



## **The Premonstratensians of Averbode and the creation of Secondary Education schools in Brazil (1889-1930)<sup>1</sup>**

Os Premonstratenses de Averbode e a criação de escolas de Ensino Secundário no Brasil (1889-1930)

Los Premonstratenses de Averbode y la creación de escuelas de Educación Secundaria en Brasil (1889-1930)

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### **Abstract**

The article aims to highlight, in the political and educational context of the First Republic in Brazil (1889-1930), the importance of the Order of Premonstratensians of Averbode (Belgium), which has been little studied in the History of Education, in the creation and maintenance of four secondary education institutions in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Rio Grande do Sul. The theoretical and methodological framework adopted is Cultural History, utilizing written and iconographic. It was found that the Premonstratensians developed their practices and representations linked to: ultramontane politics and the internal reorganization of the Church in response to its process of secularization in the country; the support of the Church and the faithful from Belgium; and the expansion of Catholicism through missionary and educational means. Their actions complied with legislation on secondary education, which was directed at the formation of the country's political and economic elite.

**Keywords:** Premonstratensian Education; Catholic educational institutions; Secondary education institutions.

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## Resumo

O artigo objetiva evidenciar, no contexto político-educacional da Primeira República no Brasil (1889-1930), a importância da Ordem dos Premonstratenses de Averbode (Bélgica), ainda pouco estudada pela História da Educação, na criação e manutenção de quatro instituições de ensino secundário, nos estados de São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro e Rio Grande do Sul. Como referencial teórico-metodológico adotou-se a História Cultural, utilizando fontes escritas e iconográficas. Constatou-se como resultado que os Premonstratenses desenvolveram suas práticas e representações vinculadas: à política ultramontana e à reorganização interna da Igreja diante de seu processo de secularização no país; ao apoio da Igreja e de fiéis da Bélgica; à expansão do catolicismo pela via missionária e educacional. Sua atuação buscava atender à legislação do ensino secundário que era voltado à formação da elite político-econômica do país.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Premonstratense; Instituições educacionais católicas; Instituições de ensino secundário.

## Resumen

El artículo evidencia, en el contexto político-educativo de la Primera República en Brasil (1889-1930), la importancia de la Orden de los Premonstratenses de Averbode (Bélgica), aún poco estudiada en la Historia de la Educación, en la creación y mantenimiento de cuatro instituciones de enseñanza secundaria, en los estados de São Paulo, Río de Janeiro y Río Grande do Sul. Como referencia teórico-metodológica se adoptó la Historia Cultural, utilizando fuentes escritas e iconográficas. Se constató como resultado que los Premonstratenses desarrollaron sus prácticas y representaciones vinculadas: a la política ultramontana y a la reorganización interna de la Iglesia frente a su proceso de secularización en el país; al apoyo de la Iglesia y de fieles de Bélgica; a la expansión del catolicismo a través de la vía misionera y educativa. Su actuación cumplió con la legislación de la enseñanza secundaria orientada a la formación de la élite político-económica del país.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Premonstratense; Instituciones educativas católicas; Instituciones de enseñanza secundaria.

Received: 2025/04/09

Approved: 2025/07/05

## Introduction

The text presented here about the role of the Premonstratensians of Averbode (Belgium) in education in Brazil is a topic still little studied by historians of education.<sup>2</sup> Our objective is to highlight, within the context of the First Republic (1889-1930), the importance of this religious order in the creation and maintenance of four secondary educational institutions in rural cities in Brazil. In Pirapora, São Paulo, they founded the *Collegio São Norberto* in 1897; in Jaguarão, Rio Grande do Sul, in 1901, they founded the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo*; in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, in 1909, they took over the *Collegio São Vicente de Paulo*; and in Jaú, São Paulo, they took over the *Gymnasio Jorge Tibiriçá*.<sup>3</sup>

This study reveals the relevance of the Premonstratensians of Averbode's work in the Brazilian educational field<sup>4</sup>, which was not limited to school education but also contributed to the expansion of Catholicism within the communities in which they worked through their missionary activities.

The Premonstratensians belong to a Catholic religious order of Regular Canons<sup>5</sup>. They follow the *Rule of Saint Augustine*, take a vow of poverty, consecrated celibacy, and obedience to God's will.<sup>6</sup> Their name derives from the fact that the first abbey, founded in 1120, was located in the Prémontré Valley, in the Diocese of Soissons, France. The Premonstratensians are also known as *Norbertines*, as the founder of the order was Saint Norbert,<sup>7</sup> or *White Canons*, due to their white vestments. Among the Premonstratensians, who came from Belgium to Brazil, there were two groups of clergy, originating from different abbeys: Averbode and Park.

In 1896, the Premonstratensian group of Averbode arrived. Other than the thesis that aligns with this study, we found no academic research on the schools they created or their work in the educational field. In this study, we accessed reports, newspapers, narratives, photographs, websites, and books that provide scattered historiographical elements about this religious order in Brazil. Their abbey in Belgium is located in the municipality of Scherpenheuvel-Zichem, in the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels.

The Park Premonstratensians arrived in Brazil in 1898 and operated in northern Minas Gerais. They are affiliated with the Park Abbey, located in Heyerlee, south of Leuven, Belgium. There are academic studies about them (Silva, 2010; 2011 and Silva et al., 2014) that address their work as missionaries and educators.

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<sup>2</sup> This article is the result of the doctoral thesis entitled "*O Gymnasio Espírito Santo e a atuação da Ordem Religiosa Premonstratense em Jaguarão, RS, Brasil (1901-1914)*", defended in 2024 by the first author, under the supervision of the second author.

<sup>3</sup> The original spelling will be used for the names of the schools.

<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu (2003) defines a *field* as various spaces of social life or social practices that have a certain independence from other social fields. According to Bourdieu (2003, p. 119), they present themselves "as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position in these spaces and which can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants."

<sup>5</sup> *Regular Canons* gather around an Abbot, follow the rule of a religious order in communion with the Church of Rome, live in a community, in convents, and act wherever the order determines. *Secular Canons*, on the other hand, are not monastics; they live among the population and serve a diocese or administrative region of the church. As Silva (2010, p. 46) states, "Since its origin and development, the canonical institution has always been an institution of clergy," conducting worship and sacraments.

<sup>6</sup> Today, the Order is present on six continents and comprises over 1,600 members, including priests, brothers, deacons, and novices, as well as nuns and sisters. About this subject, see Chantrain (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Saint Norbert was Regular Canon in Xanten, in the Diocese of Cologne, and converted in 1115. He adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine as the basic inspiration for the communal life of the religious. In 1126, he was appointed Archbishop of Magdeburg, Germany. The new Order was approved that same year by Pope Honorius II (Silva, 2011).

It is interesting to highlight certain singularities and distinctions regarding the work of these two groups, in relation to their individual and collective presence within communities in Brazil. The Premonstratensians of Park in Minas Gerais, according to Silva (2014, p. 242), "were intensely active in local politics," developing their work in almost all areas of social life. It should be noted that this was not an uncommon practice, as the religious orders established in the interior of the country, according to Carneiro (2018, p. 02), also sought to "establish alliances with the landowners of each city or region; groups holding local economic and political power." However, in this regard, the Averbodians differed somewhat, as they sought greater coordination with the Religious Order in Belgium as well as the strengthening of schools within the communities, perhaps exercising a more aggregating role among social groups in the spaces where they operated.

However, there were similarities in the pedagogical practices developed in the educational institutions of these groups. Inspired by the *Ratio Studiorum*<sup>8</sup>, they involved emulation (encouraging competition between individuals and classes) and, at times, work outside the classroom environment. These included theater, student unions, school newspapers, marching bands, declamations, soccer, and student religious associations, among others. These activities always had the goal of fostering discipline, developing oratory skills, and fostering a militarized<sup>9</sup> education. Regarding secondary education, these objectives were meticulously planned and executed, with a view to a Catholic education geared toward the formation of the ruling elite, which valued Catholic Christian values above all else.

At the end of the 19th century, the Premonstratensians came to Brazil due to the possibilities opened up by the policies of the newly established Republic and also motivated by the ultramontane<sup>10</sup> interests of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1894, the Premonstratensians received an invitation from Pope Leo XIII, through the Apostolic Nunciature of Brussels, to found houses in Latin America. Silva (2011) presents the purpose of this papal invitation through a fragment of the text of the letter from Nuncio Giuseppe Francica Nava di Bontifé: "in order to cooperate effectively in the renewal of the Christian spirit in these populations and in the reform of public morality" (Silva, 2011, p. 9)<sup>11</sup>. Thus, cooperation for the "renewal of the Christian spirit" defines the Ultramontane spirit that encourages the Premonstratensians to come to Brazil. During this period, other congregations also arrived in the country, such as the Redemptorists (1894), who, together with other religious groups—Lazarists, Capuchins, Jesuits, among others—strengthened the movement to implement the ongoing Catholic Reformation (Ibid., p. 11).

During the early years of the Brazilian Republic, according to Azzi (1994), the middle classes and the industrial bourgeoisie, advocates of liberal thought, held some power, but lacked a socioeconomic structure, which was shared by the more conservative rural oligarchies. This period coincided with the military governments of Marshals Deodoro da Fonseca and Floriano Peixoto. In 1894, President Prudente de Moraes assumed power,

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<sup>8</sup> The *Ratio Studiorum* defined criteria and organized school knowledge. "The educational system, guided by the principles of discipline, obedience, respect, and good example, based on moral and religious inculcation, aimed to form docile, obedient students, yet at the same time prepared to occupy positions and responsibilities of command in the future" (Amaral, 2023, p. 128). For more in-depth analysis of this topic, we suggest Franca (1952) and Tambara (1995).

<sup>9</sup> About this subject, see Amaral (2023).

<sup>10</sup> This is understood as the doctrine that defends the primacy of spiritual authority over political power, and consequently, the absolute power of the Pope, both materially and spiritually (Azzi, 1994; Amaral, 2005). In Brazil, "due to its political insertion, Catholicism transferred 'its dogmatic guidelines from the strictly religious sphere to the whole of civil society and daily life'" (Coelho, 2017, p. 63).

<sup>11</sup> In the letter from the Apostolic Nuncio of Brussels, it is clear that Pope Leo XIII addressed not only the Premonstratensian abbots of Belgium, but also all orders and congregations (Silva, 2011, p. 9).

initiating the so-called "Republic of Oligarchies." This shift from military power to the oligarchies "meant not only the defeat of the industrializing sectors, but also the loss of prestige of the urban classes" (Azzi, 1994, p. 10).

In this sense, it should be understood that many religious orders that came to Brazil during this period established themselves in cities in the interior of the country, which stood out for their potential economic development and strategic location for the insertion of Catholicism. This was the case with the Premonstratensians of Averbode, who sought to connect their work as missionaries and educators with the elite and the general population.

It is important to emphasize that the Catholic Church in Brazil, due to the changes in Brazilian politics resulting from the republican regime, carried out internal reforms that strengthened religious orders (Tambara, 1995), increasing the number of dioceses in Brazil. This process was termed by Aquino (2012) the diocesanization of Catholicism. The process of diocesanization is the result of a reorganization of the Roman Catholic Church due to the end of *regalism*—a doctrine that advocated the interference of the head of state in religious matters and was abolished in Brazil with the Constitution of 1891—and of so-called *ultramontanismo*, a doctrine that defended the absolute power of the Pope, leading to a Romanization of the Catholic Church.

In this context, these orders founded colleges and encouraged the arrival of new members, and over time began to promote their education in the country. This period was marked by strong tension between Catholics and anticlerical groups defending secular, public, and free education, especially Freemasonry (Amaral, 2023). It should be noted, however, that

several institutions established in the country initially had other priority goals, such as orphanages and nursing homes, as well as the care of needy patients. Given the difficulty of maintaining these institutions, they often also began to found and open schools for the middle and upper classes in order to obtain resources for their charitable works. Little by little [...] these educational institutions also began to require greater investments in terms of human and economic resources, either to meet government demands or to compete on equal terms with secular and Protestant schools. (Azzi, 1994, p. 13)

As can be seen, the creation of secondary schools was one of the important means for the dissemination and maintenance of the Church and the Religious Orders established in the country. And the Order of Premonstratensians, in general, accustomed to the pedagogical process in seminaries and with some experience with secondary schools, came to Brazil with a dual responsibility: to care for Churches (parishes and seminaries), but also to create schools for a non-seminarian public and, in the case of secondary education, for students from the most privileged social classes.

In the present study, the theoretical-methodological orientation we used is aligned with Cultural History (Certeau, 2000; Chartier, 2002, 2006; Burke, 2005), which underpins studies linked to Educational Institutions (Magalhães, 2004; 2007), secondary education in Brazil (Amaral, 2008, 2023; Niskier, 1989; Palma Filho, 2010, Pessanha e Silva, 2021) and the use of photographs as a source of historical research (Kossoy, 1989; Vidal & Abdala, 2005).

Based on the documents accessed, we identified practices and representations (Chartier, 2002, 2006) involving the work of the Premonstratensians of Averbode. These practices, albeit briefly, highlight aspects of their work as educators and missionaries, as well as the history of the educational institutions they created and the places where they settled.

In this sense, questioning the sources is fundamental, as they are not presented as ready-made and complete sources for constructing a historical narrative. At various points, in our search for understanding the facts, we encounter more questions than answers when analyzing our written and iconographic sources. And to understand, as Certeau (2000, p. 65) states, "is to analyze, in terms of localizable productions, the material that each method initially established according to its methods of relevance." We understand the relevance of seeking meanings and signifiers, since a common field for cultural historians is "a concern with the symbolic and its interpretations" (Burke, 2005, p. 10).

The education/institution, according to Magalhães (2004, p. 15), encompasses the entire organization of "means, structures, agents, resources, but also the sociocultural and civilizational markers that states and other organizations maintain for the purposes of social permanence and change." The author presents three operational categories to be applied: *materiality* — spaces/architecture, regulations, statutes — *representation* — information from archives, memories — and *appropriation* — a sense of identity with the pedagogical model and the institution's ideology (Magalhães, 2004, p. 97).

In our study, we will present images of buildings from Averbode's Premonstrant secondary education institutions. As is the case with other public and private institutions of this type of education in the country, these buildings stand out in urban architecture for their appearance and central location.<sup>12</sup> This is the *symbolic signaling representations*. Aimed at the more affluent social classes, they are distinguished by their sumptuous, functional, and modern appearance, meeting the hygienic requirements of the time with airy and bright spaces. It should also be taken into account that these schools sought to be comparable to *Colégio Pedro II*. To this end, they had to adhere to its exemplary proposal, where the organization and presentation of educational spaces were also evaluated by government oversight. It is also important to consider that school spaces also educate and create a sense of belonging between students and teachers, reinforcing cognitive and socio-emotional issues.<sup>13</sup> They constitute a "materiality" (Magalhães, 2004) that translates educational practices and representations, imposing cultural models (Certeau, 1998; Chartier, 2002).

It can be argued that the Premonstratensians, once the school was established as a strategic space for imposing cultural models, used strategies and tactics of appropriation (Certeau, 1998) to ensure that Catholic ideals were embraced by students and the local community. Thus, practices that went beyond the school walls, such as theatrical performances, football matches, and banning Martial arts, student newspapers, and participation in masses, among others, met these expectations.

In addressing the schools, two photographs were used. According to Kossoy (1989, p. 33), "every photograph represents the testimony of a creation. On the other hand, it will always represent the creation of a testimony" (Kossoy, 1989, p. 33). Thus, he proposes considering the various dimensions of photography, such as memory and representation.

The use of photography as a source for History and the History of Education lies in its ability to portray "the yesterday and the other in their *true contours*" (Vidal & Abdala 2005, p. 178). Thus, by comparing iconographic and printed sources, we seek to relate the contours of truths, highlighting aspects of the work of the Premonstratensians of Averbode and the spatiality of their schools, inserted within the context of educational reforms in the first decades of the Brazilian republic.

<sup>12</sup> About this topic, see Pessanha e Silva (2021).

<sup>13</sup> Amaral (2023) discusses this topic by analyzing the pedagogical practices and representations of two secondary schools in the city of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul. One Catholic and the other Masonic, they competed in the educational field to instill distinct cultural models.

## Secondary Education Reforms in the Emerging Republic

The structure of secondary and higher education institutions at the beginning of the Republic "was tied to federal legislation that imposed a model to be followed, through the 'equivalence' system" (Amaral, 2005, p. 134). The model structure to be followed in secondary education was the *Collegio D. Pedro II* (or *Gymnasio Nacional*)<sup>14</sup>, in the then federal capital, Rio de Janeiro.

It is important to keep in mind that the transition from monarchy to republic in Brazil did not significantly alter the way the Brazilian State viewed educational policies. The form of government changed, but not the political ideology underlying state actions, which largely remain very similar, as a form of *gattopardism*.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, Schueler and Magaldi (2009) present us with the argument of José Veríssimo, who asserted that republican school education, in fact, brought aspects of continuity with the monarchical period. The authors also note that José Veríssimo's<sup>16</sup> considerations resembled those of a character from Machado de Assis's work *"Esaú e Jacó, o Conselheiro Aires."* "Like Veríssimo, perhaps the political regime had 'changed its clothes,' without having 'changed its skin'" (Schueler & Magaldi, 2009, p. 41).

In this scenario, the positivists, strongly present and influential in the federal government and in Rio Grande do Sul, disagreed with state intervention in matters related to public education. They aspired to the suppression of official education and scientific degrees. The regulated form of public education was similar to the previous system, in effect since the Additional Act of 1834.

Regarding education in the Brazilian Constitution of 1891, the republican Dunshee de Abranches, as discussed by Niskier (1989), brought important considerations regarding articles 33 and 34 of chapter IV, which dealt with public education. For him, this Constitution completely decentralized primary education, handing it over to the states and, in the Federal District, to the municipalities. The states, for the most part, entrusted primary education to municipal councils. The exclusive responsibility for higher education fell to the National Congress, which could, but not exclusively, create institutions for this level of education and also for secondary education (Niskier, 1989, p. 193). It was in secondary education that the Premonstratensians would act, though not exclusively.

Since the beginning of the Republic, several reforms have followed in the educational field. The first was the Benjamin Constant Reform of 1890. With an encyclopedic structure, it failed to consider the interests of students, as it contradicted the preparatory concept of secondary education. Furthermore, it was unfeasible, according to critics of the time and education researchers such as Palma Filho (2010) and Cury (2009).

In 1901, the Epiácio Pessoa Code sought to make the Benjamin Constant Reform feasible, but continued to emphasize the literary component of the secondary school curriculum. It was under the aegis of this Code that the first Premonstratensian Colleges were established in Brazil. However, following the positivist-inspired Rivadávia Correia Reform of 1911, private educational institutions began to face difficulties. Mandatory

<sup>14</sup> With the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889, the institution's name was changed to the *Instituto Nacional de Instrução Secundária* and, soon after, to the *Gymnasio Nacional*. In 1911, it resumed its original name, *Collegio Pedro II*.

<sup>15</sup> *Gattopardo* (Italian) means "leopard." The term *gattopardism* is inspired by the work *"Il gattopardo"* (The Gattopardo) by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. The connection lies in the leopard's disguise, which, by camouflaging itself, remains a leopard. In society, when everything seems to change, but some phenomena remain the same, it can be said that the phenomenon of *gattopardism* exists.

<sup>16</sup> An active intellectual in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he wrote *"A Educação Nacional"* published in 1892, among other works. The cited work is where the author demonstrates the persistence of old battles in the field of public policies for education (Schueler & Magaldi, 2009).

attendance and diplomas were abolished, and college entrance exams (a type of entrance exam) were introduced, administered at the very institutions where candidates entered. In 1915, the Rivadávia Reform was amended by Decree No. 11,530. Thus, equivalence with *Colégio D. Pedro II* returned, but only for public schools, which would continue to be a problem for private schools, which needed to employ strategies to remain open.

Regarding the implementation of the Rivadavia Correa Reform in Premonstratensian educational institutions, Canon Adriaansem's Report (2007)<sup>17</sup> states that the 1911 school year had begun calmly, although there was news of the possibility of reforms in secondary education. "When everything was in full swing, new regulations for education were decreed" (Chantrain, 2007, p. 59). Adriaansem's following words are relevant to understanding the priests' perspective on the Rivadavia Reform:

The equivalence of high schools was abolished, and therefore, no exam was recognized unless administered by college professors. There was no longer an official high school program. The principle was upheld: 'In Brazil, whoever wants to teach, what they want, and how they want.' Thus, suddenly, all high schools faced a question: could college professors also question candidates about whatever they wanted? Only later was a resolution issued requiring each college to create a list of subjects that students should know for the exam. This was the only guideline that all schools could follow in their teaching. There were three different guidelines, and each college had to choose one. (Chantrain, 2007, p. 59)

According to Chantrain (2007), schools in Jaguarão and Petrópolis attempted to continue the school year that had already begun, according to traditional custom, with some minor modifications. However, many students quickly enrolled in colleges at the end of the year, since certificates proving they had completed secondary education were no longer required. If they passed, it didn't matter whether they had completed one, two, or three years of secondary school; they entered directly.

We will present two cases related to this situation below: the first cited by Chantrain and the second, involving Pedro Vergara<sup>18</sup> when he attended *Ginásio Júlio de Castilhos* in Porto Alegre.

At *Colégio Petrópolis*, "a third-year student failed our exams and therefore had to repeat the third year. But he registered for the college entrance exam and managed to achieve excellent grades and passed the year" (Chantrain, 2007, p. 59).

When the Rivadávia Correa Law was enacted in 1911, Pedro Vergara was in his fourth year at *Ginásio Júlio de Castilhos* in Porto Alegre. According to him, the Rio Grande do Sul native was Minister of Justice and Education and "was a republican, extreme and imbued with Castilhos' ideals, Dr. Rivadávia Correa, from Santana do Livramento." He also comments that

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<sup>17</sup> Canon Avebodian worked and lived in Brazil for almost 50 years, interacting with the first Premonstratensian priests who arrived here. In 1954, back in Averbode (Belgium), at the request of the editors of the Abbey's magazine "Pikkelpoort," he wrote a report that was translated from Flemish into Portuguese by Canon Chantrain and published in 2007 (Chantrain, 2007), "*História dos primeiros vinte e cinco anos dos 'Institutos Avebodienses no Brasil' 1896-1921*". Adriaansen was also principal of the São *Colégio São Vicente de Paulo* in Petrópolis in the 1930s and a professor at the Averbodians Institutes from 1942 to 1953.

<sup>18</sup> Pedro Vergara spent his adolescence in Jaguarão, where he completed part of his elementary school at the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* and, later, part of his secondary school at the *Instituto Júlio de Castilhos* in Porto Alegre. He graduated from the Pelotas Law School in 1917. He was elected Federal Representative for the Rio Grande do Sul Constituent Assembly from 1933 to 1937 and then to the legislature from 1946 to 1951 (Soares & Franco, 2010, p. 160). Vergara wrote a work (comprising three volumes) that chronicles his childhood and youth. The account presented here is found in Volume 3.

several high schools were closed throughout the country, and as a result, he lost his free enrolment<sup>19</sup>, "and all the classes either left or became dizzy and nervous" (Vergara, 1982, p. 130). He emphasizes that he, Vergara, and several colleagues wanted to quickly become academics, so they decided to take exams at a university. Let us consider the following excerpt from his memoirs:

and where we saw the advantage of the Rivadavia Law over any other education law: one didn't necessarily need to spend six years stuck in high school. If one had talent, willpower, and studied hard, in a year or two, the young man would be in college—no matter which college it was—and, with the years that the long high school course devoured, a 20-year-old boy could earn a doctorate—all depending on the number of preparatory courses he could pass before the free education boards. If he took them all at once, it would be as if he had completed six years of high school in one year. That was what we thought and hoped. But there were teachers—and among them, there were those who didn't accept the revolution and anarchy—they said—that the country would fall into with the free education law. So, even so, Ismar, I, and many others decided: let's study a little more, and let's take all the exams in March and enroll in college—let's be academics. (Vergara, 1982, p. 131)

This excerpt, taken from his work "Memories That Remember, Part III," provides us with insight into how the Rivadavia Correa Law was perceived by high school students. Pragmatism prevailed, especially among teenagers' eager to enter university. Therefore, faced with this situation, several private schools had to adopt new *tactics* to survive, but not all were successful. It is also clear that Vergara, in his memoirs, perhaps because of his connection to the positivist ideal, or because he recognized (as is often the case today) the lack of educational purpose in secondary education, viewed favorably his educational experience of advancing his studies and entering higher education directly.

### **The Premonstratensian Schools of Averbode: Historical Aspects**

Below, we will highlight the historical aspects of the four schools opened or operated by the Premonstratensians of Averbode in Brazil. We will address the establishment and expansion of these educational institutions, observing aspects involving their *materiality, representation, and appropriation*, as proposed by Magalhães (2004).

As we had already mentioned, starting in 1896, the priests of Averbode Abbey established a presence in Brazil. We reiterate that, regarding their first 25 years in the country, Canon Adriaansem's report, published by Chantrain (2007), constitutes an important document from which we have compiled the data presented below.

The first two Premonstratensians to arrive were Vicente Van Togel and Rafael Goris, in 1896. They were entrusted with the *Bom Jesus de Pirapora* shrine, in the interior of São Paulo. Soon after, in 1897, it was elevated to a parish, with Canon Vicente Van Tongel as its first pastor. At that time, construction began on the *Colégio São Norberto* and the canons' house, located on a hill next to the Seminary.

Since its inception, the *Colégio São Norberto* student body gradually expanded, and in 1905, it evolved into the *Seminário Menor Metropolitano de São Paulo*, dedicated to training cadres for the Catholic Church, operating as such until 1949. From 1949 to 1973, it became a

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<sup>19</sup> Pedro Vergara had obtained free gratuity to attend this school, with the help of Carlos Barbosa (doctor and politician from Jaguarão), then President of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

Premonstratensian Seminary, dedicated to training members of this Order. Until 1973, it also housed the Premonstratensian canonry center (Chantrain, 2009 and STOLS, 2014).

According to Adriaansem (2007), in 1902, when the most advanced students of the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* in Jaguarão had passed the exams held in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul,<sup>20</sup> "those from Pirapora didn't even consider taking the exams in São Paulo" (Adriaansem, 2007, p. 39). This was due to the fact that many students in Pirapora intended to continue in the Order. Therefore, the institution became a Seminary, training cadres for the Church, although it continued temporarily as the *Colégio São Norberto*. The author's finding that Pirapora required more than 60 boarders demonstrates the institution's growth.

Pirapora became a reference point for the Premonstratensians of Averbode who came to Brazil. From there, they departed for other cities, such as Jaguarão (RS), Petrópolis (RJ), and later Jaú (SP), which will be discussed later.

In 1901, this order arrived in Jaguarão, Rio Grande do Sul, where they founded the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* – the second educational institution for the Averbodians in Brazil – which operated until 1914, when they left for Jaú (São Paulo), as can be seen in the excerpt below.

In 1901, a new front was opened in Jaguarão, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the extreme south of Brazil, with the founding of the *Colégio do Espírito Santo*. As the missionary ideal grew increasingly in Europe, the number of missionary vocations also increased, allowing Averbode to send more confreres to Brazil each year. Thus, the houses grew and the work increased, but in 1915, due to Masonic laws against private education, the Premonstratensian community of Jaguarão, seeing its work hindered, moved to Jaú, in the state of São Paulo, at the request of the bishop of São Carlos, Dom José Marcondes Homem de Mello, continuing its teaching at the *Atheneu Jauense* (A.S.N., n.d.).<sup>21</sup>

It should be clarified that this text, taken from a website of the Order, refers to the fact that the changes resulting from the Rivadávia Corrêa Reform of 1911 were in force as "Masonic laws against private education." It is erroneously stated that the Jaguarão school closed in 1915. In reality, it was in 1914 that they moved to Jaú, at the invitation of the Bishop of São Carlos.

Analyzing the sources, we have access to, we find that in Jaguarão, the Premonstratensians initially approached the conflict with Freemasonry with caution. This is evidenced by the expressions in newspaper articles and letters commenting on the situation there. The works "*Três Anos no Brasil*", by Schoenaers (2003), and "*História dos Premonstratenses: Averbodienses e Jauenses, atuando no Brasil*" by Chantrain (2007), are fundamental to understanding the actions of these priests in the cities where they settled. Particularly in Jaguarão, we find scattered information in local records (newspapers, Municipal Council minutes, mayoral reports, and some photographs).

In Schoenaers's letters, we find several expressions that lead us to believe, based on them and considering their purposes, that there was a positive and active involvement of the priests in the city of Jaguarão. Even in the face of adversity, Father Schoenaers expressed optimism regarding the future of the *Gymnasio* in a letter dated 1903. An

<sup>20</sup> The *Colégio de Jaguarão*, as well as the one in Pirapora, at that time were not equivalent to D. Pedro II, so, upon finishing secondary school, they took tests in the state capitals to enter higher education.

<sup>21</sup> <https://abadiadesaonorberto.com.br/historia/>. Accessed on: February 06, 2025.

analysis of later documents, including 10 issues of a student periodical from 1908, confirms Schoenaers's expectations. These expectations changed drastically starting in 1911, with the new context of Brazilian educational legislation.

In this city, the Order of Premonstratensians purchased a large house (now the *Casa da Cultura*) in 1903. On the same site, they constructed another three-story building, which opened in 1910. This was the first building constructed to house a modern school (for the time) in the city of Jaguarão.

**Figure 1** - *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* front.



Source: Separate image. Authors' collection.

This building, which became the main building of the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo*, marks the urban architecture of Jaguarão, forming part of the so-called "historicist eclecticism" (Oliveira E Seibt, 2005). It was designated a national heritage site by IPHAN in 2011, along with the city's historic center. The photograph shown dates from the 1930s, when the building was already owned by the state of Rio Grande do Sul and housed the *Collegio Elementar*, which was named "*Joaquim Caetano da Silva*."

The *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* was one of the main schools of the Premonstratensians of Averbode in the first decade of the 20th century. According to Adriaansen (2007, p. 60): "It was highly regarded, and its status as a member had greatly increased its reputation. [...] Students also enrolled from more distant places, even in cities where there was a high school." In the early years, they enrolled over 100 students, and before being upgraded to the *Collegio Nacional* their students passed the exams administered in the state capital. But with the Rivadavia Reform, which eliminated the need to attend high school to take the college entrance exams, the number of students began to decline until its operation became unsustainable (Chantrain, 2007).

The educational institution achieved upgrade to the *Collegio Nacional* in 1908, two years before the new building was constructed. Judging by the number of clergy who went to Jaguarão between 1902 and 1910 — 15 canons and 12 brothers — it can be said that the

*Gymnasio* was a priority for the Religious Order, as evidenced by its success. There were students from all over the region, including Uruguay.

However, according to sources, from 1909 onwards, its importance was shared with the school in the city of Petrópolis, and their most important members were gradually divided. Considering that the *tactics* used to educate students failed to maintain the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* operations, it can be inferred that, starting in 1911, the school began to experience difficulties, and the Order ultimately failed in its attempt to maintain its pedagogical and religious mission in the city of Jaguarão. However, the question remains: what other reasons could have led to the failure of this endeavor in southern Brazil?

Regarding the closure of *Espírito Santo* in 1914, in addition to the influence of the Rivadávia Correa Reform, we can also cite the interruption of aid from Belgium due to the outbreak of World War I (1914). There were also possible disagreements with the regional Freemasonry, which was very active in the city and with the state government. Over time, in Jaguarão, it negatively influenced the possible allocation of subsidies from the Intendancy and the Municipal Council (Machado, 1923; Chantrain, 2007) for the maintenance of the *Gymnasio*. Similarly, the Positivist government of Rio Grande do Sul, as well as the Diocese of Pelotas, responsible for the Church in Jaguarão, showed no appreciation or interest in the work of the Premonstratensians<sup>22</sup>.

In addition to these issues, Jaguarão was far from the Central House of the Premonstratensians in Pirapora do Bom Jesus, São Paulo, which made it difficult to monitor the work of the priests.

Another important factor in their move was the invitation from the Diocese of São Carlos/SP for the members of the order who were in Jaguarão to take over the *Atheneu Jauense*, with the promise of benefits and support from the Jaú City Hall.

It is interesting to note that after the closure of the *Gymnasio*, the mansion acquired in 1903 housed the State Forum and, currently, the Jaguarão Cultural Center. The other building built by the Premonstratensians housed three schools that still exist today: the *Escola Estadual Joaquim Caetano da Silva* (formerly the *Colégio Elementar*); the *Colégio IPA – Instituto Porto Alegre* /Jaguarão Department, established in 1942, which, when taken over by the state, was renamed "*Espírito Santo*"; and, finally, the *Colégio Comercial Carlos Alberto Ribas*. The existence of these schools alone demonstrates the importance of this building, distinguished by its architectural features that recall a time when Jaguarão's urban space stood out for its modernity and location on the border with the emerging and developed Uruguayan state. Currently, due to the state government's negligence, the three-story building is in a very precarious state, with its structural damage and vacated by the *Colégio Alberto Ribas*, which should have been located there. Currently, work is underway to ensure its stability and subsequent restoration.

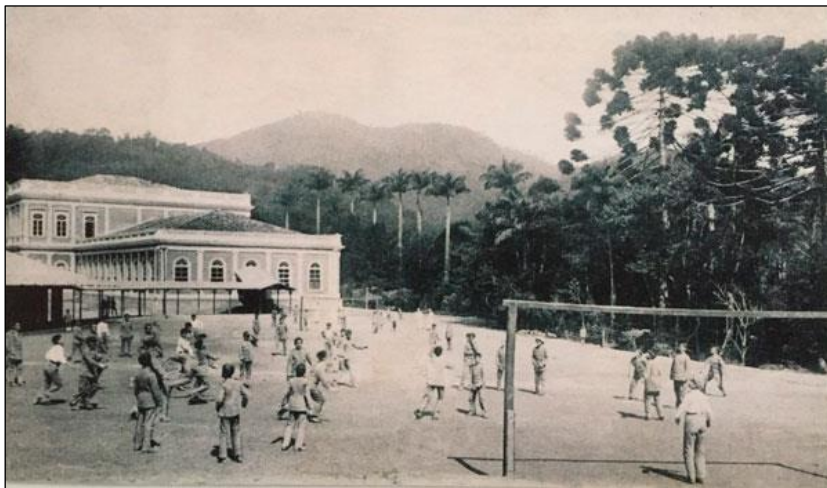
In the city of Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, in 1909, the Premonstratensians took over the *Collegio São Vicente de Paulo*, previously run by the Lazarist Fathers. It was the third school organized in Brazil under the auspices of this Order, originating from Averbode. Canon Godofredo Evers, who had experience in the area, was brought from Jaguarão in the process of "equivalence" with Pedro II, and then Canon Thomas Schoenaers, who took over the College in early 1910. The institution achieved equivalence, and from 1909 to 1911, more members from Belgium came to Brazil to work in Petrópolis, Pirapora, and Jaguarão. In Petrópolis, the strategies used to keep the school open allowed the Premonstratensians, who ran the school until 1992, to continue their work (Chantrain, 2007).

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<sup>22</sup> As there is little documentation on these specific facts, we made this statement based on reading the Catholic Newspaper "*A Palavra*" of the Diocese of Pelotas, which began to circulate in 1912, and the 1st Lustrous of the Diocese of Pelotas, from 1916. There is a perceived silence regarding the actions of the Premonstratensians in the south of Rio Grande do Sul.

In 1909, upon taking over the school, they rented the former Palace of Emperor Dom Pedro II, which was vacant. They remained there until 1940, when the Imperial Museum was established on this site by the Getúlio Vargas administration.

**Figure 2** - Courtyard of the *Colégio São Vicente de Paulo*, in the Imperial Palace. (undated)



Source: Imperial Museum Collection/Ibram/MinC

The image shows the courtyard of the *Colégio São Vicente de Paulo*, where students play soccer, in the foreground, and the former Palace of Emperor Dom Pedro II can be seen in the background. It is important to emphasize the importance of this building's representation within the urban context of the city of Petrópolis and for Brazil as a whole. At a time when the architectural design of schools in the emerging republic was reminiscent of mansions, this secondary school occupied a space belonging to the Brazilian imperial family. This fact corroborates what we previously stated regarding the buildings' *materiality*, demonstrating the same spatial strategy as other Premonstratensian schools, establishing themselves in significant spaces within their purpose. Upon leaving this building in 1940, they constructed another imposing building that followed the guidelines of Catholic education. In addition to the main building, the space included a chapel and a study and party hall. At the time of its inauguration, Canon Guilherme Adriaansen, who had been at the helm of the school for over twenty-five years, was still the principal.

In the photograph presented, considering its dimension as *memory* and *representation* (Kossoy, 1989), we can also observe the attire worn by the students playing soccer: pants, shirt, jacket, and shoes. They could be at recess, their clothing the school uniform itself, or they could be participating in a curricular sports activity during class time. Since the photograph is undated, it is possible that it was taken before the school moved in 1940. These activities were supervised by clergy. It was not uncommon for priests to participate in the games, wearing their white cassocks (Silva, 2014; Schoenaers, 2003). It is interesting to note that many of the Averbodienses religious who came to Brazil were between 20 and 35 years old and had a fondness for physical activities and sports, especially soccer, as part of their upbringing. It is worth noting that this sport was also strongly encouraged by various Catholic orders in their schools, including the Lazarists who administered *São Vicente de Paulo* in its early years.

In this context, as a unique and curious observation about this practice encouraged at this educational institution, we transcribe an excerpt from Fraguas's (2018) article in the newspaper *Tribuna de Petrópolis*, dated June 13, 2018:

As Mario Filho, the famous sports journalist who lends his name to the Maracanã stadium, pointed out, soccer had been played among the students of *Colégio São Vicente de Paulo* in Petrópolis, then an all-boys school. That year, shortly after the first match promoted by Charles Miller in Santos, Father Manuel Gonzales, a teacher at the school who, most likely mistakenly, took pride in having brought soccer to Brazil, made a rawhide ball, nicknamed "*peluda*", which would become famous at the school. Recently arrived from Europe, and using bamboo goalposts, he was the first to teach the rules of the "new" sport to the students. Soccer was such a serious issue at São Vicente, and so strongly encouraged, that, according to Mario Filho, even the *Jornal do Brasil* published an article opposing its practice at the school. (Fraguas, 2018)<sup>23</sup>

The above account demonstrates the importance of this sport at this school, not unlike that of other Premonstratensian and Catholic schools in the country. The author states that until the mid-1900s, in Petrópolis, soccer was only played at the *Collegio São Vicente de Paulo*. The first clubs in the city only emerged in 1905, a trend that would be confirmed by the founding of the *Petropolitano Football Club* in 1911. Its debut was against São Vicente on July 16 of that year, in a game held on the *Imperial Palácio Imperial* (Fraguas, 2018).

The *Collegio* had a humanities section and a vocational technical education section, both of which enjoyed excellent reputations at the time. During World War I, it was a veritable center of Belgian propaganda. On September 29, 1920, the Belgian royal family visited the facilities of the *Collegio São Vicente de Paulo*, which then housed 230 students. The sovereign received a photo album of the order's three establishments in Brazil: Petrópolis, Jaú, and Pirapora.<sup>24</sup>

This educational institution operated until 1992, making it the Order's longest-running school. That year, the *Collegio São Vicente de Paulo* was sold to the Franciscan Order, becoming the *Instituto Teológico Franciscano*. According to Chantrain (2007, p. 131), the justification was the "lack of religious to eventually replace the current administrators of the College, who were already advanced in age." This justification is also presented by José Cusatis, a professor and researcher from the city of Petrópolis, in an article in the newspaper *Tribuna de Petrópolis*, on August 7, 1993, one year after the school closed.

The last school taken over by the residents of Averbode during the First Republic, in 1915, was the then *Gymnasio Jorge Tibiriçá* in the city of Jaú, São Paulo, which was renamed Atheneu Jauense, under the Order's direction.

According to Chantrain (2007, p. 72), the first principal, sworn in on February 25, 1915, was Canon Alderico Lambrechts. The entire staff, which had worked at the high school in Jaguarão, Rio Grande do Sul, moved to Jaú. With the support of the municipality and the Diocesan Council of São Carlos, São Paulo, by the end of the first school year of 1916, there was an increase in student enrollment, which led to the construction of five new classrooms. The author states that associations were created to develop human, intellectual, and religious development, such as the "Santo Agostinho Literary Guild, the Gymnastics Club, Soccer Club

<sup>23</sup> This article was transcribed for the website of the *Instituto Histórico de Petrópolis* and can be accessed at: <https://ihp.org.br/vicentinos-sempre-memorias-do-colegio-sao-vicente-de-paulo/>. Accessed on February 10, 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Belgian Heritage in Brazil, accessed at: <https://www.belgianclub.com.br/pt-br/creator>. Accessed on February 6, 2025.

Competitions, Educational Outings, Religious Associations, Theater Performances at School Parties, Philharmonic, etc." (Chantrain, 2014, p. 30).

In 1926, the Atheneu Jauense changed its name to *Ginásio Municipal*, through municipal law, likely as a strategy to overcome obstacles in federal legislation that prevented private educational institutions from achieving equivalence with Pedro II.

In 1942, the school was named after the Order's founder, *São Norberto*, and remained under this name until its closure in 1969.

Chantrain (2007) states that among the reasons for this closure were the lack of educational institutions in the city of Jaú, the priests' intention to dedicate themselves more directly to the parish apostolate, and also the fact that they no longer had authorization to teach as required by law (Chantrain, 2007, p. 116-117). It is important to consider that, in the early 1960s, there was progress in the democratization of education, with increased access to secondary education, leading to several private schools closing their operations or being taken over by the government (Amaral, 2012, p. 113).

However, the Order remains in the Jaú region to this day, as in 1979 they established a Canonry there, which In 2000, it became an Abbey.

The Premonstratensians also maintained elementary education in their schools, especially in Jaguarão, Petrópolis, and Jaú. In this sense, there was a concern for the most needy population. In Petrópolis, the school operated a Patronage for poor children, offering literacy classes and children's games. In the evenings, there was the *Curso Noturno São Norberto*, aimed at young people and adults in these conditions. In Jaguarão, there was a night course in partnership with the *Liga Operária Jaguareense*, aimed at the working and low-income population. We can affirm that this work also aligned with the *tactics* and *strategies* (Certeau, 2000) of these priests and the Church, aiming to sustain and establish their power within the local community through education. It is also important to mention Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which, with its discourse on the search for better living conditions for the working classes, also aimed to curb the advancement of the demands of the labor movement in the face of the expansion of capitalist relations of production worldwide Western.

To better reflect on the actions of the Premonstratensians and their educational project, we present an excerpt from Stols's (2014)<sup>25</sup> text, which, in a chapter of the work "*Brasil e Bélgica: cinco séculos de conexões e interações*", states the following:

While the Premonstratensians sent more clergy than the Benedictines, **their results were modest**, primarily due to the instability of their foundations and their constant travels throughout Brazil or back to Europe. Few remained for longer periods. In Minas Gerais, almost like itinerant priests, they traveled for many days on horseback, and several suffered health problems, including malaria, resulting in some premature deaths. **They combined parish service with teaching, lacking any pedagogical training or experience. Their schools previously excelled in musical bands or theater**, such as the *São Genesco* group in Montes Claros. In their letters to the propaganda magazine 't Park's Maandschrift,

<sup>25</sup> This is the text "*Os cônegos brancos e outras ordens belgas*". The book, published with the support of the Belgian consulate in Brazil, is available free of charge online. Eddy Stols, author of the aforementioned chapter and also one of the book's organizers, was born in Belgium in 1938. He is a historian and author of works on topics related to the Portuguese-Brazilian relation with Belgium. In the 1960s, he was a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences, and Letters of Marília (now UNESP). He is professor emeritus at the Catholic University of Louvain and a visiting professor at major Brazilian and European universities.

in his use of photography, and in the books by Fathers Thomas Schoenaers, "Drie jaar in Brazilië" (Averbode, 1904), and Maurice Gaspar, "Dans le sertão de Minas" (Louvain, 1910), a greater familiarity with and curiosity about popular culture than among the Benedictines is evident. **Schoenaers was fascinated by Black culture in the lands of Rio Grande do Sul.** Gaspar, a Guimarães Rosa avant la lettre, was enchanted by the journeys through the mountains and plateaus of Minas Gerais in caravans with his comrades and by the generous hospitality on the farms. They enjoyed the gatherings and entrances with fireworks, the Black congadas (congadas) and the processions, as long as they led them. (Stols, 2014, p. 166, emphasis added)

Analyzing Stols' (2014) statements and other sources accessed so far, we can note that beyond the Premonstratensians' work in the schools they established, their contribution is evident in terms of their parish activities, their outreach to communities, and their travel accounts of Brazil, which were sent to Belgium. With these works transformed into books, they contributed significantly to the understanding of the history, culture, and geography of the regions they inhabited.

In this excerpt from Stols (2014), the author considers Gaspar <sup>26</sup>an avant-garde figure, who wrote fascinating texts on themes of the Brazilian backlands before Guimarães Rosa, an important and erudite Brazilian writer, almost all of whose short stories and novels are set in this region<sup>27</sup>. His final statements reveal the practices of this priest, leading us to perceive the insertion not only of himself, but also of the very institution he represents, the Church, into these distinct social, ethnic, and cultural groups that *they began to lead*, including in the "*congadas de negros*." This is a "new" Brazil that, during the First Republic, gradually established and consolidated a culture that effectively blended interracial cultural traditions. It is the Church, through missionary action—in this case, that of the Premonstratensians—that acts (imposing and, at times, negotiating its presence) in the popular spaces where the education and culture that uniquely characterize our country and its distinct regions are forged. In this sense, according to Loner and Gil (2012, p. 267), "it can be said that Father Thomas brings us a vision of another Rio Grande do Sul, one of the borders, of everyday life, much more concrete and real, full of small details important to historians." The authors emphasize that, with his fascination with fauna, geology, and geography, he "left behind good descriptions of the *Gaúcho* countryside region, as well as a critical perspective about Black people and interracial relations in the region at the beginning of the 20th century" (idem, p. 254).

Regarding the creation of schools, the author of the excerpt presented argues that the results were "modest." It is important to mention some data that, if not contradicting, at least relax the definition of "modest," which seems to center on the failure to expand a greater number of schools in Brazil, unlike the Salesians or the Benedictines. The author presents his argument based on quantitative data rather than what we might consider qualitative. He also adopts a critical tone when mentioning the Premonstratensians' lack

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Gaspar, a Premonstratensian from Park, wrote the book "Dans le Sertão of Minas" (Louvain, 1910), mentioned by Stols in the article in question.

<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that the Premonstratensians represent an institution, the Church, whose worldview and intentional approach to regional daily life become explicit in their books, predating the spectacular regional description presented years later by Guimarães Rosa. This comparison between the writings on regional issues by the priests and by our great name in Brazilian literature should be interpreted with caution. However, the Premonstratensians' intention in writing about distinct Brazilian spatialities whose regional characteristics could spark the interest of the Church and this religious Order specifically.

of training and pedagogical experience in their institutions (see emphasis). It suggests that activities, which, as we know, were part of the school curriculum outside of the classroom, such as *marching bands and theater*, were given more prominence than other pedagogical activities that, in their opinion, were more important.

Reports about the early experiences of Park's Premonstratensians suggest that they combined parish activities with education. And, analyzing Stols's statements, we see that he refers primarily to the northern region of Minas Gerais. He generalizes characteristics of the work of the two Orders of Premonstratensians that came to Brazil, which, in our view, presented singularities and, perhaps, purposes that differed given the regional characteristics of the places where they operated. We reiterate that the Belgian Premonstratensians worked in municipalities in the interior of Brazil, in distinct geographic, political, and economic regions.

When considering the trajectory of the institutions (schools, if mines, churches) established by the Premonstratensians of Averbode, at least with regard to the duration of some of them, it cannot be said that the results were "modest." However, the number of educational institutions they created and their tradition as educators in comparison with other Catholic orders deserve further analysis. When studying the schools maintained by the Premonstratensians of Averbode, we take into greater consideration aspects of their success or failure, regardless of the number of schools they created and maintained.

We emphasize that, according to the documents examined, despite its short duration, the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* became one of the leading secondary schools in Rio Grande do Sul, as stated by Stols (2014). Furthermore, the *Colégio de Petrópolis* in Rio de Janeiro, which remained under the direction of the Premonstratensians until 1992 (Chantrain, 2007) and the *Gymnasio Jorge Tibiriça*, in Jaú, São Paulo, which they took over in 1915 and kept under their direction until 1969, demonstrate that these schools were successful for a considerable period.

In the final section of the text presented here, when Stols cites Canon Schoenaers (of Averbode) and Gaspar (Park), he refers to the accounts they wrote and sent to Belgium about the missionary, parish, and educational activities of the Premonstratensians of Averbode and Park. In these letters, they emphasized, with undisguised enchantment, the cultural and geographic potential of the locations where they lived, not prioritizing the activities of their educational institutions. But a question also arises here: weren't their missionary and parish work also imbued with an educational process of a given worldview? It is important to keep in mind that education does not occur solely in environments where the schooling process unfolds.

Indeed, in the case of Schoenaers' letters, most of them do not provide details of the classes at the *Gymnasio*. There are, indeed, many descriptions of places and peculiar situations that signal the potential of the work to be developed in the border town of Jaguarão. It is possible to find complimentary descriptions of the pedagogical work of the priests and of events held by the school, many outside the school premises, also recorded through photographs he produced. As it had already noted, this priest was transferred to Petrópolis in 1909 to take over the direction of that school, precisely because of the pedagogical and administrative experience he had gained in Jaguarão.

Next, we will examine another observation by Stols, regarding the priests of Averbode, which helps us identify errors and misunderstandings in the dates presented and in his perception of the priests' work.

Meanwhile, more priests arrived from Averbode, enough to take charge of the *Colégio do Espírito Santo* in Jaguarão, Rio Grande do Sul, very close to Uruguay, in 1901. **This school had some success** and, after the purchase of a larger building in 1903, had over one hundred students, **but due to a lack of equality with state education, it closed in 1912. They then opened another school in Jaú, São Paulo state, but due to lack of success, it closed in 1968.** Earlier, in 1909, at the request of the Nuncio, they took over the management of a school in Petrópolis, for which they rented the Imperial Palace, which was vacant at the time. (Stols, 2014, p. 164-165, emphasis added)

In reality, as it had already stated, the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo* was equated with the *Gymnasio Nacional (Collegio Pedro II)* in 1908. However, Stols is likely referring to the end of this equating system, after the Rivadavia Reform, hence "national" rather than "state." We emphasize that the Rivadávia Correa Law of 1911 did indeed cause a problem related to equivalence; however, no mention of it is made in this section of the text. There is also an error in the closing date of the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo*, which actually occurred in 1914.

The *Gymnasio Jaguarão* was the only educational institution of the Averbode Premonstratensians that closed its doors during the First Republic. And, curiously, it was this institution that, in Stols's critique, is mentioned as having "some success." This would be partially correct if we consider only the first 10 years. Furthermore, the critique should point to a failure of the Premonstratensians in failing to maintain the *Gymnasio Espírito Santo*, a situation that did not occur in Petrópolis. In Jaú, they did not open a new school, but took over the then *Collegio Jorge Tibiriçá*. And, considering that it remained under his management until 1969, a period that can be considered extensive, it would be somewhat inappropriate to state that they were unsuccessful in these endeavors.

However, as there is a need for further studies on the work of the Premonstratensians in Brazil, perhaps there are still unanswered questions that lead the author to make these statements.<sup>28</sup> It is also important to consider that Stols, as a historian, has his *own place of speech* and *domain* to conduct research (Certeau); he is imbued with a commitment to what he presents about the past by linking, as Certeau (2000, p. 65) states, the "*ideas*" to *places*." His profound knowledge of Portuguese-Belgian-Brazilian relations should be borne in mind, as a Belgian intellectual who wrote books and experienced educational experiences in these spaces.

In more recent times, with the creation of the Abbey of Saint Norbert in Jau in 2000, the Premonstratensians in Brazil are no longer under the obedience of the Abbey of Averbode in Belgium. Motivated by the current situation and by guidance from the Catholic Church itself, they prioritize pastoral assistance and apostolic services in the formation of priests over the organization and maintenance of schools. However, individually, they continue to serve as teachers, administrators, counselors, and chaplains (A.S.N., n.d.).

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<sup>28</sup> For a brief comparison, we cite the Salesian priests who settled in Brazil in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, in 1883 (Azzi, 1995). They had extensive experience in Europe with youth and job training. Thus, they became very attractive to Brazilians of the period. Indeed, if we observe the religious, educational, and economic work of these priests, we will realize that they went far beyond simply opening schools. For more in-depth analysis, we suggest reading Azzi (1994 and 1995) and Gonçalves Neto (2013).

## Final Considerations

We conclude this text by returning to what is presented in its first sentence: "The work of the Premonstratensians of Averbode (Belgium) in education in Brazil is a topic still little studied by historians of education." But, in this sense, we add that we must go further! The Premonstratensians' role in education as a religious order organized into different abbeys on all continents deserves further academic study. The lack of research about their role in education is not limited to the Portuguese-Brazilian context. Few studies have been conducted outside this context.

This may be due to the fact that they are not considered "educators par excellence," maintaining schools with standard and regular education, focused on the educational development of the general population, as is the case with the Jesuits or Lasallians. They are best known for their work in seminaries that aim to train cadres for the Premonstratensian Order and the Church itself. The Premonstratensians of Averbode came to Brazil to work at the *Collegio São Norberto*, which soon became the *Seminário Menor Metropolitano de São Paulo*. These priests, in Europe, were more accustomed to the pedagogical process in seminaries, although they also had some experience with conventional mainstream schools. But here they added a dual responsibility: caring for churches (parishes and seminaries) and also creating schools for a non-seminarian population.

It is also important to consider, in the case of Brazil, the small number of schools they created compared to other Catholic orders during the period studied. However, we reiterate the importance of these schools at the regional and national levels. Their institutional practices and the representation of their materiality in spaces that mark the historical-cultural heritage and urban aesthetics of their locations, and allow us to witness the functionality and splendor of their buildings to this day.

In Brazil, the context in which the Premonstratensians created the four schools presented here corresponds to an international and national context in which the expectations of Catholic ultramontanist and the guidelines for national education were in conflict: secular and Catholic education. The Premonstratensian secondary schools, as we have seen, were successful in reaching out to the community they were intended for: the social elite.

This is a time when the Brazilian Catholic Church freed itself from the yoke of the monarchical state. Because of this, it carried out internal reforms aimed at strengthening religious orders and establishing schools. During that period, there was a polarization in which Catholics and non-Catholics competed, through education, for the inculcation of their practices, representations, and ideologies.

The Catholic Church, realizing the potential of schooling in expanding Catholic ideals and seeking more believers, set out to establish schools that would "compete" for young people who might otherwise be at the mercy of other non-religious schools or other branches of Christianity. They dedicated themselves with special attention to the creation of secondary schools intended for the more privileged classes, as this was also a way to sustain themselves economically and to train future generations of political and economic leaders.

To this end, when creating their schools, they sought to adapt to Brazilian legislation, in which the main objective of secondary school was to enable students, linked to a financial elite, to achieve a higher education. college. An exception was the period during which the Rivadavia Correa Reform was in effect, from 1911 to 1915, which allowed students access to higher education without having completed secondary school.

It is important to note that just as the history Premonstratensians of Averbode deserves attention from historians of education, the schools they created should be studied in their uniqueness, based on aspects of their school cultures that will reveal elements that identify their importance in regional and national contexts.

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