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Education through print: a study on the reformulation of the First Catechism of Christian Doctrine (1964)¹

A educação pelo impresso: um estudo sobre a reformulação do Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã (1964)

La educación a través de la imprenta: un estudio sobre la reformulación del Primer Catecismo de la Doctrina Cristiana (1964)

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Abstract

*This article aims to analyze the edition of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* (First Catechism of Christian Doctrine) published by the publishing house Vozes in 1964, which presents significant alterations compared to editions published in previous decades. It seeks to present evidence regarding the role the catechism played in forming its target audience. Catechisms are religious printed materials that have withstood the test of time with relative stability in relation to the content they convey and have served the purpose of disseminating the doctrines that underpin. Considering that this catechism had high print runs and a large number of editions, this study sought to understand the motivations for the changes undertaken and how, in a critical period of the history of the Catholic Church and Brazilian society itself, the catechism was adapted to new demands from the public and the publishing market. The research sources included 13 editions of the material published throughout the 20th century; magazines and newspapers available in the Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro; catalogs from the Vozes publishing house; and official documents resulting from Catholic councils and conferences. The analysis revealed several changes in materiality, mainly through the increase in the book's size, the presence of color illustrations, and the use of a simplified vocabulary; however, the questions and answers remained consistent over time, indicating a preference for tradition due to the success of the official text.*

Keywords: History of reading. Printed texts. Catechisms.

Resumo

O artigo analisa a edição do *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* publicada pela editora Vozes em 1964, que traz significativas alterações em relação a edições de décadas anteriores, e apresenta indícios do papel desempenhado pelo catecismo na formação do público a que era dirigido. Catecismos são impressos religiosos que têm resistido ao tempo com relativa estabilidade quanto ao conteúdo que veiculam e cumprem o papel de disseminar as doutrinas que os fundamentam. Por ser um catecismo com altas tiragens e elevado número de edições, buscou-se compreender motivações para as mudanças empreendidas e como, em um período crítico da história da Igreja Católica e da sociedade brasileira, o catecismo foi adaptado às demandas de público e do mercado editorial. As fontes da pesquisa foram 13 edições do catecismo publicadas no século XX; revistas e jornais disponíveis na Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional (RJ); catálogos da Editora Vozes; documentos oficiais, resultantes de concílios e conferências católicas. A análise permitiu verificar diversas alterações na materialidade, principalmente, aumento do tamanho do livro, presença de ilustrações coloridas, utilização de vocabulário simplificado; no entanto, as perguntas e respostas mantiveram-se ao longo do tempo, revelando a opção pela tradição em função do sucesso do texto oficial.

Palavras-chave: História da leitura. Impressos. Catecismos.

Resumen

*El artículo analiza la edición del *Primer Catecismo de la Doctrina Cristiana* publicado por la editorial Vozes en 1964, que presenta alteraciones significativas en relación con ediciones de décadas anteriores, y expone indicios del papel desempeñado por el catecismo en la formación del público al que iba dirigido. Los catecismos son impresos religiosos que han resistido al tiempo con relativa estabilidad en cuanto al contenido que vehiculan y cumplen la función de diseminar las doctrinas que los fundamentan. Por tratarse de un catecismo con altas tiradas y un elevado número de ediciones, se buscó comprender las motivaciones para los cambios emprendidos y cómo, en un período crítico de la historia de la Iglesia Católica y de la sociedad brasileña, el catecismo fue adaptado a las demandas del público y del mercado editorial. Las fuentes de la investigación fueron 13 ediciones del catecismo publicadas en el siglo XX; revistas y periódicos disponibles en la Hemeroteca Digital de la Biblioteca Nacional (RJ); catálogos de la Editora Vozes; documentos oficiales, resultantes de concilios y conferencias católicas. El análisis permitió verificar diversas alteraciones en la materialidad, principalmente, aumento del tamaño del libro, presencia de ilustraciones coloridas, utilización de vocabulario simplificado; sin embargo, las preguntas y respuestas se mantuvieron a lo largo del tiempo, revelando la opción por la tradición en función del éxito del texto oficial.*

Palabras clave: Historia de la lectura. Impresos. Catecismos.

Introduction

This article analyzes the reformulated edition of *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* [First Catechism of Christian Doctrine], published by the publishing company Vozes in 1964, which introduces significant changes compared to the editions published in previous decades. The analysis, conducted from the content and materiality perspectives, sought to understand, through evidence, the educational role it played in forming a broader and non-specialized audience – children, young people, and adults – at the time. In its long editorial cycle, which started in the first decade of the 20th century and mainly targeted a laic public, it had a high number of editions and reached high annual circulations. When reformulated, it reached 200,000 copies (*Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, 1964, p. 5). Considering the work's longevity and editorial success, we sought to understand the motivations behind the changes undertaken and how, during a critical period in Catholic Church history and Brazilian society, the catechism was adapted to meet the new demands of the public and the editorial market.

The sources used in the research that originated this article were thirteen editions of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* published during the 20th century; information from magazines and newspapers available at the *Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro* (HDBN); explored the catalogues from *Editora Vozes*; analyzed other official documents, resulting from catholic councils and conferences. The sources were located at the Archive Frei Chico from the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais* (PUC-MG); the HDBN website; other digital repositories; and personal archives. Even though the research focused on the remodeled edition of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, from 1964, initially, it was necessary to compare it with previous editions to perceive its singularities. In the following phases, the main themes and approaches to the printed material were analyzed in relation to the graphic-editorial project.

Problem contextualization

The implementation of studies seeking to understand the role of printed materials in the formation of subjects throughout the history of Brazilian education has grown exponentially in the last decades (Moreira; Galvão, 2021, 2024; Galvão; Melo, 2019). These works have shown, among other aspects, the power of these periodicals, magazines, school manuals, literature books, popular printed materials on educational – schooled and non-schooled – processes of women, children, Black people, Indigenous, individuals people with disabilities, and other groups. In this context, studies of religious printed materials have also gained importance, reaching, in some cases, large numbers of copies and being found in communities with little presence of the written word across the vast Brazilian territory (Souza, 2009, 2017; Orlando, 2015). Among these materials are those that, from the beginning, had the role to disseminate to a broad and non-specialized public the doctrines that ground them: the catechisms.

The catechism is considered a cultural invention from the modern period, with its first evidence in the 16th century and “assumed itself as a new pedagogy and a means of mass culture” (Vaz, 1998, p. 217). It became a literary genre with Luther, who developed the first Protestant catechism, influencing the creation of others, such as the Catholic catechisms (Hébrard, 2007; Orlando; Dantas, 2008; Molinario, 2013; Friesen, 2017; Costa; Martins, 2010). Hence, this is a genre of religious dissemination, which can be defined as an elementary manual of the Christian faith (Silva, 2007).

In the Brazilian cases, studies show that the catechisms were part of the curriculum of public schools until the 19th century, as a reading material and a support for moral and religious education (Tambara, 2005; Teixeira, 2008; Batista; Galvão, 2009; Nascimento; Feldens; Almeida, 2013; Dos Anjos, 2016; Zilberman, 2016). Even after the proclamation of the republic and the end of the *Padroado* regime, the catechisms continued to be used during the 20th century, predominantly in non-schooling educational spaces, such as churches, and public and private schools. Therefore, it is a perennial printed material with broad circulation in Brazilian society (Casimiro, Almeida, Silveira, 2017; Cruz, 2016; Orlando, 2013; Passos, 1998). Vastly used as a formation material, the catechisms have also been investigated as an object of study, as presented here, in which different dimensions of this material are explored to better understand other facets of Brazilian history of education, mainly when faced with the current debates on laic education in Brazil. One of these dimensions refers to the transformations of these printed materials throughout their long edition cycle. Like other religious materials, they need to be adapted to

the changes in the religious denominations to which they are connected and the societies and times in which they are published, under the risk of becoming obsolete and being identified exclusively with conservative thoughts and actions.

The reformulation of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* occurs in a significant moment of the Catholic Church history that, faced by the growth of other religious denominations, revolution in the costumes, and the emergence of different social movements in Latin American countries, sought to adapt itself to the new demands of the period. In the 1960s, discussions about popular Catholicism, which would be reflected in Liberation Theology and the Second Vatican Council held between 1962 and 1965, had a profound impact on the history of the institution, even resulting in internal conflicts. According to Oliveira (1992), although the "universal" Roman Catholicism proposes a religion that caters to all classes, "it is from a given class and social group that the beliefs and religious practices are defined" (p. 62). During this period, internal disputes arose between the Church of "individual salvation" ("bourgeois") and the emergence of the "Liberation Church" ("popular"), characterized by the motto "preferential option for the poor". Concerning the greater participation of lay people as pastoral agents of the Catholic Church, Souza (2009) explains that this made the experience of these subjects more active in the religious educational dimension, coordinating, guiding, and appropriating themselves of the word. For example, since the Second Vatican Council, the Mass stopped being held in Latin, and it became possible for lay leadership to celebrate Catholic Masses when there were no priests present. The renovation movement of the Catholic Church worldwide and its Latin American specificities were under question for decades and the Second Council Vatican can be considered the institutionalization of this process.

When the reformulated edition was published, Brazil also witnessed a moment of political, economic, and social effervescence that culminated, as a reaction of the elites, in the 1964 Civil-Military Coup. In the scope of popular education, several experiences were developed, such as the *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (MCP- Popular Culture Movement), by the Recife city, in which the first Paulo Freire's literacy experiences were implemented; the *Centros Populares de Cultura* (CPCs- Culture Popular Centers), initiatives from the Students' National Union (UNE); and the *Movimento de Educação de Base* (MEB- Grassroots Education Movement), connected to the Catholic Church (Fávero, 2006). Regarding school education, the Church for decades had suffered serious criticisms, mainly due to the influence of the New School (*Escola Nova*) movement that defended the laicity of education and placed students at the center of the pedagogical practice. As Carvalho (2005) affirms, the tensions between the movement's pioneers and the Catholics had consequences in the editorial strategies of both groups concerning the production of educational printed materials. While the first defended a transformation in the educational field, the Catholics sought to limit this transformative impact by incorporating aspects of the New School, including active methods in the field of Pedagogy, such as printed materials (Carvalho, 2005). Thus, the Church also wanted to renovate itself in this sphere.

Regarding the publishing company *Editora Vozes*, responsible for the publication of *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, Bittencourt (2014) points it out as one of the main four Catholic printers still in the Brazilian editorial market, together with FTD, *Ave Maria*, and *Santuário*. Founded by Franciscan friars in 1898, the company initially sought to attend the need to publish manuals to be used in schools and seminars. In its first decades, the editorial line was marked by the strong censorship of its first editor, Friar Pedro Sinzig, "a Catholic intellectual that embraced the project of making 'good press' and fighting worldly writings, as preached in the decrees of the Latin American Plenary Council, called upon by Leo XIII" (Bittencourt, 2014, p.124). According to this author, since the 1930s, the Friars Aurélio Stulzer, Ludovico Gomes de Castro, Clarêncio Neotti, and Leonardo Boff significantly marked the history of the publishing house, remodeling and expanding its catalogue, creating a collection of university books, and adopting a political position of fight for freedom within the Church and against the military dictatorship. Therefore, it is a publishing house that demonstrated an "attention to movements in society and the Church [...] which had always taken a political position, whether to moralize society, as Sinzig wanted, or criticizing dictatorships and the Church's authoritarianism, as wanted by Neotti and Boff" (Bittencourt, 2014, p.125).

Finally, we highlight that, at the time, the market of didactic books in Brazil was rapidly increasing (Hallewell, 2005), a result of the gradual democratization of education after the 1961 LDB (Brasil, 1961). Aiming to meet the demands of the public that had started attending the Brazilian school, and with the new teacher joining

it, both from low-income backgrounds, the publishing companies began releasing products considered more attractive, influenced by educational discussions and economic strategies.

The introduction of colors and illustrations sought to attract the children's audience, and the teachers' manual, which appeared at the time, aimed to meet the needs of the new teacher profile (Soares, 2001).

Faced with this context, some questions moved this research: How did the reformulated edition incorporate these movements within the Church, in education, and several other spheres of Brazilian society? How does a religious institution seek to renovate itself without losing its identity? Can a printed material published by the institution provide clues to understand this process? What reasons lead to changes in an educational artifact that was an editorial success, forming generations for decades? How did the reformulated edition of the Catechism contribute to the formation of a broad and non-specialized public in this specific context? In this article, we present evidence that enables some inferences on how these questions materialize in the focused printed material.

From a theoretical point of view, based on studies of Cultural History (Chartier, 1990; Darnton, 1990, 2010), particularly, the distinction between text and printed material, in Chartier's (1990) sense:

Thus the necessary separation between two types of devices; those arising from the establishment of the text; the writing strategies, the intentions of the "author"; and the devices resulting from a part of a book or a printed material, produced by an editorial decision or the workshop, having in mind the readers or the reading that might not be in conformity with those intended by the author (Chartier, 1990, p.127).

Therefore, the author believes that there is no text outside the support in which it is read, because the content of what is written and the materiality of its inscription produce effects of meaning. In the case of the Catechism, it is only possible to understand its role in the formation of the lay public if we analyze the more recurrent themes, the ways of approaching it, its graphic-editorial project, and the debate in the pedagogical field, such as the influences of the disputes between Escola Nova pioneers and Catholics (Cury, 1988; Carvalho, 2005), as previously noted, and the changes boosted by the demands for pedagogical innovations and the production of school manuals (Chartier, 2003; Vidal, 2001).

The *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*

The *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* was first created in 1904, aiming to standardize the teaching of Catholic Christian doctrine through a single, official text for reverends, parish priests, secular clergy, and followers from the parishes of the Diocese of the Meridional Brazilian Province. This catechism title was published by several companies, reaching a high number of editions. For six decades, there were few format and content variations (De Simone, 2019; 2023). In 1964, however, in its 95th edition, the Catechism was reformulated and published by *Editora Vozes* as a "remodeled and updated edition of the traditional *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*" (Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã, 1964, p. 5). Throughout its history, as shown by the bibliography on the theme (Orlando, 2013, 2015; Orlando; Dantas, 2008) and the study of sources in the *Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional*, the material circulated within parishes and other spaces, such as schools, in several Brazilian states. Nowadays, it is in its 156th edition (2014) and is still sold.

The presentation page of the 1964 edition informs the reader that some stories and illustrations have been added, as well as references to pedagogical and didactic resources, and that the themes explored are better developed, while maintaining the original text of the traditional Catechism (Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã, 1964, p. 5). These transformations will be analyzed in more depth below.

The reformulated edition content

The 1964 reformulated edition has a *Presentation*² developed by Friar Carmelo Surian (1923-2008), a Franciscan, born in São José do Rio Pardo, São Paulo, Brazil, who worked at *Editora Vozes* between 1963 and

²The editions before the reformulation had an Approval page written by the Archbishop and Bishops from the Brazilian Meridional Province dated from 1903, which mainly informed the motivations for the Catechism, guidelines, and recommendations for using the material.

1968. On it, he justifies changes and permanencies and explain ways to use the new version. Among the reasons to maintain the traditional text, we highlight:

Why did we maintain almost the entire old text:

- a) Because it is the text approved and recommended by the Brazilian Plenary Council.
- b) Because the edition of 200,000 issues a year proves its value and efficiency.
- c) Because after a period of abandonment or almost abandonment of the memorization process, a return to it is increasing.
- d) Because the text formulation is of notable theological fidelity. We admit that there are difficult texts. However, we believe that it is easier and safer to clarify a correct formulation in the future, not assimilated as a whole, than to correct an assimilated, but flawed, formulation.
- e) Because we aim to offer a complete text and as attractive as possible, but cheap, for the pockets of most vicars and followers. (Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã, 1964, p.4, original highlight).

Some elements should be highlighted in this excerpt, considering the aim of this article. The main arguments to maintain the text without substantial changes are supported by the fact that the formula seemed to be working, considering the high number of issues reached by the Catechism. At the same time, it answered the guidelines of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Perhaps anticipating possible criticisms, Surian defends the idea that memorization, after a period of abandonment or near abandonment, was once again valued. The author was probably referring to the intense debates that preceded the formulation of the National Education Guidelines (LDB) from 1961 (Brasil, 1961) in which, on one hand, the Catholics and private schools took the lead to defend certain ideas associated to traditional education and, on the other, the *Escola Nova* followers that affirmed, in a new Manifest (Azevedo et al., 2010), some political and pedagogical positions in favor of laic public education and active learning methods (Cury, 1988; Cunha, 2024).

Surian's defense to keep the traditional format of questions and answers, with some format innovations, regarding the text itself and its materiality, is coherent with the reading Catholic model. As Anne-Marie Chartier states: "For the Catholic Church, reading is not a value in itself, because what is important is the message of the text. The model of good reading is the one forged around the reading of sacred texts, reading of a spiritual mediation that patiently seeks to take from the divine word something that enlightens one's intelligence, fortifies the will, enlarges the heart." (Chartier, 2003, p.39). Hence, the Church aimed to form a reader that, through memorization and intensive reading, would always return to the same texts, so as not to lose oneself amidst the proliferation of new printed materials, including didactical ones. It is a concept of education different from that proposed by *Escola Nova*, which, as one of its bases, emphasized extensive reading and free interpretation of texts (Vidal, 2001).

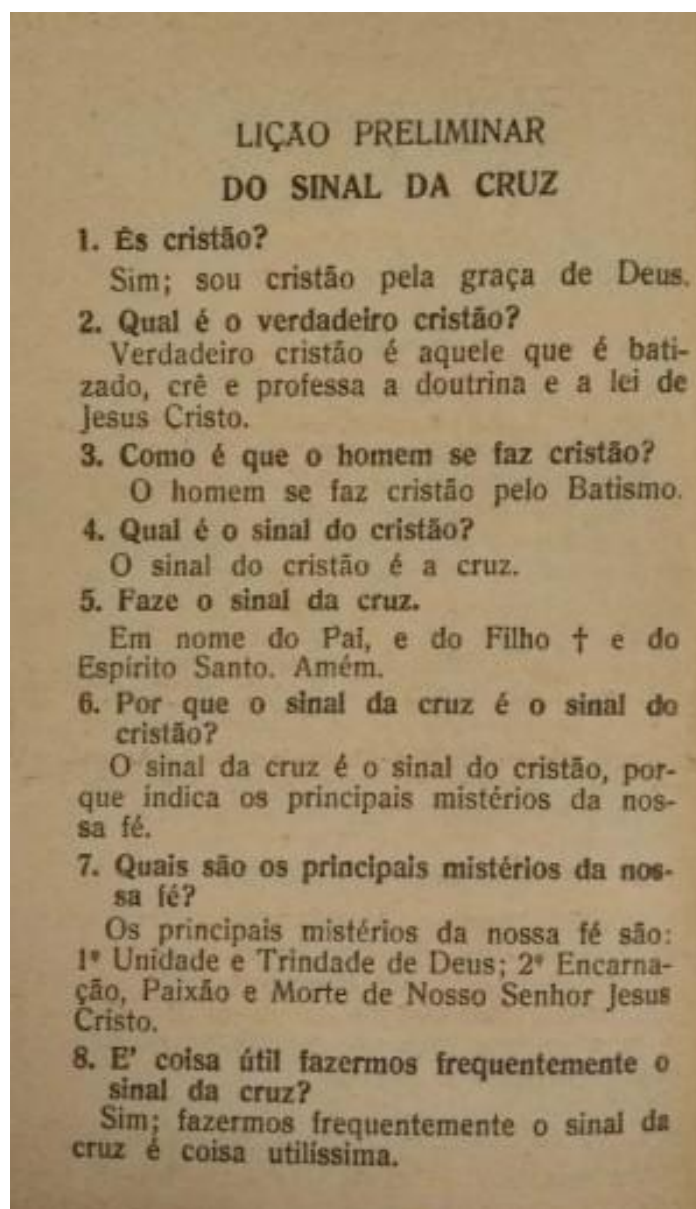
In this same direction, when recognizing that there were difficult texts, Surian anticipates, for the readers that changes had been conducted in the Catechism, without losing its "theological fidelity", making it more accessible and attractive, as much as possible, considering the educational objectives and its reading audience: vicars and followers that had limited "pockets", financially wise. We observe here several strategies used by the editors, already identified in several studies conducted within the scope of Cultural History to expand the reading audience of certain written materials. In a classic study about the books from *Bibliothèque Bleue*, Chartier (1990) identifies a series of interventions used by Troyes' printers to turn them into "large circulation"³, such as reducing editing costs, making them more accessible to potential readers, and simplifying difficult texts.

When analyzed from the content viewpoint, some of these interventions can be identified in the reformulated edition, providing evidence that the reading audience to be educated by the printed material should be broadened. As it is a catechism focused on beginning readers, the edition maintained the first part with the main prayers, commandments, sacraments and acts, gestures and signs that establish themselves as elementary practices of the Christian doctrine and a mark of Catholic belonging. In the various editions analyzed, the initial questions are retained with minor alterations to the graphic aspects, which will be further detailed in the next section. The language used in the answers remains essentially unchanged, with only minor content adjustments. These slight modifications, however, point out the objectives of the reformulated edition to be more accessible to the

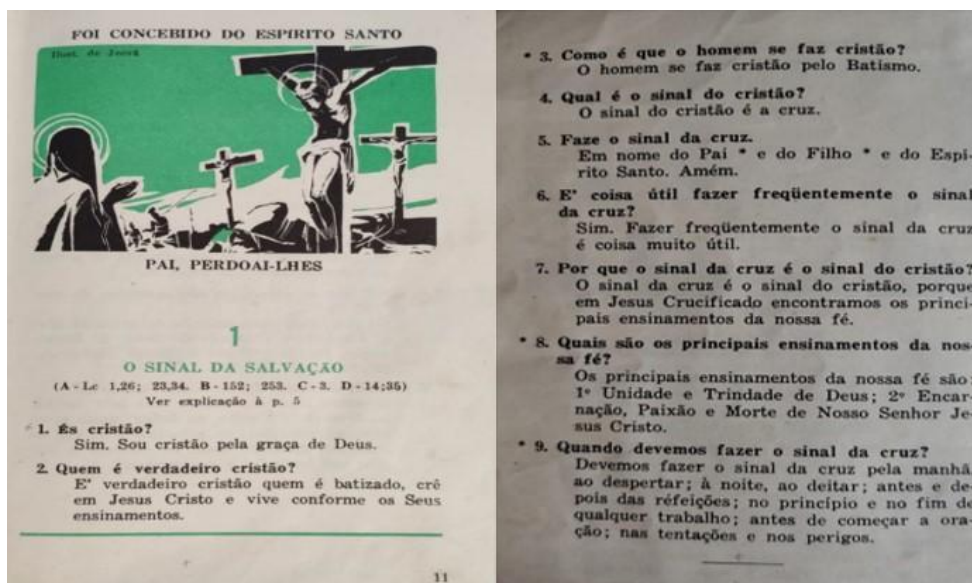
³ This expression has been used by cultural historians instead of "popular" printed materials, mainly due to the polysemy and, often, the ahistoricity of the latter term. See, for example, Chartier (1996).

reading audience and educate the largest number of followers. Some language simplifications are observed, referring to the strategy of “reductive transformations”, studied by Chartier (1990, p.175), with the “modernization of old or difficult formulas”. While in previous editions, for example, they had already changed in the title of the lesson the verb “Cross oneself” to the expression “The sign of the Cross”, in the reformulated edition the word “Cross” is substitute by “Salvation”, signaling the Catholic Church’s attempt to approximate to a contemporary and everyday language, used by the target audience composed mainly by beginners and neophytes in the doctrines. These aspects can be observed in the pages presented below:

Figure 1 - Photo of the page with the first lesson of *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* – 1957 edition



Source: *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* (1957, p.10)

Figure 2 - Photo of the page with the first lesson of *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* 1964 edition

Source: *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* (1964, p.11-12)

Another aspect to be highlighted is the number of lessons and pages analyzed in the focused editions. In the remodeled edition, we can see an investment in the detail of the lesson themes, resulting in 22 lessons with a total of 199 questions and answers presented between pages 11 and 80. Most of the lessons have three pages, and only three lessons have four pages. The traditional editions of the Catechism presented 11 thematic lessons in 39 pages with 173 questions and answers (*Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, 1957). Thus, we notice that the significant increase in the number of pages and lessons in the remodeled edition was not followed by a substantial increase in the number of questions. An example of question-and-answer reorganization is the content of the lesson about the church in the 1954 edition, Lesson VI, entitled "About the holy Catholic Church" (p. 19), which is presented on a page and a half with seven questions. In the 1964 remodeled edition, the theme is approached in Lesson 21, with the title "Jesus loves us through the Church" (p.74), with three pages and 11 questions. The content itself was not increased, but there was an addition of graphic resources, the letter is larger, and the questions were dismembered to ease understanding; only the content about the Second Vatican Council appears as a novelty. This strategy, mobilized in the reformulated edition, was also found in Chartier's (1990, p.175) studies about the *Bibliothèque Bleue*. The multiplication of chapters and the increase in the number of paragraphs, "though this division does not result in any narrative or logic need", makes, according to the author, "less dense the text distribution on the page," augmenting its reach to readers who are less used to the world of written culture. Therefore, we observe that the reformulated edition of the Catechism, when making the text more palatable and its presentation on the page more attractive, seeks to educate the highest number of readers as possible.

The change in the content and the way of approaching the themes that stand out the most in the reformulated version of the *Primeiro Catecismo* (1964) is the insertion of four topics called "In the liturgy", "Prayer", "Mission to be accomplished" and "Should keep for life". These four topics, mainly the last two, explain the appeal of the mission to become an example and convince people around to also act and behave according to the Christian principles. These topics are closely connected to the Catholic reform proposed by the Second Vatican Council that called up the establishment of a catechism with a liturgic emphasis, also affecting the production of catechisms that should present not only a synthetic presentation of the content in questions and answers, but also to be an adaptation to the how the Church used to transmit the doctrine, employing modern means and attending the needs of the present. When analyzing the collection from Priest Álvaro Negromonte that distinguished itself in content and the graphical-editorial project of catechisms circulating in Brazil in the first half of the 20th century, Orlando (2013, p.171) stresses the criticism towards the "hardship of the texts and the lack of interest they caused in the students made many priests and laic people to rethink the materials used in catechism teaching" and the

influence in the catechism movement of Munich that inspired debates on the renovation of catechism and the “catechist pedagogy, opening up to new themes, new approaches, other directions about methodological and didactic questions, the evaluation of manuals used in the catechism classes, and the catechist formation”. Thus, we notice that the reformulation was, to a certain degree, seeking to incorporate elements present in the internal debate of the Catholic Church and the pedagogical concepts associated with the active methods, making students more participative and active in their communities.

In the reformatted edition of the *Primeiro Catecismo* (1964), the maintenance of the method of ready questions and answers, as in the original 1904 text, reinforces the notion of single knowledge, a doctrine and dogmas to be memorized and externalized in the ways of acting, as previously discussed. The questions and answers aim to familiarize the reader with the fundamental principles that underpin the doctrine of the Catholic Church, which is based on sacred history, dogmas, commandments, and sacraments. In turn, the four topics at the end of the lessons reveal two other main general principles: **act** and **convince**. The analysis of questions and answers and the excerpts of the topics added to the reformulated editions enabled the grouping that shows that the printed material sought to form/educate the reader based on these three principles: **1) know** the dogma and doctrine of Catholicism;; **2) act/incorporate**, in its everyday life, the knowledge acquired, through their actions, understood as a testimony; **3) convince** people with whom they socialize that the Catholic doctrine should be known and incorporated by the whole community.

These principles reveal the elements that enable reflection on the ritualistic dimension of recreating the sacred time, rooted in the archetype of God and the hero. According to Eliade (1992), the God of the Jewish people, “reveals its will through the events is retaken and developed by Christianity, mainly, regarding the history of Jesus – the Mesias that suffers” (p.119). The focus in sacred history and the principle of **knowing** is anchored in God’s interventions in history, and primarily in the incarnation in the historical person of Jesus Christ, whose aim is to save humanity (Eliade, 1992). Also according to Eliade (1992), “The Christian liturgic year is based in a periodical and real repetition of Jesus’s birth, passion, and death, with all that this mystic drama implies for the Christian; it is the personal and cosmic regeneration through the concrete re-actualization of the Savior’s birth, death, and resurrection” (p.144). The intended personal regeneration – and that should manifest itself in gestures/ways of being and acting and in the proselytism of the Catholic action – was in synch with the internal disputes in the Catholic Church and the educational and political context in the years before the 1964 civil-military coup (Cunha, 2014). When quantifying and analyzing all the phrases, questions, answers, and excerpts of the Catechism, we perceive that the majority of the lessons’ content focuses on the **knowing** principle, approximately 69.34% of the total. After, the **acting** principles, identified in the topics “In the liturgy” and “Prayer”, and **convincing**, identified in the topics “Mission to be accomplished” and “Should keep for life”, correspond to 15.33% of the lessons’ content, as can be seen in the table below:

Table 1 – Presence of the principles knowing, acting, and convincing in the 1964 edition of *Primeiro Catecismo*

Principles	Number of sentences/questions and answers/excerpts	Percentage
Conhecer	199	69.34%
Agir	44	15.33%
Convencer	44	15.33%
Total	287	100%

Source: De Simone (2023).

Based on the analysis of the lessons that comprise the *Primeiro Catecismo* (1964), we consider that there is an effort to make the student aware of and develop the apostolic action, practice the Church’s doctrine, and form an interior consciousness, a way to be identified as Catholic. We highlight examples of this guidance in each lesson in the topic “Mission to be accomplished” that indicates the actions to be undertaken by the reader regarding the extension of their learning to the people around, such as “Pray, sacrifice oneself, and work to help missionaries to baptize the highest number of pagans as possible” (p.22), “look with relatives and friends the excerpts of Jesus’s teachings” (p.26), “work to introduce the cross at the homes” (p.29), “make an effort for the family to pray together” (p.32), “Invite friends and relatives for the Sunday mass” (p.35), among others. The title of the

lesson 13 “Jesus makes us soldiers” (p.47) is in synch with the “Mission to be accomplished” by the reader to convince other people to introduce the Christian doctrine in their lives, acting as an apostle to the laic people, calling upon a vocation as “soldier” to accomplish their mission to increase the “mystic body” of the Catholic Church, mainly, through the influence of the Second Vatican Council (Compêndio do Vaticano II, 1968-1986, p. 584). Thus, it is possible to understand the formative proposal of the catechism better and see if the addition of new topics did not alter the more conservative nature of its contents. The changes, mainly in its structure, seem to have been influenced by internal Church movements, the educational debate, and the editorial market of the time.

The reformulated edition of the graphic-editorial project

As we aimed to demonstrate in the previous topic, the text of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, throughout the various editions analyzed, including the 1964 edition, was published without major variations, with interventions that primarily sought to expand the reading audience and form more engaged followers in the Church’s apostolic action. We cannot say the same thing about its materiality, which, as we will show, had several modifications in the reformulated edition.

The first notable difference between the various versions of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* is its size. Most editions published by *Editora Vozes* until 1964 had a format of 13cm x 8.5 cm. However, the 1964 edition has a 17.7cm x 12cm format, which is significantly different from traditional catechisms. The increase in the size of the material could also be observed during the same period regarding didactic books (Soares, 2001; Orlando, 2013). Thus, we might infer that it sought an approximation with the new products, focusing on the children and schooled audience available in the editorial market. As Chartier (1990) states, the option to publish the same texts in other materialities is evidence of the editors’ need to adapt the works to the expectations or abilities of the new target audience. In an increasingly more fragmented editorial market regarding the audience, the books for children and young adults became, at that time in Brazilian history, increasingly more different than those for adults. Similarly, the didactic genre started to have its own configuration. In this context, when opting to print the 1974 Catechism in a larger format, in consonance with the new demands of the book industry, the editors implicitly informed that it was a work primarily targeting children and young people and that had the characteristics of a didactic manual.

Figure 3 – Dimensions and *layout* of the covers from Editions 1964 and 1954 of *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*



Source: *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, 1964 and 1954 editions, respectively.

Another important transformation refers to the use of illustrations and colors. As can be seen in the images below, the covers of the traditional editions do not have illustrations but are decorated with vignettes and use only black. In turn, the cover of the remodeled Catechism features a colored illustration that encompasses the cover, spine, and back cover.

Figure 4 – Cover of the 1951 and 1954 editions of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*



Source: *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, 1964 and 1954 editions, respectively.

Figure 5 – Illustration and colors in the cover, spine, and back cover of the 1964 edition of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*



Source: *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, 1964 edition.

As we can see, the illustration on the cover of the reformulated edition is in color and has children on it, which gives one more evidence that the modifications undertaken area related to the need to make the material

more attractive, adapting it and targeting it to a broader audience, mainly to children that, as it seems, is the one that should be educated first. On it, we can also see complementary graphic elements, as the phrase “This is my beloved son....Listen to him!” (Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã, 1964, cover), what induces the reader to interpret the illustration and also the content of the Catechism itself- the focus in the presence of the “Son”, in relation to the “father”, highlighted in the lessons. The need of “typographic” changes to make the catechism more attractive to the audience, especially children, had already been defended by Álvaro Negromonte to whom it was noticeable “the lack of prestige of a tiny book, small, with no illustrations, compared to the clear and varied text amidst the figures that speak much louder than the letters” (Negromonte, 1942 *apud* Orlando, 2013, p.172).

Chartier’s (1990) works also help to understand the role of images in large-circulation printed materials. In some cases, as it seems to be the case of the cover of the reformulated edition of the Catechism, the image “allows fixating and crystallizing, around a single representation, what was an interspersed and very fragmented reading” (p.180). The child or the catechist, when daily facing the colored images of Jesus leaving the waters of the River Jordan, after baptized together with John Baptist in a praying position and other people, including children, fixates/crystalizes a series of feelings and rituals from the Christian doctrine, providing “the memory and the moral of the text” (Chartier, 1990, p.180). It is also a strategy used in didactic manuals, mainly those for readers who are not yet fluent in reading, a “pedagogy of literacy that uses visuality”, as stated by Frade (2012, p.173), as the image anticipates and favors the construction and stabilization of the text’s meaning, easing its understanding.

The illustrations are also present throughout the text of the reformulated editions, which differ in this aspect from the traditional editions. Following a consistent logic, all lessons begin with an illustration in black, white, and green, accompanied by phrases related to the theme, as shown in the images of Figure 2, previously presented. According to Chartier (1990, p. 180), the use of images increases the “seduction” of the text, also making it “more explicitly and decipherable its contours”. In this direction, besides other interventions in the materiality of the 1964 Catechism, such as the increase in the size of the letters and the presence of images, reveals, once more, the expansion of the target audience, which is implicitly considered as less used to the logic of written culture.

Another significant change in the 1964 edition is the reference to the *Roteiro Catequético I* [Catechism Path I]: a teacher book for the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*, written by Friar Carmelo Surian. It is a manual for catechists to use with class plans on each theme of the Catechism, describing the materials to be used, the class time, the age range of the students, and incentives to encourage students to record their favorable and unfavorable reactions. The image below is an example of how the work is organized with the presentation of model class plans and forms of recording them:

Figure 6 – Class plan at *Roteiro Catequético I*: a teacher book for the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*

Tema doutrinal: Atitude a suscitar:		
Palestra	Meios pedagógicos	Crítica
Motivação	(quadros, etc)	
Passagem para a Mensagem		
Anúncio da Palavra	= leitura da Bíblia (em pé)	
Explicação	(letreiros, etc.) Memorização (Catecismo ou outro texto)	
Passagem para a Liturgia	Oração (gestos)	
Atividade		

Source: Surian (1964, p. 10).

The time management, according to the planning and methods to be used, is described in details:

To present the theme as a lecture and the use of pedagogical means, such as the reading of the Bible, the memorization of Catechism, and the praying moments, you need 15 to 20 minutes, because the Catechism Script considers the format of half an hour for the religion class and indicates for the second half a class of 10 to 15 minutes for activities about the class theme (Surian, 1964, p. 10).

Besides planning the time of each class, the manual also proposes that the catechist distribute the themes to be approached during the catechism period:

II – UNIT SCALE

1) Classes every Sunday and holy days

- Sundays 52 classes
- Holy days 9 classes
- discount 16 classes = 45 classes

2) Unit distribution:

- I – At the cross, a summary of the faith..... 1 class
- II – Notion of God (Lessons 2 and 3) 3 classes
- III – The original sin and the promise 3 classes
- IV – The salvation (Lessons 5 to 11) 14 classes
- V – The sacraments (Lessons 12 to 20) 20 classes
- VI – The Church, family of God 2 classes
- VII – Our answer 2 classes

NOTE: Use the remaining classes for activities and recapitulation, encompassing the general view of the topic. (Surian, 1964, p.158 – italics in the original)

The gestures to be performed in each class are also detailed. The order and control of the body is something that constitutes the history of the Catholic Church itself (Gélis, 2008). In the example below, the prayer Our Father is followed by guidelines related to the body posture to be followed/taught by the catechist, this aspect can be observed in the prescription that Surian (1964) called “Prayer as a pedagogical means”:

Our Father, who art in heaven.....	(Standing, the catechist makes gestures, inviting students
hallowed be thy name,	to imitate him/her)
thy kingdom come.....	(raised hands)
thy will be done.....	” “
on earth as it is in heaven.	(hands on chest, half bow)
Give us this day our daily bread.....	(indicate the sky with the right hand,
and forgive us our trespasses,	and the land with the left one)
as we forgive those who trespass against us.....	(petition gesture)
And lead us not into temptation.....	(hit the chest, inclined)
but deliver us from evil. Amen.	(large hugging gesture) (folded hands, looking up)
	(defense gesture, pushing) (Surian, 1964, n/p)

Once more, like the process taking place at the time in the editorial market of didactic book, which assumed a teacher that was ill-prepared to school children and young people in an autonomous and competent way (Soares, 2001), the Catholic Church also perceive the need to form the educator – catechist when faced by the increasing presence and work of laic leaders. Therefore, we see that, besides the children's public, the printed material aimed to also educate the adults in charge of teaching the content. In this aspect, the model readers (Eco, 1979) also seemed unfamiliar with the logic of the written world as they needed to find, in the pages of the material, a content materialized in an attractive graphic project that was understandable and replicable.

Therefore, the manuals for educators should also become a new artifact of formation for them, the now "countless" subjects, as explained by Friar Carmelo Surian when stressing the book's objective:

Serve, in the best way possible, the countless catechists who use the *traditional Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*. Thus, it does not intend to present any novelty in the catechism field. It is not a new method. It only offers abundant material to facilitate the use for the Brazilian catechists of the new illustrated text of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* (Surian, 1964, p. 5).

The approximations between the school market and the religious printed materials were not, however, something new at the time. Orlando's studies (2008; 2013) about the catechisms of Priest Álvaro Negromonte, which circulated between the 1930s and 1960s, for example, show that the disputes to maintain religious education in schools, the dissemination of *Escola Nova* ideals, and the movement of catechist renovation enabled the increase in catechism production for the school curriculum. According to the author, Negromonte produced materials for the formation of catechist teachers and Christian families, connected to "Catholic Action", which sought to expand the formation in Christian doctrine for lay people. Thus, the catechisms developed by him had the style of a didactic book and also focused not only on schools and catechism classes but also on different spaces that were "were closer to the school universe" (Orlando, 2013, p. 20). The author's studies, as analyzed here, demonstrate the constant need for renovation in the Catholic Church, similar to what occurs in other religious institutions when faced with new educational, editorial, economic, and social demands.

Final remarks

In this article, we analyzed the reformulated edition of the *Primeiro Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã* (1964), a printed material that was published over the previous six decades without significant modifications to its graphic aspects or content. The aim was to show how, in a critical period of the history of the Catholic Church – marked by the Second Vatican Council and its effects – of intense debates in the pedagogical field and deep transformations in other spheres of Brazilian society, the Catechism was adapted to new demands from the public and the editorial market.

The analysis of different editions reveals that the questions and answers were kept throughout the time showing, as described by the Catechism itself, the option to keep the tradition due to the success of the original text. Therefore, the Catholic Church validates and adopts memorization and repetition as an effective method to convey and disseminate its doctrine. The lessons, implicitly based on the principles "knowing", "acting", and "convincing", mainly aimed to teach readers the assumptions of Christian doctrine, its main dogmas, the sacred history taken from the Bible, the commandments, and the sacraments. We can thus perceive that, despite the renovation proposed by the Second Vatican Council and the pedagogical field at the time, a content of a conservative nature remained in the Catechism.

The influence of new guidelines in the Catholic Church can be timidly seen in the principles of acting and convincing that insert the reader into the logic of applying the liturgical and apostolic teachings. The content learned in the catechism classes should be irradiated by the students towards their relatives, friends, and people close to them, so as to introduce the Catholic values into their everyday life. Hence, catechism worked as a strategic object of apostolic teaching, indicating missions that readers needed to follow to contribute to the Catholic Church, stressing a dimension of pastoral action or the laic apostolate. Therefore, it also sought to approximate itself with the modernizing pedagogical debate of the time, which demanded a more active role from the student. The publication of a manual for the catechists, which began with the reformulated version, is, in turn, evidence that the increasing presence of lay people in pastoral actions needed to be monitored and controlled. It also shows changes in the market of didactic books that, faced with the transformations in the profile of teachers and students, often start to have a teacher's manual.

In turn, the analysis of the printed materials' graphic-editorial project showed that several transformations were operated in the materiality of the reformulated edition, mainly through the increase in the size of the book, the presence of colored illustrations, and the use of simplified vocabulary, pointing out an adaptation to the demands of the editorial market of didactic books in quick expansion at the time, turning itself to a child-young adult reader. We could also see, from the indication of materials that complemented the work, that the reformulation of catechism was also seen in the sales logic of *Editora Vozes*, as other titles it published were indicated as pedagogical resources.

The analysis of the printed material revealed that the editors sought, through several interventions in the text and its material, to educate an increasingly wider public, mainly composed of children, neophytes in the doctrine and the written world, but also by adults in charge of forming them, the laic catechists. Hence, it is a printed material that, through different strategies, educated generations of people living in the vast Brazilian territory, either approximating or distancing themselves from the renovation movements that marked the history of the Church and the pedagogical field at the time.

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