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Politics and religion under the dictatorship in Portugal (1933-1974): rebuilding the separation between the State and the Church

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What were the means of religious regulation, and more specifically, what were the terms for the institutionalisation of the Catholic Church that the Portuguese authoritarian state adopted? This article adopts a new historiographic interpretation on these questions in order to emphasise both the experience of restructuring the separation and defending the persistence of secularism in the political and cultural debate over the course of the 20th century in Portugal. This argument moves away from the until recently dominant perspective that there was prevailing in Portugal that phenomenon termed “clerical fascism” that some of the literature deems to have been generalised across the dictatorial regimes of Europe between the World Wars.

Introduction

The relationship between the Portuguese authoritarian State (1933–1974) and the Catholic Church has been subject to different interpretations by the social sciences and historiography since the advent of democracy¹. Three questions have essentially concentrated the attentions

¹ I would here thank Professor Luís Reis Torgal for his critical comments on my work and on this article prior to publication, especially as regards the need to include reflection on the problematic nature of this regime type.

of the academic community: one involves the problem of ascertaining whether the Catholic Church experienced autonomy in this period or, on the contrary, was dominated by the political class; another, stemming from this, approaches whether or not the Catholic Church served to legitimize the dictatorship of Salazar (1933–1968) and Marcelo Caetano (1986–1974); and, finally, the debate over the role of Catholicism in defining the regime. Between the 1970s and 1990s, various authors converged around an understanding that the Catholic Church was subordinate to the dictator and, in exchange, gained a privileged statute, epitomised by the signing of the 1940 Concordat with the Vatican, correspondingly serving to legitimize the regime and even extending to those aspects leading to the repression of political rights and violence against regime dissidents (Cerqueira 1973; Rosas 1999; Pinto 1992). There is a broad consensus, which has extended into contemporary times, around the idea that the Catholic elites contributed more than any other current of thinking, to shaping the dictatorship's identity, especially the matrix for its social policies and its corporative project (Cruz 1980, 15–20; Payne 1983; Léonard 1998, 107–113; Alexandre 2006, 405–406). However, some authors have emphasised the diversity of the positions towards the regime prevalent within the Church and correspondingly noting that following the end of World War Two, a generation, educated in the ranks of the *Ação Católica Portuguesa* youth movement, positioned themselves as reformists and, to a certain extent, made complaints and demands as regards social aspects that then evolved into political matters (Barreto 1994; Ferreira 1999). However, very few studies have highlighted how the Salazar and Caetano regimes failed to transform themselves into a “Catholic state” in keeping with the need for the ruling class to manage the diverse interests that made up their support base, which included a political grouping with a secularist outlook with which the regime held negotiations (Lucena 1976, 130–138; Torgal 2009, 423–439).

Over the last two decades, younger generations of researcher have striven to densify knowledge about the agreements signed with the Vatican, Catholic organisations, religious practices, writing biographies of both secular and religious figures and making recourse to equally ideological arguments even while not having innovated in terms of the core problematic framework under analysis (Reis 2006, 325-339; Carvalho 2013, 585-622; Fontes 2011). Some works demonstrate that the relationship between the political and ecclesiastic leaders was not symbiotic and place the emphasis on the voices of opposition among the Catholic faithful (Barreto 2002, 119-175; Almeida 2008). These two aspects are also those most commonly depicted in descriptions of the aforementioned relationship produced through to 2014 (Simpson 2014). Specifically, the works dedicated to that termed the “Catholic opposition” re-stated, in a paradoxical but updated form, the classification of the Portuguese case as that of “clerical fascism”, an expression in fashion since the earliest studies (Delzell 1970, 331; Michel 1977, 90-91), and therefore similarly establishing parallelisms with the other regimes in power across Europe between the two world wars. This came about through strengthening the binomial stereotype: a “progressive” Catholic minority struggling for liberty and inspired on the Second Vatican Council against a conservative majority, loyal to a pre-Council ecclesiology and indefatigably supporting the dictatorship. This line of thinking continued in declaring the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church as instrumental (Loff 2008, 165-169) and highlighting how the dictatorship interrupted a cycle of growing religious freedom and the separation of the political and ecclesiastic powers (Rosas 2012, 187-188, 257-280), allegedly brought about by the declaration of the first Portuguese Republic (1910-1926) and the 1911 Law of Separation, inspired by (but more radical than) earlier French legislation.

These studies have not developed macro-comparative approaches to the relationships between the State, the Catholic Church and the other religions that characterise peer regimes even while various authors have

generically dialogued, based on the bibliography, on the international circumstances, putting forward examples of features that define those institutional relationships (especially through observations of the concordats) or the internal relationships of international Catholicism in other countries (preferentially for the cases of Spain and Italy). One notable exception to this panorama is the study, informed and detailed, that Pedro Velez produced on the constitutions and political-constitutional doctrines under authoritarian, fascist and totalitarian regimes in the period between the two world wars. This author analyses these constitutional realities in exploring the idea that the constitutional determination defines the manifestations of religious expression and thereby defends that a similar constitutional order prevailed in Portugal, Spain and Austria, which he terms the «catholic states» (Velez 2016, 87-146). Other literature on the comparative dimension has arisen not from the field of history but rather from those of sociology, religious studies and anthropology, which in recent years have seen an expansion in studies approaching the Portuguese case, especially during the democratic period (from 1974 onwards), to analyse the relationships between religion and cultural diversity, religious identities and migrations or gender, models of secularization, involvement in international religious organisations (especially those dedicated to youth or charitable missions) and the relationship with Islamism (Vilaça and Oliveira, 2019). Along such paths, Portugal has accompanied the emerging international research agendas on religion, an area in which national historiography has demonstrated fewer results². In effect, there has only been scant consideration of this theme that has, in Europe and Latin America,

² Currently in Portugal, contemporary history studies on religion have not been subject to new scientific projects or other research approaches (including, for example doctoral and master's degree theses), which would enable the identification of significant activities within this field. This reality was highlighted by the R&D 2017/2018 Unit Evaluation for the field of History and Archaeology by the national scientific policy agency, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, in the current year of 2019.

occupied scholars focusing on the relationships between politics and religion under the 20th century authoritarian regimes and, in recent years, dedicated to analysis of the models of religious separation and regulation by the State, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the construction of the welfare State, human rights defence movements and decolonisation processes.

In the international literature, that written on the historical process of the relationships between the State and the Catholic Church under the authoritarian regime (1933-1974) arises from the syntheses published over the course of the 1980s and 1990s on this theme. From the outset, as these works incorporate only brief empirical research and their arguments are constructed from only some of the bibliography available, with an incidence on summary works (correspondingly not specialising in the relationships between the State and the religions or even in the history of Portuguese Catholicism), produced by the most prestigious and well-known international academics (Gallagher 1996; Manuel 2002).

In this article, which resumes the argument put forward in my doctoral degree thesis (Santos, 2016), I present a new paradigm for the relationships established between the Portuguese authoritarian State and the religious orders, especially the Catholic Church, which emphasises the experience of the redefinition of separation that the dictatorship brought about and that I compare to what was built up under republicanism as well as the persistence of secularism in the political and cultural debate over the course of the 20th century in Portugal. I seek to critically dialogue with the questions dominating interpretations of this theme but that are drawn from another analytical framework that I explain below. Indeed, the problem of the submission of the Catholic Church to the Salazar and Caetano regimes would actually seem artificial. Historically, we cannot conceal how, while the regal monarchic system persisted (from at least the 18th century through to 1910), the Catholic Church was, *de jure* and *de facto*, submitted to the State. It is similarly impossible to ignore that, following the declaration of the

First Republic, this subjection was not suppressed to the extent that the new political power, despite having brought an end to the confessional State and State religion, nevertheless established a model of separation that not only favoured *libertas ecclesiae* but also contrarily maintained religions under State administrative control (Moura 2004; Seabra 2009). The changes enacted after 1918 fell short of those necessary to overcoming these limitations and allowing the Catholic Church only to obtain indirect recognition of its juridical status (Matos 1999). Hence, in a diachronic observation that runs through to 1974, we may state that, under the *Estado Novo*, the Catholic Church obtained a never before experienced level of autonomy. Furthermore, the concordat regime established in 1940, irrespective of the juridical-political complexity of the national situation over subsequent decades, demonstrated a capacity for resistance and adaptation that ensured its longevity, as indeed Jorge Miranda has already detailed³.

Ascertaining whether or not the Catholic Church provided legitimacy to the authoritarian regimes of Salazar and Marcelo Caetano was also not a core problem in my study. There is no single response to this question. With the authoritarian regime having opted for a paradigm of autonomy for the Catholic Church, this prioritised respect for the already established powers (thus, in line with a strategy of *ralliement* as suggested by Catholic doctrine ever since Leo XIII) and correspondingly extending collaboration especially because, from an ideological point of view, including the ideals for structuring society, there was both an affinity and a convergence of positions. This positioning of the Catholic Church, identifiable above all during the episcopate of Cardinal Cerejeira (1928-1971), also arose from the perceptions that the ecclesiastical authority held of the political and social projects of the regime's opposition as less favourable to accommodating the autonomous

³ Only in 2004 did Portugal sign a new Concordat with the Vatican: Miranda 1993, 69.

spaces that the religious institution had gained under the *Estado Novo*. In the final years of Marcelismo, following the nomination of António Ribeiro as Patriarch of Lisbon, this position of the ecclesiastic institution towards political power was steadily eroded with the new Bishop of Lisbon adopting an attitude of greater independence towards the civil authority. For this positioning, the new cardinal drew heavily on the strategy elaborated by the Vatican for Portugal with the Holy See seeking to prepare the Portuguese Catholic Church for the arrival of democracy with the evolution of the regime towards some type of pluralist democracy deemed as inevitable (Santos 2005), especially after 1970.

Within the scope of the history of dictatorial political institutions, I sought to capture the formulating of political decision making for the sectorial policy towards religion in accordance with the triangular relationship between: the government, the legislative body and the ecclesiastical institutions. While on a lesser scale, this also attributes value to the public debate then ongoing in the Portuguese national press, both confessional and non-confessional, around the normativity making up the aforementioned policy. I also especially took into account the importance of three aspects: one, the cultural dimension of the law and the influence of legislation on the articulation of the State with confessional interest groups; second, the competition and struggle that took place within the interior of the ruling political class and its support base that featured both believers and non-believers; third and finally, negotiations in demonstrating how this was the instrument most commonly applied by these dictators (Salazar and Caetano) in order to achieve their objectives.

This approach also derives from the nature of the dictatorial regime in Portugal. While this is not the place for any detailed elaboration, I would make due reference on the grounds that this clarifies the construction of the analytical options hereby taken. Departing from the classification that Barbara Geddes proposed for the Portuguese dictatorship, which she terms, in keeping with her typology for authoritarian

regimes, a case of personalist authoritarianism (Geddes 1999, 121-123, 132) even while having been a single-party regime. In conjunction with this characterisation, I draw upon the explanation highlighting the leader's control over access to power and its maintenance: Salazar, a prestigious civilian on account of his status as university professor and a recognised supporter of Catholicism, emerged from a struggle for power between rival factions and only took on an authoritarian leadership style after fully and really grasping the role he had taken on. He conserved the united front of his government, limiting initiative in political decision making to party-members and developing a continuous form of monitoring the political situation and the opposition through both formal and informal means, which included diverse facets such as the suppression (or mitigation) of fundamental freedoms and the launching of infrastructures for repression incorporating censorship and the PIDE political police force.

Within this framework, there nevertheless emerge other characteristics lacking in the interpretative proposal from Geddes but purposefully theorised by Jennifer Gandhi in a series of studies that I not only consider add to our understanding of the Portuguese dictatorship but are also highly useful for analysis of the sectoral policy formulation undertaken by these regimes. I here refer to – as the first characteristic – the high level of institutionalisation of the self-designated *Estado Novo*. This reflects in the publication of the Constitution, immediately in 1933 and its successive revisions through to 1971; in the existence of numerous institutions identified as holding specific functions (some new, such as the single party, others reformed and adapted to the new principles of governance, such as the legislative bodies themselves, institutes, inspection services and many others) and subject to the idea of undertaking institutional reforms; regularly staging elections (even if non-competitive); or the intense normative production associated with the incremental expansion of various public policies. While no institution configured any hegemonic space in the political system,

with each retaining their own spheres, especially those that took an apparently democratic appearance (such as the National Assembly and, in certain aspects, the Corporate Chamber), they served – the second characteristic – the needs of the leaders, Salazar and Caetano, guaranteed cooperation in order to ensure their directives got enacted and thus expanding their political base. The empirical observation that supported this study enables confirmation of what Gandhi and Pzeworski concluded for the authoritarian regimes that emerged in the post-1945 period (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006); that participants in the inner workings of these institutions, with differing levels of identification with the regime, might be able to reveal their aspirations, preferences and interests (while nevertheless accepting the internal rules that regulated the prerogatives and functioning of the respective institutions) without having to take up a position in opposition to the ruling power.

Five principles for the model of State and Church separation under Portuguese authoritarianism

The Portuguese authoritarian regime brought about a significant transformation of the institutional relationship between the State and religious entities, especially the Catholic Church. This transformation arose out of the new solutions attempted for the organisation of the State, which were the fruit of the political conflicts and disputes among rival interest groups that extended throughout the dictatorship. The model for relations between politics and religion was debated within the framework of establishing interconnections between the State and organised social interests as well as between the State and individuals. The options, at least as regards those put into practice in this field, fell under the auspices of public law in general and constitutional law in particular. They also determined exclusively political dynamics that were, to a greater or lesser extent, a complement to the normative framework

surrounding religious issues. Through amalgamating these different components, the course of the *Estado Novo* saw first the inauguration and then the consolidation of a phase of important alterations to the interactions between politics and religion, which might be termed the *second separation*, characterised by constitutional interpretations of a more favourable nature to the organisational autonomy of the Catholic Church through the signing of the Concordat and the Missionary Agreement of 1940, afterwards progressively regulated, and the approval of the first Law of Religious Freedom (1971), which took into consideration the non-Catholic religious social field.

As may thus be understood, the *second separation* intentionally stands in opposition to the first attempt at separability, or the first separation, which took place between 1910 and 1933, determined by certain measures enacted by the Provisional Government, the institutionalisation of the 1911 Law of Separation and its subsequent alterations as well as by the “juridical statute” decree of June 1926. We would recall that this later legislation, irrespective of its approval within a climate of far less State opposition to religion, with a reduction in the conflictual nature of the relationship between the civil and religious authorities, and at a time when the government actively sought to meet some of the leading complaints made by the Catholic Church, did not however denote any rupture with numerous outstanding problems, both theoretical and practical, faced in terms of the relationship ongoing between the State and the Catholic Church in particular but also religious orders in general, specifically as regards the statutes for religious groups.

In contrast, the distinctive characteristic of the *second separation* stems from changes in the juridical, political and cultural framework that led to religions gaining autonomous status in keeping with their own needs even while conditioned and subject to the general interests of society that in itself justified the regulation of their rights being imposed by the framework of State governance. In comparison with the first separation, the political power as regards direct interference in reli-

gious affairs was substantially reduced, specifically curtailing the State's powers of inspection. In effect, these powers of inspection were no longer applied to determine the statute of the Catholic Church and the nature of their organisms nevertheless remaining effective as regards the social activities of Catholic institutions in the fields of education, teaching and welfare. There was less progress in the case of minority religions with the State retaining a supervisory attitude as regards the recognition of local communities and some religious associations that the 1971 Law of Religious Freedom combined with the scope for attributing juridical status to organised religious groups.

There were four different facets that guided and structured the behaviours of the political powers towards religion over the 1933 to 1974 period. They themselves incorporate the maximum doctrines of power whether or not based on existing legal precepts.

The non-confessional principle of the State

Firstly, there was the non-confessional principle of the State. As Salazarism emerged out of the various political-ideological currents that underpinned the institutionalisation of the regime in 1933⁴, there was a broad consensus as regards the need to update the model of separation between the Church and State. This process did not spurn recollections of the experiences of the first separation that focused on the persecutory dimensions of religion, particularly of Catholicism as the State sought to act to modernise institutions and society. As an aside, we would mention that the inculcation of this memory, as an experience

⁴ The idea that within the internal scope of the Portuguese dictatorship there were various political-ideological currents in support of the regime, which I apply here, has been broadly studied in Portuguese historiography and gained a growing consensus. One of the authors making the greater contribution towards characterising these various sensitivities was Fernando Rosas, who himself appropriately designated the grouping as «the viability providing platform of the rights». Rosas 1994, 164 ss.; Rosas 2004, 81-98. Some of these political currents have been subject to thorough characterisation, see: Ferreira 1992, 155 ss.; Pinto 1994.

of conflict in the collective national imaginary reached so deeply that, even after the fall of the *Estado Novo*, during the democratic transition (1974–1975), the adjustment in the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church took place within the framework of avoiding «the errors of the First Republic» despite not actually returning to questioning the principle of separation (Santos 2016). Such a generational motive justified the perceptions of the first separation having been of greater importance to Salazarism than to Marcelism. In fact, through to the late 1950s, among the ruling classes, the public administration, the ecclesiastic authorities and the leadership ranks of the various Catholic organisms and entities, there remained those who had witnessed the troubled Republican period and had been engaged in (in some cases more than in others) some of the events that had fed the confrontations among the public powers and the ecclesiastic institutions of that time. Such a circumstance would certainly have influenced the psychology of both the political authorities and their religious peers both in terms of the ways they mutually treated each other in the negotiations and talks they participated in and justifying the taking of such attitudes not only out of resistance but also in the search for an equilibrium.

Out of that comparison with events under the First Republic, the authoritarian State did not have any intention of substituting either religion in general or Catholicism in particular and opted not to demand the absolute subordination of Churches to political power and hence rejecting a hostile model of separation. The conflict underlying the configuration of this separability was overcome by the development of a new State attitude towards religions. Interested in the pacification of its relationship with Churches in general but especially the Catholic Church, the State sought to bring about a social peace in which religion no longer emerged as a polarising factor. Within this scope, there came about a collaborative separation in which the State, understood as the representative of general interests and sovereign over all other institutions located within its territory, did not abdicate from triggering practical mechanisms that

enabled the inspection of religious activities but that also incorporated an awareness of certain facets of *libertas ecclesiae*. This thus favoured the effectiveness of the institutional dimension of the Catholic Church and including launching experiments over means of reciprocal cooperation without ever endangering the political sovereignty of the State itself. Any tendency towards favouring ecclesiastic sovereignty got rejected by the political power and furthermore dispelled the consideration of religion as a legitimating source of civil power.

Nevertheless, this question remained far from consensual throughout both Salazarism and Marcelism. The confessional role of the State was defended among some Catholic sectors, some with monarchist tendencies. The tensions and divergences elicited by those who defended, for example, the introduction of the name of God into the political constitution gained in visibility precisely at the defining, constituent moments of the post-war regime (1951, 1959 and 1971). Through to such times, the sectors that shared the ambition of seeing the principle of the non-confessional role of the State rejected had been more focused on the possibility of abandoning the regime of separation and evolving into a regime of moral union. Despite never giving up on a confessional State, the political power did not give up on Catholicism as the cementing historical-cultural tradition and framework of social moral reference. Indeed, to this extent, the State would allow for functionally confessional practices in public education across the levels of primary, elementary, secondary and technical school teaching.

The principle of a specific normativity for the Catholic Church

Secondly, there was the establishing of a specific normativity for the Catholic Church. The idea of a “historical” Catholicism, transformed into the core identity facets of a nation and the consideration of the sociological weighting of Catholicism, enabled the political authorities to bestow privileged treatment upon the Catholic Church. The religious authority, especially during the episcopate of Cardinal Cerejeira, did not reject

this concept that the Catholic Church was integrated into the nation. This reason served to legitimate, from the perspective of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, the State extending its protection to ecclesial institutions and ensuring the conditions for their expansion in social and public life.

However, while considering the Church to be the “promoter of moral unity” and the “supervisor of all social activities in keeping with the common good”, the State did not entirely correspond to the expectations of the religious authority. The relationship with the Catholic Church incorporated an inherently latent tension to the extent that the State advanced in its function of coordinating every social aggregate and with religious entities correspondingly falling under the spotlight. In taking on the provision of services deemed sufficient to provide the material and cultural basis necessary for each citizen to participate in the public life of the country, the State above all entered into competition with the welfare support and educational initiatives of the ecclesial institution. Understanding itself as a founding instance of the social, in conjunction with the State, the Church did reveal difficulties in accommodating itself to the corporate project as this underwent development. In striving to preserve its own autonomy, the ecclesial institution reacted to the contents of the corporate model as they came into effect to a greater extent in the economic and social dimensions than in the political field in putting forward and attempting to implement the guidelines handed down by the Church’s social doctrine in formulating its responses to the diverse and different economic and social problems.

The historical process of drafting the legislation designed to regulate the social dimension of the Catholic religion duly reflects this framework. Without constitutionalising all of the principles demanded by the Catholic Church or dispensing with inspecting its activities through means of ordinary legislation, the political rule was sensitive to the establishing of a specific normativity for the majority religion. To this end, the Portuguese State engaged in its relationship with the Vatican in a logic inherent to the solutions chosen for reaching agreement on the concor-

dat. By extension, this also meant, at least to a certain extent, the State promoting connections between the national Catholic Church and the Holy See. Within this scope, there was the frequent sounding out of the position of the religious authorities on the content of draft legislation even prior to its publication and even extending to jointly drafting some legislation. In reality, this happened both before and after the signing of the 1940 concordat agreement even while the need for regulating the precepts of the concordat had favoured the welcoming of the principle of normative bi-laterality and furthermore fostering the idea of reciprocal cooperation. From 1960 onwards, there was the occasional publication of legislation that, in displaying a deeper understanding of the rights of the Catholic Church, somewhat pre-empted a coercive model of separation that would undergo consolidation within the later democratic context. However, over these years, what lacked for the consummation of the relationship between the State and the Church was the recognition of the value of pluralism and how this would be intimately bound up with the effective exercising of religious freedom.

The mitigated principle of religious freedom

Thirdly, there was the mitigated principle of religious freedom. The political constitution enacted in 1933 stipulated the preservation of religious liberty that did not, nevertheless, correspond to any effective supervision and oversight of religious freedom according to the current meaning of this term. This reality, furthermore, did not represent any novelty in comparison with the reality prevailing throughout the period from 1911 to 1933.

The constitutionally enacted principle of religious freedom was, from the outset, contradicted by the way in which the State regulated other aspects of religious phenomena as well as other liberties and freedoms. Salazarism accommodated and tolerated religious diversity, but no relevant support was provided by the State towards the institutionalisation of minority religions without any recognised juridical statute and

conditioned to survive under a purely de facto regime and correspondingly subject to the discretionary whims of the State administrative bureaucracy. For such religions, there was always a deficit in legislative regulation. Only under Marcelism did this problem receive political consideration through the launching of a new phase in the planning of religious freedom in Portugal whether in terms of the alteration made to the constitutional text approved in 1971, which valued the principle (restoring the institutional dimension of the freedom of organisation to all religious confessions even while the constitutional approval of an individual dimension to religious freedom remained lacking alongside the inviolability of religious beliefs and practices), or through the publication of the law on religious freedom.

The principle of Executive primacy in the regulation of religious phenomena

Fourthly came the understanding that the Executive held the preponderant role in regulating the social expression of religious phenomena. The government thus held an overwhelming and preponderant role, and particularly through the President of the Council, in formulating the regime's religious policy as was indeed the trend reflected in the formulation of policies for other sectors by this authoritarian State. The explanation for this arises out of the very conception of political organisation that facilitated expanding the sphere of government intervention through its legislative powers. This also resulted from the model of incremented political coordination implemented by Salazar and then continued by Marcelo Caetano with its *maxim* fundamentally established by the non-existence of any executive political responsibility towards the National Assembly and therefore highlighting the idea of the President of the Council as the primary decision maker, advised by his ministers who were more there to provide technical competences than political counselling with the assistance of the Corporate Chamber, another source of technical competences and skills. This reality,

despite being dominant, did not prevent some legislation undergoing preparation and development on the initiative and under the responsibility of this or that minister. Normally, this aligned with the extent of autonomy that ministers were able to build up for themselves and with the head of government nevertheless still holding the final say over the contents and publication of legislation.

This intrinsic factor to the State and Catholic Church relationship thus strengthened the role of the government as the key legislator on religious issues: the logic underpinning the concordat agreements both before and after their formal signing.

While not overlooking the State's special approach to the Catholic religion and the drafting of its normative framework, this highlights how the legislator commonly, in conjunction with the religious authorities, strove for a free appreciation of the State's opportunities and expedience. This aspect leads onto another relevant point: this period also saw the growth and transformation of the functions of State. This matter is of no lesser importance and illuminates the facet of competition between the State and the Catholic Church over the provision of certain services. In effect, the expansion of the State explains several of the already highlighted tensions with the Catholic Church in addition to justifying the greater openness of the State to joint cooperation in education and welfare. Thus, the State subsidised activities in these fields but, in reality, this also extended to identifying the scope for raising fiscal duties to allocate towards centralisation, influencing content and inclusively determining the logic behind the territorial distribution of activities primarily run by the Catholic Church.

The principle of Catholic believer political demobilisation

Finally, the strategy for the political demobilisation of Catholics saw the governing power, throughout its duration, exclude any idea of Catholic political autonomy, circumscribing the scope for organised political interventions to the União Nacional / Acção Nacional Popular

movements. While not specifically determined – the prohibition on any political activities outside of this para-party movement – and not exclusively targeting Catholics but all groups with political dynamics and purposes (the closure of the National Syndicalist Movements, for example, resulted from this position; with the only accepted exception being the monarchic cause), this always raised more problems than it returned efficiencies within the framework of preventing the party politicisation of the State. The existence of this State imposition, defined by Salazar and continued by Marcelo Caetano, did not at any point under the regime entirely resolve the problem of the individual political responsibility of Catholics and their political intervention in society. There were periods more favourable to complying with the interests of the political power as was the case in the 1930s with the progressive deactivation of the CCP – the Portuguese Catholic Centre (CCP), and other occasions, especially post-World War Two, when political views successively called the regime to account, hindering the reaching of compromises with the diverse Catholic sectors (even those falling under the auspices of the political power's sphere of influence) increasingly interventionist in public life and mobilised to dispute their own protagonism and influence both on behalf of State interests and in defence of their own political ideologies.

This highlights how there remained tensions, never eliminated throughout the entire regime, around just what the ACP – the Portuguese Catholic Action movement – might represent as regards the issues surrounding the political organisations of Catholics. These tensions prevailed for different reasons across the relationships between the government and the ecclesiastic hierarchy as well as with the organisms making up the ACP, also expressed in the relations the religious authorities maintained with the diverse Catholic sectors and even among the prelates themselves and especially in the wake of 1945. There was no clarification in political terms as to what that organisation actually stood for with its proposal to act «above and beyond all political currents,

without ever prescinding on demanding and defending the freedoms of the Church» (ACP Base IV.1) even while the pontifical logic that drove the original religious project for the creation of the ACP, which sought to overcome the intervention model for Christians in society through means of confessional political parties, was clearly understandable. According to Salazar, what the ACP intended for the relationship between Catholics and politics constituted a threat to his objective of excluding any scope for Catholic political autonomy from his political regime. The head of government's lack of trust emerges in the Concordat negotiations and determined the absence of any reference to the ACP in the resulting Concordat. According to the Council president, it had been «impossible to reach a satisfactory solution» in the Concordat solutions for the cause of the problems that had called for the identification of the goals and purposes of the ACP alongside the definition of just what were the political actions of Catholics. Both questions had represented obstacles: the first on behalf of the Vatican that had encountered «the greatest difficulty in defining what was [the purpose of *Ação Católica*]»; the second because the Vatican expressed its “desire to save all at the same time”, and to this end proclaiming «*Ação Católica* is alien to political action so that governments may accept its compliance» but while seeking «not to restrict the political liberty of Catholics, even for re-founding political parties – which is impossible to accept»⁵. As a consequence, the ACP did not attain, at any moment in its life cycle, any civil juridical statute or even any formal canonical recognition. The concession of the former depended on the attribution of canonical juridical status to *Ação Católica* and with this condition never being met. From the political perspective, it remained advantageous for the government that the ACP never attained any canonical status, a circumstance that, under the auspices of art. III of Concordat, would oblige

⁵ “Nota das fases das negociações com a Santa Sé V – 1940.” Text signed by Salazar, transcribed in Rodrigues 1993.

the State to endow the entity with a civil juridical status. The existence of the ACP, without any civil statute and subject only to the civil law that governed non-recognised associations, diluted the room for manoeuvre of the State over the organisation should, in whatever the fashion, its militants opted to have engaged in political activities. Free from providing any form of special treatment for organisations such as the ACP, the government benefitted from a situation in which Catholics counted only on tolerance for the actions they might choose to develop.

The awareness that *Ação Católica* might be banned from existence and forced to disappear, in any scenario when they were held to account, triggered debates within Catholic circles after 1948 that led to the production of certain studies on its juridical position and that mounted some pressure (but which had absolutely no effect) on the episcopate to encounter some form of solution.

Conclusion

In order to close, we would add that Portuguese authoritarianism adopted a stable policy in its handling of religion as we may ascertain from the political procedures and juridical relations that the State applied and expanded. Highlighting this factor of stability does not detract importance from the dynamism of the processes driving the drafting of laws and other normative instruments. Any monolithic perspective on the actions and visions of the authoritarian regime does not stand up to verification as the political power did not regulate society in isolation. Rather the regime displayed sensitivity to various interests, including those of religious groups and did not exclude recourse to negotiations. The various actors discussed the model of separation and updating the law as well as particular policies they disagreed with in some cases in order to agree in others. To adopt an expression from the current social science narrative, the actors established their commitments in order to

achieve their own agendas. The dominant ideology was never absolute and authority, whether State or religious based, was contradicted and challenged under many circumstances. Hence, we may grasp why the relationship between politics and religion throughout the 1933 to 1974 hiatus fed a paradox: the various attempts to make adjustments to secularism and religious freedom, with both dynamics seeking their own affirmation, ended up mutually restricting each other.

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