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Dossier: Practices of Conversion and Missionary Work (12th–17th Centuries)

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We are very pleased to present yet another issue of HORIZONTE, journal of theology and religious studies, currently dedicated to the dossier “*Practices of Conversion and Missionary Work (12th–17th Centuries)*.” This temporal and thematic focus allows us to delve into the continuous transformations of the institutional branches of ecclesiastical power, which, from the Middle Ages through modern times, were committed to establishing Christianity in Europe and other parts of the world.

Over the centuries, ecclesiastics proposed reforms to the practices of the clergy and the laity, establishing guidelines for Christian catechesis and missionary work. Given the diversity of the kingdoms, we observe that these norms and prescriptions were constantly updated to adapt to local challenges and incorporate Christian customs into local culture. We understand that this dynamic of adapting pastoral ministry extended to the New World, responding to the challenges of missionary work on the American continent and reconciling the universality of Christianity with the cultural diversity found there.

To examine these specific aspects and the various strategies for teaching faith, we have compiled a valuable collection of research studies in this dossier

The dossier begins with the article “*Antonio Vieira and preaching in the*

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17th century: moving, convincing and persuading,” by Marcio Luiz Fernandes. The author presents the elements that characterize the theology of Baroque Scholastic preaching, demonstrating how the Jesuit integrated psychological, cognitive, and affective elements to convert his listeners. Based on Aristotelian-Thomistic psychosomatic theory, the study uses the sermon on the stigmata of St. Francis to illustrate how the intellect, memory, and passions of the soul were mobilized in the service of persuasion and conversion.

The second paper, *“Political uses of conversion projects on the Amazon frontier (17th century)”*, by André José Santos Pompeu, explores the mission as a frontier institution, demonstrating how the conversion of indigenous peoples was used by the Iberian states to ensure political and economic supremacy, while also highlights the leading role played by native groups in this process. This text highlights how the populations along the Marañon, Solimões, and Negro rivers could negotiate and take advantage of their new status as “vassals of the king,” which their conversion to Catholicism conferred upon them.

Next, Guillermo Arquero presents the essay *“Kings, lords, subjects and vassals: The ecclesiastical pastoral on the ideal political relationships in Castile (14th to 17th centuries)”*, in which he examines the moral principles taught by the Church in pastoral writings regarding the relationship and responsibilities between rulers and the ruled. Drawing on confession manuals and treatises read in the Crown of Castile, the study provides a detailed account of the casuistry surrounding the legitimacy of authority, the collection of taxes, and the limits of the duty of obedience.

With the paper *“Friar Manoel Calado between Catholics and Calvinists: religious intolerances in Dutch colonial territories in 17th century (1630-1654)”*, Regina de Carvalho Ribeiro da Costa is the author of the fourth article. Using the Records of the Lisbon Inquisition Prosecutor to investigate the friar’s activities, his persecution, and his importance to preserve Catholicism in Dutch Brazil, the author reveals how the friar’s friendship with the Count of Nassau—more than his missionary work—aroused suspicion and triggered the intricate *modus operandi* of the Inquisition tribunal.

The fifth article, “*Christian practice and idolatry in 17th-century New Spain*,” is written by Ana Carolina Machado de Souza. The text analyzes the accounts of idolatry presented by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón and Jacinto de la Serna considering the new ecclesiastical legal regime established by the Third Mexican Provincial Council. By comparing these two colonial sources, the study reveals the ecclesiastical action plans devised to eradicate superstitions and improve catechesis aimed at the indigenous population.

Concluding the dossier, we present Leonor Taiano’s essay, “*Building a local and universal hero in Vida de Gerónimo de Figueroa*,” which examines how Francisco de Florencia’s work articulates medieval and Counter-Reformation hagiographic motifs within the contextual framework of the missions in New Spain. The research highlights how New Spaniards were aware of their significance within the viceregal realm and in the preservation of the universal monarchy, creating a tension between the processes of integration and exclusion of Creoles within religious orders.

In the Free Theme section, we have six significant contributions. The first of these is “*Political learning and methodology: spirituality and sharing group*,” in which Stephen Silva Simim and Amauri Carlos Ferreira analyze the experiences and political learning of young Catholics in the outskirts of Belo Horizonte during the decade of the 1990s. Using thematic oral history, the authors demonstrate how human maturation and spirituality provided lasting frameworks for transformative actions in society, transcending the ecclesial sphere itself.

The second article, “*Teaching women to be good Christians in the Iberian area in 13th century: didactic function of female hagiographic models in Romance languages*,” by Isabel Ilzarbe, explores how High Medieval hagiography conveyed values and ideals of conduct to women with a view toward eternal salvation. Through an analysis of Iberian poems focused on female martyrs, nuns, and penitents, the study reveals how the clergy’s ideas emphasized chastity and penance, exposing a context marked by clear misogyny.

Following this, Juliana Calabresei Voss Duarte and Terezinha Oliveira

present “*Clashes present in the letters of Jerome (347-420 ad) and Augustine exchanged between Justine (354-430 ad): the expression of projects in defense of Christian education,*” highlighting the defense of the Christian faith amid the differences between these two important patristic authors. The analysis of eleven epistles illustrates how, despite a lack of consensus on certain topics, both maintained their ecclesiastical authority to consolidate a solid project of human formation that would endure for centuries.

The fourth article in this section is “The action of “being moved by compassion” (σπλαγχνίζομαι) in Jesus' dialogue with the jurist (Lk 10,25-37) and in the narrative of the compassionate Samaritan (Lk 10,30-35).” In it, Ildo Perondi and Fabrizio Zandonadi Catenassi offer a detailed narrative analysis of compassion as a central hallmark of Christian discipleship in the Gospel of Luke. The study elucidates the literary and theological role of the verb in the journey's plot to Jerusalem, actively linking missionaries to the figure of the marginalized.

Next, Cleusa Caldeira and Ikenna Paschal Okpaleke publish “*Ancestor Christology: Re-assessing Bénézet Bujo's contribution to African theology,*” proposing a discussion on the need for an African Christology that utilizes the traditional category of “ancestral” to make the person of Christ intelligible within the context of the continent. The authors assess the theological controversies surrounding this paradigm, arguing that the search for the meaning of revelation should occur organically within the African worldview, rather than being tied solely to Western formulations.

The last of the Free Theme articles section is by Flavio Fontenelle Loque, who presents “*Augustine and the biblical grounds for religious intolerance: an analysis of the letters concerning the Donatist controversy,*” examining Augustine's justification for the use of force by temporal authority in promoting church unity. Focusing on the letters to Vincent and Boniface, the text clearly explains how the Scriptures were instrumentalized to legitimize and underpin policies of religious coercion in Late Antiquity.

Finally, in the Book Reviews section, readers will find a review by Clara Schettini on the important work “*Reformadoras: Mulheres que influenciaram a*

reforma e ajudaram a mudar a igreja e o mundo”, by Rute Salviano Almeida and Jaqueline Sousa Pinheiro, which sheds light on the historical—and often silenced—role of women in the religious tradition.

We hope you all enjoy reading this volume, and we look forward to contributing to the academic debate and enriching reflections on the historical, pastoral, and methodological diversity that makes up the broad field of Religious Studies and Theology.