

Dossier: Fundamentalisms and Democracy – Presentation



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Dossiê: Fundamentalismos e Democracia

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In 2021, we will complete 20 years of the September 11 attacks. While the whole world watched in astonishment at the destruction of the World Trade Center Twin Towers, a concept became a recurring feature in newspaper headlines and debates about the causes and meanings of those attacks: fundamentalism. Previously used exclusively to designate conservative sectors of American Protestantism – clinging to literalist interpretations of sacred texts and averse to the implications of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution – especially since 1979, with the Iranian Revolution and the rise of the Moral Majority in America, fundamentalism gained ground in academic reflections and writings as a form of “politically engaged faith” and one of the major challenges to democratic regimes and the secularity of the State in the contemporary world.

This new issue of Horizonte brings its readers the dossier Fundamentalisms and Democracy. The definition of what fundamentalism is and the limits and possibilities of using this concept has been the subject of a series of debates and controversies among scholars on this topic.¹ Despite this, it is practically a

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¹ See: PIERUCCI, Antônio Flávio. Fundamentalismo e integristismo: os nomes e a coisa. **Revista USP**, n. 13, p. 144-156, 1992; ROCHA, Daniel. Sob o estigma do fundamentalismo: algumas reflexões sobre um conceito controverso. **Horizonte – Revista de Estudos de Teologia e Ciências da Religião**, v. 18, n. 56, p. 455-484, 2020; WATT, David Harrington; WOOD, Simon A. **Fundamentalism: perspectives on a contested history**. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014.

consensus among researchers that there is an unavoidable political dimension of religious fundamentalism. R. Scott Appleby says that not every devout religious is a fundamentalist, but “a genuine fundamentalist is both religious and political” and believes that “circumstances require him to act politically (and perhaps violently), in order to fulfill his religious obligations” (APPLEBY, 1998, p. 280).

Inspired by their interpretations of the sacred texts' contents, fundamentalist groups around the world have been showing expressive political strength at the dawn of the third decade of the 21st century. And this strength is expressed in the conquest of political space within the democratic process (with some politicians committed to fundamentalist perspectives showing great electoral viability), through the formation of lobbies and pressure groups to defend their interests and values and, in more extreme cases, through violence and confrontation with the constituted powers. These multifaceted relations between fundamentalism and politics, especially within democratic regimes, are addressed by the texts that make up this dossier.

The Fundamentalisms and Democracy dossier consists of 11 articles by Brazilian and foreign researchers. The first text is **High on Jesus: US evangelicals and the counterculture** by Axel Schäfer, professor at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz (Germany). Discussing the context of the turn of the 1960s to the 1970s, the historian disputes a current perspective among researchers of the American Christian Right that the political mobilization of conservative sectors of American Protestantism would have been a reaction to the 1960s, especially to the counterculture. Schäfer seeks to demonstrate that the relationship between conservative evangelicals and counterculture is much more complex and that “the merger of evangelical Christianity and countercultural styles, rather than their antagonism, ended up being one of the most enduring legacies of the sixties”.

In the sequence, we have the article **Il islamico fondamentalismo: una risposta sbagliata alla domanda di democrazia** de Vincenzo (Enzo) Pace, professor at the Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy). Discussing the

developments of the so-called “Arab Spring”, the article seeks to show how the collective movements involved in the protests in the main squares of the capitals of many Arab countries, interpreted the need for political and economic changes that had been neglected by the governments of those countries. In this context, one can speak of two types of collective movements present there: revolt movements in a political battle for the advent of democracy and fundamentalist movements in search of the establishment of regimes based on religious and authoritarian foundations.

In **Secular State and religious dynamics in Brazil: tensions and dissonances**, Marcelo Camurça (UFJF), Emerson José Sena da Silveira (UFJF) and Péricles Andrade (UFS) seek to examine, in a socio-historical perspective, important aspects of religion in the Brazilian public space and “to demonstrate the ‘porosity’ of the Brazilian public/political system with the religious milieu.”

Heiberle Hirsberg Horácio (UNIMONTES) presents **Fundamentalism and Political Religion: a possibility of policy as religion** an important conceptual discussion for the relations between religion and politics studies. The possibilities of articulating the concept of fundamentalism with that of Political Religion and Civil Religion are analyzed, as well as the differences between Political Religion, Civil Religion and Public Religion.

In the article **Gianni Vattimo & Jean-Luc Nancy: the democratic fundamentalism**, Julio Paulo Tavares Zabatiero (FTSA) and Jonathan Michelson de Menezes (FTSA), starting from the interpretation of texts by the philosophers Gianni Vattimo and Jean-Luc Nancy, develop their discussion around the argument that “thinking about democracy can itself be fundamentalist, implying that not only religious fundamentalisms are a threat to contemporary democracy.”

The dossier continues with **The Fundamentalist Translation: hermeneutic equivalences between exclusivist theologies and elitist democratic models** by Jefferson Zeferino (PUC-PR) and Rodrigo de Andrade

(PUC-PR). In the article, the authors seek to interpret “the public presence of Christian churches and their political representatives based on translation as a hermeneutical process in which relationship between religion and public space is observed”.

In **Pathological effects of fundamentalism: reconnecting as a response to healthy coexistence**, Jovino Pizzi (UFPEl) “performs a speculative-philosophical analysis” of the fundamentalist discourse and, on the other hand, “it tries to highlight the proposal for a healthy coexistence”. In contrast to staggering fundamentalism, responsible for social anomalies, “the study points out the alternative of a philosophy of life”.

Starting a sequence of articles that address the issue of fundamentalism in the current political-religious context in Brazil, João Décio Passos (PUC-SP) presents the article **A pentecostal theocracy? Considerations based on the current political situation**. The author analyzes the participation of Pentecostal politicians and leaders in Brazilian politics and government and argues “that the Pentecostals working in the current government seek a religious foundation capable of overcoming the crisis that the Brazilian state and society would be experiencing”.

Carlos Alberto Motta Cunha (PUC Minas) discusses the impacts of fundamentalist elements in the Brazilian evangelical milieu in the article **Brazilian-style fundamentalism: Protestantism of Mission, its profile and focus on Brazil**. Starting from the beginnings of fundamentalism in American Protestantism at the beginning of the 20th century, the author discusses the permanence of that theological root in Mission Protestantism in Brazil and indicates some elements that would characterize a “Brazilian-style fundamentalism” with its religious and political impacts on contemporary Brazil.

In **Fundamentalist evangelicals and politics: an analysis of the Brazilian situation (2018-2019)**, Breno Martins Campos (PUC Campinas) seeks – based on an analysis of the situation of the last years of Brazilian politics –

“to understand the relations between fundamentalist evangelicals and politics in Brazil”. Throughout the article, the author seeks to discuss the relationship between fundamentalist perspectives from conservative sectors of the Brazilian evangelical milieu, especially Zionism fostered by a dispensationalist eschatological perspective, and the relationship with the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of the Republic in 2018.

Concluding the dossier, we have the article **Evangelicals and conservatism - elective affinities: the new configurations of democracy in Brazil** by Paulo Gracino de Souza Júnior (IUPERJ / UCAM) and Carlos Henrique Pereira de Souza (UERJ). Dialoging with important references of Social Sciences and analyzing the “movements” of conservative evangelical groups in Brazilian politics, the argument of the article is developed from “the hypothesis that the affinity that attracts evangelicals and conservatism is much more linked to the discursive conditions that engender the subjects and their subjectivities, than the characteristics intrinsic to Christian theology or, specifically, evangelical Pentecostal”.

This issue’s Free Thematic section features 4 articles. The first one is **Learning in the field of academic supervision methodology** by Faustino Teixeira (UFJF). In the text, the author presents and discusses the academic supervision method he developed from his experience (of more than three decades) as a teacher and advisor in the area of Religious Studies and Theology. “In addition to indicating the steps of this method, with important and practical observations, there is an application example on how to write an article”.

In **The interdisciplinary relations in Sciences of Religions**, Elisa Pereira Gonsalves Possebon (UFPB) and Fabrício Possebon (UFPB) discuss the importance of interdisciplinarity for “the field of knowledge of Sciences of Religion”. In addition, the article “highlights the identity of the Sciences of Religions as a discipline and refers to the importance of interdisciplinary dialogues for the production of new knowledge”.

Carlos Flávio Teixeira (UNASP) deals with the discussion of Martin Luther's two kinds of justice in **The perspective of the two types of justice in Luther as a critical response to contemporary crises: an option of thinking theologically the justice in dark times**. In addition to resuming this discussion in the thought of the reformer, Teixeira analyses the importance of this discussion in the contemporary context, "highlighting the relevance of the studied perspective and its plausibility as an option for thinking theologically about justice in dark times".

In the last article of the Free Thematic section, we have the text **Pilgrimages in lives: cyber-devotions and virtual sanctuaries in time of pandemic** by Magno Francisco de Jesus Santos (UFRN). In the text, the author works with the "use the social network Facebook in the process of informing and transmitting celebrations in Catholic shrines", analyzing the construction of new practices (Cyberdevotions) and sociability in Catholic religiosity in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the Free Thematic - Translation section, this edition of Horizonte brings the text **Language, epistemology, and mysticism** by Steven T. Katz, professor at Boston University (USA). The translation of the article was carried out by Brasil Fernandes de Barros, master and doctoral student in Religious Studies in the PPGCR PUC Minas. As presented by the translator, Katz's text "deals with epistemological issues of mystique and problematizes a series of conceptions on this theme".

As informed in the previous issue, this will be the last edition of Horizonte that will feature the Communications section. In its farewell, the section brings the texts **In creation, a Christian spirituality that decolonializes** by Diego Irrarrázaval from Universidad Silva Henriquez (Chile) and **Spirituality and Theology of Creation** by Elisabeth Steffens from the University of Bremen (Germany).

In the last sections of this issue, we have reviews and summaries of theses and dissertations recently defended in graduate programs in the area of Religious Studies and Theology.

Finally, we wish you all a great and fruitful reading of this issue of *Horizonte*. For authors interested in submitting their texts, the call for papers for the next dossiers (2021-2022) is now available on our website. May 2021 be an excellent year for all and that we can overcome, as quickly as possible, the sufferings and adversities of this terrible pandemic that we face.

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