


THE PORTUGUESE PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES AND THE LAW OF SEPARATION. EXPECTATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS*

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1.

In the complex debate in the transition between the 19th and 20th century in Portugal, the religious problem (the so called “*questão religiosa*”) worked as a reflection where different ideological positions were articulated, concerning the political, social, economic, cultural and educational spheres. Simultaneously, the religious itself, and its conceptual universe, were used as mechanisms for the formalization of a political conscience. In the specific case of the Portuguese republicanism, there was a dynamization of an ideological core with a significant anticlerical component that, in its radicalism, identified the roman-catholic religion as an opponent. The fact that Catholicism was constitutionally designated as the religion of the kingdom¹, and therefore, of the Monarchy, tended to reinforce that identification and the association of that critique with the search for a different society and a different religiousness, which allowed the Portuguese republican universe to open up to other spheres that were not strictly political.

* This article is intended to be a work of synthesis of a wide research developed around the themes of Protestantism and Republicanism that gave place to several publications during the period of the commemoration of the Centenary of the Republic (1910-2010) in Portugal. Given the very rich diversity of investigators and languages present in the International Congress of History «100 years of Separation. Religion, Society, State», we are now taking the opportunity to share part of our research with a larger range of historiographical fields, through the use of English.

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¹ The Constitutional Charter of 1826 defined, in its 6th article that «The Roman Apostolic Religion will continue to be the Religion of the Kingdom. All other Religions will be allow to the Foreigners with their domestic, or private, cult in houses designed for that purpose, without any exterior form of Temple» (*As constituições portuguesas, de 1822 ao texto actual da constituição*. Lisboa: Livraria Petrony, 1992). The State was defined as confessional, which resulted in the legitimization of the marginalization of all the non-catholic religious confessions, hence distanced from the exercise of citizenship and kept in a private universe. In spite of that, the same Charter specified in its 145th article that no one could be persecuted for religious matters, as long as the state religion and the public moral were respected. Nevertheless, the structuration and development of the protestant communities in Portugal along the 19th century was made under a constitutional platform that excluded those denominations from the integration in national identity. Nonetheless, that ambivalent content allowed, along the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the Charter to be invoked as an argument of legitimization both by those who defended the strict respect for the state religion and those who supported the principle of religious freedom.

On the other hand, the route of the Portuguese protestant denominations² led some of its members and leaders to republicanism³. The development of that approximation led to the building of bonds between republican militants and some Protestants, some of which led inclusively to the filiation of Protestants in the Portuguese Republican Party (*Partido Republicano Português*). That militancy was based, first of all, in the understanding of republicanism as the way through which Portugal would achieve to religious freedom⁴.

Along the 19th century, the gradual, though slow, introduction of protestant elements in the dynamization of sociabilities and the progressive coexistence of the roman-catholic inflexibility with another images of the reformed movement, allowed the emergency of favourable positions regarding the role of protestant communities in the construction of a tolerant environment. In spite of that, the practical meaning of tolerance, based in a system of inclusion, is always the translation of some conflict, since it expresses the majority's will that claims for itself the ability to legitimate (or not) the different forces in stake in the process of the formations of sociabilities⁵. The freedom of worship, on the other hand, surpasses those limitations and it is directly linked to religious freedom.

The valorisation of freedom as an essential principle was actually developed as one of the fundamentals of the republican ideology, frequently specified in its religious component. In the end of the 19th century, that ideology gradually structured itself as a repository of hope for a significant part of the Portuguese protestant communities engaged in the opening of the religious and spiritual national landscape and in the fight for the consecration of religious freedom. At the same time, the valorisation of the equality principle within the republican ideology approximate it to one of the main aspirations of the evangelical universe, engaged in claiming the acknowledgement of religious plurality and in the opposition against the privileges

² In spite its heterogeneity, the protestant Christianity, also vulgarly designated in Portugal as evangelical or reformed, should be simultaneously analysed as an unit, structured under a common doctrine but also in the self-definition of its members as an integrant part of an ample and wide evangelical movement. In the evangelical communities implanted in Portugal during this period that unity was emphasized by their minority character but also through the affirmation of principles of faith that functioned as a differentiation instrument towards roman Catholicism and a defence mechanism opposed to the critics that that same Church developed against those protestant communities. For a wider knowledge of the history of the Portuguese Protestantism, see: António Matos Ferreira – Protestantismo. In *Dicionário de História de Portugal: Suplemento*. Vol. 3. Coord. António Barreto; Maria Filomena Mónica. Porto: Livraria Figueirinhas, 1999-2000, p. 191-197; António Matos Ferreira – Correntes cristãs na definição do espaço colonial português. In *História da Expansão Portuguesa*. Vol. 4. Dir. Francisco Bethencourt; Kirti Chaudhuri. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1998, p. 425-443, Luís Aguiar Santos – Protestantismo. In *Dicionário de História Religiosa de Portugal*. Vol. 4. Dir. Carlos Moreira de Azevedo. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2001, p. 75-85; Luís Aguiar Santos – Pluralidade Religiosa: Correntes cristãs e não-cristãs no universo religioso português. In *História Religiosa de Portugal*. Vol. 3. Dir. Carlos Moreira de Azevedo. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2002, p. 399-501.

³ To understand the meeting between Protestantism and republicanism in Portugal, it is necessary to acknowledge that republicanism and the Portuguese Republican Party are not synonym expressions and, at the same time, we have to differentiate what the republican ideology stated and what the First Republic, as a regime, actually was.

⁴ Cf. Rita Mendonça Leite – *Representações do protestantismo na sociedade portuguesa contemporânea: da exclusão à liberdade de culto (1852-1911)*. Lisboa: CEHR, 2009.

⁵ Cf. António Matos Ferreira – Laicidade. In *Dicionário de História Religiosa de Portugal*. Vol. 3, p. 58-65.

given to the Roman Catholic Church. The sharing of those purposes allowed the cooperation between Protestants and republicans.

Moreover, and in spite of knowing that the growth of anticlericalism didn't exactly mean a growth of anticatholicism, it is nevertheless rigorous to say that the criticism towards the Catholic Church as an institution was frequently and progressively confused with an offensive against its doctrinal fundamentals. The protestant leaders, have contributed to the reinforcement of that association, playing a role in the theorization of an anticlericalism that manifested itself as an alternative sociability, detached from the traditional catholic foundations and projected onto the advances in science and technique, a democratic and republican political structure and, finally, onto an evangelical spirituality. In the perspective of the protestant communities, the evangelical Christianity represented, like the Republic, and in a potential partnership, the progress that didn't exist in the catholic organicity.

The implantation of the Republic in 1910 aspire to put in a concrete form a program of restoration of "morality and good sense" and in its first decisions and legislative acts, the first Republic defined the nation as the only collective belief, fighting from the beginning for a reduction of the catholic influence and for a development of a specific, patriotic and secular worship. The disestablishment of Roman Catholicism as the religion of State was an essential stage in the consecration of the religious freedom and in the integration of protestant communities in the Portuguese society. For this reason, that initial enthusiasm concerning the regeneration purposes was largely shared within the protestant sectors, and represented the beginning of an active participation of those communities in the political and cultural debate and, therefore, in the discussion about what the First Republic should be. This participation unfolded itself in various initiatives at different levels, but was basically structured in three crucial moments, being that two of them were triggered by the Law of Separation of the 20th April 1911.

2.

The first moment began with the greeting messages sent to the new regime and the immediate establishment of contacts with the new members of the Government⁶. In the 8th of October 1910 the "National Committee of the Young Christian Unions" (*Comité Nacional das Uniões Cristãs da Mocidade*) issued two telegrams

⁶ In some cases, that immediateness was practically literal. Several years later, Alfredo Henrique da Silva remember how «After sharing the anxieties of all republicans in those three memorable days between the 3rd and the 5th October, during which we were in Porto knowing almost nothing from what was going on in Lisbon, and after enjoying that unforgettable hour during which, from the Paços do Concelho, in the 6th, the Republic was proclaimed [...] I found myself thinking about what I could do to promote the prestige of the Republic» (Alfredo Henrique da Silva – *O Monstro da Escravatura: A minha defeza na campanha levantada a propósito da publicação do folheto Alma Negra*. Porto: Tipografia Mendonça, 1913, p. 15), explaining that he immediately went to Lisbon, having, during that trip, «the pleasure to enjoy the company from sr. Dr. António Luiz Gomes, who had been designated by the revolution as Secretary of State for Development (Fomento), and that was about to be invested», and then the opportunity to give a «sincere hug of congratulation for the triumph of the Republic to [his] friend sr. Dr. Afonso Costa, who was the person whom [he] knew better from all members of the Provisory Government (Alfredo Henrique da Silva – *O Monstro da Escravatura*, p. 15).

addressed to Teófilo Braga⁷ and Bernardino Machado⁸ congratulating them for the instauration of the new regime and presenting their expectations concerning the resolution of the religious problem, namely it what concerned the revocation of the laws of exception that harmed the protestant communities⁹ and the promulgation of the coveted freedoms. In the following months the demonstrations of support and manifestations of hope concerning the Republic multiplied in the protestant communities¹⁰. The evangelical press transmitted the hope that the republican institutions proclaimed religious freedom and the recognition of all citizens as equal, which would allowed an amplification of the protestant sphere of influence, since it was defended that the restrictions previously imposed to Protestants were an adverse force to the progress of the country.

In the 20th of October, a group of protestant delegates had a reunion with Teó-

⁷ Joaquim Teófilo Fernandes Braga (Ponta Delgada, 24.II.1843 – Lisboa, 28.I.1924), politician and historian, was president of the Provisory Government of the First Republic (1910-11) and was President of the Republic (substituting Manuel de Arriaga) in 1915. He represented a republicanism strongly influenced by positivism.

⁸ Bernardino Machado (Rio de Janeiro, 28.III.1851 – Porto, 29.IV.1944) was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs during the Provisory Government of the First Republic, and was elected, in 1911, as a senator in the Constituent National Assembly. He would assume the leadership of two consecutive governments, in 1914, and would be elected President of the Republic in 1915. Back in 1895, he had assumed the post of Grand-Master of the *Grande Oriente Lusitano Unido*, a position that he kept until 1899 with the one of «Great Sovereign Commendator of the Supreme Council of Degree 33» (*Soberano Grande Comendador do Supremo Conselho do Grau 33*), assuming this last position again between 1929 and 1944.

⁹ The sustenance of the confessional State represented the continuity of the marginalization of the non-catholic religious denominations and the answer to the already mentioned theoretic contradictions of the Constitutional Charter was pulverized in the adoption of different methods, namely through the signature of specific international treaties (for example between Portugal and Great Britain), in the promulgation of the Penal Code and, mostly, in the judicial, social and cultural everyday practices. The (first Portuguese) Penal Code, in 1852, included a series of articles that concerned the crimes against the kingdom's religion and that inclusion constituted, in itself, a reinforcement of the vision of the confessional State as a fusion between the national identity and the roman-catholic religiosity. A fusion that was actually reinforced by the listing of the crimes: public offenses against the dogma, acts and worship objects of the Catholic Church; the attempt to propagate doctrines that were contrary to the dogma of the kingdom's religion; the celebration of public acts of a non-catholic worship service; any proselyte activities or attempts of conversion to a different religion or sect reproved by the Catholic Church; and the crime of apostasy, condemned with the loss of all political rights. This set of articles clearly condemned and criminalized any type of non-Catholic proselytism in Portugal, which (if not completely contradicted the supposed religious freedom consecrated in the Constitutional Charter) intended to suffocate any type of religious differentiation that the Charter recognized as being a reality. It was the revocation of these articles that the protestant communities wanted to see enacted. We should, nevertheless, add that, in spite all of this, the theoretic inflexibility of the Code and the intransigence of some sectors of the Portuguese society, were not entirely reproduced in the practical field. During the transition between the 19th and the 20th century several moderating factors contributed to relativize part of the dispositions of the Code, inclusively allowing the slow construction of an environment of tolerance different from the image of intransigence transmitted in the penal legislation.

¹⁰ In one of the most important newspapers of the protestant communities, property of the Lusitanian Church, it was declared still in October: «For several years we have enjoyed religious tolerance in Portugal, but the new Government goes further, since it does not only promises the tolerance, but also the religious freedom, the perfect equality of all citizens whatever their religious beliefs are, as long as they observe and respect the laws that rule us; freedoms that were aspired by us for a long time and that exist in all the countries that occupy the first place science, in progress and in industry; that is why we cannot help but greet the advent of the Portuguese Republic [...]. If the republican institutions will give us, as we hope, more freedom to widen our action field and to spread the light and the education, they will also bring us new responsibilities» (*Egreja Lusitana: Órgão da Igreja Lusitana Católica Apostólica e Evangélica*, nº 276, 18th October 1910, p. 1-2).

filo Braga, during which they presented themselves as heirs of the spirit of Reform and supporters of progress and freedom (based on the Gospels). They defended that they already supported the republican principles¹¹ and promised to contribute to the consolidation and progress of the regime. The reaction from the President of the Provisory Government was the clarification that the Government intended, in fact, to enact the separation between Church and State and the right of each citizen to practise his religion without any restraints.

In that same day, the very same group met with Afonso Costa¹², in the Ministry of Justice, explaining what were the legislative proceedings that they would like to see enacted, namely: the revocation of the articles of the Penal Code that discriminated Protestants and criminalize their actions; the legalization of the Churches, through the concession of juridical capacity and rights of property; the right to the free edification of temples; the exemption of the payment of the “*côngruas*” (an ecclesiastical revenue); the secularization of the cemeteries; and the authorization to the free-circulation of religious books. Afonso Costa did not only declared that all those claims would be answered but also guaranteed the establishment of religious freedom in Portugal and the acknowledgement of the equality of all religions at the eye of the Portuguese State¹³.

In the meantime, those positive expectations of the Portuguese protestant communities had inclusively international responses and in the beginning of 1911, the periodical *The Protestant Observer*, in Great Britain, announced:

«Religious liberty has been proclaimed, leaving each church to profess and teach its own doctrines without let or hindrance. Members of the Government have expressed the pleasure of having been able to secure to Protestants the “free field and no favour” that we always desire»¹⁴.

It was also said, in that same newspaper, that several ministers had inclusively encouraged the Protestants and it was considered that they spoke as «politicians

¹¹ They declared in that matter: «Our schools, spreading the light without prejudice in the brains of thousands of children, our Unions, promoting the development of the instruction and the integral of the youth, and our churches raising the torch of free will and preaching the freedom, equality and the fraternity, give us the right to take our place side by side with the pioneers of the Portuguese democracy» (*Egreja Lusitana*, nº277, 3rd November 1910, p. 3).

¹² Afonso Costa (Seia, 6.III.1871 – Paris, 11.V.1937) was one of the most important characters of the First republic, one of its great ideologists. He was a member of the Parliament, between 1911 and 1926 (with several interruptions), having assumed governmental functions as Secretary of State for Justice, (1910-1911), Secretary of State for the Finances (1913-1914 and 1915-1917) and president of the Ministry (1913-14, 1915-16 and 1917). He had a fundamental role in the definition of the political structure and in the juridical architecture of the new regime.

¹³ Cf. *Egreja Lusitana*, nº277, 3rd November 1910, p. 3. That commission had inclusively been charged with the task of not only greeting Afonso Costa but thanking him for the «wise partial measures that he has been publicly taking concerning the freedom of conscience» and declaring their «confidence that the government of the Republic, faithful to its promises, will establish in our country, in all its plenitude, the freedom of worship, that great conquest of the civilized peoples» (*Egreja Lusitana*, nº277, 3rd November 1910, p. 3).

¹⁴ Historical and Diplomatic Archive (*Arquivo Histórico Diplomático*) – Foreign Office (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros) – Correspondence from the diplomatic and consular representations of Portugal (*Correspondência proveniente das representações diplomáticas e consulares de Portugal*), Great-Britain, London Legation, 1911, Annex of the Official Letter, nº 93.

recognizing in Protestantism a power for good in the emancipation and enlightenment of the nation»¹⁵, which confirmed the idea of evangelical Christianity as an important part of that program of moralization and progress of the country.

The debate about the religious problem came up, moreover, as a constant element in the general analysis of the British press about the implementation of the regime – it was frequently transmitted (and not only in the press with religious connotation) a posture that held the clericalism accountable for the “decline” of the Monarchy¹⁶ and that supported the governmental action that would lead to the consecration of the religious freedom.

The Portuguese legation in London itself declared, in the 21st of November 1910, that the consecration of freedom of worship in Portugal was already producing its results in England, since the “Spanish and Portuguese Church Aid Society” had transmitted to them that they considered the moment «without precedents to develop and consolidate the Evangelical Church in Portugal»¹⁷. In that same correspondence the Portuguese Foreign office was informed about the reception of a letter from the organization “Protestant Sons and Daughters Freedom”, based in Edinburgh, where the Portuguese were congratulated for the «emancipation [...] of Papish tyranny and despotism in their land» and where it was advocated that:

«the extirpation of clericalism, involving the banishment of Jesuits, Monks and Nuns, and the setting up of a secular system of education to dispel the prevailing illiteracy are wholesome and much needed reforms calculated to open up the way to progress and enlightenment»¹⁸.

The organization added that Portugal would become an example to other countries still dominated by “superstition” and “ignorance”, meaning the ones where Roman Catholics were a majority. Therefore, it is clear that there were evident positive expectations about what the republican regime could bring to the protestant communities in Portugal

After a first moment dominated by enthusiasm, the active participation of the evangelical communities was extended in a second phase, mainly triggered by the promulgation of the Law of Separation of the Churches and the State (20th April 1911). The Law established itself as a crucial step in the affirmation of the First Republic, but also as an essential instrument in the conflict with the Catholic Church and in the clarification of the nature and the limits of the relationship between the new regime and the protestant communities.

Instituting the freedom of worship as a basic principle, the Law of Separation did not restrict itself to the consecration of that premise, since it also wanted to im-

¹⁵ Historical and Diplomatic Archive, Correspondence, 1911, Annex of the Official Letter, n° 93.

¹⁶ In the *Liverpool Evening Express* (6th October 1910) it was transmitted that: «The young King is said to have been much influenced by his mother and the clerical party, and the misgovernment went on as though nothing had happened» and in the *Newcastle Chronicle* of the 7th of October it was considered that «the Catholic church can no longer assert the huge measure, of political power which it has possessed in the past – or any considerable part of it. Its work in Portugal has immensely contributed to the decay of effective government» (Historical and Diplomatic Archive – Correspondence, 1910).

¹⁷ Historical and Diplomatic Archive – Correspondence, 1910, Official Letter n° 97.

¹⁸ Historical and Diplomatic Archive – Correspondence, 1910, Official Letter n° 97.

plement a new model of political community, structured in purposes like: the consolidation of a national clergy properly supervised, the state supervision of the ecclesiastical properties and the delimitation of the religious groups associative power. The Separation clearly arose like the translation of a desire to dominate the Roman Catholic Church and, in a larger sense, the religious phenomenon as a whole, which obviously raise reactions not only from the Catholics but also from the Protestants. Ultimately, the law that had been conceived to consolidate the strength of the new republican regime ended being the main source of its debility and the origin of the fast division of its supporters¹⁹.

It is unarguable that the disestablishment of Roman Catholicism as the religion of State and the consecration of the freedom of worship were the concretization of some principles that had been claimed by the protestant communities for a long time, but it is also true that these denominations were simultaneously confronted with the progressive subversion of the instruments and consequences that they thought would be the result of that same freedom²⁰. The expectation and hesitation punctuated the reaction of the leaders of the protestant communities concerning the application of the Law of Separation, but they soon began a clarification process.

In the 24th of April and 8th of June 1911 they held meetings in the Junta Tri-mensal of the Evangelical Church of Mirante (Methodists) with the purpose of discussing the governmental measures. Identifying a certain incompatibility concerning the law articles and the protestant principles and purposes, the Methodist community (never forgetting to express its complete confidence in the republican regime) made a systematization of the evangelical purposes and the requests for clarification objectives that became known as *The Protestant Churches Memorial concerning the Law of Separation (Memorial das Igrejas Protestantes a propósito da Lei de Separação da Igreja do Estado)*, delivered to Bernardino Machado in the 16th of April 1911.

They presented themselves as delegates of the several Portuguese evangelical Churches, and after a brief description of the formation and projects of those churches and an alert to all the «unfair persecution» that they had suffered, the document appealed to a correct interpretation of the Law claiming that otherwise, those communities would still be victims of discrimination. In fact, the maintenance of the catholic temples and the definition of obstacles to public worship were denounced as a way to maintain the roman-catholic privileges. Consequently, the protestant delegates incorporated in the Memorial a set of proposals that would balance the situation, namely: the possibility to buy the properties where the protestant temples were (since the previous law prohibited that, and all the temples were individual property); the right to donate freely; the recognition that evangelical congregations would be allowed to have teaching purposes; the authorization of the exercise of religion functions by foreign ministers; and the permission to held evangelical conferences in any space.

¹⁹ About the conflict between the republican regime and religion see the fundamental work of Maria Lúcia de Brito Moura – *A «Guerra Religiosa» na I República*. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, 2010.

²⁰ Cf. Luís Aguiar Santos – *Pluralidade Religiosa*, p. 399-501.

Still fighting for the consolidation of the Law of Separation, the Constitution of 1911²¹ reinforced the basic principle of the freedom of conscience and enacted the neutrality of the State in religious matters. However, the practical interpretation of the main purposes of the republican regime failed in the creation of a consensus and divisions multiplied not only in the political, but also in the religious field, within which Catholics and Protestants participated in a heated discussion, both claiming the situation wasn't balanced and both denouncing the other side as privileged²².

It was still the Law of Separation that, in 1914, triggered the third moment of the intervention of the protestant communities in the process of the separation between the church and State, with the presence of a new delegation of the Evangelical Churches in the Congress of the Republic when the Law and its revision were largely discussed. That group had the purpose of renewing the claims exposed in 1911, remembering that the Law still had a significant set of restrictions that limited the execution of the protestant religious, moral and educational projects. The declarations of confidence in the regime and acceptance of the main prescriptions of the Law were also renewed, but simultaneously an alert was made for the need to fill some of its edges:

«We understand [...] that this Law, generated in a revolutionary period that came after a time of ecclesiastical predominance, could not be a conciliation law. It was a Law of war. But now, that the Portuguese Republic has already shown its generosity, amnestying the prisoners for political motives, and when everybody shows the wish to live in peace, enjoying their civil and religious guaranties, we think it is fair and of great convenience to the country that, conserving the Law in its essence, some of its edges are cut, since they not only hurt the Church of Rome but also the Evangelical Church that, in no way has contributed to the to the problems of the nation, and has only searched and keeps searching to reform the Religion and the habits and to instruct and educate the Portuguese family»²³.

The reformation of the Law was defended²⁴ as a question of justice and patriotic duty.

Nevertheless, the inability of the Republic to respond to the different supporters that had sustained the republican movement was increasingly more evident. The expectations that had been deposited in that project of national renewal were replaced by a feeling of disappointment and frustration denounced by both the political and the religious spheres. In the evangelical universe, some criticism arose concerning the degeneration of a project that had been object of a great deal of in-

²¹ Promulgated in the 21st of August of that same year.

²² The Protestants denounced the maintenance of an unequal system. The Catholics, sharing that position, consider, nevertheless, that the system favoured the protestant communities, since they considered that the strictness of the observance of the Law towards them was diametrically opposed to the benevolence shown towards the Protestants. These disequilibrium actually gave place to the intervention of the governmental organs, that, feeling the need to clear up the situation, issued (in January 1912) a circular directed to all civil governors, with the recommendation that the law should be applied equally, in order to guarantee that a privileged situation wasn't created for the non-catholic confessions.

²³ *Egreja Lusitana*, nº 349, 12th March 1914, p. 2.

²⁴ Made explicit through the request of revision or suppression of the articles: 10.º, 26.º, 29.º, 30.º, 32.º, 33.º, 34.º, 43.º, 44.º, 55.º and 178.º.

vestment. Eduardo Moreira²⁵ was one of those voices and he inclusively abandoned the militancy in the Portuguese Republican Party²⁶. He distanced himself from the First Republic, but not from republicanism. He just defended another Republic²⁷. There were, nevertheless, other republican Protestants that kept an unconditional support to the First Republic. Alfredo Henrique da Silva²⁸, for example, preserved and repeatedly claimed his dedication to the regime. He worked during those years for the conciliation and adaptation of the evangelical churches in the freedom environment provided by the republican regime and in 1922 he was inclusively awarded by the republican government with the Official Degree of the Order of Christ (*Grau de Oficial da Ordem de Cristo*).

3.

The First Republic developed an important role in both the secularization and laicization processes in Portugal. There wasn't a full correspondence between the expectations of the protestant communities and the application of the republican ideology²⁹, but that doesn't nullify the fact that the first Republic has positively influenced the integration of the evangelical churches in Portugal, inclusive allowing them to go beyond the strictly religious sphere, through the construction of a wide social and cultural activity. The circumstances were, indeed, substantially transformed and that chance provided a reorganization and adaptation of all the religious groups and a long process of recomposition of the religious sociabilities.

²⁵ Eduardo Moreira (Lisboa, 26.II.1886 – Lisboa, 22.IV.1980) was one of the pioneers of the protestant movement in Portugal, which resulted not only from his activity as a pastor but also as Theology teacher, writer, poet, ideologist and politician. His action as scholar spread out to the fields of the evangelical preaching, journalistic intervention, literary creation, historical and religious research and political activity both in the municipal and the national dimensions, and both influenced by his republican militancy. He was responsible for some essential works to the history of Protestantism in Portugal, like: *Crisóstomo Português: Elementos para a História do Púlpito* (1957) and *Vidas Convergentes: História Breve dos Movimentos de Reforma Cristã em Portugal, a partir do século XVIII* (1958).

²⁶ Defining his exit as a reaction to the inability of his co-regionalists to understand the true meaning of religious freedom and democracy and to the impotence of the Portuguese Republican Party (and most of the other parties) to neutralize the selfishness that that surpassed in the action of the First Republic. Cf. Eduardo Moreira's Resignation letter from the Câmara Municipal of Lisboa and abandonment of the militancy of the Portuguese Republican Party, 14th October 1922. União Cristã da Mocidade Archive.

²⁷ He would still declare, in 1925, that «The law of the 20th April 1911 recognized in our country, hopefully definitely, the freedom of conscience and religious freedom. Although the theories of monarchism and hereditaryness were disputable and we didn't have the chance to verify that the bees know how to create their queens but to see that men know how to ruin their leaders when created for that purpose, the law of the 20th April, even with all its imperfections, was enough to justify the change of the Regime» (*Portugal Evangélico*, nº 60 and 61, September and October 1925, p. 3).

²⁸ Alfredo Henrique da Silva (Porto, 18.I.1872 – Porto, 22.I.1950) was an educator and a protestant missionary. Educated in the field of economical and financial science, Alfredo da Silva combined, during his life, his missionary and educational activity with his professional duties. He was an English teacher in the Industrial and Commercial Institute in Porto (1910), director from the Commercial Institute in that same city and teacher of economical history and transport's organization in the Superior Institute of Commerce (1919). Within his evangelical militancy, he was a teacher in the Mirante's (Methodist) primary School, a minister in the Methodist Church (ordained in 1898), one of the founders of the União Cristã da Mocidade (the Portuguese YMCA, in 1894), and the delegate, in Portugal, from the International Alliance for Peace and Fraternity.

²⁹ There was, in fact, a certain inter-manipulation between republicans and Protestants.

In what concerns the Portuguese Protestantism, the First Republic, motivating a certain reconfiguration, has essentially provided a development of some areas of intervention and the application of a set of programs previously projected, which was translated in: a certain growth of churches and the amplification of the influence of its leaders; the multiplication of Sunday Schools and, consequently, the creation of the “Portuguese Federation of Sunday Schools” (*Federação Portuguesa das Escolas Dominicais*), in 1921; the reinforcement of the evangelical activities connected with the youth³⁰; the valorisation of social assistance as a fundamental component of the evangelical activity; and, lastly, in a more institutional level, the creation, in August 1921, of the bases of the (first) “Portuguese Evangelical Alliance” (*Aliança Evangélica Portuguesa*), a document that was the result of the meeting and discussion between delegates from all the Portuguese protestant churches.

These results reflect the complexity of the process of integration of the protestant communities in the Portuguese society and, in a wider sense, they also reflect the inexistence of linearity in the process of valuing religious plurality as a practical reality integrated in the acceptance of religious freedom and in the extension of the civil rights³¹. The transition between the Constitutional Monarchy and the First Republic, in this aspect, often defined as a linear path between the catholic hegemony and secularity, has necessarily to be questioned, since concepts as hegemony, tolerance, religious plurality, integration, freedom of worship and religious freedom, tend to assume different meanings according to the context in which they are used and the agents that use them, and do not follow one another in a necessarily ordained way.

³⁰ Namely with the renovation of the Associações Cristãs da Mocidade (ACM's), engaged in the dynamization of the intellectual and educational fields, along with the spiritual and physical areas. It was within this dynamic that the first Boy Scout's group was created in Portugal, in April 1912. Progressively the Boy-scouts movement surpassed the protestant environment, developing itself in the direction of secularization, on one hand, and of appropriation by the Catholic field, on the other.

³¹ The institutionalization of the religious freedom and the dynamization of the protestant universe in Portugal during the First Republic didn't naturally translated itself in the disappearance of exclusion and persecution episodes towards the protestant communities and believers, who still were religiously differentiated in a culture that continued to be widely dominated by the roman-catholicism.