

Abstract

When Brazil abolished the monarchy and became a republic in 1889, it also embraced an entirely different model of the relationships between State and Catholic Church. Unlike the previous Portuguese colonial (1500-1822) and imperial governments (1822-1889) that exercised strict control over the institutional church known as *padroado régio* (“royal patronage”), the new regime of the “Old Republic” (1889-1930) gave the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy extraordinary degree of freedom. But at the same time, it deprived it of its traditional privileges – from the status of the official “state church”, to secularization of marriages, cemeteries and public education.

Facing an unprecedented situation, the Brazilian Catholic Church had to redefine its positions towards the state and society and look for alternative models of mutual relationships both at home and abroad. Based on the officially-sanctioned Catholic press and especially the influential biweekly magazine *Mensageiro da Fé*, this thesis attempts to reconstruct the perceptions and attitudes of the institutional Catholicism towards challenges brought by the regime change, tracking the image formation of new and re-formulation of old enemies and creation of a new vision for the Catholic role in recently secularized Brazil.

keywords: secularization; Catholic Church; First Republic; Brazil