

## ARTICLE

## The Political Theology of Alberto Pasqualini: Christian Solidarism, Economics, and *Trabalhismo*

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This article aims to look into the thought of jurist Alberto Pasqualini as part of the early stages of organization of the ideology of 'trabalhismo', which appears in the author's work as a political theology. This doctrine emerged as the foundation of Getúlio Vargas's Estado Novo and had to adapt to the democratic regime of the 1946 Republic. We argue that Alberto Pasqualini played a fundamental role in this endeavor. He acted both as a theorist of 'trabalhismo' and as one of its main political organizers. Drawing from his books, speeches, and interviews, we will demonstrate here that the moral and political foundations of the 'trabalhismo' built by Pasqualini was based on premises aligned with Catholicism and the social doctrine of the Church, as well as his position on major issues of his time, including social and economic development, state planning, and the Cold War. To this end, we will address his writings in the context of Catholic thought represented by the papal encyclicals 'Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno'.

**Keywords:** Brazilian political thought; Catholic thought; 'trabalhismo'; social doctrine of the Church.

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When looking into the thought of Alberto Pasqualini, one can hardly disregard the consolidation of a political current that this jurist helped build — ‘trabalhismo’. He was a leader of the doctrine and, if not the first, the most illustrious theorist of the early stages of the Brazilian labor party, the PTB — ‘Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro’ (ANGELI, 2020; GOMES, 2005; KAYSEL, 2018). However, the literature that addresses his work or the establishment of the ‘trabalhista’ ideology and party does not place emphasis on a key aspect of his political and social thought: his Catholicism. The ‘trabalhista’ intellectual had a religious upbringing and shared the beliefs and dogmas connected to the Christianity of Rome, which one can see in his 1948 book ‘Bases e sugestões para uma política social’ (Bases and Suggestions for a Social Policy) as well as in his newspaper articles and speeches. This article aims to look into Alberto Pasqualini’s work from this dual place: as an important intellectual in the consolidation of ‘trabalhismo’. And, as a left-wing reader of the Social Doctrine of the Church, whose political thought had an inherent theological dimension.

Political theology here is not only understood as the analysis or advocacy of the survival of theological concepts in secular politics (KANTOROWICZ, 1998; SCHMITT, 2009). We also understand it as a way of reconciling a secular political and social order with moral doctrines guided by a theology — understood as a rational effort to understand faith, the transcendent, and the divine (SCATTOLA, 2009). According to Merio Scattola (2009), political theology projects have oscillated since the Western Middle Ages between the framing of politics within a model provided by religion and the effort to reconcile a temporal order with the divine order, understanding each as a different world. Alberto Pasqualini is part of this second group: he strived to produce a political theory for ‘trabalhismo’ that was compatible with the Church’s social doctrine, while taking into account the specific characteristics of Brazil and its political, economic, and social development.

Social sciences and historiographic works on the relationship between the Catholic Church and socialist thought usually put more emphasis on the relevance of liberation theology to this link (GODOY, 2020; LOWY, 1989; MAINWARING, 1989; SOARES, 2014). In our view, this association is correct, as this movement marked the existence of a properly left-wing, Marxist-aspiring current within Catholicism.

Nevertheless, the reading of the writings by Alberto Pasqualini and the reception of the papal encyclical 'Quadragesimo Anno' among the Catholic intelligentsia show that one can find projects that aimed at having social policies with a socialist character to them<sup>1</sup> feeding back into Catholic thought and vice versa. We also understand that the investigation into the possible encounters between religion and left-wing agendas may help somewhat disconnect the image of the religious person as someone who is necessarily conservative. Following Scott Mainwaring (1989), we consider that religion is produced by society and that, while it claims to have judgments and dogmas that remain the same over time, it changes and reinvents itself in dialogue with society itself. In the author's words:

The key argument of this book is what demonstrates that, as in any other institution, a Church is influenced by changes in society at large. More specifically, I argue that political ideologies of Brazilian society have influenced the Church's conception of faith. Social conflicts, in turn, and the way in which the state has tried to resolve or suppress them, have largely determined these ideologies and conceptions of politics. Political struggle can lead to reconsiderations about social identities and ideologies, creating new identities and ideologies. Social practices and institutional identities generally do not change because new ideas arise, but rather because social conflict leads to a new way of understanding reality (MAINWARING, 1989, p. 25).

This article will address Alberto Pasqualini's political thought understood as a political theology that aimed to provide the foundations for 'trabalhismo' in Brazil. Based on the following path: the next section will briefly address the social doctrine of the Church as described in the encyclicals 'Rerum Novarum', from 1891, and 'Quadragesimo Anno', from 1931, as well as their reception among the Brazilian Catholic intelligentsia. Our aim with this is to situate Pasqualini in this discussion to then address how his writings and speeches are located in this debate and in his 'trabalhista' political project. While the methodological orientation of this article is not exactly a linguistic contextualism 'tout court', we do want to

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Freeden (2006, pp. 425–426) argues that a thought can be considered a socialist thought if it includes five concepts that make up the diachronic core of this ideology: substantial appreciation of equality, human welfare as a desirable and achievable goal, human relations as historically construed, active human nature, and history as the place where changes occur. In our reading, Alberto Pasqualini fulfills the conditions addressed by Freeden.

understand Alberto Pasqualini's move<sup>2</sup> within a Catholic intellectual context (SKINNER, 1969) and a political context of party formation and labor doctrine.

We advocate here that, while some tended to consider him exclusively as a normative theorist who formulated a 'trabalhista' doctrine (SIMON, 2001) and others fundamentally saw him as a political actor involved in the political networks of his time (ANGELI, 2020), it is possible to provide an interpretation of his writings as to not erase his role on either side. Moreover, the bibliography on the author does not properly address the religious element of his thought, treating it as a secondary or ancillary element. In our view, Alberto Pasqualini was both a theorist who sought to interpret Brazilian politics and society in the light of the changes experienced in those post-war times and a political actor concerned with intervening in this context from a Catholic viewpoint, building a political theology. He is, therefore, an example of an author-actor, who at the same time interprets and participates in political processes. We are thus inspired by the intellectual movement of the ideational turn of political science (HALL, 1989; PERISSINOTO and STUM, 2017) that aims precisely to make the rigid separation between political ideas and practices more flexible. This current assumes that there are no practices or even public policy making that are not supported by ideas (and vice versa). From this understanding, an author like Alberto Pasqualini can no longer be perceived as belonging to only one side of the paradoxical fray between ideas and practices.

An enthusiast and organizer of the Brazilian labor party (PTB) since its establishment, Alberto Pasqualini had a brain stroke in 1956, when he was serving as a Senator. He passed away four years later and, therefore, was not able to see how his party changed over time. Nevertheless, he played a key role in the battles to consolidate the doctrine in the early stages of the formulation of the ideology of 'trabalhismo'. Pasqualini sought to morally ground a social stance based on Catholic precepts while reclaiming former president Getúlio Vargas's legacy, striving to adapt it to the democratic world of the 1946 Republic. The politician and theorist

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<sup>2</sup>We understand the term 'move' as Pasqualini's political action through his writings, within a broader language context, as Quentin Skinner (1969) defines it.

eventually formulated an alternative left-wing political thought that was not communist, but did not reject the connections between Christianity and socialism.

### **The Church's social doctrine and Catholic political thought in Brazil: from Encyclicals to Neo-Christianity**

The idea of a social doctrine of the Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is connected to an 1891 document: the encyclical 'Rerum Novarum'. Signed by Pope Leo XIII, the letter starts with a diagnosis of modernity as a time of open conflict between employers and employees, caused by the disintegration of the previous order. Judging historical process through a lens of decadence, the social issues produced by the Industrial Revolution are framed as moral problems of a world where corporations as places of workers' association and the aristocracy's commitment to meet the needs of the poorest have dissolved. These have been replaced by an emerging bourgeois and liberal society, which at the same time reduced men to an economic condition and removed them from all ties, treating them as individuals with no ties to their families or society.

Pope Leo XIII's letter criticizes the bourgeois society for its individualizing and economic character, which generates a type of inequality contrasting with Christianity. While the medieval world assumed that men had different capacities and skills to work, it understood them as equals in their condition as men. For the Bishop of Rome, work was derived from the original sin, which subjected our species to the need to ensure our own survival by the sweat of our brow; however, never so in a way that Christians would not have the resources to seek their own salvation. Hence, employers should not treat "workers [...] as slaves; [...] the dignity of human personality [should] be respected in them, ennobled as it has been through what we call the Christian character" (LEO XIII, 1891, p. 08).

From an ideological standpoint, it is a conservative document, for how it deems the historical process decadent, shows an aversion to conflict as an element of society, and provides a hierarchization of classes (FREEDEN, 2006; MANNHEIM, 1981). Leo XIII (1891), however, does not advocate the return to a previous state of affairs, but rather the adjustment of the temporal order with spiritual precepts, which means his encyclical does not necessarily lead to a reactionary reading. Such an adjustment would require a state the duty and role of which was "[...] to

protect equitably each and every class of citizens, maintaining inviolate that justice especially which is called distributive” (LEO XIII, 1891, p. 15). Such a state was seen as a way of addressing the class conflict in order to produce social harmony and the common good. In a world where employers detached themselves from concern for employees and perceived them only as an instrument for realizing their profit, Christian morality required the interference of the state in such a relationship.

While ‘Rerum Novarum’ did not necessarily provide a reactionary diagnosis of modernity, making a left-wing reading of it could be challenging — and Pasqualini aimed to respond to those challenges. The letter classifies socialism as “envy” (LEO XIII, 1891, p. 02), arguing that it has misunderstood the problem. Instead of striving to resolve the conflict between classes, socialism would then incite the subversion of the social edifice and attack the property, posited in the document as a natural right.

The same emphasis is laid in another Church document, the encyclical ‘Quadragesimo Anno’, published in 1931 at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ‘Rerum Novarum’. Written by Pope Pius XI, it announces itself as a reiteration and updating of the previous encyclical. The criticism of a liberal and bourgeois conception of the state and society remains, now with an argument that the solution to the social question offered by the Church itself in 1891 was what rose awareness of social policies among rulers. The changes in the historical context certainly led to changes in the Church’s perception. While in 1891, socialism was regarded as a doctrine that organized movements, now it had taken over the state in Russia, attempted to do so in Germany, and was growing in the rest of Europe. Also, emerging political doctrines at the time criticized the right-wing liberal order, such as fascism. Catholic institutionality would also be subjected to these changes (CASSIMIRO, 2018). ‘Quadragesimo Anno’, therefore, introduced relevant novelties in how it addressed issues of union organizing, the relationship between economic and moral order, and socialism.

In its first point, Marxist-based unions are criticized for misrepresenting a form of collective organization that is itself morally correct. Pius XI draws a parallel between the Catholic corporatist union movement he advocated in the 1930s and the old medieval corporations previously praised in ‘Rerum Novarum’. In his

conception, the Catholic union was a tool that would allow the much-desired reconciliation between the modern capitalist world and the moral and doctrinal bases of the Church. Through them, the Catholic proletariat could negotiate with employers on fair terms — as they were inspired by faith — about proper working conditions, to reflect a harmonious social order, with no need for violence or social revolution.

In ‘Quadragesimo Anno’, the economic dimension of life is inarguably discussed in theological-political terms. Antithetically to his criticism of liberalism for reducing all dimensions of life — spiritual, social, cultural, political — to the economic dimension, the Bishop of Rome proposes that the economy is subordinated to the moral (as its purpose is to enable the Christian’s search for salvation), to the political (because the economy must be organized by the state for the common good), and to the spiritual (for the economy exists by the will of God and to fulfill His ends). In a simultaneous criticism of liberalism and socialism for turning the economy into a purely material issue, the judgment on the properly Christian concept of economics is clear:

Just as the unity of human society cannot be founded on an opposition of classes, so also the right ordering of economic life cannot be left to a free competition of forces. For from this source, as from a poisoned spring, have originated and spread all the errors of individualist economic teaching. Destroying through forgetfulness or ignorance the social and moral character of economic life, it held that economic life must be considered and treated as altogether free from and independent of public authority, because in the market, i.e., in the free struggle of competitors, it would have a principle of self-direction which governs it much more perfectly than would the intervention of any created intellect. But free competition, while justified and certainly useful provided it is kept within certain limits, clearly cannot direct economic life—a truth which the outcome of the application in practice of the tenets of this evil individualistic spirit has more than sufficiently demonstrated. Therefore, it is most necessary that economic life be again subjected to and governed by a true and effective directing principle. This function is one that the economic dictatorship which has recently displaced free competition can still less perform, since it is a headstrong power and a violent energy that, to benefit people, needs to be strongly curbed and wisely ruled. But it cannot curb and rule itself. Loftier and nobler principles—social justice and social charity—must, therefore, be sought whereby this dictatorship may be governed firmly and fully. Hence, the institutions themselves of peoples and, particularly those of all social life, ought to be penetrated with this justice, and it is most necessary that it be truly effective, that is, establish a juridical and social order which will, as it were, give form and shape to all economic life. Social charity, moreover, ought to be as the soul

of this order, an order which public authority ought to be ever ready effectively to protect and defend. It will be able to do this the more easily as it rids itself of those burdens which, as We have stated above, are not properly its own (PIUS XI, 1931, p. 18).

In his critique of the free market and the opposition of classes, Pius XI argues that the solution to a harmonious and Christian social order is for public authorities to follow the Christian precepts for economic life with moral purposes: charity and justice. As expected, the Pope advocates a Catholic conceptualization for both terms, so the concept of justice associated with the end of class society, as formulated by Marxist socialism, is censured as a subversion of a natural order. Socialism, Pius XI argues, as did Leo XIII, is a misguided response to the problems of liberal and individualistic modernity. The correct remedy for the disease does not come from implementing a different kind of materialism, he argues, but rather from “a return to Christian life and institutions” (PIUS XI, 1931, p. 25).

The encyclical signed by Pius XI is more emphatic and devotes more ink to its critique of socialism when compared to the previous document. The Pope assertively affirms the incompatibility of socialism and Marxism with Christian precepts. Such a conception of society was materialistic, undermined private property — advocating its abolition —, and was based on conflict and the use of violence, all ungodly precepts. However, some reconciliation was possible. While there was a communist faction of socialism, there were also others, which have renounced the revolutionary cause and directed their criticism to economic despotism. This “more moderate socialism” (PIUS XI, 1931, p. 23) was not opposed to Christianity:

If the foregoing happens, it can come even to the point that imperceptibly these ideas of the more moderate socialism will no longer differ from the desires and demands of those who are striving to remold human society on the basis of Christian principles. For certain kinds of property, it is rightly contended, ought to be reserved to the State since they carry with them a dominating power so great that cannot without danger to the general welfare be entrusted to private individuals. Such just demands and desire have nothing in them now which is inconsistent with Christian truth, and much less are they special to Socialism. Those who work solely toward such ends have, therefore, no reason to become socialists. (PIUS XI, 1931, p. 23)

In the above excerpt, Pius XI reconciles with reformist groups by recognizing the political and moral legitimacy of their agendas. However, he invites them to abandon the label of socialists, as their precepts are not exclusive to the doctrine and are shared with the Church. Such a separation between a revolutionary and materialist socialism and another branch of socialism somewhat compatible with Christianity will be dear to Pasqualini in his pursuit of a political project that is simultaneously left-reformist and Christian.

Pasqualini, however, was not the first Brazilian to establish connections with 'Rerum Novarum' and 'Quadragesimo Anno' in his political theology. Earlier in the 1930s, the Catholic intelligentsia from these lands were already drawing from the assertions of these documents to conceive their own projects. According to Scott Mainwaring (1989), the time between 1916 and 1945 was the model of neo-Christianity, in which Catholic leaders became involved in politics to battle over the direction taken by the state and society. Initiatives related to the realization of a social project aligned with the Church emerged in this context, including the Catholic Action of Don Sebastião Leme and the organization of a Catholic laity of middle-class intellectuals, gathered at the Don Vital Center. In the latter, prominent figures included Jackson de Figueiredo and, after his death in 1928, Alceu de Amoroso Lima. With the emergence of the Vargas Era and, later, of his Estado Novo, these intellectuals engaged in the battle over the direction of the state in a Catholic sense.

In this Catholic political and intellectual context, Alceu de Amoroso Lima published 'Política' (Politics) in 1932, under the pen name of Tristão de Athayde (1932). The book was published shortly after 'Quadragesimo Anno', yet it already referenced the encyclical. While it bears similarities to the reading provided by Pasqualini in 1948, the political project here is different: instead of advocating for reformist socialism, a conservative view was endorsed as the secular output of Catholic morality. Tristão de Athayde (1932) also opposes, as did the encyclicals, a liberalism that reduces man to an individual outside society and to a platonic Marxist "blind determinism", which completely erases him to the detriment of the social (ATHAYDE, 1932, p. 16). He also draws from a diagnosis that liberalism and bourgeois society have disrupted society, reducing it to a logic of free contact between parties and making it artificial rather than natural. In his opinion, socialism

was the result of the same logic<sup>3</sup>: the idea of a liberal autonomous will was the maker of revolutionary thought. The relationship between bourgeois society and socialism was that “one mistake spawned the other” (ATHAYDE, 1932, p. 24). Like the encyclicals, the author also claimed a Christian union organizing as a form of economic organization of society, explicitly quoting excerpts from the encyclical on economic organization, as an argument from authority for his treatise.

On the concept of property, Tristão de Athayde contrasts the liberal freedom of “18<sup>th</sup> century rationalism” (ATHAYDE, 1932, p. 93), based on autonomy and will — thus making it an absolute right — with the Christian conception, which imposes moral correctives on it. He argues that the liberal concept of property diverts it from its God-given purpose: to satisfy the need of all, to realize the common good. According to Tristão de Athayde (1932), the selfish use of property is not morally correct, regardless of whether or not one is entitled to it; therefore, it is lawful for the state to limit it, nationalizing companies and services. He also advised that Catholics who considered that economic life did not interest Christian morality were wrong, for the Catholic project could not be the bourgeois liberal project, and the economic problem was also a spiritual one, as clearly stated in the encyclical ‘Quadragesimo Anno’. For the Catholic intellectual, spiritual values should be above political and economic values, and Catholics had to participate in the institutions of civil society and the state drawing from their moral precepts. Regarding socialism, the conservative Catholic intellectual follows the dichotomy posed by ‘Quadragesimo Anno’: socialism is censured for its materialism and, for the apology for conflict, but deemed correct in its criticism of the excesses of bourgeois capitalism:

In all the criticism that socialism makes of the errors and abuses of capitalist society, which has grounded its economics on an individualistic principle, we are largely in agreement with it. And also in agreement with its attempt to extend the benefits of social life to all members of society, preventing the exploitation of some classes by others. These are points in which socialism, successor to liberalism, emerges as a reaction to the

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<sup>3</sup>The association between liberalism and revolutionary logic can also be seen in other theorists who may have been a source for Alceu de Amoroso Lima, including the French Catholic philosopher Louis de Bonald (1988).

liberal regime in what liberalism separated itself from its Christian sources. And by reacting to it, it has restored, albeit on a materialistic basis, what Christian social justice has always affirmed. This is why we find ourselves in agreement with the socialists—in the critical part of their doctrine. What is good about socialism is only a return to Christianity, through the ruins of bourgeois liberal individualism.

When it comes, however, to social philosophy, method of action, and program of reconstruction, this is where we differ radically from the socialists, who are unaware of the nature of man, building a utopian and bogus society and violating all rights, prior to the state, of particular social groups, of man himself, and of God (ATHAYDE, 1932, p. 167).

We realize here that reading papal encyclicals from a critical standpoint regarding liberalism, demanding energetic state action while also admitting shared agendas with socialism, is not something distant from Brazilian Catholic thought. In the year following the publication of ‘Quadragesimo Anno’, such assertions already appeared in the work of Tristão de Athayde (1932), a Catholic intellectual — conservative at the time — that was very prominent in this field. Meanwhile, during the Vargas Era, Catholics were certainly not the only group vying for the direction the state would take, and new problems emerged after the democratic transition in Brazil after 1945. The idea of the corporatist organization of labor was shared with fascism, defeated in World War II. Equally problematic was the assumption of a single-doctrine state in a political context that was opening up to a multi-party system. The economic issue, on the other hand, now had, in addition to the shared moral theses, the Estado Novo experience of economic planning, responsible for pushing for the industrialization and modernization of the Brazilian economy (PINHO, 2019). It is in this set of concerns that another Catholic intellectual will try to organize a political doctrine that could adjust the Vargas legacy to democracy, while sharing the Catholic premises of previous decades. In the next section we will focus on Alberto Pasqualini and his efforts to build ‘trabalhismo’, looking into the political theology postulated in his writings.

### **Alberto Pasqualini: effort to build a Catholic ‘Trabalhismo’**

Founded after the end of the Estado Novo, the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) is acknowledged as a kind of left arm of the Vargas era, opposite to its right arm, the Social Democratic Party (PSD). This judgment, however, should be taken as a starting point for understanding ‘trabalhismo’, not its final stop. The PTB was born

under an authoritarian state to operate under a regime that was no longer authoritarian (GOMES, 2005, p. 302). As Ângela de Castro Gomes (2005) argues in her classic work 'A invenção do trabalhismo' (The Invention of 'Trabalhismo'), the Estado Novo saw itself as a social democracy that did not necessarily need to be a political democracy to deserve this label. The discourse then was one about the state having the role of producing as much social welfare as possible for the national collectivity. In fact, this is the concept found in writings by intellectuals connected to the Vargas dictatorship. In his 1938 book 'O Estado autoritário e a realidade nacional' (The authoritarian state and the national reality), Antônio José de Azevedo Amaral (2002) defines the regime of the time as an authoritarian state, taking a very different path from that which would later be adopted by science and political sociology (SCHWARTZMAN, 1985). Azevedo Amaral (2002) argues that the Estado Novo was authoritarian because it was in a kind of Aristotelian median between the vices of the liberal and totalitarian models. This path, he wrote, could safeguard the positive legacy of both while having their respective vices. The Vargas regime, therefore, could safeguard the interest of the people who related to a protective leader without giving up the basic guarantees of individual freedom essential to a modern world.

During the Vargas Era and before Alberto Pasqualini, another Catholic intellectual tried to reconcile Vargas's social policies with the theses advanced by the Church. In works including 'Direito do trabalho e democracia social' (Labor Law and Social Democracy), 'História social da economia capitalista' (Social History of the Capitalist Economy), and 'Instituições políticas brasileiras' (Brazilian Political Institutions), Francisco de Oliveira Viana (1999, 1988, 1948) considered a centralized administration around a strong Executive branch a necessary condition for the operation and modernization of the Brazilian state. Oliveira Viana was critical of the fact that the democratic-liberal model and the parliament had handed over the power of the Republic to local factious interests that were not committed to the national question. Similarly to what was presented in the encyclicals and in the work of Tristão de Athayde (1932), in his broader reading of modernity, the sociologist and jurist understood that capitalism and the victory of the bourgeoisie over the aristocracy led to the loss of any notion of duty

to the poor. That was the victory of 'homo economicus' over other spheres of life, including spiritual life (VIANA, 1948). He then argued that the rise of Getúlio Vargas to power was a kind of local adjustment to a worldly disorder. Modernizing Brazil and conferring social rights on all classes was made possible especially with the Estado Novo. For Oliveira Viana (1948), there was a Christian background to Vargas's social policy, drawing clear inspiration from the papal encyclicals:

These principles are in accord with the Social Doctrine of the Church ('Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno'). It restores "[...] the spirit of equality and justice that ruled the relations between workers and employers in the Middle Ages [...]" (p. 31). The barriers between workers and employers collapse and there is a spirit of solidarity (VIANNA, 1948, pp. 33-34).

As addressed in vast bibliography (FERREIRA, 2005; GOMES, 2005; KAYSEL, 2018), after 1942 — as the international political climate changed and World War II escalated —, it became more difficult to maintain an authoritarian state. As a result, the heterogeneous base that had supported the Vargas administrations split into two parties. It was then up to the PTB to be an organization for workers, supported by unions and inspired by the then recently established framework of the social question. After the democratic transition in 1945, 'trabalhismo' was consolidated around a party that represented a project for the country based on the defense of national sovereignty, reforms of socioeconomic structures, and the expansion of social rights for workers as necessary means to achieve Brazilian development and increase social welfare (FERREIRA, 2005, p. 12).

According to André Kaysel, in the 1946 Republic, the PTB became the most expressive force of what he calls "people's nationalism" (KAYSEL, 2018), even though it had originally emerged from an authoritarian political culture and state. In 15 years, 'trabalhismo' went from a party originating from authoritarian, conservative state bureaucracy to Brazil's major progressive force. (KAYSEL, 2018, p. 232). After João Goulart left the Ministry of Labor and Vargas committed suicide in 1954, the PTB devoted efforts toward the ideological consolidation of 'trabalhismo', with an approach that was moving it more and more to the left. The political scientist argues that, after Vargas's death (and inspired by his last administration), this current established itself as an ideology based on

developmentalist nationalism and the defense of reforms aimed at expanding social welfare (KAYSEL, 2018, p. 231). At the early stages of this change, the intellectual and political actor that was most committed to organizing what this 'trabalhista' social doctrine would be was the jurist and PTB member from Rio Grande do Sul Alberto Pasqualini.

Pasqualini's writings were produced in the context of the democratic transition after the Estado Novo, and what we can apprehend from them is a kind of left-wing reception of the social doctrine of the Church present in the papal encyclicals 'Rerum Novarum' and 'Quadragesimo Anno'. While in Tristão de Athayde (1932) and Oliveira Viana their search for a Catholic moral basis for a state project led them to advocate conservative ideas connected to the defense of an authoritarian order, in Alberto Pasqualini's work, they are the moral foundations for a reformist and democratic left-wing project. Published in 1948, 'Bases e sugestões para uma política social' (PASQUALINI, 1948) draws from the ambiguity found in 'Quadragesimo Anno' about the possible similitudes between reformist socialism and Christian thought to assert himself as such: "Our position is clear and unambivalent. If socialism means the socialization of the means of production, we are not socialists; if it simply means a growing extension of social solidarity and a growing participation of all in the benefits of civilization and culture, then we are socialists (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 42).

The book basically advocates a concept of justice as an expansion of welfare based on Christian precepts, which should be carried out by the state — as manifest in the Church's own documents. This is presented in a philosophical and universalist language rarely seen in our political thought (LYNCH, 2016; 2013), but it can be explained as we understand that, as a Christian Catholic, he understood Catholic precepts as universal and capable of adapting to different national realities. Socialists tend to have a conception in which development as a distribution of welfare was the 'ratio' of history (FREEDEN, 2006). Alberto Pasqualini stood out precisely because he did not build his argument through a secular approach, but based on a political theology, insofar as he aimed to make the earthly order compatible with the foundations of Christian morality (SCATOLLA, 2009). His concept of justice and his conception of society are explicitly connected

to his Christianity. He argues that the 'trabalhista' program was "humane and essentially Christian" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 43). Hence his concern to conceive a kind of intellectual history of Catholic Christianity to affirm that its precepts are in line with his religion. His discourse feeds back into itself as his reading of the social question is supported by the Church's thought while he also interprets this Catholic thought and its encyclicals based on how he sees the world, industrial society, capitalism, and socialism.

Drawing from the encyclicals, he asserts that a Christian rejection of communism does not imply a denial of socialism as a whole. Quoting the 1891 'Rerum Novarum', he describes how the Church had specifically condemned communism in the document as a doctrine that was antithetical to Christianity for its criticism of the hierarchies created by God, for its materialist preaching, and for encouraging class struggle and violence. While, as a Catholic, he agrees that Marxist doctrine reduced man to his economic aspect, he recalls that, in the papal encyclicals, communist materialism is not considered the only form of socialism. In a reading that emphasizes the statements in 'Quadragesimo Anno' about the possible similarities between socialism and Christianity, Pasqualini (1948) concludes that not all socialism is condemned by the Church. The author critically makes use of the assertions of the document and, instead of overlapping Catholic thought with the guidelines of reformist socialism — which the encyclical itself does —, he uses them to justify the existence of a Christian socialism.

Pasqualini (1948) also follows the perception of the encyclicals on a view of society based on a class conflict. He, however, disagrees with such an ontology of the social, in the same direction taken in the 1931 document and by Tristão de Athayde the following year. He blames liberalism and employers who are disconnected from their social duties for letting class struggle become an option. The fact that workers sought this solution was not the fault of socialism as an ideology, but a phenomenon existing in unequal societies marked by class antagonisms. The cause was "[...] individualistic capitalism the psychological element of which is selfishness" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 04) and its apology for excessive competition and the ambition for profit and power — that is, the same culprit pointed out by both Leo XIII and Pius XI. According to Pasqualini (1948), the Church admitted this both in the 1931 encyclical and in another encyclical from

1937, 'Divini Redemptoris'. Class struggles, he argues, occurred when the masses had fair claims against this state of affairs.

On the question of the private ownership of the means of production, the author strives to resolve it based on the scholastic tradition (through Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas) and the encyclicals. His conclusion is the same as Tristão de Athayde's: that Christianity is in favor of individual property only so that it can serve collective interests (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 04). In the modern world, the only solution to this is, he argues, for it to be subjected to public authorities and directed toward the larger goal of social justice. Hence his political theology that sees the state as playing the primary role in guaranteeing a cohesive and just social order, which was created by God, but corrupted by humans.

Positioning himself on the international conflict of the Cold War, Pasqualini (1948) understood it from the perspective of Hegelian and Marxist dialectic as an opposition between thesis (capitalism) and antithesis (communism) in which the synthesis should be a model of socialism that incorporated what was virtuous in both. He believed that the Soviet Union was an example of moral decay (for its use of violence and terrorism) and, therefore, attracted those who felt a "morbid inclination" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 209) toward these methods. This, he argued, was deeply against the social order and, therefore, could not generate benefits for it. However, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin were not the inventors of "social ideas" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 215) and did not have a monopoly in it. Social ideas were, he writes, the evolution of the very sense of solidarity, according to the objective changes happening in the world.

And these objective changes in the world were happening towards the improvement of human life, because the technical mastery of nature was necessary to satisfy everyone's needs. For Alberto Pasqualini, the meaning of development was to enable the building of an ideal of Christian justice that could be socialist, provided that the ideology was not materialist, preserved freedom, and only socialized the means of production to the extent of social demands (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 206). As the author argues:

If the supreme law of charity consists in men's duty to love one another,  
how can this precept be fulfilled when some have too much and others

cannot even satisfy their most basic needs? Instead of ordering them to distribute their surplus to the poor as alms, isn't it better to organize society in such a way as to avoid these shocking inequalities? And would this, perhaps, offend the evangelical commands? (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 210)

This does not imply a radical rejection of capitalism on the part of the 'trabalhista' theorist. While his critique of communism aimed to place 'trabalhismo' as a left-wing alternative to Marx and Engels's doctrine, there was also an effort to place it as a kind of third way. As a Catholic reader of the encyclicals, he understood selfish capitalism as the polar opposite of communism, which was, therefore, equally rejectable for its vices. However, as a post-war man concerned with economic development, he considered that capitalism had innovated in the techniques of wealth production and merit awarding. As the Church understood it, a profit-driven regime of private property with wage labor is not itself bad — the problem is when it is corrupted and ultimately dismantles the social order. A model in which wealth production had a social purpose to it and equal opportunities were offered was desirable as a mechanism for development and expansion of access to the goods of civilization.

As previously argued, the 'telos' of history, the author wrote, was not to achieve maximum equality, but a Christian concept of justice. The driver of this movement should be the very adaptability of society and human nature, which would undergo not only technical but moral improvement, towards the general consensus that Christian solidarity was necessary for the good life in common. The author argues that these teachings had been bequeathed to us by the Scriptures since Paul the Apostle, who said that all the other commandments emanated from the fundamental premise of loving one's neighbor as oneself. In the course of history, as long as well guided by the correct precepts, a private property regime would tend to coexist with social welfare and solidarity. Each individual would be aware of their role and have their basic needs guaranteed; however, those with a vocation for entrepreneurship could get rich, as long as not at the expense of the poverty of others. What was at stake for Pasqualini (1948), therefore, was not the end of class differences, but that it is not a given *a priori* based on criteria that he, as a Catholic 'trabalhista', deemed unjust. Similarly, a non-negotiable aspect was striving for universal social welfare, so that those who did not have a vocation for the capitalist

adventure did not need to fight for it. Like the papal encyclicals of 1891 and 1931, and writings by Tristão de Athayde (1932) and Oliveira Viana (1948) from the Vargas Era, Alberto Pasqualini (1948) understood, during the 1946 Republic, that capitalist modernization was a disruptive force of social harmony and the balanced relationship between classes, and it should be up to the state to resolve it.

From the perspective of a left-wing political project, 'trabalhismo' took on a reformist meaning soon after the democratic transition. From a Catholic standpoint, it can be understood as an effort to reconcile tradition and modernity, in a project that aimed to restore a Christian social order, but that did not emulate the Middle Ages. Conversely, it should be a Christian order for the modern world and its own demands, both national and universal. As pointed out in previous sections of this article, 'trabalhismo' was a tradition inherited from the national-statism of the Vargas Era and, therefore, it sought to organize it within a democratic framework without taking the state out of the center of economic and development management. As expressed since 'Rerum Novarum', Pasqualini's Catholic and functionalist views based on solidarity between classes could only make sense if there was an entity leading the national community and served as an arbitrator between different social interests. He wrote, "The state is society in its political and legal structure. [...] It is to the social body what the nervous system is to the animal body" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 123). It would then be up to public institutions to enforce labor rights achieved, as well as to prevent the exploitation of some humans by others.

Following the Keynesian shift toward consumption, the 'trabalhista' theorist argued that development could only happen by increasing workers' purchasing power. The author demonstrates his knowledge of Keynes's work, 'General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money'<sup>4</sup> (KEYNES, 1996) and relies on the idea of a multiplier effect to argue that transferring money and granting credit to the poorest would make the system more dynamic. Meanwhile, as large resources remained in the hands of a few, that would only have an effect on the consumption

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<sup>4</sup>Pasqualini not only replicates Keynes's ideas, but quotes him in notes of 'Bases e sugestões para uma política social' (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 76).

of luxury goods. The state, therefore, should operate as the planner of economic activity, both by increasing consumption and granting credit to producers of products that were of interest to the community. He argued that the state evolved historically, from a purely policing role to a social role and, at a later stage, to an economic role (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 74). This means that he perceived progress as an expansion of the roles of the state, in favor of the national community, in the same sense presented in 'Rerum Novarum' and 'Quadragesimo Anno'.

In his narrative, the first moment in the history of capitalist society was marked by a disregard for people. It was "capitalism in its individualistic and selfish form" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 63), which had also been criticized by Oliveira Viana (1948) in a book published that same year<sup>5</sup>, by Tristão de Athayde (1932) in 'Política', and by the papal encyclicals referenced above. Going in the same direction, Pasqualini understood that, as the world progressively changed and human labor was replaced by machines, capitalism solely driven by profit-making proved to be unsustainable. To continue to exist, capitalism should have a social end to it, and it could not be maintained by 'laissez-faire', and the supposed law of general equilibrium, both censured by the Church as expressions of the selfishness of bourgeois society, unconcerned with others (LEO XIII, 1891; PIUS XI, 1931). In Pasqualini's view (1948), the failure of liberalism to generate common good and development was demonstrated along with the need for its rationalization by the state, based on the interests of all social classes. The next historical stage to unfold was one in which, having secured social rights, the state would become the coordinator of economic activity as a whole.

A reader of the Church's social doctrine and in dialogue with the Catholic intelligentsia, Pasqualini also had a functionalist and harmonious view of society, guided by a Christian solidarism. Each social class or group was part of a whole and their 'raison d'être' should be connected to this whole. The individual or class who thought only of their interests was antisocial, and, ultimately, unchristian. The state

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<sup>5</sup>'Direito do Trabalho e Democracia Social' was published in 1948, featuring writings by the author dating from 1932 to 1940. The final phase of the work by Oliveira Viana (1988, 1958, 1948) (who was a consultant to the Ministry of Labor during the Estado Novo era) is fundamentally concerned with understanding the transformations of capitalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how to equalize it with the maintenance of welfare and social solidarity, from the approach of the Church's social doctrine. In these aspects, there is similarity with Pasqualini's writings (1948).

therefore was this model's "technical-legal" organization (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 73), because only it could see the big picture and incorporate different demands, ensuring the maximum general satisfaction of needs. History, he argues, proved that this was the best common way of life and its meaning was to continually broaden this ideal: "Doesn't social progress consist in the democratization of needs? Democratizing needs must consist of raising the social standard of the individual, making the goods that correspond to this standard accessible to him" (PASQUALINI, 1948, p. 95).

As a Catholic who was not only concerned with matters of faith but with furthering the political doctrine of 'trabalhismo,' Pasqualini (1948) constantly tries to reconcile the two. In a speech at the PTB national convention in 1950 where Getúlio Vargas was announced as a presidential candidate, he argues that the former president's return meant deepening and expanding 'trabalhista' achievements, but also establishing economic and welfare guarantees where parasitism and speculation were to be eliminated. In his Catholic conception of the economy, it was not an autonomous subsystem of the social, but the realization of the Christian need for labor as a way of providing human subsistence. Therefore, for him too, the economy could not have an end in itself, nor be disconnected from the earthly authority chosen by God, nor from His way of ordering the social. In other words, the economy should be subjected to the state and politics. However, unlike what Tristão de Athayde (1932) advocated, this did not mean that the social order should be built without a democratic component to it. In the author's words, it was actually the opposite: "Because 'trabalhismo' is a movement in the sense of the people's needs and aspirations, the climate of 'trabalhismo' can only be that of democracy, as only through democratic institutions and the democratic mechanism can the people make their will be felt and have their rights asserted (SIMON, 2001, p. 215).

In a 1953 speech as a paronymph at an economics graduation ceremony at the Catholic College, he further addressed the relationship between state, economy, and democracy, arguing that "[...] the thesis of liberalism could no longer be accepted, because its consequence is the very denial of justice" (SIMON, 2001, p. 359). At the same time, however, justice was not something that just happened —

humans had to achieve it by implementing policies aimed at the realization of this ideal “[...] and the material instrument of its realization is, of course, the state, a well-constituted, well-inspired, well-guided state” (SIMON, 2001, p. 359). In this design, the elections play a role as a battle between the moral projects that are up to technicians, including economists, to implement. But the people, he argues, only knows the purposes, not the techniques; those intellectually trained were then tasked with implementing the projects for them.

It should be noted, however, that Pasqualini’s defense (1948) that Christianity was compatible with a certain model of socialism and state was not immune to criticism from other Catholics. The ‘trabalhista’ theorist was harshly criticized by Capuchin Friar Hermínio Tondelo<sup>6</sup>, who wrote five columns in the newspaper ‘Correio Rio-grandense’ between May and June 1949 criticizing ‘Bases e sugestões para uma política social’ (PASQUALINI, 1948) as a book of heretical content, for referencing papal bulls to preach a communist project, advocating the collectivization of wealth. In an article published in ‘Correio do Povo’ on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1949 (SIMON, 2001), he responds to the Capuchin Friar that Pope Pius XI himself admitted that there were socialist postulates that were consonant with the social doctrine of the Church. He also clearly states that he is not against private property as a whole, but that it should have a social role to it. In the decades that followed, the radically anti-communist and conservative view of Christianity became more influential within the Church than Pasqualini’s socialism, which may partly explain the Catholic support for the 1964 coup (MOTTA, 2020). However, Pasqualini (1948) reminds us that while there may be elective affinities between the dogmas of a given religion and conservative thought, this relationship is not necessary and only persists because it is socially and politically replicated.

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<sup>6</sup>The Capuchin priest Hermínio Toledo was an editor at ‘Correio riograndense’, a newspaper from Garibaldi, Rio Grande do Sul state, and wrote a regular column for it. His writings in the newspaper basically addressed anti-communism, promotion of events and episodes related to the Church, and criticism of customs (for example, the column he writes against feature films). He wrote 04 articles attacking Pasqualini between May 04<sup>th</sup> and June 05<sup>th</sup>, 1949, accusing him of lying about socialism being compatible with the doctrine of the Church. After Pasqualini’s response, he wrote another article, a rejoinder in which he reiterates that Pasqualini was heretic for pointing out such an association. The writings are not included in the collections of Pasqualini’s work, but the issues of the newspaper are available for consultation in the Digital Newspaper Archives of the National Library.

## Final considerations

This article aimed to support an interpretation of Alberto Pasqualini's political writings as a political theology, understood as an effort to reconcile religious moral precepts with the temporal order. While it was not intended to erase his role as a political actor that takes action in his context, it aimed to locate his effort — soon after the democratic transition — to organize the theoretical ideology of 'trabalhismo'. Based on the claim of the social policy implemented under the Estado Novo and a moral vision guided by the same Christianity of Tristão de Athayde and Oliveira Vianna, the politician and jurist aimed to build not a conservative project, but a socialist alternative to communism, without necessarily making it anti-capitalist. 'Trabalhismo' then served simultaneously as a proposal for a left-wing political culture and as a third way.

In isolation, this apparent hybrid of socialism and conservatism may seem paradoxical, but it is perfectly understandable when we comprehend 'trabalhismo' as a left-leaning political identity in the framework of the social question in the Vargas Era and Alberto Pasqualini as a Catholic who draws from Church documents as his moral foundations. Alberto Pasqualini's views of society and politics provide a reception, in democratic times and in times of ideological diversity, of the Catholic thought found in the encyclicals and in the ideals of Estado Novo theorists. As Ângela de Castro Gomes (2005) points out, the formation of the working class, their identity, and a political party that aimed to represent them should not be understood through previous theoretical models. Therefore, the 'trabalhista' discourse and the way it is assembled by Alberto Pasqualini can only be surprising for those who unconsciously compare them with another type of discourse regarded as authentic and with which Brazilian political history does not correspond. The same problem can sometimes occur when we see the association between political and religious movements in the contemporary world — if it is true that there is a possible association between different strands of Christianity and a right-wing or far-right political thought, this association is not necessary in either of the two isolated groups.

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