

## **CATHOLIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES: THE HYPERBOLISATION OF THE MIDDLE AGES CARRIED OUT BY HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL**

**FUNDAMENTALISMO CATÓLICO NOS SÉCULOS XX E XXI: A HIPERBOLIZAÇÃO DA IDADE MÉDIA REALIZADA PELOS ARAUTOS DO EVANGELHO**

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**Abstract:** This article aims to analyze the use of the Middle Ages as a reference for Catholic fundamentalism in the 21st century. To this end, we have divided it into three parts. First, we present the emergence of fundamentalism in the early 20th century in the Protestant context of the USA. At the same time, we have noticed that there are several points of contact between Protestant and Catholic fundamentalism, especially when both criticize the worldview proposed by Enlightenment philosophers. Having identified the main features of fundamentalism in the 20th century, in the second part of this article we will analyze Catholic fundamentalism, taking into

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a utilização da Idade Média como referência para o fundamentalismo católico no século XXI. Para tanto, dividimos em três partes. Primeiramente, apresentamos o surgimento do fundamentalismo no início do século XX no contexto protestante dos EUA. Ao mesmo tempo, notamos que existem vários pontos de contato entre o fundamentalismo protestante e o católico, principalmente quando ambos criticam a visão de mundo proposta pelos filósofos iluministas. Identificadas as principais características do fundamentalismo no século XX, na segunda parte deste artigo analisaremos o fundamentalismo católico, levando em consideração algumas

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account some conservative Catholic organizations that were founded at that time. In the third part, we analyzed the group *Arautos do Evangelho* (Heralds of the Gospel) and the way they use the Middle Ages to build and legitimize a discourse against modernity and the ideas of social equality, since for them inequality should be a guiding principle, as it was in the Middle Ages.

**Keywords:** Neomedievalism, Fundamentalism and Heralds of the Gospel

organizações católicas conservadoras que foram fundadas na época. Na terceira parte, analisamos o grupo *Arautos do Evangelho* e a forma como eles utilizam a Idade Média para construir e legitimar um discurso contra a modernidade e as ideias de igualdade social, pois para eles a desigualdade deveria ser um princípio norteador, como era na Idade Média.

**Palavras-chave:** Neomedievalismo, Fundamentalismo e Arautos dos Evangelhos

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## 1 – Introduction

This article aims to analyze the use of the Middle Ages as a reference for Catholic fundamentalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To do this, we have divided it into three parts. First, we introduce the emergence of fundamentalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Protestant context of the USA. At the same time, we have noticed the existence of several points of intersection between Protestant and Catholic fundamentalism, especially when they both criticize the worldview proposed by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Having identified the main features of fundamentalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the second part of this article, we intend to analyze Catholic fundamentalism, considering several conservative Catholic organizations that were founded at that time. In the third part, we analyzed the group *Arautos do Evangelho*<sup>1</sup> (Heralds of the Gospel) and the way they use the Middle Ages to build and legitimize a discourse against modernity and the ideas of social equality, since for them inequality should be a guiding principle in the same way it was in the Middle Ages.

## 2 – Fundamentalism: the paradox of modernity

### 2.1 – The birth of fundamentalism 1909-1915

Despite its “broader” present-day uses, fundamentalism was originated from the Christian West, being gestated by conservative North American evangelicals who turned against the Enlightenment and liberalism ideals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early

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<sup>1</sup> From now on, we will only quote the name of this group in English.

20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although it was quickly exported to the rest of the world through neo-colonialism, the idea was born in a very specific context: a series of publications called *The Fundamentals* between 1910 and 1915.<sup>2</sup> The term fundamentalist itself came into being in the 1920s when Baptist journalist Curtis Lee Laws, editor-in-chief of the *Baptist Watchman-Examiner*<sup>3</sup> for the Lord.

The basis of this line of thought was the anti-modernity, above all, in its theological method, which was guided by a historical-critical method of interpreting biblical texts.<sup>4</sup> The bottom line is that, for them, there were absolute fundamentals of faith, therefore, uninterpretable, which would be immune to science and relativization. It is also noteworthy to point that, roughly speaking, it is possible to establish an intersection between the Protestant fundamentalist discourse and the *Syllabus Errorum* promulgated December 8, 1864, by Pope Pius IX: in the field of politics, for example, both sides attacked liberalism. Although Dreher mentions the Protestant camp, we highlight some key points in the fundamentalist discourse in his gestation, which, to a greater or lesser extent, were adopted by non-Protestant fundamentalists from the 1970s; let us see:

[...] the verbal, literal inspiration of the Bible; the affirmation of Jesus' true divinity and virgin birth, his vicarious atoning sacrifice, through his spilled blood, and his bodily resurrection; the second coming of Christ to earth, at the time seen as imminent with apocalyptic signs or with a return to an ancient, millennial, intermediate kingdom; negative acceptance of the results of modern science, when they did not correspond to what they called 'biblical faith'; exclusion of the *status* of true Christian from all those

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<sup>2</sup> See: DIXON, Amzi C.; MEYER, Louis, and TORREY, Reuben A. (Publishers) *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. Chicago: Testimony Publ. Com., 1910-1915), 12 vols. We would like to thank our friend César Moisés Carvalho who read this article before and gave us important suggestions.

<sup>3</sup> MARTY, Martin E. Fondamentalisme. In : LACOSTE, Jean-Ives (Dir.). *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*. Paris: PUF, 2007, p. 585-587, p. 586.

<sup>4</sup> To be more precise, we emphasize that fundamentalism arose as a reaction to liberal theology, which adopted the historical-critical method. Fundamentalism starts from biblical literalism and adopts at most the grammatical-historical method introduced by Calvin but considered by contemporary fundamentalists as a method used by Jesus (sic.) to interpret the Old Testament. See: CARVALHO, César Moisés and CARVALHO, Céfora Ulbano. *Teologia Sistemático-Carismática*. 2 Vols. Rio de Janeiro: Thomas Nelson Brasil, Vol. 1, p. 140, 141, 337, 347-350, 401-403, 500, 501; Vol. 2, p. 761, 762, 787, 812-819. For more information on the differences between Catholics and Protestants in interpreting the Bible in the context of fundamentalism, see: KEATING, Karl. *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on 'Romanism' by 'Bible Christians'*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988, especially in the chapter 9.

who did not accept this fundamentalism.<sup>5</sup>

Still on the rise of fundamentalism, its adherents had two other essential assumptions. On the one hand, a vehement opposition followed by a reaction to any changes in religion determined by modernity. They argued that “the true religion” was threatened by the so-called principles of modernity, *e.g.*, historicism and relativism which together posed a threat to constituted authorities, namely, the institutional powers of the churches. According to this logic, secularization is seen as an evil that must be opposed, and thus the Western world should be re-Christianized. The second aspect, which characterizes fundamentalism even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, concerns politics. For supporters of the movement, politics should be Christian based. Therefore, we can comprehend the discursive basis of the proposed arguments, for example, that in public schools, teaching should follow the Bible and not science. It is an act where science theology and also the formulation of a postulate according to which religious truth is the premise of political action.<sup>6</sup> In the fundamentalist thoughts, we observe that for different religious and political movements, the Middle Ages appear as an important reference. This historical period is mobilized as an anti-modern reference, it represents a moment of consolidation of Christianity into Western civilization. The Middle Ages could stand for a Christian, hegemonic culture that is predominantly white and patriarchal. At least, that is the way the Middle Ages have been mobilized by conservative groups in Brazil. For them, it is important to be connected to Europe so that they can deny our links to slavery and the original peoples. In doing so, the conservative groups present themselves as “authentic Europeans” who have no connection to the people from Africa and the original peoples. Specifically in the case of Brazil, according to these movements, it is meant as a link to medieval past able to re-establish our “true past” or in other words, white Christianity.

Although fundamentalism emerged in the Protestant context in the United

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<sup>5</sup> DREHER, Martin N. Fundamentalismo. In: BOTELHO, Fernando Filho (Dir.). *Dicionário Brasileiro de Teologia*. São Paulo: ASTE, 2008, p. 448-456, p. 453. In this paper, all of quotation were translated by the authors.

<sup>6</sup> See: Ibidem, p. 454.

States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term has also been used outside its original context, so we endorse its use beyond U.S. Protestantism.<sup>7</sup> One of the aims of this article is to show how it came to be rediscovered in the USA in the 1970s by the movement called Majority Morality,<sup>8</sup> led by televangelist Jerry Falwell, who calls himself a fundamentalist. This movement created the foundations of Christian fundamentalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century transcending the borders of the United States because it became involved in political parties, as the Brazilian case explains it very well today.

In the 80s, during the political process of making the latest Brazilian Constitution, the Evangelical Parliamentary Bloc was born. Their objective was to introduce Christian principles into the newer version of the Brazilian Constitution. From the 1980s to the present day, the number of explicitly evangelical parliament members has increased, resulting in the current, so-called “Bible bench” or “Evangelical bench”, composed of several congressmen from various Christian denominations (including Catholics) who, roughly speaking, also defend fundamentalist principles. In Brazil, fundamentalism is not only found in the political sphere, but also in various religious movements (Catholics and Protestants). These movements cannot act effectively in politics through political parties.

In this article we argue that fundamentalism has helped to build a conservative pan-Christianity from the 1970s and the present day. This discourse

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<sup>7</sup> There is a debate about the extent to which its use in the context of Islamism is even possible through the concept of global fundamentalism. Although we cite the context of the Iranian revolution, we have chosen to limit our analyses to the Christian context. For more information on global fundamentalism, see: WATT, David Harrington and WOOD, Simon A. *Fundamentalism: perspectives on a contested history*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Founded in 1979 by Jerry Falwell, Majority Morality was a political and religious group that operated in the US to elect Ronald Reagan in 1980. This group aimed to influence politics in the US through its theological and moral agendas. They ignored the separation between the public and private spheres and also resorted to rhetorical “moral hazards” that threatened society in the USA. For more information, see: SILVA, Ivan Dias da. *Jerry Falwell e a maioria moral: um estudo sobre a relação entre religião e política no espaço público americano entre 1979 e 1989*. Doutorado (Ciência da Religião) Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora, 2016. Available on: < <https://repositorio.ufjf.br/jspui/handle/ufjf/3633> >, last accessed October 28, 2022.

was able to replace the progressive ideas of ecumenism.<sup>9</sup> The agenda of morality upheld by fundamentalists has brought together various fundamentalist groups. This means that groups that call themselves fundamentalists and others that do not have united in the same agenda. Together, they are fighting an eschatological war in the political arena against various social advances that these groups believe represent a moral degradation of society.

The discourse of Majority Morality relies on “family’s values” as their basis. According to theses “values”, the right to abortion, policies concerning LGBTQIA+ rights, science-based teaching, communism and everything else that is understood as a threat to the family and should be strongly fought. At the same time, they have adopted a pro-neoliberal capitalist and pro-Israel stance. They are under the influence of dispensationalism, a Christian theological doctrine associated with the conservative milieu in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This doctrine has a hermeneutical system that sees historical events as if they were connected, and it makes an eschatological sequence to interpret History.<sup>10</sup> The idea of a covenant between God and man is fundamental in this doctrine because it brings the concept of an unconditional covenant that disregards human weakness. This explains why Israel begins to play a fundamental role in this doctrine. According to the theologian:

We see, therefore, that dispensationalism interpretative system pervades the whole Bible even having the distinction between Israel (Jews) and the Church (gentiles) as a main characteristic, for the promises made to Abram and carried out by the people of Israel must be integrally achieved despite the fate of the Church. In this aspect, there is an amalgamation between Jewish apocalyptic and Christian eschatology, it means, the continuity between the New and the Old Testament, also the influence of the behavior of some nations to protect Israel (Psalm 122.6) and (Genesis 12, 1-3).<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s, fundamentalist groups became increasingly interested in

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<sup>9</sup> Nowadays it is accepted by a few Christian groups, but they have completely refused inter-religious dialogue.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the seven dispensations present in the Bible according to this doctrine, see: SOFIELD, C. I. *A Bíblia Sagrada com referências e anotações de Dr. C.I. Scofield*. São Paulo: Imprensa Batista Regular do Brasil, 1983, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> See: CARVALHO, César Moisés and CARVALHO, Céfora Ulbano. *Teologia Sistemático-Carismática...* Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 1752.

political issues. This process helps us to understand the reasons for the fundamentalists' interference in international affairs, mostly in cases concerning the state of Israel. We argue that the thoughts of fundamentalists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century merge the original ideas of the early fundamentalists, especially the ideas of the anti-modernists, of political fundamentalism as represented by Majority Morality. Influenced by dispensationalism, they defend a restoration of the Judeo-Christian worldview.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.2 – Fundamentalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

As we have already mentioned, the concept of fundamentalism was originated in the Protestant milieu in the USA. In common usage, however, various manifestations of conservative thoughts have been classified as fundamentalist, regardless of whether they are political or religious actions. The fact is that, nowadays we often have an exacerbated use of the terminology which, due to its “fluid” usage, ends up losing some of its function as an academic concept. Still, if we intend to address the fundamentalisms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is important to go back to the 1970s, when there was an upsurge in religious discourse to address political issues. Moreover, since this decade, we have needed to see fundamentalism in a broader framework, not limited to the Protestant milieu, and as a religious and often political reaction against all forms of modernity.<sup>13</sup>

To do so, we will employ the three examples provided by Dreher<sup>14</sup> which, on one hand, demonstrate the strength of fundamentalism in politics and, on the other hand, corroborate a broader use of the concept, involving other religions. Initially,

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<sup>12</sup> See: CARVALHO, César Moisés. *Pentecostalismo e pós-modernidade. Quando a experiência sobrepõe-se à Teologia*. Rio de Janeiro: CPAD, 2017, p. 26 et seq.

<sup>13</sup> The struggle against modernity has been in the discourses of the Catholic Church since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of modernity was born in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to define the philosophical-political foundations laid by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. According to the Catholic Church, later adopted by Protestants, modernism would produce a society that separated the civil sphere from the religious sphere and broke the link between God's law and human beings. Modernism took various forms in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as liberalism in all its forms and humanism, which separated people from God. For the concept of modernism, see: MARTINA, Giacomo. *História da Igreja: de Lutero a nossos dias*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2005. Vol. III.

<sup>14</sup> See: DREHER, Martin N. Fundamentalismo. In: BOTELHO, Fernando Filho (Dir.). *Dicionário Brasileiro....* Op. Cit.

let us turn back far to 1977 at the elections to the Israeli parliament. On that occasion, the Labor Party characterized by a lay and democratic socialism, lost the Majority. Henceforth, the Zionist movement – in whose discourse, the religious use of the premise of a special relationship between God and the chosen people is evident – was strengthened as a result. Theology had subordinated politics in this case.

Approximately two years later, in 1979, there was the proclamation of the Islamic republic in Tehran, as well as the occupation of the Mecca Mosque by armed Muslims. In both cases, the underlying discourse was similar, that is, the need to re-Islamicize the Islamic world in order to expand it on a global scale. And in 1980, in the USA, there was the election of Ronald Reagan with decisive support from the Moral Majority movement, founded by preacher Jerry Falwell. The group's purpose was to organize the 60 million Americans who called themselves "born-again Christians".

The examples above have a vehement critique of modernity in common; after all, they can all be seen as a reaction to Western modernity. Yet, paradoxically, they all emerged from the crisis of modernity itself. At its origin, modernity affirmed its belief in salvation through secularization. As Dreher points out, modernity also had its own fundamentalisms, based on faith in history, faith in science, faith in politics, and even containing a measure of messianism. Now, since the 1970s, we have been experiencing a crisis of paradigms in all sciences.

Does the progress of the sciences really bring an end to miseries? Does the progress of history really lead to an end to wars and killings? This is the background for us to understand the resurgence of fundamentalist movements. Here we have the basis for understanding the difference between current fundamentalism and fundamentalism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was opposition to secular beliefs, scientism, faith in progress. Today we are looking for fundamentalist answers to questions arising from the loss of secular certainty.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 456.



As the present time is in crisis, the past is reinterpreted by the fundamentalist vision in which a time is invented – a time in which one lived in harmony with God. Also, the contradictions brought about by liquid modernity create the conditions for the elaboration of an eschatological discourse that prepares an apocalyptic end that emerges from the will of God. Thus, the fundamentalists reinterpret history in order to subject it to their desires for the present.

### **3 – Catholic fundamentalism, the affirmation of the medieval**

In this second part of the article, we will analyze the anti-modern ideas based on fundamentalist thoughts that are widespread in Brazilian subjectivity. These ideas are present in contemporary religiosity through the incorporation of symbols, aesthetics and a narrative that calls itself as mediaeval heritage. We will focus on appropriations of Middle Ages developed by a Catholic Brazilian group that looks towards the medieval roots as a model of Christian spirituality and also a way to fight modern ideas.

We begin our analysis of the integration of the anti-modern manifestation in Brazil from the European context. To do this, we examine the Catholic group Heralds of the Gospel, a Roman Catholic international association of pontifical law, founded in 1999. We want to highlight the way this group uses references to the Middle Ages, *e.g.*, symbols, images, concepts, to connect with the pre-modern period.

#### **3.1 – The migration of Catholic traditionalism**

Although the manifestation of Catholic traditionalism became more militant in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the anti-modern ideas that develop and disseminate the discourses of the conservative religious associations, such as Heralds of the Gospel have spread in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The various currents of traditional Catholicism are guided by the episcopal activity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century popes, especially Pius IX, Leo XIII and the first pope of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pius X. The choosing of these popes was not arbitrary but based on the fact that they were considered theoretical sources of criticism against “modernity”, the ones largely used by various conservative Catholic religious groups.

In 1965, the promulgation of Vatican II by Pope Paul VI was the turning point, so traditionalists have put on against what they saw as a real attack on the truths of the Church. According to them, these truths were seen as eternal and immutable since Jesus had delegated the Church to Peter, the Apostle. According to the conservative Catholics, the changes made in this Council shook the dogmas strongly. They were not an adaptation for the Church to be updated for the new times; actually, they were part of a plan that was organized by political and religious powers to destroy this institution. The “enemies” of the Church, namely modernism and liberalism, were the same as those pointed out by the popes almost a century before.

Although he was not the first pope to denounce the evil of so-called “modernism”, Pius IX was one of the most influential popes to fight the new thoughts that were spreading in Europe at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as naturalism, humanism and especially the ideas that emerged from the French Revolution. In addition, he described this historical event as the beginning of the greatest evil.

Under the pontificate of Pius IX, the struggle against the ideas of the Enlightenment became stronger. Two important documents were written in that time. These were the encyclical *Quanta Cura*<sup>16</sup> and the other called *Syllabus Errorum*,<sup>17</sup> in which the “errors of modernism” were pointed out and fought against: Pantheism, naturalism, absolute and moderate rationalism, indifferentism and another supposed error of the Church and civil society.

Pius X retained the same belligerent logic as Pius IX; however, he went further. In his opinion, liberalism was the most dangerous manifestation of the evil of modernism among all modern ideas. Under his pontificate, there were important writings that help us to understand the criticism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century traditionalists about the changes in the Church after Vatican II. Among them, the most important are the decree *Lamentabili sane exitu*,<sup>18</sup> the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* and

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<sup>16</sup> DENZINGER, Heinrich, HÜNERMANN, Peter. *Compêndio dos Símbolos, Definições e Declarações de Fé e Moral*. São Paulo: Paulinas/Loyola, 2007, p. 630.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 632-641.

<sup>18</sup> It was the first doctrinal and nominal condemnation to the modernism.

the Antimodernist Oath.<sup>19</sup> This Oath was extinct only two years after the closing of Vatican II in 1967. It is important to emphasize that the anti-modernist agenda of Pius IX and Pius X were not temporary but has persisted to the present day. Contemporary fundamentalist Catholics have based their demands on these popes, especially the writings produced by them to support their arguments.

An attempt to shape the Catholic Church in the world on the basis of his norms began under the pontificate of Pius IX. This movement, called Ultramontanism<sup>20</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had the first Vatican Council (1869/70) as its central point. This Council proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope and at the same time established him as the most important authority in matters of faith and morals. Since then, dioceses around the world have responded positively or negatively to the framework set by the Holy See.

It is important to underline that the Pope was the head of the Church, but until Vatican I, there was some flexibility in the hands of the bishops to make decisions in their dioceses, whether in cases of ritual or the engagement of Catholic members in the social world.<sup>21</sup> This centralization was well succeeded in some dioceses, but not in the entire Church. The Ultramontanism had continuity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the movement named Catholic Integralism, self-proclaimed as an integral Catholicism able to deeply spread in the society and bring the faith back to public sphere. According to Caldeira:

[...] Considering the different nuances, one could think that both Catholic ultramontanism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Catholic integralism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were embedded in the same historical dynamic and project, *i.e.* the struggle against modern principles within the framework of scholars/politics and the return

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<sup>19</sup> "This oath would be compulsory for all members of the Church, such as priests, ordained religious and seminaries professors". CALDEIRA, Rodrigo Coppe. *Os Baluartes da Tradição: o conservadorismo católico brasileiro no Concílio Vaticano II*. Curitiba: CRV, 2011, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ultramontanism, a term of French origin, was a movement in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that claimed the primacy of the Pope's power and infallibility. The name is an allusion to "beyond the mountains", *i.e.* above the Alps. For more information, see: VIEIRA, Dilermando Ramos. *O Processo de Reforma e Reorganização da Igreja no Brasil (1844-1926)*. Aparecida, SP: Editora Santuário, 2007, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Let us recall that Pius X began the reorganisation and standardization of the Code of Canon Law for the whole Church. This decision blocked the individual decisions of the bishops in their dioceses at that time.

to the values before the events that led the Church into such a crisis.<sup>22</sup>

Until the opening of Council Vatican I, only 11 dioceses were settled in Brazil. At that time the country was under its second and last monarch, the emperor Pedro II in a period known as the *Segundo Reinado* (Second Reign 1840–89). The relations between the Brazilian government and the Holy See were resumed by an ancient arrangement between both sides known as the *Padroado Régio* (royal patronage), where the crown had a narrow – but flexible and effective – way of management over religious and legal aspects concerning the Catholic Church that were received from Rome. Only 7 Brazilian bishops were sent to the council. Upon their return, they emphatically demonstrated their approval for the centralization and unification of the Church as desired by Pius IX, *i.e.*, the strengthening of Ultramontanism in the country.<sup>23</sup> In Brazil, a conservative, anti-liberal and anti-masonic Church was established through the years between the two Vatican Councils and, moreover, opposed to any dialogue with other religious denominations. It was shown as an elitist church, close to the republican state, which interfered in the affairs of government whenever possible. This practice and its relationship with the State were called neo-Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

One of the best-known personalities who worked to promote the ultramontane movement in Brazil from 1920 onwards was the lawyer, politician, and secular Carmelite Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. He was a prolific writer; he participated in several Catholic associations, especially those that sought to promote devotion to the Virgin Mary, contributing to various media of communication, such as the Catholic Journal *O Legionário* (The Legionary), founded in 1927 and published by the *Congregação Mariana da Legião de São Pedro* (Marian Congregation of the Legion of Saint Peter). In this publication, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira wrote about the

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<sup>22</sup> CALDEIRA, Rodrigo Coppe. *Os Baluartes...* Op. Cit., 47.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> In Brazil, the project of neo-Christianity began at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Church turned to the State to reclaim positions that had been lost in the last century, proposing that the country was Catholic in practise, despite being secular in its constitution. For more information, see: AZZI, Riolando; GRIJP, Klaus van de. *História da Igreja no Brasil: Ensaio de Interpretação a partir do povo - Terceira época - 1930-1964*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2008.

possible dangers of modern Catholicism and at the same time, he raised the anti-communist, anti-masonic and anti-liberal flag.<sup>25</sup> In another monthly periodical, *O Catolicismo* (Catholicism), founded in 1951 by the bishop of the town of Campos dos Goytacazes in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Dom Antônio de Castro Mayer, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira maintained his ideology of what “true” Catholicism should be. According to Vinícius Couzzi Mérida:

This journal was extraordinarily militant in its fight against modern philosophy within the Church, but also against philosophy hostile to the Church, such as Marxism, Rationalism, and Liberalism. In this way, the pages of *O Catolicismo* spread the unified model of the religious practices of Catholics, which was to be based on the models of conservatives, creating the *modus vivendi* of the legitimate Catholic who, according to *O Catolicismo*, was to oppose the revolutions and mentalities of modernity.<sup>26</sup>

Between the years 1930 and 1960, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira was able to agglutinate secular and religious forces that printed strong traces in Brazilian Catholicism. Whether in his books or papers, whether surrounded by followers of ultramontane Catholicism, he managed to have important people close to him, for example members of the extinguished Brazilian royal family and two priests who had been sacred as bishops a few years later and attended the Council Vatican II. When these bishops joined the conservative conciliar group which called itself *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*,<sup>27</sup> they already had a long-standing friendship with Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira.

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<sup>25</sup> For more information, see: CALDEIRA, Rodrigo Coppe. Em defesa da Ação Católica: Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, um baluarte da tradição. *Revista Brasileira de História das Religiões*. ANPUH, Ano VI, n. 16, maio 2013, p. 97-111. Available on <<https://periodicos.uem.br/ojs/index.php/RbhrAnpuh/article/view/22629>>, last accessed February 23, 2023.

<sup>26</sup> MÉRIDA, Vinícius de Souza. A Militância Antimoderna do Jornal Catolicismo nas décadas de 1950 a 1960. *Anais do 31º Simpósio Nacional de História*. RJ, 2021, p. 1. Available on <[https://www.snh2021.anpuh.org/resources/anais/8/snh2021/1628555881\\_ARQUIVO\\_03d4c36d8fce63d92d522bce15852452.pdf](https://www.snh2021.anpuh.org/resources/anais/8/snh2021/1628555881_ARQUIVO_03d4c36d8fce63d92d522bce15852452.pdf)>, last accessed January 3, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> The *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* (International Group of Priests) was founded by conservative bishops who, during Vatican II, were opposed to ideas they described as “progressives”. This group was in contraire to the collegiality of the episcopacy, the use of vernacular in the Mass, and the recognition of parity between the Catholic religion and other religions. The *Coetus* participated heavily in all sessions of the council and tried to block any possible flexibilization that the church would make towards modernity. For more information, see: CALDEIRA, Rodrigo Coppe. *Os Baluartes...* Op. Cit.

In 1960, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira founded the TFP – *Sociedade Brasileira de Defesa da Tradição, Família e Propriedade* (Brazilian Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family and Property). This institution is known for its defense of conservative Catholicism and rejection to the Council Vatican II. Throughout this organization, other similar institutions have emerged with different purposes but still the same bases of criticism against the so-called dangers of modernity, together they defended traditional and anti-modern Catholicism in their own particular ways of action.

One of the new groups that split off from TFP was created by Dom Antonio de Castro Mayer, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira's friend of early times at *O Catolicismo*, already mentioned. Mayer had distanced himself from TFP and founded the *União Sacerdotal São João Maria Vianney* (Priests' Union of Saint John Mary Vianney) in 1982, in which the premises of Vatican II were strongly denied. This institution would come into conflict with the Holy See and it had been supported by the French bishop of the Swiss city of Ècone, Dom Marcel Lefebvre. Dom Mayer and Dom Lefebvre were excommunicated by John Paul II in 1988. The excommunication did not have any effect over Mayer's *União Sacerdotal* labors, that continued its works up to 2002, when it decided to submit under the Holy See's authority and finally accept the laws of the Council Vatican II.

The second religious association to emerge from the TFP was the Roman Catholic International Association of Pontifical Right called Heralds of the Gospel, which, as we have already noted, is the focus of this article. It was founded in 1999 by Monsignor João Scognamiglio Clá Dias as result of a disagreement with the TFP. This group was recognized by the Holy See in February 2001 by John Paul II. According to the Heralds of the Gospel website, they are present in 78 countries. In 2009, they were recognized by Pope Benedict XVI as the Society of Apostolic Life.

Founder Monsignor João Clá holds two Doctor's degrees, one of them in Canon Law from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome, and the other one in Theology from the Pontifical Bolivarian University of Medellin. He founded the Thomist Aristotelian Philosophical Institute, which has a Thomist orientation. He also founded the Saint Thomas Aquinas Theological Institute, and

the Philosophical-Theological Institute Saint Scholastic.

The Heralds of the Gospel are settled around the mountain range of Cantareira, in the State of São Paulo in Brazil. Among the buildings we can find the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, the Seminary of the Clerical Society, and the Formation House of the Heralds where in the seminary, students learn Italian, English, Spanish, Hebrew, and Greek in addition to Gregorian chant. The building keeps a university where Philosophy, Theology and Religious Sciences are taught. For obvious reasons, the educational process is linked to the Thomistic orientation. The students live under vows of chastity and devotion, and under restricted discipline. The fundamentalist thoughts of this group are present in their teachings and can be seen through references to the thoughts, culture, and philosophy of the Middle Ages. Medieval times are claimed as “pre-modern” in which Catholic faith reigned in all society.

#### **4 – The Middle Ages claimed by Heralds of the Gospel**

In this part of our article, we will look at the relation of the Heralds of the Gospel with the Middle Ages. Our goal is to identify medieval elements appropriated by this institution. In addition, we would like to highlight how they spread this medieval imagination as a reference to a perfect pre-modern world guided by the Christian thoughts. This cosmovision offers people an alternative to the disenchanted World that was lost with modernity. That is, the Middle Ages represent an opportunity to return to true faith, threatened by enlightened principals.

The allusions to the Middle Ages are many and they are made explicit by Heralds of the Gospel. First, it is interesting to see the complex of buildings in the Cantareira Mountain range in the municipality of Caieiras in the state of São Paulo. There, the building of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, in neo-Gothic style, began in 2006 and the towers reached a height of 60 metres at the end of the construction period. In addition, the ceiling is richly decorated with mediaeval motifs. In 2012, this basilica was given the title of Minor Basilica. When entering the place, one is immersed in the Middle Ages. We see beautiful stained glass, a huge

rose shape window and arched ceilings, every aspect in the interior is a statement of the importance of the Middle Ages brought about by this fundamentalist group.

We would like to draw attention to the monumental construction of the Minor Basilica. What does that mean? We will not undertake a full analysis of the architecture and imagery in this basilica here, but merely focus on the anti-conciliar (Vatican II) intentions expressed in the structure built by this group. If we consider the great religious buildings erected in Brazil towards the end or after the end of Vatican II, we can mention two important examples. First, we have the artistic conception of the National Sanctuary of Aparecida by Cláudio Pastro. Here, he clearly cites the ideas born in Vatican II when he wrote about the function of images and the liturgy while calling himself a post-conciliar artist.<sup>28</sup> Although he drew inspiration from the Middle Ages, he used the references of the simplest art of the early Middle Ages to defend a religious art as simple as possible. In this way, he draws attention to Christ as the center of the Church, established in Vatican II, and at the same time professes ecumenism, as he did in the images of Aparecida.<sup>29</sup>

Another important building that may be associated with the need for modernization of the Church, as proposed by Vatican II, is the Metropolitan Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro. This building was built in modern architecture and is a statement to make us think about the future and other cultures. Especially in the blue stained-glass windows, people of different races are depicted representing the appreciation of other cultures, including non-Christian. Moreover, the construction of this cathedral resembles a Mayan pyramid, which can be understood as recognition of the importance of the native American peoples. Roughly speaking, we may distinguish the second half of 1960 and the following decade as the time when Liberation Theology was strong in Brazil and this conception of theology influenced both constructions in several ways. We would like to emphasize that Liberation Theology has focused particularly on poor peoples and social issues. This thinking created a preferential option for the poor.

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<sup>28</sup> See: PASTRO, Cláudio. *Arte Sacra*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> See: GOMES, Richard. A arte sacra como instrumento litúrgico pós Concílio Ecumênico Vaticano II. *Revista Desvio/Escola de Belas Artes da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*, nº 3, 2020, p. 40-55.



Back to the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, built by Heralds of the Gospel. Because of this group's association with the conservative thought, we assume that this building is not only a basilica, but also a statement against Vatican II and the influence of the Liberation Theology in Brazil. They use the Middle Ages through the neo-Gothic building which may mobilize ideas such as European superiority, considering the historical context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is clear that the basic idea behind the use of this particular type of architecture is the intention to preserve or even imitate the European model and all its supposed values and the institution's preference for the elites. They have inequality as a fundamental principle, because they follow the thoughts of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira,<sup>30</sup> according to whom the society of the Middle Ages was perfect owing to its separation into orders. For them, this means that the Church must consider only the elites as an important part of society as was the nobility in the Middle Ages, including the Church. Nowadays, this idea sustains, however, the economic elite is considered in this capacity. According to his words:

The formation of traditional elites, as a *tonus* aristocratic, is indeed such a profoundly natural phenomenon, evident even in countries without monarchical and aristocratic past. Even in the latest democracies, in which there are no feudal remnants, a kind of new nobility or aristocracy has developed through the natural forces of society. This is the power of elite families, which by tradition have put all their energy into the service of the state and its government, and the state can count on these families at any moment. It is a great definition of the essence of nobility, reminding us of the colonizers,

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<sup>30</sup> Two years after the death of Plínio Corrêa (1995), in 1997, a legal dispute arose between Monsignor João Clá and other senior members of the TFP. In 1997, the older members received a positive decision on control of the TFP, so Monsignor João Clá founded the Heralds of the Gospel in 1999. But the final decision of this legal dispute was in favour of Monsignor João Clá. For more information about this legal suit, see: RANGEL, João Guilherme Lisbôa. *Política, religião e neomedievalismo: As diferentes Idade Média da Tradição Família e Propriedade (TFP) e os Arautos do Evangelho*. *Signum*. n<sup>o</sup> 22, 2021, p. 204-225. Available on <<http://www.abrem.org.br/revistas/index.php/signum/article/view/585>>, last accessed February 23, 2023. Since 2012, the Heralds of the Gospel have taken control of the Brazilian Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP). Why do we emphasise this? The fact that the Heralds of the Gospel have taken control of TFP is relevant because they have been using Plínio Corrêa's image and thoughts since 2012. They even have a YouTube series called *O pensamento de Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira* (The Thoughts of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira). We would like to point out that some of the videos have Spanish subtitles, as in the following example. "O pensamento de Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira". Available on <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulZtoDH4Wmo>>, last accessed January 4, 2023.

trailblazers and planters who advanced the progress of the Americas for centuries and remained true to their traditions. It is a great moral value to the society in which they (the elites) live.<sup>31</sup>

The mentions to that time do not only refer to their buildings. A clear reference to the military Order of Santiago from Spain is also seen in their clothing. The uniforms are in the mediaeval military style, with a beige tunic decorated with a cross, long boots and a rosary tied around the waist. The large half red and half white cross printed on the front of the uniform is known as the Cross of Santiago. It is speculated that it is a lily in the form of a sword. This symbol originated in Spain, possibly after the Battle of Clavijo (844). Since then, it has been used as a distinctive sign of the religious order of the Knights of Santiago.

This order was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by King Afonso of Castile and aimed to fight the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula. It also defended the pilgrims who went to Santiago de Compostela to venerate the relics of the Apostle of Santiago. The mediaeval order was called the Order of Santiago known in Portugal as the Order of Saint James of the Sword. The presence of this cross on the uniforms is not only an explicit mention of the Middle Ages but also evokes the heritage of the mediaeval warriors who fought against the “infidels” under the “true principle” of the Christian faith.

Symbols are statements and we also make statements through our clothing, as individuals or as part of groups. Let us think of the uniform chosen by Heralds of the Gospel, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the need for religious tolerance, ecumenism and various demands for less religious intolerance were noted in different religions. As an anti-modern statement, they chose to make a clear reference to the war called Reconquest on their uniforms. In doing so, they not only emphasize the conflict between the different religions but also the idea of European superiority. Once again, they point to the Middle Ages as the ideal model to be imitated in contemporaneous times. In Plínio Corrêa’s opinion, the claims of superiority of the Catholic Church of that time are not to be criticized. The

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<sup>31</sup> OLIVEIRA, Plínio Corrêa de. *Nobreza e elites tradicionais análogas nas alocuções de Pio XII ao Patriciado e à Nobreza Romana*. Porto: Livraria Civilização, 1993, p. 53.

symbolism on their uniforms could be understood as a statement against what is seen as modern infiltration of traditional Catholicism, including the teachings of the Vatican II. The uniforms may symbolize the group's attachment to a time when the Catholic Church was hegemonic, and they are fighting for a return to that state of things.

Hagiography is another element which connects the Heralds of the Gospel to the medieval. We would like to draw attention to the narrative of Saint Raimundo of Peñafort's life, which can be found on the website of this institution.<sup>32</sup> He was a descendant of the King of Aragon who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and became a Dominican saint. In this narrative, we find essential aspects of mediaeval hagiography. According to the account, Saint Raimundo of Peñafort was professor at the University of Barcelona who went to Bologna where he taught while continuing his studies. Around 1220, he was invited to become confessor to Pope Gregory IX. We would like to emphasize that in the hagiography written by Heralds of the Gospel the values of canon law are promoted. The emphasis is on the fact that Raimundo Peñafort was responsible for promoting canon law through his involvement in writing the "Decretals of Gregory IX".

This kind of emphasis could be related to the fact that João Clá himself has a doctor's degree in canon law. As highlighted in the narrative, the Decretals are still important for canon law today. We can see the wish of the Heralds of the Gospel to link the medieval past to the present moment. According to the narrative, they arose to preserve the heritage of the Middle Ages while proudly displaying the achievements of Saint Raimundo of Peñafort. In doing so, they linked the life of this saint with that of the founder of this institution. The mediaeval hagiography, especially that of Raimundo of Peñafort, published by the website Heralds of the Gospel, serves to legitimize the group, once this saint perfectly fits the goals of this institution to promote evangelization and the prominence of canon law.

There are some aspects in this narrative that we would like to focus on. First

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<sup>32</sup> See: QUEIROZ, Antônio. São Raimundo de Peñafort: Um homem para todas as missões. In: *Arautos dos Evangelho website*. Available on <<https://www.arautos.org/secoes/artigos/especiais/sao-ramundo-de-penafort-um-homem-para-todas-as-missoes-143534>>, last accessed January 5, 2023.

of all, there is not a single bibliographical reference in this text. We can only identify the author, whose name is Antonio Queiroz and about whom we cannot find any information on the Heralds of the Gospel website. Since there is no ecclesiastical title before his name, we assume that he is a layman in this institution. As was common in the Middle Ages, this type of text does not cite references to support arguments. It is that the text is valid by its own authority and by the authority of the Church. The main value of this kind of narrative is its exemplary character, it has a proselytizing effect. That is, they have no need to be realistic. They firmly reject the “scientific method” established by the Bollandists.<sup>33</sup>

According to the Bollandists, who began to combat the mediaeval fantasy connection to sainthood in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Church should follow some procedures before granting sainthood to anyone. First of all, they disregarded the “naïve language” used by the mediaeval church. This means that the text should not be considered authentic either by the *auctoritas* of the person who wrote it or by the *auctoritas* of the Catholic Church itself. They began to develop document criticism to determine the authenticity of any narrative of holiness. To improve the veracity of narratives, they also improved philology by searching the earliest written version about a saint and also to corroborate the narrative with the help of other sources. Roughly speaking, they began to work with similar methods as the positivist historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The re-appropriation of Middle Ages through medieval hagiography carried out by Heralds of the Gospel endangers the Enlightened paradigm which has been the basis of contemporaneous science. The narrative is full of elements of medieval *mirabilia* which would hardly be accepted by the postulates established by the Catholic Church at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the “scientific method” for writing hagiographies has maintained the paradigm established by the Belgian Bollandist. However, this method seems to have ignored the narrative of Saint Raimundo de Peñafor published on the Heralds of the Gospel website. We do not find a historical-critical text on this site, but a narrative full of mediaeval

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<sup>33</sup> For more information about this method, see: PEETERS, Paul. *L'oeuvre des Bollandistes*. Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1961.

Christian imagination as in the Middle Ages. In this narrative, we clearly see the subjugation of History to Theology as observed in the historical Middle Ages (5th to 15th centuries). This practice has been taken up again since the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the reinventors of the Middle Ages.

In the specific case of Saint Raimundo Peñafort,<sup>34</sup> we would like to highlight the fact that he is a *beata stirps* (saint of the lineage).<sup>35</sup> Roughly speaking, in the Middle Ages it was believed that people from the nobility were predestined to become saints because of their virtue. Once again, the institution has instrumentalized the concept of *beata stirps* to emphasize the importance of nobility while defending the principle of inequality, as Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira had done in the past. If we look at the narrative as a whole and consider the refusal to the Bollandist method, the use of saint of the lineage and the surrealist narrative, we assume that this choice was intended to deny the Counter-Reformation and any modern thought that arose after the end of the Middle Ages.

Another way to highlight and glorify the work of Middle Ages is through its YouTube channel. There, you will find a series of videos on history, monasteries, churches, theology, philosophy, and mediaeval thoughts. They have also published pictures, audio sounds, stories, and books about the Middle Ages. An attempt is made to inform about the Middle Ages, to spread knowledge about this specific historical period. To this end, the audience is given a social, political, and cultural background that goes beyond church history presented in apologetic form. For obvious reasons, we find mentions of Saint Thomas Aquinas praising his contributions to philosophy and scholastic thought. Very likely, these mentions are justified by the Monsignor João Clá's Thomistic training.

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<sup>34</sup> For more information on his nobility, see: SILVA, Carolina Gual da. Cavaleiros podem demandar e reter o dízimo? Reflexões sobre privilégios papais em Raimundo de Peñafort. In: SANTANA, Eliana Veríssimo de, SILVA, Carolina Gual da, and TEIXEIRA, Igor Salomão (Orgs.). *A construção de jurisdições eclesásticas: dízimos, ordens religiosas e territórios no direito canônico medieval (séculos XII-XIII)*. Porto Alegre: CirKula, 2019, p. 55-74, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> For more information about the concept *beata stirps* in the Middle Ages, see: VAUCHEZ, André. 'Beata Stirps' : Sainteté et lignage en Occident aux XIIIe et XVe siècles. In : ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE DE ROME. Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval. *Actes de: Colloque de Paris organisé par l'École Pratiques des Hautes Études en collaboration avec le Collège de France et l'École Française de Rome*. Paris, 6-8 juin 1974. Paris: École Française de Rome et Palais Farnèse, p. 397-407, 1974.

We also observe an effort to refute the negative image that the Middle Ages have had since the Renaissance. To this end, there is the Church History series, in which some lessons are dedicated to the Middle Ages, mainly to refute prejudices and stereotypes. In class number 5, entitled *Ano 1000: Idade das trevas ou da luz* (Year 1000: Age of Darkness or Age of Light), the priest addresses the history of the Church during this period, mentioning events such as the Investiture Controversy and the Crusades, among many others. Despite the descriptive character of this class, at the end, the priest quotes the encyclical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century pope Leon XIII. We can also read the quotation on the screen. "There was a time when the philosophy of the Gospel dominated the states. At that time, Christian wisdom and its divine virtue were profoundly present in the law, in the institutions and in the habits of all men, in all categories of relationships in civil society".<sup>36</sup> This quote summarizes some thoughts expressed in this video. Leon XIII's encyclical offers arguments that prove that the Middle Ages were by no means a time of darkness, but light, because they were guided by Christian principles.

As we can see, although this video is presented as an online course, there are only two quotes in it, Pope Leon XIII's and another from the Bible. The second quotation was understood by the priest as an indirect allusion to the Middle Ages said by Jesus. According to him, the ideal of light in the following quotation would be understood as the Middle Ages. Once again, this institution is following the procedures of corroboration used in the Middle Ages. The first quotation stands for the *auctoritas* of the Church, that its power comes directly from God. The second stands for the Son of God's own speech and both say the same thing. When the Catholic Church was the head of society, the society was in harmony with Him.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they

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<sup>36</sup> *Ano 1000: Idade das trevas ou da luz*. Available on <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OUozKrHDaE>>, last accessed January 16, 2023, 20min49s.

have done has been done in the sight of God.<sup>37</sup>

The priest made a comparison between light and darkness. Light already ruled the world in the Middle Ages. In doing so, he not only claims that the Middle Ages are light, but he criticizes the modern world, which has distanced itself from the light through Enlightenment thinking. The Middle Ages appear not only in the mentions found on YouTube, but also among the elements previously analyzed. In all mentions, this period is presented as a time when faith ruled the planet, the laws, customs, institutions, and social, political, and cultural structure were determined by Christian principles. It is a recreation following the main ideas established by the fundamentalist Catholic that is, the Middle Ages as a time of peace, light that should guide our troubled contemporaneous society because that society was able to live in harmony with God.

#### **4 – Conclusion**

We hold that the Heralds of the Gospel have created a kind of hyperbolized Middle Ages that has nothing to do with our historical situation in Brazil. The real Brazil has a huge heritage of African peoples and original inhabitants, real Brazil has no mediaeval past, although our elites try to link us to elements of European culture. We would infer The Heralds of the Gospel are running a neomedievalism operation so that they feel themselves free to re-elaborate our history, citing only the mediaeval past as a model of society. But this disconnection with Brazil's History is not a naïve action. It is intentional in order to make a statement that is favorable to their worldview. They hold on to the centrality of the Middle Ages, which played an important role in the construction of the Western civilization. In this way, they establish Europe and its history as the model of civilization.

This hyperbolized Middle Ages mobilizes an invented past inspired by European history and combines violence with religious intolerance. This kind of mobilization also has a dominant color: white. It is important to stress that Plínio

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<sup>37</sup> John 3: 12–22. This verse was quoted on 20 minutes in the same class mentioned in the previous note.

Corrêa de Oliveira's thoughts were probably linked in several aspects to extreme right-wing groups in the USA and that the Heralds of the Gospel have Plínio Corrêa's books as basic principles. In the same way, this invented Middle Ages has a gender, and it is the masculine. We can see that the role of women in this institution has a model: of the Virgin Mary. They only quote women when these ones have been made saints. Considered as a proposition and statement, we see that they reject several modern thoughts and ideas from Vatican II while naturalizing inequality as a fundamental principle of society. They have chosen fundamentalism as a model for society. In the case of Brazil, the situation is even more serious, because part of the Catholic Church played an important role in the struggle against inequality, in the struggle for the dignity of poor people. It is not a question of the model of the Church, but rather the model of society. Following the thoughts of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, they use the Middle Ages as a model to develop our society in the present time.

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