts* is subjectivism. Even though we share meanings with other people, our time and place are not only experienced within the group, but also markedly individually. This subjectivity generates a multitude of varied forms of understanding, values, principles, abilities, sensibilities, and so on. Those idiosyncrasies may enrich but also may limit the potentialities of the relationships we establish with people of different faiths, since they are limited to our own histories and ability to make sense of it.

The third source of knowledge for Christians mentioned by Muck and Adeney is *the text*. It refers to the Bible, which is a holy text for Christians, God's very words. To be under the authority of that text is what characterizes Christians as Christians, for it is the norm for other types of knowledge. Here, however, one must be reminded of the hermeneutical challenges that theology has faced throughout history. The text is not interpreted in a vacuum. Both *context* and *pre-text* are active as one reads the Bible, interprets it and applies its knowledge. *Context* and *pre-text* generate both richness and limitations on the hermeneutical task. As one thinks of interaction with people of other faiths, that richness and those limitations must be recognized.

Because of the potentialities and limitations present as we consider those sources of knowledge in a giftive approach, Muck and Adeney suggest we make use of what they call the

⁸⁰ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 4795 (Kindle).

spiral of knowledge. The goal of the spiral is to deepen our knowledge of ourselves and the knowledge of the other cultures/religions we are relating to.

It starts with reflecting on one's experience. It sets aside convictions and meets the new culture with an open attitude. Then it evaluates that new culture and religion on the basis of Christian understandings. Finally, it integrates new ideas and insights with original understandings.⁸¹

It is in the context of the *spiral of knowledge* that Muck and Adeney invite Christians to put their personal convictions on hold⁸² as they approach a different culture/religion. Our convictions, which can also be understood as the paradigms we use to understand, evaluate and interact with reality, are constructed throughout one's life history. Our life's experiences shape the way we understand ourselves and the reality we live in. Because our understanding is limited to our sensory apparatus and to our cognitive capacity to make sense of the different life's experiences, there is much subjectivity in the meanings we give to reality.

Although we may think that our actions are logical or natural, our choices are influenced by a number of factors: authorities we trust, principles we hold, the ends or goals that we believe are good for ourselves and our communities, the context in which we operate, our everyday behaviors, and our own character, even our genes.⁸³

Therefore, if one wants to properly understand another culture/religion in order to more richly interact with it, it is important to take the culture/religion for what it is. Our personal experience is active in the relationships we establish, so there is a need to put "convictions on hold" for a while in order to be more open to the gifts to be received.

Unless we find a way to open ourselves to other ways of seeing things, we will be unable to perceive that other religion accurately or appreciate it fully. And if we cannot understand the other religion, we cannot understand those who practice it.

⁸¹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 4685 (Kindle).

⁸² It is not possible to someone to put all his/her personal convictions on hold. Many of them operate in an unconscious level, and there is no way we can approach a subject with neutral mind sets. However, the authors invite us here to be aware of the limitations of our knowledge, working in a way where we create the necessary space to take one's meanings as they are given to us. It is an effort to try to understand someone else's world of meanings.

⁸³ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5077 (Kindle).

Both learning and communication cease. We see instead our own reflection, a predetermined pattern of understanding created by our experience that may have little to do with the way of life we are trying to understand.⁸⁴

Muck and Adeney make it clear that the invitation to put one's convictions on hold does not imply an intention to reject or belittle the wisdom God has given in Scripture. Putting one's convictions on hold essentially means laying aside socially constructed forms used to understand and interact with reality,⁸⁵ opening the necessary space to listen carefully and to think through thoroughly what one has to say,⁸⁶ keeping in mind that differences do not necessarily mean someone is wrong.

It is important to note, however, that this laying aside of our convictions is an ideal, something we attempt but do not expect to reach. We learn only by projecting a set of convictions on the world and seeing whether our experience confirms or rejects them. By attempting to bracket our prejudices, we hope to allow what is being communicated by others to reach us. But we never totally succeed in laying aside our own views. Nonetheless, repeated attempts to do so, along with a growing awareness of our own pre-texts, can aid us in perceiving more clearly the parameters and meaning of the beliefs and practices of another religion.⁸⁷

Accessing a different religion with an open attitude amplifies knowledge acquisition opportunities.

Encountering the other—through the processes of listening, discovering their questions, learning to accept points of nonunderstanding, getting the message, and walking with them—provides us with information and new perspectives on a range of subjects.⁸⁸

As new knowledge is acquired, it is necessary to evaluate it by reengaging our own convictions, comparing what we have learned from other religious cultures with our beliefs and values.⁸⁹ In

⁸⁴ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5413 (Kindle).

⁸⁵ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5430 (Kindle).

⁸⁶ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5479 (Kindle).

⁸⁷ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5421 (Kindle).

⁸⁸ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5921 (Kindle).

⁸⁹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5921 (Kindle).

Christianity, the Bible will establish the norm, the standard, the measuring instrument for any evaluation.⁹⁰ However, in that endeavor, Muck and Adeney recognize that different theologies emphasize different aspects of God's revelation. At different times and in different places, different facets of the Bible have been highlighted. From time to time, the historical context has raised different questions for Christianity to address. Reflecting on that complexity and not intending to limit the principles that could guide the Christian evaluation of the knowledge acquired as one interacts with other religions, Muck and Adeney suggest three themes that could be used to accomplish that task: love, the Holy Spirit and a personal God.⁹¹

As Muck and Adeney apply these themes to the *spiral of knowledge* dynamic, they look for clues of God's presence in other religions. They explain love from John's first letter and use John's definitions (love is life giving; love is active in doing good; love is confident, displacing fear) to discern the presence of God in non-Christian communities. Muck and Adeney argue for the activity of the Holy Spirit in other religions based on the fact that those religions congregate people who believe in divine power and human transcendence. Finally, Muck and Adeney affirm the relationship to a personal deity present in other religions as a sign of God's activity in them. Muck and Adeney's approach rests on an understanding that ideas already present in world's religions can be used to communicate the Gospel.⁹²

⁹⁰ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5940 (Kindle).

⁹¹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5976–81 (Kindle).

⁹² Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5976–6041 (Kindle). In order to illustrate the dynamic of the *spiral of knowledge*, Muck and Adeney present Kōsuke Koyama's experience among villagers in northern Thailand. With a Japanese background and ethnicity, a Princeton University education and experience in WWII, Koyama went to northern Thailand. There, he bracketed his sense of superiority as Japanese and a Christian theologian and instead attempted to see God's presence in the Thai people. He realized he did not properly understand Thai Buddhist Culture, and started to identify what were the questions and issues of the Thai people. Nonviolence became the norm by which he evaluated Thai culture and his own theology. As a consequence of that dynamic, Koyama reappraised his own views in light on the issues and religion of the Thai people. "Koyama studied the stigmata of Christ, developed a theology of Christ's suffering, and related those concepts to the struggles of Thai peasants as part of his growing understanding of what a contextualized Thai peasant theology might become. His

Reflecting on our role as gift givers in the context of the knowledge acquired in the interaction of other's religions, they affirm that

Our gift is not doctrine. Our gift is not judgment. Our gift is not about us but about Jesus. Our gift is the story of Jesus... The task is to suggest that the story of a people's culture fits into the Jesus story. Once we tell the story, with passion and commitment and love, however, it is up to the people themselves to see how their culture's story fits into this bigger, more comprehensive story.⁹³

However, at the same time a Christian cannot be seen apart from the Christian community, including its historical community. The church's growth, as much as it respects indigenous expressions of the faith, cannot take place apart from that community, otherwise it greatly risks becoming something different from Christianity.

Even though the dissertation will question some elements of Muck and Adeney's rationale, it recognizes the value of the giftive paradigm as it is grounded on the *spiral of knowledge*. By valuing cultural sensitivity and affirming biblical commitment, the *spiral of knowledge* proposed by Muck and Adeney gives tools to identify the best gifts we can offer as well as those we can receive. It puts us in a humble position, which does not satisfy itself with limiting generalizations but moves us toward more sophisticated understandings of other religious cultures. In order to experience what is different in deeper ways, one must approach the other with an open mind that tries to avoid the prejudice of preconceived ideas that frequently jeopardize the construction of more sophisticated understandings. The new perceptions may affirm, reshape or even question

experience of the violence of war and its connection with his Christian experience helped form a self-identity and a theology that were integrated in his own life. That nexus of experience, theology, and identity could then come into conversation with the people of Thailand— Buddhists and Christians.” Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6177–99 (Kindle). From a Lutheran point of view, even though such an approach can be argued for, it bears elements that have the potential to generate theological pitfalls. This dissertation will propose the TKR as a lens to evaluate Muck and Adeney's proposal, as well as the elements they use to sustain and operate it. Thus, the way they elaborate the themes suggested by them will be addressed in this dissertation's third chapter.

⁹³ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 7823 (Kindle).

previous understandings, even theological ones. The knowledge gained in the process is itself a gift. It also opens channels for interaction and amplifies the possibilities of the exchange that can take place. Obviously, from a Lutheran point of view such an exchange does not occur without qualification, and that task will be dealt with in the dissertation's next chapter.

In their work, Muck and Adeney demonstrate that a giftive approach can take different forms because it recognizes its context. However, to accomplish its purpose, those forms must still fit the Gospel. The model holds on to what is essential to the Christian faith but builds on the understanding that many aspects of our culture and even of our Christian practices are social constructs that must be regarded as such. It generates opportunities to witness God's grace revealed in Christ, but it recognizes that other religions may display valuable practices of social interaction and philosophical knowledge which cannot be simply discarded because they come from a culture that was not directly influenced by the Christian thought.

Significant Contributions of the *Giftive Metaphor*

This dissertation deals with the reality of religious pluralism and the challenges it poses to the Christian ministry of ULBRA's campus pastors. It understands that in the face of today's skepticism towards affirmations of absolute truth, which is connected to a negative tolerance towards religions,⁹⁴ campus pastors risk succumbing to a spirit of self-criticism that may break with the Christological faith present since Apostolic times. Following that path, they would

⁹⁴ According to Muck and Adeney, "globalization and freedom of religion have created a kind of negative tolerance of all religions that has the overall effect of minimizing them all. This negative tolerance develops in this way: Religion is a very powerful force, and people tend to be passionately religious. Religious conflict often occurs because people believe their religion is so important and so persuasive that they insist on its truth and uniqueness to everyone around them. If we are to have religious freedom and religious peace, this passionate character of religious belief must somehow be controlled. Whether intended or not, the free marketplace of religious ideas seems to reduce the overall value level of all religions. If no single religion is the ultimate truth, then all are less important. A relative approach to truth inevitably reduces commitment to a single truth." Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 326 (Kindle).

weaken central confessions of faith and lose their saltiness (Matt. 5:13). On the other side of the spectrum, if they deny the need for constructive dialogue with people of other religions, they risk becoming blind fundamentalists incapable of properly communicating and, therefore, properly giving testimony to their specific context of the faith that is light to the world (Matt. 5:14). To avoid these two pitfalls, the dissertation aims at helping ULBRA's pastors as they deal with today's pluralism, affirming two essentials, (1) the importance to firmly hold on to the fundamentals of the Christian faith; (2) the importance of being open to constructive interaction with people of other faiths, generating opportunities to mutual knowledge, joint humanitarian work and confident testimony. With that in mind, the following will highlight aspects of the *giftive metaphor* that will show why it can be a useful model for campus ministry in a religiously pluralist context:

- It is Biblical: The Scripture is rich in references to gift-giving, having God as the ultimate giver. Creation is itself the gift of existence to whatever we know. The Bible is replete with references to the innumerable blessings God bestows “on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). God’s care for his chosen people, blessing them with manna, quails, deliverance from enemies, God-fearing rulers, faithful prophets, are all expressions of God’s giftive nature. In addition, God gave the ultimate gift, Jesus Christ, who was sent by him to give eternal life (John 6:38–40). And since God is the ultimate giver, the whole Trinity grants us divine blessings. The Holy Spirit was given to us and bestows on us multiple gifts. The God who freely gives also calls his children to become blessings to others, giving from what they have received (Matt. 10:8), because “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).
- It is consistent with the Lutheran focus on God’s grace: One of the most, if not the

most important contribution of Lutheran theology to Christian theology in general is its emphasis on God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ. Its uncompromising affirmation that we do not deserve anything from God but condemnation and that all we receive (with a special emphasis on forgiveness of sins and salvation) is received solely by grace is the central accent of that theology. Therefore, our relationship with God is always a giftive relationship. It would not be possible without the gracious gift we receive from God.

- It reinforces the role of pastors as bearers of God's love: For many, the university is the temple of knowledge. Knowledge, as history has shown, can easily become an instrument of domination feeding human pride and his/her desire for power. "Human pretention is rarely more inflated than in the pride of knowledge."⁹⁵ Campus pastors are not immune to that trap. J. C. Ryle (1816–1900), the first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, expresses well that risk,

But above all we must take heed that we lay aside the sin which does most easily beset us, the sin which from our age—or habit—or taste—or disposition—or feelings, possesses the greatest power over us. I know of two which are always at our elbows, two sins which try the most advanced Christians even to the end, and these are pride and unbelief. Pride in our own difference from others, pride in our reputation as Christians, pride in our spiritual attainments. Unbelief about our own sinfulness, unbelief about God's wisdom, unbelief about God's mercy. Oh, they are heavy burdens, and sorely do they keep us back, and few really know they are carrying them, and few indeed are those who will not discover them at the very bottom of the chamber of their hearts, waiting an opportunity to come out.⁹⁶

A giftive approach strengthens a spirit of servanthood, which is essential to pastoral ministry whatever its context.

⁹⁵ Phil Schroeder, "Ministry on Academic Turfs: A Lutheran View in Invitation to Dialogue," *The Theology of College Chaplaincy and Campus Ministry* (NY: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 1986), 12.

⁹⁶ J. C. Ryle, "The Heavy Burdens of Pride and Unbelief," JCRyle Quotes, accessed January 30, 2012, <http://jcrylequotes.com/2010/01/07/the-heavy-burdens-of-pride-and-unbelief>.

- It can help campus pastors at improving their relationships with people of other religions: The *giftive metaphor* enforces a relational approach to the campus ministry. The pastoral work on campus becomes more meaningful as the minister builds relationships that improves the impact they have in each other's lives. The *giftive metaphor* values people for who they are, especially considering the experience that brought them to the point they are at. This is not done in a relativistic way, but through sensitivity to someone else's life story. Besides that, it values the innumerable gifts people from other religious cultures have to offer to us. That mindset may help campus pastors more naturally interact with those from a different faith (or lack of it).
- It deals with a practice widely known in Western Culture, that of gift-giving: In their book, Muck and Adeney describe different meanings and practices that different cultures bring to gift giving/receiving: Indigenous Gift Giving, Eastern Gift Giving, Western Gift Giving and Religious Gift Giving. They demonstrate that even though differences exist and must be considered in this social phenomenon, practices of gift giving/receiving are present in all societies. That is especially true in Western Culture. Due to the Christian influence in our culture, we still hold to the idea of the free gift, even though the religious perfection of that practice is not evidenced in people's daily lives. That ideal, however, influences relationships in humanitarian activities, working relations, religious piety, business contracts, political negotiations, and so on. The concept is present in Brazilian culture in a way that confirms Marcel Mauss's understanding of the phenomenon as a *total social fact*, an activity that has implications throughout society. Even though the meaning and practices present in the phenomenon are varied, its pervasive presence in culture validates its use as a tool for understanding

and employing dialogical practice.

- It highlights the importance of university extension programs: A university accomplishes its purpose as it reaches out to its surrounding community. ULBRA has its work defined by the cycle extension–research–teaching–extension. In that paradigm, the university’s activity begins in the surrounding communities, valuing their knowledge and understanding and responding to their needs. The university focuses on people’s reality (extension), seeks to understand and create ways to respond to the needs of that reality (research), socialize and critically evaluate the constructed knowledge (teaching) and goes back to the communities in order to mediate changes (extension). Extension projects,⁹⁷ which can be led by campus pastors at the university, approximate their ministry of the academic dynamics and can become opportunities for mutual-learning and meaningful testimony. Projects that deal with domestic violence, human rights, professionalization, social inclusion, and so on, are significant gifts the Christian university and the campus ministry may bestow to people.

The summary of Muck and Adeney’s thesis so far presented demonstrates that their proposal is aligned both to the need of theological interaction with today’s cultural trends and the commitment to the call that Christianity holds as God’s chosen people. It attends, therefore, to the purpose of the practical theology reflection. More than that, it demonstrates how the giftive paradigm can suitably assist campus pastors as they interact with peoples of other faiths in a way that respects their otherness and demonstrates commitment to Christian convictions.

From a Lutheran perspective, the exchange among members of different faiths proposed by

⁹⁷ In Brazilian Universities, extension programs offer learning opportunities for the university’s surrounding community without granting degrees, cultural interaction and offering services to those in need (medical, dental, etc.). In summary, those programs promote mutual learning opportunities that connects the university, its faculty and students to the surrounding communities, benefiting in different ways all those that are involved in the programs.

Muck and Adeney's *giftive metaphor* should not take place without qualification. A Lutheran use of the giftive paradigm will employ a characteristic discernment through its theology. The use of Lutheran lens to deal with Muck and Adeney's proposal will be the main theme of this dissertation's third chapter.

Conclusion

Metaphors powerfully mold people's minds and attitudes. They not only express understandings of realities, but they also create realities as they become active in our thought. This understanding of metaphor undergirds this dissertation's use of the *giftive metaphor* to aid campus pastors in their pluralistic context as metaphor will work both as a tool of understanding and as a device guiding campus pastors' attitudes. It is believed that through the use of the *giftive metaphor*

[w]e read the Bible better. Isn't the root metaphor of God's activity among us the metaphor of God's grace? We do not earn our salvation through fighting the devil or because of good deeds. We are given it by God. Grace. It is a gift. We express ourselves better in our own culture and in our relationships with other religions when we replace the marketplace metaphor—the managerial competition with other religions—with the metaphor of bearing and receiving gifts. We develop better theologies that are culturally sensitive but, more importantly, biblically faithful to the commands of witness when we see them through the spectacles of gift giving (see chapter 3). We do the work of mission better, without succumbing to the temptations of power and manipulation and triumphalism, when we ratchet down our pride and become gift givers and gift receivers rather than mini-saviors of the world.⁹⁸

As people understand the relationships they establish with people of other faiths through the means of gift, they will oppose attitudes that denigrate the Gospel and Christianity itself. They will more clearly see that God's forgiveness in Christ is a given that cannot be imposed. They will understand that Christianity must not be eager for domination in the secular realm,

⁹⁸ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 179 (Kindle).

because Christians are not called to subjugate, but to serve/give according to what they have received. They will be outraged at violent attitudes even when the perpetrators are willing to justify those attitudes as a defense of the Christian faith. Proactively, they will be open to constructive interaction. More than that, they will be eager to share the most precious gift they have received: grace in Christ. They will also give good testimony of their faith as they promote people's well-being. They will value the knowledge and good practices of people of other faiths, making good use of the gifts those people have to offer.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Gift is not the only metaphor present in Bible but it is a powerful metaphor as one considers the complexities of our age. One way to see its potential for inter-religious dialogue is to reflect on other biblical metaphors such as the *military* and the *market metaphors*. In a world like ours, where violence is a social problem, political instability persists and human capacity to destruction has grown, a *military metaphor* may bring more baggage than the intended concept can bear. In the case of the *market metaphor*, even though our capitalist life style would relate to it, much criticism has questioned the morality of prosperity theologies and of Christian denominations characterized by capitalist drives. Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6616 (Kindle).

CHAPTER THREE

THE GIFTIVE METAPHOR THROUGH THE LENS OF THE TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS¹

Introduction

The dissertation's first chapter contextualized the research question by recognizing the challenges generated by today's religious pluralist trends to ULBRA's campus pastors' ministry. The second chapter presented the *giftive metaphor* as an avenue for how ULBRA's campus pastors can work on inter-religious dialogue in the university's pluralist context. As stated, the *giftive metaphor* suitably relates to Lutheranism's most remarkable theological accent: forgiveness/salvation is graciously given by God as a free gift. That statement, however, does not exempt the giftive paradigm of an analysis through Lutheran lens, a qualification that attends to the requirements of a practical theological reflection. That analysis will be done through the use of the Lutheran distinction known as the Two Kinds of Righteousness (TKR).

Muck and Adeney's Proposal: Points of Concern

As part of the introduction to the third chapter, it is necessary to highlight some points of concern related to the way Muck and Adeney structure their rationale as they propose the *giftive metaphor* as a paradigm for how Christians might interact with people of other religions.

Muck and Adeney seem to present a broader definition of the Gospel than Lutheran theology usual focus on grace. The authors are clear as to the centrality of Jesus' story, to what God has gracefully done through him as paramount to Christian faith. Through Jesus, God offers

¹ The same principles at work in applying the giftive metaphor to religious pluralism through the lens of the TKR may also be applied to questions concerning Christian plurality and cultural plurality. Even though the object of study of this project distinguishes inter-religious dialogue from inter-cultural dialogue, it is important to state that those dimensions are not unrelated. Religiosity does not take place in a cultural vacuum, and cultures are usually impregnated with religious ideas and values. A clear distinction is not possible even though it is theoretically intended, and that will show up in the research's text at times.

“the gift of salvation.” Jesus is the bearer of God’s “free gift of grace.” His uniqueness as “the suffering savior” is affirmed. The Gospel as the act of the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ, which is freely offered to all human beings, is evident in different sections of the book. That necessity of the Gospel is clearly stated by the authors as they write that “[a]ny means that we use in mission that does not acknowledge that it is God who saves is a method inconsistent with Scripture.”² However, on occasion they understand the Gospel in a way that includes aspects of demands, of morality. For example, when they deal with the subject of cooperation among religions in order to create harmonic relationships between different peoples, the book affirms that “part of the gospel is to support and even create just social systems.”³ Therefore, to cooperate with other religions and seek for the establishment of justice is a “gospel requirement.”⁴ Another example is when the authors reflect on the concepts we can find in non-Christian religions which can become gifts for us, gifts which will help us more deeply understand our own Christian convictions. Those gifts are present in “social structure and values,” which “carry the Gospel in another culture.”⁵ A mature Christian cannot deny that non-Christian social structures may present values more suitable to the promotion of social justice than societies influenced by the Christian ethos. However, the biblical demands related to moral, ethics, and social order are connected to the natural law revealed throughout God’s creation and cannot be confused with the Gospel as God’s gracious self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

Another theological concern is their claim that the Spirit’s gifts are given outside the Word. Quoting John 14:16–17, the authors expand the fulfilment of the promise of the sending of the

² Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 3468 (Kindle).

³ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 584 (Kindle).

⁴ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 601 (Kindle).

⁵ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6213 (Kindle).

Spirit to every religion. They affirm that following Jesus' death and resurrection, "God's Spirit has pervaded the world in a special way."⁶ The authors do not directly deal with the question of the Spirit's activity outside the Word but affirm that the Spirit of God is active in structuring other religions' beliefs. As an example of that position, they curiously mention a Lutheran theologian, Lee Snook. An Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's theologian, Snook understands that the Spirit is active in the world's religions, leading people to "trust in the power of God to change reality."⁷ According to Snook's experience, that leading takes place even before people receive a Christian witness. Snook "saw the activity of God's Spirit in the beliefs of the Africans before they ever heard the name of Jesus."⁸ Even though a biblical theology recognizes Spirit's gifts that are not connected to salvation (Gospel), as texts such as Exod. 31:1–5 and 35:30–35 make it clear, these assertions must be carefully expressed. If we do not clearly qualify what kind of spiritual gifts are given by God outside the Word, we risk losing the fundamental role of the Gospel in the bestowing of the Spirit's gifts related to salvation.⁹

Those theological concerns, however, do not take away the value of their main thesis. It is the understanding of this dissertation that an analysis of their proposal from the TKR can both validate and utilize their suggested approach.

The Option for the Two Kinds of Righteousness

The Purpose for Using the TKR

Aiming at explaining how Christians stand in their relationship with God—*coram Deo*—

⁶ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6001 (Kindle).

⁷ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6001 (Kindle).

⁸ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 6014 (Kindle).

⁹ Other concerns could be attested, but these are the more significant ones.

and with the created world—*coram mundo*, Lutheran thinking offers the doctrine of the Two Kinds of Righteousness as an understanding that structures and permeates its theological thought.¹⁰ The first kind of righteousness refers to our relationship *coram Deo*. Everything that takes place in that kind of righteousness is God's work. This is a passive righteousness. The second kind of righteousness refers to our lives as we stand *coram mundo*. In this horizontal relationship, Christians have a call from God to serve and care for all human-beings and for the whole creation. In this dimension of life, our righteousness is an active interaction with that which surrounds us.

As I use the TKR in this chapter, I will begin by demonstrating how the giftive paradigm suitably relates to Lutheran theology. Recent research has shown that the heart of Lutheran theology deals with the semantic field of gift. As Luther longed for a merciful Father, he found in the undeserved gift of forgiveness and salvation the core of his theological genius. God's grace pervaded all his writings, informing his varied theological reflections. It is not by accident that justification by grace is the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*. The very word *grace*, considered the cornerstone of Lutheran theology, belongs to the semantic field of gift and essentially is a perfection of the term, focusing on the freedom and goodness of the Giver despite the undesirability and lack of merit of the receiver. The TKR firmly affirms that understanding.

Second, I want to strengthen the giftive paradigm's theological foundation, which has God as the ultimate Giver. Through the use of the TKR we can strongly affirm God's loving nature, which is expressed through the means of gift. First and foremost, he gave/gives himself as the

¹⁰ The Two Kind of Righteousness distinction was first hinted by Luther in the Heidelberg Disputation (1518). Later, it was further developed in the sermons: Three Kinds of Righteousness (1518), Two Kinds of Righteousness (1519), On Monastic Vows (1522) and Sermons on Genesis (1523/1527); in the Lectures on Galatians (1531–1535) and Galatians Commentary (1535). In this later writing, Luther points out the relevance of this concept to his thinking calling it “our theology.” Philipp Melanchthon uses the distinction in the Augsburg Confession (1530) and in its Apology (1531), expressing the concept using varied terms.

incarnate Word and the Sanctifying Spirit. That giftive nature is also manifest in his creation, as relatedness is an essential characteristic of our createdness. We all have received, and we all are called to give according to what we have received. The TKR sustains that understanding as it affirms both God's giftive character and the relational nature of his creation, and along with it the ethical responsibilities that flow from that nature.

Third, I want to use Lutheran theology when I talk about ethics and Christian responsibilities toward peoples of other faiths and do so in a positive way. Besides that, I also want to be able to talk about gifts Christians receive from people of other faiths in a positive way. In Brazilian Lutheran circles, Law and Gospel has been the default theological paradigm to treat most topics. Even though I recognize the foundational importance of that distinction to Lutheran theology, I understand that in some situations that is not the only distinction to guide sound theological reflection. The present dissertation's thesis is one of those cases. One positive consequence of using TKR is that it could be more prominent in Brazilian Lutheran theological debates.

Fourth, I want to use the TKR in order to further develop the use of the giftive paradigm, from a Lutheran perspective, as we relate to people from other religions. The matter here addresses more directly the question: "As Christians, what gifts do we give and what gifts do we receive as we relate to people of other religions?" The TKR will affirm without compromise that forgiveness of sins and salvation is freely and graciously given by God in Christ. Through Jesus' vicarious work God reconciled his creation to himself. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus overcame sin and death and gave us gifts such as forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. Those gifts are received through faith, which is itself a gift given by God the Holy Spirit and

which involves God as the Giver.¹¹ That faith in the undeserved grace of Christ will be the most important gift we will share as members of the Christian Church. From that faith, which affirms God's loving nature, acts of caring love will flow towards those we live with despite their different religious beliefs. This caring love is also affirmed by the TKR. As God's people, we are ambassadors of his saving desire towards his creation and will live accordingly, making use of reason and other resources to promote creation's well-being. This righteousness toward others and creation is located in the horizontal dimension. It is in that dimension that we can greatly benefit from people of other religions, being blessed by their acts of love, by their culture and knowledge, and even by their call to repentance, as they point out to us our own sinful ways.

God is a Gracious Giver: Lutheran Theology's Giftive Character

This dissertation's main question deals with the reality of pluralism in the context of a Lutheran university. Even though one cannot find in Luther a fully developed theology of world religions, that does not mean that we are left without meaningful Lutheran resources to deal with the challenges generated by pluralism. Risto Saarinen, professor of Ecumenical Theology at the University of Helsinki, argues that because Lutheran confessional writings dealt with the many controversies of Luther's time, one cannot find a comprehensive Lutheran body of theological doctrine. Since the *Book of Concord* is an eclectic work mostly concerned with those controversies, there are Christian teachings which are only rudimentarily treated by it. In the face of that, Saarinen sees himself joining those who have tried to overcome that deficit. The strategy he chooses presupposes that the missing parts of doctrine are inherently present in the historical body of Lutheran doctrine. He says that the

¹¹ Simo Peura, "What God Gives Man Receives: Luther on Salvation," in *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 954 (Kindle).

themes available in the text can be amplified so that a comprehensive body of doctrine emerges. In this manner, some central ideas or motifs available in the normative texts are like the stem cells in human body: they are pluripotent, that is, they can become different kinds of organs and members of the comprehensive body.¹²

For Saarinen, the *theology of giving*¹³ operative in Luther's thought is so powerful that other doctrines are found in it. In this way, this dissertation focuses on the TKR, understanding that the giftive elements operative in Luther's thought also engender the TKR. In other words, the TKR is giftive in nature as is Lutheran theology as a whole.

Luther's theology of pure gift without reciprocation is a fundamental block of the Reformation's revolutionary enterprise. The then existing theological, devotional, ritual-cultic and ecclesiastical-legal systems were deeply changed as the implications of *sola gratia* became operative in thought and culture.¹⁴ Examining discussions on the young and old Luther's theology, the concept of gift has been present and has structured Luther's thought at least since his 1516 lectures on Romans, and continued up to his 1546 Preface of that same epistle. Even though through that time he had used *gift* in varied forms and contexts, the concept kept its basic content, showed itself to be organic to his thought and regularly served his "rhetorical, pedagogical, or homiletical purposes."¹⁵ In other words, the Reformation's new understanding of gift "stood at the very beginning of Luther's reformatory new orientation as the central perspective of his entire theological work, and it spread out from there to all other levels and

¹² That is not the only presupposition used by Saarinen. He understands one should also follow the "biblical, patristic and medieval Christian teaching." Risto Saarinen, "Theology of Gift as a Comprehensive Lutheran Theology," in *Transformation in Luther's Theology: Historical and Contemporary Reflections*, ed. Cristine Helmer and Bo Kristian Holm (Leipzig: EVA, 2011), 141–49, 141. Briefly put, Saarinen argues that theologians have put too much attention on the receiver's incapacity, lack of merit or inability, instead of emphasizing the perspective of the giver, who is God.

¹³ Saarinen, "Theology of Gift."

¹⁴ Berndt Hamm, "Martin Luther's Revolutionary Theology of Pure Gift without Reciprocation," *Lutheran Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2015): 125–61.

¹⁵ Stephan K. Turnbull, "Grace and Gift in Luther and Paul," *Word & World*, 24 no. 3 (Summer 2004): 305–14.

parts of his reform thought and action.”¹⁶

Even though the theme of gift has become a significant element in contemporary Lutheran reflection,¹⁷ its arrival in Lutheran cycles is relatively recent. One of the possible reasons for that is the giftive paradigm’s reciprocal character, which can easily find resistance in Luther’s emphasis on unilateral grace.¹⁸ As it was demonstrated in chapter two, one of the main characteristics of Mauss’s reflection is that even though a gift may appear free and disinterested, it always involves forces between both sides of the interaction, in a way that the practice of gift giving is characterized by the giving-receiving-reciprocating cycle.¹⁹ That process is then understood as an integral part of the social fabric. Luther, on the other hand, works the theological understanding of God’s unilateral gift against sociology’s reciprocal understanding.

However, the giftive character of the TKR allows us to articulate our theological reflection in a way that God’s grace is clearly stated, and, at the same time, human responsibility is affirmed. In Luther’s theology, God is the ultimate giver. We can do nothing to deserve God’s gifts. We can give back nothing to God that is not already his. In God’s giftive relation with his creation there is strict monergism. God gives out of his free will, what is an expression of his very being.

But the TKR will also

allow the theological space needed to speak positively about the Christian life within a world where the Judeo-Christian ethic—that could once be taken for granted—is

¹⁶ Berndt Hamm, “Martin Luther’s Revolutionary Theology,” 126.

¹⁷ The giftive character of Lutheran Theology has been highlighted by scholars such as Oswald Bayer, Tuomo Mannermaa, Martin Seils, Simo Peura and Sammeli Juntenen, among others.

¹⁸ Derek R. Nelson and Paul R. Hinlicky, *The Oxford Encyclopedia on Martin Luther* (New York: Oxford, 2017), 1:558.

¹⁹ Olson, “Excess, Time, and the Pure Gift,” 352.

crumbling... it offers a more comprehensive framework to speak positively about life in this world while not undermining the doctrine of justification.²⁰

TKR focuses on what it means to be human, placing our lives before the Creator and before the creation.²¹ It affirms the value of human life despite ethnicity, culture or religion. God's creation, because it is God's creation, bears intrinsic value because it is the fruit of his hand. Even though sin perverted God's creation, he still cares and manifests his kindness towards humanity, since life is only possible if God sustains it. That is true for believers and unbelievers. "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Mat 5:45). In addition, the sending of God's Son aims at the salvation of all, because all are important to God, because He "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1Tim. 2:4). Putting the implications of TKR in a simple way, it first sees people of other faiths as targets of love, God's and ours, and not as competitors in the religious market. To further demonstrate how TKR informs the work of this dissertation, a closer look at its theological structure is needed.

Two Kinds of Righteousness: Summary Definition and Main Implications for the Dissertation

As Mauss's theory was presented in chapter two, the emphasis was on its relational character. It showed people's interdependence through giving-receiving-reciprocating in a cycle that displays human interconnectedness. People's lives take place and are structured in the interpersonal relationships that they establish. Mauss affirmed that because there are binding forces which are created in gift giving/receiving, the practice itself builds connectedness and its

²⁰ Charles P. Arand, "Two Kinds of Righteousness as a Framework for Law and Gospel in the Apology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (2001): 417–39, 418.

²¹ Charles P. Arand, and Joel D. Biermann, "Why the Two Kinds of Righteousness?" *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 2 (April 2007): 116–35, 123.

consequent social stability. Thus, gifts are not just presents given out of generosity, but are essential blocks of the social structures. They stimulate reciprocity and consequently strengthen people's ties. Mauss's thesis, therefore, presupposes and values relatedness as a fundamental element of humanity.

Even though his parents were orthodox Jews, Mauss himself was not a religious man. He did study religion, but not from a theological perspective. He was an anthropologist and a sociologist, and his studies approached religion as simply a human production. However, my claim is that as he defined gift and described its role in human social interaction, he was describing from a sociological view a theological reality. Gift giving and gift receiving involves one of the most fundamental characteristics of our God established existence: relatedness. Because of the way God designed creation, we come to be, we grow, we live because of the complex and varied relationships that are established throughout our lives. The oxygen that I breathe is a distinct entity from myself, so I establish a relationship with the air that surrounds me. The fruits that I eat are entities distinct from myself, so I establish a relationship with other non-human living creatures. The hug or conversation that nurtures my soul is only possible as I interact with other people, so I establish relationships with fellow humans. By their very nature, gift-giving and gift-receiving are relational activities. They integrate our very existence as fundamental realities of the relationships that are established throughout our lives. In all relationships, things are taken and things are given, and when they are mutually and freely given and gratefully received, those relationships direct themselves towards harmony and plenitude.

Lutheran theology understands the nature of the relationships that are established in our lives and the consequent gift-giving and gift-receiving present in them as what defines us as

human beings.²² Aiming at explaining how Christians stand in their relationship with God—*coram Deo*—and how they (should) stand in their relationship with the created world—*coram mundo*, Lutheran thinking offers a simple and powerful understanding that structures and permeates its theological thought. That understanding is expressed through what is known as the Two Kinds of Righteousness doctrine.

The first kind of righteousness refers to our relationship *coram Deo*. That relationship is characterized by divine monergism. God is the one who gives, we are those who receive. Everything that takes place in that kind of righteousness is God's work. He is the one who makes us righteous through Jesus Christ. By grace alone he gives us the forgiveness of our sins, declaring us righteous and granting us a renewed and eternal life. This is the *Deus pro nobis*, who without merit on our behalf saves us.²³ Before him, we are beggars who gracefully receive all that we need from the hands of our Father. We do nothing to deserve it. God gives it completely free. Therefore, as Luther states, this is a passive righteousness.²⁴

The second kind of righteousness refers to our lives as we stand *coram mundo*. In this dimension, our righteousness before the created world is established as we seek to live our lives according to the work that God has entrusted us, a work that is based on the law present in the human heart and revealed in the Word of God. In this horizontal relationship, Christians have a call from God to serve and care for God's creation, which includes human and non-human

²² Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 10 (Kindle).

²³ Even though it can be said that traditional Lutheranism has difficulties dealing with the implications of the *theosis* proposed by Mannermaa and Irmeli, one can greatly benefit from their reflections on the concept of the love of God as it is developed by Martin Luther. "God's love is not oriented toward "what is" but rather toward "what is not." That is why God's love does not desire to gain something good from its object but rather pours out good and shares its own goodness with its object." Tuomo Mannermaa and Kirsi Irmeli, *Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther's Religious World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 2.

²⁴ Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1999): 449–66, 452.

entities. Here, God grants us reason and creativity so that, from the gifts we receive from him, we can promote the well-being of all his creatures. *Coram mundo*, we are responsible for what we do or do not do before God and before the people with whom we live. Thus, in this dimension of life our righteousness is an active interaction with that which surrounds us.

The use of the TKR allows us to interact creatively with culture and at the same time remain faithful to the center of our Lutheran faith. This is so because the doctrine distinguishes different dimensions of our being without dichotomizing our lives in this world. It states that God's grace revealed in Christ does not annul our nature and the divine gifts attached to it, it restores them. There is in the horizontal realm, therefore, a recognition of the value of the cultural expressions of our very nature, which allows us to recognize and receive gifts that come from those outside the Christian faith. Reflecting on a Lutheran approach to culture as he deals with the use of music as a cultural gift in the church, Leopoldo Sánchez stresses that same understanding by stating that

[w]hile the confessors affirm our corruption by sin and need for redemption, they do not speak of replacing nature with grace. Nature and grace are taught in different ways. While God reveals his power in nature, God's redeeming grace is not sought in nature but in the gospel.²⁵

Referring to the Apology's article on the number and use of the sacraments, Sánchez notes that although cultural gifts are not "sure signs of grace" with the "command of God," they can be seen as other "signs" that may "serve to teach and admonish" others as we communicate with them from a Gospel-informed perspective.²⁶ He argues that the Apology opens the possibility for developing a theology of "two kinds of signs" that allows "pastors and missionaries to engage

²⁵ Leopoldo A. Sánchez, "Theology in Context: Music as a Test Case," *Concordia Journal* 38, no. 3 (2012): 214.

²⁶ Sánchez, "Theology in Context," 211.

culture theologically by asking about the potential pedagogical use and evangelical reception of signs of significance in various cultures.”²⁷ In a way similar to Sánchez’s distinction between signs of grace and signs of culture, the TKR distinction is solidly placed on God’s act of grace *coram Deo* and from that foundation speaks of such grace as sustaining our lives as an embodied presence of the faith that transforms us for engaging others *coram mundo*. Such an approach theologically allows us to value aspects of diverse cultural expressions.

Today, churches of all denominations struggle at understanding their role in our post-Christian society. To address this situation, the TKR may become a powerful tool able to guide and empower our communities and their pastors. It enables us to stay committed to the faithfulness of our theological heritage and, at the same time, communicate meaningfully in today’s context.

The Passive Righteousness and Its Giftive Character

As stated above, passive righteousness deals with our relationship *coram Deo*, and so it is called vertical righteousness. In this relationship, God is the giver²⁸ and we are the receivers. This monergistic action affirms that all we are and all we have as human beings are free gifts given by God, and that includes material and spiritual blessings. The Christian reasoning that structures this gift giving understanding can be well apprehended from a creedal perspective. Such an approach is supported by Luther’s comments on the giftive character of the Apostles’ Creed. His words, quoted below, are a fundamental source for scholars’ reflection on the giftive nature of Lutheran theology.

²⁷ Sánchez, “Theology in Context,” 213.

²⁸ For Luther, that is what makes God, God. In his first lecture on Psalms he affirms “This is what it means to be God: Not to receive but to give good.” That understanding is the basis of our relational nature as creatures, since we were created also to share the gifts we have received. Mannermaa and Irmeli, *Two Kinds of Love*, 23–66.

These are three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has. The Father gives himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us. But this gift has become obscured and useless through Adam's fall. Therefore, the Son himself subsequently gave himself and bestowed all his works, sufferings, wisdom, and righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father, in order that restored to life and righteousness, we might also know and have the Father and his gifts.

But because this grace would benefit no one if it remained so profoundly hidden and could not come to us, the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself to us also, wholly and completely. He teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it. He does this both inwardly and outwardly – inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism and the sacrament of the altar.²⁹

Here, Luther stresses God's giftive nature, which characterizes each one of the Trinity's persons. The noun *gift* and the verb *give* are used seven times in the text, plus their correlative forms *bestow*, *receive*, and *benefit*, among others.³⁰ In Luther's reasoning, God does not only give creation, he gives himself through/to creation. Because of Adam's fall, he also gives himself through Jesus' incarnation³¹ in order to reconcile us and grant us even more gifts. Because of our rebellious nature, he also gives himself through the Spirit, "wholly and completely," so we can receive and preserve the gift won for us by Jesus on the cross. For Luther, in the Trinity God must be understood primarily as the one who gives and the one who does that generously and continuously.³²

Inspired by that same understanding, I will follow our ecumenical creeds' three article structure to demonstrate how God's relationship to us can be understood through its giftive

²⁹ *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 37: 366.

³⁰ Oswaldo Bayer. *A Teologia de Matim Lutero* (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2007), 184.

³¹ The giftive nature of God's can be perceived in other prominent theologians such as Karl Barth. As the most remarkable statement of his reasoning, he focuses on God self-giving through revelation, which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Risto Saarinen, *God and the Gift: An Ecumenical Theology of Giving* (Collegeville, MN: Unitas, 2005), 5.

³² Bayer, *A Teologia de Martim Lutero*, 71.

character.³³ Our existence as human beings and creation as a whole (First Article),³⁴ the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus and the salvation it accomplishes (Second Article) and the faith bestowed by the Holy Spirit which appropriates what was won by Christ as well as joining us to the community of faith (Third Article) are all gifts that we freely receive from God. They are gifts we do not deserve and to which nothing can be added by what we do. Here resides the unique gift Christians have to offer.

Considering that creedal perspective, the First Article points to a strict distinction between Creator and creatures, and the total dependence of the latter upon the former.³⁵ First, that means that our very existence is a free gift of God. Second, it means that in his wisdom and love, God created a complex and astonishing universe to which he gave a relational character.³⁶ As declared by God's words after his work in each day of creation, all that was made was good. That

³³ As he proposes a framework for the role of virtue ethics within Lutheranism, Joel Biermann writes on the growth of a creedal emphasis in recent theological reflections. My research project is aligned with his criticism on the topic as well as with his use of trinitarian theology. What he means is that the "framework presented here advocates not an emulation of perichoretic intra-trinitarian relations, but an appreciation for the extent of God's activity as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. From the perspective of contemporary Lutheranism, the appropriation of a creedal frame points especially to a renewed appreciation for the importance of God's first-article work of creation." Joel D. Biermann, *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 139.

³⁴ The Two Kinds of Righteousness infers that our identity and, consequently, our life's *telos* can only be understood in relation to our Creator. Therefore, a First Article theology has much to say on that distinction.

³⁵ Dealing with the Two Kinds of Righteousness, Robert Kolb makes clear the importance of the doctrine of creation to Luther's theology. Robert Kolb, "God and His Human Creatures in Luther's Sermons on Genesis: The Reformer's Early Use of His Distinction of Two Kinds of Righteousness," *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 2 (April 2007): 166–84.

³⁶ An understanding of human beings as relational creatures is supported by the TKR and it articulates our identity and *telos* in relational terms. Arand and Biermann affirm that as they define righteousness: "Righteousness has to do with meeting God's "design specifications" for being a human creature and fulfilling the purpose for which God created us. It has to do with being fully human, that is, as God intended us to be when he created us. Integral to his design, God created us as relational beings; and human relationships take place within two fundamental realms or arenas: we live before God (*coram Deo*), and before the world (*coram mundo*)." Arand and, "Why the Two Kinds," 118. As Robert Kolb affirms, "fundamental to Luther's understanding of the Biblical teaching of creation was his conviction that God had made human beings in and for community with one another. God had so structured human life that he made individual human beings not only to stand in relationship to him in vertical dependence but also to associate with other human beings in horizontal interdependence." Robert Kolb, "God Calling, 'Take Care of My People': Luther's Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology," *Concordia Journal* 8, no. 1 (January 1982): 4–11, 5.

declaration points to the intrinsic value held by every single one of the entities created by God. In a special manner, God created humankind, blessed man and woman with a living soul and gave them authority over creation as God's representatives. The created world was given as a gift, so humans could enjoy the intrinsic, aesthetic and beneficial values of what God has made and, at the same time, care for what was given by him.

The same God that created the whole universe still sustains it, because without his constant presence we would not be. His presence is an active presence. Mediated by the creational laws he established, God gives existence to other human beings. Human beings are blessed with reason and creativity, and as they interact with each other and with the created world they grow in knowledge, invent new techniques, and cultivate their relational nature by sharing what they have received and accomplished through their gifts. God's active presence still gives us innumerable gifts, blessing us through his creatures as we are heated by the sun, hydrated by the rain or fed by plants and trees. The understanding of the giftive relationship God established with us in a First Article perspective is expressed by Luther's explanations of the Apostle's Creed:

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property-along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.³⁷

The second article is an affirmation of God's love for his creatures, with special focus on humankind. It points to the God who gives his only Son in order to restore humankind and the

³⁷ Small Catechism I.2 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 354.

whole creation. He gives what is his and takes what is ours,³⁸ breaks the chains of the condemning law that imprisons us and grants us renewed life as restored children of the heavenly Father. Humankind was not able to overcome the abyss created by sin, which separated us from our source of life and meaning, our Creator. Only God could accomplish such a deed, and he did so through Christ. Jesus' holy and precious blood and his innocent passion and death won forgiveness of sins and, with it, life and salvation. Those gifts are then freely given and in no way can be negotiated. Here resides the most profound affirmation of the doctrine that characterizes the essence of Lutheran theology: our salvation is a gift given to us by grace.³⁹

In the context of the Second Article, Saarinen directs attention to one of the most remarkable Bible verses related to the "giving of Christ," John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."⁴⁰ The verse explicitly characterizes Jesus as the gift that is given. But it is not just that Jesus was given to death so those who believe in him may have eternal life. Johannine context indicates that the meaning of "gave" goes beyond death and expresses the whole sending of Jesus to the world. "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands" (John 3:35). Jesus is the primary recipient of God's love and, at the same time, he is given to the world out of God's love. Because he has received everything, he is also the one who

³⁸ In this context, Luther's concept of *fröhlicher Wechsel* becomes significantly meaningful. In Christ, it reaffirms God as the unrestrained Giver and we as the absolute receivers in relation to him. It establishes an understanding of gift giving as unrestrained love, which is not limited by the receiver ability to give anything back, to recognize what was given or even to understand the cost that was demanded in order for the gift to be given. The gift is given in complete freedom, out of unconstrained love. That freedom sets the basis for the Christian's active righteousness, because "Since there is nothing left to do *coram Deo*, the passive righteousness of faith means freedom to focus all attention on serving creation, leading us to appreciate earthly life as the sphere for our labors. The reception of passive righteousness leads us to embrace the world as the good creation of God." Arand and Biermann, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," 122.

³⁹ Because of the role of that central statement of Lutheran theology, the Apostle's Creed's Second Article is deservedly highlighted. However, a broader understanding of our relationships with God and our fellow creatures must consider the whole range of the *Deo pro nobis*, and that is exactly what makes a creedal perspective so helpful for what this research aims at accomplishing.

⁴⁰ Saarinen, *God and the Gift*, 37.

has authority to give everything. “As recipient, gift and giver, the Son sets the actions of giving and receiving in motion.”⁴¹ In John, God’s process of giving is mediated by the Son.

In John and in the Bible as a whole, the close connection between giving and sending relates God’s giftive nature also to the sending of the Holy Spirit. As one turns to the Third Article theology, the same giftive principle is explicitly manifest. That is so, because

Each of the persons of the Trinity contributes to our understanding of faith as knowledge of a self-giving God. Luther points out that the Holy Spirit first teaches us to know Christ. Apart from the Holy Spirit, we would find in Christ no more than a great teacher in the history of humankind. Because of the Holy Spirit, however, we recognize in him “my Lord and my Savior” who has made us favorable in his Father's eyes. And this knowledge of Christ and of his work reveals God to be the loving Father who shows his favor and grace toward the sinner. Christ is, as Luther argues, “a mirror of the Father's heart, apart from which we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge.” Thus, it is the common task of the triune Persons to reveal God as self-giving love.⁴²

What was won by Christ can be primarily understood as objective salvation. In his vicarious work, he fulfilled God’s will and suffered our pain and death on the cross. On the third day he rose from the dead and came out victorious over death. All that needed to be done for creation’s complete restoration to be possible became reality through Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection. However, for salvation to become subjective, in order for those gifts to become mine, they must be and are only received in faith. Faith, however, does not come from our human capacity, it is a gift of God. As stated Martin Luther, “by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him.”⁴³ Faith, therefore is a gift of the Holy Spirit given out of God’s free will. By bestowing and strengthening faith through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit brings to the believer’s life what was won by Christ, making her

⁴¹ Saarinen, *God and the Gift*, 38.

⁴² Peura, “What God Gives,” 997 (Kindle).

⁴³ Small Catechism III.6 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 355.

a member of the holy communion of saints.⁴⁴ To be a member of that family community is itself a gift. It guarantees me that I am a child of the Heavenly Father and, as such, a legitimate heir of all the richness that flows from him. It also grants me brothers and sisters who, by sharing the same faith, sustain me in words and deeds as I “fight the good fight of the faith” (1Tim. 6:12). It is also through the gift of faith that we receive “the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” Such faith encompasses all three human temporal perspectives. It points out to a past where God has been active in human history and in my personal history, adopting me through Baptism, calling me through the Gospel, feeding me through his written and sacramental Word. He now enlightens me with his gifts, makes me holy and keeps me in the true faith. He also directs my attention to the hope of the resurrected and eternal life.⁴⁵

Thus, as the Christian faith confesses its fundamentals, it does that by pointing to a God who is *pro nobis*, who manifests himself through the gifts he bestows to us. That includes our existence and the forgiveness we gracefully receive through faith in Jesus Christ. Being God sufficient in himself, all his gifts are freely given.

The (Im)Possibility of the Free Gift

The previous section stressed God’s giftive character. It did that by especially declaring him to be the ultimate giver, the one who freely and graciously gives existence, salvation and sanctification. The receivers are not able to reciprocate because there is nothing that they have

⁴⁴ Once more, Luther’s explanation of the article properly displays the passive and giftive natures of our relationship with God “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” Small Catechism III.6 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 355.

⁴⁵ Small Catechism III.5 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 355.

that was not given to them (1 Cor. 4:7), and all that they have, including their very existence, belongs to God. The section affirmed that giftedness is an essential trait of God as he presents himself to us, a trait that expresses its depth in the fact that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16). However, there is not unanimous agreement among scholars when it comes to the viability of the concept of (free) gift as we describe human reality. Therefore, it seems important to take some time to discuss such viability by focusing briefly on Jacques Derrida’s reflections on the impossibility of the gift. The purpose of this discussion is to affirm God’s giftive character in distinction from human giftive character, an understanding expressed by the TKR.

As it became clear in this dissertation’s second chapter, for Mauss there is no free gift. Even though a gift may appear free and disinterested, it always involves forces between both sides of the interaction, in a way that the practice of gift giving is restricted to the giving-receiving-reciprocating cycle. It is that cycle that creates and enforces social bindings structuring human interaction. Mauss is not the only one who questions the common Christian ideal of a free gift. Different scholars have discussed the philosophical viability of the concept and many of those discussions have challenged Christian theology. Such a criticism is not only directed to human interaction. Even when the concept is applied to God it is seen as a dominating tool, used in an attempt to win alliance or exercise power over people through dependence and a sense of obligation to reciprocate. For many, “the language of gift-giving has thus become vulnerable. Receiving a free gift means that the receiver becomes dependent of the giver.”⁴⁶

Probably, the more pervasive criticism on the giftive language, and Mauss’s theory, comes

⁴⁶ Saarinen, *God and the Gift*, 18.

from the Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida,⁴⁷ who deconstructs the very concept of gift by asserting its very impossibility. In his argument, Derrida takes the discussions on gift from a social or economic phenomenon and states it as a semantic or philosophical problem.⁴⁸ For a gift to be a genuine gift, he affirms, there must be no reciprocity, exchange or debt. That is a direct response to Mauss's thesis' main element. For Derrida, if a gift is given and a return is demanded, even implicitly, then there is no gift anymore. "For there to be a gift, *it is necessary [il faut]* that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt."⁴⁹ The one who gives must not expect something back. The very recognition of the gift by the giver annuls the gift, because recognition is, itself, something that is given back. The very recognition of the giver that he/she is giving a gift annuls the gift, because the gift is paying a self-worth recognition. For a gift to be a gift, both giver and receiver should not be aware of what is taking place, or the gift must not appear as a gift. "If he recognizes it *as* gift, if the gift *appears to him as such*, if the present is present to him *as present*, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift. Why? Because it gives back, in the place, let us say, of the thing itself, a symbolic equivalent."⁵⁰ Here, the symbolism active in Mauss's giving-receiving-reciprocating cycle *grants* Derrida ammunition to attack his compatriot's theory. Even the counter-gift that is symbolically received has the ability to annul the gift.

As one faces Derrida's criticism, an enterprise such as the one proposed by this dissertation

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2017).

⁴⁸ Saarinen, *God and the Gift*, 24.

⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, "The Time of the King," in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (NY: Routledge, 1997), 129.

⁵⁰ Derrida, "The Time of the King," 129. Because of his semantic analysis of Mauss's work, Derrida also criticizes the generalization made by the use of the word gift, which intends be a universal concept that comprehends diverse phenomena and supposedly imposes an European meaning into heterogeneous languages. Therefore, not only the concept itself is uncertain, but also its presumed comprehensive character. Derrida, "The Time of the King," 139.

could be seriously threatened. While it is not the focus of this research to engage in a lengthy dialogue with him, a brief note on his criticism is called for and can strengthen one of the dissertation's fundamental premises: that the giftive character of God is manifest, even after Fall, in his Creation.

First, we must understand that Derrida's approach to gift does not aim at nullifying its use or deny its empirically attestable existence. Even after clearly affirming his understanding of the impossibility of the gift, he recognizes that "we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it."⁵¹ It is like a reality that, even while not palpable, is somehow imprisoned in our mind. Or we can talk about the idea of a free gift as a transcendental drive that, even though it does not find rational viability in a materialistic view of reality, pushes us toward something or someplace that we know is there, somewhere. In that way, Derrida calls our attention to something that is deeper than Mauss was able to comprehend or even to identify. That understanding shows us that

Derrida's interest to the phenomenon of the gift is not... nihilistic. On the contrary, the philosopher is focusing on it because the gap between the common-sense idea of the gift and the impossibility of its precise definition points toward something more general and philosophically important.⁵²

Impossibility is a human trait. Because our existence is characterized by limitedness, which manifests itself in the most varied forms, our experiences and the way we understand them are imprisoned in our bounded nature. Such limitation is then intensified by sin. Hence, as we reason about free gift, a reality only possible as a divine act, "one can think, desire, and say only the impossible, according to the measureless measure [*mesure sans mesure*] of the impossible."⁵³ The impossibility that characterizes human nature can only find real existence in that which is

⁵¹ Derrida, "The Time of the King," 141.

⁵² Saarinen, *God and the Gift*, 25.

⁵³ Derrida, "The Time of the King," 141.

not human, that which is beyond human, whose very nature is in ontological opposition to human nature, a Being whose reality is not characterized by limitedness, but by self-plenitude. Therefore, “while Derrida insists that the gift is impossible, he also maintains that it is not thereby unthinkable. It is, instead, a figure of the impossible, a figure that might also bear the name of God.”⁵⁴ Only a Being that is full in itself can freely give in the most profound sense of the expression. Only the One who needs nothing can give expecting nothing back.

Creation, because it is limited, resembles God’s free-giftive character in a limited way. Creation, because is limited, needs providence and is not sustainable by itself. Creation, because it expresses God’s relational character, displays an existence where each created entity gives, receives and reciprocates according to its nature. Creation, because it is fallen, frequently turns its giftive character into a tool of domination, as it is the nature of sin to twist what is God given. Therefore, it is desirable and necessary to affirm the ideal concept of free gift present only in the divine and manifest in humans, according to their nature as creatures, as a gift of God. That is so because that rationale, as it is the nature of the words that God gives to us, directs our lives towards God’s original plan to its creation. In summary, one can argue that Derrida’s criticism actually sustains the concept of free gift, at least from a theological perspective. The view that the gift nullifies itself is a philosophical way to talk about a theological belief. It is a reading of reality that identifies sin and its perverse nature. It is a reading of giftedness that finds perfection only in a being that is not created. It is a testimony of our limitedness that clamors for a fulfilling Giver.

⁵⁴ Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God As Gift : Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University, 2001), 184.

The Active Righteousness and Its Giftive Character

As stated above, the active righteousness in the TKR deals with our relationship *coram mundo*, called horizontal righteousness. It encompasses humanity as a whole and is structured on the doctrine of creation.⁵⁵

The sixteenth-century reformers struggled with questions of human ontology, recognizing man's condition as one of sin and despair. We are creatures, and only the one who is Creator can make real statements about our beings. Because sin separates us from God, it also separates us from our very being. Therefore, anthropology was seen theologically. In that context, Luther and Melancthon developed their thinking in the framework of the TKR. The passive righteousness "allowed the reformers without qualification to extol the gospel by removing human activity as a basis for justification before God."⁵⁶ The active righteousness

clarified the relation of the human creature to the world in which God had placed him or her to live a life of active righteousness for the well-being of human community and the preservation of the environment. The two kinds of righteousness, however, are inseparable from one another. The passive righteousness of faith provides the core identity of a person; the active righteousness of love flows from that core identity out into the world.⁵⁷

As God comes to us in Jesus Christ and reestablishes our relationship with God through the undeserved gift of forgiveness of sins we receive from him, he reestablishes the meaning of our lives, the essence of our beings. This is how God deals with his beloved creatures, and this is where we mirror our lives as we live in this created reality. "Our relationship to God shapes our relationship to creation,"⁵⁸ therefore, Christians cannot separate their active life in this world

⁵⁵ William W. Schumacher, "Civic Participation by Churches and Pastors: An Essay on Two Kinds of Righteousness," *Concordia Journal* 30, no. 3 (July 2004): 166–67.

⁵⁶ Kolb and Arand, *The Genius*, 234 (Kindle).

⁵⁷ Kolb and Arand, *The Genius*, 234 (Kindle).

⁵⁸ Kolb and Arand, *The Genius*, 303 (Kindle).

from the undeserved grace they receive in Christ and through Christ. Who we are in Christ becomes the basis of how we act as stewards of God's creation.

To be a human being as God created us to be, a perfect human specimen, involves being totally passive, as a new born child of God, and totally active, as a responsible neighbor to other people and to the whole of God's world.⁵⁹

A creedal theology allows us to speak positively about life in this created world. It denies the Platonic dichotomy between spirit and body and affirms that a life committed to our embodied reality is not only desirable but is part of the Creator's design for our existence. We are creatures in a created world, and that defines our status in it. We live in relationship with other creatures. Since God placed human beings as his representatives over creation in order for them to exercise authority in a careful way, he also granted them reason and creativity, among many other gifts, in order to do so. Therefore, humans fulfill their identity and *telos* when they use all the gifts they have received to promote the well-being of each other and their fellow non-human creatures. That is God's will for their lives. In their horizontal relationships, humans are responsible before God and before their fellow creatures for what they do and what they do not do. Humans become righteous in that dimension as they act accordingly to what they have been created for and to what they have received, which defines that dimension as one of active righteousness.

Thus, we can articulate the horizontal righteousness with a giftive understanding of our existence. We reach our *telos* as we exercise in love the authority we have received and share the gifts we have received in order to promote the well-being of the whole of God's creation. All creation's entities have received gifts according to their nature. By giving according to what they have received, they promote creation's well-being and fulfill their *telos* as God's creatures. That

⁵⁹ Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 280 (Kindle).

is true for non-human entities, but it especially applies to those who were put in a special relationship to God, to creation and to their kind: human beings.

Naturally, discussion ensues on whether that understanding applies equally to Christians and non-Christians.⁶⁰ It is true that we live in a fallen world and that the harmony created by God has been destroyed by a self-centered will to dominate and exploit. However, the divine will that was present before sin is still operative in our postlapsarian reality in what we can call laws of creation.⁶¹ Here, law can be understood as existence as God created it to be.⁶² Even though they are obscured by sin, those laws still serve as curb to humankind, restricting the destructive

⁶⁰ Confronting the criticism that the Two Kinds of Righteousness equates the morality of believers and non-believers, Joel Biermann develops the concept of Three Kinds of Righteousness, which is based on material extracted both from Luther and Melanchthon. His work deals with the perceived differences between Luther and Melanchthon as they refer to the Two Kinds of Righteousness and is built on their recognition of a necessary distinction between two kinds of this-worldly righteousness. In Biermann's own words, a Three Kinds of Righteousness paradigm "has the added benefit of bringing greater clarity to the latter (righteousness before humanity) by accenting the distinction between the *coram mundo* righteousness of believers and that of unbelievers." Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 126. In agreement with Biermann's distinction of two kinds of this-worldly righteousness, the present work comprehends that from a Lutheran point of view there is an inwardly difference between believers' and unbelievers' good works. However, it is my position that this research will benefit by keeping with the Two Kinds of Righteousness paradigm. A university's call is essentially connected to the horizontal righteousness. My paper deals with the reality of a confessional university that is highly pluralist in its performance. Among other things, that means that the Lutheran faith is not a well-established and pervading guiding paradigm of the institution (different departments of the institution operate under principles that are highly critical of the Christian understanding of reality). The difference between those works performed in faith and those performed outside of faith can only be discerned spiritually. Biermann himself prefers not to get into the details of how the Two Kinds of Righteousness connect in the Christian's life, in the intersection between vertical and horizontal righteousness. Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 131. The research deals with inter-religious dialogue and the main common ground for conversation between Christians and non-Christians is the promotion of well-being. I believe that a distinction on the externals of the matter can bring un-necessary confusion and/or tension to the dialogue. With that consideration, a two-dimensional distinction is a more straight-forward paradigm for this specific research.

⁶¹ Reflecting on Phillip Melanchthon's philosophical background, Schulz affirms that for the reformer "there was a congruency between the *lex naturalis* and the *mens divina*. Natural law is God's law, used by him to order civil life. Philosophy is thus an explanation of the laws of God, as far as reason understands law, particularly the second table of the divine law." Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Two Kinds of Righteousness and Moral Philosophy: Confessio Augustana XVIII, Philipp Melanchthon, and Martin Luther," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January 2009): 30. Due to today's associations of the expression *natural law* with Mother Nature, Kolb and Arand suggest that we speak about *laws of creation* instead of *natural laws*. Besides avoiding non-intended connotations, such a suggestion is welcomed because it fits with what has been stated in connection with the doctrine of creation. Another advantage of using *laws of creation* is that "because it is grounded in creation, this law of creation is no secret. In some sense it is universally accessible and applicable. The mind can grasp its rightness for human life. For this reason natural law provides a vital point of contact for conversation about morals and works between Christians and non-Christians." Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 64–65.

⁶² Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 90.

consequences of a nature that is now estranged from its Creator. In a God-human relationship, those laws accuse and condemn.⁶³ In a creature-creature relationship, they preserve God's creation from the pervasive powers of sin. Besides that, gifts such as reason and creativity are freely given by God to all, in a way that non-Christians can significantly contribute to the most varied areas of interaction in our horizontal dimension.⁶⁴ In other words, since those are external works, they can be accomplished apart from the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work, an understanding present in the Apology.⁶⁵ However, as one is regenerated in Christ by grace through faith, the active righteousness is sought for a diametrically different motivation.⁶⁶ It is not concerned with self-justification, but it seeks to freely give because it is free from the accusing and condemning power of the law. Along with that, the Holy Spirit inhabits and sanctifies the believer, bringing to his life "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23a), blessing other people's lives with these gifts.⁶⁷ Therefore, in our worldly relationships, Christian and non-Christian giftive deeds look externally the same and accomplish the same good to others. However, these deeds flow from different spirits. "Christians enjoy the advantage of being rightly related to the Creator, enabling them to live virtuously *coram mundo* with greater intentionality and understanding about what it is that they

⁶³ It is important to say that as one considers a God-Christian relationship, "while the Law continues to accuse and threaten us because of our sinful conscience, the Law does not only threaten and accuse our conscience. It is also a delight because it shows us what God wants us to do, and it echoes the delight of our new hearts!" Timothy E. Saleska, "The Two Kinds of Righteousness! What's a Preacher to Do?" *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 2 (April 2007): 143-44.

⁶⁴ Kolb, "God Calling," 6.

⁶⁵ Arand, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," 422.

⁶⁶ Schulz, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," 35.

⁶⁷ It also can be added that as believers perform their "walks of life," as Luther usually called the different roles we hold in service and care of others, "by virtue of their Baptisms, Christians are given the task of confessing the name of Christ within every walk of life." Charles Arand, "The Ministry of the Church in Light of the Two Kinds of Righteousness," *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 4 (October 2007): 346.

should be doing.”⁶⁸

John Barclay’s Assessment of Gift as it Relates to Luther’s Two Kinds of Righteousness

Marcel Mauss’s work prompted other scholars to study the gift metaphor. Among those who dedicated themselves to theologically reflect on the phenomena of gift-giving, John Barclay stands tall with his massive work *Paul and The Gift*. Aware of the giftive character of God’s revelation in our life, John Barclay’s book explores the power of giftive language by emphasizing the character of God’s gift to us revealed in Paul. Even though Martin Luther is not the main character of Barclay’s reflection, he does take time to work on how Paul’s giftive language impacted Lutheran theology. When Barclay deals with Galatians, for example, he makes reference to Luther, affirming that the reformer “articulates his configuration of the Gospel as *the incongruous gift of God in Christ*” where Christ is neither Judge nor Lawgiver, but the Savior who freely bestows “*his righteousness on (permanently) unworthy sinners.*”⁶⁹ Since Paul’s use of gift took place in a pluralist context, Barclay’s work relates to our dissertation’s main topic and helpfully expresses how a giftive metaphor is used in Paul both in passive and active manners. Even though he doesn’t use the vocabulary of TKR, he does substantiate its Pauline basis.

Focusing on the specific context of Paul, Barclay’s study demonstrates that in the Greco-Roman world gift practices valued the character of the receiver. Since the practice of gift-giving was essential to the creation of social ties, gifts were not generally designed as a one-way donation. Social rules put the receiver under the obligation of a return. Because gifts created ties and a return was expected, givers generally cared that gifts were given in consideration of the

⁶⁸ Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 157.

⁶⁹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 340.

receiver's worth.⁷⁰ Barclay, then, identifies a disruptive concept of gift/grace present in Paul's letters.

Barclay's main sources of reflection on Paul are his letters to the Galatians and Romans. In those letters, God's grace and its consequent supreme gift to humanity has a Christological content. Christ gave himself for our sins (Gal. 1:4), therefore God's supreme gift is the Christ-gift, or more specifically, the Christ event, his death and resurrection. In that event, God was revealing and giving himself. His ultimate act of beneficence is a world-changing event that takes place in the death and resurrection of Christ. That transformative gift is given with no connection to any kind of worth present in the receiver.⁷¹ For Barclay, it is exactly that incongruous giving without conditions of God's gift that makes Paul's preaching so innovative and creative. In Paul's missional context, it is that character that breaks with the need of any Jewish cultural capital or religious practice for the Gentiles. It detaches God's grace from previous configurations of a religious life that, connected to Judaism, would become a stumbling block in the formation of non-Jewish Christian communities. Paul's message frees the reception of the gift from any kind of human values. "Announcing the incongruous gift enacted in Christ, [Paul] is at odds with the normative conventions that govern human systems of value."⁷² He breaks with the contemporary assumption on gift and specifically with Jewish comprehension of ethnic worth, expanding the granting of the gift to every people despite their ethnicity and cultural capital. For Barclay, Paul's interpretation of the Christ-gift and his concept of gift as incongruous gift took shape in his mission outside the Jewish community.

His [Paul's] Gentile mission not only embodied but also shaped his thought.
Theology and practice reinforced one another in a protracted dialectical relationship

⁷⁰ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 184.

⁷¹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 352.

⁷² Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 355.

that made his apostolic calling to the Gentiles central to his version of the good news.⁷³

Therefore, Barclay's thesis is that in Paul we have an emphasis on the incongruous aspect of gift giving practice. In a society that valued the worth of the receiver, Paul presented a gift that was given without any condition. In that sense, Paul's semantic use of gift in his letters is disruptive, because it questions common understandings of the practice. Such use was necessary with the formation of innovative communities in light of a Christian faith that was expanding beyond Jewish cultural/religious boundaries. All can receive the gift and the giving of the gift occurs without any cultural, religious, or ethnic demand.

Historical context is then recognized as an essential force as one configures the modes of the sharing of the Good News. According to Barclay, in Paul's pluralist milieu, the Good News had to take on contours that would make it more suitable to address the specific characteristics of his audience. Those contours helped him to break through cultural barriers, valuing human plurality without neglecting the distinctive characters of the Christian faith. That move enabled him to create innovative communities that were in continuity with the grace of God and in discontinuity with limiting cultural/religious systems. "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Historical context is the driving force of this dissertation, which faces the challenge of a context similar and different from that of Paul's. Similar in the sense that is pluralist, but while Christianity was an intriguing unknown faith for Paul's audience, the university audience bears a suspicious look towards Christianity. In the academy, Christian history is usually construed as one of abuses and oppression. In such a context, a giftive paradigm has the power to break

⁷³ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 361.

through preconceived ideas that work as barriers in the inter-religious dialogue at the Lutheran University in Brazil.

Barclay's thesis reinforces what is the main idea affirmed here: the relationship that God establishes with us is giftive in nature. Freely, gracefully, undeservedly, God gives us our very existence and sustains that existence physically and spiritually. From the nature of that relationship, flows the giftive character of our active righteousness.

For Barclay's reading of Paul, even though God's gift of Christ is an incongruous gift, it has as consequence the formation of a community that is an expression of the gift (or, of the gifts bestowed by the Spirit). "The new creation in Christ presses toward the formation and flourishing of a community in which the truth of God's self-giving in Christ is expressed in loving relations."⁷⁴ Therefore, Barclay understands that in Paul the Christ-gift can be unconditioned (free of prior conditions regarding the recipient) without also being unconditional (free of expectations that the recipient will offer some "return"). This paradoxical understanding is aligned with the Lutheran paradoxical affirmation of the TKR. The grace that is passively received by us from God must not be confused with passiveness in good works or indifference before people's needs. God's gift is freely given in Christ through the Spirit, and the love that motivates God's gift giving compels us (1 Cor. 5:14) to live as blessings to those that surround us, cultivating works of love, giving to others what we have freely received. "Such social practice does not create or elicit the gift, either past or present; but it is so much integral to the gift that without it the Christ-gift simply ceases to have existential reality."⁷⁵

That understanding emphasizes the work of the campus chaplaincy as an embodied faith,

⁷⁴ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 439.

⁷⁵ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 440.

which consciously promotes peoples' well-being and the cultivation of good habits and virtues. The kingdom of God is not detached from bodily practice, therefore, "the new habitus of the believer—the new perceptions, goals, dispositions, and values—can become effective only in practice."⁷⁶ This understanding thus undergirds the Lutheran doctrine of the TKR as used in this dissertation.⁷⁷

Conclusion

This dissertation advocates the use of the *giftive metaphor* as an avenue on how ULBRA's campus pastors can work on inter-religious dialogue in the university's pluralist context. The assessment of the dissertation's proposal through the TKR has strengthened the metaphor's theological foundation and at the same time qualified its use from a Lutheran perspective. It did that by:

(1) Affirming an essential character of the *giftive metaphor*, which is the relational nature of our human existence. The TKR deals with our humanity which is expressed through the relationships that are established in our lives. The ideal of those relationships stands on gift giving and receiving. In that way, it clarifies the connection between the giftive paradigm and the Christian concept of human identity as it also discerns the purpose, the *telos* of our life. The TKR is a helpful tool in that endeavor because it deals with what it means to be human. In other words, it is the nature of our existence as human beings to be in relation with others, sharing with them according to what we have received. Both the giftive metaphor and the TKR affirm that.⁷⁸

(2) Creating space in Lutheran theology for the talk about gifts of love (good works for the

⁷⁶ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 516.

⁷⁷ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 518–19.

⁷⁸ Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 21.

sake of the world) in a positive way. The TKR allows us to talk positively about Christian life within the created world without undermining the doctrine of justification.⁷⁹ The TKR focus on what it means to be human, placing our lives before the Creator and before the creation, which makes it appropriate for what this research wants to accomplish.⁸⁰

(3) Affirming the theological relevance of the giftive paradigm. Essentially, the TKR describes relationships where gifts are given and received. It is based on the affirmation of God as the ultimate and unrestrained giver and articulates our identity and *telos* as established by that first relationship. Our existence is a total gift, which makes the giftive paradigm something intrinsic to it.⁸¹

(4) Affirming the uniqueness of the gift of God's grace received in Christ as the most important and distinctive element brought by Christianity to an inter-religious dialogue. As Christians approach inter-religious interactions, it is fundamental for them to be aware of the distinctive contribution they bring to the dialogue. Empirically, that is not based on externals, since even Luther was "willing to grant that at times the godless fulfill the second table of the Decalogue so brilliantly that they indeed at times appear holier than Christians."⁸² Christians' distinctive gift is the grace revealed by God in Jesus Christ. It is the power of God that transforms lives.

(5) Affirming the value of the contributions made to the world by non-believers, many of which are gifts to Christians and must be accepted as such. In a context that is pluralistic and that holds to a worldview that demands pluralism, being able to appreciate other's contributions to

⁷⁹ Arand, "Two Kinds of Righteousness as a Framework," 418.

⁸⁰ Arand and Biermann, "Why the Two Kinds of Righteousness?" 123.

⁸¹ Kolb, "God and His Human Creatures," 172.

⁸² Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 56.

the task of a university can greatly assist the establishment of relationships that create personal and, consequently, meaningful opportunities to talk about the specifics of each religion.

(6) Making my research more attractive to Brazilian Lutheran theologians, since it deals with Luther's and Phillip Melancthon's texts/theology. More than that, it contributes to the spreading of the TKR as fundamental understanding that permeates Lutheran theology, but is hardly addressed in my Synod, the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil.

(7) Enhancing the value of Lutheranism within the academy, especially through TKR's understanding of active righteousness. Just as that dimension of our relationships stands on the doctrine of creation, so does the Lutheran understanding of vocation.⁸³ Vocation is a powerful concept in a university's context. It connects Lutheran theological thought with the university's this-worldly character, fostering the social importance of our professions that counters today's individualistic drives. It also points to the dignity of every profession, affirming their value before God as different spheres of activities that follows the laws of creation⁸⁴ as they promote the well-being of creatures.⁸⁵ In addition, it gives support to the university's very essence, which is being a community where the competencies and abilities necessary for excellence in the exercise of different vocations are developed.⁸⁶

⁸³ Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 148.

⁸⁴ Kolb, "God Calling," 6.

⁸⁵ Arand, "Ministry of the Church," 348.

⁸⁶ Another positive aspect connected to the option for the TKR is that the doctrine enhances the value of Lutheranism within the academy, especially because of the TKR's developments on the active righteousness. Just like that dimension of our relationships stands on the Doctrine of Creation, so does the Lutheran understanding of vocation (Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 148.). Our active righteousness takes form as we live out our vocations, acting accordingly to the calls we have as parents, children, faculty, student, co-worker, member of a local community. Vocation is a powerful concept in an university's context. It suitably connects Lutheran theological thought with the university's this-worldly character, sustaining an understanding of the social importance of our professions that questions today's individualistic drives. It also points out to the dignity of every profession, affirming their equal value before God as different spheres of activities that follow the laws of Creation (Kolb, "God Calling," 6.) as they promote the well-being of creatures. Besides that, it gives support to the university's very

(9) Distinguishing the Holy Spirit's justifying and sanctifying activities, which take place through the means of grace connected to God's Word, from the blessings God displays over all creatures as a consequence of his benevolent nature. This distinction is to qualify what gifts we give and what gifts we receive as Christians from other religions.

So far, I have described the research's question context, directed our attention to the *giftive metaphor* as prominent tool to address the challenges generated by that context and, in this last chapter, qualified that tool through the TKR's lenses. It is now time to more directly demonstrate how giftive practices can take place at ULBRA's campuses as its campus pastors interact with people of other faiths.

essence, which is being a community where the competences and abilities necessary for excellence in the exercise of different vocations are developed. That is connected to the understanding that if a righteousness of work or active righteousness is achieved by human ability, educational institutions have much to offer in that endeavor (Schumacher, "Civic Participation by Churches and Pastors," 176.).

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ESSAY ON THE CHRISTIAN GIFTIVE DIALOGUE WITH AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIOSITY

The dissertation's first chapter described today's religious pluralism, arguing that Modernity's secularization project did not put an end to religion, but prompted more individualistic expressions of faith and, consequently, promoted pluralism. Through the chapter, the context to be assessed took a more localized shape as, by the use of Robert Benne's typology, the dissertation argued for characterizing ULBRA as an *intentionally pluralist* institution. In this highly pluralist context, ULBRA's campus pastors serve as God's ministers, being the most visible and operative expression of ULBRA's very specific faith. The situation described points out the need to develop or systematize approaches that can inform the exercise of their ministry in that context. While not limiting the possible approaches to one option, the dissertation's second chapter argued for the use of the *giftive metaphor* as a tool that promotes an embodied presence of the Christian faith in the confessional university. Its focus was on Muck and Adeney's *giftive metaphor* proposal, advocating it as a paradigm for how Lutheran campus pastors might encounter pluralism at ULBRA. In its third chapter, the dissertation analyzed the giftive paradigm through the lens of the Lutheran distinction known as the Two Kinds of Righteousness, which was used to sustain and promote the use of the *giftive metaphor* in a Lutheran academic context.

Now, the dissertation's fourth and final chapter will exemplify how that giftive dialogue can take place by making use of two distinct religious traditions: Christianity and Afro-Brazilian religiosity. Muck and Adeney's *spiral of knowledge* will be used as an approaching tool in order to identify the gifts Christians (campus pastors) can receive from and give to Afro-Brazilian practitioners. In order to "plow the soil" to that end, the dissertation will first briefly reflect on

two aspects of campus ministry.

On Campus Ministry at ULBRA

Before I directly deal with the specific case of the relationship between Christians and Afro-Brazilian religiosity practitioners, I first want to highlight two concepts related to the campus ministry which, in my opinion, are directly connected to a giftive approach. The brief reflection on them presented below will both indicate the shape of that ministry as well as foster its intrinsic giftive characteristics. The first concept, *ministry of presence*, will highlight the relational character of the campus ministry. The second concept, which will relate *vocation and gift*, will direct the campus pastor's attention to his flock's needs, fostering the intentional character of the *ministry of presence*. Such a move is related to Muck and Adeney's *spiral of knowledge*. It seeks to acquire knowledge from the one we want to relate with, evaluate that knowledge and seek to better understand what gifts we can receive from that relationship as well as what gifts will be more significant to the people of a specific religious culture.

The Ministry of Presence

In the closing chapter of *Christ and Culture*, Niebuhr reflects on how relativistic our solutions to the questions raised by those concepts are. That conclusion relates to Muck and Adeney's reflection on the *spiral of knowledge* as they highlight the potentialities but also the limitations of our ability to make sense of the world that surrounds us. Even though this dissertation does not intend to present a final answer to the questions raised by those who are concerned with how the Christian faith should relate to human culture, it joins their reflections in order to contribute to the understanding of that unavoidable relationship.

God's most remarkable gift to humanity took place in Jesus' incarnation. As his birth was announced to his parents, he was referred to as the Emmanuel: *God is with us*. That is a powerful

testimony of a personal and relational God who wants to be with his creation and, through his active presence, display his goodness through innumerable gifts. As it was argued before, Jesus' very presence among us is itself a present – it is God giving himself, and his work among us has won for us the ultimate gift: new life through God's free gift of forgiveness and salvation.

Since we cannot give back to God anything that is not already his (Ps. 50), we respond to his goodness by glorifying his name because of the wonderful things he has made among us. Since we cannot give back to God anything that is not already his, he directs our lives to his creation, calling each one of us to be active representatives of his blessings, giving accordingly to what we have received. The word *representative* bears in it the word *present*, which can point out both to the act of being present and to the nature of that presence as being itself a present, a gift. In other words, we Christians answer God's call of being his representatives as we relate to people, as we walk with them in the walks of life and as that walk displays the gifts we have received. It is a relational call. The importance of that *representational* perspective is displayed as Jesus, making use of two metaphors, calls his followers to be a *present* through *presence*: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13,14).

Those verses are part of the Sermon of the Mount, and follow the Beatitudes. The words of comfort and confidence at the beginning of the sermon put Christian lives in an intense relationship to the world. In that relationship, they may face persecution and injustice, but will also share mercy, are promoters of peace, and display God's gifts to his creation. However, as challenging as our cultural context may seem, the Christian faith does not take us away from it, putting us into a kind of cultural vacuum. Quite the opposite. Christians do not make a decision between being in the world and not being in the world, but between being in the world in a meaningful manner fulfilling their call and being in the world in a meaningless manner denying

the identity established by Jesus' words: "You are salt. You are light." Even though sometimes we may feel like aliens in a world that distances itself from its Creator, our "only concern is how to be in the world, in what form, for what purpose."¹

The concepts of salt and light imply the state of being present and through that presence giving according to our nature, or in other words, to what we have received as creatures of God. If salt is not salty, "it is no longer good for anything." Yet for salt to salt, it cannot be contained in a box of selfishness, inwardly directed to itself or its own institution, but it must be put out in order to change, to preserve, and to heal. In the same way, light only reaches its purpose when it is seen and makes things visible. It is not possible to be salt if there is no contact, if there is no relationship. It is not possible to be light if we hide ourselves, and also hide our gifts. We can make a difference in people's lives only by connecting to them, by being present in their lives. That is the basis of the expression *ministry of presence*.

This *ministry of presence* is a simple but powerful perspective of the campus ministry, especially considering the challenges and opportunities of a pluralist context such as ULBRA's. In a significant way, the pastoral work in an educational institution, at least in my personal experience, displays a different dynamic than that experienced in a parish ministry. In general, IELB's congregations in Brazil greatly rely on their pastors for them to lead or, at least, be a significant actor in the processes and events that take place in or are promoted by the church. The congregation's main activities, such as, services, catechesis, and affinity-group reunions usually count on the pastor's presence to be fully operational. In the decision-making process, even though agreement is not necessarily achieved, the pastor's words usually have the space to be

¹ Stanley Hauervas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdom, 1989), 42.

spoken and are usually highly respected. He is a leading figure of the life of the congregation through what he does and says. On the other hand, schools and universities operate in a much more interconnected, but pluralistic way. Many are the reasons for that, but one can consider the high demands of a competitive market, specific governmental regulations and their implications on the internal organization, the very nature of the educational institution as it gathers many learning groups, the many areas of expertise that are professionally joined together in the same project, and so on. Since ULBRA is not a religious institution, and also because of its diversity and internal complexity and external conjuncture, the campus pastor becomes one voice among thousands. That means that many decisions will be made, many activities will take place, and many goals will be established and accomplished with or without his direct involvement. If the campus pastor, somehow, wants to *confessionally* impact those decisions, activities and goals, he must interact with people as they carry out their responsibilities, whatever their position at the university is.

The *ministry of presence* is also related to the very nature of the pastoral office as seen in the *shepherd and sheep* metaphor, which was embodied by our Good Shepherd. His ministry embraced all the sheep of Israel. He was among them, talked to them and held them. He even smelled like them because of all the time they spent together. For the campus pastor, his Judea is the university campus. As Jesus did in his ministry, he must walk around, go places, meet people, join conversations, take part in reunions and events, speak when it is time to speak, listen when it is time to listen, enjoy people's welcoming, sorrow in love their inattention and resistance, rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. He takes the risks involved in any relationship; in short, he is present in their lives as they walk their walk of life.

Vocation: The Place Where Needs and Gifts Meet²

A Christian university's purpose is significantly connected to the horizontal righteousness of TKR. Quality education is a precious gift an institution can offer in order to develop and promote people's talents. The university does that by creating a learning community where diverse gifts are exchanged and through that exchange knowledge is advanced. Along with the advancement of knowledge and tutoring of techniques, ULBRA cultivates values and principles, helping to build people's character. At the same time, it reaches out to its surrounding community's needs, learning from their experiences and understandings and promoting their well-being through the university's extension programs. In that way, ULBRA gives gifts to individuals and through them to society, expanding its action beyond its confessional boundaries, entering into a highly pluralistic context, that of higher education in Brazil. Therefore, ULBRA serves those who come to it but also moves towards those who are not enrolled. According to its nature and as part of its call, ULBRA gives gifts and creates relational ties where gifts are exchanged. Through the relationships the university promotes social justice.

As a pastor becomes part of that enterprise, his call as a Christian into the horizontal righteousness' endeavor is heightened by his call as a campus pastor. The locational character of his vocation directs and shapes his efforts. He then becomes an agent of justice to those who are part of the community he serves. Therefore, the characteristics of that community will give form to his endeavors in the horizontal righteousness dimension of his life.

In the article *The Human Face of Justice*,³ Leopoldo Sánchez advocates for a neighbor-oriented approach to those who aim at fulfilling their vocation in this world. He theologically

² Tom Christenson, *Who Needs a Lutheran College?* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2011), 10.

³ Leopoldo A. Sánchez, "The Human Face of Justice: Reclaiming the Neighbor in Law, Vocation, and Justice Talk," *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 117–32.

defines justice (the same word used both in Portuguese and Spanish for *righteousness*) as the “righteousness of the [God’s] law.”⁴ Therefore, *doing justice* is to live accordingly to that law as we relate to humankind (horizontal righteousness), with *law* being the expression of God’s will for creation. Sánchez then explains that God’s word gives us the *that* of justice (its content), represented by the Decalogue, but Scriptures leave open the *how* of justice, “its lived forms or expressions, which indeed are manifold and depend on our particular contexts of service where actual neighbors are cared for.”⁵ The *that* of justice is bound to God’s word, while the *how* of justice is bound to the neighbor and his historical context. Therefore, Sánchez suggests that a reflection on *doing justice*, on living according to God’s will as we relate to other human beings, must focus on the specific needs of the actual neighbors we are called (vocation) to serve. In that sense, the way we live our vocation must be contextually flexible and sensitive because we are called to serve people in all their diversity and in their continual movement in life.⁶

As we consider the specific situation of campus pastors, one of the essentials of the exercise of their vocation is *to know* in order *to act*.⁷ They will take into serious account the person they serve, identifying what it means to do justice to that specific person in that specific context. They will consider, among other things, the fact that people come from diverse religious cultures. That implies that those people experience the world in different ways and a neighbor centered approach is necessary as one seeks to do justice to them according to their specific needs. In order to picture that understanding, one could consider the situation where to do justice to the practitioner of an African-Brazilian religion may be not to sing the second stanza of the

⁴ Sánchez, “Human Face of Justice,” 117.

⁵ Sánchez, “Human Face of Justice,” 118.

⁶ Sánchez, “Human Face of Justice,” 119.

⁷ Sánchez, “Human Face of Justice,” 124.

official anthem of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, giving her the gift of public empathy.⁸

It is the contention of this dissertation that the campus pastors' unavoidable interaction with people from different faiths or no faith at all is better dealt with in a giftive/dialogical way. Since matters of faith usually become sources of tension among people from different religions and maturity in the relationship is necessary in order to deal with such matters, the initial and most common ground for conversation between Christians and non-Christians is active righteousness, expressed in this section through the broad concept of the promotion of justice. As we recognize the value of the active righteousness in Lutheran theology, we both foster acts of love which are aligned with the giftive character of Christian faith and also generate opportunities for constructive interaction and meaningful witness.

The Spiral of Knowledge: Afro-Brazilian Religiosity as a Sample Case Study

Committed to the Christian faith and concerned with cultural sensitiveness, Muck and Adeney argue that a giftive attitude must consider what they call the *spiral of knowledge*. With it they aim at fostering Christianity's knowledge, recognizing the limitations of human understanding, and valuing the knowledge and history of cultures not directly influenced by the Christian ethos. Through the *spiral of knowledge*, we can deepen our knowledge of ourselves and the knowledge of the other religious cultures we are relating with. In the process, we are invited to reflect on our own experience, meet the other religious culture with an open attitude, acquire

⁸ People from Rio Grande do Sul are known for their patriotic posture related to their state, somewhat analogous to how Texans feel about Texas. Because of this, the *gaúchos* (people born in Rio Grande do Sul) proudly sing their state anthem wherever they have a chance to, including the official ceremonies that take place at the university. One line of the second stanza of the anthem says "Povo que não tem virtude acaba por ser escravo" ("People who have no virtue end up being slaves"). That line aims at representing *gaúchos'* virtuous fight for freedom. However, what does that line mean to those who bear the religious tradition of peoples who were hunted down at their homes, kidnapped from their land, enslaved in a foreign nation and fought the same war? That question does not come naturally to a white Christian pastor. It demands the learning that comes from his relationship with those he serves. The empathy that comes from knowledge about the person's history may generate opportunity for a conversation about the freedom we all have because of Christ's virtues.

knowledge from that experience, evaluate that knowledge on the basis of Christian understandings, and, finally, integrate new ideas and insights with our original understandings.⁹ It is important to take the culture/religion for what it is, because the assessment of a different religion with an open attitude amplifies knowledge acquisition opportunities.¹⁰ In inter-religious dialogue, such a move is necessary if one wants to more properly understand another religious culture in order to richly interact with it.

As one considers Muck and Adeney's *spiral of knowledge*, this dissertation's first three chapters worked on delineating different aspects of ULBRA's campus pastors' *context, pretext* and *text*. It is now time to acquire knowledge from the one we want to relate with, evaluate that knowledge and seek to better understand what gifts we can receive from that relationship as well as what gifts will be significant to that religious culture. Therefore, the present chapter aims at exemplifying the use of the *giftive metaphor* in the relationships established through the pastoral work that takes place at ULBRA's pluralistic context. It will do that by approaching one of the most well-known Brazilian religious expressions: Afro-Brazilian cults.

Since it is not the dissertation's goal to present a comprehensive assessment of all the possible exchanges that can take place as Christians dialogue with practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religiosity, the chapter will focus on a historical approach to that religious manifestation and, from that presentation, argue for what will be called *the gift of interpellation* as an example of the gifts we can receive as Christians of people from other religions.

⁹ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 4685 (Kindle).

¹⁰ Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 5921 (Kindle).

On Receiving and Giving Gifts

The African Diaspora

Afro-Brazilian religiosity displays many religious expressions throughout the territory, which can be partly explained by the diversity of African peoples that constituted it as well as by the cultural re-invention that characterized their coming to America. Therefore, one cannot properly understand the role of that religiosity for today's African descendants without considering the phenomenon that amalgamated Brazil's and a significant part of Africa's history.

The first three centuries of the Modern Age experienced, among many other transforming events, the largest diaspora of human history—the African Diaspora.¹¹ That expression characterizes the forced migration of millions of Africans to different continents, but most of them to North, South and Central America. The maritime expansion that stretched Europe's domination throughout the world propelled many changes in the economic configuration of the West. As colonizers sought both to guarantee their dominion on the new territories and explore the riches those territories could produce, enormous amounts of land needed to be transformed

¹¹ The word diaspora, which could also be understood as dispersion, refers to the involuntary or encouraged scattering of populations from their indigenous land to different geographical areas. Even though the term is usually connected to the Jewish dispersion, which was a significant event in history, the African diaspora becomes a fundamental topic to Brazilians because of its profound impact on our history. The words of Joaquim Nabuco (1849–1910), a prominent Brazilian abolitionist, depict, if only in a limited way, the African importance to Brazil's history: "For three hundred years the African has been the main instrument of the occupation and maintenance of our territory by the European, and his descendants mingle with our people. Where he has not yet arrived, the country presents the aspect with which it surprised its first discoverers. All that which means man's struggle with nature, conquest of the soil for housing and culture, roads and buildings, cane fields and coffee plantations, the house of the master and the slave quarters, churches and schools, customs and post offices, telegraphs and railways, academies and hospitals, everything, absolutely everything that exists in the country, as a result of manual labor, as employment of capital, as accumulation of wealth, is nothing more than a gratuitous donation of the race that works for the one that makes it work." Original text: "Há trezentos anos que o africano tem sido o principal instrumento da ocupação e da manutenção do nosso território pelo europeu, e que os seus descendentes se misturam com o nosso povo. Onde ele não chegou ainda, o país apresenta o aspecto com que surpreendeu aos seus primeiros descobridores. Tudo que significa luta do homem com a natureza, conquista do solo para a habitação e cultura, estradas e edifícios, canaviais e cafezais, a casa do senhor e a senzala dos escravos, igrejas e escolas, alfândegas e correios, telégrafos e caminhos de ferro, academias e hospitais, tudo, absolutamente tudo que existe no país, como resultado do trabalho manual, como emprego de capital, como acumulação de riqueza, não passa de uma doação gratuita da raça que trabalha à que faz trabalhar." Joaquim Nabuco, *O Abolicionismo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012), 15.

by farming. Added to that, the new economic setup of Europe greatly valued the production of goods, consumerism and international commerce, which demanded high production of supplies. Since the industrial revolution was still to come, the need of labor greatly increased. That process established slavery as one the most significant characteristics of the economic life of the American continent during its colonial period.¹²

For more than three centuries the trade of African slaves was one of the most profitable European economic activities. Even though it is not possible to determine how many Africans were forcibly taken from their lands and sold throughout the New World, studies point to a number that comes close to 12 million.¹³ More than three hundred years of the Brazilian history developed under slavery. Brazil was the last country to abolish it. Nowhere in the new world was slavery present in such a large territory. Close to 40 percent of all the Africans that were taken to the American continent came to Brazil, which represents 6 times the number of enslaved Africans that were taken to the USA.¹⁴

Even though there is significant criticism towards Portuguese slavery, especially considering how much profit they made from slaves trading and the tardy liberation of slaves in its American colony, it is a fact that the European mentality as a whole sanctioned the treatment of enslaved Africans as a commodity. For many years, the trade of slaves was one of the most important economic activities for Spain. Even France, which had experienced the libertarian changes of its 1799s revolution, did not oppose the forced African diaspora. Up to 1791, its official commercial documents still categorized the enslaved Africans as *trading goods*. Similar

¹² Rafael de Bivar Marquese, “A Dinâmica da Escravidão no Brasil,” *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* 74 (2006): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0101-33002006000100007> (accessed June 20, 2019).

¹³ Rafael Sanzio Araújo dos Anjos, “Cartografia da Diáspora África–Brasil,” *Revista da ANPEGE* 1 (2011): 261–74, 263, doi 10.5418/RA2011.0701.0022 (accessed June 21, 2019).

¹⁴ Décio Freitas, *O Escravismo Brasileiro* (Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto, 1991), 9–11.

postures were displayed by England¹⁵ and the Netherlands.¹⁶

Africans were imprisoned by Europeans but also by African traders. That was just the beginning of the violence that would characterize their lives. After they were sold as property, a long and dangerous trip would take place, which could last from thirty days to five months. Mattoso records the testimony of brother Carli, who described the conditions in a ship packed with six hundred and seventy Africans:

The men were piled in the basement at the wedge, chained for fear of revolting and killing all the whites on board. The second half-bridge was reserved for the women, and the pregnant women occupied the aft cabin. The children crowded into the first half-bridge like a herring in a barrel. If they were asleep, they would fall on each other. There were bilges to satisfy the natural needs, but as many feared to lose their places, they relieved themselves where they were, especially the men, cruelly pressed against each other. The heat and stench were unbearable.¹⁷

It is important to avoid generalizations, because the conditions of the transportation of the slaves could vary from ship to ship. The Portuguese government, for instance, even implemented laws that sought to create minimal health conditions for the transportation.¹⁸ However, the pressure for more and more profit weakened these laws. It is believed that around fifteen percent to twenty percent of the African slaves died during the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁹ If one

¹⁵ In 1807, Lord Elton makes the following observation in the British Parliament: “the trade [of African slaves] was sanctioned by parliaments in which the wisest jurists, the most enlightened theologians, and the most eminent men of state had a seat.” Original text: “o trafico havia sido sancionado por parlamentos em que tinham assentos os jurisconsultos mais sábios, os theologos mais esclarecidos e os homens de estado mais eminentes.” Evaristo de Moraes, *A Escravidão Africana no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1933), 21.

¹⁶ Moraes, *A Escravidão*, 12–14.

¹⁷ Original text: “Os homens estavam empilhados no porão à cunha, acorrentados por medo de que se revoltem e matem todos os brancos a bordo. Às mulheres reservava-se a segunda meia-ponte, as grávidas ocupavam a cabine da popa. As crianças apinhavam-se na primeira meia-ponte como arenques num barril. Se tinham sono, caíam uns sobre os outros. Havia sentinas para satisfazer as necessidades naturais, mas como muitos temiam perder seus lugares, aliviavam-se onde estavam, em especial os homens, cruelmente comprimidos uns contra os outros. O calor e o mau cheiro tornavam-se insuportáveis.” Kátia de Queirós Mattoso, *Ser Escravo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990), 47.

¹⁸ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo no Brasil*, 46.

¹⁹ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo no Brasil*, 48.

considers the three centuries of slave trade, that can represent up to 2.4 million deaths during the trip.

For a long period of time the Portuguese crown was not concerned about the colonization of subtropical Brazil, which included a late arrival of slaves to what we now call Rio Grande do Sul State (RGS).²⁰ In part, that contributed to the idea that slavery in RGS was somehow more lenient than in the rest of the colony. That myth, however, is undone as innumerable documents demonstrate that the treatment here received by the slaves from their white owners was not less violent than that experienced in equatorial Brazil.²¹

Studies have demonstrated that also in RGS there was an extensive presence of slave labor, which became essential to southern Brazil production during the slavery period.²² In 1858, for instance, RGS had 70,880 slaves, almost twenty-five percent of the province's population. In 1874, the slave population reached its peak, with 98,450 slaves living in RGS.²³ In RGS, as it was the case throughout Brazil, from a legal point of view, "the slave was a *thing*, subjected to the power and ownership of another, and as such, was taken for *dead*, deprived of *all rights* and without any representation. The legal condition of thing, however, corresponded to the same social condition of the slave."²⁴ In the specific case of the Rio Grande do Sul state, studies point out that the relationship between owners and slaves could become even more brutal given the economic conditions of the region. Since in RGS there were no significant possibilities for

²⁰ Bakos, *RS: Escravismo e Abolição*, 12.

²¹ Bakos, *RS: Escravismo e Abolição*, 12.

²² Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1991), 80.

²³ Cardoso, *Capitalismo e Escravidão*, 81.

²⁴ Original text: "o escravo era uma *coisa*, sujeita ao poder e à propriedade de outrem, e, como tal, havido por *morto*, privado de *todos dos direitos* e sem representação alguma. A condição jurídica de coisa, entretanto, correspondia à própria condição social de escravo." Cardoso, *Capitalismo e Escravidão*, 125.

accumulation of wealth during the slavery period, violence and the imposition of the owner's will would become the marks of an asymmetrical and brutal relationship.²⁵

However, the violent treatment does not describe every lord-slave relationship in Brazil. Even though inhumane violence was not unusual, its use did not take place on a regular basis, as a daily part of the slave's life.²⁶ There were many lords who treated their slaves in a much more humane way. However, the general understanding that characterized slavery in America was that of "the underlying conception of man as a conveyable possession with no more autonomy of will and consciousness than a domestic animal."²⁷ Relegated to the state of possession, the slave could be easily subjugated to his owner's wants, whims, contradictions, stress, and violence.

Religiosity as Shelter and Resistance

The brief historical description presented above depicts in a very limited way the suffering imposed to African men, women and children during Brazilian slavery. The hardships of life did not end as they got acquainted with their new home. Besides the many internal losses and fears each one of them had to face, African slaves had to struggle to integrate themselves into a world that was different from the one they had, adapting to two very different communities: that of the slaves and that of the white.²⁸

Even though many people picture Africa as a single nation, most Brazilians would be surprised with the variety of ethnic groups that make up the African rich diversity. Africa was made up of many groups, each of which had their own culture, social organization, language and religious traditions. Even though one can identify similar traits among the many clans and tribes,

²⁵ Cardoso, *Capitalismo e Escravidão*, 132.

²⁶ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 116–17.

²⁷ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (N. Y.: Oxford, 1988), 62.

²⁸ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 112.

their identity as distinct ethnic groups is what characterized Africans.²⁹ As those groups were brought together in Brazil, they had to learn how to live with one another, overcoming historical conflicts, adapting to each other's culture, forming a new social group of enslaved people along with all the adverse conditions in a foreign land.

At the same time, the slaves had to adapt to the white people's culture. That basically involved two things. First, the slaves had to behave as a good laborer. They had to focus on work, mastering the basic abilities concerning the plantations or mining and, at least, a basic knowledge of Portuguese in order to understand the orders that were given and try to get around fairly well.³⁰ Second, they had to be acquainted and demonstrate consent, at least to a minimum degree, to the white Europeans' religion. They were baptized and most of them learned the *Lord's Prayer* and the *Hail Mary*, as well as took part in the Holy Days' celebrations. In many cases, those external expressions of faith satisfied the European lords.³¹

²⁹ "Several ethnic groups or *nations*, with distinct cultures, were also brought to Brazil. Guinea and Sudan, north of the Equator, the Congo and Angola in central and southwestern Africa, and the Mozambican region on the eastern coast were the main supplier areas. From the first two came, among others, the Afantis, Axantis, Jejes, Peuls, Hauçás (Muslims, called Malês in Bahia) and the Nagô or Yoruba. The latter had great political, cultural and religious influence in a large Sudanese area. Black Africans from the Congo and Angola—the Cabindas, caçanjes, muxicongos, monjolos, grenades—were also of Bantu culture, as were those from Mozambique." Original text: "Diversos grupos étnicos ou *nações*, com culturas também distintas, foram trazidos para o Brasil. A Guiné e o Sudão, ao norte da linha do Equador, o Congo e Angola, no centro e sudoeste da África, e a região de Moçambique, na costa oriental, foram as principais áreas fornecedoras. Das duas primeiras vieram, entre outros, os afantis, axantis, jejes, peuls, hauçás (muçulmanos, chamados malês na Bahia) e os nagôs ou iorubás. Estes últimos tinham uma grande influência política, cultural e religiosa em ampla área sudanesa. Eram de cultura banto os negros provenientes do Congo e de Angola — os cabindas, caçanjes, muxicongos, monjolos, rebolos—, assim como os de Moçambique." Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, *Para uma História do Negro no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, 1988), 9.

³⁰ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 114–16.

³¹ "These blacks, taken from their families, from the communal life of clans and tribes, from their spiritual, cultural, and material habits, became for Europeans a human herd whose legal status was not really defined, since the captives would only be slaves after being resold. Is it an amorphous flock? Certainly, the stupor and the fear, the abasement and the dread, the horror before the unknown, the strange and the coercion, are their first reactions. But slowly and painfully, at their own expense, the captives learned the existence of another world, strange and different. Accustomed to life in an organized social framework that was part of their own identities, they were almost anonymous... The new masters are observed, their gestures studied. Active resistance and active resistances alternated and shaped each other." Original text: "Esses negros arrebanhados, arrancados às famílias, à comunidade dos clãs e das tribos, aos seus hábitos espirituais, culturais, materiais, tornam-se para os europeus um rebanho

As the slaves sought to cope with the fractured reality they faced, an important movement took place. Many went to what could bring them together as a community and reestablish a sense of security, belonging, identity and transcendence. They went back to their religion, and they did it with a strong communitarian spirit.³² As the slaves searched for survival, they went through a necessary process of redefining who they were, and religion became the most important expression of that change.³³

That complex process gave birth to varied forms of syncretism, which involved African tribal religions, the Iberian-Portuguese Catholicism and the indigenous religiosity.³⁴ As for the use of the word syncretism, Wulfhorst's research is helpful. According to him, the most probable explanation to its origin dates back to the inhabitants of Crete (*cretism*), who, despite their internal disagreements and lack of unity, would always come together (*syn*) to fight common enemies and ensure survival. In a similar way, African slaves who came from varied tribes which frequently fought each other, united with one another to survive an unfriendly context.³⁵ In that process, they integrated diverse elements of distinct religious cultures.³⁶

humano em consignaço, cujo estatuto jurádico não é de fato definido pois os cativos somente serão escravos após serem revendidos. Será um rebanho amorfo? Certamente o estupor e o medo, o abatimento e o pavor, o horror diante do desconhecido, do estranho e da coaço, são suas primeiras reaço. Mas os cativos vão a pouco e pouco, penosamente, às próprias custas, aprender a existência de outro mundo, estranho e diferente. Habitados à vida num quadro social organizado que fazia parte de suas próprias personalidades, ei-los quase anônimos... Os novos senhores são observados, seus gestos estudados. Resistências ativas, resistências passivas, alternam-se e conjugam-se." Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 43.

³² Mattoso, *Ser Escravo no Brasil*, 144.

³³ Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, *Para uma História do Negro no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, 1988), 12.

³⁴ Ingo Wulfhorst, *Discernindo os Espíritos—O Desafio do Espiritismo e da Religiosidade Afro-brasileira* (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 1996), 44.

³⁵ Wulfhorst, *Discernindo os Espíritos*, 44.

³⁶ Based on A. Anwander's four stage scheme of the syncretic process, Wulfhorst locates Umbanda in the last stage, *theocracy*, which basically means the birth of a new religious manifestation. On the other hand, he understands that Candomblé did not go beyond the first two stages, *accommodation* and *assimilation*. Umbanda and Candomblé are today's major Afro-Brazilian religious traditions. Wulfhorst, *Discernindo os Espíritos*, 45. For

Both in the countryside and in the city, the first organizations of slaves were religious ones.³⁷ With slavery, the diverse African cultures brought their religious symbols, meanings and practices into the colonized world. They sought to restructure their lives, which included reforming a religious life that included African diversity. From that process, new religious structures were born, which united different aspects of the African diversity, while they did not follow the structures of the European religion, they were influenced by them.

[B]y breaking foundational elements of African society and carefully mixing ethnicities, slavery managed to destroy social structures, but the blacks safeguarded the essential values of African civilizations—the *religious* ... the slave is faced with two religious practices: the Catholic, difficult to assimilate but prestigious, because it is that of the lord, based on a trinitarian God, more feared than loved, avenger in the present but promising the paradise after death; the African, which had as many facets as the nations and communities, but which gradually seeks to unite, to be acceptable to all, to open itself to all in order to give coherence and soul to almost every black community.³⁸

From place to place, the forms taken by African slaves' religiosity were varied. Very often, it was expressed through an external accommodation, which disguised the experience of non-Christian religiosity under the popular language and rites of the Catholic Church. This led in many cases to syncretic forms of religiosity. It is important to note that, since colonial times, the African religious festivities got the white Europeans' attention, and their reactions varied between tolerance and rebuke. Depending on time and circumstances, the attitude was one of

Anwander's theoretical study of syncretic processes: A. Anwander, *Einführung in die Religionsgeschichte* (München: Josef Kösel & Friedrich Pustet, 1930).

³⁷ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 147–48.

³⁸ Original text: “[A]o romper os marcos da sociedade africana e ao misturar cuidadosamente as etnias, a escravidão conseguiu destruir as estruturas sociais, mas o negro salvaguardou os valores essenciais das civilizações africanas—os religiosos... o escravo defronta-se com duas práticas religiosas: a católica, difícil de assimilar mas prestigiosa, pois é a do senhor, baseada num deus trinitário, mais temido que amado, vingador no presente mas promotor do paraíso além da morte; a africana, de tantas facetas quanto as nações e comunidades, mas que procura gradualmente unificar-se, tornar-se aceitável por todos, abrir-se a todos para dar coerência e alma à quase totalidade de cada comunidade negra.” Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 145.

allowance or confrontation. However, the Catholic opposition was almost constant.³⁹

Commenting on the slaves' adaptation to the white community, Mattoso described the re-structured religious manifestations as both shelter and resistance.

Most slaves are born, live, and die with the externals of religion, never having had any contact with Christian doctrine. It is up to them to preserve or create their own inner life or to practice, under the benevolent gaze of the gentleman who sees only slaves playing, the religious rites of their predecessors.⁴⁰

As religion became the slaves' shelter under the adverse social structure they lived in, it generated opportunity to preserve many other aspects of African culture. From African orality to the foods that are today offered to *Orixás*,⁴¹ Afro-Brazilian religiosity preserved many elements of their prior identity, such as food, songs, language, dance, and objects. The religious space, therefore, became a place for cultural preservation,⁴² which reinforced the role of religion as

³⁹ Edmar Ferreira Santos, *O Poder dos Candomblés—Perseguição e Resistência no Recôncavo da Bahia* (Salvador: EDUFBA, 2009) 457, 500–08.

⁴⁰ Original text: “A maioria dos escravos nascem, vivem e morrem com as exterioridades da religião, sem jamais terem tido qualquer contato com a doutrina cristã. Cabe-lhes preservar ou criar uma vida interior própria ou praticar, sob o olhar benevolente do senhor que nisto vê apenas brincadeiras, os ritos religiosos de seus antepassados.” Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 115.

⁴¹ Even though there is variety in the African roots of the Afro-Brazilian religiosity as well as in the way the African slaves reconstructed their religious life in Brazil, there are some recurrent elements in the diverse Afro-Brazilian religious manifestations. One of them is the Cult of *Orixás*. “Each African people group who came to America brought with them the cult of ancestors, ancient divinized tribal kings/queens, whose memory was perpetuated by their descendants. Gathered in the middle of the slave trade, they gave birth to the Brazilian pantheon, generally referred to today as the Cult of the *Orixás*. These *Orixás*, familiar here as in Africa, were associated with the forces of nature such as thunder, fire, lightning, sea water and rivers, and woods. According to mythology, the *Orixás* received from the one in charge of the creation of the earth, *Ododua*, specific tasks in relation to the earth's domain, and with it they became cocreators and guardians. Above all *Orixás* is *Olorum*, creator of the universe, without material representation, and worshiped through the *Orixás* who are his intermediaries.” Original text: “Cada povo africano que veio à América trouxe consigo o culto a um ou dois ancestrais, antigos reis/rainhas tribais divinizados, cuja memória foi perpetuada por seus descendentes, que, reunidos em meio à escravaria, deram origem ao panteón brasileiro, generalizado hoje como Culto dos *Orixás*. Estes *orixás*, familiares aqui como na África, foram associados às forças da natureza como o trovão, o fogo, os raios, as águas do mar e dos rios, as matas, pois, segundo a mitologia, os *Orixás* receberam do ser encarregado da criação da terra—*Ododua*—tarefas específicas com relação ao domínio da terra, e com ele se tornam corriadores e guardiões. Acima de todos está *Olorum*, criador do universo, sem representação material, e cultuado através dos *orixás* que são seus intermediários.” Elsa Gonçalves Avancini, “O Sagrado na Tradição Africana e os Cultos Afro-brasileiros,” In *RS Negro—Cartografia Sobre a Produção do Conhecimento*, ed. Gilberto F. da Silva, José A. dos Santos e Luis C. C. Carneiro (Porto Alegre: EdiPUCRS, 2010), 140.

⁴² Raul Lody, *Candomblé – Religião e Resistência Cultural* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1987), 10–11.

resistance and shelter under an oppressive context.⁴³

Reflecting on the role of Candomblé, one of the two major Afro-Brazilian religious traditions, Lody states:

Under the conditions that the official history itself describes, the African man in Brazil, being a slave, was an arm, an “engine’s part,” and not an individual, a man (human). Thus, the principles of the ethnic groups and their legacies were manifested in the most inventive ways of... attempting to be African under the regime of Catholic officialdom, which was adverse and condescending with slavery oppression.

In that context, the Candomblé institution, which has existed for centuries and has been strengthened, is an expression not only of the religious life but also of the social life, hierarchy, ethics, morality, oral and nonverbal traditions, playfulness, in short, everything that the religion as a space of resistance managed to maintain and preserve of the culture of the African man in Brazil.⁴⁴

Still today, Afro-Brazilian religious spaces represent resistance and protection for a large part of Brazilian population, especially because they function as an identity affirmation. In the words of Nina Opa Fola and Winnie Bueno, black community activists in Porto Alegre RGS, it is

⁴³ That same reasoning is manifested in other cultural expressions present in different parts of Brazil. Many beaches of the Brazilian coast, for instance, are well known spaces for Afro-Brazilian worship. In those places, Iemanjá (a feminine *orixá* associated to the sea) is honored through expressive religious festivals that gather hundreds of thousands of people every year. Because of that, in many places along the Brazilian coast one can find monuments associated to that religious tradition. The construction of those monuments, which frequently involved public financial resources, is justified by the fact that the *orixás* are considered not only religious symbols, but a fundamental part of the African cultural heritage that characterizes Brazil. Da Silva recognizes today’s value of the Afro-Brazilian religions as a significant representative of the African culture and its history in Brazil, which justifies affirmative policies directed to protect religious expressions. There is an intrinsic connection between the history of African slaves in Brazil and their descendants and the Afro-Brazilian religiosity, which makes it “a legitimate field for the application of state public policies aimed at these populations and also a potential field for action by black groups or movements interested in bringing together institutions for the preservation of cultural heritage of black African origin.” Original text: “um campo legítimo de aplicação de políticas públicas do Estado voltadas a estas populações e também um potencial campo de ação para os grupos ou movimentos negros interessados em aglutinar instituições de preservação de patrimônios culturais de origem negro-africana.” Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, “Religião e Identidade Cultural Negra: Católicos, Afro-brasileiros e Pentecostais,” in *Cadernos de Campo* 20, (2011): 296, 299.

⁴⁴ Original text: “Nas condições que a própria história oficial descreve, o homem africano no Brasil, por ser escravo, é um braço, uma peça e não um indivíduo, um homem. Dessa forma, os princípios dos grupos étnicos e seus legados manifestaram-se livremente nas mais inventivas maneiras de... tentar ser africano sob o regime da oficialidade católica, adversa e conivente com a opressão escravagista. Neste quadro, a instituição candomblé, centenária e fortalecida, polariza não apenas a vida religiosa, mas também a vida social, a hierárquica, a ética, a moral, a tradição verbal e não-verbal, o lúdico e tudo, enfim, que o espaço da defesa conseguiu manter e preservar da cultura do homem africano no Brasil.” Lody, *Candomblé*, 10.

in the religious context, where they live with people who suffer the same kind of discrimination that they do, that they find their sense of identity:

I understand that [our religious community is not] just a place of religion—we are a civilizing place, where we learn to be people. That is so because in the world out there everything that we do, other people will say “that is not *coisa de gente*” (something characteristically human). Everything we do is half-human, half-animalistic. And my role as an activist is to say no, it is to say that percussion, singing, theater, and music are all about us, that's our tradition.

For black people, the *terreiro* (place where Afro-Brazilian religiosity is celebrated) has this importance of identity, of a very strong identity reinforcement.⁴⁵

As their words indicate, the discrimination and unjustifiable violence that characterized the African diaspora during the slavery period is still operative as today's social structures perpetuate discrimination in the most varied areas of life.⁴⁶ Even though slavery has been abolished in Brazil for more than a century, the constitution guarantees the freedom of religion, and the government has promoted diverse affirmative policies for African descendants, prejudice is still a major social problem for African descendants in Brazil.⁴⁷ Because of the role of Afro-Brazilian religiosity as the most remarkable representation to the culture that was shaped in the forge of slavery,⁴⁸ practitioners of Afro-Brazilian cults as well as their symbols and religious

⁴⁵ Original text: “Entendo que não somos somente um espaço de religião, somos um espaço civilizatório mesmo, onde aprendemos a ser gente. Porque no mundo aí fora, tudo o que a gente faz eles dizem que não é coisa de gente. Tudo que a gente faz é meio humano, meio animalesco. E o meu papel como ativista foi dizer que não, que percussão, canto, teatro, música, tem tudo a ver conosco, é essa nossa tradição... O terreiro para a negritude tem essa importância de identidade, de um reforço identitário muito forte.” “A Mulher nas Religiões de Matriz Africana– Militância e Religião,” UFRGS’ website, accessed July 23, 2019, <https://www.ufrgs.br/jordi/162-raizes/militancia-e-religiao/>.

⁴⁶ João Costa Vargas, “A Diáspora Negra como Genocídio,” *Revista da ABPN* 2 (2010), 31–65.

⁴⁷ Up to 1945, the use of properties for Afro-Brazilian Cults’ worship could only take place under police authorization and some of their rituals were legally understood as fraudulent healing and charlatanism. Also, their religious culture was often discredited by the print media, intellectuals and representatives of the church. Ari Pedro Oro, “Notas Sobre a Diversidade e a Liberdade Religiosa no Brasil Atual,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira*, 254 (2004), 324.

⁴⁸ Academic works such as *RS Negro—Cartografias sobre a Produção do Conhecimento* describe the numerous challenges faced by the black community as well as diverse coping actions organized throughout Rio Grande do Sul state. In such a context, religion is still a place of shelter for a community historically marked by

sites are still the target of violent actions.⁴⁹ The report “Religious Intolerance in Brazil”⁵⁰ demonstrates, through a rich data collection, that those who practice Afro-Brazilian religions are the most common victims of acts of intolerance, which include verbal assaults, physical aggression and desecration of places of worship. For many researchers, the historical discrimination against the Brazilian black community has assumed many forms, and today is remarkably present in acts of discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religions. Such discrimination leads to the negation of the black identity in Brazil.⁵¹

As one considers the *spiral of knowledge* suggested by Muck and Adeney and the need to approach the other in order to learn from his experience as a religious individual, it seems appropriate to declare that one cannot satisfactorily understand Afro-Brazilian religiosity without

discrimination and social segregation. Cristian Jobi Salaini, for example, reflects on the role of Afro-Brazilian plastic art as a place where the members of the community articulate their identity in ethnic solidarity. According to his study, the form that the Afro-Brazilian plastic art has taken was originally a ritual, religious one. Even though diverse inspirations motivate the Afro-Brazilian artistic production, religiosity is still a prominent theme and many of its works still recognize the “spiritual force” as the depository of the black culture. Therefore, to portray Afro-Brazilian religiosity in artistic form is important because of its persistence as an element of the black culture. Gilberto F. da Silva, José A. dos Santos e Luis C. C. Carneiro, org. *RS Negro—Cartografia Sobre a Produção do Conhecimento* (Porto Alegre: EdiPUCRS, 2010).

⁴⁹ In June 2015, an Afro-Brazilian religious group was stoned as they came back from their religious ceremonies by people who were holding Bibles in the air and shouting “*Devil. Go to hell. Jesus is coming.*” “Menina Vítima de Intolerância Religiosa diz que Vai Ser Difícil Esquecer a Pedrada.” G1 Portal, accessed in July 19th, 2019, <http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2015/06/menina-vitima-de-intolerancia-religiosa-diz-que-vai-ser-dificil-esquecer-pedrada.html>. In March, 2019, a *terreiro* (the place where Afro-Brazilian cults take place) was desecrated. Drug dealers were accused, but on the external wall of the *terreiro* one could read the words “Jesus is the owner of this place.” “Terreiro de Candomblé é Depredado em Nova Iguaçu e Religiosos são Expulsos.” G1 Portal, accessed in July 19, 2019, <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2019/03/29/terreiro-de-candomble-e-depredado-em-nova-iguacu-religiosos-foram-expulsos.ghtml>. According to *Disque 100*, a federal government service designed to receive phone calls with complaints related to Human Rights, the number of allegations of discrimination against supporters of African-based religions increased in 2018 in Brazil. According to Elisa Rodrigues, Executive Secretary of Racial Equality Promotion of the City of São Paulo at the time, most of the intolerance towards Afro-Brazilian religions is due to the fact that those traditions are associated with the Afro-Brazilian community. “Aumenta Número de Denúncias de Discriminação Contra Adeptos de Religiões de Matriz Africana em 2018 no País,” G1 Portal, accessed July 23, 2019, <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2018/11/19/aumenta-numero-de-denuncias-de-discriminacao-contradeptos-de-religoes-de-matriz-africana-em-2018-no-pais.ghtml>.

⁵⁰ Babalawô Ivanir dos Santos et al., *Intolerância Religiosa no Brasil—Relatório e Balanço* (Rio de Janeiro: Klinê Editora, 2016).

⁵¹ Lucilia Carvalho da Silva e Katia dos Reis Amorim Soares, “A Intolerância Religiosa Face às Religiões de Matriz Africana como Expressão das Relações Étnico-Raciais Brasileiras: O Terreno do Combate à Intolerância no Município de Caxias do Sul,” *Revista EDUC* 03, (2015), 2.

considering the history of violence and prejudice that forged those communities. Even though those communities are not composed solely of African descendants,⁵² Afro-Brazilian religiosity is still the one that, in proportional terms, gathers more black people and *pardos*,⁵³ about 48 percent of its practitioners.⁵⁴ In addition, as was demonstrated above, the history of those communities is marked by the struggle for survival of African slaves and their descendants, and the Afro-Brazilian places of worship are still places of shelter for those who seek to value their African ancestry in the face of a long history of discrimination. The impact of that history on today's communities is well argued by Darcy Ribeiro, one of the most influential Brazilian scholars:

No people who went through this [violent slavery] as their routine of life through the centuries could be left without being indelibly marked. All of us Brazilians are flesh of the flesh of those blacks and Indians who have been tortured. All of us Brazilians are, equally, the evil hand that made them suffer. The tenderest sweetness and the most atrocious cruelty were here combined to make out of us a sorrowful and suffered people, an insensitive and brutal people. As descendants of slaves and also of their masters we will always be servants of the evil that was poured, installed in us, both by the feeling of pain intentionally produced to increase the suffering and also by the exercise of brutality on the men, on the women, on the children who were made the target of our fury.

⁵² Brazil's 2010 census indicated that only 0.3 percent of the Brazilian population identify themselves as adepts of the Afro-Brazilian religions. There is much discussion on that data, which is usually considered highly imprecise. The main argument for that challenge is that many practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions live a dual religious citizenship. Because of the prejudice connected to the Afro-Brazilian religions as opposed to the prestige of other religious traditions, many of the Afro-Brazilian religions' practitioners often identify themselves as Catholic or Kardecists. See Reginal Prandi, "As Religiões Afro-brasileiras e seus Seguidores," *Revistas Eletrônicas da PUCRS's website*, accessed July 23, 2019, <http://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/civitas/article/viewFile/108/104>.). At the same time, there is also much discussion about the growing presence of white people in the *terreiros* and the impact that phenomenon has on those religious traditions. Ari Oro, "Religiões Afro-brasileiras do Rio Grande do Sul: Passado e Presente," *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 2, vol. 4 (2002), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0101-546X2002000200006> (accessed July 23, 2019). Jonas França, "Elementos para um Debate sobre os Brancos e a Branquitude no Candomblé: Identidades, Espaços e Responsabilidades," *Revista Calundu* 2, vol. 2 (2018): 55–81, <https://doi.org/10.26512/revistacalundu.v2i2.15706>, accessed July 23, 2019).

⁵³ *Pardo* is a category used by the Brazilian Institute of Geographic Statistic (IBGE) and commonly refers to mixed ethnic ancestry.

⁵⁴ Silva, "Religião e Identidade," 298.

The most terrible of our inheritances is this: to carry with us the torturer's scar imprinted on the soul and ready to explode in racist and social class brutality. That brutality shows, even today, in the Brazilian authority predisposed to torture, mistreat and hurt the poor that fall into their hands. But by producing greater indignation, that brutality will give us strength tomorrow to deal with and create greater solidarity in our society.⁵⁵

The consideration of the history of violence and prejudice that has forged the Afro-Brazilian religious communities opens up space to dialogue with the Afro-Brazilian religiosity practitioners. That space and dialogue can bring the gift of a more mature understanding of our own culture as Brazilians, an understanding that can expand the reflection on who we are and what we should do in order to achieve what we want to be. However, I want to highlight another gift that springs from an interaction with the Afro-Brazilian religiosity, one that is specifically directed to Christianity, one which I will call *the gift of interpellation*.

On Receiving the Gift of Interpellation

In English, the word *interpellation* has two main uses, both introduced from French. One comes from philosophy, and it refers to the concept proposed by Louis Althusser to explain the process by which individuals encounter and internalize their cultures' values.⁵⁶ The other is used in politics, and it refers to the process or occasion when questions are formally asked to a

⁵⁵ Original text: "Nenhum povo que passasse por isso como sua rotina de vida através de séculos sairia dela sem ficar marcado indelevelmente. Todos nós, brasileiros, somos carne da carne daqueles pretos e índios supliciados. Todos nós, brasileiros, somos, por igual, a mão possessa que os supliciou. A doçura mais terna e a crueldade mais atroz aqui se conjugaram para fazer de nós a gente sentida e sofrida que somos e a gente insensível e brutal que também somos. Descendentes de escravos e senhores de escravos seremos sempre servos da malignidade destilada e instalada em nós, tanto pelo sentimento da dor intencionalmente produzida para doer mais quanto pelo exercício da brutalidade sobre homens, sobre mulheres, sobre crianças convertidas em pasto de nossa fúria. A mais terrível de nossas heranças é esta de levar sempre conosco a cicatriz de torturador impressa na alma e pronta a explodir na brutalidade racista e classista. Ela é que incandesce, ainda hoje, em tanta autoridade brasileira predisposta a torturar, sevicar e machucar os pobres que lhes caem às mãos. Ela, porém, provocando crescente indignação nos dará forças, amanhã, para conter os possessos e criar aqui uma sociedade solidária" Darcy Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995), 120.

⁵⁶ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation," *Marxists' Depository*, accessed July 30, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>.

government minister in parliament.⁵⁷ This second meaning is closer to the intended use of the word in this dissertation. *Interpellation* comes from the Latin *interpellatio*, which could be translated as *interruption*. It is associated with *interpel*,⁵⁸ from the Latin *interpellare*, meaning *to interrupt by speaking*. That way, it denotes the act of interrupting someone, as he/she speaks, in order to challenge his/her thinking through questions that demand a response.

Understood that way, *interpellation* can generate the space, time and motivation to reflect on specific topics in a way that promotes the maturation of thought and, consequently, of action. Because of its challenging nature, it invites to a reassessment of one's ideas and attitudes by presenting compelling reasons to justify or reconsider those ideas and attitudes.

In a process similar to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, *interpellation* works as new/provocative information is brought up in the form of a question which causes imbalance and the consequent need of equilibrium. For equilibrium to take place again, either one has to adapt the new information into pre-existing cognitive schemas or alter pre-existing cognitive schemas in order to fit the new information.⁵⁹ Either way, the process implies the impetus for the construction of learning and consequent cognitive and moral development. It is in that sense that *interpellation* is here understood as a gift.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ "interpellation," OED Online. June 2019. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.csl.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/98135?redirectedFrom=interpellation> (accessed July 31, 2019).

⁵⁸ "interpel," OED Online. June 2019. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.csl.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/98131> (accessed July 31, 2019).

⁵⁹ For more information on Jean Piaget and his cognitive theory, Marilyn H. Appel and Lois S. Goldberg edit., *Topics in Cognitive Development* (New York: Plenum Press, 1977). Richard Kohler, *Jean Piaget* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008). Hamidreza Babae Bormanaki and Yasin Khoshhal, "The Role of Equilibration in Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development and Its Implication for Receptive Skills: A Theoretical Study," *Academy Publication* 5, vol. 8 (2017): doi <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0805.22> (accessed July 31, 2019).

⁶⁰ The concept of the *gift of interpellation* was thought of after the reflections developed by Volney J. Berkenbrock, a Brazilian scholar who has dedicated a large part of his research to the study of Afro-Brazilian religiosity. "Religiões de Matriz Africana e Cristianismo: Um Diálogo Possível? Uma Entrevista Especial com Volney J. Berkenbrock," Instituto Humanitas' Webpage, accessed July 31, 2019,

It is the understanding of this dissertation that a dialogical⁶¹ encounter of Christianity with Afro-Brazilian religiosity can generate opportunities for the receiving of such a gift.

Christian dialogue with another concrete religion can lead to an enrichment of one's identity through the other religion and also to the possibility of eliminating poor understandings by meeting the other and taking seriously the criticism made by the other's position. It is possible that a voice from outside may lead Christians to wake up, to better understand their identity, to practice it better in those places where it has fallen asleep as a result of self-glorification and false self-confidence. Or a voice from outside can give the Christian an impetus to understand Jesus Christ in a more current and local way in the concrete situation where Christians now live.⁶²

As one approaches Afro-Brazilian religiosity through a historical perspective that considers the impact of oppression on a given community and the fact that that oppression was perpetrated by a group that characterized itself as being Christian, such study necessarily *interpellates* us as a confessional institution and the Christian community as a whole with the question: *How could a Christian community enslave, through centuries, millions of people, submitting them to a less than human treatment?* Surely, there are other interpellations that can flow from such a study,⁶³

<http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/entrevistas/549028-religoes-de-matriz-africana-e-cristianismo-um-dialogo-possivel-entrevista-especial-com-a-volney-j-berkenbrock>.

⁶¹ As we understand inter-religious dialogue through the means of gift, we realize that many other elements are exchanged through dialogue besides words, elements that are both tangible and intangible. Indeed, dialogue involves conversation, but it goes beyond that as respect, knowledge, appreciation, public recognition, feelings, time, and so on are exchanged.

⁶² Original text: “O diálogo do cristão com uma outra religião concreta pode levar tanto a um enriquecimento de sua identidade através do outro como também a possibilidade de purificação através do confronto com o outro, do levar a sério a crítica que é feita pela posição do outro. É possível que um a voz vinda de fora possa levar os cristãos a acordar, a encontrar melhor sua identidade, a melhor praticá-la naqueles pontos onde ela já adormeceu como consequência duma autoglorificação e duma falsa segurança. Ou uma voz vinda de fora pode dar ao cristão um impulso para entender Jesus Cristo de forma mais atual e local na situação concreta onde os cristãos vivem.” Volney J Berkenbrock, “Diálogo e identidade religiosa : reflexões sobre a base teológica para um encontro positivo entre o candomblé e o cristianismo,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 221, vol. 56 (1996), 26.

⁶³ Berkenbrock, having in mind that Christianity sees itself as the answer to the meaning of our existence and as the way to fully achieve that meaning, understands that when other people find those answers in other religions that finding *interpels* Christianity. Why did not many African slaves and their descendants take part in Christianity's totalizing narrative? What are the reasons for them to choose another totalizing narrative? “Religiões de Matriz Africana e Cristianismo: Um Diálogo Possível? Uma Entrevista Especial com Volney J. Berkenbrock,” Instituto Humanitas' Webpage, accessed July 31, 2019, <http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/entrevistas/549028-religoes-de-matriz-africana-e-cristianismo-um-dialogo-possivel-entrevista-especial-com-a-volney-j-berkenbrock>.

but the dissertation will focus on this question as a sample reflection on gifts we may receive from other religious cultures. The decision here made for that specific interpellation is motivated by the ethical reflection it demands from a religious tradition—Lutheranism—that is often characterized by its “whiteness,” a trait inherited from its German origin.

When looking at the historical record, one can easily find information that questions the Catholic priests’ posture as well as the morality of the European lords during the slavery period. From condescendence to direct involvement in the slave trade, clergy and lay people, members of the Christian community, shamefully failed as ambassadors of the love taught by their Master. Mattoso records the speech of a 17th century Catholic priest to the enslaved Africans who were huddled together in slave ships: “Consider yourselves now children of God. You go to the country of the Portuguese, where you will learn the things of faith. Forget your home countries, stop eating dogs, mice and horses. Be happy.”⁶⁴ She also makes known the accounting records of seven slaves sent to Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the eighteenth century. Among the expenses, one can see the record of the “services of the priest who baptized five captives” totaling 7,500 *réis*, an exorbitant amount for the time, higher than the cost of feeding the seven slaves for seventy six days.⁶⁵

The discussions on the relation between slavery and the Christian faith are varied. David Davis, for example, who wrote a classic book on the issue of slavery in Western culture, argues for a fundamental duality in the New Testament on how slavery was dealt with. On the one hand, Christianity made all humans equal, before each other and before God, which should make

⁶⁴ Original text: “Considerem-se desde já filhos de Deus. Vocês vão para o país dos portugueses, onde vão aprender as coisas da fé. Esqueçam seus países de origem, deixem de comer cães, ratos e cavalos. Sejam contentes.” Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 44.

⁶⁵ Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 69.

abolition a logical conclusion. On the other hand, it reinforced notions of bondage by subordinating everyone to God, the Lord of the lords. “In the blinding light of the Gospel message, men could both accept and disregard social distinctions.”⁶⁶ Church Fathers such as Saint Basil of Caesarea (330–379), for example, affirmed that one cannot find in the biblical letter to Philemon a suggestion that slaves should be freed, but that Paul made a precedent to condemn and bring back to servitude those slaves who had run away. On the other hand, we also have the words of John Chrysostom (349–407) who, in his preaching, declared slavery as a consequence of sin, that lords should treat their servants as brothers and sisters in Christ and that slaves should be freed whenever that was possible.⁶⁷

The previous examples seem to sustain Davis’ intriguing conclusion: Slavery has a curious capacity “for generating or accommodating itself to dualisms in thought.”⁶⁸ Evaristo de Moraes, reflecting on the reasons that made African slavery morally acceptable for European Christianity, highlights the statement made by Augustine: “*omne quodcumque volumus bonum est*” – “whatever we want is good.” According to Moraes, this is how the principle of all false consciences is established. We rationalize whatever we want in order to make it morally good to our consciences. People’s or group’s interests are sophistically transposed into the welfare of the

⁶⁶ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 85.

⁶⁷ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 86–87. Davis also criticizes Martin Luther, as he affirms that the Reformation did not bring any immediate change to the Church’s traditional ideas concerning slavery. He bases that criticism on Luther’s answer to *The Twelve Articles of the Christian Union of Upper Swabia*. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 106. Through the articles, the peasants cried out for emancipation claiming that Christ had died to set men free. For Luther, that would be a distortion of the scriptures and that would make Christian freedom to become a “*gantz fleisslich*.” Luther’s position can be understood by the fact the peasants made use of the Scripture and of the Reformation’s principles in order to support their demand, misusing those sources. Because of that, Luther approached the articles theologically and not socially. Luther’s position is understandable as one considers his emphasis on grace and his spiritualized emphasis, but one can also regret the fact that he was not incisive on some points, as if in accordance with the social distortions of his day, which also affirms Niebuhr’s criticism in *Christ and Culture* on Lutheran theology.

⁶⁸ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 119.

community. That understanding is then continuously repeated and mentally taken as truth, coming to the point of becoming the communal moral judgment.⁶⁹

Some historical examples seem to support Moraes' proposal. In times that were troubled by Reformatory movements where the Roman Church ruled in Europe, the Padroado became an important element for the church's expansion and strengthening, which took place by an economy that stood on the slave trade. In addition, as it was affirmed above, in the Modern era slavery became a fundamental element of the economy of the Western world, sustaining the wealth of the European society and their imperialist drives, becoming a matter of public interest for civil and religious powers. Thus, "the inclination to discuss slavery as a matter of public policy was of course strengthened in the seventeenth century, when the slave trade and colonial plantations became increasingly important in the international contest for economic and military power."⁷⁰

"Such was the pressure of the current prejudices against the non-Christian peoples and the economic needs of the colonizing countries that more than one cleric was herald of the slavery of black Africans, and some argued that in the religion of Jesus there was no decisive word against such an institution!"⁷¹

In the light of that, Davis concludes: "As Christians looked less to an imminent millennium and more to the need of accommodating themselves to the world, they tended to accept the institutions of state and society as a necessary framework for controlling sin and allowing the Church to perform its sacramental functions."⁷² In that process, where political and religious

⁶⁹ Moraes, *A Escravidão Africana*, 20.

⁷⁰ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 110.

⁷¹ Original text: "Era tal a pressão dos prejuizos correntes acerca dos povos não christãos e das necessidades economicas dos paizes colonizadores, que mais de um clérigo se fez arauto da escravidão dos negros africanos e houve quem sustentasse que na religião de Jesus não havia palavra decisiva contra tal instituto!" Moraes, *A Escravidão Africana*, 15. Moraes registers Las Casas' example. An avid defender of American indigenous people, Las Casas advised the introduction of African slaves on American soil.

⁷² Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 88.

powers had common interests, the church's structure contributed to sustain slavery, even if unintentionally.⁷³ Since the slavery period, Brazilian Catholicism was a "religion of formalist, authoritarian obligations, in which the family patriarch fulfilled the function of a religious chief," such that the Church's structure gave philosophical support to the lord-slave relation that was established.⁷⁴

Even though one can find examples of when the Church opposed the atrocities committed through the African diaspora,⁷⁵ in general the Church's position was marked by complicity or, at least, silent acquiescence with human trade and slavery during America's colonization.⁷⁶ In summary, one can say that during the Enlightenment the "public consciousness in most parts of America was in keeping with the practice of trafficking, although from time to time, through the three centuries it had been spreading, one or another sense of revulsion had appeared, lost in the midst of indifference and of the surrounding self-centeredness."⁷⁷

As Berkenbrock argues, learning of Brazil's history of slavery and realizing that the perpetrators were Christians, at least nominally, makes us face the role of Christianity in the history of the constitution of Latin America. What one can also perceive is the distance between what was taught by the Gospels and the way Christians lived their lives in this world. The

⁷³ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 85.

⁷⁴ Original text: "A sociedade escravista conta com o apoio da Igreja para ensinar a seus trabalhadores as virtudes da paciência e da humildade, a resignação e a submissão à ordem estabelecida. O catolicismo brasileiro é uma religião de obrigações formalistas, autoritária, na qual o patriarca da família cumpre a função de um chefe religioso." Mattoso, *Ser Escravo*, 114.

⁷⁵ Cônego José Geraldo Vidigal de Carvalho, *A Igreja e a Escravidão—Uma Análise Documental* (Rio de Janeiro: Presença Edições, 1985).

⁷⁶ Moraes, *A Escravidão Africana*, 15.

⁷⁷ Original text: "consciência publica, na maior parte da America, se accomodava com a vigencia do trafico, embora, de longe em longe, através dos tres seculos por que elle se vinha alastrando, tivesse surgido um ou outro sentimento de repulsa, perdido no meio da indiferença e do egoísmo circundantes. Moraes, *A Escravidão Africana*, 21.

interpellation that comes from that reflection interrupts the inconsistent way many Christians live their lives, loudly preaching love as the highest virtue, participating in religious rites that glorifies the One who incarnated that virtue in its deepest sense, but taking care of their business with indifference towards the “widows” and the “orphans,” forgetting the words of their Master: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matt. 9:13). Such an interpellation works as God’s law, which daily calls institutions and individuals into repentance and at the same time constantly invites us to pay attention to the virtues that are to permeate our lives as we live in this horizontal dimension. That interpellation brings a challenge to every Christian,

to mirror the Christian identity, that is, to follow the proposal of love, service, and mercy of Jesus Christ. This is, therefore, a type of interpellation that the contact with the religions of African roots in Brazil makes to the Christian identity. This questioning points to a challenge for Christians: to live Christianly.⁷⁸

As today’s Christians react to that interpellation, not only trying to theologially explain their predecessors’ attitude as it relates to human sinful nature, but seeking a deeper understanding of what it means to be Christian in the specific historical moment God has put them in, the internal and external reactions provoked by that interpellation become themselves gifts. That gift results in the commitment to better understand how our past brought us to this point, but more than that, it is about a commitment to the present, as that time and space God now gives us to live as witnesses of his love and mercy. To face the history of oppression that marked Afro-Brazilian religiosity and realize how Christians contributed to the establishment of

⁷⁸ Original text: “espelhar a identidade cristã, quer dizer, o seguimento da proposta de amor, de serviço, de misericórdia de Jesus Cristo. Este é, pois, um tipo de interpelação que o contato com as religiões de matriz africana no Brasil faz à identidade cristã. Esta interpelação aponta para um desafio aos cristãos: viver cristãmente.” “Religiões de Matriz Africana e Cristianismo: Um Diálogo Possível? Uma Entrevista Especial com Volney J. Berkenbrock,” Instituto Humanitas’ Webpage, accessed July 31, 2019, <http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/entrevistas/549028-religoes-de-matriz-africana-e-cristianismo-um-dialogo-possivel-entrevista-especial-com-a-volney-j-berkenbrock>.

a society where racism became structural and still promotes inequality⁷⁹ calls us to repent of our sinful ways. But, at the same time, that experience invites, compels, *interpels* us to reflect on and act upon what it means to be a disciple of Jesus who, by following the Master's steps, affirms with his life the Christian message of *faith, hope and love*.

On Giving the Gifts of Hope, Faith and Love

It has been argued in different parts of this dissertation that the theological reflection on the reality of many religions cannot only be dealt with soteriologically – even though that is of high importance, but also ethically. Christian theology cannot content itself with theoretical definitions but must also consider how Christians witness to their faith and what flows from it in a world where religious pluralism is a reality. It has to do with the question of how I, as a Christian, can faithfully live my life in a world marked by diversity in its most varied forms. Such a question is important because the core values developed and/or highlighted by the process of answering it will play an important role if we want theology to accomplish its purpose, not only happening as a mental process, but essentially as an encompassing human activity.

Theorizing on what question should motivate an ethical reflection, Oswald Bayer suggests that we should begin with “What has been given to me?”⁸⁰ In that context, he proposes we follow what he calls the *categorical gift*, which sustains itself on the fact that our very existence and the space and time to experience it are gifts. For Bayer, ethics must first consider a plausible understanding of life, which is determined by “the word of giving and receiving.”⁸¹ Giving and

⁷⁹ We can understand racism as a systematic form of discrimination that bases itself on definitions of race and is manifested through conscious and unconscious practices that represent benefits to some and prejudice to others. Structural racism refers to those practices that take place in interpersonal relationships and in the social institution's dynamics, being ingrained in society's political and economic organization. Silvio Almeida, *O Que é Racismo Estrutural?* (Belo Horizonte: Editora Letramento, 2018), 16, 24.

⁸⁰ Oswald Bayer, “The Ethics of Gift,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 447–68.

⁸¹ Bayer, “Ethics of Gift,” 449.

receiving make it possible “to describe the course of both natural and cultural events in the world, and at the same time their indissoluble connection with one another.”⁸² That ethic starts on the “conception of a willing, open-handed, generous and incessantly giving God.”⁸³ God is the one who gives existence, who justifies the ungodly, who gives apart from merit; he brings faith gifts *ex nihilo*. “God gives himself to us without reservation or condition, fully and completely, with everything that he is and can do. God opens himself to us in such a way that he allows us to share in his fullness, takes us into fellowship with him, gives himself over to us entirely.”⁸⁴ God’s acts towards creation are grounded on him alone, and that is what sustains and characterizes Bayer’s *categorical gift*.

Opposing Derrida’s *gift self-contradiction*, Bayer argues that God, the Ultimate Giver, wills to have a counter-gift, the response of faith, but that willing does not annul the gift. That is so because the counter-gift is not a condition for the gift to be given. “God’s categorical giving does not exclude the counter-gift of the creature, but rather empowers the creature to this counter-gift as its response.”⁸⁵ The faith that God gives is at the same time passive and creative. It receives God’s gifts, but those same gifts are dynamic; they liberate and empower us to live as creatures of God in the way of the gift established by the Primary Giver. Sin, therefore, is the failure of taking and the failure of giving.⁸⁶ Faith directs us vertically to God in thankfulness, but also horizontally to our neighbors. Such an understanding is sustained by the distinction of Christ as *donum* and Christ as *exemplum*, as articulated by Martin Luther:

⁸² Bayer, “Ethics of Gift,” 449.

⁸³ Bayer, “Ethics of Gift,” 452.

⁸⁴ Bayer, “Ethics of Gift,” 456.

⁸⁵ Bayer, “Ethics of Gift,” 458.

⁸⁶ Bayer, “Ethics of Gift,” 460.

Now when you have Christ as the foundation and chief blessing of your salvation, then the other part follows: that you take him as your example, giving yourself in service to your neighbor just as you see that Christ has given himself for you. See, there faith and love move forward, God's commandment is fulfilled, and a person is happy and fearless to do and to suffer all things. Therefore make note of this, that Christ as a gift nourishes your faith and makes you a Christian. But Christ as an example exercises your works. These do not make you a Christian. Actually they come forth from you because you have already been made a Christian. As widely as a gift differs from an example, so widely does faith differ from works, for faith possesses nothing of its own, only the deeds and life of Christ. Works have something of your own in them, yet they should not belong to you but to your neighbor.⁸⁷

Campus pastors are called to serve people in specific communities, considering their personal historical moment. Because of the faith they have received and the creativity it generates, they take part of the gift economy inspired and sustained by God's free gift. Their generosity, therefore, is not conditioned by any human standard, but flows from grace. The forms taken by the Christian faith as it is expressed in the gift economy are varied and must always consider the individual they aim at serving. However, I propose the three abiding gifts presented in Paul's letter to the Corinthians—faith, hope and love—as an ideal possibility. They are articulated as a general (not limiting) guideline on what gifts Christians can display as they act as “stewards of God's grace in its various forms,” using “whatever gift [they] have received to serve others” (1 Pet. 4:10).

Faith is the divine gift of our capacity to affirm our original created goodness despite our actual fallen human condition. Love, in turn, is the gift we are commanded and obligated to give to the other, even in the face of enmity... hope is the culminating divine gift of the possibility for ultimate human reconciliation despite its seeming impossibility. Hope is the teleological fulfillment of the faith that despite human evil and conflict the world is finally good. And it is at the same time an affirmation that love can ultimately be realized among us.⁸⁸

Sometime after AD 420, a man called Laurentius asked Augustine to write a handbook on

⁸⁷ *A Brief Introduction to What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels* (1521), in LW 35:120.

⁸⁸ John Wall, “The Economy of the Gift: Paul Ricoeur's Significance for Theological Ethics,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29, no. 2 (Sum 2001), 237.

the proper way to live the Christian piety in this world. *Enchiridion*⁸⁹ was the answer to that request. For the structure of the handbook, Augustine made use of the Pauline triad faith, hope and love.⁹⁰ Since it was written about ten years before his death, the book displays the theology of a mature Augustine.

Paul's words recorded in 1 Cor. 13:13 are among the most well-known biblical words. Even though Paul's affirmation that "the greatest is love" has generated much discussion, one should not forget the abiding character that connects the three gifts.⁹¹ Augustine highlights their distinction, but also their interconnectedness. Faith involves past, present and future things, and believes both what is evil and what is good. That what is hoped is, necessarily, an object of faith, it is something believed,⁹² but "hope has for its object only what is good, only what is future, and only what affects the man who entertains the hope."⁹³ As one is transformed both by faith and hope, those graces are expressed in works of love towards God and towards our neighbors. "Wherefore there is no love without hope, no hope without love, and neither love nor hope without faith."⁹⁴

When reading his handbook, one should notice that Augustine refers to the three gifts as

⁸⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *Enrichidion* (The Fig Classic Series on Early Church Theology/Kindle Edition, 2012), Kindle.

⁹⁰ The Pauline triad "Faith, hope and love/charity" served for Augustine's *Enchiridion* and for the Middle Ages' and Reformation's catechisms as a standard table of contents. Faith was expressed on the basis of the creed (understood as *fides quae creditur*), hope on the basis of the Lord's Prayer, and love/charity on the basis of the Ten Commandments. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 161.

⁹¹ The reformers, for example, had to justify the centrality of faith in one's salvation on the face of Paul's famous statement. As the Apology of the Augsburg Confession suggests, one must have Paul's audience in mind and consider his focus on the love for the neighbor as an admonition to the Corinthians' sin. Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV.225 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 154.

⁹² Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 75 (Kindle).

⁹³ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 84 (Kindle).

⁹⁴ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 90 (Kindle).

graces.⁹⁵ Here, this dissertation sees two potentialities. One, in the Christian gift economy, we give what we have received. Faith, hope and love are, first of all, gifts graciously given by God to his children, they are *graces*. Two, as we live out those gifts, we enter God's gift economy by sharing with those around us what we have received, in a way that grace is manifested to God's children through us. As one considers the main theme of this dissertation, it seems proper to quote here Paul's words: "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders (those who have a different faith); make the most of every opportunity (which includes all the contacts that take place in the university). Let your conversation (dialogue) be always full of grace (giftive in nature)" (Col. 4:5, 6a).

Faith

As we turn specifically to faith, Augustine takes it as *fides quae creditur* – faith as *what is believed*, the content of one's confession. Thus, he works on doctrines such as creation, evil, sin, angels, church, judgment, and so on. However, among the many statements on faith, Augustine declares that the proper foundation of the Christian faith is Christ.⁹⁶ Here, one can also see in Augustine an understanding of faith as *fides qua creditur*, the subjective act of believing, which is itself a gift.⁹⁷ Through Christ we are made righteous, we are reconciled with God. That reconciliation is accomplished by God in Christ and is given to us, through faith, by grace.⁹⁸ As one considers those two uses of the word faith, two very specific but intimately related gifts may be highlighted.

⁹⁵ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 34 (Kindle).

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 49 (Kindle).

⁹⁷ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 413 (Kindle).

⁹⁸ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 398 (Kindle).

In the book *Unapologetic Theology*,⁹⁹ William Placher deals with the challenges that the reality of other religions imposes on Christianity, arguing for an active participation in inter-religious dialogue. What is characteristic of Placher's thesis is his emphasis that if Christianity wants to bring a meaningful contribution to the conversation, it must present something that characterizes its identity and, therefore, enriches the dialogue by bringing new information, knowledge, a new perspective. Therefore, an affirmation of faith as *fides quae* is necessary. The central dogma of Christian faith is that the gracious God has sent his very Son into the world. Paying the debt of our sin, the Son brought forgiveness and newness of life to whoever believes in Him. Christ, therefore, is the foundation of the Christian faith. The knowledge of such a new and disruptive perspective of who God is and of what he does for us is, itself, a gift. However, that good news is also the power of God that brings salvation to whoever believes in him (Rom. 1:16). Since "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" (Rom. 10:17), the gift of faith as *fides quae* has the power to also bring the gift of faith as *fides qua*.

Willing to bestow the gift of faith, a campus pastor will boldly, humbly and kindly share the gift of *fides quae*, praying that the gift of *fides qua* will also be given by God. As it was shown through Barclay's thesis above, in a society that valued the worth of the receiver, Paul presented a gift that was given without any condition. In Paul's preaching, God's ultimate act of beneficence towards humanity was a world-changing event that took place in the death and resurrection of Christ. Through that, God conquered sin and death and now freely offers forgiveness and newness of life. That transformative gift is given with no demand of any kind of

⁹⁹ William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989).

worth present in the receiver.¹⁰⁰ That incongruous character of God's gift breaks with the need of any human judgment on someone's worthiness. It detaches God's grace from human social demands.¹⁰¹ All can receive the gift and the giving of the gift occurs without any cultural, religious, or ethnic demand.

Since the Word of God is understood by Christianity as being timeless, the same disruptive power of the message of the free gift in Christ that gave origin to communities of faith outside Jewish cultural, social, and ethnic boundaries two thousand years ago can still transform people's lives today, especially those deeply marked by sin's brutality. The living testimony of the grace of God has the power to impact those people whose self-esteem has been historically violated through prejudice. It can help them to understand their value as beloved children of God in a world that has not treated them accordingly. It can give them the existential, psychological, emotional safety that one finds in Jesus' arms, and at the same time empower them to face prejudice with courage, certain of their value as God's redeemed people. Such an approach is also inspired by Paul's attitude in Ephesus, where he avoided a direct confrontation with Diana, but bestowed a gift that transformed the culture. That is the power of the faith that is given as a gift.

Hope

"We are saved by faith alone; but the faith that saves never remains alone."¹⁰² It is from that faith that "springs the good hope of believers."¹⁰³ Because faith directs our lives to God, he

¹⁰⁰ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 352.

¹⁰¹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 355.

¹⁰² Bruce M. Metzger, *Apostolic Letters of Faith, Hope and Love* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2006), 491.

¹⁰³ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1415 (Kindle).

becomes the only one from whom “we hope to do well.”¹⁰⁴ That starts with the very doctrine of Creation, which, by pointing out the goodness of God’s hands, works both as a *rememoration* of God’s original plan and as a *anticipation* of what he wills to us.¹⁰⁵ In other words, our “faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:21), because we believe what he has done and what he will do.

The hope that attaches itself to the faith on God’s lordship, goodness and mercy is expressed, in Augustine’s opinion, through the Lord’s Prayer. His reflections, I believe, display the understanding of an eschatology that is not limited to future cosmic events, but which is directly connected to the Christ event and is performed throughout the time of grace inaugurated by Jesus’ death and resurrection. For Augustine, in the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer “we ask for blessings that are to be enjoyed forever; which are indeed begun in this world, and grow in us as we grow in grace, but in their perfect state, which is to be looked for in another life, shall be a possession for evermore.”¹⁰⁶ In the last four petitions, we ask for the wants of this earthly life. It is here in this world that we need spiritual and physical nourishment; it is here that we need forgiveness, for that is where we commit sins; it is here that we need protection and deliverance, for it is in this world that evil has an active presence, and it is also here that we face all kinds of temptations. In the life that is to come there will be none of those needs.¹⁰⁷ To put those petitions before God in prayer is an act of hope sustained by the assurances of the faith. Hope, therefore, stands on the faith that believes in a heavenly and gracious Father, that is ensured by His love, that is certain that all blessings that we need will come from his hands. As a Father, he is concerned with our lives as a whole, which includes spiritual and physical demands.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1415 (Kindle).

¹⁰⁵ Wall, “Economy of the Gift,” 52.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1422 (Kindle).

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1422 (Kindle).

Therefore, we always hope good from his hands, either in this life or in the life that it is to come.

That understanding of hope is not a passive waiting for a heavenly life that will come someday. It is to live here and now in the peace granted by the faith that trusts God's care. That takes away the anxiety we usually bear due to the innumerable challenges we face in this sinful world. It invites us to rest on God in days of unholiness, wickedness, scarcity, insensitivity and temptation. Hope engenders endurance before this world's difficulties and, at the same time, inspires our living. In Christ we see God's love and power, through which he both wills and is able to fulfill his promises. If the cross stands for suffering, the resurrection stands for fullness of life. That life was already won for us and will be fully established in Jesus' return. Therefore, we are invited to "set [our] hope on the grace to be brought to [us] when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming" (1 Pet. 1:13). In that sense, the thing that we hope for becomes an element that can shape our present. This understanding reflects Jürgen Moltmann's main thesis. As one who learned through his own experience in World War II how evil can permeate human existence, Moltmann found in his faith on God's promises the hope that sustained him and shaped his own presence in the world. That hope is not rooted in our humanity, but on what God accomplished through Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁸ Such a realized eschatology is also supported by theologians such as Paul Ricoeur, who asserted the ethical role of hope in our lives.

Ordinary human relations remain fallen and finite. However, the kingdom of God can be realized in this world insofar as it transforms human relations under the limit-experience of hope. Despite the impossibility of our bringing all human goods into an inclusive social order, we can be moved by the radical experience of hope to transform human relations in the direction of ever greater reconciliation.¹⁰⁹

Willing to bestow gifts of hope, a campus pastor's living testimony represents a

¹⁰⁸ Cesar Kuzma "O Teólogo Jürgen Moltmann e o seu Caminhar Teológico Realizado na Esperança," *Atualidade Teológica* 43 (2013), accessed August 7, 2019, <https://www.maxwell.vrac.puc-rio.br/22671/22671.PDF>.

¹⁰⁹ Wall, "Economy of the Gift," 251.

transforming gift on those whose lives are marked by injustice, prejudice, and social segregation. Commenting on how hope can characterize Peter's first letter, Bruce Metzger argues that the main issue addressed by the apostle is the fact that his audience was "beginning to face the hot breath of the furnace of persecution."¹¹⁰ Thus, Peter writes in order to encourage them through the hope we have in Jesus Christ. That hope will sustain an attitude that, even before evil, will live motivated by love, "looking with open eyes as to how [one] can help [his] neighbors."¹¹¹ Christian hope is not a mere expectation that things will get better, but a real conviction that as we lay our lives in God's hands he will cover us with grace. Thus, all those who suffer are invited to rest on God, enduring in faith, hope and love the challenges life presents to us. That hope, even though it looks to the future, impacts our very present. It gives us the spiritual and emotional energy to endure, grants us peace and motivates us, despite our sufferings, to sustain others as they walk their ways in life.

People who were outcasts, people who were slaves, people who did not amount to anything in the social pool... These are people who felt despondent. This [Peter's] letter is to encourage them to have hope, to have confidence. Why? Because God has chosen them. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."¹¹²

Peter's words to a segregated community are encouragement to all of those who, suffering the consequences of their ancestors' violent banishment, can find in God's adoption a new and permanent belonging. "Hope is the experience of the radical possibility that love will give rise to a universal human community, despite the tragedy of human singularity and one-sidedness."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Metzger, *Apostolic Letters*, 571.

¹¹¹ Metzger, *Apostolic Letters*, 615.

¹¹² Metzger, *Apostolic Letters*, 615.

¹¹³ Wall, "Economy of the Gift," 251.

Love

Augustine's understanding of love¹¹⁴ is directed by the biblical connection of love with the will of God, since every commandment has love for its aim.¹¹⁵ God's will is expressed through the love of God and the love towards our neighbor. Love is the principle that nurtures an ethical life in this world; what we do or do not do must flow from our love to God and our love to our neighbor. Love decentralizes us from ourselves, directing our lives not to our self-interest and self-indulgence (depicted by Augustine as *lust*), but to the Other and to the others. If, on the one hand, faith grants us freedom; on the other hand, love restrains and conquers our selfishness.¹¹⁶ Such a *decentralizing* understanding of love is expressed through many biblical passages. John 3:16, for example, teaches us that the love of God, the Father, made him give up that which was most precious to him, his only Son, in order to save the world. The same author, also known as the *beloved disciple*, records Jesus' words as his Master defined the ideal of love: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friend" (John 15:13).

That *decentralizing* move is rooted in God. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Because "God is love" (1 John 4:8), all that he does he does in love. His action towards us characterizes love as self-giving. Creation itself speaks of a God that is not centralized in himself, but who, from his self-sufficient being, gives existence to other beings. Because he is love, he establishes a relationship with his creation, which comes to the point of giving himself through Jesus Christ for our salvation. In order to restore us to his likeness, he gives himself to us

¹¹⁴ Reflecting on Paul's affirmation of love being the highest of all gifts, Augustine affirms "For when there is a question as to whether a man is good, one does not ask what he believes, or what he hopes, but what he loves. For the man who loves aright no doubt believes and hopes aright; whereas the man who has not love believes in vain." Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1448 (Kindle).

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1492 (Kindle).

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 1506 (Kindle).

in Spirit, making us his dwelling place. As it is articulated by Metzger,

God, according to the scriptures, does many things. He creates, he judges, he sustains, he loves. But when John says here, “God is love,” that is a still more wonderful and profound statement, because all of God’s activities are activities done in accordance with his nature, which is love. So when God’s activity is that of creating, he creates according to his essence. According to his nature, he creates in love. When he sustains, he sustains you and me in love. It is according to his nature. When he judges, he judges in accordance with his nature. All that God does—and God’s activity is referred to many times—is done in accordance with his nature, which involves self-giving love.¹¹⁷

The fulfillment of God’s love as Christ’s self-giving opens new perspectives on how that love impacts our daily lives. In John 13:34, Jesus says: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Often set aside, the word *new* is significant in Jesus’ utterance. It implies the existence of something old, a previous command, which was “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). But the standard established by Jesus’ life and death is much more elevated than any previous command. It is sacrificial love.

Since it is the nature of God to love, it is his nature to give. Love manifests itself by promoting other’s welfare. The incongruent character of God’s gift articulated above is directly related to his loving nature, which is also incongruent. His works of love towards humanity are not based on any kind of merit nor sustained by any divine expectation. They are the free expression of God’s nature, He promotes the well-being of his creatures despite their lack of merit or their incapacity to reciprocate. Such a reasoning breaks with our logic of equivalence.

Any concern for others' genuine otherness has to rupture and disorient our ordinary finitude and partiality. Christian love ought not to be understood as an emotion or a virtue, or in any other way confined within ordinary human experience or understanding. It must, instead, be understood to radically reorient our fallen logic of equivalence around the more primordial logic of God's superabundant gift.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Metzger, *Apostolic Letters*, 976.

¹¹⁸ Wall, “Economy of the Gift,” 246.

Willing to bestow gifts of love, a campus pastor will act in order to promote his community's well-being despite their faith and their values. Inspired by Muck and Adeney's *spiral of knowledge* and Sánchez's *neighbor oriented approach*¹¹⁹ articulated above, we affirm that in order to live according to God's will as we relate to other human beings, we must focus on the specific needs of the actual neighbors we are called to serve. Thus, the campus pastor's ministry will be flexible and sensitive to people's diversity as they live their continual movement in life.¹²⁰ Inspired by their faith, campus pastors' works of love towards the members of the campus community will not be based on any kind of human standard nor even depend on any evangelistic expectation. Being aware of concepts such as structural racism, recreational racism, institutional racism; acknowledging the economic, educational, professional and social segregation that impacts the lives of many Brazilians due to a history of oppression; understanding the resistance movements triggered by racism and prejudice, which include the rescue and affirmation of African descendants' identities through Afro-Brazilian religiosity; campus pastors will be much more capable of serving those people according to their needs. They will support equality policies, academic organizations, extension events, human right's campaigns, and any other work that promotes the dismantling of social segregation. They will be in touch with black communities, learn from staff, faculty and students what are their needs as African descendants or as descendants of any other segregated ethnicity. They will lecture on equality, give speeches against racism, and promote extension programs that aim at building an integrative community. They will engage in what Sánchez calls a "hopeful love," namely, a type of humanizing task in the *coram mundo* sphere of righteousness (or justice), according to which

¹¹⁹ Sánchez "The Human Face of Justice," 117–32.

¹²⁰ Sánchez, "The Human Face of Justice," 119.

“hope does not only give love a future orientation but actually gives love its sense of realistic discontent with the present status quo and its expectation of and working toward a better future for the neighbor and society.”¹²¹ In that way, the chaplain’s vocation will accomplish its role as the place where needs and gifts meet.

Conclusion

The dissertation’s first chapter contextualized the research question by recognizing the challenges generated by today’s religious pluralist trends to ULBRA’s campus pastors’ ministry. The second chapter presented the *giftive metaphor* as an avenue on how ULBRA’s campus pastors can work on inter-religious dialogue in the university’s pluralist context. The third chapter worked on an assessment of the giftive paradigm through the Lutheran lens of the Two Kinds of Righteousness. Functioning as a concluding session, chapter four worked as a sample exposition on how Christian campus pastors and practitioners of other religions can benefit from a relationship that is understood as giftive in nature.

In contrast to a congregational call, campus ministry does display specific characteristics. Those peculiarities can be utilized depending on how deep the Christian ethos permeates the confessional university the pastor serves. That is surely the case with ULBRA’s campus pastors. Different reasons make it a very diverse community, which not only challenges the Christian witness but also generates numerous opportunities to bestow gifts and be enriched by others’ gifts. Through the many relationships that are established, fulfilling the university’s mission as a

¹²¹ Leopoldo A. Sánchez, “The Struggle to Express Our Hope,” *LOGIA* 19, no. 1 (2010): 30. Using the distinction between the TKR to speak about hope, the author explains further that “active righteousness is not primarily concerned with individual holiness but is above all ‘social,’ concerned with the neighbor and society. If the language of ‘hopeful trust’ can be used to describe the fullness of being human *coram Deo* then perhaps the language of ‘hopeful love’ can describe what it means to be human *coram mundo*.” Sánchez, “Struggle to Express our Hope,” 30.

learning community, pastors can improve the work they do as they understand it in a giftive way. Such an approach both opens space to the consideration and valuing of the gifts displayed by others. This approach will shape the pastor's ministry as one which serves people by not only enriching their lives spiritually, but also physically, socially, academically and emotionally.

The specific consideration of Afro-Brazilian religiosity, even though it was done in a limited manner, was able to demonstrate how a giftive dialogue can take place between Christianity and other religions, suggesting that dialogical relations, filled with boldness, humbleness and kindness, can be transformative.

In order for that to take place, a genuine commitment to learn from other experiences is necessary. Muck and Adeney's *spiral of knowledge* showed itself to be a prominent approach in that endeavor. It helps at breaking through pre-conceived ideas, which are socially constructed and can often blur the way we understand and live our own faith. Because sin permeates any human undertaking, even a culture traditionally marked by the Christian values can become a tool of oppression and violence, violating its very faith by forcing it to fit or sustain human sinfulness. Therefore, the discernment proposed by Muck and Adeney is of fundamental importance, because among other things it situates our faith in culture but does not allow us to confuse it with culture.

As the understanding of the Christian faith is freed from biased ties, it recovers its disruptive nature. It makes us realize that our thoughts are not God's thoughts, and our ways are not God's ways (Isa. 55:8). As that happens, our mind is opened to God's "most excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31), one that displays God's love and along with it his grace, glory and power through the recognition of the many gifts he has continually bestowed to us. At same time, it directs our existence through a decentralizing process, which helps us to understand that the reason of our

existence is not located in ourselves, but in God and in those he gave us to love the same way he loved us.

Such a view will make every Christian understand that, as we live our faith, also and especially as pastors of a university community,

“[w]e are more than conquerors of other peoples, more than harvesters of souls, more than winners of metaphysical arguments: we are the bearers of gifts. We bring to the world the greatest of all gifts, the story of what God has done for the world through Jesus Christ.”¹²²

¹²² Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, 162 (Kindle).

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