

PEDAGOGY OF OBEDIENCE: RELIGION AND WORK IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY READING BOOKS

PEDAGOGIA DA OBEDIÊNCIA: RELIGIÃO E TRABALHO NOS LIVROS DE LEITURA OITOCENTISTAS

PEDAGOGÍA DE LA OBEDIENCIA: RELIGIÓN Y TRABAJO EN LOS LIBROS DE LECTURA DEL SIGLO XIX



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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the relationship between reading instruction, religion, and work in primary education in Ceará, Brazil, during the second half of the 19th century. Its main sources are the school textbooks used at the time, especially the reading books by Abílio Cesar Borges and the "Facílmo Method" by Emílio Achilles Monteverde. It argues that these printed materials, far from being limited to literacy, functioned as instruments for disseminating a Catholic Christian morality articulated within a project of social discipline. Through fables, short stories, maxims, and images, these books instilled values such as obedience, resignation, fear, charity, and the valorization of work, contributing to the formation of docile, economically useful individuals adjusted to the prevailing order. The study shows that reading was conceived not as an autonomous practice or one geared towards pleasure, but as a means of internalizing moral and religious norms, frequently based on a pedagogy of fear and guilt. In this context, religion and work appear as complementary pillars in the construction of an ethic aimed at maintaining social hierarchy, especially with regard to the poor, for whom primary education was intended to train a disciplined and obedient workforce. At the same time, the role of the Church and the educated elites in legitimizing this order stands out, as well as the use of school textbooks as vehicles for a civilizing project that sought to reconcile progress, faith, and social control.

Keywords: Reading Instruction. Catholic Religion. School Textbooks. Work and Social Discipline.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a relação entre o ensino da leitura, a religião e o trabalho na instrução primária no Ceará, na segunda metade do século XIX, tomando como principais fontes os manuais escolares utilizados à época, especialmente os livros de leitura de Abílio Cesar Borges e o *Método Facílmo* de Emílio Achilles Monteverde. Argumenta-se que tais impressos, longe de se limitarem à alfabetização, funcionaram como instrumentos de difusão de uma moral cristã católica articulada a um projeto de disciplinamento social. Por meio de fábulas, historietas, máximas e imagens, esses livros inculcavam valores como obediência, resignação, temor, caridade e valorização do trabalho, contribuindo para a formação de sujeitos dóceis,

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economicamente úteis e ajustados à ordem vigente. O estudo evidencia que a leitura era concebida não como prática autônoma ou voltada ao prazer, mas como meio de internalização de normas morais e religiosas, frequentemente baseadas em uma pedagogia do medo e da culpa. Nesse contexto, religião e trabalho aparecem como pilares complementares na construção de uma ética voltada à manutenção da hierarquia social, especialmente no que se refere às camadas pobres, para as quais a instrução primária destinava-se à formação de mão de obra disciplinada e obediente. Ao mesmo tempo, destaca-se o papel da Igreja e das elites letradas na legitimação dessa ordem, bem como o uso dos manuais escolares como veículos de um projeto civilizador que buscava conciliar progresso, fé e controle social.

Palavras-chave: Ensino da Leitura. Religião Católica. Manuais Escolares. Trabalho e Disciplinamento Social.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la relación entre la enseñanza de la lectura, la religión y el trabajo en la educación primaria en Ceará, Brasil, durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. Sus principales fuentes son los libros de texto escolares de la época, especialmente los libros de lectura de Abílio César Borges y el "Método Facílmo" de Emílio Achilles Monteverde. Se argumenta que estos materiales impresos, lejos de limitarse a la alfabetización, funcionaban como instrumentos para difundir una moral cristiana católica articulada dentro de un proyecto de disciplina social. Mediante fábulas, cuentos, máximas e imágenes, estos libros inculcaban valores como la obediencia, la resignación, el temor, la caridad y la valoración del trabajo, contribuyendo a la formación de individuos dóciles, económicamente útiles y adaptados al orden imperante. El estudio muestra que la lectura se concebía no como una práctica autónoma ni orientada al placer, sino como un medio para interiorizar normas morales y religiosas, frecuentemente basadas en una pedagogía del miedo y la culpa. En este contexto, religión y trabajo se presentan como pilares complementarios en la construcción de una ética orientada a mantener la jerarquía social, especialmente en lo que respecta a los pobres, para quienes la educación primaria tenía como objetivo formar una fuerza laboral disciplinada y obediente. Al mismo tiempo, se destaca el papel de la Iglesia y las élites letradas en la legitimación de este orden, así como el uso de los libros de texto como vehículos de un proyecto civilizador que buscaba conciliar progreso, fe y control social.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de la Lectura. Religión Católica. Libros de Texto. Trabajo y Disciplina Social.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the image of a child on his knees and hands folded in prayer, the first lesson of the "Second Book of Reading", entitled "Love of God", by Abílio Cesar Borges, a compendium used in primary classes in Ceará, already indicates the religious character of the printed material, in which elements of Christian doctrine and the Old and New Testaments are combined with the lessons, seeming to want to look at childhood from its earliest years of life. Presenting the values with which the "childhood of the people" would be instructed, this period of the subject's life constituted the main means by which the ideas of the Baron of Macaúbas would sound satisfactory, especially to the political elites. After all, Abílio proposed with his enterprise to present the ways in which a people would be "regenerated", which involved obedience to the constituted authorities.

If one wants to improve a people, to regenerate or perfect it, the only way to achieve this is to give the people's childhood, in little books at the level of their intellectual powers, the holy doctrines of morals and religion, of reason, virtue and order: and it is only in school that this can be done, and under the direction of teachers worthy of such a great task.²

The growth of the book trade in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially with the attempts to expand the reading and consumer public, gave rise, in an increasingly incisive way, to a school literature that proposed to continue to call religion as a way of pacifying differences, taking faith as a defining dimension of that order through sacred writing. For this, the book par excellence would no longer be the Bible, at least in its direct materiality as in the eighteenth century, nor only religious books. School textbooks, especially reading books, although they pointed out some changes, such as the insertion of a teaching that excelled in intuition as opposed to methods based on decoration, assumed an important role in the elaboration of the cult of progress allied to religion, as seen in the previous topic of this chapter.

In those days, to the book market, there was the challenge of making available to the reading public books that met the demand for the dissemination of literacy and, along with it, the values defended as patents of the civilization that the enlightened class wished to build. The collection of reading books by Abílio Cesar Borges seemed to meet such demands. In all his materiality, Abílio seemed to unite different tastes and interests. Catholic values and the methods considered more modern by the intellectual elites for the dissemination of education would dialogue "harmoniously" in order to establish the participation of such forces in the state

² BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Second Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, New Correct Edition, Improved and Enlarged, 1869, Introduction, p. XV.

of affairs at the time, especially with regard to the necessary changes in public education that were already present in European countries and in the United States.

Literacy and civilization appeared in the knowledge to be acquired as part of the repertoire of an erudite culture that was intended to be achieved. Along with the improvement and fluency or even the insertion of readers in the world of letters, a set of prescriptions was placed almost to a high degree as the ultimate purpose. The plots of the stories and fables revealed their character of reading directed not to entertainment, in an unpretentious or pleasurable way, but to an extremely religious culture to be printed, based on fear and punishment as part of what the wealthier layers took as progress and civilization.³

In relation to their contents, the plots of the stories and fables seemed to meet, through pedagogy and methods, the daily life of the classes. Elaborated from what can be called a pedagogy of fear, fear and awareness of guilt, in the public scene, the Bahian physician and educator Abílio Cesar Borges fiercely criticized the use of physical punishment in official instruction⁴. However, the pedagogy contained in his books ended up reaffirming a model of education in which punishment and punishment constituted the main means of correction. Such pedagogy was mixed and merged with the Catholic virtues of the books of moral theology, the lives of the saints, and sacred history, all elaborated from the book par excellence, the Bible.

In the anecdotes and fables, earthly situations were mixed with biblical stories as if they wished, according to the Catholic tradition, let us say their teachings, to affirm that the consequences of their acts would also be, just as they were in the biblical past: hunger, suffering, diseases, public humiliation. Although he does not specify whether the punishments by the teachers should be of all kinds, including the physical, most of the stories and fables had a tragic end or disastrous consequences for the characters who despised the warnings and advice of their parents and teachers, as they told the lessons that brought scenes of death and illness from his "Second Book of Reading for use in Brazilian schools".⁵

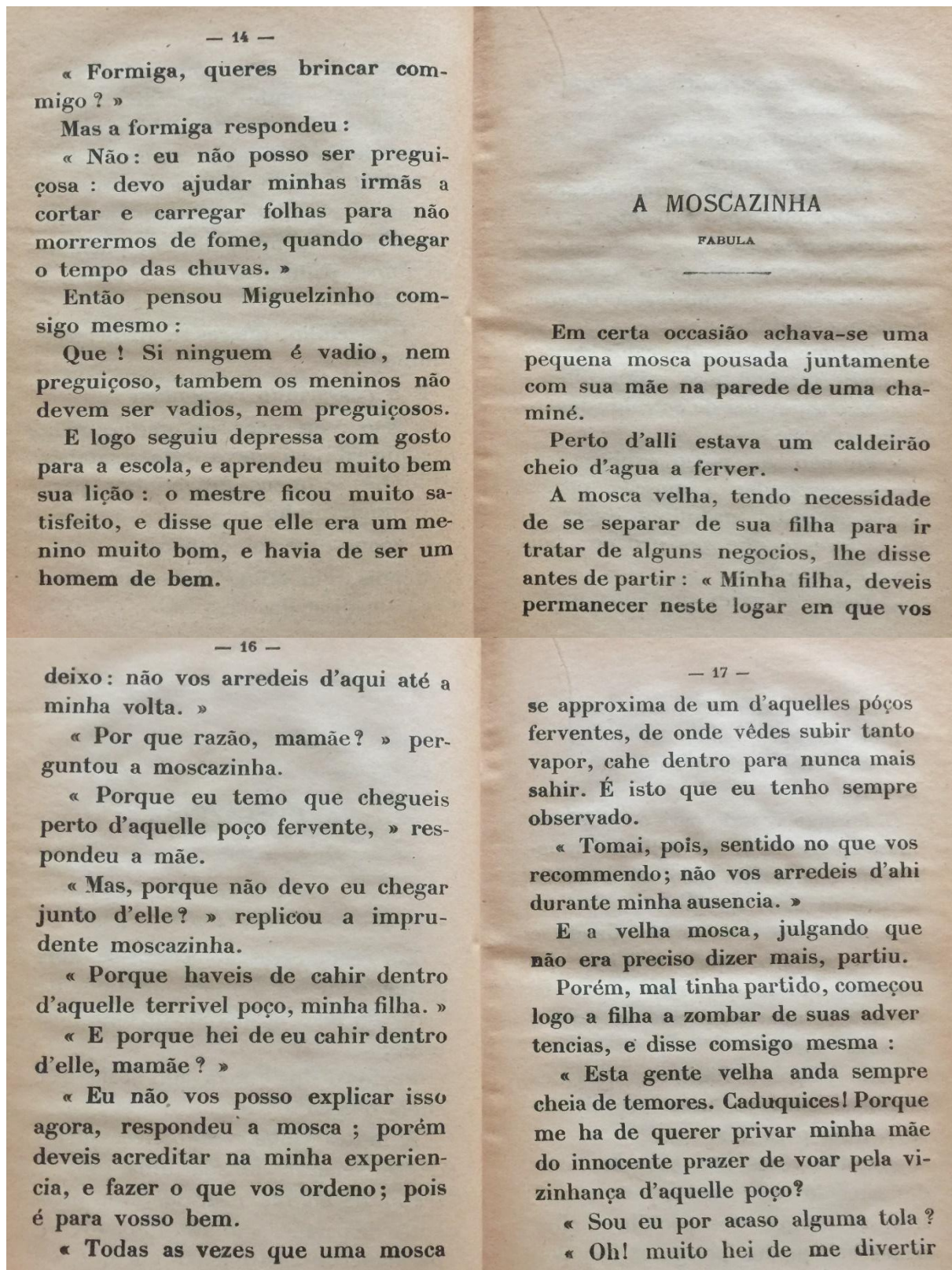
³ For countless primary school children, this erudite religious culture was taught in a "purely oral" way, to the extent that the scarcity of books did not allow everyone to have possession of the printed matter. At most, only the teachers and a few would have to share the copies in class. Not to mention that they spent weeks writing on stones, for lack of leaves.

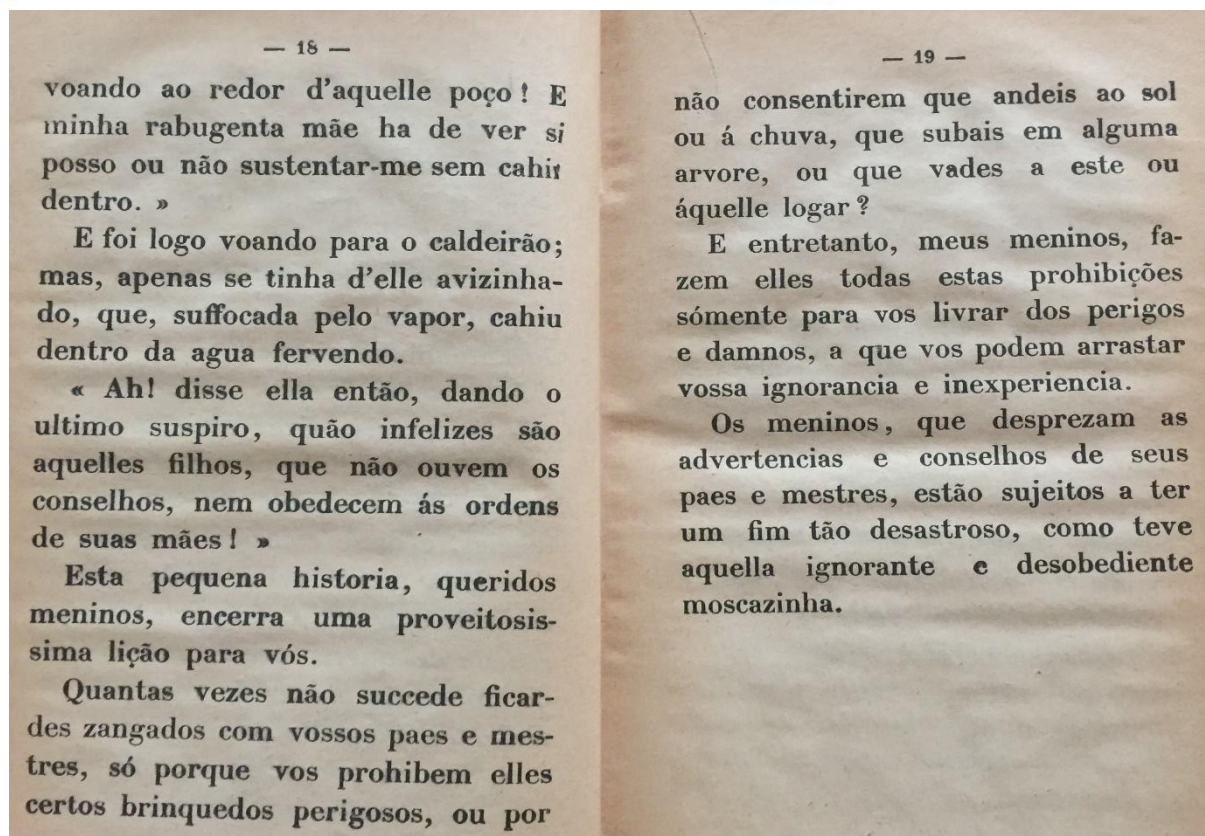
⁴ In this scenario, the Ginásio Baiano (1858) and the Colégio Abílio (1871) were the first educational establishments to advertise against the palmatoria. In Bahia and other provinces of the Empire, documents circulated such as the writing "Twenty years of propaganda against the use of the paddle and other demeaning means in the teaching of youth", authored by Abílio Cesar Borges himself, extracted from *O Globo* and published by Tipografia Cinco de Março in 1876. In the "war on the palmatoria" movement, the Baron of Macaúbas [Abílio Cesar Borges] even sent a copy of this printed matter to the newspaper *Cearense*. Source: BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Study plan and statutes of the Colégio Abílio founded in the Court of the Empire**. Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia do Imperial Instituto Artístico, 1872; BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Twenty-two years of propaganda in favor of the elevation of studies in Brazil (Fragments published in the Jornal do Comercio in 1880)**. Brussels: Typography and Lithography E. Guyot, 1884; BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Twenty years of propaganda against the use of the paddle and other demeaning means in the teaching of youth (extracted from O Globo)**. Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia Cinco de Março, 1876; *Cearense*, 1876, n. 45, p. 2, 4 col.

⁵ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Second Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição correct, melhorda e enlarged, 1869, Fábula: "Moscazinha", p. 15.

Figure 1

Story from the Second Reading Book by Abílio Cesar Borges





Source: BORGES, Abílio Cesar. Second Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição correct, melhora e enlarga, 1869, Fábula: "Moscazinha", p. 15.

With the growth in the production of school textbooks, even though it would emerge as an enterprise that would generate great profits only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth years, especially with specialized bookstores, such as Francisco Alves, "the Church's acculturation effort will continue to bring into play all forms of culture, the printed sheet, writing, singing, music",⁶ as seen in the hymns and prayers conveyed in the reading books of Abílio Cesar Borges. In these manuals, one can see a lithograph, "the aesthetic devices",⁷ proper to the eyes of the children, with images of their family daily life, of games, fairy tales, always in the sense of drawing their attention, explaining and reinforcing what was defended in the content of the texts, placing them in a universe full of duties, acceptable behaviors and directions that could not be contested.

Such a structure of the compendia denounced the character with which the teaching of reading was transmitted to religion, even with the growth of books intended "exclusively" for the learning of how to read, if the main purpose with which they were elaborated was observed.

⁶ ROCHE, Daniel. **The people of Paris**: essay on popular culture in the eighteenth century. São Paulo: University of São Paulo Press, 2004, p. 290.

⁷ DUTRA, Eliana de Freitas; MOLLIER, Jean-Yves (ed.). **Politics, nation and edition**: the place of printed matter in the construction of political life in Brazil, Europe and the Americas in the eighteenth-twentieth century. São Paulo: Annablume, 2006, p. (INTRODUCTION).

The truth of this teaching, that is, the methods, the pedagogy and the forms of reading, could only be elaborated from Catholic Christian doctrine, from the elements of its theology and morals, as they had long been, that is, "by analogy to the dogmatics of the church itself".⁸ At this point, images, more than accompanying the texts or acting as aesthetic devices, making books even more expensive, would play a primary role: they would explain or even direct the forms of reading. In the pictures that represented children with folded hands in prayer or when they brought mothers reading to their children, it was not only religion that should be cultivated within the home, but reading itself as a practice sometimes individual and silent, sometimes elevated to faith, or collective, presided over by the mother and bringing together the members of the family, depending on day-to-day situations.

The reading to be made of the images contained in the school manuals would be further reinforced by the picture of the crucified Christ, an item of first necessity in the inventories of furniture and utensils, without which it would be impossible, as many teachers claimed, to continue with their work. Wishing to insert a sacred language in the classroom environment, through this board, it was believed that children would easily read, even those who did not yet know how to recognize the letters and join the syllables. The image would remind us that Christ died on the cross to redeem the sins of those who believe in him, and therefore, in return, they must be obedient and follow his commandments, as pointed out in the reading manuals.

Through fables and short stories, the litany to be memorized was no longer that of the liturgy, but the understanding that one should live [this in the lessons to be taken for life] with the biblical stories, not only because the Catholic religion was rooted in nineteenth-century society,⁹ but because the lessons made it clear that, if they wanted to live in abundance, By the order of work, or to have some success, the way would be to walk in the dictates of Catholic evangelical morality, taking such lessons as practice even of the most ordinary issues of everyday life.

In such a scenario, in Abilio's reading books, the coexistence between religion, faith and fiction affected and, sometimes, merged with the narratives of the subjects' real lives, because

⁸ BOTO, Carlota. **The world in writing**: uses and customs of Portuguese school reading in the nineteenth century. Coimbra: Separata da Revista de História das ideias, Vol. 20. Faculty of Letters, 1999, p. 249.

⁹ In this case, the presence of Catholicism obeys various orders, either through the Padroado, as a force that was not restricted to the religious dimension, or through instruction in sacred things, as they would need them in the most diverse situations, including as the main requirement to become a primary school teacher. In the Professional Capacity Exams, for example, the tests brought excerpts from books such as the "History of Simon of Nantua or Merchant of Fairs", by Laurent Jussieu, and Iris Classic, in order to present to the candidates messages that brought "rules of civility", behaviors, virtues, "moral improvement". He was asked to speak on the "necessity of religion in general and the advantage of Catholicism." Source: CEARÁ. Provincial Government, Primary Public Instruction, Ceará, 1864. Available: APEC. Background: Public Instruction, Correspondence, Topical Date: Ceará, Chronicle Date: 1864. BR CEAPEC IP CO EXM 01 03 (142) CX 70.

the readers, as they read, were called to bring their own history as a way of self-control of their actions, as proclaimed by the sacred book, to whom many felt that he was the only reliable support on which an explanation for earthly things could be obtained.

In the period prior to the publication of the "Second Book of Reading" by Abílio Cesar Borges, the book "Easy Method to learn to read both the round and the handwritten letter in the shortest possible time", authored by Emílio Achilles Monteverde, had been circulating since 1861 in Ceará.¹⁰ Composed of knowledge intended more for the teaching of Christian doctrine than even for learning to read, those interested could acquire it at Joaquim José de Oliveira's bookstore and at Mr. Villar's Typography and House, as advertised in the "Cearense" in June 1861 to March 1862 uninterruptedly. In this Typography, numerous other productions for public and private schools were on sale, such as "Moral Lessons", a title present in the inventory of books existing in Joaquim José de Oliveira's bookstore, in 1872,¹¹ "Duties of Man", by Silvio P., "Bom Homem", by Ricardo, and many others considered, throughout the nineteenth century, *bestsellers* in the school production market.¹²

Depending on the page that was opened, one could easily confuse the "Método Fácil" (Easy Method), printed with a wide circulation in the provinces of the Empire, as seen in newspaper advertisements and in the correspondence of the Public Instruction of Ceará, with a religious compendium, because in its sixteenth edition, published by the Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, in Lisbon, after the explanations about diphthongs, came the "Advice to youth",¹³ then the "Summary of Christian doctrine" and the "Gift to childhood or manual of sacred history adorned with 100 beautiful prints representing the main events referred to in the old and new testaments". In this part, the "morals of the Christian religion", the "main duties of boys", the "maxims, sentences and moral thoughts", and the "useful rules to observe in life" were emphasized.¹⁴

¹⁰ In the ad in question, the author's name is not published, only the title of the work.

¹¹ Inventory of Angélica Alexandrina de Oliveira, Orphan Registry, Fortaleza/CE, Package 33, process 16, 1870, Public Archive of the State of Ceará – APEC.

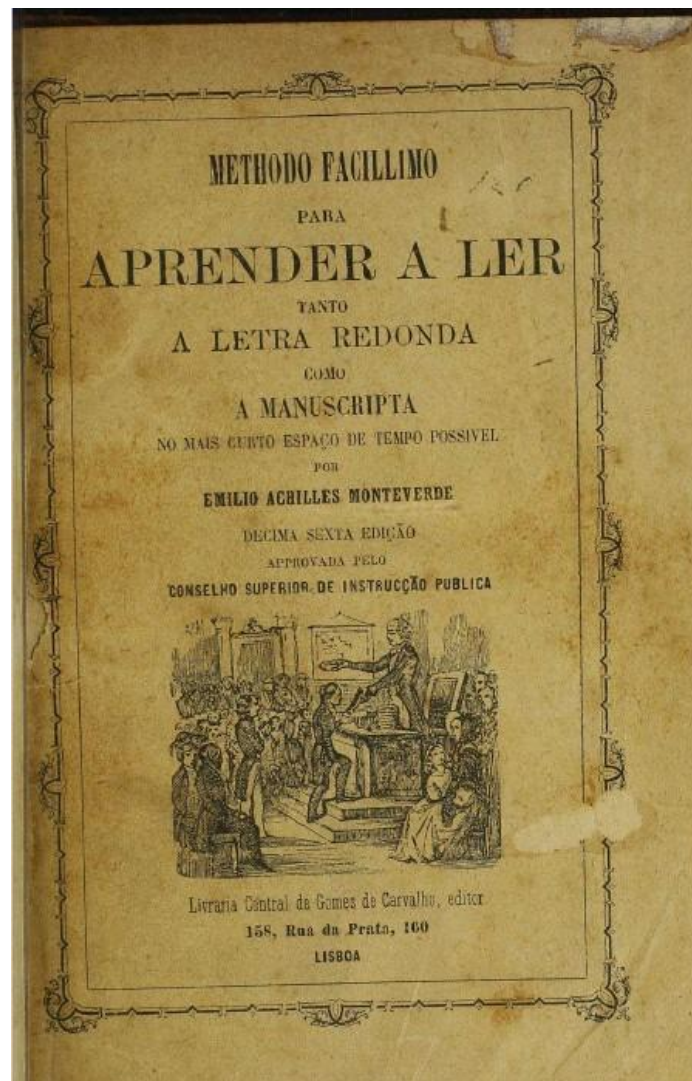
¹² Cearense, 25 jun. 1861, n. 1452, Announcements, p. 4, 4 col.

¹³ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 45.

¹⁴ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--].

Figure 2

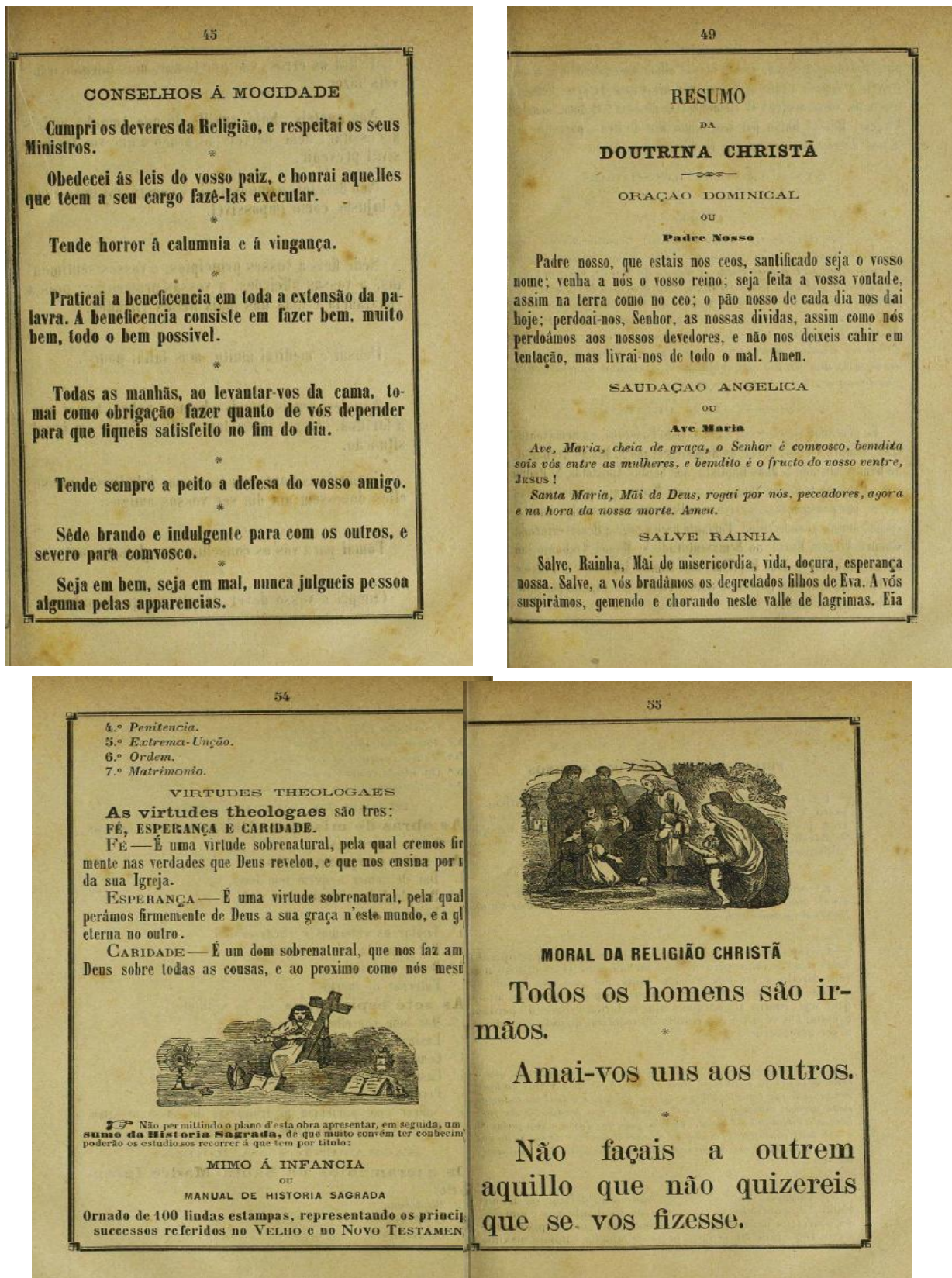
Cover of the book *Methodo Facillimo para aprender a ler*, by Achilles Monteverde



Source: MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--].

Figure 3

Book *Methodo Facilimo para aprender a ler*, by Achilles Monteverde



Source: MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 45, 49, 54, 55.

The "Easy Method" presented religious subjects in the form of instructions, directions and sentences, always alternating between content strictly related to the reading of the code and many others ranging from religion to Portuguese inventions. In such parts, no relationship was established with the teaching of writing, unless the student already had certain skills, which he would use for his improvement. It followed the format of the reading books of that period, a kind of small encyclopedia that, even presenting itself as a book to teach reading, religion gained prestige space.

The lessons and teachings placed the reader in an atmosphere not only of literacy, in the sense of marking the need to be instructed in the teachings that make up the different types of knowledge of the primary curriculum, but of a series of prescriptions that sought to make one elaborate a control of oneself, of one's room, of one's domestic space, as well as the "control of some over the other",¹⁵ creating a guilty conscience, where reason [the rational] would discern between the practice of what would be "adequate", as well as the feeling of guilt when incurring in what they judged to be mistakes.

At that time, the debates around the change of political regime, the development of industry and the need for free labor gave rise, at the same time, to the need to identify the State as an institution capable of building and maintaining a school that formed souls prepared for work. The "Catechisms of Agriculture" figured together with the "Catechisms of Christian Doctrine" and the compendia intended for the teaching of reading, as the most indispensable books for primary education,¹⁶ as they would make children lovers of religion and work. Thus, for a good part of the nineteenth century, education was focused on the formation of the worker, obedient, economical and lover of the homeland. In Ceará, the teachers would instill "a taste and sympathy for the study of the main source of wealth" of the Province: agriculture, as they stated in response to the circulars accompanied by a reasonable number of catechisms referring to this knowledge,¹⁷ in 1862. Therefore, we see an education that, above all, would minimally develop elementary knowledge in order to make them, first, aware of their duties.

¹⁵ BOTO, Carlota. **The world in writing**: uses and customs of Portuguese school reading in the nineteenth century. Coimbra: Separata da Revista de História das ideias, Vol. 20. Faculty of Letters, 1999, p. 246 and 247.

¹⁶ CEARÁ. Provincial Government, Primary Public Instruction, Aquiraz, 1867. Available: APEC. Background: Public Instruction, Correspondence, Topical Date: Aquiraz, Chronicle Date: 1867. BR CEAPEC IP PP CO RE 13 01 (53 and 54). CX 52.

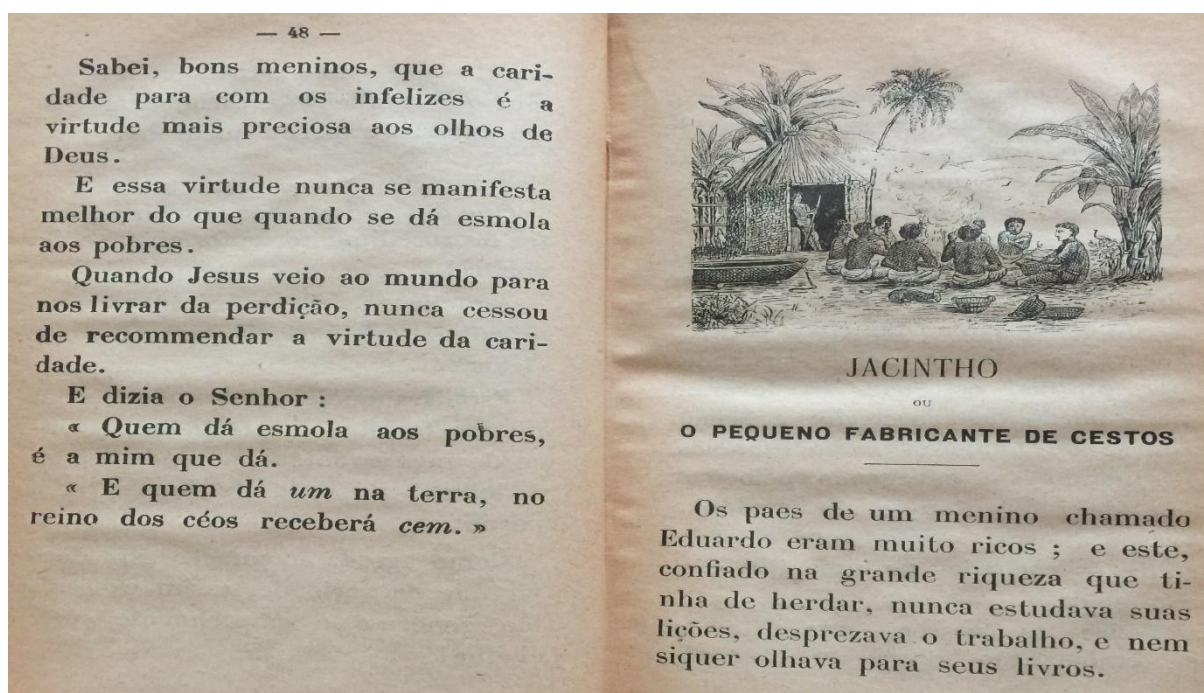
¹⁷ CEARÁ. Provincial Government, Primary Public Instruction, Fortaleza, 1862. Available: APEC. Background: Public Instruction, Correspondence, Topical Date: Fortaleza, Chronicle Date: 1862. BR CEAPE IP PP CO RE 07 02 (113). CX 51 / CEARÁ. Provincial Government, Primary Public Education, Soure, 18. Available: APEC. Background: Public Instruction, Correspondence, Topic Date: Soure, Chronicle Date: 1862. BR CEAPEC IP PP CO RE 05 01 (68). CX 50.

Learning to read, in order to first understand orders and commandments, aspects that would contribute to the maintenance of social order.¹⁸

The investigation of the printed books intended for the teaching of reading, which, together with the diocesan catechisms, often composed the only books present in primary classes, allows us to conclude that the school in Ceará, in the second half of the nineteenth century, in fact, is more moralizing and regulating than focused on the formation of some trade. Although work began to occupy more space as the discussions around the changes that were believed to be necessary in the primary curriculum gained greater strength, especially in the last decade of the century, the contents of the printed materials used in primary education already brought prominently, since the beginning of the 1860s, the exaltation of work as being of the order that "civilizes and at the same time constitutes a reward".¹⁹ In the anecdotes, fables and maxims "the duty of work"²⁰ and religion is remembered in all the daily situations of the characters.

Figure 4

Story present in the *Second Reading Book* by Abílio Cesar Borges



¹⁸ OSAKABE, Haqira. The world of writing. In: ABREU, Márcia (org.). **Readings in Brazil**: commemorative anthology by the 10th Cole. Campinas, São Paulo: Mercado de letras, 1995, p. 19.

¹⁹ ROCHE, Daniel. **The people of Paris**: essay on popular culture in the eighteenth century. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2004, p. 352.

²⁰ GEREMEK, Bronislaw. **The sons of Cain**: vagabonds and miserables in European Literature (1400-1700). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995, p. 290.

Pelo contrario o pequeno Jacintho, que vivia na vizinhança de Eduardo, era um menino bastante pobre, porém muito diligente e industrioso; e tinha uma grande habilidade para fazer cestos.

Um dia, enquanto Eduardo estava pescando á beira do mar, e Jacintho se occupava em cortar cipós para fazer cestos, foram ambos agarrados por piratas, os quaes os levaram para bordo de seu navio, e faziam tenção de vendel-os como escravos.

Quando iam navegando pelo mar em fóra, levantou-se um medonho temporal, que atirou com o navio sobre os rochedos de uma ilha desconhecida.

Todas as pessoas que estavam na embarcação morreram, excepto

desejosos de possuir um cesto como aquelle.

Jacintho foi logo conduzido para uma linda cabana, cercada de arvores fructiferas, onde podia viver tranquillamente e á sua vontade no meio da abundancia de tudo; e alli passava os dias inteiros a fazer cestos.

Eduardo foi tambem chamado para fazer um cesto; mas era tão estúpido, preguiçoso e ignorante, que os negros não tiveram paciencia para atural-o; deram-lhe uma grande surra, e de certo o teriam matado, si Jacintho não se tivesse apresentado pedindo e rogando muito para lhe pouparem a vida.

Cedendo aos pedidos de Jacintho os negros não mataram Eduardo; porém despiram-no de todas as suas

aquelles dous meninos, os quaes, como por milagre, chegaram a uma terra habitada por negros selvagens.

Então Jacintho pensou que poderia agradar áquelles barbaros, trabalhando e fazendo alguns bonitos cestos: assim, tomou seu canivete, cortou alguns cipós e os trançou, fazendo um bello cesto.

Muitos dos negros, homens, mulheres e meninos, vendo Jacintho occupado em fazer o cesto, chegaram-se para perto, e ficaram attentos ao redor d'elle, olhando com grande curiosidade como elle trabalhava, e cantava alegremente.

Quando o cesto foi acabado, deu-o Jacintho de presente ao principal, ou chefe da terra; e todos ficaram

finas roupas, que deram áquelle; obrigando Eduardo a vestir a roupa grossa e remendada de Jacintho.

Além d'isto fizeram de Eduardo o criado de Jacintho; e o serviço que este dava a seu criado era sómente cortar cipós para cestos.

Por esta pequena historia, meus caros meninos, bem vêdes que em toda a parte os meninos trabalhadores e industriosos estão certos de achar quem os estime e proteja, enquanto os preguiçosos e ignorantes passam uma vida miseravel, desprezados de todos.

Source: BORGES, Abílio Cesar. Second Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição correct, melhorda e enlarged, 1869, p. 49, 50, 51.

In this way, in the "Very Easy Method", work and the economy would be directly related to freedom and independence: 'let us therefore preserve our freedom and our independence. Let us be industrious and free; let us be economical and independent'.²¹ It should be noted that,

²¹ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters.** Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 145.

in manuals intended for the teaching of reading, such as Monteverde's dictum, as well as the collection authored by Professor Abílio, slavery appears little. There is, in fact, a certain silence in relation to the slave labor system when discussing labor. By way of religion, the dependence to which these textbooks referred was that of the poor and free strata, especially for the possession of the land they did not have. The students were left with the understanding of relations of dependence as a means of doing "charity", an aspect seen as part of the very "natural" structure of the order of things, as stated in the "Fourth Book of Reading" by Abílio Cesar Borges:

Love the poor above all things; for below father and mother, brothers and sisters, it is the poor who need you most. By second family; I have shut neither the door nor the heart nor the purse; give them something to do, if you can, because work does not dishonor a man and they keep him better than almsgiving. Giving something to do is more and better than giving money; it is the charity of charities.²²

Work appeared as the "remedy" against both vices and misery. One of the main duties of the boys was to be "charitable with the poor and needy",²³ because "the existence of these unfortunates depended solely on the charity of their fellow men",²⁴ as established in the part "Mimo à infância ou manual de história sagrada adorned with 100 beautiful prints, representing the main events referred to in the old and new testaments", in the "Método Fácil". In this book, assistance actions were a subject dealt with in the religious contents. As a measure of salvation of the soul, the assistance activity was much more associated with work than with almsgiving. In addition to the chances of salvation of the soul being greater, as was believed, granting work to the poor layers was fundamental to the discipline and obedience necessary for the capitalist society of the nineteenth century.

Used as an instrument for the elaboration of such consensus, in the "maxims" still present in the aforementioned book, "work brought with it comforts, abundance and consideration".²⁵ At this point, a question becomes fundamental: how to make the majority of primary school children believe that, through work, they would live in abundance if their parents spent their entire lives working and, even so, when they managed to buy their books it was with a lot of effort and sacrifice?

²² BORGES, Abílio Cesar Borges. **Fourth Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, New Edition, part: Healthy Councils (Visconde de Castilho), p. 138.

²³ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 57.

²⁴ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 57.

²⁵ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 141.

In the press, at that time, among the issues on the agenda, was the need to regulate, together with religion and work, the poor and free population. On March 3, 1872, the "Tribuna Católica", a religious, literary and news periodical that came out every Sunday under the auspices of the diocesan bishop, published an article about Public Instruction, based on a rhetoric that stood out for "divine providence":

It cannot be denied that common instruction has the apparent advantage of forming, by contact, the habit of equality between the great and the small, between the rich and the poor, and of establishing on this basis the fraternity that promotes liberty; but experience has shown that this system has not been achieved. If not to establish license and anarchy in society; for the little ones, like the great ones in school, want to be so also in the jobs of the state without the same qualification, and they apply themselves to politics instead of applying themselves to work, for which Providence has destined²⁶ them. [...] And all must apply themselves to politics, because it was this that Providence destined them to, and not to work? The direction of society belongs to everyone, and not to the few to whom God has given wisdom for this?!²⁷

Here, the analyses of Anne-Marie Chartier and Jean Hébrard fit. Although discussing the discourses about reading and writing between 1880 and 1980, it is appropriate to appropriate it to the context of Ceará, specifically directing it to instruction. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Church would have to deal more and more with "a long crisis that engenders simultaneously the secularization of school and the State, the rupture of traditional balances (evolution of customs, de-Christianization, generalized schooling, etc.)"²⁸ At that time, the ecclesiastical elites and the employees of Public Instruction themselves, many of whom were Catholics, argued that attempts to control education/schooling seemed not only a right of the Church, but its duty.²⁹

For the ecclesiastical elites, the poor strata had their importance in the development and progress of society, at the time, through their labor, constituting, more than anything else, "a set of labor force, potential or real",³⁰ sometimes inside, sometimes set aside, waiting to be taken when the need demanded it. Here, Catholic religious thought was sustained, as it had been for a long time, under the aegis, as Bronislaw Geremek said, of "work as a duty of the poor and the

²⁶ "The people of Ceará reap what they sowed". Tribuna Católica, 3 mar. 1872, Tribuna Catholica Section, n. 25, p. 1, 2 col.

²⁷ "The people of Ceará reap what they sowed". Tribuna Católica, 3 mar. 1872, Tribuna Catholica Section, n. 25, p. 1, 4 col.

²⁸ CHARTIER, Anne-Marie and HÉRBRARD, Jean. **Discourses on Reading 1880-1980**. São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1995, p. 23.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁰ BRESCIANI, Maria Stella. **London and Paris in the nineteenth century: the spectacle of poverty**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994, p. 88.

foundation of their status".³¹ This poor and free population made up a kind of "wealth of the nation".³² Their place in the social sphere would be associated not only with their condition of poverty, bringing together the full extent of dependence within the economic system and material deprivation, but because the "providence", by which the "natural law" is understood, would have made them "small" destined to the function of working. Thus, under the principle of a certain rearrangement imposed by the "celestial force", these individuals would be outside politics or even the administrative dimension of society.

It can be seen that the "Catholic Tribune" sought to present justifications for the positions that the subjects would occupy in the social and political sphere. An education legitimized by "divine providence" itself, with the Church being the institution capable of directing individuals to their roles in the social composition. The exercise of politics through public office was exclusively the responsibility of the elite. Under this logic, it can be concluded that secondary education and, later, higher education was intended for the training of future leaders of the political-administrative structure, while primary education, to which the less economically favored classes were directed, would form the necessary labor force for free labor. For the aforementioned sheet, the transgression of this "natural law"³³ would lead to "anarchy", which, in its religious discourse, gains a "negative" connotation, but which, in practice, meant much more a fear of the population's capacity for rebellion which, although it did not lead to major ruptures, could bother and put on the agenda the privileges and the maintenance of a vertical order. which the dominant strata sought to resize, within social relations, in their favor.

The diffusion of education to the poor could represent a threat to the more favored classes who, by exploiting mainly their labor, maintained the privileges of a small portion of the population. The fear was that access to letters would awaken to freedom and independence. In the enlightened media, the defense that the lights should be brought to all segments of the population, including the poorest, brought with it a complexity that involved political and religious forces and diverse interests. For several members of the enlightened and ruling class in the Province, allowing everyone to receive education, while being on the same level of access to cultural assets, was the same as implementing "anarchy", as previously stated. To conceive that the son of a tailor, farmer or worker had time available to dedicate himself to reading a book, or that he had his studies continued after primary school, would bring disorder in the

³¹ GEREMEK, Bronislaw. **History of misery and charity in Europe**. Lisbon: Terramar, 1986, p. 277.

³² BRESCIANI, Maria Stella. **London and Paris in the nineteenth century: the spectacle of poverty**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994, p. 88.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 88 and 89.

hierarchy of organization of nineteenth-century society, given that "reading and studying is an 'ornament' of the traditionally cultured classes".³⁴

Allowing the poor, who spent their entire lives in toil, to leave the condition of dependence, starting to accumulate some capital, whether financial or cultural, would make the small ones want to "equal" the "big", and, therefore, not only the "debasement" of the³⁵ wealthier layers would happen, as in the words of Amaral Lapa, but the disorder and agitation in the social structure itself. Given that those who "Providence" had designated as those who should maintain, through their labor force, the bases of the State, were "breaking" with such logic. The "Catholic Tribune", at that time, did not take long to publish in its pages criticism of the theory of social equality or socialist democracy, under discussion in Europe. For the Catholic Church, as reiterated by Amaral Lapa, "it was necessary to make believe that the class struggle with the consequent equality of the latter, a prerogative of socialist theory, was definitely an aberration".³⁶ For the ecclesiastical elites, it was unacceptable to "lower the upper classes to the level of the lower classes [...], or the elevation of the latter to the top of the former",³⁷ as it would lead to "disharmony of uses, customs, education and life and the consequent social confusion".³⁸

Education, as the newspaper "Tribuna Católica" argued, was "inserted in the world of representations that distinguished social groups".³⁹ It distinguished in such a way that it demarcated places and functions within the social hierarchy, including some and excluding others. For the poor classes, work would not be a guarantee for abundance, on the contrary, although they lived by the sweat of their arms, and all the members of the family came to perform some activity, these were barely enough to guarantee the daily needs, so that others could not be met when they set aside amounts for the purchase of school books or any other material intended for the instruction of their children. The civilizing discourse of the men of politics and letters, often inflamed by the prism of religion, painted a future far from the reach of the simple people. The "Promised Land" and the "Heavenly Jerusalem" presented in the school textbooks of morals and religion were far from the "horizon of expectations"⁴⁰ of the majority of the population.

³⁴ CAVALLO, Guglielmo. Between volume and codex: reading in the Roman world. *In: História da leitura no mundo ocidental*. CAVALLO, Guglielmo and CHARTIER, Roger (ed.). São Paulo: Editora Ática, vol. I, 2002, p. 76.

³⁵ LAPA, José Roberto do Amaral. **The excluded**: contribution to the history of poverty in Brazil (1850-1930). Campinas, SP: Unicamp Press; São Paulo, SP: Editora da USP, 2008, p. 46.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ CAVALLO, Guglielmo. Between volume and codex: reading in the Roman world. *In: História da leitura no mundo ocidental*. CAVALLO, Guglielmo and CHARTIER, Roger (ed.). São Paulo: Editora Ática, vol. I, 2002, p. 77.

⁴⁰ KOSELLECK, Reinhart. **Futuro passado**: contribuição à semântica dos tempos históricos. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto: Ed. PUC-Rio, 2006. In this period, the idea of progress broadened this horizon, it was not only the Church that determined the futures.

As instruments for the implementation of political projects, school books sought, especially for their content, to appease or even pacify the different social conditions at that time, spreading a "consensual morality"⁴¹ – as in the words of Aníbal Bragança. Allied to the value system of Catholic Christian doctrine, this consensus served in the cult of progress, dedicating to the church part of what could be elected as vehicles for the construction of the famous modernization, expressed in the search for "uniformization and homogenization of different cultures and social realities, while strengthening national sentiment".⁴²

In such a scenario, in elementary public education the majority of children lived at the expense of a state that, in order to maintain the privileges and interests of the wealthy classes, subjected them, as a component of the poor segments that they were part of, to a control and ordering that crossed the most diverse daily situations, supported by discourses ranging from the religious to the police. The logic, therefore, would be to make the country adjust itself in order to respond to the interests of the capitalist world with the new demands driven by the emergence of industrialization and the need for labor for free labor. Thus, it was necessary to maintain order internally by disciplining and "civilizing" the various social segments, especially the uneducated, dissolving the conflicts that would contest the maintenance of dependence and marginality in which the majority found themselves, whether due to the slave order, private property, or limited access to education. The Imperial State should, the wealthy layers thought, follow the changes of the so-called "civilized" countries, which, at that time, served as a reference for what was most modern in the most diverse fields, especially in the new economic relations that sustained the Western capitalist world, namely the growth of trade at the international level obeying a transatlantic movement of the most varied goods.

Primary education, at that time, as a cultural asset, was not left out of this circuit, either because of the circulation of school printed materials, especially between Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon and France, given a more commercial character; or by the adoption of measures that organized formal education in these countries, as a reference to equip public primary education in the Empire of Brazil. This dimension of education, therefore, would serve as a means to appease the growth of violence that, according to the ruling classes, came from the poor segments of the Province, so fond of vices and crimes. It would collaborate in the construction of a civilized and hegemonic state, imprinting among the various segments the acceptance of relations that

⁴¹ BRAGANÇA, Aníbal. The transmission of knowledge, education and the publication of school books. *In*: DUTRA, Eliana de Freitas and MOLLIER, Jean Yves (ed.). **Politics, nation and edition**: the place of printed matter in the construction of political life, Brazil, Europe and the Americas in the eighteenth-twentieth centuries. São Paulo: Annablume, 2006, p. 558.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

conceived the ruling class as the one able to direct the course of the country, as being part of the divine will and the forces that made up nineteenth-century society.

The fact is that this order was justified in school and religious literature itself (catechisms, books of sacred history and liturgy) as something natural, as if these rearrangements were part of the social organization itself in order to maintain balance and well-being. In the education of the poor, they formed a universe of reading that sought to justify poverty and social order.

At that time, it was possible to find in reading manuals elements for the daily use of the subjects, such as prayers and songs, sentences and instructions, always based on the relationship with the time of work activities inside and outside the home. These productions seemed to want to function like religious books, especially those of liturgy, prepared for the daily services, composed of guidelines on how to proceed in the daily tasks, always organized in favor of the dimension of faith. Due to these characteristics, reading books should increasingly be present in the domestic space, organizing the actions of the subjects. The contents referring to activities in agriculture, in the countryside, directed to peasants and merchants, bring indications that such books were prepared to be read even during rest hours, or even in the work environment, acting as a moment of formation, directing actions to achieve greater "success" in their trades.

Prayers and songs intended for the family space should, if not be sung, at least pronounced upon waking up and before going to sleep. Thus, reading books followed a specific order, that of self-control and training for work. Due to the content, the authors' desire was that its reading would be done when daily activities were finished and at the beginning of the morning, emphasizing, when it came to domestic activities, the figure of the girl, as presented in the "Third Book of Reading for use in Brazilian schools", by Abílio Cesar Borges.

Christian Girl Hymn in the Morning

Girl wakes up! It takes hours to get you up.
Study examples in the small insect.
Leave your bed with serene tensions;
And your work begins again joyfully.⁴³

Hymn to be sung at night

Girl, say, your work today |
Was it with patience and zeal finished?
If it is so, then, in the pillow the forehead
He leans over, and sleeps without fear of thorns.⁴⁴

⁴³ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Third Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição reformada e melhor, 1890, p. 220.

⁴⁴ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Third Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição reformada e melhor, 1890, p. 221.

Fairy tales and anecdotes brought a repertoire of insertion in the world of reading so that, already in childhood, the future worker was formed, first with the activities carried out in the domestic space, with the time to wake up and go to bed, always as a function, especially among the poorest, of the activities to be carried out the next day. With advancing age, tasks in the religious space such as the "mass assistant or acolyte" came⁴⁵ to be done concomitantly with the chores in the home space.

Such schedules seemed, in the logic of civilization contained in school textbooks, not only aspects of organization to start daily tasks each day, but the most effective way to maintain the health of the body, fortune and intelligence, as discussed in the text "The science of the good man Ricardo or means of acquiring fortune", extracted from the work of Benjamin Franklin, entitled "The science of the Good Man Ricardo" present in the "Easy Method", by Achilles Monteverde.⁴⁶ The health of the worker's body would be maintained by going to bed and waking up early to start work activities. The regulation of their daily lives would pass through the control of time, an aspect in which reading books played a defining role, because their contents spoke of the time of progress, of the pace by which not only material abundance would be achieved, but physical health, which in the lives of the poorest would remove boredom, vice and misery, as well as the time of daily life, that spent to provide for daily needs.

As the end of the Empire approached, the need for labor for free labor increasingly gave rise to the demand to create in school books, but also in what circulated as knowledge, "a new disciplinary practice that would take into account the sanitation of the worker",⁴⁷ who, because it came, according to belief, from "a social class devoid of good habits, he would naturally be prone to infirmities of body and mind."⁴⁸ The healthy body would come from the daily exercise of work. Thus, the education propagated by the textbooks would first pass through the body, with the formation of the sanitized and healthy subject able to compose the necessary labor force at that time. The childhood to be built was always looking at the formation of the future adult.

The behaviors considered "ideal" were elaborated in the lessons, based on "a given recurrence to the past" through the biblical text, which would be experienced in the order of the present, aiming at the same time, in primary education, the formation of the character of the adult man, the future worker, the future housewife. The subject [the characters] to whom the

⁴⁵ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Second Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição correct, melhora e aumento (New correct edition, improved and enlarged), 1869, p. 85.

⁴⁶ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 140.

⁴⁷ LOBO, Lilia Ferreira. **The infamous of history: poor, slaves and disabled in Brazil**. Rio de Janeiro: Lamparina, 2008, p. 236.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

short stories referred was virtuous, subordinate, subject to an order that was not his own, for freedom and independence, but that of the boss, that of the social conditionings elaborated for the maintenance of privileges and order.

A set of rules was imposed on them early together with the dimension of faith, which occupied a prestigious place in all the materiality of these books. "There was practically a combination of religious prescriptions and a work ethic that seemed to be desired to compose the society of the future."⁴⁹ When it is necessary to carry out some work in the space of the home or in the church, play, or any other occupation that was not aimed at the fulfillment of some duty, should be left aside. One should "sacrifice pleasures to the fulfillment of duties", as Abílio Cesar Borges said in his "Second Book of Reading".⁵⁰ From an early age, the greatest maxim was that this time should be occupied with work, otherwise they would become vagrants and lazy. "Work should be your only distraction."⁵¹ For the poorest, the order of work would be to meet the expectations of their present, of the needs of each day.

The activities in the domestic space, even those in the recesses of the world of the home, such as the organization of the room, of items of private use, and those developed to manage one's own budget and possible sustenance, or those carried out in Catholic rituals, such as the mass, brought up in the plots of the stories, seemed to meet the educational proposal of primary education at that time. What could be, in the eyes of the most inattentive historian, by reading the school textbooks of the nineteenth century, another question related to the daily life of the subjects, with the activities that each member exercised as a matter proper to the functioning and organization of the family, if thought of in a larger field, will reveal an intimate correlation between literacy, discipline, work, savings and budget.

The "advice to youth" in the "Easy Method" constantly insisted on economy and savings. The absence of money could cause a lack of probity. Thus, the need to save was also related to the maintenance of order, since in the lives of the poorest, precision would lead to dishonesty, as was constantly stated in the sessions of the Provincial Assemblies. For these subjects, work would be "the origin of happiness, and the safest, in addition to being an essential condition for the health and vigor of the body",⁵² as said in the story "The farmer and his children or the fruits of labor", in the "Third Book of Reading of Abilio":

⁴⁹ BOTO, Carlota. **The world in writing**: uses and customs of Portuguese school reading in the nineteenth century. Coimbra: Separata da Revista de História das ideias, Vol. 20. Faculty of Letters, 1999, p. 250.

⁵⁰ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Second Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição correct, melhorda e enlarged, 1869, p. 107

⁵¹ PERROT, Michelle. **Those excluded from history**: workers, women, prisoners. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2020, p. 304.

⁵² BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Third Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição reformada e melhor, 1890, p. 181.

Moreover, work is a duty for man. 'You shall eat your bread kneaded by the sweat of your brow,' said God, alluding to the necessity that every man has to work, so as not to pass through the humiliation of asking." It is evident, however, that the sedentary worker, who works without bodily effort and with less fatigue, the man who works with the spirit and with the pen, but in a way that is useful to society, also fulfill the divine law, even if sweat does not deny their foreheads.⁵³

The naturalization of the misery of the poorest through the biblical text took place without any parsimony in the manuals aimed at learning to read. The work that generated fatigue and tiredness, like the tasks in the fields, followed the same order of justification through the sacred scripture, insofar as in the stories it is said that work was a man's duty and bread should be obtained with the sweat of his own brow.⁵⁴ By observing such a law, the subjects would make their own happiness, since they had fulfilled the divine precept and obtained the approval of their own conscience, as well as that of others.⁵⁵ Achilles Monteverde did not refrain from selecting the fables, stories and entries that dealt with work and divine providence.

Therefore he who is industrious should not fear misery, for hunger passes through the door of the diligent man, without daring to enter his house. Nor will justice penetrate it, because labor pays debts, when idleness increases them.⁵⁶

Let us work incessantly from morning until night, since we do not know if we will be able to do it the next day. That is why the Good Man Ricardo says with good reason: 'it is better to have one today than two tomorrow. – Save what to eat and do not keep what to do'.⁵⁷

I seem to hear people ask me: and is it not lawful to have a few moments of leisure? But I will answer with what the Good Man Richard says: Let us use our time well, if we want to have the right to rest; And let us not waste an hour, since we cannot count on a single minute.⁵⁸

The expectations of the future, always based on the present situation, filled the poor people with anguish, who, for the most part, lived in dependence on both the holders of privileges and the celestial forces, the only support to whom something should be expected, as

⁵³ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Third Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição reformada e melhor, 1890, p. 181.

⁵⁴ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Third Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição reformada e melhor, 1890, p. 181.

⁵⁵ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Third Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, Nova Edição reformada e melhor, 1890, p. 182.

⁵⁶ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 140.

⁵⁷ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 141.

⁵⁸ MONTEVERDE, Emilio Achilles. **Very easy method to learn to read to read both round and handwritten letters**. Lisbon: Livraria Central de Gomes de Carvalho, [18--], p. 141.

they often stated in their daily lives. Providence was used in these stories, such as those written by Visconde de Castilho, as a justification for maintaining a certain state of passivity, since the anguish and constant concern in the lives of the neediest classes could lead to transgression, riots and thefts. It was, therefore, a school literature, whose Catholic evangelical doctrine and morals brought gratitude, as a virtue that, in the lives of the poor, would act against discontent, uprising.

In the universe of religious manuals and reading books, clergy and laity should tread with caution. The Church, fearful of the different interpretations that the laity could make of the reading of books and legislating on what could be read in different classes and social positions, sought to maintain its values and dogmas present in the lives of the subjects. The ambiguous character of the biblical message, which could, depending on reading, both "teach subservience and justify rebellion",⁵⁹ worried priests, intellectuals and politicians, as they believed that such passages could favor the idea of freedom and independence, as in the parts relating to the advent of a so-called "Promised Land". "The Gospel message could not give the oppressed a code to judge their oppressors."⁶⁰

In other times, publications of this kind would perhaps have been less necessary, for there is no lack of very pious and orthodox writers who thought it expedient to place in the hands of the simple and ignorant people the sacred volume in which the secrets of God are contained, and in which the great Augustine confessed that there were more things that he did not know than those that he understood. Neither Bossuet nor Fenelon, said the celebrated Lamennais (before his apostasy), ever thought of vulgarizing the holy books, and with all who read them or who studied them more carefully? But they knew perfectly well the most pernicious abuse that their reading can make, and indeed has done in all ages the passions of men, and the fanaticism of heterodox sects, there being no error so absurd and monstrous that it has not been intended to be justified by the authority of Scripture.⁶¹ [Emphasis added]

Certainly, the fear was that the understandings that were made of these books would lead to the understanding that reading could be an act of transgression and resistance. In this movement, a latent issue arose to which all the others would converge: to control the understanding that would escape the dictates of Catholic morality, of faith, that would inquire, and make subject to discussion what had been imposed by the various forces, including the Church, as dogma and religious teaching. It is no coincidence that, in "Sacred History", by José

⁵⁹ COSTA, Emília Viotti da. **Crowns of glory, tears of blood**: the rebellion of the slaves of Demerara in 1823. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998, p. 29.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

⁶¹ ROQUETE, José Ignacio. **Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments Enriched with notes and moral reflections, for the instruction and sanctification of the faithful**, Pariz: V^a J.-P. Aillaud, Guillard and Co., [n.d.], 10th ed. t. 1, p. VI.

Ignacio Roquete, advice is conveyed "about the dispositions with which they should read the word of God, if they wanted its reading to benefit them".⁶² The "transgression of reading" was feared,⁶³ that, based on their codes of understanding the world, they would make their own reading, including its reality linked to their social conditions.

"Providing for oneself in silence, seeking not to satisfy one's curiosity and neither to argue or criticize"⁶⁴ was what was expected of the subjects. They could seek in the teachings coming from the sacred scriptures "only the meaning elaborated by the Church herself".⁶⁵ It was necessary, therefore, to instruct them before reading in the printed materials. In this scenario, the early years would constitute a time of preparation for children so that, before reading and studying the book, "they would already be used to listening to them, and impregnated with their spirit".⁶⁶ With a predominance of a rhetoric of language based on virtues, on the explanation of earthly deeds through religion, with an extremely moralizing tone, in the short story "Passarinhos", by Viscount of Castilho, in the *Fourth Book of Reading*, by Abílio Cesar Borges, the order of things related to work and sustenance was already established: the poor had to show solidarity with each other in the face of their conditions of precision and wait peacefully for the celestial assistance.

What is it to give free rein to care? God never opens his own out of his hands. Divine love has secrets that we barely take care of. Let us believe, hope, love and go on peacefully on our way."⁶⁷ If I die before you, you will be the father of my children; if you die before I, I will be the father of yours; and if we both die before they are of an age that they can support themselves, they will have him who dwells in heaven as their father.⁶⁸

Day and night, a common concern accompanied these men who worked in the fields and supported their wives and several children with the work of their hands: "if I die or fall into bed, sick, what will become of my wife and children?" In the dialogue in question, the wait for better conditions came to mean the fulfillment of the directions designated by the Church for the life

⁶² ROQUETE, José Ignacio. **Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments Enriched with notes and moral reflections, for the instruction and sanctification of the faithful**, Pariz: V^a J.-P. Aillaud, Guillard and Co., [n.d.], 10th ed. t. 1, p. XIII.

⁶³ BOTO, Carlota. **The world in writing**: uses and customs of Portuguese school reading in the nineteenth century. Coimbra: Separata da Revista de História das ideias, Vol. 20. Faculty of Letters, 1999, p. 249.

⁶⁴ JULIA, Dominique. Readings and counter-reform. *In*: CAVALLO, Guglielmo; CHARTIER, Roger (ed.). **History of reading in the Western world**, vol. 2. Editora Ática, 1999, p. 90.

⁶⁵ JULIA, Dominique. Readings and counter-reform. *In*: CAVALLO, Guglielmo; CHARTIER, Roger (ed.). **History of reading in the Western world**, vol. 2. Editora Ática, 1999, p. 90.

⁶⁶ *ibidem*.

⁶⁷ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Fourth Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro; Francisco Alves, New Edition, part: The birds (history) of Visconde de Castilho, p. 187.

⁶⁸ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Fourth Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro; Francisco Alves, New Edition, part: The birds (history) of Visconde de Castilho, p. 187.

of the faithful. In the education of the poor, there was a concern to make the relationship between poverty and a future expectation fed by resignation and gratitude more and more intimate, having to be content with the goods they had, even if they were only their labor power, as also said in the story entitled "Resignation of a mother", by Antônio Feliciano de Castilho, present in the "Fourth Book of Reading" by Abílio: "Daughter, in much to possess is not what happiness is set, but in waiting and loving much".⁶⁹

Attentive to these allegations conveyed in school textbooks, there is a split or even aggravation that makes us ask: and did things turn out as the illustrated segments so well desired, in this case, the authors of school textbooks? When the balance seemed to tip in favor, at least in the field of ideas, of the messages conveyed in books, the investigation allowed us to glimpse another path. In this, the actions of the poor will be a kind of frontier in which one will try daily to "make destiny retreat".⁷⁰ Continuing, it is in the next chapter that we start to weave this plot.

2 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the reading books used in primary education in Ceará in the second half of the nineteenth century allows us to understand that the teaching of reading was deeply articulated with the moral, religious and disciplinary formation of the subjects. More than instruments for literacy, school textbooks were devices for the dissemination of Catholic values, social order, and legitimization of the hierarchies that structured nineteenth-century society. In its pages, learning to read meant, above all, learning to obey, to work, to resign oneself and to recognize social differences as natural.

The manuals of Abílio Cesar Borges and Achilles Monteverde show that elementary public education was conceived as part of a civilizing project aimed especially at the poor and free layers of the population. In this project, religion, work and discipline appeared inseparably. The anecdotes, fables, prayers, maxims and hymns present in these printed materials sought to shape behaviors, control sensibilities and produce useful subjects for the social and economic order in consolidation. Childhood was taken as a privileged space for intervention, since, through it, it would be possible to form the obedient worker, the resigned Christian and the citizen submissive to the constituted authorities.

It was also observed that the discourses present in these books were articulated with the broader transformations experienced by the Empire of Brazil in the second half of the nineteenth

⁶⁹ BORGES, Abílio Cesar. **Fourth Reading Book for use by Brazilian schools**. Rio de Janeiro; Francisco Alves, New Edition, part: The birds (history) of Visconde de Castilho, p. 190.

⁷⁰ PERROT, Michelle. **Those excluded from history**: workers, women, prisoners. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2020, p. 120.

century. In this context, school forms acted as important instruments for building consensus, spreading an ethic of work, economy, charity and Christian resignation. At the same time that they promised abundance, happiness and moral ascension through work, they naturalized poverty and reaffirmed the dependence of the popular classes.

The Catholic religion occupied a central position in this process. Far from disappearing in the face of the expansion of the publishing market and the proposals for pedagogical modernization, it was re-elaborated and incorporated into the new school printed materials. Thus, reading books took on functions previously attributed to catechisms and other religious works, becoming supports for spiritual and moral formation. The images, biblical texts and edifying narratives continuously reinforced the need for faith, obedience and self-control, seeking to guide not only the school space, but also the family daily life and the most ordinary practices of social life.

However, although the discourses conveyed in these compendiums sought to produce conformity and submission, the very need to insist on themes such as resignation, discipline and obedience reveals tensions and fears present among the political, intellectual and ecclesiastical elites. The fear that education would awaken desires for equality, freedom and social ascension permeated the debates on education and schooling. Reading, in this sense, carried an ambiguous dimension: it could serve both the control and the possibility of questioning the current order.

In this way, the school books analyzed allow us to understand nineteenth-century public education beyond a simple literacy policy. They show the school as a space for the construction of subjectivities, the regulation of conducts and the dissemination of political and religious projects. At the same time, they reveal the limits, contradictions and disputes that marked the efforts to form the popular strata in imperial Ceará. It is precisely in this terrain of tensions between discipline and resistance, conformation and lived experience, that the daily practices of poor subjects are inscribed in the face of the civilizing projects elaborated by the elites, an issue that will be deepened in the following chapter.

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