



Transnational diffusion of Methodist schools between the 19th and 20th centuries¹

Difusão transnacional de colégios metodistas entre os séculos XIX e XX

Difusión transnacional de las escuelas metodistas entre los siglos XIX y XX

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the foundation of schools carried out by the North American Methodist missionary movement in different regions of the world between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Using reports, periodicals, and other religious publications, we seek to understand how the transnational missionary dynamics used the technical infrastructure built by capitalist modernity to expand the reach of its educational actions. Identifying the population phenomenon as a field open to interventions, the paper reflects on how the alignment between theology and the Methodist educational conception found in the nascent urban life a privileged space for the schools founding.

Keywords: Methodism; History of Education; Transnational.

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Resumo

O objetivo desse artigo é analisar a fundação de colégios realizada pelo movimento missionário metodista norte-americano em diversas regiões do mundo entre o final do século XIX e início do XX. Lançando mão de relatórios, periódicos e diversificadas publicações, buscamos compreender como a dinâmica missionária se serviu da infraestrutura técnica edificada pela modernidade capitalista para ampliar o alcance transnacional de suas atuações educacionais. Identificando o fenômeno da população como um campo aberto a intervenções, o artigo reflete sobre como o alinhamento entre a teologia e a concepção educacional metodista encontrava na nascente vida urbana um espaço privilegiado para fundação de escolas.

Palavras-chave: Metodismo; História da Educação; Transnacional.

Resumén

El propósito de este artículo es analizar la fundación de escuelas llevada a cabo por el movimiento misionero metodista norteamericano en diferentes regiones del mundo entre finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX. Haciendo uso de informes, periódicos y publicaciones diversas, buscamos comprender cómo la dinámica misionera utilizó la infraestructura técnica construida por la modernidad capitalista para ampliar el alcance transnacional de sus actividades educativas. Identificando el fenómeno de la población como un campo abierto a las intervenciones, el artículo reflexiona sobre cómo el alineamiento entre la teología y la concepción educativa metodista encontró en la naciente vida urbana un espacio privilegiado para la fundación de escuelas.

Palabras clave: Metodismo; Historia de la Educación; Transnacional.

Introduction

Methodism is a Protestant religion that emerged in 18th century in England through the John Wesley's efforts. As an Oxfordian university student familiar with modern philosophical conceptions and heir to the intellectual developments arising from the 1517 reform, the theology he developed recovered reflections from Pietism and Arminianism to construct an anthropology that universalized the salvation possibility, in the sense that God had rescued all the humanity of original sin. Emphasizing individual freedom, this *a priori* established condition depended on human choices that would guide life towards the recognition of the state of grace. Daily conduct, faith and biblical study would be mechanisms that, if methodically routinized in life, would serve as basic foundations for the path of sanctification, in the sense of moral improvement in the love of God (HEITZENRATER, 1996).

This theology, since the beginning of Methodism, had the prerogative of making the believer co-responsible for propagating the gospel, in the sense of creating conditions of possibility for other people to recognize themselves as creatures blessed by divine love. It was as if Methodists understood themselves as those who would help others awaken to "the calling." In this sense, Methodism was guided by actions among the masses with cults strongly marked by an emotional character and by diverse intervention proposals that could enhance the evangelization of people. The mission notion was at the heart of the Wesleyan theological conception and was understood as a "field of work" from non-Methodists in the community to people in distant lands. John Wesley himself, for example, visited the United States (SLEDGE, 2005).

Understanding oneself as someone who received the "call" meant assuming a leading position in life, in the sense of identifying, like Paul in the biblical narrative, spontaneous modes of evangelical action. This is how, progressively, Methodists began to articulate effective strategies to create conditions to awaken in humanity the recognition of salvation given by God. Within these actions were educational activities. In 1748, the Methodists founded their first school, in Bristol, England (CRACKNELL; WHITE, 2005).

After spreading throughout the United States from the end of the 18th century, Methodism became institutionalized in the country through the efforts of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC). However, in 1844 in view of the schism that occurred due to tensions involving the ownership of slaves by members of the high ecclesiastical hierarchy, the institution dissociated into a northern association, which maintained the same name, and a southern denomination, which from then on, it was called the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS). Each one in its own way organized internal mechanisms to carry out John Wesley's phrase: "the world is my parish".

The mission notion, especially in the first half of the 19th century, was linked to internal and external work. It is worth remembering that this was a period in which North American borders were being demarcated as expansion to the West occurred. In this sense, the notion of foreign mission was modified as new states were incorporated into the Union. Internally, communities with immigrant, black and native populations were the main destinations for missionaries, externally, Liberia, China and, later, Latin America were places over the which religious' people introduced their cults. Throughout the 19th century, the two Methodist associations also articulated their missions based on educational activities (ROY, 2013).

Based on this scenario, the purpose of this article is to analyze how the establishment of Methodist educational practices was related to the transformations that the world underwent between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

At that time, the phenomenon of population, the technology territorialization, the expansion of capitalist infrastructure and changes in urban landscapes marked the dawn of modernity in several cities around the globe – many of which were the Methodist missionaries' destination (SANTOS, 2021).

Studies about the transnational circulation of subjects, practices and pedagogical repertoires have gained great prominence in national and international publications in recent years (VIDAL; SILVA, 2024). As demonstrated by Elizânia Sousa do Nascimento Mendes (2023), in the specific case of the relation between Protestantism and education, research in Brazil that uses the transnational framework still appears to be at an initial stage of development, as the main research emphases are related to the Protestant insertion in the country, with a view to the founding of institutions and their political and pedagogical actions, to the philosophical and social foundations sociological aspects of Protestant education and female protagonism in school actions.

We understand that the transnational perspective serves to support the understanding of a movement occurred outside the official apparatus of the US government and made use of the borders porosity established in the process of building national states for the founding of Protestant schools through missionary activities (FUCHS; VERA, 2019). Connected through a religious institution, the Methodists were responsible for mobilizing a significant circulation around the world with a view to an organization that was constituted as a network. By adopting this perspective, we aim to emphasize the global dimension of the missionary movement and the educational synchronies it stimulates. We understand that the founding of Methodist schools between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century allows us to frame the problem based on a shift in relation to a certain historiographical tradition that confined analyzes to regional sections closed in on themselves (SANTOS, 2021). The theoretical-methodological foundation of this article seeks to demonstrate that the intensity of missionary circulation was made possible by the support of the technical infrastructure created by the process of capital expansion, which included the post office, railways, printing house, telegraphs and steam transport (SANTOS; FONSECA; NARITA, 2019).

Despite focusing the analysis on MECS at various times, we will not shy away from using the documentation produced by the northern Methodists, as both Churches, despite their differences, had very similar methods and interpretations regarding the need to send religious missions to other peoples. To develop this proposal, we will use minutes, books, articles, reports and publications that circulated in periodicals edited by religious people between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Before starting, it is worth highlighting that all translations from English were made by the author.

Methodist global expansion

It was especially after the Civil War that shook the United States between 1861 and 1865 that the Methodists began to organize their foreign activities with greater vigor. According to Robert Sledge (2005), the period between 1870 and 1920 was the “golden age” of Methodist missions. The movement developed in this context allowed the people's movement, knowledge and practices beyond the borders delimited by the American national state construction. This dynamic was enhanced as religious people made use of the infrastructure built by the process of assimilation of peripheral regions into the sphere of circulation of goods in the context of the expansion of capitalist modernity in the 19th century. In this context, a series of transnational connections were developed that allowed the articulating centers of industrial capitalism to associate with different regions of the world with a view to expanding travel by steamship, railways, telegraph networks, post

offices and printed matter distribution systems. Through modern technology, the process of capital appreciation integrated the world, accelerating communication and the movement of people, capital and information (BAYLY, 2004).

This set of transformations was best seen in the interior urban spaces connected by railways and port cities were destinations for steamships that circulated on transoceanic trips. These networked spheres witnessed demographic expansions in an asymmetric way as they became the target of complex migratory processes. Urban landscapes and life in these locations were being decisively altered by the experience of modern acceleration while the territorialization of technology was taking place, expressed by steam engines, electric lights, trams, automobiles and a whole range of elements that symbolically and practically made up modernity. Within a broad framework of global circulation, these material changes were concretely observed in the routine of cities such as Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Valparaíso, Mexico City, Havana and Lima, to name a few Latin American cases (SCOBIE, 1991).

The Methodists in their process of missionary expansion identified the potential work that these places transformed through the connections made possible by the capitalist infrastructure. In a publication from the beginning of the 20th century, religious people ask:

Among global movements, none fit the completion of the Siberian railway and the signing of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty for the construction of the Nicaragua Canal. The first places the eastern and western civilizations of Asia and Europe in direct contact with each other, opening a transcontinental artery for traffic and travel. The second involves the peaceful revocation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and guarantees an international and interoceanic highway, which will change the map of the world and make Mexico Gulf and the Southern States were the theater of stupendous commercial, social, and religious movements. Are our evangelization plans proportionate to the situation? (The Review of Missions, Jan. 1902, p. 431)

Making evangelization plans proportional to the situation observed seemed to be a condition for the missionary activities' expansion. Demarcating the work field in foreign lands, the North American Methodists published a Missionary Atlas (Figure 1) that demonstrated the scope of the technical infrastructure, highlighting important railway lines and routes taken by steamships. It is interesting to note the emphasis on peripheral regions and the willingness to show that the United States was connected to the rest of the world.

Even though it is cartography from the beginning of the 20th century, it demonstrates a process that has unfolded since at least the mid-19th century. The idea defended in this article is that the development of cities connected by technical infrastructure made their incorporation by the Methodist missionary movement viable. In this sense, *ubi capitalismus, ibi missionarii*, that is, where capitalism was, there was the missionary, insofar as there was a predilection for occupying regions where the material transformations resulting from the process of capital expansion promoted conditions for the population phenomenon. The mediation of infrastructure was fundamental in the work of religious moralization, associated with the civilizational paradigms that were components of the nineteenth-century narrative that placed non-Protestant peoples in sociological categories of cultural demotion. The journal *Woman's Missionary Advocate* (WMA), published on the initiative of the MECS women's organization between 1880 and 1910, features in a publication from 1892:

The sending of missionaries to the region was justified due to the Catholic presence, understood as a problematic form of Christianity. The representations that circulated through religious publications provided a kind of ideological map that expressed interpretations created from the American Protestant perspective to legitimize the missionary movement (SAID, 1995). According to the Methodists, “the defective and distorted Christianity taught by the Roman Catholic Church” had made “Catholic countries legitimate fields for evangelical missions” (WINTON, 1905, p. 267). By reproducing the stereotypes reinforced since the colonial period, religious people used adjectives that demarcated what they considered to be the moral inferiority of Catholicism. In a publication from 1894, the religious stated that, “for almost four hundred years, Romanism of the most corrupt type spread its terrible influence over this vast continent”, determining “indifference, sensuality, infidelity and anarchy” (MILLARD; GUINNESS, 1894, p. 5-6). It seemed clear to the Methodists of the period their responsibility, almost as a chosen people who reflected the assumptions of Manifest Destiny, in taking the gospel to these regions, in the sense of a moral reform articulated based on the civilizational parameters that determined Protestant superiority over Catholic.

North America cannot escape a deep moral responsibility for South America. [...] American prestige has never been greater than it is now. Never have the people of Spanish America been so ready to receive the principles which have made the United States and England the leaders of civilization, the pillars of pure Christianity. Olsson, who although a Swede by birth, rendered important service to the American cause in connection with his missionary work during the recent war, discovered this in thousands of miles of travel. He saw that the Roman Catholic hierarchy is no longer the power it once was; that it no longer has control over the people it once had, since even in places far from the relation with the outside world, many can be found willing to hear the Gospel and receive its messenger (OLSSON, 1899, p.12).

Perceptions about the need for missions in East Asia were moving in the same direction. Realizing the territorialization of modern technique and the potential of religious actions opened up by the infrastructure of modernity, the MECS leaders argued in a report published in 1891:

In central and western China there are immense regions still waiting for the heralds of the cross. The God’s hand is making a way for the gospel in the western provinces of that vast empire. The great distance and the absence of railway communication have, until now, rendered the region comparatively inaccessible from the East. British greed for colonial conquests and commercial ventures for its people is opening lines of travel to this region, which embraces millions of immortal souls for whom nothing has been done. Its rivers will soon be open to steamships, the railroad will penetrate its mountain passes, and the merchants of the West will reap rich harvests from their trade. While the

barriers are broken down, the Church must be ready to enter the new open field. [...] Our branch of the Church must be prepared to follow the leadership of Christ as he opens, through worldly agencies, the way to his kingdom within these vast domains of pagan darkness (Forty-fifth annual report..., 1891, p .19).

Arguing from binomials such as open/closed and Christian/pagan helped to construct a narrative that justified the missionary enterprise, as it reinforced the Methodist theological self-perception of creating conditions so that human beings could recognize the universalization of salvation given by God. Local opening was linked to having ritualization of technical infrastructure through the expansion process of capital that circulated through the transnational webs of steamships, railways and telegraphs. It seemed clear to the global movement of the religious institution that following the paths opened by imperial³ initiatives enhanced and facilitated missionary work.

Just as in the case of Latin American Catholic Christianity, there was the perception that “the nations of the East must also be prepared for the outpouring of the Spirit and be able to recognize him in his return” (WMA, Jan. 1883, p. 5). Methodists argued that “the seeds of the finest feelings which are hidden in human nature have failed, except in a limited measure, to sprout and bear fruit in the barren soil and cold climate which Confucianism has produced” (SHEFFIELD, 1905, p. 193). In this case, the legitimacy for the missions was justified by the metaphorical association between morality and the natural environment. The sterility of the soil and the cold climate, from a cultural point of view, were directly linked to local Confucianism. By inverse rhetorical effect, Protestant Christianity would be able to carry in tow civilizing mechanisms that would have repercussions on the elevation of human nature in East Asian societies.

The interpretation of Buddhism followed the same direction. According to religious people, “everyone who has deeply studied this great cult must have realized its impractical and unsatisfactory character and seen how poor adapted it is to become the religion of an enlightened world” (GRING, 1905, p. 155). The analytical categories constructed since the 18th century that identified the idea of enlightenment with elucidation fed the Western civilizational reference, which was also, in the case analyzed here, associated with Methodist Protestant morality. The missions would thus have the capacity to ward off the supposed local moral darkness. Very close perception to that made in relation to Taoism. According to the religious, “ancient China was darkened by countless savage beliefs, which like scattered clouds overshadowed the earth; this Taoism came together, gathered them into its fold and became a set of superstitions” (DU BOSE, 1905, p. 164). The nation was conceived as “the land of demons” where “devil worship took firm hold” (DU BOSE, 1905, p. 178).

One could almost say that there is nothing good about it [Taoism]. Leaving aside its idolatry, the worship of the creature rather than the great Creator, is a mixture of spirit worship, superstition, charms, witchcraft and demonology. It is degrading to the intellect and the soul. A very large proportion of their priesthood are

³ There is a great effort in historiography to discuss the relations between imperialism promoted by industrial nations from the 19th century onwards and missionary actions. We will not enter into this debate as it escapes the focus of the analysis intended here. For more information in this regard, the reader can consult: SANTOS, 2021; TYRRELL, 2010

miserable opium smokers. There is little hope for China in political, moral or religious terms until Taoism is wiped from the face of the earth. It's bad, and only bad. The missionary's duty is simply to say, 'Sirs, why do you do these things? We preach that you should turn from these vanities to the living God, who created heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are there' (DU BOSE, 1905, p. 181).

As a counterpoint to civilization, the population practicing Taoism was interpreted as savage and close to witchcraft and the devil. Similar cultural debasement emerged from the missionary presence in Africa. Resonating many of the sociological categories constructed by the culture of imperialism (SAID, 1995), the Methodists also identified the evangelizing potential opened up by the modern technical infrastructure on the continent. This penetration was interpreted as opening paths for the establishment of activities aligned with Western civilizational paradigms that had the objective, as in East Asia and Latin America, of moralizing local peoples.

The heart of Africa has been opened by the latest explorations and a vast field for missionary efforts is revealed. The population of the continent has been estimated at 200,000,000, half of whom have never heard that there is a Savior. European powers are dividing the territory, steamships are navigating its rivers and inland seas, and soon railroads will open a path to civilization through its wide valleys and tangled forests. There is work in Africa for all branches of the Church of God (Forty-fifth annual report..., 1891, p. 20).

The notion of progress, typically from the 19th century, was linked to Protestant Christian morality, reproducing the perception according to which the enlightenment of the continent would depend, on the one hand, on the technological settlement provided by the process of capital appreciation, and on the other, by the installation of Christians jobs. According to a publication published in the Southern Methodist periodical *The Missionary Voice* (TMV) in 1911: "Half a century ago [Africa] was rightly called the Dark Continent. Today large steamships travel along its lakes and rivers, the whistle of the locomotive and the click of the telegraph are common sounds" (TMV, apr. 1911, p. 38). A Describing it as the "dark continent" reproduced the idea that its population was surrounded by "ignorance, barbarism and superstition" (TMV, Jul. 1911, p 19).

Africa is the last continent to be opened to the gospel, its people are the last large section of the human family to be reached by the truth in Christ. [...] Still later, along both coasts and the distant South, the edges of the continent were explored; the vast continent, the oldest on Earth and destined to have a great place in the world's future, was shrouded in mystery. We do not know why for many hundreds of years its people lived in a barbaric paganism babbling in many languages. We only know that there was mystery, tragedy and uncertainty. When the world needed this new continent for the enlargement of its commerce and its population, and when the time came for God's final challenge to the Church for the last dark continent in the redemption of the

world, then how quickly the veil was lifted! We now look at the map of all Africa, trace its rivers, sound its lakes, measure its mountains, estimate its vast wealth, count its peoples and study its religions. All Africa is now open to the forces of Christianity (WMA, Jul. 1910, p. 607).

Opposing civilization and barbarism, the Methodists justified their missions to Africa based on the sociological degradation of the continent. Reproducing interpretative categories built since colonial times, religious people demarcated the need for Christianity in terms of the ethnic traditions found locally. The iconography published in 1919 in a publication that honored the first centenary of American Methodist missions echoed, in the middle of the 20th century, the association between black people and the biblical tradition built from the reading of the book of Genesis. According to religious interpretation, the continent had been occupied by descendants of Ham, Noah's youngest son, whose descendants had been cursed by their grandfather. Africans, thus, would bear the mark of a people destined for barbarism, against which Protestant missions were positioned, understood as civilizational agents.

Figure 2 - “From cannibalism to civilization”



Source: Missionary Centenary Commission, 1919, p. 5.

In this way, the possibility of morally reforming the people who inhabited peripheral societies led the Methodists to institutionally organize a set of missionary actions that departed from the United States and reached regions touched by the technical infrastructure built by capitalist modernity. The incorporation of these places through the dynamics of market expansion and acquisition of raw materials opened up possibilities for religious people to act through transnationally organized institutional leadership. But what were the main action strategies? A possible answer can best be seen in a religious publication from 1898 that deals with the activities carried out on the African continent.

This aggressive white civilization is constantly pushing northward toward Central Africa, and any great Church that hopes to have a meritorious share in the evangelization of the African continent must somehow tap into this northern tide and plant bases of operations along the way of churches and schools in which native teachers, evangelists and Bible readers for the regions beyond can be trained (Seventy-ninth annual report..., 1898, p. 38).

As the documentation demonstrates, educational practices were among the strategies used by Methodists to spread the gospel and encourage conversion in favor of Protestant Christianity. Since the beginning of religious organization with John Wesley in the 18th century, there was a significant focus on the founding of schools as a practical device for carrying out moral reform. From what has been said so far, it is not an exaggeration to assume that, in the second half of the 19th century, several urban centers spread globally, integrated by the process of capital appreciation, were the main mission fields that received activities through confessional schools.

Missionary education

The educational activities developed by Methodist missionary between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th in the most varied transnational fields can be divided into two fronts. The first concerns formal education projects, which meant the founding of schools that were subject to the authority of local public authorities, in order to follow state curricula, hierarchical and institutional structures within a broad framework of expansion of schooling in the national States (HILSDORF, 2006). The second was manifested mainly, but not exclusively, through Sunday schools, which expressed non-formal action, in the sense that they were constituted as spaces with great autonomy in relation to local authorities in that they followed their own pedagogical ideals closely associated with moralization. and preaching the gospel (GADOTTI, 2005)⁴.

Not that these dimensions coexisted together and independently of each other. In fact, these were actions that exchanged pedagogical methods and curricula. Discussing the expansion of education in the United States, a publication by The Missionary Voice highlights the intertwined relationships between formal and non-formal education from a Methodist perspective.

We affirm that in American life, with its separation of organized religion from the taxing power, the Sunday school is of prime importance. To fulfill its great trust, the Church must provide adequate equipment, trained teachers, and a curriculum that provides not only for the study of the Bible, Church history, and doctrine, but also for the religious interpretation of nature, history, and everyday life.

We are pleased to note a rapid advance in Sunday school standards and methods, in the type of leadership insisted upon, and particularly in the growing demand on the part of Churches and denominations for trained leaders of religious education in both the local and the denominational field.

The task now facing the Churches of America is to provide, at their own expense, an adequate system of religious education for the

⁴ Much of the educational activities developed by Methodists between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th were carried out by the institution's women's organization. For an analysis of female protagonism in light of the gender approach, the reader can consult: ROBERT, 1997.

children of the entire country. The system must definitely plan to raise religious leaders among the blacks. It must include immigrants, the neglected classes in the cities, and all groups of the population who are not able to provide this education with their own resources (TMV, May 1912, p. 259-260).

Understanding formal and non-formal actions as vehicles through which it would be possible to conduct the moral reform of societies presupposes a certain perspective about education. Despite distinct sociological categories, colleges and Sunday schools were involved with the possibility of, from the scriptures, allowing students to assimilate a set of values. In this sense, Methodists understood society as a reified object separate from the State and capable of being shaped as it received a certain design (SCOTT, 1998). Education as a process and social intervention was the mechanism that would enable children to routinize Christian values in their conduct, so that in the near future society would have its relationships guided by the morality prescribed by Methodist Protestantism. As a kind of social engineering in the theological sense, education and religion were understood as civilizational vectors capable of elaborating the social through the (re)production of a moral grammar important to the ordering of urban life (NARITA, 2016). In a treatise on religious missions, Methodists argued:

Every Sunday school should be a missionary society. There is no reason otherwise. If not all members are able to donate, most of them are. Every superintendent must teach the entire school by reading and explaining the missionary scriptures – the New Testament is full of them. He should also set aside missionary days and start an interesting program of missionary songs and readings for the children to participate in. Each school must set aside at least one Saturday of the month as missionary day and make special contributions on that day. The superintendent would do well to draw special attention to this day a week in advance and to urge participation and contributions. Superintendents will find new life in their schools through this means. Every teacher should consider his class as a missionary society and use his peculiar personal influence to establish in each of his students the habit of praying for missions and contributing to them (ATKINS, 1896, p. 16).

The urban centers integrated by the capital valorization process were understood as places that required this set of interventions with the aim of removing their populations from a supposed condition of moral degradation. According to religious people, the development of cities could not occur without the organization prescribed by the teachings of the gospel, therefore, the societies on which the missions were directed at the transnational level were understood as marked by a deficit, that is, as a kind of lack whose main characteristic was the presence of vices, conflicts and non-Protestant religious conceptions. Identifying the moral problems in the public sphere arising from the population phenomenon, a Methodist periodical reported in 1897:

The Church of Christ can accomplish what it pleases in the work of moral reforms. The Church is the only power that can be invoked to overthrow evil. Only Christian citizenship can carry on the fierce battle for its own life, which today the nation is fighting against rum and scoundrels, against bosses and murderers, against atheists and anarchists, against cowardly politicians and a corrupt press, against drunkenness, demagogues and the devil. Never has the call of duty been so loud, never has the opportunity been so great, never has the responsibility been so crushing (Western Christian Advocate, Aug. 18, 1897, p. 12).

The construction of modern life was not dissociated from the moral record, therefore, education should be a form of action that targets social regulation. The dynamics of urbanization experienced simultaneously in different regions of the world required, according to the Methodist interpretation, that educational actions be disseminated as ways of managing the population and contributing to conserving the sociopolitical fabric based on Christian parameters (FOUCAULT, 1999). The religious asked:

Can Christian statesmen, capitalists and businessmen stand by and watch diplomacy, capital, and industrial expansion create in foreign communities complex social and moral problems, spread the evils that inevitably follow in the wake of such movements, and be indifferent to their solution and the moral well-being of the communities in which their influence is being so powerfully felt? Should native communities be left alone to deal with these imported problems? (TMV, Mar. 1912, p. 164).

Assuming that education was capable of giving a certain shape to society implied recognizing that human nature was equally susceptible to external influences. Through formal and non-formal actions, the Methodists started from a tripartite anthropological interpretation that used the references of Christian psychology as a foundation for their educational actions. According to religious people, human beings were composed of soul, body and spirit. The contrast between body and soul was dear to modern philosophy of Cartesian tradition and considered the *res cogitans*, hierarchically superior in relation to the *res extensa*, as the seat of knowledge, insofar as the mind was operated by the logical laws of reason capable of producing representations (RYLE, 2009). Returning to the Stoic notion of *pneuma*, Christian psychologists inserted into reflections based on substantial dualism a divine dimension that gave human beings the “breath of life”. According to religious interpretation, the “*pneuma* is that part of man which is made in the image of God – it is the conscience, or faculty of God – conscience which has been depraved by the fall and which is dormant, though not completely dead” (HEARD, 1870, p.ixx).

The tripartite conception recognized the importance of the body as an instrument for mediating the relation with the empirical world and of the soul as a *locus* of rational

development. However, for Methodists, the spiritual part of human nature was configured as the divine consciousness that allowed human beings to identify stand as a creation and nourish, through faith, the path of recognition of grace that legitimized salvation given as a universal condition, as prescribed by Wesleyan theology. If philosophy provided understanding about the body and soul, the scriptures would provide understanding about *pneuma* as the operating condition of the other two parts. In this sense, the distance that Christian psychology operated in relation to dualism pointed to a hierarchy that made the spirit the main focus of the individual's education as a mechanism that would enable the ordering of the public sphere, insofar as it was through it that it would be possible to discipline the body and soul and provide social cohesion through the routine of conduct guided by Christian morality. In short: "Thus, the body serves the soul or psyche, the soul serves the spirit" (HEARD, 1870, p. 21).

Comprehensive educational action should be concerned with meeting these three dimensions of human nature. It would not be enough, pedagogically, to develop only physical and intellectual activities among students. It was equally fundamental to stimulate the divine spark of the spiritual part as a necessary condition for straight conduction of the unity synthesized in the condition of existence. Whether through formal or non-formal actions, the Methodists assimilated this reference into their missionary educational conception, as shown in a 1900 publication that circulated in the *Woman's Missionary Advocate*.

The perfection of education is a path for the entire tripartite nature of man – body, soul and spirit – towards a complete awareness of life and its possibilities for good and evil. When the choice of will is for good, man grows in Christ, [...] the only example of a human desire being in perfect agreement with the divine will [...] In the origin and development of Christian education, nothing is more or less than the supreme love of God – a love that obliges you to make the best use of yourself for His glory; and this is done by preaching to humanity and bringing men and women to the knowledge of Him as their personal savior from sin. In other words, missions are the natural flow of Christian education. It is an integral part, giving and sending to others the blessings of light and truth that have been received, as the word indicates. Not to accept and disobey this command of Christ, 'go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature', is to close off the broadest avenue through which the man's soul reaches its highest and best state. Through refusal or indifference, the mind is darkened, the soul is dry, and the whole nature is diminished and going downward. The conclusion is simple: education without the flow of missionary work is only half of the fulfillment of the law: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself' (WMA, Mar. 1900, p. 3-4).

Methodist missionaries understood education as a technology of power that would discipline bodies in the sense of galvanizing Christian values through the stimulation of spiritual faculties (FOUCAULT, 1999). The transnational religious movement, boosted with the help of modern infrastructure, optimized the expansion of educational operations aimed, above all, at urban centers assimilated by the process of capital appreciation within which the population phenomenon created moral problems that required missionary intervention. The search for social cohesion that would align humanity under the tuning fork of Christian values fueled the Methodist impetus towards a search for simplification and homogenization (SCOTT, 1998). Education, social intervention and mission were listed in a 1901 religious publication:

If it is important to convert men, it is equally important to develop them through fellowship in prayer, praise, testimony, Bible study, and service to others. Christian brotherhood is unsurpassed as a means of grace. But Christian education must not only be devotional but also pedagogical, not only emotional but also mental. The law of unity of mind has a decided value in our missionary work. It is the same mind in man that deals with the common problems of everyday life and the profound mysteries of divine things. The more mental capacity, the more capacity for God, since the entire mind is Christianized. The more power you have to think; the more power your thoughts of God will have if those thoughts attract your attention. The more power and breadth of sympathy and feeling one has, the more fully is he qualified to enter into the mind that is in Jesus Christ. The more power and delicacy of moral discrimination you have, the more capacity you have to always choose the best part and put first things first. If, therefore, we are to evangelize the nations that do not have Christ, we must educate them as well. Evangelization and education are reciprocal. Educating without Christianizing is lease sharp weapons into lawless hands. To evangelize without educating is to place the most delicate instruments in confused hands (Missionary issues..., 1901, p. 31).

The educational actions articulated transnationally from the United States by the Methodists globally energized a network action that moved in relative synchrony with the capitalism development between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th (SANTOS; FONSECA; NARITA, 2019). Latin America, East Asia and Africa were regions that received educational missions in a long process captured in Chart 1 – which only considers formal actions. It is important to highlight that some schools were discontinued, others were relocated and some were transformed into different institutions. A fundamental caveat involves missions in Africa. Although it has not experienced the phenomenon of population and urbanization in the same way as other global regions, given the asymmetries of the process, the capitalism expansion created conditions that allowed the transnational missionary network to maintain fundamental support and communication for the establishment of its educational actions on the continent.

Chart 1 - Methodist colleges founded transnationally by MECS

Região	Local	Conexão	Escola	Inauguração
México	San Luis Potosi	Ferrovias em 1888	Colegio Inglés	1882
	Saltillo	Ferrovias em 1883	Colegio Roberts	1886
	Durango	Ferrovias em 1892	Instituto MacDonell	1887
	Chihuahua	Ferrovias em 1882	Colegio Palmore	1891
	Guadalajara	Ferrovias em 1888	Institute Colon	1893
	Cidade do México	Ferrovias em 1873	Mary Keener Institute	1897
Cuba	Matanzas	Cidade portuária	Colegio Irene Toland	1899
	Havana	Cidade portuária	Candler College	1899
			Colegio Eliza Bowman	1900
			Colegio Buenavista	1920
Brasil	Piracicaba	Ferrovias em 1877	Colégio Piracicabano	1879
	Rio de Janeiro	Cidade portuária	Colégio Bennett	1888
	Porto Alegre	Ferrovias em 1869	Instituto Metodista Americano	1889
	Juiz de Fora	Ferrovias em 1875	Instituto Granbery	1889
			Colégio Mineiro	1891
	Taubaté	Ferrovias em 1876	Colégio Americano de Taubaté	1891
	Rio de Janeiro	Cidade portuária	Escola do Alto	1892
			Colégio Americano Fluminense	1892
	Petrópolis	Ferrovias em 1854	Colégio Americano de Petrópolis	1895
	Ribeirão Preto	Ferrovias em 1883	Colégio Metodista	1899
	Belo Horizonte	Ferrovias em 1895	Colégio Isabela Hendrix	1904
	Uruguaiana	Ferrovias em 1883	Colégio Metodista União	1908
	Birigui	Ferrovias em 1912	Instituto Noroeste	1918
	Passo Fundo	Ferrovias em 1898	Instituto Metodista de Passo Fundo	1920
Santa Maria	Ferrovias em 1885	Colégio Metodista Centenário	1922	
Lins	Ferrovias em 1908	Instituto Americano de Lins	1928	
China	Shangai e seu entorno	Cidade portuária; Ferrovias em 1876	Nantziang School	1879
			Mary Lambuth School	1881
			Anglo-Chinese College	1882
			McTyeire School	1892
			Laura Haygood Normal School	1895
			Palmetto School	1896
			Davidson Memorial Girls' School	1897
			Hayes-Wilkins Bible School	1898
			Virginia School	1901
			Susan Bond Wilson School	1903
	Nanking	Ferrovias em 1909	Bible Teachers Training School	1912
			Ginling College	1915
Coreia	Seul	Ferrovias em 1899	Ewha College	1886
			Carolina Institute	1898
	Songdo	Cidade portuária	Holston Institute	1903
			Mary Helm School	1907
	Wonsan	Cidade portuária	Lucy Cuninggim School	1900
			Theological Training for Women	1908
Japão	Kobe	Cidade portuária	Kobe Institute	1887
			Palmore Women's English Institute	1887
			Bible Woman's Training School	1892
			Kindergarten Training School	1895
	Hiroshima	Cidade portuária	Hiroshima Girls' School	1887
Congo Belga	Wembo Nyama	Acesso via navegação no rio Congo	Girls' Home and Educational Work	1918
	Minga		Girls' Home and Educational Work	1921
	Tunda		Girls' Home and Educational Work	1928

Source: SANTOS, 2021.

Legend: Região- Region; Local-Local; Escola – School; Conexão – Connection; Inauguração – Opening; Mexico; Brazil; Korea; Japan; Belgian Congo; Ferrovias- Railroad; Shangai e seu entorno - Shanghai and its surroundings; Cidade Portuária - Port City; Acesso via navegação no Rio Congo - Access via navigation on the Congo River.

Final considerations

That way not occurring in a linear manner and without contradictions, the installation of educational projects through missionary actions undertaken by North American Methodists demonstrates the vigor of an institution that projected on a transnational level a series of actions aimed at converting people to Protestantism. The religious protagonism shows the schools founding was closely involved with proposals for intervention in public spheres built in the midst of capitalist expansion. The development of the technical structure built in modernity was a decisive factor in the spread of the Methodist movement, which intentionally, overlapped with the dynamics that incorporated new regions into the process of capital appreciation. Ideologically legitimizing missionary activity based on civilizational criteria dear to nineteenth-century industrial powers, religious people interpreted other peoples as inferior and dependent on an external moralizing agent.

Methodist educational circulation points to global simultaneities developed amid the socioeconomic transformations that occurred between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. These circuits of action aimed to anchor Christian values that would guarantee social cohesion to the extent they effected the humanity awakening to its condition of forgiveness given by God in relation to original sin, according to the theological interpretation constituted from the reflections of John Wesley. Starting from a tripartite anthropological conception developed by Christian psychology, the Methodists understood that human nature should be educated to routinize morally correct conduct, which would lead societies to a superior civilized form of coexistence. Intervention in the social sphere was closely linked to obedience to the call presented in Mark 16:15: “Go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature”.

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