

## Circulation and strategies from the magazine “The Young Lutheran” transnational perspective and intertwining stories (1950-1970)

### *Circulação e estratégias da revista “O Jovem Luterano”: perspectiva transnacional e das histórias cruzadas (1950-1970)*

Patrícia Weiduschadt\*  
Elias Krüger Albrecht\*

#### ABSTRACT

This study discusses a possible cultural exchange among young Lutherans associated with Missouri Synod in different countries worldwide. The discussion is based on the magazine “The Young Lutheran” (1929-1970), a periodical for young adults created by the Missouri Synod, the current Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, to educate and mentor the social and religious life of their youths. The chosen timeframe is between 1950 and 1970, since it was a period of distribution and strategies aiming to foster such exchange. Thus, “The Young Lutheran” was printed and published to accomplish the mission. This magazine was responsible for mediating questions and connections from different Lutheran youth realities. Through its pages, strategies were spread, such as reading plans, friendship circles, and youth trips, allowing the connection of young people from different parts of the world. For corpus analysis, we used the transnational theory and crossed histories (WERNER; ZIMMERMANN, 2003; SCHWRIEWER; CARUSO, 2005) to understand how the religious ideas and principles engaged in the dynamics reverberated within the Brazilian context, as well as how the interconnectivity occurred between realities. We can affirm that the Missouri Synod Lutheran institution, through the incorporated exchanges and experiences, pursued to standardize cultural, educational, and moral development of the youth unity. However, such actions were taken and adapted according to the local situation.

*Keywords:* Youth. Lutheranism. Transnational. Intertwining Stories. Journal.

Translated by Viviane Ramos – E-mail: [vivianeramos@gmail.com](mailto:vivianeramos@gmail.com)

\*Universidade Federal de Pelotas, UFPel, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. E-mail: [prweidus@gmail.com](mailto:prweidus@gmail.com); <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6804-7591> – E-mail: [liask.albrecht@gmail.com](mailto:liask.albrecht@gmail.com). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7381-8909>

## RESUMO

O presente estudo tem como objetivo discutir um provável intercâmbio cultural entre jovens luteranos ligados ao Sínodo de Missouri em diferentes países do mundo. Tal intercâmbio foi veiculado pela revista “O Jovem Luterano” (1929-1970), periódico juvenil produzido no Brasil, pelo Sínodo de Missouri, atual Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil, para educar e orientar a vida social e religiosa dos seus jovens. O recorte temporal escolhido foi o das décadas de 1950-1970, por ser um período de circulação e estratégias que visavam fomentar esse intercâmbio. Assim, para efetivá-las, intensificou-se a propagação de tais práticas no impresso, sendo responsável por mediar a interlocução e as conexões de diferentes realidades juvenis luteranas. Por meio de suas páginas disseminaram-se estratégias, como planos de leituras, círculo de amizades, viagens de jovens, que possibilitaram conexões entre jovens de diferentes partes do mundo. Para a análise do corpus utilizou-se da teoria transnacional e das histórias cruzadas (WERNER; ZIMMERMANN, 2003; SCHWRIEWER; CARUSO, 2005), buscando compreender como as ideias e os princípios religiosos envolvidos na dinâmica foram reverberados no contexto brasileiro e como se deu a interconexão entre realidades. Pode-se afirmar que a instituição luterana do Sínodo de Missouri, por meio dos intercâmbios e das práticas adotadas no periódico em questão, buscou homogeneizar a formação cultural, educativa e moral das uniões juvenis, mas que, certamente, essas práticas foram recebidas e adaptadas de acordo com o contexto local.

*Palavras-chave:* Juventude. Luteranismo. Transnacional. Histórias Cruzadas. Impresso.

## Introduction

This article deals with the German-ethnic immigration groups that moved, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, from Germany to the United States of America and, later, after being established in that country, spread to other places. This proposal demands a contextualization of their arrival in Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in 1900. We know that, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the migration groups from Europe needed to move for economic and survival<sup>1</sup> questions. However, the group in question had religious reasons to leave their origin country and used this to institutionally expand the ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> Studies about immigration in the state of Rio Grande do Sul have been broadly divulged since the 2000s, mainly in the region of *Vale dos Sinos*. See Dreher (1998), Rambo (2002), Kreutz (1194). For more recent studies in the meridional region, see Weiduschadt (2007), Thum (2009).

communities established in the lands intended for German immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, this study presents the Lutheran institution Missouri Synod that mediated and connected this movement, established by orthodox principles and proclaimed itself the “true Lutheran church.” This institution escaped the increasing Christian rationality in German at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to create this Lutheran strand in the United States (STEYER, 1999; WEIDUSCHADT, 2007).

Despite the doctrinal divergences with other Lutheran strands, the Missouri Synod worked similarly to the Lutheran institutions in Germany, mainly characterized by the concern with the community organization, the establishment of the pair school and church, the foment of printed material among adults, children, and young peoples, and the production and circulation of doctrinal and didactic material. Hence, one of the ways Lutheran religious institutions worldwide expanded was through the circulation of printed materials. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these materials’ production, circulation, and edition were intense. This need to stimulate the educational area, represented by the creation of schools and the production of written religious material was grounded on the principles of the reformer Martin Luther<sup>3</sup>

In this article, we want to highlight the printed material targeting the youth public of the institution Missouri Synod. This Synod was founded in 1847 and created a cohesive network in the North-American country, reaching Brazil in 1900 with the visit of a pastor to the German-ethnic communities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the south of Brazil. Besides expanding to Brazil, it also did missionary work in other parts of the world, such as Asia, Europa, other Latin American countries, and Oceania. The concern with Christian education did not rest only in the children, through the organization of parish schools<sup>4</sup> but also in the dissemination of religious publications,

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<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Lutheran institution, which edited the youth magazine, we can infer that previously-organized ethnical groups in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, established it. In this context, the first immigrants in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century systematized independent non-official communities. They were created to have organizational freedom and continue as such until today. However, they did not produce didactical materials (TEICHMANN, 1996). Therefore, the institution of the Missouri Synod, the current Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, could have the support to install itself in this context, convincing these immigration groups that it was essential to be connected with an official institution, justifying the need to have a theological formation for pastors and a pedagogical one for the teachers, as well as fomenting the publication of magazines and books (WEIDUSCHADT, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther led the Protestant Reform, a movement to renew the church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Central Europe, leading to important societal transformations and changing the educational and religious field. Those who identified themselves with Martin Luther’s ideas became known as Lutherans. For more, see Russo (2012).

<sup>4</sup> Many works deal with the formation of parish schools in ethnical communities. See Weiduschadt (2007); Kreutz (1994).

doctrinal and educational. The youth public received considerable investment from the Lutherans, through specific activities, such as the control of leisure, consolidated by the dissemination of their doctrinal principles.

The publication “The Young Lutheran” (*O Jovem Luterano*), the mobilizing object of this study, was a youth communication vehicle that circulated between 1929 and 1971. Created by the *Waltherliga Brasilienses*<sup>5</sup> aiming to help with the interests of the church and deliver to the young people a youthful reading with a religious base, emphasizing education and entertainment, and approximating the young Lutherans from different regions in the country. The magazine was published in German in its first years, called “*Der Waltherligabote*.” In 1940, due to the nationalization of education and the prohibition of circulating foreign literature, the periodical was written in Portuguese under the title “*O Jovem Luterano*.”

The publication had the regular format, measuring 15 x 22 centimeters, with no significant oscillation in the number of pages, which varied from 16 to 18 per edition. The issues in German have illustrated and colored covers, while those in the 1940s, in Portuguese, though varying in color have a standard cover with the same logo. Until that time, the inside of the magazine had leaves similar to newspaper paper, with a denser texture, printed in black and white, including pictures. Since the 1950s, we can perceive gradual changes in the magazine with diverse covers and colored prints inside. The texture of its pages gets smoother with a brighter aspect, similar to coated paper. Regarding the content, young people are invited to reflect on varied educational and recreational themes related to life, body, and soul.

The magazine was produced and edited by *Casa Publicadora Concórdia*<sup>6</sup>, whose editors and leading columnists were directly or indirectly connected to the religious institutions, among them, pastors, teachers, and young seminarians. With monthly editions and an annual subscription paid by the subscribers, the number of prints oscillated between two thousand in the 1930s and 1940s, to three thousand in the 1950s and 1960s, and four thousand in the 1970s.

The mother church in the United States had broadly stimulated this model of youth press. The production of reading materials and maintaining a publishing house were pressing issues in the Synod foundation in 1847. Originating in Germany, they kept the Lutheran premise of parish school formation and printing of materials, aiming to expand to other places beyond the United States. As the institution was established by German immigrants, even keeping the German language in the production of religious

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<sup>5</sup> Currently, the Evangelical Lutheran Youth of Brazil.

<sup>6</sup> *Casa Publicadora Concórdia*, still works in Porto Alegre. It was founded in Brazil in 1923. It published and publishes periodicals and books of the institution in question. It was influenced by the publishing company of the Missouri Synod in the United States, the *Concordia Publishing House* in the United States (ALBRECHT, 2019).

and informative material, the circulation was in German, thus, easing the insertion in the communities of German immigrants worldwide. This guideline did not hinder, even with less incidence, the action in non-German communities, as in some places in Brazil or Africa. Regarding the expansion, the ethical issue was central, granting more legitimacy to start the work.

The Missouri Synod sought to reach different segments of the church through the organization of departments and schools. However, it soon perceived the need to invest especially in the youth segment. Pahl's (2003) studies, held in the North-American context, considered that youth, at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, was one of the life phases more controlled and guided by religious and laic institutions. Pahl (2003) also affirms that the Christians invented teenage hood and tried to shape youth by its conservative rules regarding sexuality, gender, and behavior, as well as social changes<sup>7</sup>. According to the author, the young people in these movements knew how to resist and take advantage of the knowledge and experiences from different places.

Proof of this was the Missouri Synod youth, the first congregational systematized organization, called *The Internacional Walther League*,<sup>8</sup> which had an integrated network in several North American states, assembling women to the administrative organization, contrary to the Synod's general guidelines. The youngsters' strategies allowed the consolidation of this youth union in the mother church, interconnecting it with several places through their proposals (PAHL, 2006). This author's study defends that young people followed the changes over time since the league's foundation in 1897. The interconnection and action of these ideas resonated in different parts of the world where the Missouri Lutheran church had expansion points, from the organization of youth groups up to the production of written materials. In these publications, there are guidelines for playful activities, how to conduct amorous relationships, and the stimulation of endogenous sociability<sup>9</sup> within the religious group, there are precepts of licit and illicit activities for young Lutherans.

We should highlight that the different approaches of Brazilian historiography about the formation of ethnic communities, related to Lutheranism, sought to classify the different types of Protestants (DREHER, 1998). Marthin Dreher (1998) considers Protestantism as all the organizations that systematically came to Brazil that differed from Catholicism. Therefore, the author's study considers the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the period

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<sup>7</sup> In a way, the emergency of the Young Christian Association and the Young Workers Association, forces Lutheran's investment in youth associations. (PAHL, 1977),

<sup>8</sup> The name of the league honors the founder of the Missouri church in the United States, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walter (WEIDUSCHADT, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> In several magazine publications, young people were advised to choose their peers from the same religious strand because the institution considered the ideal family the one formed by members with the same religious principles.

in which this arrival movement of other religious congregations effectively took place in the country. However, the Lutheran institutions are not considered a mission of Protestantism but an immigration and historical movement. In this direction, Steyer (1998) argues that the reason the Missouri Synod expanded its organization in Brazil was a formal request from the ethnical communities of Rio Grande do Sul, whose work was known through the periodicals ( the newspaper *Der Lutheraner*). Despite sending missionaries, the pastors that came to Brazil were systematically and formally formed in North-American seminars. Thus, Steyer disagrees that the Missouri Synod had a “proselytizer” objective, i.e., it did not try to convince groups that already had a religion to join them but aimed to answer the demand of German-ethnical communities. Since its foundation in the USA, its confessional and doctrinal concern was reinforced, establishing the principles of the Lutheran community, grounded in Martin Luther (DREHER, 1998).

The article will not depend on these questions, instead, it focuses on transnationality and the formation of networks established, mainly, by ethnical approximations. Hence, we use the concepts of transnationalism and crossed histories, as they help to point out that the connections between different contexts have an intersection point (WERNER; ZIMMERMANN, 2003), in this case, the youth institution as a way to systematize action, seeking different ways to reverberate the contexts they were present, i.e., taking advantage of the Lutheran organizations and adapting themselves to their contexts. (WERNER; ZIMMERMANN, 2003; OSSENBACH; POZO, 2011; FUCHS, 2017; SCHRIEWER. CARUSO, 2005).

We can understand these crossings as configurations through Werner and Zimmermann’s (2003) works. The emphasis is not to understand the points of departure and arrival but, according to these researchers, to highlight the notion of intersection. This notion of intercrossing is at the principle of crossed history and transnational, breaking away from a unidimensional perspective, simplifying, and homogenizing for the benefit of a multidimensional approach that recognizes the plurality and the complex configurations resulting from it (relations, interactions, and circulation).

Therefore, we need to understand, within this theoretical perspective, the strategies of circulation and expansion that disseminated campaigns and projects mediated by the youth magazine, organized by the young groups of the Lutheran institution of the Missouri Synod.

So, we intend to understand the cultural exchange between young Lutherans connected to the Missouri Synod in different parts of the world. Our main research source is the magazine “The Young Lutheran”, from 1950 to 1971.

This work focuses on the editions from the 1950s until the end of the magazine, in the 1970s, when we perceive a greater circulation of ideas and people beyond the national frontiers. We question these processes based on the concepts of transnational and crossed histories. Some actions of the corporation and socialization of ideas among

young Lutherans cross the physical limits of their territories' frontiers. Hence, we will present the strategies of the printed material through three practices that make these exchanges visible, i.e., reading plans, friendship circles, and youth trips.

### **Printed material strategies: circulation and transnational connection**

Starting from the assumption that the religious institution Missouri Synod was established by a system theologically grounded on the writings of Martin Luther, we can perceive the religious expansionism of such an institution, reverberated in the actions to break away the isolation of cultural frontiers, mainly among ethnical communities. By this expansionist perspective, the Synod could establish relationships between different cultures and promote cultural connections with their religious ideals. Such connections allowed intertwining and various re-crossings. As they are relational, there are no fixed relationships. The groups studied modify themselves as they establish connections and crossings. (WERNER; ZIMMERMANN, 2003).

We could think there would be homogeneity in the resonance of these practices in different contexts because they would encompass identical religious ideals and the meaning of community in different places. However, when observing the different exchange practices, we can perceive that some singularities emerge.

As an official body of the Lutheran Evangelic Youth in Brazil, the magazine was a way to connect ideas and principles, fomenting projects and programs developed by North American Lutheran young people to incentivize reading. Therefore, it seeks to approach some practices in this period that converge to highlight such movements. The magazine often organizes the practices shown. Other practices are only published to echo and demand the participation and engagement of Brazilian Lutheran readers.

As a religious magazine, it aimed to shape and mold moral and doctrinal behaviors in youth groups. This magazine was produced in Brazil, inspired by a youth magazine published in the United States. Hence, it wants to highlight its distinction and the formation of "The Young Lutheran" transnational networks in a different context, with participation, proposals, and connections. To better visualize the potential of the connection in a different context, we present below a table to understand the relationship between the periodical "The Young Lutheran" in different countries and the respective practices.

The data show a closer connection with places like the United States, Germany, Portugal, and Argentina through youth trips and effective exchange. This probably happened because, in these places, the ethnic communities were stronger and closer. In the other places, with the exception of Australia, which had an ethnical community, the Synod expanded in a missionary fashion, no longer ethnical. However, in a way, the young participants from these places probably had some knowledge of English.

TABLE 1: Relation of the countries, situation, and practices disseminated by the magazine “The Young Lutheran”

Country	Situation	Practices: reading plan, friendship circles, and youth trips.	
		Proposal	Participation
Brazil	Foundation by the Synod of Missouri- 1900 Publishing of the magazine “The Young Lutheran” Edited and published the news.	Friendship circles Youth trips to Portugal, Germany, and Argentina.	Reading plan Youth trips Friendship circles
United States of America	Headquarters of the mother church, founded in 1847. Headquarters of the first youth union of the institution	Plano de leitura	Youth trips to Brazil
Australia	Foundation by the USA- 1880	-----	Reading plan Friendship circles
Japan	Foundation by military Lutheran missionaries from the Synod of Missouri- 1948	-----	Reading Plan
Argentina	Immigration community was founded in 1905 by Brazil	-----	Friendship circles Youth trips.
Portugal	Brazilian mission – late 1960s	-----	Friendship circles Youth trips.
India	Foundation in 1894	-----	Reading Plan
Africa	No data about the foundation	-----	Friendship circles
Finland	No data about the foundation	-----	Friendship circles
Germany	There was no official church of the Synod but approximations with other Lutheran institutions.	-----	Friendship circles Reading plan Youth trips.

SOURCE: Magazine “The Young Lutheran,” 1950-1971. Table created by authors.

The reading plans, as described in the Table 1, were proposed by the youth from the United States. They seem to be a recurrent practice in many places connected with



the Synod. Though we did not fully analyze it, “The Young Lutheran” shows the effort to universalize this strategy when presenting this proposal.

The reading plan systematically presented the reading of the New Testament, proposed by the *Walther League* / EUA (the Lutheran Evangelical Youth from the United States), suggesting its expansion “to all young Lutherans worldwide”, broadly presented in the magazine “The Young Lutheran”, as follows:

The General Congress of Lutheran Youth gathered in Porto Alegre on January 19, 20, and 21 enthusiastically accepted the plan to systematically read the Bible, suggested by the Walther League in the USA. The plan aims to join young Lutherans worldwide in the same reading and narrow the bonds that unite us. Especially because the young American Lutherans are willing to provide new testaments to this reading (O JOVEM LUTERANO, mar., 1951. p. 37).

The proposal was to promote an organized reading of the Bible’s New Testament and promote an exchange of ideas among young people worldwide with young North Americans, as can be seen below:

In the USA, each young Lutheran will contribute with a dollar to receive the New Testament in 11 small volumes, also receiving a small leather case in which they can carry a volume wherever they are. The same dollar will pay for another New Testament for a friend in the missionary field indicated by the donor or a name sent by the missionaries. Therefore, the mission work will be included in the offer, and the friends in mission everywhere will be reading and studying the same excerpts of the New Testament with the donor. In the Americas, Australia, Asia, Europe, and Africa, they will participate in this grand communion of Bible reading. Imagine the many benefits that may arise from this great endeavor (O JOVEM LUTERANO, jan./fev. 1950, p. 5).

To do so, the young Brazilian interested in participating in the reading plan and receiving a Bible donated by the young American had to organize a list with their names and addresses and send it to the Lutheran youth general council that would forward it to the American *Walther-League*. Afterward, the youngsters would receive a Bible with the donor’s name and the indicated address. So, the young people could keep a correspondence with those who donated the New Testament (O JOVEM LUTERANO, mar. 1951).

Unsurprisingly, an American institution focused on places with expansion projects, needed to dialogue and establish bonds to “transfer” principles and values in another territory, aiming to homogenize the religious and doctrinal precepts. What stands out are the systematic strategies used for this endeavor. An international way of work is organized from the mother church<sup>10</sup> in the United States, which proposes/imposes to the

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<sup>10</sup> We use this expression because, in the United States, the institution Missouri Synod formed and organized the expansion.

subordinated places their due interlocutions. We know that each reality to be reached would not similarly follow the initial proposal, as they probably needed to adapt. Therefore, we intend to observe the points of contact and connection. Processes that cross the frontiers not only geographical but also social, cultural, and educational. More than crossing, the meaning of trans-frontier is seen as a dynamic model, permeated by entanglements (*Verpfechtung*) (SCHRIEWER; CARUSO, 2005).

A possibility to discuss other aspects related to the transnationality and crossed histories open up, as in the “cultural spaces,” in which the creation of new mental maps of the places where the analyzed subjects lived are not grounded on the nationality or the territory, but in places and networks of cultural exchange (OSSEMBACH; POZO, 2011). For example, the spaces of ideas and educational formation represented by school organization, teacher training, and, in this case, mainly, the circulation of a specific press, show how disseminating strategies can make a certain ideal visible, here, a religious institution. The proposal, mediated by the printed material, meant to interconnect a type of thought that would shape this youth, while the intersections could not be predictable. There were changes and adaptations.

In the March edition of 1951, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” reiterates that the plan delineated by *Walther League* in the USA was to make young Lutherans “worldwide” commune of the same reading and thus correspond, know each other, and narrow the friendship bonds to make this plan acceptable:

The Walther League in Chicago reports that the plan was accepted worldwide, exciting all those who knew it. The names of “friends of the mission”<sup>11</sup> are arriving from all continents. Never before a youth plan has reached such proportions and reached so many hearts as this evangelizing endeavor. (O JOVEM LUTERANO, mar. 1951, p. 37).

It is noticeable the trust that the institution is wishing for the homogenization of different youth groups in different countries and contexts. For them, institutionalized religiousness would erase the differences between North American, Latin American, African, or Asian realities. They bet on the idea of exchange through the circulation of youth printed material.

To implement this project, the magazine calls upon young Brazilians to “[...] start, as soon as possible, the exchange of ideas between the young people from here and abroad” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, mar. 1951, p. 37). According to the periodical, the exchange of young people from different parts of the world is a great opportunity to present to them the Brazilian culture and learn the habits of other places.

The issue Apr./May. from 1952, p. 50 mentions that “all young Lutherans in the

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<sup>11</sup> In the 1950s, there probably was an institutional need to implement this mission, going to the communities, such as in Africa and Finland, which were not ethnically German. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnical groups had stabilized and there was no intense formation of new nuclei.

world wish to know the youngsters from other countries and be in a closer communion with them.” It also highlights that,

This project of exchange ideas aims to unite the Lutheran youth worldwide for a more efficient work in which everyone can share the benefits. Thus fomenting the exchange of ideas and materials to be integrated in the youth program in all parts of the world. The wish is to assemble Youth representatives from all fields of activity in the Lutheran church worldwide to establish contact, further cementing the existing friendly relationships and jointly plan the future (O JOVEM LUTERANO, abr./mai.,1952, p. 51).

Based on Certeau (2011), this mobilization can be thought of as a strategic articulation of the Missouri Synod to condition the social relationships to the purposes of the religious institution. While promoting an intentionally organized reading, in which young people from different parts of the world are systemically reflecting the same Bible text, the Synod reinforces their educational, social, and religious purposes and connects the Lutheran confessional unity, as well as facilitating the creation of friendship bonds between young Lutherans from different parts of the world.

In August 1952, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” brought a partial number, pointing out that, at that moment, 14,882 young people participated in the project in the world and received a Bible from a North-American friend. To stimulate Brazilian youth, who did not participate in the reading project yet, the magazine presented a ranking of the five countries that most accepted the program, highlighting that Brazil was in fifth place, with 1,326 young people, behind Germany with 1,537; India with 1,696; Australia with 2,523 and Japan, in the first place with 4,112 young people participating in the systematized reading of the Bible (O JOVEM LUTERANO, ago. 1952). It also stresses that the project was still underway and Brazilian youngsters could still participate in the reading program and receive a Bible as a gift.

The fact that Japan, Australia, and India, up to then perceived as countries with little Lutheran tradition, were the territories with the greatest participation in the project causes wonder and surprise. We were urged to know why the young people in these territories were leading the plans to read the Bible. We know that the missionary work of the Missouri Synod in Japan started during World War II, through the chaplains of the USA Army affiliated with the *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)*. In 1948, the LCMS established the first missionary in Japan. In 1950, missionary work was officialized in that country. A year later, in 1951, the radio program *Lutheran Hour* started to be broadcasted in Japan. In 1953, the Synod was officially recognized as a religious group in Japan (STREGGE, 1953). Thus, the significant participation of young Japanese in the reading of the Bible was influenced by missionary work. We should highlight that this missionary spirit cannot be confused with proselytism. The mother church’s formality and doctrinal precepts always had to be instituted (STREGGE, 1953).

Regarding the action of the Lutheran church in Japan, we point out the interview

given to the magazine “The Young Lutheran” by the teacher of the *St Louis Institute /USA* William Danker, in which he talks about his trip to Japan, aiming to follow the work of the Missouri Synod among the Japanese and study Japanese religions for his subject “Mission and Comparative Religions,” which he taught at the *St Louis Institute/ USA*. When questioned about the work among young people in Japan, he stressed that “there is a good youth work in the church in Japan. In fact, we could almost say that the Lutheran church in Japan is essentially a youth movement, as most members are young” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, ago. 1969, p. 7).

Beginning in 1950, the Walther League initiated a program known as the Bible Reading League. Through this project, Walther Leaguers from all over the United States and Canada contributed one dollar each, for which each received a New Testament in twelve small pamphlets. A similar New Testament was sent to a “mission friend” in some foreign land. The names of these mission friends were gathered and sent to Chicago by missionaries over the entire globe. At the International Walther League Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, July 8-12, 1951, it was reported that one thousand five hundred names of mission friends had been received from Japan. (STREGE, 1953, p. 98-99).

This way, the community in Japan is shaped by the ideas disseminated in the periodical, not through a German-ethnic community. During the World War, it was possible to connect these two realities. The Asian country was considered exotic, due to its linguistic and religious distance, so entering this space would show the Synod’s force, mainly in this age group. The presentation and relationship with Japan are presented with no tensions and conflicts, which certainly did not happen. There needed to be adaptations for Lutheranism to be accepted in Japan and, in the same way, young people in that context also had their resistances and adaptations.

Regarding Australia, we could see that the formation of the Lutheran Church in that country occurred similarly to the *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)*, USA. It was established by German immigrants, who, similarly to those immigrating to the USA, also refused to participate in the Prussian Union and migrated to Australia at two different moments. The approximation with the Missouri Synod would have happened since the 1880s, by seeking pastors in the American Missouri Synod. In 1904, a part of it became a district of this Synod. Thus, with the structured orthodox Lutheranism, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” observes that in 1951, when the plan to read the Bible started, the youth league of Australia celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, mobilizing the Australian youth for activities and festivities allusive to the date (O JOVEM LUTERANO, abr./mai. 1952), influencing the young Lutherans in that country to join the project of the *Walther League*.

On the other hand, contrary to our initial expectation, orthodox Lutheranism among Indians is older than in Brazil. According to the magazine “The Young Lutheran,” the missionary work of the Missouri Synod among the Indians started in 1894, in

Krishnagiri, in the district of Salem, in the province of Madras. In 1948, the Lutheran Evangelical church in India had around eighteen Thousand souls, thirty-six missionaries, aiming pastors and teachers, and five deaconesses. (O JOVEM LUTERANO, jan. 1948). In 1953, there were forty-two missionaries, five deaconesses, thirty-four young theologians formed in the seminary of the institution in Nagercoil, and five hundred and thirty-six stations and communities. Besides this, it held an equipped hospital with two medical doctors (O JOVEM LUTERANO, ago. 1953).

In the 19th century, the Missouri Synod already attended India with North American pastors who went there. According to Fergin (1958):

The missionary Elmer E. Griesse presented a thesis for the University of Washington, St. Louis, on the history of the Missouri Evangelical Lutheran Mission in India (MELMI) from the beginning of the work in 1895 until 1944. This present thesis will bring us to the end of an era – for the Mission has a grown into a sister church of the Missouri Synod. On January 8, 1950, the Lutheran Evangelical Church in India (IELC) declared itself capable to self-government (FERGIN, 1958, p. 1).

So, in the period mentioned in the reading plan, there was in India a certain autonomy regarding the United States. However, it is an administrative autonomy, not a religious and doctrinal disconnection. It is interesting to notice the need of the Brazilian magazine, guided by the youth organization in the American headquarter, to highlight the missionary work in countries with little Lutheran tradition, such as Japan, Australia, and India. The need to engage young people would grant a certain universality in the ideals of the Lutheran doctrine and the legitimacy of youth organizations. Furthermore, it reinforces that if countries far from the Lutheran knowledge were thriving, the work with young people in Brazil needed to be intensified.

In 1953, the magazine closed a project thanking young Brazilians who joined, highlighting that, as informed by “*Walther League/EUA*, more than 17,000 copies of the new testament were sent to 75 different countries in 41 languages” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, jun./jul. 1953, p. 70), thus showing the international mobilization created by the project.

This practice not only shows that the Lutheran youth in the world was involved in a reading program but also that there was a mobilization behind the expansion project of the Missouri Synod to take the orthodox Lutheranism to places where there were religious communities that identified themselves with the Lutheran praxis, as well as in communities not so closely connected to the Lutheran ethnical profile. For the Synod, the young person was a renewing force, the believers of the Lutheran church of tomorrow, as indicated in the magazine “The Young Lutheran” from February 1947, which talks about the importance of the Missouri Synod among young people.

It is uncertain if the proposal of ideas and cultural exchange resulted in the proliferation of the institution. In the Brazilian case, the linguistic barriers were great,

as there was no vast knowledge of English and, in the 1950s, the young people did not attend the German ethnical schools due to the prohibition established by the *Estado Novo* policy<sup>12</sup>.

Another exchange strategy, which demanded a high language level, was called “Friendship Circle,” broadly disseminated in the magazine “The Young Lutheran.” This was a Brazilian Lutheran youth initiative to promote correspondence between young people and/or youth groups in other countries, aiming to exchange experiences and learn about the work developed by them.

Some of these letters had a large space in the magazine spaces, while others are only quoted. For example, in February 1966, the magazine reported receiving a letter from Nigeria/Africa and another sent by young people from Finland, in which African and Finnish youth unions informed about their satisfaction to correspond with young Brazilians through “Friendship circles.” As can be seen in the excerpt in the letter published in the magazine “The Young Lutheran”:

[...] we inform you that the Lutheran Youth in Finland is progressing very well [...]. We wish to keep in contact with you! And we wish to correspond to learn about your activities and your faraway country, to further increase the feeling of unity among Jesus’ followers. We are grateful to communicate with you (Finish youth) (O JOVEM LUTERANO, fev. 1966, p. 6).

This is not simply a letter exchange between young people from different countries. In the text of the letter above, we can perceive a cultural exchange in which young people use this correspondence to know the reality and customs of other countries. In the edition Mar./Apr. 1966, there is also a letter sent by Australian young people pointing out the delivery of a letter sent by youngsters from Porto Alegre/RS, thanking them for a pennant<sup>13</sup> and a postcard. They say they were happy to know more about the culture of Rio Grande do Sul and Brazil. The letter also stresses the existence of a large youth department in Australia that would send a pennant and a postcard to reciprocate the present sent to young people from Porto Alegre. It also shows the wish to “further strengthen the bond of the Christian association, joining the Brazilian youth with the young people from Australia” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, mar./abr., 1966, p. 10).

The letter, probably translated, is published to demonstrate that young people from different places organized themselves similarly. It also seeks to reinforce connections and contacts through symbols that would represent a youth union.

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<sup>12</sup> A set of measures adopted during the Getúlio Vargas’s government (1937-1945), such as the prohibition to use the German language and the circulation of foreign literature, among other measures to reduce the influence of foreign immigrant communities in Brazil and force their integration with the Brazilian population. See Seyferth (1997).

<sup>13</sup> A type of badge or emblem that identifies a group of people.

Similarly, there was contact with the youth from Lisbon/Portugal, with whom the young Brazilian Lutherans kept a close relationship, exchanging experiences and missionary support, as we can see in the letter published in the magazine:

With a joyful heart, we are writing to thank the Youth Union from Niteroi. We were amazed by the offers sent [...] thus proving that faith knows no distance to separate the servants of the Lord [...] as our department is still in the initial evolution phase, we cannot give back yet your beautiful offers, as they deserve [...]. However, so you can have a little souvenir of us, we are sending two photos of our youth group and a postcard. In the near future, we wish to send a more allusive souvenir of the Portuguese folklore [...]. On Sundays, we are making an Evangelization campaign in Lisbon, making tours, and distributing Christian literature [...].

Now, I would like to ask for a favor: could you please send us the address or even an issue of “The Young Lutheran”, we believe that is its name, to ask, through it, all Lutheran youth centers in Brazil to write us. We will gladly reply to disseminate this friendship circle on a larger scale (Albino Pereira Carvalho) (O JOVEM LUTERANO, Jul. 1966, p. 8).

The letter shows a closer approximation between the young people of these two countries, probably helped by the language. Despite the evidence, we cannot affirm that the language was an important point to approximate or distance away from the mission fields. However, in December 1963, p. 9, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” informs that the “young Lutheran congregation from Portugal [...], after a doctrinal evaluation, will become a member of the Brazilian District and, thus, of the Lutheran church”, differently than other countries with whom the Brazilian Lutheran youngsters corresponded, where there was a structured Lutheranism. In Portugal, the work was starting and Brazil was mainly responsible for this missionary work.

In April 1968, the pastor from Portugal Paulo Jung<sup>14</sup> writes to “The Young Lutheran” thanking the Brazilian Lutherans for the material and financial support to the work developed in Lisbon and Queluz, where the Lutheran church held weekly meetings with worships, biblical studies, Sunday school, and the women’s department<sup>15</sup>. He points out that, at the time, they were working in the organization of youth departments in Queluz and Lisbon. (O JOVEM LUTERANO, abr. 1968).

It was up to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil to assist and guide the Lutheran communities in Portugal. Therefore, it counted on the force and enthusiasm

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<sup>14</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> pastor of the Lutheran Evangelical church of Brazil in Portugal.

<sup>15</sup> These activities were always organized in the Lutheran institution that, besides the worship moments, also promoted biblical studies, which are more informal meetings to study the Bible. The Sunday school was, especially, a practice targeting children with a doctrinal learning with children’s language and the department of women believers, generally married ones.

of the Brazilian Lutheran youth, which was engaged in this work, to offer its services to the magazine, to approximate the Portuguese youth, and socialize with them. After all, they were part of the Brazilian district. Therefore, in Jan./Feb. from 1969 the Pastor from Portugal Paulo Jung wrote to the magazine "The Young Lutheran" to thank it for sending a collection of the periodical corresponding to the year 1968, stressing that, through the magazine, he could know the dynamic of Youth Unions, district congresses, and events in the Brazilian youth circle. He points out that the resources there were scarce, and they relied on the collaboration of Brazilian young people with any material that could help in the work with youngsters and children. He reinforces that the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Portugal already had a Sunday School, with a regular attendance of 20 to 30 children and two youth groups. One of them had 15 young people who gathered every fortnight in Lisbon, one from Angola, a Portuguese province overseas, and another group with eight young people who gathered twice a month in Queluz (O JOVEM LUTERANO, jan./fev. 1969).

The connections and exchanges can also be perceived by the trip reports of young Brazilians who traveled to know the reality of Lutheran youth in different countries. This was the case of a Brazilian student who participated in the Lutheran Youth Congress in Germany and knew some German youth organizations. In his testimony, he relates his opportunities to experience and share activities in the German context. He also opined that these young people were much "behind" compared to the Brazilian Youth (O JOVEM LUTERANO, set./out. 1958). Faced with this, we can perceive that the connections were not only mechanical transfers of knowledge, opening up the possibility of choices and judgments of what would be adequate to each context. We are sorry that in the pages of the magazine, they do not deepen on the reasons for this "lag", we can suppose that there was no systematized organization with regular meetings and activities, mainly involving the everyday leisure of young people.

The magazine "The Young Lutheran" shows that this exchange of Brazilian Lutheran youth with young people from different nationalities was constant and held differently. Still, in the 1950s, it is possible to see the publication of a letter sent by the *Walther League* from the USA to the young Lutherans of Brazil, greeting them by the constituent congress of reorganization of the old Walther League in Brazil with the name Lutheran Youth from Brazil (O JOVEM LUTERANO, jan./feb. 1950). This letter points out that the Lutheran youth worldwide were not isolated, and there was communication among them. It also highlights the American *Walther League* leadership over the others, reported by the magazine as a reference, as seen in the Jan./Feb. issue from 1955, when reporting the work developed by Lutheran young people in that country.

As the North American Youth Lutheran model should inspire the Brazilian Lutheran youth, the young people from the USA should also know about the work developed by young Lutherans in Brazil. In Jul/Aug 1957, the magazine "The Young Lutheran" reported that the *Walther League* from the USA asked for a special article about the



Congress of Brazilian young people to be published in the Lutheran youth magazine in that country. In the following month, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” announces that:

The Young Lutheran and the Lutheran Youth in Brazil will have closer contact with the magazine of our American brothers, “The Walther League Messenger”<sup>16</sup> with the appointment of pastor Reimnitz as our correspondent for the United States (O JOVEM LUTERANO, set. 1957, p. 2).

Thus, there is undoubtedly a circulation of information among Brazilian and American young people through their magazines.

The exchanges and connections were visible, but there was no complete control over the transfers of the youth organization of the mother church. It tried to establish guidelines and precepts. However, these were adapted to the Brazilian reality.

According to Ossenbach and Pozo’s (2011) study on the post-colonial models in the Iberian Peninsula regarding Latin America, the authors tried to deconstruct the relationship center-periphery, as if the so-called advanced ones would completely dominate and acculturate the peripheral region. The work provokes the studies that consider the category ‘transnationality and crossed or interconnected histories’ when questioning if the center would indeed completely dominate the so-called periphery. Therefore, it is noticeable that the attempts of an educational organization aimed to unite groups from outside the country and adapt them to the institution’s guidelines. Nonetheless, despite being dominated, the groups established here could resist and impose their own organization and adaptation. It is not only Brazil that needs to understand the United States. The need to learn the South American culture was also visible.

In 1964, “The Young Lutheran” received a letter from Pastor W. Dorre, an advisor of the mother church (Missouri Synod) (O JOVEM LUTERANO, may./jun. 1964, p. 22). The letter highlights the interest of North-American children and teenagers to know the Brazilian culture. The magazine “The Young Lutheran” uses this to “incentivize Brazilian teenagers to practice their English skills exchanging letters with their friends in the United States. They will have much to tell and will certainly learn much about there” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, 1964, may./jun. p. 22). The exchange of letters with their “brothers in faith” in the United States was presented as an opportunity for linguistic, general, and cultural knowledge, as the proposal was to exchange information. About this, the world president of the Missouri Synod at the time, Jacob Preus, in an interview

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<sup>16</sup> *Walther League Messenger* started to publish under this main title in 1918, substituting the *Vereinsbote*, a bilingual publication in German and English. It followed the volume numbers of the previous publication. It was substituted by *Arena* in 1963. See <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=waltherleaguem>

given to the magazine “The Young Lutheran” states that “the best strategy for the Brazilian youth to introduce new ideas in their work and have more contact with their brothers in faith is the exchange between young people” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, out. 1969, p. 6).

Simultaneously to this circulation of ideas and letters among Brazilian and American Lutherans, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” from 1967, ago./set. reports the visit of 28 young American Lutherans who, combining business and pleasure, came to Brazil to visit some young people and know the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, and Porto Alegre, also participating in a youth congress in this last city. According to the magazine:

The Americans had a good impression of young Brazilian Lutherans. The caravan of Lutherans from the United States was nicely welcomed by the young people from all the states that visited. They received much love from the Brazilian young people who presented aspects of Brazilian traditions to them. (O JOVEM LUTERANO, aug./sep. 1967, p. 4).

Again, Brazilian culture is cited as a topic of interest by North Americans.

Another exchange present in the pages of the magazines during the period is the friendship between the Lutheran young people in Brazil and Argentina<sup>17</sup>. In several moments, we can read about the organization of caravans of young Brazilians to participate in the General Congress of Lutheran Youth in Argentina. In the May./Jun. issue from 1956, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” presents a special article about the participation of five Brazilian youth departments in the II General Congress of Lutheran Youth in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In the article, the young people talk about their experience in the youth meeting in another country. Similarly, in different moments, the magazine points out the participation of young Argentineans in Brazilian congresses.

This close relationship with neighboring youths led to the broad dissemination of the Argentinean events in the magazine “The Young Lutheran”. At the same time, these young people presented their wish to participate in the events in Brazil, as seen in the letter sent to the magazine in Feb./Mar. 1957. The association of young Lutherans in Argentina writes that it expects with eager interest the Programme of the General Congress of the Lutheran Youth in Brazil, in Porto Alegre/RS. They highlight that they were confident that the days with the Brazilian young people would positively influence the Argentinean youth. A month earlier, the magazine “The Young Lutheran” reported with satisfaction the confirmation that, once more, the Lutheran youth of Argentina would send representatives to the General Congress of the Lutheran Youth in Brazil. It

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<sup>17</sup> According to Rieth (2009), the institution of the Missouri Synod started in Argentina in 1905, fomented by the Brazilian church. It also expanded through the ethnical community, i.e., in German communities already established in the Argentinean territory.

highlights “thus, we narrow even more the bonds of friendship and spiritual exchange with our Argentinean brothers” (O JOVEM LUTERANO, jan. 1957, p.1).

Due to the geographical proximity between the state of Rio Grande do Sul and Argentina, it was possible to intensify the relationships and exchanges through cultural and sporting get-togethers. Therefore, they held visits and meetings with exchanges and strengthened the groups with the same interests and doctrinal connections.

We can perceive in these strategies the possibility of organizing activities and an imaginary of assembly and unity, trespassing transnational frontiers, connected and reported by the youth organization periodical.

## **Final remarks**

This article aimed to show how the connections and interrelations can be enacted by religious institutions seeking educational strategies to shape and form certain behaviors. In this case, the youth public was their target, a group that tends to escape control while seeking more freedom of choice. However, the institution in question, The Missouri Synod, has noticed since its foundation the importance of investing in youth, as they would be the loyal future of the church. Therefore, it needed to offer religious education, morals, and sociability moments.

One of the strategies we have found was the establishment of the Youth Lutheran Association to compete with other Christian and workers' associations and the circulation of periodicals that could mediate the interlocution with the interests of the mother church in the United States with other places. In this study, we focused on the Brazilian reality, which was also concerned with young people. Brazilian Lutherans published a youth magazine, “The Young Lutheran” that organized, guided, and fomented educational, sociability, and cultural activities to form youth groups.

We approached here the most fruitful methods that, through the periodical, sought to intensify these connections. Mainly in the 1950s to the 1970s, it published proposals of circulation and exchange, such as plans to read the New Testament, established by the mother church, friendship circles, with international letter exchange, the reports of Brazilian youngsters' trips, and the welcoming of foreign young people in Brazil.

Regarding the reading plans, the magazine published the proposals and participation of different countries, thus presenting other realities and contexts. The demonstration of Brazil's lack of protagonism in the campaign, which can be seen in the ranking where Brazil is behind Japan and India, was a way to call attention to the need to strengthen Brazilian youth.

The friendship circles showed and disseminated the connections between foreign and Brazilian young people, especially those coordinated by the mother church in the United States but with the possibility of communicating with other countries. We can thus perceive that the institution tried to homogenize youth organizations through a

doctrinal alignment and by practices considered Christian, such as the leisure accepted in the church.

Finally, we highlight the trips and reception of young foreigners, which showed the attempt to form a Lutheran Youth identity that transcended frontiers. The concept of transnationalization and crossed histories helped to problematize many questions.

To what point did it fully accept the church's hierarchical proposals? How did each place adapt to these proposals? We still need more elements to analyze the meetings and connections better. However, faced with these practices, we can affirm that the Lutheran church in question sought to give meaning to the universal sense of a youth organization that represented the Lutheran strand of the Missouri Synod, reinforcing such mentality through the practices mediated in the periodical "The Young Lutheran."

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Text received on 08/05/2022

Text approved on 03/21/2023

