

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**OLIVEIRA, Miguel de** (Válega, Ovar, 1897 – São Jorge de Arroios, Lisbon, 1968)

Miguel Augusto, born on 15 December, was the eldest of the seven children of Jacinto de Oliveira and Rosa Maria de Jesus, registered as "farmers" on their firstborn's baptismal certificate. After completing primary school in the parish where he was born, he continued his studies at the minor seminary of the diocese of Porto, in Carvalhos, on 16 January 1911. From there he moved on to the diocese's major seminary, where he excelled in the three-year course of theological studies. Given his intellectual qualities, the diocesan authorities invited him to continue his studies at the Gregorian University (Rome), an offer he declined. While waiting to achieve the canonical age for priesthood ordination, he taught at the Feirense College in the 1917-1918 academic year and, the following year, at the Ovarense College. From February 1920 he continued to teach at the Preparatory Seminary of his diocese, which was then operating in the *Paço da Torre da Marca*. There he taught Portuguese, French, and history, and was ordained a priest on 18 July 1920.

Five years later he was chosen to lead the editorial board of the Catholic newspaper *Novidades* [News] and moved to Lisbon. Earlier that year he made the first of his trips to Palestine. He wrote a chronicle of this trip, which was published in that same periodical and aroused the interest of a group that, as part of a French initiative, undertook another tour in 1927: besides Palestine, they visited Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece and Syria, as well as Italy and France. Whilst continuing his journalistic activity, from 1932 he took on the role of literary censor in the editorial section of *União Gráfica*.

He was a prolific writer: he published more than two hundred titles, which included monographic works in article or book form and various collaborations with the press or collective editorial initiatives: for the local press, in the *Progresso da Feira* [Progress of Feira] and the *O Concelho de Estarreja* [The Municipality of Estarreja], and for the diocesan press of Porto in *Voz do Pastor* [Voice of the Shepherd] from the late 1910s until the first years of the following decade, including his extensive, hard to quantify contribution to the *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* [Great Portuguese and Brazilian Encyclopedia]. In the early 1930s, together with Lopes da Cruz and Raúl Machado, he began publishing the *Anuário Católico de Portugal* [Catholic Yearbook of Portugal] (which is still published today in a different format).

He was 24 years old when, in 1921, he began his historiographical publications on the pages of *O Concelho de Estarreja* with *Válega– Memória histórica e descritiva* [Válega- Historical and descriptive memory], which was published as a standalone volume in 1981. He returned to local studies more than a decade later, resuming his historiographical publications: first with *A Vila de Ovar– Subsídios para a sua história até ao século XVI* [The Village of Ovar: Subsidies for its history up to the 16th century] and *Privilégios do Barqueiro de Esgueira*

(1935) [Privileges of the Boatman of Esgueira], and the following year with *Inquirições de D. Afonso II na Terra de Santa Maria* [Enquiries of King Afonso III in the Land of Santa Maria] and *Passais da igreja de Salreu no ano de 1076* [Parish lands of the Salreu church in 1076] and, in 1937, *S. João de Ver nos documentos do «Livro Preto» da Sé de Coimbra* [St. João de Ver in the documents of the "Black Book" of the Cathedral of Coimbra], all of them published in the bulletin of the *Arquivo Distrital de Aveiro* [Aveiro District Archive]. His collaboration with the same publication continued over the next few years, a period during which he published the summarised works that made his historiographical work stand out.

In 1938 he published *História da Igreja* [History of the Church] (republished in 1942, 1952, and 1959). The bibliography he used had an obvious pedagogical slant, showing the influence of the French historiographical panorama, which he followed closely. The clarity of the text, which aimed to be "correct and in line with the latest conclusions of historical research", was intended to serve an explicit didactic purpose ("it is particularly aimed at youth and members of Catholic Action, the apostolate of which does not have to be carried out, as a rule, in high intellectual spheres"). These characteristics were recognised by Alfredo Pimenta, who classified the work— in his notes to *A História da Igreja do P.e Miguel de Oliveira* (1938) [The History of the Church by Father Miguel de Oliveira]— as a "small volume of 300 pages, with images and a mellifluous cover, like the voice of my priest", pointing out some errors of fact and, above all, the dated bibliography on which it was based. Miguel de Oliveira hit back at these criticisms, in that same year and with the same violent style, in *História da Igreja. Resposta a um crítico ou Crítica dum resposta* [Church History. Response to a critic or Criticism of a response], noting they would be motivated less by scientific interest than by spite arising from the criticisms that had been made of them in the newspaper *Novidades* [News].

With similar aims of dissemination and synthesis but also with didactic concerns, he published in 1940 *História Eclesiástica de Portugal* [Ecclesiastical History of Portugal]. Successively re-edited in 1948, 1958, and 1968, it was updated in 1994 by Artur Roque de Almeida. Fulfilling the purpose of "being objective without any intention of apologising", the work nevertheless denotes proximity to the mood of nationalist fervour that the Estado Novo was instigating. The author was interested in underlining the "unity by Faith" that should put an end to the assumed "disquiet in which the Portuguese lived during periods of disagreement between the State and the Church" (*História Eclesiástica...* [Ecclesiastical History], I). The solidity of the work went hand in hand with the aim of emphasising the historical role of the Catholic Church in the country's history, blaming elements foreign to nationality (among them, the "anti-religious prejudices of French philosophies", "the Freemasonry influences" and the "anarchic tendencies of Protestantism, imported from England" (*História Eclesiástica de Portugal*, p. 298) for what he considered an atmosphere of persecution of the ecclesiastical institution, particularly in his assessment of contemporary Portugal. Following the organisation by dynasties (although he didn't establish a separate section for the Philippine period), he dedicated the last period to the "Liberal Monarchy and the Democratic Republic", although he considered that he gave the "century of Liberalism an autonomy that perhaps the future will not recognise" (*História Eclesiástica...*, III). Positively reviewed by José Vives and Pierre David, who considered it an "excellent handbook" that revealed a "judicious critical spirit" and openness "to the new developments of science," it had, among others, the merit of emphasising the scarcity of historiographical production on religious issues, even if the contours of the past were limited to the



ecclesiastical sphere. However, this work opened inroads into complementary areas: each section dedicated chapters to teaching and the arts, as well as elements relating to the religious experience of the faithful. When it comes to weighing up the different periods and dynamics, he uses the terms "crisis" and "restoration" to characterise those which, in his analysis, appear to be of lesser or greater importance to the Catholic Church, Catholicism, and its agents.

Also in 1940, Miguel de Oliveira published in the *Revista de Guimarães* [Guimarães Magazine] one of his most solid pieces of fundamental research, which, ten years later, was given its own version under the title *As paróquias rurais portuguesas – Sua origem e formação* [Portuguese rural parishes - Their origin and formation]. In this version he incorporated the critical suggestions of Torquato de Sousa Soares, who favourably assessed the work and invited him to collaborate with the *Revista Portuguesa de História* [Portuguese Magazine of History]. In this magazine he published *Origens da Ordem de Cister em Portugal* [Origins of the Cistercian Order in Portugal] and *Santa Iria e Santarém* [Saint Iria and Santarém].

From the second half of the 1950s, he continued to develop a historiographical activity characterised by the role he played in founding and directing the *Centro de Estudos de História Eclesiástica* (CEHE) [Centre for Studies in Ecclesiastical History], of which the current *Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa* [Centre for Studies in Religious History] is a successor. In response to the challenge made by the *Comité International des Sciences Historiques* [International Committee of Historical Sciences], which noted the absence of a Portuguese historiography at the International Congresses of Historical Sciences, Miguel de Oliveira led the Commission created during the founding meeting of the CEHE held on 5 January 1956, which included António da Silva Rego, António Brásio, and Avelino de Jesus da Costa. Together with Bernardo Xavier Coutinho and Mário Martins, they became part of the Editorial Board of CEHE magazine, which Miguel de Oliveira named *Lusitania Sacra* [Sacred Lusitania] (still being published today). He published some of his final works in this magazine, including *Inquirições de D. Afonso III na Terra de Santa Maria* [Enquiries of King Afonso III in the Land of Santa Maria] in the last issue. In the meantime, he had contributed with several articles to the German encyclopaedias *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* and *Lexikon der Marienkunde*. After being awarded the rank of Officer of the Military Order of *Santiago da Espada* in 1945, he was elected a corresponding member of the *Academia Portuguesa da História* [Portuguese Academy of History] in 1951 and became an academicien in April 1956, succeeding Henrique de Campos Ferreira Lima in seat no. 16. He died in Lisbon on 15 February 1968. In his honour, the elementary school in his hometown was named after him in December 1998.

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