

Articles

Religious education and laity of the State in Rui Barbosa's presidential campaigns (1909-1919)

Ensino religioso e laicidade do Estado nas campanhas presidenciais de Rui Barbosa (1909-1919)

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Abstract

The present work aims to investigate the relationship between two points defended by Rui Barbosa, the first being the Laity of the State and the secularization of education and the second, religious teaching in public schools. From a methodological point of view, we chose hermeneutics as a working tool, from a phenomenological basis. Thus, the path of construction takes place by looking at an event and presenting a possible meaning from our perspective as researchers. The event we look at is Rui Barbosa's presidential campaigns, especially the civility campaign. We begin by building Rui Barbosa's history with religion. Then, we move on to analyzing his speeches in the presidential campaigns, where we find a politician defending himself against accusations of atheism and irreligiosity by apologizing for elements of religious life and its presence in national education. We conclude by demonstrating the logical chain of the relationship between State laity and religious education in Brazil during the first Republic.

Keywords: Rui Barbosa; religious teaching; laity; presidential campaigns.

Resumo

O trabalho tem como objetivo investigar a relação entre dois pontos defendidos por Rui Barbosa, sendo o primeiro a secularização do Estado e a laicidade da educação e o segundo o ensino religioso nas escolas públicas. Escolhemos a hermenêutica como ferramenta de trabalho desde uma base fenomenológica. Assim, o caminho de construção se dá pelo olhar para um evento e a apresentação de um sentido possível a partir de nosso olhar de investigadores. O evento para o qual olhamos são as campanhas presidenciais de Rui Barbosa, especialmente a campanha civilista. Começamos construindo o histórico de Rui Barbosa com a religião, depois partimos para a análise de seus discursos nas campanhas presidenciais, onde encontramos um político se defendendo de denúncias de irreligiosidade a partir da apologia de elementos da vida religiosa. Concluímos demonstrando o encadeamento lógico da relação entre laicidade do Estado e ensino religioso na Primeira República.

Palavras-chave: Rui Barbosa; ensino religioso; laicidade; campanhas presidenciais.

INTRODUCTION

Rui Barbosa was a politician, a jurist and, above all, an intellectual. He lived between the years of 1849 and 1923, and, although born in Bahia, moved to São Paulo during college, when establish close liaison with liberal movement from his time, participating directly in the Republican State framework. While managing his own intellectual formation and his political action, he entered the field of reflection and proposition about Brazilian education, agenda that would be in his political project, when he was running his electoral campaign for Presidency of the Republic. However, it's relevant to notice that Rui Barbosa wasn't victorious in any presidential running, but his political program and ideas mark Brazilian History as well as the history of the political thinking about Brazilian education. Nonetheless, Rui Barbosa's presidential discourses as chosen source is justified because those would be the moments that he summarized his political thoughts, producing a stage for his presidential running.

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Since his educational background, Rui Barbosa elected Liberalism as an ideological basis, where his ideas are grounded. Applied his principles in the Brazilian history reality that he was inserted. Liberal experiences observed in countries as England, France and United States of America was his models and examples, the latter being the strongest benchmark as a valid enforceability of ideological range at society life¹.

From his Liberal platform, he addresses the principle of laity^{2,3} as a constant in his thoughts, reviewing the religious interventions at the Government and at the State, showing the urge for severance between religious interests and political interests. Without radicalism and criticizing radical inclination, he recognized that existed, in religious expression, a commendable series of principles, ideas and practices that must be kept, since doesn't interfere closely in managing political power. In that sense, during the proclamation of the Republic of Brazil, he was active in the transitional government, making sure that laity was present at the decrees that guided the country to his constitutional establishment⁴.

On other hand, Rui Barbosa advocate for Religious Education in Brazilian school's curriculum, which at the time seemed as source of hope on the nationalist republican mindset and as a place for technical qualification for job market. In this context, one could ask about the Religious Education role in the education concept adopted by Rui Barbosa for his Brazilian Republic, the answer must consider that it was a time when his thoughts were already mature and elaborated in his electoral-political field, in other words, in his Government Plan for the nation. That's the reason why we look through his presidential campaign, especially the civil one, from the year 1910, when the debate about education and Religious Education were more present.

In order to develop an answer to the problem here presented, we must delineate some points. First, as it should be in scientific production, we'll expose and reflect on the methodological questions that this endeavor embraces. In this case, the approach we adopt is Hermeneutics, seeking the sense of the phenomena that is shown to us through the texts (sources) in relation to their contexts. Aiming a possible sense, as is proposed by Hermeneutics, doesn't mean intending to exhaust a source, but, indeed, circle a dialogue with the contexts that embrace a phenomenon. Thus, we must look through Rui Barbosa's history and his relations with religious subjects. One must stress, here, Rui Barbosa's revisionist position in relation to the First Vatican Council that, in 1870, among other things, establishes the papal infallibility, mechanism of extreme religious power. Hence, we must reflect about how his revisionist attitude influences Brazilian voters' impressions of him as politician, and how that affect his ballots raise efficiency. At last, analyzing his defense for Religious Education and his laity advocacy, we'll see which perceptions are allowed in our interpretation of the idea of education, Republics and religion in Rui Barbosa.

¹ Vera Teresa Valdemarin (2000), on her thesis: "O liberalismo demiurgo: estudos sobre a reforma educacional projetada nos Pareceres de Rui Barbosa", maps, at the first chapter, a reading about liberalism on Imperial Brazil. Then, she concludes that Brazil would be the best exemple for partial using of liberalism and shows how Rui Barbosa's texts was important for definition of an Brazilian liberalism.

² Laity concept is wide and variable. Fernando Catroga (2006) arguments about numerous ways and manifestations of laity in his work: "Entre deuses e Césares: secularização, laicidade e religião civil: uma perspectiva histórica". In this text, laity is used in Rui Barbosa's perspective, as a walk away of State from faith paths, practices and expressions, granting, mostly, freedom rights; through the text this discussion about the limits of freedom and severance extends to Religious Education interests.

³ T.N.: The word "laicidade" has no similar peer in english, since, usually, secularism approach both the meanings distinguished in this work. Although "laity" widely means "[...] all the people who are involved with a Church but who are not priests" (McFarland et al., 2012), a brief investigation in etymology show us that the term comes from greek *laikos*, which means "of the people," "pertaining to the common folk," (Wiktionary, 2026). Furthermore, *laikos* does not occur in the Bible, only *laos* — meaning "people" —, referring "to those who were not priests, deacons, or clerics" (McFarland et al., 2012), for what it can also be read as "neutral", in religious terms. As so, Professor Fernando Catroga (2006), specialist in history of ideas and theory of history, present his work — originally "Entre deuses e Césares: secularização, laicidade e religião civil: uma perspectiva histórica" — with "laity" as *laikos* (or, in portuguese: "laico/laicidade"), translating his text to "Between God and Caesar. Secularism, Laity and Civil Religion: an historical perspective". Assevered by this background, the word "laity", here, will be used intending to fulfill this significance gap, meaning, then, as in Brazil: "neutral", "of the people", or, more specifically, "Oblivious to the clergy or any other religious order" (Michaelis, 2026), and, finally, in legal terms the State of Laity means that freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, and the free exercise of religious worship is ensured and the protection of places of worship and their liturgies is guaranteed, in accordance with the law: "VI - é inviolável a liberdade de consciência e de crença, sendo assegurado o livre exercício dos cultos religiosos e garantida, na forma da lei, a proteção aos locais de culto e a suas liturgias" (BR. Const. art. V, amend. VI, Brasil, 1988).

⁴ Nogueira (1973, p. 39, our translation) asserts that "Rui was the major master and the most brave indoctrinators of constitutional precepts. In reality, he had to teach them to the judiciary, the President of Republic and members of National Congress. And act in front of them with intrepidity, fearlessness and courage". (In the original: "Rui foi o mestre maior e o mais denodado doutrinador dos preceitos constitucionais. Na realidade teve que ensiná-los à magistratura, ao presidente da república e aos membros do congresso nacional. E agir perante eles com intrepidez, destemor e bravura").

It is important to highlight that, over the text, the forms “secularism” and “laity” should not be mistaken, once they carry different meanings, although demonstrating the same inclination. Secularism is the process of severance between the State in relation to the religious forces, i.e., the delimitation in the fields of political power and religious power. Laity, on the other hand, is advocating for faith expression freedom to be granted, opening readings for religious diversity.

METHOD

The methodological support chosen for our efforts is Hermeneutics. That methodological structuration prioritizes an interpretative analysis, in which is possible to apprehend a sense of a phenomenon that was shown. Accordingly, the phenomenon analyses are the range of ideas and actions of Rui Barbosa in the field of Education, Laity and Religious Education. The key to reading this phenomenon, i.e., the unclamping point, is the discourses that Rui Barbosa pronounces in his presidential running. Within those pronouncements, the civil campaign was prioritized, for it has touched the themes analyzed to a greater extent. This work can be claimed, also, as an historical work, once it looks through History with the ambition of converge the past and the time we are now living.

The theoretical and methodological basis from Hermeneutics used in here consists in Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) works, French philosopher devoted to a post-Heideggerian Hermeneutics, sharing with Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) the lapidation of this field at the end of the Twenty Century. Ricoeur argues that the footprints to which we look in history mechanics are a present phenomenon, a presence that shows itself as it is for its reader, the hermeneutic, constructing it with the means allowed by his time:

The first way of thinking about the pastness of the past is to dull the sitting of what is at issue, namely, temporal distance. The historical operation will then appear as a de-distanciation, an identification with what once was. This conception is not without a basis in historical practice. It not the trace, as a trace, present? Is to follow it not to render contemporary with their trace the events that it leads back to? As readers of history are we not ourselves made contemporaries of past events by a vibrant reconstruction of their intertwining? In short, is the past intelligible any other way than as persisting in the present? (Ricoeur, 1997, p. 144, our translation).

Rui Barbosa's thoughts, as well as his work, attend at the moment that we look for it and bring, based on our world, his means. For instance, there isn't a pure past, but rather a past that comes back in relation to its reader. In this sense, if we look to Brazilian State's laity today, and its debates about mandatory Religious Education offer, we'll see that our present is result of a constant born at past. Rui Barbosa thought and elaborated, at the beginning of our Republics, a system with structure for basic comprehension of religious role in society's life, as well as education to mediate this presence.

Inasmuch as Ricoeur thoughts, we understand that written text still lacks a second moment, a reception, an interpretation. It occurs because of the paradoxical reader presence, which is, at the same time, carrier and performer of an intent, builder of a purpose:

From a purely rhetorical perspective, the reader is, finally, the prey and the victim of the strategy worked out by the implied author, and is so the very extent this strategy is more deeply concealed. Another theory of reading is required, one that places an emphasis on the reader's response - the reader's response to the stratagems of the implied author. A new element enriching poetics arises here out of an “aesthetic” rather than a “rhetoric,” if we restore to the term “aesthetic” the full range of meaning of the Greek word *aisthesis*, and if we grant to it the task of exploring the multiple ways in which a work, in acting on a reader, *affects* that reader. This being-affected has the noteworthy quality of combining in an experience of a particular type passivity and activity, which allows us to consider as the “reception” of a text the very “action” of reading it”. (Ricoeur, 1997, p. 166-167, our translation).

Henceforward, it is possible to understand that in methodological structure remains no space for passivity, for receiving history from source's narrativity. One must construct the source in foundation of an inherent dialogue with the reader's worldview. This world, then, is built with a reality reading, from a perception that it is an Educational System in Brazil that propose Religious Education and advocate for State's laity, although it doesn't reach, necessarily, one and another intent.

From this regard we're able to bring up questions for Rui Barbosa answer through the consulted sources, circumscribed in his world reading. From this practical point of view, the methodological approach adopted, attributed to Ricoeur, establishes a process where we consult the source, bring up a suspicion sourced based and put it in a test considering the contextual elements from the reader-performer, evoking a possible reading at the hermeneutic horizon.

RUI BARBOSA, RELIGIOUS CRITICIZER

During his time in law school, in 1868, Rui Barbosa left the Faculdade de Direito do Recife, moving for Faculdade de Direito de São Paulo; allowing to Rui Barbosa strength his connection with liberals from São Paulo, and training him to a career delayed in returning visibility and conditions of livelihood. During the graduation, he doesn't immediately debut as a great jurist, in fact, he intermediates this occupation with press jobs, aiming his own subsistence and pay off debts that his father, João Barbosa, contract for his college expenses (Viana Filho, 1987, p. 99).

At the time, Rui Barbosa enrolled in many groups, fighting for his non-negotiable principles, such as the end of slavery regime and State's laity. When, in 1874, João Barbosa dies, Rui Barbosa, by many paths, try to honor family debts. One of these ways was publishing, in 1877, a translation of a book, including an extensive introduction. This idea comes due to his Freemasonry colleagues, whose believe that State's laity should be a flag taken up to stop religious interests from interfering in political organization. Thus, with moral encouragement of his peers, Rui Barbosa translates and publishes the book, but it doesn't reach as much as he expected, remaining him with even more debts (Viana Filho, 1987, p. 127).

The book published by Rui Barbosa had as main issue the critic to papal infallibility, proposed from the First Vatican Council, which ended in 1870. It's possible read, hitherto, that the book was attached in the circle of disputes that deal with papal infallibility, Church-State relation and ultramontanism.

Placing, however, farther the aim, and aspiring to establish methodically, before our fellow countrymen, generally alien to these studies, the modern, Christian ideas concerning the relations between the cults and the state, and to indicate the liberal preservative measures against clericalism, we strove to discharge ourselves of this task in an introduction. There, sketched rapidly the incursions of pontifical primacy into the national churches, its usurpations in the bosom of the states and the reiterated and peremptory denials by catholicity of the infallibilist presumptions of the tiara; evidenced the absolute identity between the idea of infallibility and that of omnipotence in the jurisdiction of heaven and in that of earth; dissected nakedly the palpable ignorance of those who deem optional to Roman Catholics the adherence to the Syllabus; proved the philosophically and practically irreconcilable incompatibility between that abominable symbol of papolatry and any contemporary constitution, specifically ours; — established all those indispensable premises to our conclusions, we ventilated the question in all the applications to Brazil designing the institutions which, in our view, constitute the natural and definitive solution of the problem. Oppugning the inept expedient of concordats, the impotent hybridism of royalist legislations, the unnamed policy of relaxation, which is that which there prevails among us, we exposed the superiority of religious emancipation through the principle of the free church in the free state, its opportunity, its decisive efficacy and without substitutes. (Barbosa, 1877, p. XIII)⁵.

⁵ In the original: "Pondo, entretanto, mais longe a mira, e aspirando a estabelecer metodicamente, perante os nossos conterrâneos, geralmente alheios a esses estudos, as idéas modernas, christãs sobre as relações entre os cultos e o estado, e indicar os preservativos liberais contra o clericalismo, forcejámos por desempenhar-nos dessa tarefa n'uma introdução. Ahi, esboçadas rapidamente as incursões do primado pontifício nas igrejas nacionaes, suas usurpações no seio dos estados e os desmentimentos reiterados e peremptórios da catholicidade as presumpções infalibilistas das tiaras; evidenciada a identidade absoluta entre a idéa de infalibilidade e a do omnipotência na jurisdição do céu e na da terra; dissecada nuamente a ignorância palmar dos que reputam facultativa aos Catholicos romancistas a adesão ao Syllabus; provada a incompatibilidade philosophical e praticamente inconciliável entre esse abominável símbolo da papolatria e qualquer constituição hodierna, especificadamente a nossa; — assentadas todas essas premissas imprescindíveis ás nossas conclusões, ventilámos a questão em todas as applicações ao Brasil desenhando as instituições que, a nosso vêr, constituem a solução natural e definitiva do problema. Oppugnando o alvitre inepto das concordatas, o hybridismo impotente das legislações realistas, a inominada politica da relaxação, que é isso que ahi vale entre nós, expusemos a sobre excelência da emancipação religiosa pelo principio da igreja livre no estado livre, sua oportunidade, sua efficácia decisiva e sem sucedâneos". N.T.: In Portuguese version of this work, the author strictly followed Rui Barbosa's writing style within direct quotations, accordingly to gramatical norms ruling at the time.

In this quotation one can see Rui Barbosa's intention translated in straight manners. The author criticizes, at the same time, the Church that, by the papal infallibility aims to grant the extension of its own power on political regime, and the fact that Brazilian Monarchy didn't withdraw from this external power. The quotation starts with Rui Barbosa stressing in expose to Brazilians something that wasn't common thought, revisioning, this way, tradition itself. There lays a pedagogical process structured. One must perceive that this isn't a direct criticism of religious nature, but rather, to practices of political and religious powers merging. What is shown, furthermore, is an introduction to a Political Theology, a concern grounded in political and philosophical inquiry, putting religious interests as debate content.

The inquiry suspicion here is that, asserting "Free Church in Free State," Rui Barbosa's idea wasn't to suppress general religions, neither treat Christian faith, rather, it aims to establish which field belong to who, which are the boundaries between public and private, heteronomy freedom, the external side of the national.

As it said, in methodological discussion, the text isn't fulfilled from inside, in reality, open itself to the reader, that receive it and interpret it. Thus, between fair or biased interpretations, Rui Barbosa's proposal was criticized in fields that are more conservative in society, being accused even of atheism. This movement followed him as a shadow, renewed from time to time, when his opponents intended to reach him some way. At first moment, Rui Barbosa even feared that his marriage right would be renounced, for what he speeds up his marriage with Maria Augusta Viana Bandeira. (Viana Filho, 1987, p. 128).

DISCUSSION

Rui Barbosa was a State Representative Senator, remaining active in his public life. Even with his name widespread in other moments, he actively participates in presidential running in 1910 and 1919. In 1910 his campaign⁶, beginning in 1909, was known as a civil campaign, since he competed with a military leader, Hermes da Fonseca. Hermes da Fonseca was nephew of Marechal Deodoro da Fonseca, essential actor during Republican Proclamation, ruling the country at transitory times and elected at first presidential elections.

At this moment, Rui Barbosa was already a well-established character at Brazilian political scenery. His career came from the last years of Monarchy, then, at transition government, his participation was intense. However, Republic takes paths away from what were expected, nor endorsed by Rui Barbosa. The change at political system didn't grant a change in population mindset, thus, Republican regime inherits numerous economic and social problems, among them, the lack of a consolidated national education system.

The Republic of Brazil born from the efforts of liberal and positivist groups. The strenght sword of the military, that had a more positivist formation in general, was essential for monarch deposition. When the new political regime set up, these groups that had united before, end up occupying distinct power dispute fields, with the military group in advantage, directly concerned of national political life⁷.

⁶ The *Casa de Rui Barbosa* (Rui Barbosa's House) foundation available a digital collection from the "Campanha Civilista" (Civil Campaign), from Maria Madalena Schmidt Martins (2024). For Martins explanation of the production of the paper see Martins (2026).

⁷ Although the constant battle for political power, specially aiming the presidential chair, liberals and positivists end up falling in some sort of utilitarian convival, in which their defenses differ as much as their overlap: "Unlike, and in inverse current comprehensions in the matter of nature and working of the First Republic, liberalism was a sustainer for political organization, intentionally authoritarian and oligarchic, and put forward henceforth election of the President Campos Sales, 1989. Thus, the oligarchization was programmatic for liberalism, not only a product of a cut-out between institutions and national sociology, as sustained by unparalleled arguments from Oliveira Vianna. In this direction, positivism presents itself not only as source of authoritarian *tout court*, as it is usually interpreted, but rather a social arrangement that denies the viability of a non-solidary individualism as social foundation, unequivocal emphasis from the same Oliveira Viana work's". In the original: "*Ao contrário, e invertendo compreensões correntes quanto à natureza e ao funcionamento da Primeira República, o liberalismo foi sustentáculo de uma organização política intencionalmente autoritária e oligárquica, posta em movimento a partir da eleição do presidente Campos Sales, em 1898. E, em sendo assim, a oligarquização foi um elemento programático do liberalismo, e não apenas fruto de uma disjunção entre as instituições e a sociologia do país, como sustenta o inigualável argumento de Oliveira Vianna. Nessa esteira, o positivismo se apresenta não como fonte de autoritarismo tout court, tal como normalmente se interpreta, mas sim de um arranjo social que nega a viabilidade do individualismo insolidário como cimento social, acento inequívoco dos escritos do mesmo Oliveira Vianna*" (Araújo, 2010, p. 114, our translation).

When Rui Barbosa develops his great civil campaign, suffer many retaliations and attacks from the opposition. One of these attacks claims that he's an atheist, precisely for his critic of papal infallibility proposed for the First Vatican Council. Due to this critic, Rui Barbosa promotes ideas about religion and Religious Education in his electoral campaign, thus he wouldn't be electorally jeopardized. We must stress the significance of discourses from presidential campaign as source, once at the moment of political exposition Rui Barbosa was widely attacked for his supposedly atheist position, being forced to argue vehemently in antagonistic directions.

French Liberalism had displaced not only the Church, but also the religion and religiosity of the political field, posing not only an effort for laity, but mostly for secularism. Rui Barbosa, as a liberal, argues that isn't necessary a radical disengagement, hence a well delimited severance would be enough, advocating, thus, for a objective laity. In his civil campaign, Rui Barbosa asserts:

That was the religious freedom that we wrote in Brazilian Constitution. That one excludes the scholar program of Religious Education. But doesn't consent that scholar teaching, scholar bookings, profess irreligion and unbelief, neither inhibit, when mandatory in the country, Religious Education from minister of religion, out of scholar hours, at the same scholar building. But doesn't exonerate Government of the obligation to proportionate neither to the sailor nor to the soldier, impartially, benefits of his sacred ministry. The State is forbidden from providing religious instruction. However, it isn't unauthorized for exciting indirectly the moral gains from Religious Education, promoting tax immunity for houses devoted to cult. (Barbosa, 1967, p. 61, our translation)⁸.

Rui Barbosa advocates religious freedom. Accordingly to the author, this freedom would be possible if State didn't compromise with a specific way of religious education. The government could allow Religious Education to happen at schools, but it shouldn't subsidize this act, otherwise, configure privilege for a religion in detriment of the others. It worth emphasizes that, at that time in Brazilian history, religion was basically equal to Roman Catholicism, since the arrival of Protestant at the country still was limited, furthermore, indigenous and African religions was completely marginalized. Unlike nowadays, the perspective of one religious' study that aims to comprehend religious phenomena didn't exist, putting Religious Education at work for tradition, for the romantic catholic monoculture religion.

It's important to emphasize that Rui Barbosa's moderate vision indicates his relationship with religiosity, hence his idea of laity don't differ from what becomes more popular at the Brazilian mindset:

By other terms, Rodrigues (2013), grounded in French academics, point out two distinct ways of regimen of severance between State and religions. While Brazil was characterized for its flexible separation, for which religious fact is recognized and identified as cultural element, France, for its turn, is characterized for a rigid severance, where State abstract religious difference of its citizens and carry responsibilities for a "citizen universal" (p. 158) (Valente, 2018, p. 111, our translation)⁹.

What is evident at Rui Barbosa's discourses are his beliefs in moral gains from Religious Education. In fact, Rui Barbosa repeats that assumption in various moments, understanding that religion provides moral wellness, and those are extended to society. Religious instruction with moral purposes should, therefore, be encouraged by State, since it would benefit from this moral formation of the population.

Due to Rui Barbosa's participation, Religious Education is built as something that happens within school, but outside of the State expenses.

The solution that I used the educational problem on public schools, is, precisely, the same established 28 years ago, on the primary educational reform project that, on September of 1882, I submitted, as the public instruction draftsman, to the deputy board.

⁸ In the original: "Foi esta a liberdade religiosa que nós escrevemos na Constituição Brasileira. Esta exclui do programa escolar o ensino da religião. Mas não consente que o ensino escolar, os livros escolares, professem a irreligião e a incredulidade, nem obsta, quando exigido pelos pais, ao ensino religioso pelos ministros da religião, fora das horas escolares, no próprio edifício da escola. Exime o soldado e o marinheiro à observância obrigatória dos deveres cultuais. Mas não exonera o governo de proporcionar ao marinheiro e ao soldado, imparcialmente, os benefícios do ministério sagrado. Veda ao Estado o fornecer a instrução religiosa. Mas não o priva de animar indiretamente as vantagens morais do ensino religioso, favorecendo com imunidades tributárias as casas consagradas ao culto".

⁹ In the original: "Em outros termos, Rodrigues (2013, p. 158), apoiando-se em estudiosos franceses, aponta duas formas distintas de regime de separação entre Estado e religiões. Enquanto o Brasil seria caracterizado por uma separação flexível, a partir da qual o fato religioso é reconhecido e identificado como um elemento cultural, a França, por sua vez, teria como característica a separação rígida, em que o Estado abstrai a diferença religiosa de seus cidadãos e coloca-se responsável por um 'cidadão universal'".

On art. V & 3, exonerating the primary professor, on official schools, from religious tuition, id add: the religious education shall be conducted by *ministers from each cult, on the scholar building, if the parents shall want, informing the teacher, on which time they shall regularly meet*, always after class, but never taking more than 45 minutes each day, and no more than thrice a week.

The most enthusiastic adept of religious education in schools shouldn't want more. Three classes a week, taking three quarters of an hour, each one should thoroughly satisfy the reasonable clergy and family's demands. I've occupied myself, for over 30 years, with the education general organization, on strict terms, incorporating the religious education to the secular school, through the modular entrance, on scholar buildings, to the religious professors, to the sacred teaching [...] while I was turning the public professor duty secular, I was, also, maintaining the education programs neutral, while respecting the students family choice and religion and their rights.

I chased endorsement for this approach long ago, among authorities, in 1877, when I started to spread it, from Belgian Catholicism, grounding at the feeling from the council commissioned by the head of Partido Católico, Mr. Theux, in 1833. "The State," he would say, "the State remains alienated to religious education. Classes hours will be arranged so the students may receive this lecture from Worship Ministers" (Barbosa, 1967: 269-270, our translation)¹⁰.

In this discourse, Rui Barbosa mentions his most famous input in educational field, his reports about Public Education, presented before, at Imperial Brazil. Rui Barbosa had already proposed that State shouldn't act directly as religious educators, instead, just allow such education, which, according to him, were a right that couldn't be taken away from students¹¹.

One observes a balanced path, in which, at the same time, Rui Barbosa fight for State's laity and grant of individual rights, such as faith right and beliefs. This balance point is, exactly, the main object of our research. Considering this source, one can ask: which are the limits of this balance? What should be the weight of each side in a Republican construction that ambitions both, secularize itself and grant faith rights?

While still defending himself from accusations of being a treat to religion, Rui Barbosa asserts that:

It is visible that I am not advocating for secularism of education on the avail of atheism. My intents were openly opposed. The very role of the master, separated from priestly ministry, at the first youth instruction, is attached to a parallel culture from religious feelings, obligated to not offend it. That was what I accentuated, increasing and transcribing the lawmaking project submitted, in 1855, for Dutch councils, in the 21st article, which state: "Instruction must serve for develop moral and religious feelings. The settlers must abstain from teaching, practicing, or authorizing anything that may insult children's religious beliefs in his school". Those ideas that I've sustained, thirty tree years ago, in my former book, so explored against me until these days, about the Vatican Council, ideas that I recall, in 1882, at my own project for general Educational Reform, and, in 1893, reaffirmed, at my conference in February, 22th, in Bahia, on behalf of the orphans from Asilo de Nossa Senhora de Lourdes (Barbosa, 1967, p. 270-271, our translation)¹².

¹⁰In the original: "A solução com que ali resolvo o problema do ensino nas escolas públicas, é, precisamente, a mesma consagrada há vinte e oito anos, no projeto de reforma do ensino primário, que, em setembro de 1882, submeti, como relator da comissão de instrução pública, à Câmara dos Deputados. Ali, no art. V, § 3, exonerando o professor primário, nas escolas oficiais, dos deveres da instrução religiosa, acrescentava eu: O ensino religioso será dado pelos ministros de cada culto, no edifício escolar, se assim o requererem os alunos, cujos pais o desejarem, declarando-o ao professor, em horas que regularmente se determinarão, sempre posteriores às aulas, mas nunca durante mais de quarenta e cinco minutos cada dia, nem mais de três vezes por semana. O mais entusiástico adepto da instrução religiosa nas escolas não poderia querer mais. Três lições por semana, de três quartos de hora cada uma, satisfariam amplamente às exigências razoáveis da família e do clero. Quase trinta anos há, pois que, ocupando-me com a organização geral do ensino, planeava eu, em termos rigorosos, a associação do ensino religioso à escola leiga, mediante o ingresso franqueado, nos edifícios escolares, aos ministros do culto, para o magistério da palavra divina. [...] Secularizando a função do mestre público, aliava-lhe eu, à escolha das famílias dos alunos, o concurso do ministério sagrado, mantendo aos programas escolares o seu caráter neutro, mas respeitando, na religião dos pais, os seus invioláveis direitos. Entre as minhas autoridades em abono desse alvitre ia eu buscar, já antes, em 1877, quando comecei a recomendá-lo, a do catolicismo belga, apoiando-me no sentir da comissão nomeada pelo chefe do Partido Católico, mr. de Theux, em 1833. 'O Estado', racionava ele, 'o Estado mantém-se estranho ao ensino religioso. As horas de aula combinar-se-ão de modo que os alunos possam receber dos ministros do culto esse ensino'".

¹¹See: Barbosa (1981).

¹²In the original: "Já se vê que eu não advogava a secularização do ensino em proveito do ateísmo. Os meus intuitos eram declaradamente opostos. A própria função do mestre, estremada assim do ministério sacerdotal, na primeira instrução da mocidade, se mantinha vinculada à cultura paralela do sentimento religioso pela obrigação de o não melindrar. É o que eu acentuava, encarecendo e transcrevendo o projeto legislativo submetido, em 1855, às câmaras holandesas, no art. 21. do qual se estatuiu: 'A instrução deve servir, para desenvolver os sentimentos morais e religiosos. Os instituidores abster-se-ão de ensinar, praticar, ou autorizar qualquer cousa, que possa ofender às crenças religiosas dos meninos inscritos na sua escola'. Tais as idéias que eu sustentava, há trinta e três anos, naquele meu livro, hoje contra mim tão explorado, sobre o concílio do Vaticano, idéias que reiterei, em 1882, no meu próprio projeto de reforma geral do ensino, e, em 1893, renovei, na minha conferência de 22 de fevereiro, na Bahia, em benefício dos órfãos do Asilo de Nossa Senhora de Lourdes".

One observes here a widening Rui Barbosa. He doesn't restrain himself to perceive the ways religion can be offered, but which should be its work tone. Religious Education, that would bring moral benefits, cannot be a place that harm other religious groups, since it would configure a restraint in freedom manifests, in the opposed direction of what as expected. It is perceptible that Rui Barbosa's liberalism won't intend to remain in shallow debates, but rather enter in detail, promoting far expanded discussions.

Aside interpretative contextual hermeneutics, would be inevitable to extract from Rui Barbosa's discourses that he was excited about religious plurality or diversity, especially considering our contemporary mentality, marked by a globalized world, in which religious cultures in every corner of the world can be founded. Nonetheless, considering the author circumstances — in which Protestantism, prevailing consolidated in Europe and United States of America, was still crawling as national religious culture — in consolidating its principles of legal equality and State impartiality, one understands as hermeneutic possibility that these steps already existed as strong progress of thoughts elements. This idea, according to Rui Barbosa, doesn't born from French liberal experience, that was more radical, but from liberalism crossed by American religiosity:

There was where the Constituição Brasileira drank its source, not on France. Not on France, but there is where we should look for the lessons, the decisions, the solutions, annoying, reactionary and violent, on the French politics, while the American, in equal manner, benefic and peaceful. (Supported).

My ideas, on this topic, are the ones that, six years ago, I developed on a speech on Colégio Anchieta, to its students. I hereby, solely ratify them. In few words they condense. Impartiality on a manner of all, on actions of state duty. The catholic majority, on its constitutional rights, defend against religious intolerance. Protection to the minor religions against the majority excess. Benevolence and sympathy to the cultural and moral development by superior's ways of religious action, guarded by, invariably, between all worship, the constitutional neutrality (Supported) (Barbosa, 1967, p. 59-62, our translation)¹³.

In presidential campaigns discourses, irreligiousness is the first foe that Rui Barbosa's approach should fight. Here, we endure the idea that he believes in a moral gain from religious instruction and life. That irreligiousness should be suppressed because of the rights of the catholic majority present in Brazilian society. Nonetheless, in counterbalance, Rui understands that this majority couldn't abuse its power beyond the minority. Our comprehension about what does this minority, defend by Rui Barbosa, is limited, still we can deduce that isn't a very expanded range, focusing mostly on Protestant expressions. In the years of 1919, the arrival of Daniel Berg¹⁴, in Pará, bringing with him Pentecostalism. Therefore, at that time, Rui Barbosa still brings within a comprehension of diversity religiosity grounded in Historical Protestantism and some evangelical movements, such as the Baptists.

Unfortunate skeptical souls are easily established with discourage for fighting, with resignation in face of the afflictions from subordination. In souls mediated by faith, the intense sense of our divine descent mock the treats, challenge the obstacles, prevail the dangers, and annihilates the oppressions. Bigger than this lands, where God armed you,

¹³In the original: "A Constituição Brasileira bebeu ali, não em França. Não em França, mas ali, é que lhe havemos de ir buscar as lições, as decisões, as soluções, irritantes, reacionárias, violentas na política francesa e, na americana, equitativas, benéficas, pacificadoras (Apoiados). As minhas idéias, a este respeito, são as que, há seis anos, desenvolvi no Colégio Anchieta, em um discurso aos seus alunos. Daqui as ratifico solenemente. Em poucas palavras se condensam. Observância da igualdade legal entre todas as crenças. Imparcialidade em relação a todas, no exercício das funções do Estado. Defesa da maioria católica nos seus direitos constitucionais, contra as intolerâncias da irreligiosidade. Proteção das minorias religiosas contra os excessos da maioria. Benevolência e simpatia para com o desenvolvimento da cultura moral pelos meios superiores da ação religiosa, guardada invariavelmente, entre todos os cultos, a neutralidade constitucional (Apoiados)".

¹⁴Wulffhorst (1995, p. 8, our translation) says that "A brother in Christ told to Daniel and Gunnar a celestial vision with the word 'Para'. Believing that this vision would be the call trough a mission, they check th world map and found in Brazilian map the State of Pará. They trusted that this fact was divine evidence. Then, pursued financial resources for travel and move foward Belém do Pará. Arrived in 1910 and look hor the Igreja Batista. It doesn't take long to lead prays and studies gatherings, in which highlighted an Holy Spirit Baptism, speaking in tongues and the cure. The baptist minister react in a oposed way from these ideas and the disagreement resulted in a split up, since eighteen baptists joined the Swedish missionaries and found the first local Church from Assembly of God, in 1911, at Belém". In the original: "Um irmão na fé contou a Daniel e Gunnar uma visão celestial na qual aparecia a palavra 'Para'. Crendo que essa visão seria o chamado para a missão, foram consultar o mapa-mundi e encontraram no mapa do Brasil o estado do Pará. Consideraram este fato como confirmação divina. Procuraram recursos financeiros para a viagem e seguiram para Belém do Pará. Chegaram lá em 1910 e procuraram a Igreja Batista. Não demorou muito e já dirigiam reuniões de oração e de estudo, nas quais ressaltavam o Batismo no Espírito Santo, o falar em línguas e a cura. O pastor batista reagiu de forma contrária a essas idéias e o conflito resultou numa cisão, pois 18 batistas se uniram aos dois missionários suecos e fundaram a primeira Igreja local da Assembléia de Deus em 1911, em Belém".

is the value of your faith in His protection. The greatest mountains overcome; the haughtier towers expunge. But the religious morality of a great population, raised in Christianity, shall not be conquered for any human Army (Barbosa, 1967, p. 274-275, our translation)¹⁵.

Rui Barbosa maintain focusing in freedom, believing that moral religious would be a solid vehicle to strength the nation's resilience and force.

In quote, the intellectual uses a warfare metaphor, affirming that doesn't exist any army capable of conquering a population educated in Christianity. The strength of this nation would come from a sense of divine cause, which, in theological language, could be translated as a sense of creature, created and planned by God. This feeling gives strength to overcome obstacles, dangers and oppressions. Beyond hermeneutical gaps, one can understand that these three elements: obstacles, dangers and oppressions, indicate barriers that must be crossed with resilience, courage and freedom. At this point, one can see how Rui Barbosa shows his systems' function, i.e., at which point it is possible to believe that religious moral advances can encompass National Education demands. Perceive that there's not a belief in directly supernatural influence, excluding the author from a mystical reading of religiosity, including him in an ethic systematization, establishing a logical comprehension about religious structures in collectivity.

Christianism still are the main thoughts of Rui Barbosa, especially because Brazilian religiosity is fond in the remains of this time. Christianity relates with the very way of colonization at the country, that, by reclaiming Republics, complete the severance from its colonial footsteps. However, religion isn't conceived as colonization inheritance, which could be an important allegation, but is seen at the country, rather, as a way of liberation from chronically problems¹⁶.

Religious moral centrality as part of the formation and development of the country passes through Rui Barbosa's comprehension about education:

Teaching, as much as justice and administration, prevail and endure more from truth and morality, with its practice, than great innovations and beautiful overhaul that anchor it. (*Supported*). Among us, every government reconstructs the mechanics, but none seeks to improve manners. (Barbosa, 1967, p. 53, our translation)¹⁷.

Truth and morality are praised by Rui Barbosa, in opposed sides of beautiful innovations and reforms. Innovations and reforms, in this context, are attuned with what the intellectual named "mechanisms". Accordingly with this alignment, it is possibly understand that the author diminishes the importance of technical innovations in education, including, possibly, didactic methodologies, curricular organizations, and pedagogical theories. Rui Barbosa understands that the core question is on habits, believing that those should be reformed, steadying centrality in truth and morality. Religious fields are a space where truth and morality are worked with intensity, valuing the content of those truths and moralities isn't our purpose here. One way or another, those are proposed systems, that claim to be moral and true, affecting directly their believers.

In one more hermeneutic gap moment, one could affirm that it seems to exist in Rui Barbosa hope that something so usual to Brazilian culture, its religion, could be the source for changing an obsolete and colonial mindset for a modern and liberal way of thinking.

Religion is perceived by him as something indispensable to human life, and therefore, to nationality, once God is perceived as the guarantee of the freedom he advocated. His faith passed through a moderate rationalism and a Renaissance traditionalism, since he did not follow the deists, in the task of purifying Catholicism of that which did not pass through the canon of reason, and in the project of recovering the original of Christianity (Fonseca, 2004, p. 7, our translation)¹⁸.

¹⁵ In the original: "Nos espíritos devastados pelo cepticismo facilmente se estabelece o desânimo da luta, a resignação às misérias da servilidade. Nas almas retemperadas pela crença o sentimento intenso da nossa origem divina zomba das ameaças, desafia os obstáculos, triunfa dos perigos, e aniquila as opressões. Mais do que estas serras, em que Deus, vos acastelou, vale a vossa fé, em que ele vos preserva. As mais altas montanhas se transpõem, as fortalezas mais arrogantes se expugnam. Mas a moralidade religiosa de uma grande população, educada no cristianismo, ainda estão por surgir das criações do poder humano os Exércitos, que a conquistem".

¹⁶ Tolentino (2019) trace an overview about changes in Brazilian religious culture since First Republic. The author found testimony in cultural and intellectual production at the time, revealing that modernization and innovation seek change the status quo of religiosity comprehension at the country.

¹⁷ In the original: "O ensino, como a justiça, como a administração, prospera e vive muito mais realmente da verdade e moralidade, com que se pratica, do que das grandes inovações e belas reformas que se lhe consagram. (Apoiados). Entre nós todos os governos reformam o mecanismo, e nenhum busca reformar os costumes".

¹⁸ In the original: "A religião é percebida por ele como algo indispensável da vida humana, e por conseguinte da nacionalidade, uma vez que Deus é percebido como a garantia da liberdade que preconizava. Sua fé passava pelo crivo de um racionalismo moderado e de um tradicionalismo renascentista, uma vez que não seguiu os deístas, na tarefa de depurar o catolicismo daquilo que não passasse pelo cânon da razão, e no projeto de recuperar o original do cristianismo".

Rui Barbosa's thoughts carry a moderation that marks an unique aspect. This moderation aims to balance the forces of Modernist Rationalism and a renovating traditionalism. It's almost as if the author, without choosing a side, believed in the potentiality of the union between the forces of the past, reformed, and the future forces.

CONCLUSION

To Rui Barbosa, education and religion meet in an space of debate that's interesting to public aspects, embracing the definition of a political program. His worries with freedom grants make his proposals meticulous, anticipating conflicts situations and interfering with a State elaboration that could put itself side by side with Modern States.

Following the steps of hermeneutic method employed here, one understands that laity, for Rui Barbosa, should be a continuous force throughout State structures, without evading cutting resistances forces in this path. On one side, this laity shouldn't constrain citizen freedom, but inspire they, by the means of granting rights.

Religious Education should not be maintained by State, whose Secularized, but encouraged in a way that, from it, structured a central change in education, a moral change. Rui Barbosa sees in religion, especially in Christianity — absolute majority at Brazilian religious scenario at the time —, roots for a cultural change. Faith and religious morals are taken as positive traits that could answer cultural demands in Republic progress.

Within possibilities of reading Religious Education defense at Rui Barbosa's presidential campaign, we understand, as hermeneutic result, that his proposal is sealed in a circle. The State encourages Religious Education, that teaches faith and morals. Those faith and morals build a sense of search for truth and belonging, feeling of creature in a bigger plan, that inspire the course of educating. Moral, scientific, technical and freedom guided education excites society, constructing, thus, a stronger Republican State.

In this sense, it isn't incoherent Rui Barbosa's defense of both: laity and Religious Education. Trespassing the idea of moderation, the author balances the gains in each part, demonstrating that they not only can coexist, but also collaborate for a common goal: the progress of Brazilian society.

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Authors contribution

FMJ: Data analysis (interpretation of results and assignment of meaning based on pre-determined theoretical frameworks), Methodology (methodological design of the research), Writing (drafting the original manuscript). MCGM: Methodology (methodological design of the research), Project management (guidance, supervision, or coordination), Review (critical review of the original manuscript and approval of the version to be submitted).

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