

**OSCILLATING HARMONY: RELIGION, MORALITY, AND CIVISM IN BRAZIL –
1931/1997**

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the relationship between Religious Education and Moral and Civic Education in the basic schooling in Brazil, focusing the attention, in the first case on the public school curriculum, and, in the second one, on that of all schools. The federal legislation, as the product of alliances and conflicts between the religious and the political fields, was examined in the light of education. The author concluded that, during the studied period, both subjects have accomplished different roles, complementing or alternating with one another, in the power game between the political and religious fields.

*BRASILIAN EDUCATION – EDUCATIONAL POLITICIES – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION –
SECULAR EDUCATION*

The inclusion of Religious Education (RE) in public school curriculum, and Civic and Moral Education (CME) in every school curriculum in Brazil, as well as the exclusion of CME from school curriculum, have always reflected very strong political and ideological interests. Associations between RE and CME at different historical moments have been pointed out by Cunha and Góes (1985), Cunha (1991) and Horta (1994).

RE in public schools is an unusual subject in the Brazilian bibliography, just as the CME is. When included, it is clear that the defense or criticism of these disciplines is mostly from an ideological position. It is indeed surprising that religious education has been a subject avoided by

laymen, and that it has only been dealt with by its most enthusiastic defenders. As regards CME, it has been rejected by those on the left of the political spectrum as something indelibly linked with the authoritarian regime, or praised by the right as an essential tool for improving social life. Leaving the analysis of such positions for another time, this text focuses its attention on a structural element common to both disciplines – the fact that both of them are included in public school curriculum due to pressures from outside the educational area. The text also focuses its attention on understanding the differences between RE and CME, as well as the relationship between both disciplines.

The period studied starts in 1931 (when RE was integrated into the public school curriculum by Decree Number 19.941) and ends in 1997 (when the National Education Guidelines Law (LDB) of 1996 was changed by the introduction of Law Number 9.475 the period, CME was sometimes included, sometimes excluded, from the curriculum: included during the so-called New State period, then excluded during the so-called Populist Republic, making a strong comeback during the military dictatorship (Decree-Law Number 869/69), and being once more discarded during the transition period to democracy (Law Number 8.663/93).

Employing Pierre Bourdieu's (1974) field concept, the research starts from the assumption that it is necessary to go beyond the Church-State binary scheme in order to understand the subject being discussed, which was useful at a time when the Catholic Church was the dominant actor.

A field is a complex social space structured around power relationships between agents or institutions that operate according to an implicit logic. Each field is, thus, a space of struggle where these agents and institutions fight for monopoly over legitimate symbolic violence within it and for the appropriation of the capital specific to this field. It is in this sense that we can speak of a religious field, of a political field, of an artistic field, and of an educational field. The symbolic power relationships demarcating the limits of each field are based on material power

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relationships between groups and/or social classes, between those dominating and those being following year, thus reinforcing the power of religious bodies to design that discipline). In this dominated, in a way intended to hide and reinforce them. The fields are structured with various degrees of autonomy, that is, degrees in which capital and competition over its appropriation are largely specific to them, and are not reducible to each other.

One of the sources used for writing this text was the federal legislation analyzed as a product of alliances and conflicts between the political field and the religious field, insofar as it concerns the educational field. Other sources were laws, decrees, decree-laws, ministerial directives, and official opinions of the Education Boards, in terms of their justifications, with the purpose of finding in them both manifest and hidden meanings, understood in the context in which they were written.

Let us take into consideration some important background information about the subject and the period.

In the first four decades of the Republic, RE was abolished from public schools by a constitutional mechanism that declared the independence of the State in relation to religious bodies. In the first four years of secondary school (named gymnasium at that time), religion was sometimes replaced by the discipline Moral, with or without the addition of positivist-oriented “and Civic Education”. This discipline did not achieve the formation goals expected. Meanwhile, Catholic militancy, organized under the leadership of Cardinal Sebastião Leme and around a true apparatus of ideological production and distribution, was able to advance in the political field and be seen as an effective solution for establishing order, first threatened by the worker movements of the 1910s, and later by the military rebellions of the 1920s.

President Artur Bernardes (1922/1926) ordered the introduction of CME in the elementary school curriculum by Decree Number 16.782, of January 13, 1925, exactly when the Catholic deputies and senators tried to ban RE from public schools in the constitutional review of 1925/1926. Though they were in the majority, their votes were not sufficient to change the Constitution at this point. However, we could see that RE had been introduced into the public schools of at least six state education systems in that biennium, being optional for students *outside of official class hours*. (Cury, 2003).

It was in the state of Minas Gerais that such constitutional rule was more openly infringed by the Catholic religious hegemony. In 1928, authorized by the decree of President Antônio Carlos de Andrada, catechism was introduced into schools maintained by the state government, once a week, *during official class hours*. Andrada's Secretary of Interior and Justice was Francisco Campos, a federal deputy at the constitutional review of 1926 that had defended the return of RE to public schools. Campos also became the minister of the newly created Ministry of Education and Public Health during the Interim Government of Getúlio Vargas, in November 1930.

1931/1937 – EXCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The projection of this “reciprocal cooperation” between Church and State upon the country, starting in Minas Gerais, corresponded to an unheard-of political and religious mobilization of the Catholic masses in Rio de Janeiro.¹

Decree Number 19.941, of April 30, 1931, granted the possibility of offering religious instruction in public institutions of primary, secondary, and teacher-training education. Religious instruction was not mandatory, but “voluntary”. In order to be offered in official education institutions, at least 20 students had to sign up for it. When taught, religious instruction should not interfere with the class hours of other disciplines, a condition that disappeared from subsequent legislation.

In contrast to RE, CME, prescribed in the 1925 reform, was abolished from the secondary education curriculum. Such removal was justified by the minister with the argument that the values to be transmitted only make sense when based on the living experiences of the students, as the formula that “we only learn what we practice.” RE would be a good substitute for CME which, by the way, had to be based on religion (Campos, 1940, p. 51).

The victory of the Catholic Church over the enactment of Decree Number 19.941/31 was strengthened in the Constitution of 1934. No longer committed to the old project of starting a

¹ In May 1931 a homage to Our Lady of Aparecida was made and, in October of this year, it was inaugurated the statue of Christ the Redeemer, both with the presence of the high ecclesiastical hierarchy and a multitude of faithful.

Catholic Party, Cardinal Leme sponsored the creation of the Catholic Electoral League (LEC) in 1932. Its purpose was to enlist, organize, and instruct voters all over the country, and to channel votes for candidates who agreed with the Church's program and who pledged to defend it in the future Constituent Assembly. It was a successful strategic policy since most of the candidates supported by the LEC were elected. With a strong caucus supporting LEC's program, the Assembly favored RE in public schools, getting closer than ever to the demands of the Catholic Church.

Leading the opposition against the Catholic platform at the Constituent Assembly was Deputy Guaraci Silveira, elected by the Brazilian Socialist Party from the caucus of São Paulo. Silveira was a Methodist minister, at a time when Protestants of all denominations were no more than 2 % of the Brazilian population. Although they were a very small presence in quantitative terms, Protestants, especially Methodists, tried to highlight the prestige of their schools to demand a larger political and ideological space in the educational field. Or, at least, for not reducing it. Speaking against the article that made RE in public schools *mandatory*, although not compulsory for students, Silveira showed how that position was just in the hegemonic interests of the Catholic Church and, in practice, made the instruction of other religions impossible.

With Socialist, Liberal, and Masonic support, Silveira introduced amendments that replaced RE by CME. The Catholic response was synchronized and massive. Under the motto "without religion, there are no morals," Silveira's amendments to these and other questions involving the Catholic Church's reinforcement of political power were soundly defeated (Almeida, 2002).

As a result, the possibility of association between Church and State was introduced into the constitutional text. In the same article that forbade federal, state, and municipal governments from maintaining "relations of alliance or dependence with any other religious cult or Church," the safeguard "without damage to the reciprocal contribution in favor of collective interest" was added.

Thus, the Constitution of 1934 was enacted with an article on religious education which was different from the religious instruction of the 1931 decree. Primary, secondary, vocational, and teacher-training education had to include religious education since it would appear as a

“regular course offering.” However, student attendance continued to be non compulsory, with parents or guardians being able to choose between distinct religious denominations.

1937/1946 – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PARALLEL TO CIVIC AND MORAL EDUCATION

Before the New State, but in the preliminaries, CME and RE emerged from discussions on the preparation of the National Education Plan. The research tracking done by Horta (1994, p. 151ff.) on the contributions made by the different States’ Education Departments, entities, and personalities consulted by Minister Capanema in 1936 regarding CME, particularly on the way it should be taught, highlights certain personal opinions about the necessarily religious basis of morality, along the lines defended by the Catholic Church. The final draft of the bill containing the plan was written by a four-member commission, among them the two important Catholic leaders Alceu de Amoroso Lima and Father Leonel Franca. Five articles dealt with CME, showing how its essence was rooted in the Aristotelian-Thomistic ethical tradition and in the Catholic moral theology. The dissolution of Congress, following the putsch of 1937, aborted the planning process.

Even though it did not have an anti-Catholic or antireligious bias, the nucleus of political power in the New State had fascism as its direct reference, resting on mass consent without mediation of the clergy, although not refusing its support.

Thus, the Constitution of 1937 made civic education, physical education, and handicraft mandatory in every public and private primary, teacher-education, and secondary school without which they would not be authorized or recognized. The *compulsory nature* of RE, intended by the Constitution of 1934, was thus replaced by the *possibility* of this instruction, as had been done in 1931. However, for the first time, the *status* of RE as a subject matter was accorded by legislation. However, the Constitution of 1937 had an exemption clause clearer than any other legal text. It said: “But [RE] could neither be mandatory for school masters or teachers, nor of compulsory attendance by students.” The warning regarding the first part was proper mainly in elementary education, where each class had only one teacher. In the case of a non-religious

teacher, or member of a non-dominant religion or even if the teacher was religious and embraced secular public education, he could not be forced to teach RE.

After the Constitution of 1937, the New State's education reforms, formulated by Minister Gustavo Capanema, kept RE in all the organic "laws", although not so strongly as the Catholic Church had been able to do in the Constitution of 1934. CME, in turn, was reintroduced with a religious connotation which was not as strong as that of the aborted National Education Plan of 1936, and it was minimized even more in the decree-law version of the military junta in 1969. Let us see how the organic "laws" dealt with our subject with different emphasis, according to the education area.

In the organic "law" for secondary education (Decree-Law Number 4244, of April 9, 1942), RE was considered an integral part of adolescence, it "being permissible" for the public educational institutions to include it in the first and second cycles of secondary school. The programs and the educational regime would be established by the *ecclesiastical authority*, an expression that showed the hallmark of Catholicism, both structurally and literally.

Secondary education should take "special and constant care of the CME of its students. Three articles were directed to them, one of them with three paragraphs. CME should be directly associated with the education of "leading individualities", of "men of spiritual insight and attitudes which must be known by the masses and be common amongst the people."

The values behind CME would not be religious per se, for emphasis was given to patriotic fervor, the historical coherence of the Brazilian people, their problems and designs, and their mission amongst other people. CME should help adolescents develop the ability to take initiatives and make decisions, as well as "the essential attributes of will power". Rather than being a specific discipline, CME should be taught, mainly, within the context of history and geography, but sub-divided into "general" and "Brazilian". In juxtaposition to such cross-disciplinarity, the "law" stated that patriotic consciousness would be specifically shaped by engaging in the typical activities of the Brazilian Youth Organization, a fascist-inspired organization, which unsuccessfully aimed to mobilize students on the secondary school level.

CME was less often mentioned in the organic "laws" relating to the professional courses offered in secondary schools (industrial, commercial and agricultural), which were aimed at

educating the labor force. The possibility of offering RE remained, but on a non compulsory basis.

Soon after the deposition of Vargas, in October of 1945, during the brief term of José Linhares as the President of the Republic, three organic “laws” that had been prepared by Minister Gustavo Capanema were enacted. Some changes had been made, due to the new political-ideological picture in vogue.

The organic “law” of primary school (Decree-Law Number 8529 of January 2, 1946) did not take CME into account. In fact, CME would only apply to adolescents as Capanema had explained when justifying the secondary school law. RE remained in place with a restriction, however, which was more severe than in the other organic “laws”: that its teaching should not be compulsory for teachers, nor should its attendance be compulsory for students.

On the other hand, in the organic teacher-training education “law” (Decree-Law Number 8.530 of January 2, 1946), which was enacted on the same day that it was decreed, the issues that should have been taken into account in the design of the CME course syllabus were treated in a very superficial way. CME was treated such that it would not be the object of a specific syllabus. Rather, it was treated such that it would be the result of “the spirit and practice of the whole teaching process”. RE, however, would be presented by way of a course which was non compulsory for students to attend and for teachers to teach.

It is not inappropriate to think that the most significant purpose of the discipline RE in teacher-training education was to assure the essentially reproductive function of their graduate students on the primary education, something that the Catholic Church always dedicated special attention.

1946/1961 – EXCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

While the President José Linhares transitional term was still ongoing, Decree-Law Number 8.347, of December 10, 1945, was enacted, bringing about several changes in secondary schooling, which affected 19 articles of the organic “law”. The most aggressively fascist-inspired elements were removed from the law, among them two whole articles and also the references to “constant and special care” with the education of “leading individualities” through CME.” The

paragraph that concerned the Brazilian Youth Organization was also removed. Some strong terms were replaced, e.g. “patriotic fervor” for “Brazilianism.”

While these changes to legislation on education were taking place, and the most aggressive elements of the New State legacy were being expunged from it, the Constituent Assembly went on with its work. At this time, the disputed issues in public education, whether it should be secular or not, attracted little attention.

In the political field, the partidary expression of the 1946 Assembly was quite different from the 1933/1934 Assembly. The main differences were the emergence of the Brazilian Labor Party, the PTB, which included union leaders from the wage-earners sector, and the emergence of the Communist Party, the PC, which had no legal precedent.

Even though the Catholic Church did not count on the Catholic Electoral League, it enjoyed full hegemony in the Assembly, as far as its historical demands were concerned, having received explicit or tacit support from several parties. For example, although the PC rejected RE in public schools as a matter of principle, it eventually and pragmatically accepted its non compulsory offering to students. Guaraci Silveira, once again a member of the Constituent Assembly, now in the PTB Caucus but still presenting himself as a Protestant congressman, changed his position and started to defend the Catholic Church. This was different from several other Christian entities that declared themselves contrary to RE in public schools at the time, as Silveira himself had done in 1933/1934. He stated that the situation had changed, and that the feared Catholic oppression was no longer menacing, such that what ended up prevailing was “the religious solidarity of christian creeds” (Oliveira, 1990, v.1, p. 157).

Secular teaching was advocated by socialists from the Democratic Left Movement, such as Hermes Lima, and by liberals, such as Aliomar Baleeiro, from the National Democratic Union. Unlike the 1932 Manifesto, the Brazilian Charter on Democratic Education, approved at the Congress of the Brazilian Society of Education, ABE, in 1945, replaced the advocacy of secular public schooling with freedom of religious worship, concentrating its efforts on the demolition of the New State legacy.

In the correlation of forces that supported Catholicism, the former ministry and now Deputy Gustavo Capanema was the main writer of the chapter on education in the new Charter, receiving wide support. Thus, the 1946 Constitution included an article that took RE into account

and that replaced its mandatory teaching in public schools without specifying, however, any level or modality. It was implicit, though, that RE be offered on the middle school level. RE would be on the regular public school curriculum, therefore its offering was mandatory, though its attendance not. It would be taught according to the religious beliefs of the students, as professed by them, if they were able to do so, or by their legal representatives. The 1946 Constitution had the same content as the 1934 Constitution, with a small change in form, but with an important omission, and this had to do with the level and modality of the RE offering in public schools.

This was the context of the discussion for the enactment of the National Education Guidelines Law (LDB), which was signed by President João Goulart, on December 20, 1961 (Law Number 4.024). Although important articles had been vetoed, especially the ones which concerned higher education, the issue related to RE remained untouched.

A long article by LDB, containing two paragraphs, expressed the demands of the Catholic Church, with one reservation, which caused arguments in the following decades. The main clause of the article literally transcribed the corresponding article from the Constitution of 1946, with an inserted clause that was in disagreement with the demands that had been discussed: that RE would be taught “without bringing any burden to government authorities.” This means that public schools would not be able to pay RE teachers. Given a strict interpretation, even the teacher of the faculty could be transferred to RE, at least not during their working hours. Voluntary work and payment by religious entities would then be necessary for the practical implementation of RE.

However, in the essence, those demands were met. One of the paragraphs stated that the creation of RE classes would not depend on the number of interested students, and this eliminated the inertial interpretation brought about by the 1931 decree, which established a minimum limit for RE course offerings. The other paragraph stated that the formal registration of RE teachers would be granted by the authorities of their respective religious creed, i.e., that the governmental authorities would cede such power mainly to the benefit of the Catholic Church, and of the other entities that would be willing to compete for religious hegemony in public schools.

As far as CME was concerned, the LDB was rather modest. It just stated that, among the norms to be observed in the planning of the middle school didactic process, “the civic and moral

education of the student” *should be taken into account* ”by means of an educational process that develops it”.

In sum: while LDB reestablished the constitutional norm of mandatory offering of RE in public schools, in this way reasserting the strength of the Catholic Church in the political arena, CME was reduced to its simplest expression. If the former should be a subject on the syllabus, the latter should not even be a part of the actual didactic practice, just something to be “taken into account” in the planning of middle school teaching.

1961/1993 – CONVERGENCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CIVIC AND MORAL EDUCATION

During his short administration, President Jânio Quadros revived CME in the legislation on education.

By evoking the organic “law” for secondary schools of 1942, Decree-Law Number 4.545/42, on national symbols (in force) and Decree-Law Number 8.347/45, which diminished the presence of CME in secondary schools, the president reestablished and consolidated different provisions that had been put aside. Thus, Decree Number 50.505, of April 26, 1961, reaffirmed the mandatory offering of CME in the educational institutions of any area or grade, public or private.

The resignation of Quadros was issued four months after this decree and the troubled inauguration of his vice, João Goulart, followed by the coup attempt whose leading perpetrators were military ministers, all relegated CME to a lower level. But it did not fade into memory. While the promulgation of LDB by Goulart, in December of the same year, revoked the baselines of that decree, it did not remove it from bills submitted by military authors, which would insist on CME after the 1964 coup, this time with success.

At the outset of the military government, the Federal Board of Education, CFE, came under strong pressure to affirm its support for the implementation of CME, which it resisted, giving similar reasons as those given by Campos in 1931. Changes in the council board, however, as well as the radicalization in the political process, of which Institutional Act Number Five was a prime example, made possible the approval of a bill which came to form the basis of Decree-Law

Number 869 of September 12, 1969, issued by the military junta. As a result of this legal-political act, CME became a mandatory subject at schools of all levels and modalities of the educational systems all across the country.

The aims of CME brought together reactionary thinking, conservative Catholicism and the doctrine for national security as it was conceived by the War College. Being based on national traditions, the purpose of this discipline was: a. to defend democratic principles by preserving a religious spirit, the dignity of the human being and love for responsible freedom under God's inspiration; b. to preserve, strengthen and project spiritual and ethical national values; c. to strengthen national unity and the feeling of human solidarity; d. to worship the nation, its symbols, its traditions, institutions, and its great historical personalities, and to develop the character of the people grounded on moral principle and on dedication to family and to community; f. to understand the rights and duties of Brazilians and to be aware of the sociopolitical and economical organization of the country; g. to prepare the citizen for executing civic duties grounded on morality, patriotism and constructive action, all aimed at the common being; to be law abiding, hard working and integrated within the community.

This discipline would be taught from primary school to higher education, and also in the post-graduate programs, being known as *Estudos de Problemas Brasileiros* (Studies on Brazilian Problems) in higher education. The course syllabus would be drawn up by the Federal Board of Education (FBE) and by the National Committee on Morality and Civism – CNMC, with six members being appointed by the President of the Republic, "from among people who are dedicated to the cause". The Minister of Education could give the Cross (meaningful symbol) of Merit of Civic and Moral Education to those who stood out in the "dedication to the cause." Among its first members, the CNMC gathered general officials, rightist militant civilians, and a Jesuit priest.

The writer of the CFE Special Committee, in charge of providing the course syllabus guidelines for this discipline, was Counselor-Archbishop Luciano José Cabral Duarte (Report 94/71). Although the report states that the CME should be secular, he declared that religion was the basis of the morals to be taught. In order to avoid a contradiction, Archbishop Duarte made use of the concept of "natural religion", i.e., which takes us to the knowledge of

God by the dint of reasoning, which implies theological rationalization of the Judeo-Christian tradition. But let us move on to RE itself.

As the National Congress was injured by the impeachment of congressmen in the middle of their terms, the process of drawing up the new constitution started so as to fit the legal order of the country into the picture defined by the several institutional and supplementary acts. As in the previous situations, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, united, formed the Constituent Assembly while carrying out their ordinary parliamentary activity.

The overall climate did not allow controversial topics to reach the assembly, even if congressmen themselves freely conducted the discussion. As far as RE in public schools was concerned, the discussion centered on the issue of payment of teachers by the State. The Catholic Church intended to seize the opportunity, which was as favorable as it had been in the Vargas era, to expand the benefits it received from the State for its religious and educational activities. However, its demands did not get passed.

The text of the constitution that was enacted in 1967 ordered that among the norms that should guide educational legislation was the offering of religious instruction, taken on a voluntary basis, which would be included in the normal class hours of public schools at the primary and secondary levels, this latter point being finally explicit. Nevertheless, the 1961 LDB remained in force and prevented the burden of RE from being taken on by the government. This situation would change four years later.

In 1971, the National Education Guidelines Law for Primary and Secondary Levels was enacted, Law Number 5692, of August 11. RE is present as the sole paragraph of the article which requires obligatory CME, along with other disciplines. A major point was the repeal of an article of the 1961 LDB which prohibited the payment of RE teachers by the government. Thus, legislation became silent on this issue. As a consequence, Catholic leaders started to cultivate governors and mayors in order to transfer public school teachers to the courses on RE and to have their own agents in the primary and secondary public schools paid.

In the 1980s, the process of transition to democracy ended up in a new constitution. Regarding the topic under discussion, the Charter of 1988 reedited the terms of its predecessors, with the following resolution: “Non compulsory religious education will be taught during normal

class hours in public elementary schools,” and it reduced the duration of RE. Under previous legislation, RE could be taught until high school.

The transition to democracy put CME through a long agonizing death, different from its end during the New State era, when it became immediately extinct after the deposition of Vargas. The lengthy, tortuous, and contradictory process of political transition, which started in the beginning of the 1980s, allowed it to have an amazingly long life. In 1986, President José Sarney submitted a bill to Congress proposing the extinction of the CME, which proceeded slowly through legal channels. Seven years later, Law Number 8.663 of July 14, 1993, revoked Decree-Law Number 869/69 and determined that the school hours of this discipline, “as well as its objective of producing good citizens through education and the acquisition of knowledge about the Brazilian reality,” should be incorporated into the disciplines of Social and Human Sciences at the discretion of every educational institution.

In practice, CME was the favorite work place for priests, nuns, and military officers, the latter mainly in higher educational institutions. Thus, when the 869/69 Decree-Law was passed, RE and CME found stated in the legislation the political and ideological conditions for the convergence of content and the exchange of members of the faculty.

1993/1997 – EXCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Defeated in the Constituent Assembly, those who held secular ideas lost power but, despite that, the National Congress established a limit to RE in public schools years later. In the LDB of 1996 (Law Number 9.394) the constitutional provision about RE was incorporated with the condition of being offered “without bringing any burden to public funds”, as in the LDB of 1961.

Compared with previous legislation, an unprecedented novel option was configured — the availability of RE to be offered in one of its two forms: confessional, conforming to the religious options chosen by the students themselves or those responsible for them; or interconfessional, resulting from an agreement between several religious organizations, which would be responsible for the program. According to the first option, religious teachers or advisors would be prepared and credentialed by their respective churches or religious bodies.

This arrangement only lasted a little while. The Minister of Education proposed a change in LDB when it was ready to be enacted under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who endorsed it. In the National Congress, three bills were submitted on the same topic, one by ministerial initiative, and two by congressmen.² The three bills were sponsored by the center-right of the political spectrum and were appended, but the writer of the substitute bill, which was approved, was Deputy Roque Zimmermann of the center-left wing of the Workers' Party (PT of Paraná State), known as Father Roque³.

The bill was given urgent status and resulted in Law Number 9.475 of July 22, 1997. Objections raised by two deputies from the left-wing of the political spectrum, José Genuíno (Workers' Party – PT of São Paulo State) and Sérgio Arouca (Socialist Popular Party – PPS of Rio de Janeiro State), who set forth secular arguments, were of no use.

The language of the relevant LDB article was then modified. RE was considered an “integral part of a citizen’s basic education” and special powers were conferred to municipal and state teaching systems to establish rules for the qualification and admission of RE teachers. In addition, the power of religious organizations formed by different religious denominations were recognized. All educational systems had to consult them when devising their respective RE programs.

As important or more important than the actual expressions employed in the new text were two omissions. First of all, the restriction against using public funds to cover the costs of RE in public schools was lifted. Second, the statement which explicitly recognized interconfessionalism as a mode of RE was removed. The first omission opened the way for negotiations between religious organizations and state and/or municipal government authorities of each state in the Federation with the purpose of funding their agents in public schools. The second omission provided moral support for religious organizations, especially Catholic ones,

² Although the initiative to change Article Number 33 of LDB had been originated by the minister, the first bill submitted to the Chamber was that of Deputy Nelson Marchezan (Brazilian Social Democratic Party – PSDB-Rio Grande do Sul State), to which two other bills were appended: one by Deputy Maurício Requião (PMDB-Paraná State) and the other by Paulo Renato Souza.

³ For electoral purposes, probably, the deputy incorporated his religious title to his civil name.

that intended to maintain the confessional character of RE. This was in detriment to those who advocated replacing it by a presumed common denominator among different religions, a denominator of moral character.

Civic and Moral Education Not Included in the 1988 Constitution and in the 1996 LDB

After the LDB reform, an emphatic revival of the old plea of the Catholic Church concerning the effective implementation of RE in public elementary school systems was observed. The haste with which this discipline has been effectively introduced in public school systems makes to seem that the diffuse, although effective, secularism which postponed the generalized implementation of this discipline in public schools for decades has lost political force. The introduction of the discipline was accomplished by recruiting teachers credentialed by religious organizations through competitive public examinations.

The Catholic revival, however, did not take place without causing internal dissent in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. This disagreement concerned the strategy employed to guide Catholic relations with other religious segments, and has had repercussions on the implementation of RE in public schools: for one group, it had to be confessional, for another, interconfessional. Recently, these disputes have increased, and there are members of the first faction who claim that members of the second faction intend to transform RE into a kind of CME, an innuendo carrying a great load of pejorative connotation.

CONCLUSION

During the period analyzed, RE and CME meant different things in the power game between the political and the religious fields. RE was used as a political tool in the field of education by the religionists for hegemonic purposes. Similarly, CME represented attempts by the political field to use religion as a tool for equally hegemonic purposes and employing the same strategy, through public education. This is represented in the following scheme:

RE: religious field => political field => educational field

CME: political field => religious field => educational field

In their justifications, meanings were frequently inverted. For example, if you read texts from that time literally, you will get the idea that the inclusion of RE in public schools, in 1931, was an initiative originating with the state to garner Catholic Church support, as if this institution were simply a plaything, instead of a player.

When both disciplines were simultaneously on the curricula, there was objective convergence of their respective means of implementation through the public school system: a comprehensive tool during the New State (1937/1945) but restricted during the military dictatorship (1964/1985). At that time, despite efforts in favor of a religious base, legal texts dispensed with a religious base for moral education when formulating the National Education Plan bill (1936). For instance, the conservative thinking regarding family was shared; but for all the rest, fascism was good enough. The Integralist Doctrine, widely disseminated amongst teachers, constituted a convenient ideological amalgam ready for immediate use, in spite of its political failure after 1937. During the military dictatorship of 1960/1980, the catholic religious base of CME was explicitly evoked, plus the active role of the clergy in teaching and developing didactic materials. In this regard, the encyclopedia *Pequena enciclopédia de moral e civismo* [Small Encyclopedia of Civism and Moral], coordinated by a leading Jesuit priest and edited by MEC, is noteworthy. During that period, the harmony between these players was not complete due to differences regarding explicit political issues, mainly after Institutional Act Number Five (AI-5). Following it, the Catholic Church gradually turned towards human rights advocacy. Hegemonic dispute then took a different course.

Critical differences between RE and CME were not found in the period under study. On the contrary, the great amount of RE material introduced in the CME teaching material attests to the existing harmony between both disciplines. And more than any other religious organization, the Catholic Church actively and consciously contributed to it.

CME became extinct, first in practice, and then by law, after the military dictatorship was defeated. RE remained and withstood the criticism that laymen made against it when the 1988 Constitution was drawn up. To consolidate its space, the Catholic Church started to develop an articulated and intense movement; first in the religious field, and then afterwards, in the political

field. And the Church successfully brought about changes in the LDB of 1996, less than a year after its enactment, e.g., the restriction on paying RE teachers in public schools was lifted, and other institutional advantages were obtained.

Despite receiving significant support during the dictatorship through “reciprocal cooperation”, partial or total, and due to the existing harmony between RE and CME, the Catholic Church expanded its power over the public education field when parliamentary democracy gained force. That happened in the Constituent Assemblies of 1933/1934, 1946, and 1987/1988, and in the process of drafting both LDBs, the 1960 LDB as well as the 1990 LDB. In fact, legislative support proved to last longer than the support attained by executive measures.

Thus, whether due to RE or CME, the process of autonomy in the field of education was delayed, contrary to the expectations that the “Pioneers of the New Education” emphasized so much in the *Manifesto* of 1932 (Cunha, 2006).

This text closes with a word about the decisive importance of religious entities in the political field, whether by direct influence over government authorities, or by action over political parties, something quite different from the LEC of the 1930s. Rephrasing, the loss of autonomy has shown itself to mainly be a loss for the political field, in benefit of the religious field.

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