

## PRESENTATION

This issue of *Debates do NER* brings an overview of the academic production of groups linked to the Paulo Freire Program (PFP) that are specialized in the study of religion. This Program is composed of a network of Brazilian universities, including the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) and the Free University of Amsterdam (VUA) of Holland. Since 2003, the network has been holding meetings and research seminars in Brazil and Holland for the development of joint research in the different areas of research and the exchange of teachers, researchers and students (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels). The area of social sciences of religion is one that has advanced most in the Program's four years of existence, having organized diverse joint activities in research and academic exchange.

By presenting an overview of the research on religion published by groups linked to this university network, *Debates do NER* aims at outlining a general view of the themes and questions that have been highlighted in the projects, publications, Masters dissertations and Doctoral theses in each of these research groups. By bringing together these texts, we mean to offer a comparative data base that will enable the reader to find intersecting points within the wide universe of national and international research on religion.

This set of texts is preceded by an article by Pierre Sanchis who brings a reflection on the theme of religion in Brazil. Aside from taking stock of the author's long trajectory which reveals him as one of the area's most important and most productive researchers, we identify in this article themes and questions which have dominated different moments in the studies and publications on religion in Brazil. But, instead of following a bibliographical agenda or favoring a distance-far analysis of his subject, Sanchis speaks from living experience on his insertion into the field of Brazilian academic debate which he has accompanied and in which he has been one of the major protagonists for more than 40 years. Finally, this issue is also being published

in an English-language version, in the hope of divulging the PFP's research on religion to a wider public and of finding new research partners beyond our national boundaries.

*Carlos Alberto Steil*  
*Daniel Alves*  
*Editors*