

THE CATECHISM MANUALS ON THE TRACKS OF EDUCATION: NOTES FROM HISTORY

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Abstract

This article presents, in a historical perspective, catechism manuals as a class of printings extensively used by Catholic Church in its educational practices, focusing on Brazilian society. Methodologically the paper analyzes these books as cultural objects that have gone through different production, appropriation and circulation strategies in order to propagate Catholic doctrine in a more effective and permanent way. Also indicates different material and discursive aspects this pedagogical instrument acquired in the first half of the 20th century. Whether in school or parish catechesis, the first one above all, Catholic catechisms contributed to the shaping of the doctrinal field of Catholic pedagogy and from religious apparatus turned into object of the school culture.

Key-words: catechisms, printed papers, modernity, history of education.

OS MANUAIS DE CATECISMO NAS TRILHAS DA EDUCAÇÃO: NOTAS DE HISTÓRIA

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta, numa perspectiva histórica, os manuais de catecismo como uma classe de impressos largamente utilizada pela Igreja em suas práticas educativas, com enfoque na sociedade brasileira. Metodologicamente o texto analisa esses livros como objetos culturais que passaram por diferentes estratégias de produção, apropriação e circulação a fim de propagar a doutrina católica de forma mais eficaz e duradoura. Indica ainda, diferentes produções materiais e discursivas que esse instrumento pedagógico adquiriu na primeira metade do século 20. Tenha sido na catequese paroquial ou escolar, nesta última, sobretudo, os catecismos católicos contribuíram para a conformação do campo doutrinário da pedagogia católica e passaram de aparato religioso a objeto da cultura escolar.

Palavras-chave: catecismos, impressos, modernidade, história da educação.

LOS MANUALES DEL CATECISMO EN LOS SENDEROS DE LA EDUCACIÓN: APUNTES DE HISTORIA

Resumen

Este artículo presenta, desde una perspectiva histórica, a los manuales del catecismo como un tipo de publicaciones ampliamente utilizada por la Iglesia en sus prácticas educativas, centrándose en la sociedad brasileña. Metodológicamente el texto analiza estos libros como objetos culturales que pasaron por diferentes estrategias de producción, consignación y distribución con el fin de difundir la doctrina católica de forma más eficaz y duradera. También muestra varias producciones materiales y discursivas que dicho instrumento pedagógico adquirió en la primera mitad del siglo 20. En la catequesis parroquial y sobre todo en la escolar los catecismos católicos contribuyeron a la conformación del adoctrinamiento en la pedagogía católica y pasaron de ser un instrumento religioso a un objeto de la cultura escolar.

Palabras-clave: catecismos, impresos, modernidad, historia da educación.

LES MANUELS DE CATÉCHISME SUR LES CHEMINS DE L'ÉDUCATION: NOTES D'HISTOIRE

Résumé

Cet article présente, d'un point de vue historique, les manuels du catéchisme comme une classe d'imprimés largement utilisée par l'église dans ces pratique éducatives, en se focalisant sur la société brésilienne. Méthodologiquement le texte analyse ces livrés comme des objets culturels qui passèrent par différentes stratégies de production, d'appropriation et de circulation à fin de propager la doctrine catholique de manière plus efficace et pérenne. Le texte indique aussi différentes productions matérielles et discursives que cet instrument pédagogique acquit dans la première moitié du 20ème siècle. Que ce soit dans la catéchèse paroissiale ou scolaire, dans cette dernière en particulier, les catéchismes catholiques contribuèrent à la formation du champs doctrinaire de la pédagogie catholique et passèrent d'apparat religieux à objet de culture scolaire.

Mots-clé: catéchisme, imprimés, modernité, histoire de l'éducation.

Introduction

In writing the history of the Brazilian education, the printed forms have contributed in a significant way. In this article, the attention is turned to a specific class of printed forms: the Catholic catechisms, with an educational printed destination for the propagation and conservation of faith and the doctrine of the Church, which proliferated from the Reform movement and exerted significant influence in the educational practices of the Brazilian society. With the analysis of the collection of catechisms from Monsignor Álvaro Negromonte¹, this paper aims to signal different material and discursive productions that this pedagogical instrument acquired in the first half of the 20th century, having the Brazilian society as a privileged *locus* of the analysis.

Tensions, conflicts, disputes in the religious field raised a series of initiatives such as the proliferation of catechism manuals, which contributed for the development of education in the country, allowed the movement of religious ideas and encouraged reading and writing by different social groups. In Brazil, the catechism manuals are rarely a specific study object of the History of Education, of the book or of the printed material and they usually appear as support reference to studies about aspects of religious education and school practices².

The construction of this story follows, therefore, the threads and the tracks left in other areas, such as Theology and Linguistics, as well as in other fields of work of History, as in History of the Book and Reading, History of the Church, History of Teaching and History of Education itself, which sets the catechism manuals as objects of forms and meanings themselves, carriers of a history.

Between forms and feelings

Catechism is analyzed in this paper as a doctrine book, a publication that had as objective education, the inculcation of habits and religious and moral values, behavior modeling, Christian formation. In the condition of printed material, it should be considered as its physical dimensions in an articulated form to its production of meanings. The material devices can indicate both the imposition of a meaning to the text, and the uses that can be invested to them and the appropriations to which they are susceptible. To think of these aspects, in an articulated manner, can increase the chances of deciphering the order that the books seek to establish (Chartier, 1996).

The history of the book points typography as practice that started to be exercised since the 15th century by Christian printers. According to Assis (2004), this fact has boosted the use of the catechism as an educational tool since the 16th century. Since the invention of the printing press, the Catholic Church, experienced copying and handling books, maintained a determined policy with respect to printed material, which were used to propagate their positions, from the assumption that every effort in editing and circulating such texts was part of the goal to build a Christian civilization.

¹ Catholic intellectual and educator who renewed catechism education in Brazil between the 1930s and 1960s. About his work and his collection of catechisms see Orlando (2008).

² This is the case of works such as *The catechetical pedagogy and the education in the first republic (1889-1930)*, by Mauro Passos, *From the reading of the catechism to the catechization of reading: the catechism as a reading text in primary schools in Brazil in the 19th century século XIX*, by Elomar Tambara, *The catechism as a language teaching method*, by Luiz Eduardo Meneses de Oliveira and Lêda Pires Corrêa, and *The pedagogy of the protestant catechisms in Catholic Brazil* and *The protestant catechisms in Brazil*, by Ester Fraga Vilas-Bôas Carvalho do Nascimento.

Modernity boosted the era of religious printed material. With increased circulation, they spread in order to disseminate faith, both Catholic and Protestant. With this, they became key allies in the conformation of both fields. In this perspective, however, the various forms of printed material of an educational character that circulated in the 16th century, such as the Bible, the breviaries, the book of hours, the booklets and newspaper folders, the catechisms were the most prominent printing by its wide circulation in the different social and cultural domains.

As an important catechesis tool, the catechism, originating from the Greek *katechismós*, it means to teach the word, to instruct. In a broader sense, catechesis is a concept that relates to the ecclesial action which conducts, both individuals and communities, to the maturity of faith. The catechism, in turn, is a compendium of the Church's doctrine that expresses in an essential manner the fundamental faith truths, necessary to salvation. The text of the catechism has the function to systemize by education, the catechetical action, adapting the methodology used to age and to the circumstances in which it will be applied.

Regarding a transmission through intensive or extensive³ reading practice, the catechism manuals constitute as reference texts, secure and authentic for the teaching of faith and Catholic doctrine, enlightened by the apostolic tradition, by the Church's teaching and by the Holy Scriptures. What Bourdieu means "a foothold that is a script, preventing eccentricities and extravagances, which ensure the economy of improvisation, maintaining it within limits (2005, p. 98). Organized in the form of questions and answers, a novelty in the 16th century, it was intended to transmit the message and to teach through the dialogue the Church's values and standards. The doctrine should be learned in detail, in order to contribute for the formation of a set of values and the own *habitus* of a Christian.

Although the existence of catechisms to teach the Christian doctrine is prior to modernity, it is in this period that this class of printed material gained a greater impulse⁴. According to Bollin and Gasparini (1998), the term catechism, used to indicate the little book of the Christian doctrine, already used, both in Latin, and in the vernacular, in the 14th century, serving for the exposition of the Christian doctrine to ignorant people or to the children. But it was from the Protestant Reform and the uses that Luther made from the printed material for the faith's propagation, that the Church was compelled to use the same

³ The reading practices have constituted the object of investigation of some historians who have turned to the *History of the book and reading* as Roger Chartier, Jean Hébrard, Alberto Manguel, among others. Chartier (1996) when treating of an intensive and extensive reading practice reveals different communities of readers not only as to the uses of the printed material, but also of their intentions, their goals. Being part of a religious popular literature, the catechism manuals suggest greater attention to great masses of readers from the 16th century, trying to perceive upon the existence of a recurring reading practice of printed circulation, the characteristic *habitus* of this reading appropriation.

⁴ It is common to take the understanding of the catechism associated with the method used. However, this article calls attention to the printed material, published in different formats and proposing teaching methodologies that over the years and place where it was used, featuring the multiplicity of this object. Among the methodological proposals adopted, one can highlight the historical-biblical narrative that emerged in the 17th century. There is, also, the proposal to replace the memorization technique by the Socratic Method, based on dialogue, fruit of the Catholic Enlightenment. In the 20th century, there is the existence of a collection of catechisms examined by myself at the Master's, entitled *Towards a christian civilization: the Álvaro Negromonte collection and the pedagogy of the catechism* (2008), which proposes a comprehensive method, preferring the explanation and verification of the topics covered through the association with life, whenever possible. Whatever the method, at different times in history, the catechisms were the main characteristic tools of modern catechesis and the formation of the civilized man.

strategy for education and shaping the Catholic faith. The catechisms adopted now-a-days, new outlines. Catechesis, which adopted an apostolic character, began to be used by the Church under a new light, that of teaching. According to Bollin and Gasparini, catechesis is seen as the “teaching of the Christian doctrine, concentrated on the catechism, the book (printed!) compile in a simple, essential and complete way, all that the faithful should know” (1998, p. 105).

After the Reformation, the catechisms proliferated and became the center of the pastoral-catechetical action. The inadequacy of the pastoral action at the time gave rise to the tonic of the reformist movement: the need for religious education. With this, there was a wave of catechisms, Protestants and Catholics, as a way for the maturity of faith and, consequently, the salvation of souls. Even among Protestants, “it was, many times, more popular than the Bible itself” (Nascimento, 2006, p. 4).

The variety of texts produced dissonances in the speeches from both sides, which sought to associate religion and civilization in their teachings. Guided, initially, in a reading practice called by Chartier (1996) as intensive, the catechism texts served both to inculcate the new values and principles proposed by Protestantism, and to instruct and conform to the truth from the Catholic Church.

This conformity started by the own interior of the religious field. Religious ignorance reached up to the clergy that lived in miserable conditions, without any perspective, intellectual and spiritual food to strengthen their own faith. This resulted in a movement of internal reform and the publication of *Catechismus ad parochos*, better known as Roman or Tridentine Catechism, turned to the pastors, as an auxiliary tool of theological training in regard to what should be taught to the people.

The Protestant catechisms, widely distributed for the instruction of the people, adopted two strands more clearly defined: Luther and Calvin. Luther's catechisms are known in the Church History for its pastoral character. In 1529, he published eight catechetical boards for the family, the large catechism for the instruction of preachers and teachers and the small catechism, simpler and designed for pastors and fathers of families to explain to the children. From the methodological point of view, Luther took for the large catechism a greater rigidity and used a continuous discursive text, considering the target public. In this same perspective, the small catechism is written in a question and answer format, more educational for children.

Already Calvin's texts, which influenced the Catholic catechisms, appear in the Church History in a doctrinal perspective. Calvin's catechisms are a kind of Theology summaries, which condense in a broadly, orderly and rigorous form what should have been, necessarily, learned by children and adults.

In the wake of the success of the protestant project to spread faith and religious instruction by printed material, especially the catechism writings, the Catholic also compiled several catechism texts which were designed as manuals of the Christian doctrine, aimed at children and the faithful, in a general manner, to those who wanted to learn about the Church's doctrine. The main Catholic catechisms published in the wake of the Protestant project were written by three religious people from the Society of Jesus, who was involved in the fight against the spread of Protestantism: Peter Canisius, Edmond Auger e Robert Bellarmine. Canisius works are mainly characterized by Summa, a theological-pastoral synthesis model composed of two parts: knowledge and the

Sacraments. These catechisms were the most widespread texts in the schools by the Society of Jesus and dominated the German-speaking countries until the middle of the 19th century.

Auger's works influenced the French catechisms and they are marked by the concern with the spread of Protestantism: its organization seeks to answer, point by point, to Calvin's catechism. Despite the great success in a short time, Auger's catechisms were supplanted by Canisius's, who was more concerned with the individual training than with the opposition. Both authors wrote their works during the Council of Trent. Bellarmine's works⁵, written after the Council, achieved the approval from the pope and they became mandatory in Rome. They were presented at the First Vatican Council as the most authorized model for the compilation of the universal catechism. It was the unofficial text from the Church and the most used in parochial catechism classes until the compendium by Pius X, in 1905 (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998).

The catechism, as material object that conveys the teacher-student pedagogical relationship, altered the catechetical practices over the times. The relationship, before based on the catechist, critical to transmit the message, was transferred to the text, to the printed word. In modern catechesis, the role of the catechist was to explain the book. At that moment, in catechism classes "the key player is the book" (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998, p.118).

As much as the Catholic Church disputed the individualization process of modernity itself, this was felt in the catechism classes, which completely changed the process dynamics of the acquisition of knowledge. The concept that there was an apostolic catechesis in the Ancient Era and Middle Ages, based on orality, which assumed a greater interaction between people and a socialized reading practice, was replaced by a new behavioral code that led the individual to an individualized reading practice, introduced by the printed culture, of which the Catholic Church was also a participant:

From now on, the doctrine is not only explained and then summarized into some formulas of easy retention. It should be understood in detail and recited by heart. The book is not only the priest's manual or of the educated person, which serves as a guide for people's instruction. It is placed directly on the hands of children and adults. Its format is much smaller as the book is widespread. All of this is new in relation to the past. (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998, p. 117)

In 17th century Europe, the multiplication of catechism manuals and catechetical education were intended not only to transmit, but also to set the Christian spirit. The spread of the religious schools tried to form and display the religiosity of their members. The action of the schools competed to transform the 17th century into a century of disputes and polarizations which dictated as standard the demonstration of faith by the behavior and moral conduct. "Religiosity should also be demonstrated by Christians living in society,

⁵ The catechetical writings by Bellarmino are summarized in two: the *Dottrina cristiana breve perché si possa imparare a mente* (1597), written for children in the form of a dialogue, in which the master asks and the disciple answers, with 96 questions and answers, and the *Dichiarazione piu copiosa della Dottrina Cristiana per uso di quelli Che l'insegnano ai fanciulli e altre persone semplici, composta in forma de dialogo* (1598), a kind of orientation guide for priests, catechists and teachers, in which the dialogue is reversed and the disciple is who asks and the master answers, with 273 questions-answers (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998, p. 115)

and the expression *honnête homme* designated the human type that daily demonstrated their beliefs, since it had been done for this, in the Christian (spiritual) and social (courtesans) qualities by the schools” (Hilsdorf, 2006, p.76).

The court society, which was configured as social, political and economical, determined the new behavioral models and code in the civilized world. In the 18th century, the social mobility of the clergy allowed them to become the main promoters of the court's customs that in many aspects were consonant with the Church's interests. The control of emotions and disciplined training of behavior, for example, presented affinities with particular trends in the traditional ecclesiastical behavior: “civility gets new religious and Christian foundation” (Elias, 1990, p. 111). This made the Catholic Church one of the most important institutions for the dissemination of behaviors and styles from the lowest strata of society. According to priest La Salle, in his *Norms of civility*,

most Christians consider decorum and civility as a quality purely human and mundane and, not thinking on further increase your mind, do not consider it an attitude related to Deus, our neighbor and ourselves. This shows well how little Christianity there is in the world. (*apud* Elias, 1990, p. 111)

The cultural movement of Enlightenment and the cult to education and to the enlightenment to form the citizen resulted in a proposal of secularization between State and Church, especially in France, which imposed on religious education a new mission: to create a link between the Church and the civilized world, establishing a relationship between reason and faith, between tradition and progress. At the core of these initiatives, from the 18th century on “it is outlined a new pastoral that puts the parish as a center of the apostolate, seeking to affirm the Catholic school and uses the press as support and sustenance for preaching” (Assis, 2004, p. 54).

Before the proliferation of printed material with an educational character, like the various types of literary texts that emerged on the 18th century, the Church adopted the strategy of transforming the catechism in a school subject and to assure its formative function. Catechesis and catechisms have come to occupy the school spaces belonging to the Church. The catechism texts, adapted to school, also served as first reading manuals. In this case, it is “impossible to reconstruct a history of the written culture without facing the modalities of their schooling”. As stated by Hèbrard (2007, p. 37), one might think in this association between religious practice and literacy processes, as proposed by Oliveira and Corrêa:

The close relationship between the literacy process and the written culture allows us to understand at least one of the reasons that lead to the need to anchor the Christian formation in literacy, which in turn, chains reading and writing learning. Thus, catechism establishes itself as an instrument able to link the realms of faith for literacy. (2007, p. 2)

Based on this prerogative, the authors defend the catechism as a method of teaching and learning, by which are intertwined religious formation and language education. Highlighted, in this sense, the compendium *Breve instrucçam para ensinar a doutrina christã, reading and writing to boys* and at the same time the *principles of the Portuguese language and its orthografia*, used as a child's primer for teaching the language in the

State of Pernambuco, around 1759. Thinking about catechism as a method requires attention to the variation of forms, discourses and methods by which these texts passed over time.

From the Jesuit schools to the schools of Christian doctrine, the catechism was a central figure. From the 18th century, its use in the public schools, was discussed and adopted as a legacy of the Catholic Enlightenment⁶. The idea of school as an ideal *locu* for the formation of the civilized man, the fruit of the enlightened mentality, found also echo in Catholicism. According to Nascimento,

the civilizing speech valued the school as being the agency destined by excellence to the cultivation of great virtues, to the strengthening of the spirits, the formation of the man of the future, the conscious man. The civilized man, educated, would be able to organize the family on solid, friendly and fair bases, according with the aspirations of progress, in line with the scientific standards. (2001, p. 16)

Therefore, “school catechesis or the schooling of catechesis is, in fact, a consequence of the Enlightenment mentality” (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998, p. 155). If, on one hand, the French Enlightenment incited a de-christianization project of the French nation, on the other hand, the German Enlightenment acquired their own contours, brand of social configuration⁷ that undertook it and opened spaces in German and Austrian public schools for the school catechesis.

Catechism and Sacred History became school disciplines and the catechism book came to be thought for the school, practice that was extended through the 19th century. The articulation of the catechism to the public school opened space for priests and Catholic intellectuals to associate it to any other object of the school culture, inserting it, therefore, in the educational concerns which surfaced with modern pedagogy⁸.

The production of catechisms in the 19th century, debated during the Vatican Council I (1869-1970), brought the marks of new times, which asked new objects, new practices, new own representations of time and place in which they were circumscribed. Within the Catholic catechesis, the catechisms texts brought the marks of two main catechetical currents: historical-theological, of innovative trend, and the traditional-doctrinal. These two currents mark the movement of renovation and tradition which was established in this century.

⁶ The catholic enlightenment “does not accept the secularist instances of the enlightenment and wants to be a movement of religious, pastoral, social, theological regeneration, which seeks what is substantial, reasonable, fair and useful in faith. It is characterized by the fight against doctrinal fixism and the scholastic; by the ample space granted to reason relatively to faith and to authority; by less attention given to mysteries and to the brand new; by the preference given to moral life, relatively to worship; by the sobriety of prayer and worship; by the historical view of faith and dogma extracted from the Bible. It sees in the ecclesiastic, specially, an educator from the people of God, a master of moral.” (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998, p. 153)

⁷ The concept of configuration or figuration is understood in this paper as is proposed by Norbert Elias, “a social formation, whose dimensions can be very variable (players of a card game, the company in a cafe, a school classroom, a village, a city, a country), in which the individuals are connected to each other by a um specific mode of mutual dependence and whose reproduction implies a mobile balance of stresses” (2001, p.13).

⁸ This articulation also brings up traces of a cultural circularity between Brazil and Germany which are revealed in the configuration of a set of educational practices, in this case, specifically Catholic. About this relationship Brazil-Germany, it is interesting to see the works by Lúcio Kreutz (1991) and Jorge Carvalho do Nascimento (1999) as important references for the serious study of the theme.

In several countries, such as France, Italy and Germany, catechism texts considered unique in each country, were adopted. The idea of a single catechism text, considering that the teaching of religion was associated with the civilizing discourse, allows to infer that it was intended, by religion and by printing, to shape the culture of a nation as a civilizing pattern.

In the name of this civilization, in the beginning of the 20th century, Pope Pius X published the encyclical *Acerbo Nimis* (1905), by which was sought to combat what the Roman authority called of religious ignorance of the Catholic and to encourage the expansion of the catechesis in an efficient form. The insistence of Pope Pius X in nourishing the people of spiritual food radiated a work that called for volunteer catechists for the parish catechisms and Catholic catechist teachers in their classrooms, by the access that they had to a greater number of children in a more continuous way. These two areas of action of catechesis contributed to proliferate, once again, the production of catechism manuals, which was triggered in the 19th century (Lustosa, 1977).

Having the educational field disputed with the Protestants and with the defenders of secular education, one of the strategies adopted by the Church was the expansion of the number of Catholic institutions around the world, to ensure the number of faithful by educational training. The book became not only a religious apparatus, but also a school culture object. The written memory is spread by printed material, in order to perpetuate values, behaviors, discourses that were effective and formed societies. In this sense, “the book carries with itself the mission of educating, civilizing, universalizing and instructing” (Toledo, 2001, p. 2) and its use as a pedagogical tool, either being in the Church or in the classroom’s space, met the project of forming the individual character thinking about its social projection.

The Catholic catechisms in the Brazilian education

The catechism text, in Brazil, since the Colony, articulated the faith to the basic knowledge and it became an important resource used by the Church. The use of the catechesis and of the catechism manuals leaves, still, in evidence that the educational project developed in Brazilian land was part of an international movement for the conformation of the Catholic religious field. Since the arrival of the Europeans, the need of the Jesuits to deal with sexual and moral liberation of the inhabitants residing in it, took them to adopt as a strategy to confront the situation, the civilization of manners. The Jesuit priests saw, teaching catechism, the ideal strategy that would serve as a control mechanism of the rampant impulses that met and mingled among the people existing here.

The first catechisms were written in Tupi-Guarani, to meet this need. Considering that, at that moment, its highest ideal was to impose modes and standards of modes, to use the native language of the Indigenous people was the most efficient means so the appropriation of these teachings could occur effectively.

In the patronage regime, religious education had a free pass to dictate the models that should prevail in the new society, once religion and education were concurrent and interdependent processes. Not only the truths of faith were disclosed, but also the socially acceptable conduct modes, such as standards of morality, in a network of interdependence in which it was not possible to separate what was religious and what was

a social behavior standard. Naturally, this context inserted religious teaching and the sacred catechism lessons in the center of the school curriculum.

The Catechetical Discourse from the 18th century associated the catechism to Christian doctrine classes and to civility. According to Andrade,

it was ancient custom to use the catechism as a teaching language primer. D. Diogo Ortiz, *Cathecismo pequeno da doutrina e instrução que os christão ham de creer e obrar, para conseguir a benaventurança eterna* [...] e a *Grammática da lingua portuguesa com os mandamentos da santa madre Igreja*, by João de Barros [...] Who as the author explains in *Grammar of the Portuguese Language*, although catechism, functioned as 'short letter', since it was in it the 'art for the boys to easily learn to read with all diversity of syllables that the nature of our language suffers. (1978, p.13, 14)

In this context, it came out, in Pernambuco, between 1759 and 1760, the *Breve instrucção para ensinar a doutrina christã, ler e escrever aos meninos e ao mesmo tempo os princípios da língua portuguesa e sua orthografia*, probably commissioned by the governor. This primer-catechism was a kind of breviary of good manners and good customs, a text of learning reading in Portuguese and a manual of Christian truths (Andrade, 1978; Lustosa, 1992).

With the expulsion of the Jesuits, promoted by the Marquis of Pombal, the officially instituted catechism was Montpellier, drafted in 1702, but in 1721 went to the index for its *Jansenist* guidance⁹. However, the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese translations, escaped condemnation. Some Brazilian bishops resisted its use, others adopted it and there were those, like the Canon Luis Vieira da Silva, who had, in his library, Montpellier's catechism next to the works of the French philosopher Bossuet, one of the main representatives of the Catholic orthodoxy in 17th century France (Frieiro, 1981, p. 57).

During this period, despite of the catechesis in the Jesuit molds had lost the privileged space of application, the religious ideas were not totally forsaken as the ideal of the Civil Christian society still fitted the spirit of the Brazilian society. The new schools did not disentangle from this ideal and the new laymen priests had to be also responsible for the catechetical instruction.

The regalism from the beginning of the 19th century gave continuity to the educational practice of associating religion to education, via catechisms as reading texts. According to Tambara (2003), from the set of reading texts used in the primary and secondary schools in Brazil in the 19th century, there are forty six catechisms, of which the

⁹ "Jansenism was a movement that emerged within the Church, in 1638, and it preached that man is repeatedly asked by the grace and by the ambition. He cannot resist to inward grace. Therefore, if it falls, it means he did not receive the grace. Jansenism took a practical feature of perfection and intended to restore the austere primitive discipline. It made difficult frequent communion, insisted on divine justice and on its punishment and reinforced the mentality of servants and did not of the children of God, which weakened christian life." (Negromonte, 1954, p. 114)

most mentioned titles, for its translations and re-editions, is the *Catecismo histórico*¹⁰, by Abbot Fleury. Subsequently, there were Montpellier's catechism and the *Catecismo de doutrina cristã*, written by Canon Fernandes Pinheiro. According to Tambara, there was a specific guideline of "emphasizing the process of grade school reading text-based on a religious character, as determined on art. 47 of Couto Ferraz Reform, which indicated the explicit readings of the Gospels and the news story of Sacred History" (Tambara, 2005, p. 3).

In the mid 19th century, began a period of the Catholic reform. According to Passos,

this period had an important characteristic that was moving a group of bishops, from various parts in the country, for the teaching of the Christian Doctrine [...], and they constituted in the main articulators of the confluence of ideas which were generated, under the inspiration of the Council of Trent and, later, reinforced by the Vatican Council I, the Catholic reform movement and the teaching of the catechism. (1998, p. 239)

This change of orientation within the Church, which spent a period living under the aegis of ultramontanist and won more expressiveness from the 1870s in the 19th century, and it was also reflected in the catechism texts. In the report of book supplies to schools in Rio Grande do Norte, according to Tambara, there were, predominantly, three religious books that are worth mentioning: *Religious Moral*, by Ambrosio Rendu, *Biblical History*, by the former bishop from Pará, and *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. The latter one had a significant donation in relation to other books offered to school. According to Tambara (2005), Dr. Abílio Borges donated 400 copies of his reading books, Dr. Macedo donated 18 copies of his *Corographia do Brasil*, and, then president of the Province, João Capistrano Bandeira de Melo, together with the director from Public Education, Gomes da Silva donated 1.000 copies of the *Catecismo da doutrina cristã*.

In this effort of clergy renewal, and in the wake of the State incentive, it was published a variety of catechism texts, inspired in the Roman catechism, which were important means to reform the principles of the Christian faith and eventually, thus replacing the *Historical Catechism* and *Montpellier's Catechism*. Furthermore, as stated by Lustosa (1992) much simpler primers were published, especially to serve as teaching assistant catechists, often with little qualification. These primers were measured out by content level and according to age.

In this project, undertaken concurrently with the Imperial Law, in 1827, according to Azzi (1977), Don Romualdo's catechism was the first text to appear, in 1831, and it had an important role as a pioneer, in this spirit of reform, by the effort presented against the Jansenists ideas in *Montpellier's Catechism*. Then, it followed, according to Passos (1998), *Mariana's Catechism*, also known as *D. Viçoso's Catechism*. Along the same line, came out *Catholic Primer on the Main Points of the Christian Doctrine*, published by Rio de Janeiro's Bishop, disciple of Don Viçoso. There were, also, the catechisms by Don Antônio

¹⁰ This catechism was published in 1683 and it is divided in introduction, the small and large catechism. The two catechisms are divided in two parts: a historical and the other where there is the Christian doctrine in narrative form. Its proposal was to substitute the doctrinal catechism by the historical-biblical. This catechism met "a remarkable bookseller success" and it opened a way for the idea of catechesis associated to the Bible. Since then, catechesis based on history has never been extinguished in the catechetical movement and the publications of the compendiums of Sacred History have multiplied (Bollin; Gasparini, 1998, p. 152).

Joaquim de Melo (1859), Don Joaquim Manuel da Silveira (1866), Maranhão's Bishop. In São Paulo, Don Lino Deodato Rodrigues de Carvalho reprinted the manual written by Don Antônio Joaquim de Melo, and Don Macedo wrote the *Catholic Church's Catechism for the Use of the People* and *Para's Catechism*, being that this last one had great repercussion.

But not only bishops published catechisms. Lay people also dedicated themselves to this task:

Viscount of Cairu wrote a *Primer of the Brazilian School for religious instruction in Brazil*, a daughter of Mary translates from French into our language a *Manual of First Communion and Confirmation*, another layman, Joaquim Maria de Lacerda, publishes the *Small Religious Encyclopedia, containing Catechism of the Christian Doctrine, summary of the tests on religion, sacred history for the use of Brazilian schools*, and finally, it can also be attached to such, Antonio Conselheiro himself, whose book of sermons shows how faith is transmitted in popular media, without forgetting the commitment of so many unknown "saints" and "blessed" who sometimes were – and still are – the only ones to take to many places in the interior the echo (catechesis) of the Gospel message. (Vilela, 1998, p. 304)

Despite all the necessary efforts, in Brazil, separation between the State and the Church, that was installed with the Republic, and the consequent official withdrawal of religious education from the schools, it served as an explanation for the state of religious ignorance that, according to D. Leme, in his pastoral letter in 1916, it was the cause of all society's ills.

In this struggle against religious ignorance the catechesis began to have a major role in the indoctrination of individuals. A good teaching of the catechism should ensure a moral education of the individuals' conscience (Orlando, 2008). In this perspective, it was needed to nourish the people of religious instruction. The set of strategies to reconstruct Brazilian Christianity and to promote Christian civilization, the two guiding axis of the practices undertaken was linked to two areas of action: school and the press. A network of Catholic denominational schools spread, aiming to the formation of a ruling elite, according to the Catholic tradition and culture. The literate knowledge was the tool chosen by the Church to "redefine its role in the Republican society, recovering and expanding the power that it had since colonial times" (Gebara, 2006, p. 90).

The Catholic press was developed as a tool elected to combat the anti-Catholic doctrines and instrument of pedagogical destination. The several uses, assigned to the press, happened, mainly, because of the school spaces being turned to a more restricted elite. The Catholic teaching libraries, studied by Donizetti Sgarbi (2001), corroborate with this principle. They enclosed the productions from the Center D. Vital and from the Brazilian Catholic Confederation of Education in the papers *The Order and Brazilian Magazine of Pedagogy*, which aimed at shaping the educational field, as pedagogical tools used to forge a Christian culture. This strategy stemmed from the Catholic understanding that perceived the pedagogical field far beyond the school walls. According to Sgarbi, the Catholics "believed that, through the book and its similar spread, especially, among intellectuals, the opinion makers, could start the re-Christianization of Brazil" (2001, p. 9).

With the intention to order the avalanche in favor of catechesis, the Episcopal conferences developed the Pastoral of 1915, which, among other things, regulated the

teaching of catechism and established a standard catechism, which synthesized, in its themes, the concerns of the Church at the time. This catechism was composed by three volumes and it served, for several decades, for the primary religious instruction. According to Mauro Passos (1999), the three manuals were organized in the following manner: the *Summarized Catechism of the Christian Doctrine, the First, the Second catechism and the Third catechism* and they were published by Editora Vozes. Subsequently, the summarized catechism was incorporated to the second catechism, corresponding to three different levels that, later, they were regrouped in *Minor Catechisms*, referring to the first two catechisms, and *Major Catechism*, referring to the last one. However, according to Lustosa,

the primarism of the methods employed, the tendency of a catechesis that was exhausted and closed with first communion, the generalization of the idea of a catechism turned off from life would not present the needed remedies for the correction of the deep illnesses from the religious ignorance. Furthermore, it was a catechesis predominantly done with a preventive spirit against Spiritualism and Protestantism. (1977, p. 52)

The hardness of the texts and the disinterest that they caused in students took many priests and laymen to rethink the materials used in teaching the catechism. At this time, some Catholic intellectuals and educators like priest Negromonte were talking with Belgian and French pedagogical currents also interested in the renovation of the Catholic educational practices and religious teaching. However, the Munich catechetical movement appears to inspire the debates on catechism renewal and in Brazil finds in the figure of priest Álvaro Negromonte one of its main promoters.

Contributions from the international chains for the reformulation of religious teaching were brought to discussion in the First Brazilian Catechetical Congress, held in Belo Horizonte, in 1928. From then on, a series of discussions were set off, which allowed thinking in a renovation of catechetical pedagogy, with openness for new topics, new approaches, other directions about the methodological and didactics issues, evaluation of manuals used in catechism classes and the training of catechists. In this event the European catechetical congresses were also mentioned and according to Mauro Passos (2008), the relevance of the congress was mainly related to the opening debate on the catechetical pedagogy with other actors involved with catechism issue besides the theologians, as pedagogues, educators and catechists, which brought up “a series of subsidies for study that were still in the shadow of the catechetical movement” (Passos, 2008, p. 449). In this perspective, this congress is appointed by Passos as “a test of changes, having its conclusions being felt in the following decades, with the particular momentum from priest Negromonte, who struggled to systematize and to expand the meaning of catechesis” (2008, p. 454).

In the mid 1930s, inserted in the international movement which already showed a dialogue since the late 1920s, Negromonte started to adopt the strategies undertaken by his colleagues in different countries, such as the organization of congresses to debate the catechesis issues, organization of catechetical weeks, publication of pedagogical magazines and books, in order to reach a wider public and to provide a more solid Catholic formation. Step by step, he occupied the educational scenario through different paths, among them, the schooling of catechesis.

Under this influence, he published a collection of teaching manuals of catechisms, composed by fourteen books, destined from the 1st grade to the normal course. Initially, they were written as individual books of doctrine and moral, destined to secondary school students or religion courses. Subsequently, the Project was expanded and formed a collection destined to all school grades, without discarding the possible uses in parochial catechism classes. The expansion of the reach of the catechesis in a more attractive way, was in line with the speeches produced by the sciences of education and it is reflected in the books, which showed more concern with its recipient: format, that varied in colors and illustrations; brochure, to facilitate the handling: content, adapted to different ages.

The main strategy of action by Negromonte was to propose a reformulation in the catechism texts in a double aspect: material and textual. The new meaning of catechesis comprehended a formation oriented for a religious life in the practice. The doctrine should be taught without losing sight of the formative aspect of religious education, but in an attractive way, interesting for students and efficient for the purpose for which it was proposed. The old manuals did not meet these expectations. New texts were necessary:

The new texts, if they really wanted to serve to the purpose of the catechism, which is to form the practical Christian, should have a feature entirely different from the present. I know that before a new catechism, we all will feel a strange impression. We have in mind those questions, those expressions that we decorate when children and we teach it a thousand times to the little ones; we become used to that material order; we put up the kind of book from our catechisms [...] Change that and we find it strange [...] But it is necessary to change! (Negromonte, 1942, p. 75)

The changes to which Negromonte referred to were in concern to text language, to tailored content, to didactics, to approach with reality, the practical character of the lessons and, finally, although he says the latter is of less importance, the necessary change in the typographic aspect:

Who knows child psychology knows the discredit of a small book, type of tiny, without illustrations, in the face of big books, clear and varied text running between the figures that talk much more than letters. And who knows the charm of a new book, soon sees that among the manual that change each year attracting the interest and the enthusiasm of the children, the same catechism passing, old and known, from year to year will be a sad figure. (Negromonte, 1942, p. 78)

Soon after the publication of this article in the *Brazilian Ecclesiastic Magazine* (*Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira*), Negromonte launched the series *My catechism* (*Meu catecismo*), aimed at the primary course. Besides that, speaking of the need of text renovation, Negromonte pointed some initiatives in this intention that, according to him, were not successful, but did not announce his project in a specific way, only leaving the need and the justification for the publication of the primary series. In proposing a new catechism text, Álvaro Negromonte did not refer to a textual change, of only content. He went beyond. He was worried about making the book an efficient resource for the classes, his attention turned to the theoretical, methodological and technical aspects of the object in question: "I know that to give a catechism text that is new (and not a new) of catechism is

a very difficult task. But it is so necessary that it deserves our best efforts” (Negromonte, 1942, p. 82).

The concern of the priest with the form of the catechism texts reflects this approach with the ideas that circulated around the renewal of the educational field and the production of the book as an object of the school material culture. In developing the Children’s Literature program for the School of Teachers at the Institute of Education of the Federal District, there is a concern with a set of criteria referring to a good publication, shared by other education professionals. Among these criteria, practically normative, it’s included the concern with the text content, organization, current time and the accuracy of the notions put, adaptation to children’s basic interests, artistic qualities, appropriate language, correct, clear and simple and the care with feature material, with the format, printing, paper and the pictures used. All of these aspects tried to turn the school manual and the reading act more enjoyable (Vidal, 2001). In modern school, the form of treating the student, related to the book, did not encourage reverence. Rather, the intimacy between the subject and object of culture had in mind to narrow this relationship. In this conception, “the book should be loved, conquered by the reader, transforming it in an object of work. Male and female students got used to the book” (Ibid., p. 106).

It can be said that the reformulation of the religious education, through using the more interesting catechism manuals, helped in the re-Christianization project of the Brazilian society. The publication of new catechism books, in a new material and textual support, had a broader meaning for the Church that went beyond the pedagogical sphere and fell in the political scope. To publish is to turn something public. It is to do, as Bourdieu points out, “go from the informal to the official. Publication is the rupture of a censorship” (2001, p. 244). To publish new catechism texts was a public demonstration of the Catholic dialogue with the new times. It meant to break with the Republican censorship and to print the marks of the History with the Church.

Final considerations

The profusion of catechisms developed in modernity, the varied formats and uses received, the presence, but above all, the intense circulation of these texts in the public education spaces and politics, reveal the dialogue between Church and modernity. It is also an answer to the political and religious division and to cultural and pastoral poverty that the Catholic Church was in the context of modernity.

The Church’s investment in printed material for education as the catechism reached, successfully, of the institution hotspots: directly contributed to the spread of the Catholic faith, to overcome the stage of religious ignorance in which the Christian people was and formed themselves, as an effective tool for the development of a new Christianization project.

The production of a series of books produced by the Church was intended to reach not only the human intellect, but also to move “the senses and the heart for the good so that intelligence would stay focused on God” (Assis, 2004, p. 93). Bearers of Church authority and tradition, religious books, in general, and specifically the catechism books, carry out what Assis diagnosed as “a double influence on man: to be taught by the Church’s authority and to keep his thought and feelings focused on the infinity” (Assis, 2004, p. 93). Thus, such books would be part of education’s conceptual composition from

the Catholic education perspective, which does not understand that education is not complete, dedicated to the training of mind and soul.

The studies on this topic, the field of History Education, are still rare as is the use of such printed material for research sources. If the printed culture has attracted the attention of education historians, through books, printed teaching material and educational periodical press, it is of salutary importance to consider the catechism manuals in this assembly, as a cultural object that allows capturing traces of educational practices in different times and spaces. In this sense, the education historian still has much to investigate about production, circulation and appropriation of this type of printing, used in different ways by different groups that took at it as a manual of religious education.

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