Presentation of the Dossier

In the 1993, Richard Dawkins, a critical evolutionary biologist of creationism and intelligent design, professor of public understanding at Oxford University, wrote a rather provocative letter to the editor of *The Independent*. Some extracts from the letter:

Sir: In your dismally unctuous leading article (18 March) asking for a reconciliation between science and “theology”, you remark that “people want to know as much as possible about their origins”. I certainly hope they do, but what on earth makes you think that “theology” has anything useful to say on the subject? [...]

What has “theology” ever said that is of the smallest use to anybody? When has “theology” ever said anything that is demonstrably true and is not obvious? [...] If all the achievements of theologians were wiped out tomorrow, would anyone notice the smallest difference? [...] The achievements of theologians don’t do anything, don’t affect anything, don’t achieve anything, don’t even mean anything. What makes you think that “theology” is a subject at all?¹

Dawkins is avowedly an adversary of theology, but when we put aside our discomfort and/or resentment toward him, his questions and assertions offer a great starting point for a reflection on the theological doing. The achievements of theologians do not affect anything! Really? Are we doing “mere theology”, to allude to the idea of Harold Wilson, a British politician, of describing with such pejorative expression anything that seemed distant and obtuse?² The public face of theology, from which the articles collected in this dossier are representatives, indicates that it is not. Since Duncan Forrester, a pioneer of public theology, the field seems to have taken inspiration and advanced reflection on the realities of modern life, covering a spectrum that stretches from issues involving ethics (social, racial etc.) violence, going through the law and the assumptions about justice until the discussions in the field of politics and the environment.

¹ Cf. DAWKINS, Richard. Letter: Scientific versus theological knowledge. *The Independent*, 20 mar. 1993. Disponível em: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letter-scientific-versus-theological-knowledge-1498837.html>>. Acesso em 30 nov. 2018.

² Cf. FORRESTER, Duncan. *Christian Justice and Public Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 27.

Reverberating an interdisciplinary effort that is characteristic of the field, the articles in this volume face real life and seek to judge from that place, that is, the reality that is beyond the Church itself and the academy itself. Thus, the texts that make up the first part of the dossier **Public Theology** are particularly interested in reflecting on contextual theology, the problematic relationship between science and faith, on the articulation of ecological ethics from the theology and on the subjectivity of relationships in Christian counseling.

Right from the beginning and with recourse to divine *shalom*, **Integral Salvation in Latin America: brief biblical-theological essay from Theology of Integral Mission**, by Sidney Moraes Sanches, presents the pertinent discussion on salvation from the perspective of Integral Mission Theology, with a focus on the Latin American environment, taking into account in this way the contextuality of theology, that is, a theological elaboration that has roots in its social, political context, cultural, religious and economic. The second contribution, **The interconnection of science and faith with focus on the benefits that this union brings to the formation of students in higher education**, by Rogério de Assis e Jorge Luiz Freire de Aquino, is an argument in favor of the positive and productive relationship between science and faith, greatness whose integration, challenging Dawkins' criticism, can offer broader and more critical training perspectives to higher education students. Taking the crisis of epistemology as a starting point, the third article, **Ecology: a question of public theology**, by Roberto Carlos Conceição Porto, introduces theories of ecofeminist theology to discuss the public dimension of ecotheology. But not just that. There is also an evaluative concern in the text, to analyze if and to what extent ecoteology is a subject relevant to the scope of public theology.

The electoral process for the executive branch in 2018 only confirms the warning made by Jürgen Habermas: "It is an irresponsible attitude not to recognize the intervention of religious action in the public sphere". The heterogeneous group of evangelicals is highlighted not only by its demographic growth, media visibility etc., but also by its rupture with a posture of alienation regarding party politics. He is a fundamental actor, organized in a surprising number of figures. Despite the experiences of evangelicals (historic) still elected in the Old Republic and also in the post-Vargas period, it is undoubtedly in the 1988 Constituent Assembly that the expressive insertion of the politicians of the faith in the representative houses takes place. The context is the (re)democratization of the country, added to the explosion of the Pentecostal movement in Brazil and Latin America. On this track,

the article **God, the Bible and evangelicals in the Constituent Assembly (1987-1988)**, by Sidney Melo, makes the rescue of the clash around two propositions that marked this beginning of the evangelical participation in politics: the obligation of a copy of the Bible in the “Table of the Constituent Assembly” and the registry of the expression “under the protection of God” in the preamble of the one that would be known as the Citizen Constitution of 1988.

The next three articles, purposively sequential, testify to transdisciplinarity and relevance as purposes of this journal through the Human Sciences: a specialist with postdoctoral studies in Communication; an expert with postdoctoral research in Education, with co-authored article; and a specialist with doctoral studies in Sciences of the Religion, but also in Social Sciences, with co-authored article.

Another mark of contemporaneity is speed and the multiple instruments of communication. Knowledge, of all kinds, is increasingly being disseminated and available, rapidly and in great quantity, as well as cultural exchanges, typical in the context of Globalization/Transnationalization. The advent of so-called “Social Media” or “Digital Social Networks” has made possible a scenario of massive expansion of the act of communicating and, for good or ill, given a voice to many people. In the climate of the 2018 elections, there was a growing awareness of the use of these new channels of communication to campaign, debate and finally accuse each other through fake news. The article **Affirm humanizing communication in the perspective of Public Theology**, by Magali do Nascimento Cunha, brings to light the character of the faith and its communicative act in the public dimension, from the Latin American method “See, Judge and Act” and the analysis of the narrative of Genesis. It points out challenges to a faith that is relevant, beyond the private sphere.

Religious education and its offer in public schools has been one of the guidelines for discussion of the secular state. In 2017, the Federal Supreme Court, by 6 x 5 votes, recognized the legitimacy of the discipline, under the confessional model in Brazilian basic education. In view of the fact that the country is multicultural and multireligious, the court’s decision seems to contradict article 19 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, following the same path taken in the signing of the Brazil-Vatican Concordat in 2010. The year 2018 is also symptomatic by the resumption, with force, of the campaign for approval of the bill denominated “School without Party”. The proponents of such a project understand that the classroom is not a place to discuss gender identity, as well as understand that there is ideological indoctrination on the

part of teachers and, in the limit, the exercise of teaching has confronted a naturalized moral standard in Brazilian society and families, mostly Christian. The article **Religion and education in the Constituent Assembly of 1934: congruences between eugenic thinking and the defense of religious teaching**, by Rafael de Souza Oliveira e Marcelo Furlin, analyzes this relationship between religious teaching and morality in the context of the first phase of the Getúlio Vargas administration. Emblematic period, due to the fact that Brazil recently broke away from what became known as “the first secular wave” (1891-1931), at least in the prescriptive field.

The article **Theoretical and didactic aspects of the formation of the teacher of the religious education: perspectives based on the Religion Studies and the National Curricular Common Base**, by Nathália Ferreira de Sousa Martins e Elisa Rodrigues, we find a reflection on the formation of Teachers of Religious Education, before the new Brazilian educational proposal, with emphasis on respect for the religious diversity scenario, present in the country.

This edition also has the memory of Rubem Alves, in the article **Theology as desire, dialogue, and absence: a brief scope of intersections between Rubem Alves and biblical wisdom theology**, by Felipe Silva Carmo, here, it is possible to find a discussion from the sapiential texts (Job, Proverb and Ecclesiastes) and some notes on the difficulty of thinking a “Theology of Wisdom”, which contemplates the various aspects of Theology, at present, such as expression dialogue and the possibility of absence.

And we closed the edition with the text **ENCRISTUS: an experience of catholic-pentecostal dialogue in Brazil**, by André Luís da Rosa, in which the author presents historical aspects of a movement that arises in 2008, which brings together Catholics of Charismatic and Pentecostal renewal, who unite in search of unity and holiness.

So, we gladly deliver this dossier to the readers, hoping that the interdisciplinary provocations present in this edition will collaborate with the practices and reflections on Public Theology. Good reading!

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