

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**CEREJEIRA, Manuel Gonçalves**

(Lousado, Vila Nova de Famalicão, 1888 - Benfica, Lisbon, 1977)

Manuel was the first-born of the eight children of Avelino Gonçalves Cerejeira and Joaquina do Sacramento de Jesus Rebelo. Usually described as a couple of farmers from Minho, Manuel's baptism records his father as a "trader", a reference to the production of clogs to which he was also dedicated. The income from these activities enabled them to provide their four sons with further education. The young Gonçalves Cerejeira continued his education after elementary school, with his preparatory studies at the Seminário-Liceu de Guimarães [High School Seminary in Guimarães] (1899-1904). The following year he completed a complementary course in literature at the Liceu Alexandre Herculano [Alexandre Herculano High School] in Porto from where he travelled to the Seminário Conciliar [Conciliar Seminary] in Braga to complete the Triennial Seminary Course (1906-1909), answering the call to ecclesiastical life that he said he had felt since he was a child. His *alma mater* in Coimbra provided him with a diverse higher education: he enrolled in Theology in 1909, completing his bachelor's degree in the 1911-1912 academic year with a grade of 18 out of 20, just as the respective School was nearing its end. That same year he enrolled in the Law course, which he abandoned in order to enrol in the fourth section of the Faculdade de Letras, Ciências Históricas e Geográficas [School of Arts, Historical and Geographical Sciences] in 1912-1913, which he completed in 1916 with 19 points out of 20.

His theological studies gave him a good command of Latin and Greek, in addition to the basics of Hebrew, a subject in which he was the only ordinary student in 1910-1911. The literature degree gave him access to the German language, completing the two German language and literature courses (1913-1915) taught by Carolina Michaëlis Vasconcelos, whose knowledge he demonstrated in his historiographical work (*A Idade Média*, p. 5; 17; 60). Above all, he revealed an affinity with and mastery of the French language, whose cultural universe was particularly dear to him and influenced him most profoundly.

For nearly two decades, Coimbra was the sphere of activity for the combative ecclesiastic and intellectual: ordained a priest in April 1911, he became an honorary member of the CADC and later spiritual director of Catholic university students. During this period, he diversified his collaboration with the press, which he had begun at the age of 19 in the Porto daily newspaper *A Palavra*, at a time when he was also writing in *Estudos*



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*Sociais* about The Organisation of Education: he directed the weekly newspaper *Imparcial* from its inception in 1912 until mid-1914; he was the editor of the magazine *Lusitânia* (1914), directed by the jurist Francisco de Sousa Gomes Veloso; he collaborated with the diocesan weekly newspaper *Correio de Coimbra* (1922-1928); and he wrote “Cartas aos novos” [Letters to the Youngsters] (1925-1928) in the CADC’s magazine *Estudos*, which would be published independently in 1933.

It was during this period that he embarked on an academic career with a historiographical focus, divided between teaching and publishing his studies. In the year he completed his second undergraduate degree, he was appointed provisional assistant by decree of 11 November 1916, a position he held until 1919, and was the representative of the assistant professors of his School to the General Assembly of the University during this period. He held a similar post between 1919, when he became ordinary professor, and at least 1922. His appointment as Archbishop of Mitilene, assistant to the Patriarch of Lisbon, when he was ordained a bishop on 17 June 1928, would put an end to his teaching activity, which included teaching Ancient History, Medieval History, General History of Civilisation, Modern and Contemporary History, History of Portugal and Introduction to History. He also took on the role of secretary of the School on 1 November 1925, secretary of the respective Bulletin, which was to be called *Biblos* (and is still published), and director of the University Art Archive and Museum, where he began his duties in July 1927, although he had been the archivist-palaeographer since 1918. The Archive preserves the memory and notes of his work of cataloguing the files of candidates for holy orders.

His published historiographical work covers the period between 1917 and 1928. The first work corresponds to the dissertation *O Renascimento em Portugal: Clenardo: com a tradução das suas principais cartas* [The Renaissance in Portugal: Clenardus: with a translation of his main letters], which he submitted to complete his doctoral examinations, defended on 30 January 1918, and was awarded the highest mark, just two months after his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday. The second volume of this work was to be presented in the competition for ordinary professor, which never took place. In addition to the 1917-1918 edition, the book was republished in 1926, 1949 and 1974. This was followed by articles published in *Biblos*: in 1925, *Do valor histórico de Fernão Lopes – Esboço crítico de “D. Pedro I e a sua época” do Sr. General Moraes Sarmento, Lisbon, 1924* [On the Historical Value of Fernão Lopes – A Critical Outline of “D. Pedro I and His Era” by Mr. General Moraes Sarmento, Lisbon, 1924], which was published in the same year; in 1926 and 1927, *Notas Históricas sobre os ordenados dos Lentes da Universidade* [Historical Notes on the Salaries of University Lecturers]; in 1927, *O conceito de Idade Média* [The Concept of the Middle Ages]. This would be published as a volume under the title *A Idade Média* [The Middle Ages] in 1936, and as *A Idade Média na História da Civilização* [The Middle Ages in the History of Civilisation] in 1953: the published part had been in print since 1929, but he never finished a substantial part of what he had planned for chapters III and IV, respectively on “Considerations on the role of Christianity in the formation of the European soul” and “The Middle Ages and the Barbarians”.

Fernando Falcão Machado’s 1927 book entitled *História de Portugal. Súmula das lições magistrais de História de Portugal (1.º ano) pelo Ex.mo Professor, Senhor Doutor Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, no ano*



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*lectivo de 1927-1928, na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra* [History of Portugal. Summary of the Lectures on the History of Portugal (1<sup>st</sup> year) by the Honourable Professor, Dr. Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, in the 1927-1928 Academic Year, at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra [School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra] about which there is no note that it was rejected by Cerejeira and whose first biographer included it in his bibliography, allows access to some of the most prominent elements of his historiographical thinking, in line with the perspectives he supported in his own works.

Firstly, with regard to the epistemological status of History and its methodology. Rejecting it as a “science”, he fought for it to be “elaborated by scientific processes”, showing himself to be methodologically close to the then hegemonic positivist principles, for the primacy of facts, which should show “the living, real image” in the aggregate of their “circumstances and conditions” (*História de Portugal*, p. 5). The quest for objectivity through factuality is evident in the conditions for drawing up a “scientific History of Portugal”: objective – “the more faithful the image of the facts”; documentary – since the documents would support a more “truthful” interpretation, freed from the historian’s “bias”; Portuguese – not “patriotic, like that of German Romanticism”, but seeking to “revive the soul of Portugal, without leaving the realms of facts”; peninsular – criticising the analytical isolationism that hinders the discovery of national characteristics, which can only be done “by the comparative method”; European – placing “in place and time” the influence of “foreign” ideas, currents and facts and the “political situation of Europe” (*História de Portugal*, pp. 6-10). In the light of these principles, he evaluates the general histories of Portugal that existed at the time: Refraining from considering Fortunato de Almeida’s work, as its publication had not been finalised, he gave a positive appraisal to Herculano’s, which was written “according to the postulates that should be taken into account when writing a scientific history”. He would accompany this author in his rejection of Ourique’s miraculous interpretation in a conference given in Cádiz in 1927. Conversely, he distanced himself from Oliveira Martins, turning to António Sérgio, to whom he attributed the best assessment of that author, whose work he considered “subjective and insufficiently documented”, the result of a “particular conception”. Regarding Pinheiro Chagas, whose work he considered more objective than that of Oliveira Martins, he criticised the “lack of documentation” and, above all, the “great defect of isolating himself from Spain”. In short, he supports the need to give historiography greater analytical breadth in line with “modern” demands that broaden the “history of the State, making it sociological”, as opposed to “literary history”, a vehicle for prejudices that would lead to anachronistic, “apologetic and political” analyses (*História de Portugal*, p. 11).

Cerejeira’s most widespread, commented on, translated and criticised work, *A Igreja e o Pensamento Contemporâneo* [The Church and Contemporary Thought] (1924, reprinted in 1928, 1930, 1944 and 1953, translated into Spanish in 1945), although unrelated to the historiographical field, provides an insight into the decisive aspects of his historiography. They reveal him as a militant, committed intellectual, and can be included in the criticism that Julian Benda directed, among others, at Henri Bergson, whose vitalist and intuitionist theses Cerejeira was close to, although he considered them insufficient. They did, however, allow



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him to delegitimise the totalising pretension of positivist ideology, while at the same time retaining the primacy of facts in his method. By doing so, he sought to clearly establish the boundaries between science and religion, safeguarding the autonomy of both and their necessary relationship, which allowed him to sustain the anthropological and social validity of religion – in other words, Christianity and, in particular, Catholicism. This perspective had an institutional correlate, the necessary autonomy of the State and the Church from each other, clearly expressed in the title of one of the parts of *A Idade Média* [The Middle Ages]: “The historical originality of the Church: the ‘great innovation’ of a moral power independent of the State” (p. 293).

This “intellectual crusade” (see Luís Salgado de Matos, *Cardeal Cerejeira...*, 2018, p. 30) aimed at the “Christian Reconquest of contemporary high thought” had a triumphalist flavour in the 1924 work. In a more circumspect manner, but no less forceful, these elements can be seen in his doctoral thesis. Clenardus gave him the opportunity to take part in the debate that divided the Portuguese intelligentsia between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the following century: the causes of national decadence. Drawing on the biographical and intellectual background of the Flemish humanist, he showed critical autonomy in the face of the intervention of ecclesiastic and political structures – the Inquisition above all – which would give him greater legitimacy to point out the insufficiency of Antero’s theses, which he explicitly mentions. Conversely, he was closer to the views of Herculano, Oliveira Martins, Silva Cordeiro – whom he mentions – and, above all, António Sérgio, whom he often quotes. With Clenardus, Cerejeira stresses that the “deep reason for our decadence” had to be found in the “defects of the economic and social structure” of Portuguese society in the 1500s, to which the ideal of chivalry had contributed, promoting the “abhorrence” of work and the “nobility mania”, which the dynamic of slavery had exacerbated; in addition to being morally reprehensible, its effects had been pernicious, resulting in the ruin of free labour, the corruption of customs and the disorganisation of the family (*Clenardo*, pp. 197-210).

Thus, supported by a protagonist who was close to the facts, Cerejeira could point to the absence of a “ruling class” capable of guiding the country towards a “closer and more active economic regime” as the central cause of national decadence. While not abandoning the decadent reading, which was instrumental to his action aimed at reversing it, he rehearsed the question of its inevitability: rejecting “historical fatalism”, the epistemological presuppositions on which he based himself prevented historiography from answering this question, given that the historical subject “is not interested in knowing what should have been”, instead confining itself to “its own domain”, i.e., “what *actually was*” (*Clenardo*, p. 194). Above all, it allowed him to show the insufficiency of the theses that pointed to religious influence as the central reason for that decadence, maintaining that “in Portugal the role of religion in the political greatness and material prosperity of nations is easily exaggerated [...]”. Although religion could be counted among these causes, it was “not even the most important”. In other words, the purposes, objectives and effects of religion and politics were clearly different: religion “aims *directly* at the supernatural order”, which allows its influence on the political and material greatness of peoples to be valued “only *indirectly*” through its “moral action” (*Clenardo*, p. 213).

Cerejeira’s interest in the medieval period reveals the methodological framework of his historiographical



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activity, as well as the ideological purposes behind it. The analytical precision and clarity of *A Idade Média* [The Middle Ages] (1936) served the purpose of refuting both the intellectual fads that equated those thousand years to a “false night of ten centuries” and their rehabilitation by Romanticism, which he considered to have been “often more generous than prudent” (p. 11). Refuting the visions of the “age of barbarism”, the “terrors of the year one thousand” – aimed at Michelet whose *History of France* he considered a “fine book of literature...” – of the same French historian’s “nul bain pendant mille ans”, of the “jus primae noctis” or the “misery of the people”, he seeks a balanced portrait of medieval times (“truthful” is the term he uses), noting its legal, artistic, philosophical, economic, scientific and theological progress, which allowed him to emphasise the role of “Christianity in the formation of the European soul” against the views that blamed the Church for the supposed medieval darkness, without any shadow of a past-loving intentionality: “Certainly, progress does not lie in... going back” (see *A Idade Média*, p. 174). In his *Notas históricas sobre os ordenados dos lentes da Universidade* [Historical Notes on the Salaries of University Lecturers], he makes an incursion into the areas of economic and social history, a field that was incipient in Portuguese historiography at the time; without the breath of direct research into these issues, he nevertheless considers them, just as he did in *Clenardo* [Clenardus], when he analyses the medieval period, paying attention to the studies of Alberto Sampaio and Gama Barros, as well as Gaulish historiographical production on the subject.

From the period before his accession to the episcopate, Cerejeira travelled to Spain and France, either privately, accompanying student outings or on academic work, as in the case of the Cádiz Conference. When he was invested with episcopal functions, in addition to several stays in Italy, where he took part in the Concilium work between 1962 and 1965, he was Pontifical Legate on several occasions, when he visited the various overseas territories (1944), Goa, on the occasion of the centenary of the death of St Francis Xavier (1952), and Brazil, for the inauguration of the new capital (1960).

On 29 November 1958, in the Sala dos Capelos, he gave a lecture on The condition of the Christian in the historical construction of the world on the occasion of his jubilation as Professor of the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra [School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra]. He brought to a close the academic career that had stopped when he was ordained a bishop in 1928, which would lead him to the patriarchal chair of Lisbon and the cardinal’s purple the following year. He had been a corresponding member of the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid since 19 April 1921, and accepted a similar position at the Academia Brasileira de Letras in 1964, having refused to be elected to the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa in 1929.

While Patriarch, he wanted to continue asserting himself as a historian, a double condition not without some ambiguity, which, incidentally, was the confessed origin of the work that Silvio Lima published in 1930 entitled *Notas críticas ao livro do Sr. Cardial Cerejeira “a Igreja e o Pensamento Contemporâneo”* [Critical Notes on the Book by Cardinal Cerejeira “The Church and Contemporary Thought”] (see p. 7, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1931), although Cerejeira’s book in question had no historiographical intentions. While he did not focus on ecclesiastical history, he nonetheless provided support, including financial backing to the Centro de Estudos





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de História Eclesiástica [Centre for the Study of Ecclesiastical History], which was created outside academia in 1956, but in 1984 became part of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa [Portuguese Catholic University], an institution founded by Cerejeira in 1968, fulfilling an intention he had formulated as a Coimbra professor in the 1920s. When he retired from the patriarchal chair, he continued to work on his thoughts on Clenardus, particularly translating the Flemish humanist's correspondence (PT/AHPL/PAT14-PR).

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