

## Article

# Religious History in Portugal from *Lusitania Sacra* (1720) to the *Enciclopédia de História Religiosa* (2023): An Overview

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**Abstract:** The religious history in Portugal remains fragmented despite the progress made, especially in the last four decades, compared with other European historiographies. This article intends to identify factors that explain the Portuguese religious history landscape through an exhaustive diachronic presentation of the main works and authors. It aims to present the fundamental milestones of the field's evolution, both thematically and institutionally. The ambiguous relationship between national memory and the hegemonic Catholic religious tradition, the ideological and political debates surrounding the late modern reset of national identity benchmarks, and the impacts of a dictatorial experience that conditioned the academic landscape for almost 50 years are the reasons for the late emergence of religious history in Portugal and its discreet presence in the academy. After establishing the essential chronology and underlining the main results, this article will outline Portuguese religious historiography's most pressing tasks and challenges.

**Keywords:** Portuguese historiography; historiography; religious history; Portugal



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## 1. Introduction

The object of religious history is not religion. Religion is the focus of theology and may be the focus of philosophy, history of religions, and other types of knowledge.

History has humans as its object in the multiple spheres in which they are implicated as both the subject and result of what they do, e.g., social organization, politics, the economy, and art, and the various forms of materiality and discourses produced in each of these spheres. Religious experience is one of these and an indispensable object of historiographical discourse (Bloch 1997, pp. 167–8). This is regardless of the multiple definitions of religion and the epistemological limits that religious historians are aware of in applying the term religion to times and societies before modernity (Mazel 2021), times in which society, politics, the economy, art, and religion tend to be represented as entities with their own autonomy and consistency.

This epistemological framework requires methodological caution in two ways: the first is to prevent the religious phenomenon from being studied in isolation from other areas without which it cannot be understood, and the second is to guard against the totalizing analyses of each specialty of historiography. If each phenomenon—religious, social, political, economic, and artistic—does not explain the totality of human experience, none can be understood in their countless implications isolated from their relationship with others. For this reason, religious history is not a separate field from history in general (Geraerts 2017; Van Lieburg 2018; Gugelot 2021). Rather, it is an object of interest for history, alongside society, politics, economics, and culture.

The concept of religious history, born in the interwar period, resulted from the need to give new content to history—in the historiographical sense—attentive to the globality of human activity without abandoning the specializations required in the scientific method. For religious subjects, it was a matter of paying attention to their social and anthropological elements, going beyond, but not without, the vision focused on the institutional dimension

and the protagonists of religious confessions of what was then called ecclesiastical history (Hilaire 2004).

In the following pages, a possible portrait of the Portuguese historiographical production around the religious phenomenon in the last three hundred years is reviewed. The first part focuses on the chronology that preceded establishment of the concept of religious history in Portuguese historiography. The second part deals with the affirmation period of religious history between the 1980s and the mid-2000s. Finally, the years between 2006 and the present will be considered from the point of view of the challenges and risks associated with religious history in Portugal.

For each part, the most relevant authors, works, and initiatives; the most important academic institutions; and the teaching activities directly related to this field of historiography are presented.

The transition from ecclesiastical history to religious history in the Portuguese case is like the one made by other European historiographies. However, when compared with Italian historiography and, above all, French historiography—the most influential in continental Europe—Portuguese historiography has shown a persistent delay in time and a lower degree of production, as in the case of Spanish historiography (Pellistrand 2017). The aim of this article is to present the reasons for this delay, as well as the efforts to make up for it, which have not considered medieval, early modern, and late modern historiography to the same degree.

Overall, it is argued that religious history must still be a fundamental focus of research and reflection in the globally considered Portuguese historiography. It is further argued that the current situation represents a weakness of this historiography.

## 2. Religious Themes in Portuguese Historiography before the Advent of Religious History

Religious issues have always aroused interest, whether considering the content of beliefs and practices or the agents of the institutions that guarded the socially organized forms of religion. Interestingly, the intervention of these actors often extended into areas of social, political, and economic life that are easier to distinguish today. This was not the case in medieval and early modern societies. The boundaries between these spheres were more porous, so one can question whether such categories can be used—other than operationally—to study phenomena in which religion, politics, economics, social organization, and cultural productions appear deeply intertwined (Rosa 2018).

In Portugal, as in other countries such as France, Italy, Germany, and Spain—to name just a few—the period before the emergence of religious history corresponds to what has traditionally been called “ecclesiastical history”, i.e., the “history of the Catholic Church”, which was almost exclusively centered on ecclesiastical agents and elaborated by ecclesiastics. It was a clerical history: the expression of a socially recognized power and knowledge. It sought to grasp the meaning of events by inscribing them in a teleologically oriented and providentially guided “history of salvation” (Hildesheimer 1994).

The results of this analysis do not devalue the chronological tradition of the religious orders (Bourd  and Martin 2012, pp. 26–39; Krus 2001; Santos 2009) but rather underpin the impossibility of classifying it as religious history. In a certain sense, the project of writing the ecclesiastical history of the Kingdom of Portugal is the culmination of the journey made until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In the context of the creation of the Royal Academy of History (1720), the intention to write a history of the dioceses of Portugal was outlined. This was to continue the tradition of building the memory of the kingdom and its greats linked to the affirmation of the new Braganza dynasty that began after the union of the Iberian crowns (1580–1640).

This project, entitled *Lusitania Sacra*, was never carried out. In the meantime, Tom s da Encarn  o da Costa e Lima (1723–1784), future Bishop of Olinda, published the four volumes of the erudite *Historia Ecclesiae Lusitanae Per Singula Saecula ab Evangelio promulgato* between 1759 and 1762.

Politically, this period corresponded to the absolute monarchy and its efforts to consolidate the autonomy of the state vis à vis the papacy, which had a foundational moment in the expulsion of the Jesuits (1759): anti-Jesuitism condensed a significant part of the ideological debates on the social and political role of religion among Portuguese elites from the end of the 18th century to the first decades of the 20th century.

After the civil war (1832–1834), which pitted the sectors in favor of absolute monarchy against those in favor of the liberal monarchy—and in which the latter emerged victorious—the efforts to limit the autonomy of ecclesiastical agents who escaped the intervention of civil power were extended to the remaining orders and congregations: all male orders were abolished in 1834.

The change of political regime did not significantly transform the framework of higher education in Portugal: there continued to be only one university in the whole country until 1910, the University of Coimbra. Despite the opening of the Curso Superior de Letras in Lisbon (1861–1911), there was little space reserved for history at this institution. In fact, ecclesiastical history was absent from the research carried out there (Mendes 1996, pp. 168–69).

The second phase of the period before the emergence of religious history coincides with the appearance of history as an academic field, i.e., the positive establishment of proven facts via a systematic analysis of sources and the presentation of events based on them, i.e., the combination of heuristic and hermeneutic activities using various analytical methods. It has been the norm to place the beginning of this process around the figure and historiographical production of Alexandre Herculano (1810–1877) (Torgal et al. 1996, p. 10). Herculano's activity can be placed in the context of the academic historiographical production that began in the second half of the 18th century in France and Germany, of which he was aware. The requirement for textual criticism was pointed out by João Pedro Ribeiro (1758–1839) in the prologue to his *Dissertações Cronológicas e Críticas*, published in five volumes between 1810 and 1836: "The false documents produced in Spain, and even in Portugal, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, have so entangled our History that two centuries and the work of so many wise men have not been enough to reduce it to its purity." The same author began a *História da Igreja Portuguesa*, published between 1884 and 1888, which does not go beyond the seventh century.

Herculano did not distance himself from Ribeiro's purpose but deepened it. The opening words of his collection of documents, *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica* (1856–1917), are archetypal: the critical analysis of documents, "exercised severely and impartially on certain elements, can well appreciate the value of the facts", which becomes indispensable for "reducing history to a true science".

Reserving little space for religious issues, it was not the facts reported in the *História de Portugal*, which Herculano published in four volumes between 1846 and 1853, or his *História da origem e estabelecimento da Inquisição* (three volumes, 1854–1859), but the absence of supposed facts that set the tone of the debates about these works. The present conditioned the past: the discussion on the place of religion in Portuguese society in the 1800s and on the confessionalism of the Portuguese monarchy, which became increasingly controversial in the second half of the 19th century, shaped the historiographical production of the following decades. Interpretations of the past supported divergent positions on the psychodrama of the supposed "national decadence," in which religion—the Catholic Church and the Inquisition—was deemed the fundamental cause. Although it predated Herculano, this perspective was developed, with nuances, by Rebelo da Silva (1822–1871), Pinheiro Chagas (1842–1895), and Teófilo Braga (1843–1924), among others, who built an anticlerical interpretation of the country's history (Matos 2000).

History was written with rolled-up sleeves and bare fists that served as an instrument in an ideological fight, supported by the collection and positive establishment of facts. Militant Catholicism replicated the purpose but in the opposite direction, instrumentalizing history for apologetic purposes. The most remarkable example is the *Historia de Egreja*

*Catholica em Portugal, no Brasil e nas possessões portuguesas*, published by Father José de Sousa Amado in 10 volumes between 1870 and 1879.

Although the Catholic Church was the official state religion throughout the constitutional monarchy (1834–1910), its social and political role and importance in the country's history is subject to debate. This intellectual environment contributed to the historiographical treatment of religion, reinforcement of its apologetic intentions, and confinement to the ecclesiastical actors and atmospheres of militant Catholicism.

This was noted in the most relevant work of this stage, the *História da Igreja em Portugal*, published by Fortunato de Almeida (1869–1933) in eight volumes between 1910 and 1928. In the preface, Fortunato stressed the need to “properly” study the “ecclesiastical history” of the country to understand its “political and social history” better. However, the author's intellectual environment and Catholic militancy contributed to a work with a significantly apologetic undertone. This is despite the rigor with which he established the facts. Fortunato's erudite work is organized according to the ecclesiastical institution, following the institutional history of Gama Barros (1832–1925), whose work he admired. Despite these limitations, Fortunato's work is still relevant today. On the one hand, it opened avenues of research that were only developed at the end of the century (by referring, albeit slightly, to the Islamic and Jewish communities in Portugal, alluding to religious practices outside the Catholic Church, and signaling the importance of a clerical career and its financial sustainability). On the other hand, many issues addressed by Fortunato were not developed as they should have been. In fact, Fortunato made it clear that his work was a sketch that established the contours of the “outline of the building” that would only be built by the future efforts of “many.”

These efforts were scant in the following decades. However, academic assessments of religion-related issues were in the process of changing in a new political context: the triumph of the republican movement (1910) gave rise to a new regime that proceeded to secularize the state via the decree of 20 April 1911 known as the Law of Separation. Academic evaluations of religious issues were changing despite the social and political conflicts that this change entailed.

On the one hand, scholars enacted this change by highlighting the phenomenon of religion as a field of academic interest through ethnography and sociology. Its most relevant expression was the work of Leite de Vasconcelos (1858–1941), showing that the religious subject could not be confined to Catholic expression and even less to its ecclesiastical incidence. This path was opened by the work *Religiões da Lusitânia* (three volumes, 1897–1913) and the materials gathered in *Etnografia Portuguesa* (three volumes, 1933–1942, continued by Manuel Viegas Guerreiro between volumes IV and X, published in 1988). The bulk of the information made available, and the research clues left therein are still awaiting further examination.

On the other hand, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the interest in local or regional history developed, which led to the collection of many different elements and documents, including those of a religious nature. These collections extended study of the religious phenomenon beyond the limits of institutional and ecclesiastical boundaries. João Gomes de Oliveira Guimarães (1853–1912), known as Abbot of Tagilde, and the priest Francisco Manuel Alves (1865–1947), known by the ecclesiastical title of Abbot of Baçal, deserve special mention.

Despite these efforts, historiographical production on religious topics during the first three decades of the twentieth century remained sparse. Some representative examples of this historiography should be mentioned: António Garcia Ribeiro de Vasconcelos (1860–1941) on the evolution of the cult of Queen Isabella of Aragon; João Lúcio de Azevedo (1855–1933) on the Jesuitic presence in Brazil; Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira (1888–1977), future Patriarch of Lisbon, on humanism in Portugal; and Miguel de Oliveira (1897–1968), who produced two works general in scope, *História da Igreja* (1938), and one with a title that embodies the epistemological framework of this period, *História Eclesiástica de Portugal*

(1940, successively reprinted, after revision by Artur Roque de Almeida, until the beginning of the 21st century).

The moments of tension that conditioned the attitudes of the Catholic Church and the ruling powers during this period affected the academic environment. However, the gradual loosening of relations between the two institutions with the military dictatorship (1926–1933) and its evolution into a totalitarian right-wing regime that became the Estado Novo (1933–1974) did not significantly alter Portuguese historiographical production. Although the Estado Novo dictatorship maintained the secularity of the state, it sought the support of the majority religion, the Catholic Church; the latter saw the change in the regime as a more favorable environment for its activities, although the new situation was not without its moments of tension and strong ambiguity. The new political environment did not help academia pay more attention to religious issues.

The third phase of the period before the advent of religious history corresponds to the years between the 1950s and the early 1980s. Three basic processes characterized this phase.

The first is linked to the perception of the backwardness of Portuguese historiography compared with the international scene, especially French historiography, which, at the time, guided Portuguese academic circles.

This perception was at the origin of the Center for the Study of Ecclesiastical History (CEHE), founded on 5 January 1956. In 1952, the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Ecclésiastique Comparée (CIHEC) launched a call to form national committees dedicated to studying ecclesiastical history. Viginia Rau (1907–1973), Torquato de Sousa Soares (1903–1988), and António da Silva Rego (1905–1986) noted the absence of Portuguese contributions at the X Congress of Historical Sciences held in Rome (1955). This is despite the National Committee set up by the Ministry of Education. The members of this committee were Miguel de Oliveira, Salvador Manuel Dias dos Santos Arnaut (1913–1995), António Silva Rego, António Brásio (1906–1985), and Avelino de Jesus da Costa (1908–2000). Except for Arnaut, the remaining members, joined by Bernardo Xavier Coutinho (1909–1987) and Mário Martins (1908–1990), launched the CEHE, whose activity resulted in a journal publication. This journal, appealing significantly to the 1720 project, was called *Lusitania Sacra* (LS). It was the only outcome of the CEHE, which would only be formally constituted almost two decades later, being canonically approved by the Patriarch of Lisbon on 29 December 1972, and obtaining civil approval on 15 February 1973 ([Direcção CEHR 1989](#), p. 337). In 1956, the CEHE presented itself as a “grouping of scholars of good will” (*LS* 1956, 1ª Série, I: 297) working outside the academy and struggling with financial issues.

Most members were clergymen, including the benedictine José Mattoso (1933–2023), who would become a figure who renewed Portuguese historiography. But it was also supported by some laymen, including Torquato de Sousa Soares, Eduardo Brazão, José Sebastião da Silva Dias, and Henrique Barrilero Ruas.

The second element was related to the changes in Catholic ecclesiology in the first half of the twentieth century and was doctrinally consecrated at the Second Vatican Council. In particular, the notion of the Church as the “People of God” has been a decisive impulse for extending beyond ecclesiastical institutions and their leaders, i.e., the study of the Christian religious phenomenon. Though limited, this ecclesiological shift, particularly relevant in French, Italian and, to a lesser extent, Spanish historiography ([Durand 2009](#); [Montero 2003](#)), impacted the Portuguese academy. This is particularly evident in the growing importance of the history of ideas, within which the research and teaching of J. S. da Silva Dias at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra (UC) should be highlighted. The Seminar on Portuguese Culture made a decisive contribution to extending historiographical research into the late modern period. In addition, the seminar “History of Ideas in Portugal in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” directed by Silva Dias, opened new avenues of research, including religious ideas. Some historiographical and philosophical publications produced in this context were groundbreaking, e.g., the study by Friedrich Stegmüller (*Filosofia e Teologia nas universidades de Coimbra e Évora no século XVI*, 1959) and those of Silva Dias (the yet to be surpassed *Correntes de Sentimento Religioso em Portugal* (séculos



XVI a XVIII), 1960; *Congregação do Oratório de Lisboa. Regulamentos primitivos*, 1966; the remarkable *A política cultural da época de D. João III* (2. Vols.), 1969; and, paving the way for new studies, *O Erasmismo e a Inquisição em Portugal: o processo de Fr. Valentim da luz*, 1975). In the early 1970s, some papers from this seminar were progressively published. Their scope shows the importance that the history of ideas and culture has had in signaling the importance of studying the religious phenomenon and the diversity of its effects beyond the confines of ecclesiastical institutions. Some leading historians of the following decades began their academic careers at the Seminar on Portuguese Culture, including Luís Reis Torgal (*Tradicionalismo e Contra-revolução. O pensamento e a acção de José da Gama e Castro*, 1973), José Eduardo Horta Correia (*Liberalismo e catolicismo. O problema congreganista (1820–1823)*, 1974), and João de Almeida Policarpo (*O pensamento social do grupo católico de “A Palavra”*, 1977).

The third element was related to the education reform at the end of the Estado Novo dictatorship, particularly the expansion of higher education institutions. In 1972, the Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (ISCTE) was founded. In 1973, the “Veiga Simão Reform”, named after Minister José Veiga Simão (1924–2014), led to the gradual creation of new universities. In that year, the University of Aveiro, the University of Évora (UE), the University of Minho (UM), and the New University of Lisbon (UNL) were founded. In the following years and until the mid-1980s, this dynamic extended to other geographies and saw the advent of private universities.

This trend was decisive for the increase in history courses, the remarkable growth in undergraduate students, and above all, the increased numbers of students going beyond a bachelor’s degree, which all had impacts on research for master’s and doctoral theses (Torgal et al. 1996, p. 487).

These three processes decisively contributed to moving from ecclesiastical to religious history. From a symbolic point of view, the *Dicionário de História da Igreja em Portugal*, directed by António Alberto Banha de Andrade (1915–1982), culminates this first period. It started to be published in 1980 but had only two volumes due to the death of its coordinator. In the extensive introduction, Banha de Andrade rejected the intention of making an “apologetic work of the Church” and outlined the evolution of Portuguese historiography on the Catholic Church. However, although this confession is at the heart of this work—as the dictionary title makes clear—it is also an account of the thematic and methodological advances that Portuguese historiography had made in the preceding decades. The author already foresaw the need to consider “other influences” beyond the Catholic Church, such as “the persistence and strength of pagan superstitions or the melting pot of people’s beliefs”. He believed it was clear that there was a “need to promote the study of the Church in Portugal” by exploring ecclesiastical themes in areas such as “literature” and “art”. Dealing with financial difficulties and the limitations imposed by studying subjects still in their infancy, Banha de Andrade presented the dictionary as “a challenge that modern historiography” launched “to Portuguese historians.”

This challenge would begin to be overcome by a new generation of historians in ways that no longer fit the ecclesiastic or church history designation, giving rise to what can properly be called the history of religious history in Portugal.

The shortcomings and scarce production of the very long course of this first period were reflected in university teaching. The reform of the UC, promoted by the minister Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, better known as the Marquis of Pombal, introduced the chair of ecclesiastical history into the theology course with the statutes of 1772. Successively reformulated throughout the 19th century, although always oriented to teaching theology, teachers paid attention to developments in international bibliography, mainly German and French. In 1896, a report prepared by Francisco Martins (1848–1916), António Garcia Ribeiro de Vasconcelos, and Joaquim Mendes dos Remédios (1867–1932) noted the state of Portuguese research on the subject: nearly two centuries later, they recalled the long-awaited project of *Lusitania Sacra*, pointing out that, as far as the history of the Church in Portugal is concerned, “almost everything remains to be done among us, and it is urgent

that something is done” (Azevedo 2020, p. 70). Ecclesiastical history remained present in the Portuguese academy throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries only in the Faculty of Theology of the UC. However, the diocesan seminaries’ role in promoting local studies was not negligible when they were slowly reopened from 1850 onwards (Matos 2000). Teaching ecclesiastical history was eliminated from the Portuguese academy with the disappearance of the Faculty of Theology and its transformation into the Faculty of Letters of the UC in 1910. It was not until the 1960s that ecclesiastical history returned to the higher education level with the creation of the Instituto Superior de Estudos Teológicos (1966–1975), an initiative of religious orders, including the Franciscans and Dominicans. Soon after, the Faculty of Theology of the Portuguese Catholic University was established (1968), divided into three regional centers (Lisbon, Porto, and Braga). Later, this presence was extended with the creation of the Instituto Superior de Teologia de Évora (1977), which took on an inter-diocesan scope in 1985, bringing together the theology students of the Ecclesiastical Province of Évora (Beja and Algarve).

As for civil universities, the chair of History of Christianity at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon (UL) has existed since the 1960s, first led by Honorato Rosa (1920–1968), then by Isaías da Rosa Pereira (1919–1998). The latter taught it between 1973 and 1993, in addition to several seminars on the history of the Inquisition. Moreover, the journal *LS* was maintained throughout the 1970s and the direction of CEHE since 1968 (Moreira 2000) thanks to his efforts.

### 3. Recovering Lost Time: How Religious History Began

The changes in the academic landscape since 1973, the political and intellectual atmosphere created by the advent of political democracy in 1974, and the stabilization of the democratic regime since 1982 stimulated Portuguese research as never seen before. An attempt was made to fill the gap in Portuguese historiography compared with other European academies. This delay, as far as religious issues were concerned, was also due to the constraints imposed by the Estado Novo dictatorship since religion was one of the essential elements of the regime that should not be discussed.

Between 1980 and 1990, an attempt was made to keep up with developments in international historiography: an effort of heuristic and hermeneutic innovation, methodological renewal, and thematic expansion into neglected areas—such as culture or social history (Monteiro 2017)—that reflected a dynamic historiography. To this was crucial Portugal’s accession to the European Union, then known as the European Economic Community, in 1986. In turn, this implied new academic requirements, Portuguese universities being closer to their European counterparts via integration in research projects, and guaranteed access to new sources of funding.

The emergence and consolidation of religious history was part of this broader process. For this reason, it is not easy to precisely date the moment when religious history emerged on the Portuguese historiographical scene. Symbolically, this origin can be placed within the framework of a double movement found within the thematic expansion previously alluded to. The first materialized with the incorporation of CEHE into the Academy on 1 December 1984, by inclusion in the Faculty of Theology of the Portuguese Catholic University (UCP); the second on 26 February 1988 when it changed its name to Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa (CEHR—Centre of Religious History Studies). This process culminated in reactivating the journal *LS*. Between 1979 and 1988, it published no issues due to financial difficulties, and few authors were dedicated to ecclesiastical history after the “Carnations’ Revolution” (25 April 1974). Significantly, the first issue of the second series of *LS* in 1989 was devoted to the late modern period, an era virtually absent from Portuguese ecclesiastical history.

This process to establish the beginning of religious history in Portugal is discussed because the process has resulted in some features that characterized it from then on. Firstly, it is an indication of its academic attachment that this field of historiography has acquired. Secondly, the peculiar character of this link is that it is not associated with a faculty or

department of history. This is challenging for CEHR, given the lack of a dedicated student body. On the other hand, inclusion in the Faculty of Theology, the only one of its kind in the Portuguese university panorama, would have the advantage of preventing history classes from continuing to be limited to ecclesiastical issues.

Nevertheless, the CEHR did not have an exclusive role in the production of religious history in Portugal but played a crucial role in stimulating research that would continue in other academic institutions and by historians associated with other universities and research centers. In fact, the historiographical approach to religious issues has been integrated into general historiographical research in the last four decades. However, many researchers and institutions dedicated to this field have more or less systematically collaborated, led the activities and initiatives of the CEHR, or led research projects that also included the institutional participation of the Center.

Among these institutions, some of the most relevant ones are worth mentioning. In the mid-1970s at the UC, the Institute for the History and Theory of Ideas and the Center for the History of Society and Culture was initially promoted by Silva Dias. These two institutions have published the *Revista de História das Ideias* since 1977 and the *Revista de História da Sociedade e da Cultura* since 2001, respectively.

At the UP, the Inter-University Center for the History of Spirituality developed its activities between 1993 and 2007, where the journal *Via Spiritus—Revista de História da Espiritualidade e do Sentimento Religioso* began publication in 1994.

At the UÉ, the investigations carried out since 1994 by CIDEHUS, the Center for Research and Development in Human and Social Sciences, should be highlighted.

Another institution worth mentioning is the Scientific Nucleus of Medieval Studies of the FCSH at UNL, called the Institute of Medieval Studies from 2001. At the same university, in collaboration with the University of the Azores, was the Center for the History of Overseas, now called CHAM—Center for Humanities.

In addition to the journals mentioned above, the field of religious history was published in broader historical journals, such as *Clio* and *Ler História*, and multidisciplinary journals, such as *Análise Social*.

The *História Religiosa de Portugal* (three volumes) and the *Dicionário de História Religiosa de Portugal* (four volumes), published between 2000 and 2002, both edited by Carlos Moreira Azevedo (Azevedo 2000–2001, Azevedo 2000–2002), are milestones in the path taken by religious history in Portugal during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

These works are the most relevant expressions of the above-mentioned transformation. First, they represent an epistemological change in approaching the religious phenomenon by Portuguese historians. Following the path of Th. Luckmann, explicitly mentioned by Azevedo, both represent the process of overcoming an analytical model centered on “ecclesiastically oriented religion” by considering the “anthropological dimension of the systems of meaning”. Hence, the choice of the notion “religious”, given its broader scope, is to the detriment of “Church” or “Christianity”, going beyond the limits of confessionalism or the span of Christianity (Azevedo 2000, pp. IX, X). Secondly, they reflect the diversity of institutions that have played a leading role in the emergence of religious history in Portugal, although the CEHR is the only institution exclusively dedicated to this field of historiography. Thus, although the CEHR led the project from an institutional point of view, the coordination of each volume of the *História Religiosa de Portugal* and the authorship of its various texts represent a notable diversity, which is particularly visible in the volumes devoted to the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. The first volume was coordinated by Ana Maria Jorge (CEHR) and Ana Maria Rodrigues (UM), with contributions from Bernardo de Sá Nogueira and Maria de Lurdes Rosa (UNL), Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar and Joaquim Chorão Lavajo (UÉ), and Maria José Ferro Tavares (Universidade Aberta) and Saul António Gomes (UC). The volume dedicated to the modern period, coordinated by João Francisco Marques (UP) and António Camões Gouveia (UNL), had contributions from José Pedro Paiva (UC); Maria de Lurdes Correia Fernandes and Zulmira Santos (UP); and Francisco Bethencourt, João Paulo Costa, and Pedro Penteadó (UNL). This was not the case



with the third volume dedicated to the late modern period and coordinated by Manuel Clemente and António Matos Ferreira. It included texts by Luís Aguiar Santos, Nuno da Silva Gonçalves, and Paulo de Oliveira Fontes, all members of the CEHR. This institutional uniformity is indicative of the minimal interest that Portuguese religious historians devoted to late modernity in the 1980s and 1990s, in contrast to interest in the medieval and modern eras. On the one hand, the abundant documentation of ecclesiastical origins and the social, political, and cultural relevance of institutions somehow related to the Catholic Church during these periods explains this imbalance. On the other hand, the increasing autonomy of civil institutions, the development of their bureaucracy, and the spread of the press have focused the attention of historians of the late modern period. More relevant, however, is an ecclesiastical perspective of religion that late modern Portuguese historiography has not yet fully overcome. This perspective sees secularization as a loss in the relevance of religion, perceiving it only through its institutional expressions. This fact is more paradoxical given Portugal was a confessional country until 1911, and the influence of ecclesiastical structures and agents remained relevant beyond that period, whether from a social, political, or even cultural point of view. Moreover, the lack of attention to the Catholic religious universe seems to have devalued studying other religious denominations and other expressions, practices, materialities, and social ties fostered by religion as a side effect.

This imbalance in research and historiographical production between the Middle Ages and the early modern period on the one hand and the late modern period on the other was revealed in the historiographical evaluation carried out in 2006 at the colloquium promoted by the CEHR for the 50th anniversary of the journal *LS*, with a 2009 issue that was dedicated to its communications. Maria de Lurdes Rosa, writing on the sociability and spirituality of the lay universe; Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar, examining the institutional structures and agents; and José Mattoso, discussing the research perspectives opened in recent decades, were able to take stock of the significant progress made in Portuguese medieval religious history. Even then, they pointed out the impossibility of exhaustively presenting all the authors and works published up to that time. With the same precaution, Federico Palomo compared Portuguese and Spanish historiography, which had recently been the subject of a comparison with the French panorama (Pellistrandi 2004); Susana Goulart Costa outlined the historiography of the Tridentine reform; and Zulmira C. Santos reviewed the evolution of Portuguese historiography on spirituality in the early modern period.

It is relevant that the texts of Bruno Cardoso Reis, João Miguel Almeida, and Luís Aguiar Santos did not focus directly on the historiographical development around the late modern period, which points to a smaller production scale in terms of religious history.

For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate late modernity Portuguese historiography—without claiming to be exhaustive—based on reading the works mentioned above regarding the medieval and modern periods in addition to the detailed list in the work coordinated by Carlos Moreira Azevedo, *Bibliografia para a História da Igreja em Portugal* (1961–2000).

The democratization that ended the dictatorship of the Estado Novo created a social and political environment with repercussions for the range of topics that historiography could address. One was the attempt to understand the origins of that dictatorship and its relations with the Catholic environment of the early twentieth century, a path that opened at the beginning of the 1980s (Cruz 1980; Seabra et al. 1993). The religious policy of the dictatorship and the study of its key elements were later the subject of several studies, increasing in the first decade of the 21st century (Barreto 2002; Pimentel 2010; Carvalho 2013; Simpson 2014), and the diplomatic relations between this regime and the Holy See (Reis 2006). Gradually, the perspective of a linear allegiance of Catholicism and its leading elements to the Estado Novo was nuanced in studies on the Catholic labor movement (Rezola 1994, 1995, 1997, 2008), as well as in studies on the dissatisfaction of Catholic groups and their opposition to the dictatorship (Ferreira 1994; Almeida 2008; Revez 2009), while other studies examined the diversity of attitudes and behaviors of Portuguese Catholics regarding the colonial war (1961–1974) (Ferreira 2000; Araújo 2011). More recent studies examined the links of some Catholic oppositionists with other sectors of the opposition,

such as the Portuguese Communist Party (Silva 2023). The regime's religious policies were also the subject of a recent overview (Santos 2016). The same author studied an important episode of the transition period between the dictatorship and the constitutionalization of democracy, the so-called Ongoing Revolutionary Process (PREC) (Santos 2005). The relationship between churches and dictatorial regimes in Portuguese-speaking countries was the subject of a comprehensive analysis (Gonçalves and Rezola 2019), which opened avenues for further development.

The centenary of the republican revolution in 1910 triggered a flux of publications or republications about the so-called First Republic (1910–1926) that did not fail to consider various aspects of the religious policy of that regime, particularly the ideological matrix underlying the Law of Separation (Seabra 2009; Matos 2010; Pinto 2011) and the social conflict that followed (Moura 2010; Carvalho 2011).

Although to a lesser extent, the religious policies of the Constitutional Monarchy (1834–1910) that preceded the Republic have also been the object of historiographical interest, whether considered globally (Neto 1998) or focused on particular aspects such as the religious legitimacy of some of the popular resistance to liberalism (Ferreira 2002), the diplomatic relations between the Portuguese state and the Holy See (Dória 2001), or the partisan mobilization of Catholics (Silva 1996; Silva 2022). Between 2010 and 2011, parliamentary debates on the religious issue covering the three political regimes of contemporary Portugal were studied (Neto 2010; Proença 2011; Santos 2011). These studies represent the relevant progress that Portuguese historiography has made in the field of church–state relations. However, even this topic must be examined in more depth, especially that concerning the nineteenth century, for which there seems to be continuing lack of interest.

The study of the structures and agents of contemporary Portuguese Catholicism is in a similar situation. Significant progress has been made on the origins of lay protagonism, which began outside Portugal in the early 1980s (Volovitch 1982, Volovitch 1982–1983), focusing on the last period of the monarchy and the early republic. These were continued in the following decades, either going back to the first agents, considered collectively (Clemente 1993) or as individuals (Gonçalves 2004; Ferreira 2007). Some of them, also prominent ecclesiastics, can be appreciated for the role they played in the rapprochement and subsequent drifting apart of the Portuguese and Brazilian Catholic protagonists, which remained significant between Brazil's independence in 1822 and the mid-twentieth century: the relevance of recent research (Moura 2018) makes it clearer how far we are from a satisfactory exploration of these issues.

The central role of the *Acção Católica Portuguesa* has been the subject of a study on its activities (Fontes 2011), as well as several partial studies on initiatives related to this institution that resulted from its disaggregation (Fontes and Santos 2017). However, their number is insufficient. Furthermore, the shift in focus from ecclesiastical history to religious history, which involved an epistemological, heuristic, and hermeneutic turn, led to a decreased interest in ecclesiastical structures and protagonists. For instance, late modernity historians have not furthered Paiva's (2006) exhaustive examination of the episcopate during the modern period. Two exceptions are notable: the prosopography on the episcopate between 1940 and 1975 by Matos (1994), which requires a more comprehensive treatment of chronology and incidences, and the set of biographies on the patriarchs of Lisbon, which also awaits further development (Azevedo et al. 2009). The results of Paulo Alves' doctoral thesis on the episcopate, referring to the period of the Constitutional Monarchy, are expected to be presented in public defense. There has been limited biographical research on Portuguese prelates from the 19th and 20th centuries, as evidenced by the few existing studies (Ramos 1995; Oliveira 2009; Coelho 2010; Abreu 2010; Rei 2017).

The other grades of the hierarchy have received even less attention. The contemporary cathedral clergy represents a significant gap in the religious history of Portugal, with limited prosopographic studies, institutional functioning, and financial situation analyses, except for a few cases (Abreu and Amaral 2018). Studies on the secular clergy are also

lacking. Current approaches are insufficient from both a chronological (Faria 2006; Pinto 2017) and thematic (Leal 2016, 2019) standpoint. A holistic portrait of the contemporary period or significant chronologies within this period that consider the biographies, careers, and religious and non-religious activities of agents must be included.

The regular clergy has been extensively studied in relation to various houses, orders, and congregations (Franco 2006; Franco 2007; Franco and Abrantes 2021; Romeiras 2018; Gouveia et al. 2018) and in the context of global congregationalism across different periods (Villares 2003; Franco and Abreu 2014). It is worth mentioning the dictionary that focuses on this topic (Franco 2010).

However, the process and the consequences—religious, social, financial, and patrimonial—of the extinction of religious orders and congregations in 1834 and the process of their re-establishment that occurred progressively throughout the second half of the 19th century remain to be solidly addressed. In this regard, Portuguese historiography has, until now, been almost entirely silent about the exclaustated personnel, the “egressos”, and their fate (Rodrigues 2004).

This process led to a comprehensive economic transformation of ecclesiastical institutions, resulting in various financial outcomes which require further scrutiny in relation to both this and subsequent periods. This constitutes one of the issues that Portuguese religious history has overlooked (Alves 2012).

The lack of research also extends to ecclesiastical training institutions (Ferreira 2004), which is surprising since many of them were institutes that trained social, political, and cultural agents who did not pursue a career in the clergy. Furthermore, some seminaries served as institutions for both ecclesiastical and civil matters. In addition to the current studies, other monographic approaches with a chronological domain and diverse value, such as those of Costa (1990), Aparício (1999), and Pombal (2020), are necessary. Joint studies on this subject are also required.

Alongside seminars, there is a need for more research on academic institutions of theological education, specifically the Faculty of Theology at the University of Coimbra. A recent study (Azevedo 2020) has provided valuable materials to analyze. Likewise, initiatives throughout the 20th century until the establishment of the Faculty of Theology at the UCP in 1968 (Dias 2005) need similar attention. Existing works on the diversity of approaches to the religious phenomenon at the UC until the 20th century, especially concerning philosophy and law, still need to be completed (Oliva 1997; Carvalho 2018). Further development in this area is necessary.

The field of the history of ideas and mentalities includes significant studies focused on how religious institutions and practices (Catroga 1988, 1999, 2001) reconstituted their social position. It is noteworthy that studies dedicated to the analysis of anticlerical individuals and movements (Abreu 2019) opposed Catholicism, the official religion of Portugal until 1910 and which remained largely the majority after that. The studies conducted by Catroga (2006) play an essential role in understanding the dynamics of secularization and the emergence of civic religiosities, which challenged the significance and social function of religious institutions. The various forms of these religiosities and their geographical and social incidences are still largely unknown and can be the subject of studies that cross different areas and knowledge, as recently shown in the approach to the intersection between religion and fado (Tuna 2020a, 2020b). The same assessment can be made from the path opened via the intersection between anthropology, medicine, spirituality, and mysticism (Marques 2013).

The two examples indicate the necessity to broaden studies on the intellectual formulations and modalities of spirituality, both academic and non-academic, over the past two centuries. Such studies should consider the continuity in diachronic variations and the novelties introduced during this period. Although there has been a pioneering incursion (Ferreira 1986), these aspects must still be thoroughly addressed (Revez 2011, 2017). Research on contemporary religious practices that deviate from Catholic orthodoxy and

display diversity in forms and geographies is also insufficient. Research on the Middle Ages and Modern Ages (Paiva 1992) lacks studies specializing in the late modern period.

While catechesis was subject to a comprehensive approach that includes all Portuguese-speaking countries (Belinquete 2011), but still requires further investigation, parenetics is an area of contemporary religious history that must be addressed. It would benefit from being explored through the various means of dissemination, such as written, broadcast, or televised press. Some studies on this topic have provided useful instruments for further exploration (Azevedo and Ramos 1991; Fontes and Ferreira 2014), including the circuits of book production and circulation (Alves 2015). Other forms of cultural production and dissemination have also been neglected in historiography. This extends to literature, the film club movement, and recent studies on the scope of music (Pinto and Ferreira 2020) and the impact of the liturgical movement in Portugal (Costa 2009a). Only religious architecture has received more robust attention (Fernandes 2000; Cunha 2015; Cunha et al. 2023).

After the preliminary studies by Matos Ferreira (1998, 1999, 2010), which distanced themselves from the prevailing apologetics before the emergence of religious history, more recent approaches to missionary activity have also been undertaken. These include the period of the First Republic (Dores 2015), Estado Novo, and the transition to democracy (Almeida 2023), and further developments in chronology, themes, and personalities are expected.

Within a religious context, various changes within Catholicism shaped the late modern era in Portugal. These changes signaled a more comprehensive shift in the religious landscape as other Christian denominations and faiths were recognized and granted legal status. After the initial studies by Ferreira (1990, 1995) and Marques (1995), the fundamental characteristics of Portuguese Protestantism were established by the turn of the 21st century (Santos 2002). This has resulted in a need for monographic studies of the various denominations, including their structures, leaders, practices, and spiritualities. Scholars have pursued this path by studying the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church (Silva 2013a, 2017, 2018, 2020; Silva et al. 2016) and its educational influence (Afonso 2006), the portrayal of Protestantism in Portuguese society (Leite 2009), and the recent, extensive investigation of the British and Foreign Bible Society (Leite 2019). We anticipate that the Portuguese Society for the History of Protestantism, established in 2012, will provide valuable contributions, primarily broadening research to surpass the restrictions of the majority–minority analytical framework. Confessional diversification and religious freedom have substantial social, cultural, and political effects that this analytical framework alone cannot encapsulate.

More attention should be given to the recent reappearance of Islam and Judaism. Compared with the medieval and modern eras, relatively few studies have been conducted on the current presence of these two religions in Portugal. This was highlighted in Tavim's (2014) thorough analysis of the history of Judaism in Portugal in 2014. Broad, chronologically focused studies like Martins (2006, 2009, 2010) point to topics that require in-depth investigations with a focus on issues, institutions, and figures. Concerning this topic, it is noteworthy to mention the research conducted by the 'Alberto Benveniste' Chair of Sephardic Studies, which has been based at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon since 1996.

Regarding teaching, the presence of religious history in Portuguese academia expanded, albeit limited, during this period.

The three regional centers of the UCP Faculty of Theology have maintained teaching in church history via a curriculum organized around four subjects following a classical periodization rhythm: Ancient, Medieval, Early Modernity, and Late Modernity. Despite maintaining a confessional designation, these courses are taught by CEHR members and observe the characteristics of the hermeneutical approach in religious history. The same is true for similar classes offered at ISTE.

António Matos Ferreira's teaching deserves special mention due to his significant influence. Apart from teaching Church History courses, particularly modern and contemporary



history at the UCP starting in 1990, Matos Ferreira also taught different subjects in the History of Christianity at the Faculty of Letters at UL (FLUL) from 1989 to the mid-2010s. Many of Ferreira's students from the Theology course at the UCP and the History course at UL were influenced by his teaching and committed themselves to researching religious history. Additionally, Ferreira played a prominent role in promoting the joint master's and doctorate courses in the History and Culture of Religions, a joint venture of FLUL, CEHR, and Macao Scientific and Cultural Centre since 2011. Courses in the History of Judaism and the History of Islam, among others, are offered in this context.

The UÉ established the History of Al-Andalus chair to support its history courses, while UM introduced the optional History of Islam chair.

In 2002, UP introduced the optional History of the Church in Portugal chair as part of its history degree program. The chair was led by José Marques until 2007 and from then on by Luís Carlos Amaral. The Seminar on Ecclesiastical Institutions in the master's program in Medieval History is led by Amaral and Maria Cristina Cunha.

At UC, José Pedro Paiva instructed the following seminars: Catholic Reform and Social Control in the master's program in Modern History of Portugal during the academic year 1999–2000 and three editions of The Church and the Inquisition seminar from 2007 to 2010.

#### 4. A History with a Future? Challenges and Risks

Based on the 2006 assessments, providing a complete overview of the developments resulting from Portuguese religious history during medieval and modern times was difficult. The magnitude of this challenge has further increased in the past decade. The number of research works, master's and doctoral theses, and publications continues to rise. [Rosa \(2018\)](#) also observed developments concerning hermeneutics and methodologies.

It is relevant to highlight the characteristics of gaps revealed by past authors, and in this manner, identify the gaps that were overcome and those that remain.

Hermínia Vilar, Lurdes Rosa, and José Mattoso, while differing in their perspectives and emphases, agreed on two features of medieval Portuguese religious history: the significant advancements evident between the 1980s and the first half of the 2000s, adhering to contemporary trends and methods of European historiography; and the perception of the fragmentary nature of this production ([Rosa 2009](#), p. 76; [Vilar 2009](#), p. 151; [Mattoso 2009](#), p. 170). Mattoso went further, warning of the need to complete what he provocatively considered a program of positivist history. In his assessment, developments in anthropology have raised new issues that have resulted in sidelining certain ecclesiastical elements that were insufficiently studied in the Portuguese case. The institutional apparatus of the medieval Portuguese Church lacked such studies to identify nodal phenomena, which he called the "crossroads of history", and this proved to be a priority in the face of the multiplication of sectoral studies such as female intervention or the impact of the introduction of Canon Law. He thus signaled that the absence of these studies limited the approaches that could be made employing religious anthropology ([Mattoso 2009](#), p. 167).

Some limitations were related to the absence of histories of dioceses and the main religious orders and studies on ecclesiastical careers or the relationship between ecclesiastics and the laity. Historians of the early modern era experienced comparable issues ([Santos 2009](#), pp. 257–61; [Costa 2009b](#), pp. 246–48). Furthermore, scholars had to cope with the lack of research on specific topics of the early modern era, such as the implementation of the Council of Trent, the Inquisition, or missionary expansion, prompting the need for more comprehensive publications that establish foundational knowledge. Addressing these gaps would allow existing studies to be further developed. Some topics, such as spirituality ([Cohen 2020](#)), parenetics, and theology, even required a preliminary and exhaustive survey of various sources and archival funds ([Costa 2009b](#), p. 248; [Santos 2009](#), p. 258).

Many gaps cut across all historical periods and are even more evident in the late modern period. Only a minor portion of the gaps identified in the evaluations conducted during the mid-2000s have been addressed. A few examples substantiate this claim.



Firstly, the lack of attention to studies on ecclesiastical institutions and figures continues. Despite the repeated calls for studies on the history of Portuguese dioceses, there has been only one noteworthy development: the three-volume *História da Diocese de Viseu* (Paiva 2016). Research by Maria João Oliveira e Silva (2013c) on the episcopal chancellery of Porto during the medieval period, that by Hugo Ribeiro da Silva (2013b) on the cathedral clergy immediately following the Council of Trent, and the collection of biographies on the prelates of the diocese of Lisbon before its elevation to the status of patriarchate (Fontes 2018) highlight the existing gaps in studying Portuguese ecclesiastical institutions.

Secondly, some investigations have comprehensively examined specific institutions, such as the study on solitary life experiences by Fontes (Fontes 2021; Volzone et al. 2022) and the four-volume, chronologically cross-sectional study on Misericórdia do Porto by Amorim (2018). These studies attempt to address the gaps in research on orders, congregations, and religious and lay practices of piety. Nonetheless, they still demonstrate a need for further development. In some cases, especially when considering the early modern period, some institutions and their dynamics have been subject to a two-fold approach: the geographical and thematic expansion of analysis, as was the case with the Inquisition (Bethencourt 1994; Lourenço 2016; Furtado 2015; Santos 2022); and the assembly of new syntheses, which was applied to the same institution (Marcocci and Paiva 2013). In contrast, some topics have been revisited, such as the case of Tridentine Catholicism (Gouveia et al. 2014).

Third, the application of digital humanities tools to religious history is still in its infancy, and its possibilities are yet to be fully explored, as highlighted by a few examples: the *Fasti ecclesiae Portugaliae* project focused on the Portuguese cathedral clergy's prosopography from 1071 to 1325. As a result, the wills of medieval Portuguese clerics were published (Morujão 2010). The *Registo da Paroquialidade Portuguesa Contemporânea* (1833–1911), of prosopographic incidence, aims to establish the list of all parish clergy during the constitutional monarchy and the beginning of the Republic; it is a work still in progress (Pinto 2023), but its contours have already been the subject of a preliminary presentation (Pinto and Alves 2022). The inventory mentioned above of the Catholic press in the 20th century must be added to these.

In 2006, one area was identified in which special effort would have to be made: identifying archival funds and publishing sources. This area is highly valued in historiography due to its beneficial qualities, such as greater accessibility to dispersed documentation and its ability to support research on multiple topics through one fund. Yet, the criteria used to evaluate scientific production go against it, leading to its devaluation. This explains why this activity is given secondary importance in Portuguese historiography. The studies conducted in this field after 2006 are particularly significant in this context since the release of documentation on the brotherhoods of Misericórdia was already underway before that date. Furthermore, a catalog of religious institutions, their manuscript sources, and a bibliography were published for the first time that year (Sousa et al. 2005), followed by revised versions in 2006 and 2016. These endeavors were further complemented in the following year (Campos 2017).

Other examples worth noting are Boissellier's (2012) works on medieval ecclesiastical benefits and Soares' (Soares 2015) two-volume reports on the *ad limina* visits of the archdiocese of Braga that cover both early and late modern periods. The reports provide valuable information on institutional issues, ecclesiastical and lay practices, devotions, and discipline. The publication of the two-volume *Cartas pastorais dos patriarcas de Lisboa* (Aniceto 2017) has opened numerous opportunities for studies on various topics. The documentation produced by the Nunciature in Lisbon on Portuguese overseas expansion (Franco 2011) comprises three volumes. This source shows the increasing attention given to the Holy See's archive funds over time and requires further study, especially concerning the late modern era. In addition, an inventory (Pinto 2020) has documented the scattered documentation available for studying the Inquisition.

A particular emphasis has been placed on archives. Maria de Lurdes Rosa's study on family archives (Rosa 2021, 2022) is anticipated to offer analytical resources for religious

matters arising from the anthropological, social, economic, and institutional implications of the research (accessible at <https://www.vinculum.fcsh.unl.pt/about/>, accessed on 4 August 2023).

Since 2021, the CEHR has been promoting an initiative to increase the visibility of archival work developed by various religious institutions. The initiative also encourages cooperation and promotes best practices among the institutions forming the Network of Archives of Religious Institutions (RAIR). The CEHR has classified some funds and made available archival descriptive tools via the freely accessible PAPIR platform (available at <https://portal.cehr.ft.lisboa.ucp.pt/arquivos/index.php>, accessed on 3 August 2023) to preserve at-risk personal and institutional archives.

However, digitizing ecclesiastical archives still needs improvement, and this situation goes beyond the usual context of Portuguese public and private archives, in which essential documents related to religious history are scattered.

These elements collectively preserve the features presented over a decade ago. Since 2006, Portuguese religious history has shown some dynamism, as a series of studies have attempted to trace general patterns in European religious history for each period. Recent developments in gender issues exemplify the current efforts (Fontes et al. 2015, 2017). However, this characteristic was not accompanied by an attempt to address the fragmented character of Portuguese religious history between the 1980s and 2000s. This was apparent from the lack of ability to conduct studies on the different dioceses across the country or on the overall history of the significant religious orders.

The study of religious history in Portugal has received limited input from the study of concepts following Reinhart Koselleck. Considering the lack of clear institutional and social divisions between religious and civil structures in Portugal until state secularization, it would be advantageous to re-evaluate certain terms and concepts, such as ‘Church’, to invigorate research in this field.

This overview of the state of religious history in Portugal, which is necessarily concise and focused on the late modern period, requires a brief consideration of its risks and challenges.

The first risk is the possibility of downgrading the importance of religious issues in the Portuguese scientific community. In a broader context in which some human sciences, such as history, are considered secondary, the issue of religion seems to be losing its importance. This trend has been observed in other regions where religious studies used to play an important role, such as France (Cuchet 2020). The decline of academic prominence seems to correlate with the transformation of religious institutions in European societies and the shift in the perception and practice of religion, leading to the exclusivity and irreducibility of religious experience. Believers may avoid analysis, perceiving it as a potential threat. At the same time, non-believers may consider that the contested relevance of religious institutions corresponds to a decline in the importance of the phenomenon globally, without considering the metamorphoses it undergoes today, as has always occurred. As pointed out, believers and non-believers seem to share the same culture that disregards the need to know the religious phenomenon, regardless of each person’s position on it (Roy 2008).

This devaluation is directly related to two additional risks. The first is that religious history is replaced by an apologetic reading, internal to the various denominations, which stresses the exceptional character of the religious phenomenon and detaches it from other factors, such as social, economic, political, or cultural factors, that might help to understand it. Second, the overspecialization of other historical disciplines, like political, economic, social, or cultural history, impoverishes their analysis by ignoring the religious component, its institutions, and its agents.

Another risk arises from the still fragmentary nature of religious history in Portugal. The academic devaluation that may result from questioning the epistemological validity of religious history may discourage long-term research, both in chronological scope and in continuity over time. As emphasized above, vital research in this field requires substantial

funding; the less social and symbolic relevance religious history has, the more difficult it is to justify academic investment.

The academic community in Portugal has given mixed signals regarding this issue. Due to the financial crisis of 2008–2013 and the subsequent reorganization of research centers, CEHR, the only institution focusing on religious history, lacks multiannual funding. This constraint prevents broad research projects from being established. It restricts institutional linkage among some Portuguese and foreign researchers who are interested in developing studies in religious history at this institution.

UNL and UM plan to introduce a Religious History of the Medieval West course and an optional Themes in Religious History course to their respective history curricula. The former will begin in 2023–2024 and the latter in 2024–2025.

These teaching projects are additional to those identified in the previous period. If realized, these projects will strengthen the religious history in the national academic panorama and may interest new generations of historians.

Additionally, the *Enciclopédia de História Religiosa em Portugal*, a recently launched online resource (available at <https://portal.cehr.ft.lisboa.ucp.pt/Enciclopedia>, accessed on 3 August 2023), presents an important academic contribution to research and teaching purposes. This platform aims to gather studies on religious phenomena in Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries while also providing access to the articles of the *Dicionário de História Religiosa de Portugal*. Its goal is to disseminate the latest academic production in this field. The encyclopedia focuses on history and aims to provide a transdisciplinary understanding of religious phenomena, with inputs from various fields, such as archaeology, anthropology, art history, sociology, literary studies, and theology.

These favorable factors can help overcome the challenges stemming from epistemological devaluation and the fragmentary nature of Portuguese religious history. If this is the case, the field of religious history can pave the way for Portuguese historiography, in general, to open new perspectives of analysis that go beyond the “ideology of the nation-state” (Bethencourt 2009). Comparative history, often limited to comparing and contrasting individual national cases, only partially alleviates this limitation but does not solve it.

This is because religious history deals with a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, providing a distinctive intellectual realm to discuss the human experience. Religious history can provide a valuable space for experimentation and reinvention when combined and articulated with other areas of history, useful in the epistemological transformation process that historiographical activity has revealed. This is due to the anthropological and societal implications of religious phenomenon and the widespread geographic presence of the institutions addressed by religious history.

## 5. Conclusions

In Portuguese historiography, religious history has yet to find a stable place. This is most evident when it comes to the period of the late modern age.

The reasons for this can be found in the confessional connotation that remained until very recently: ecclesiastical history was excluded from the university environment after 1910, and the social and political constraints resulting from the Estado Novo dictatorship contributed to the general weakness of Portuguese historiography in that period. This has prevented it from accompanying the epistemological transformation of ecclesiastical history into religious history when it occurred in other countries.

It can be said that Portuguese historiography has followed in the footsteps of the transition from ecclesiastical to religious history that occurred in France, Spain, and Italy, but with a significant delay.

This delay is very clear when considering the limited space reserved for religious history in Portuguese public universities: it contrasts with the role similar institutions played in affirming religious history as an element of general historiographical activity from the mid-1960s onwards, especially in France (Langlois 1987, p. 107).

Portuguese historiography of the medieval and early modern periods has recovered some of this backwardness, although there are still significant gaps to be filled.

The historiography of late modernity, however, has only been able to do this to a very limited extent. This points to the fact that, similarly to what has been suggested for the Spanish case, there is still a certain degree of “mistrust” towards religious history (Pellistrandi 2017).

This also suggests that, particularly regarding late modernity, religious history has not been considered a relevant field of research by Portuguese historiography, resulting in its narrowing.

The effort to renew historiography in the wake of political democratization was remarkable. It sought to keep pace with the development of international historiography. But in the process, it skipped stages, which contributed to the fragmentary nature of Portuguese religious historiography.

This lack of fundamental acquisitions does not paint a diachronic view of the relevance of studies on religious issues. Religious institutions, initiatives, and actors are often approached from different perspectives, which is more evident for the medieval and modern periods than for late modernity. This helps to explain the unbalanced presence of religious history between the studies of the first two eras and those of the last.

More importantly, this situation helps to explain why late modern Portuguese religious history has not received international attention (Hilaire 2004, p. 13), nor has it been included in the most recent evaluations of the state of religious history in the European context (Gugelot 2021, pp. 669–71).

The marginal character of religious history is not pointed out with the intent to claim its special place, much less its autonomy from other fields of historiography. Instead, it is argued that the weaknesses of religious history and the risks of devaluation challenge Portuguese historiography as a whole: the study of human being is incomplete without the systematic and dispassionate intellectual interrogation of the religious element, its institutions, its agents, and its physical, intellectual, and symbolic creations.

Comparatively, interrogating the religious phenomenon is fundamental to increasing the complexity of studying human experience in time, that is, history.

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