



1. *A Letter from the Editor*
2. *French Secularism and the Law of 1905*

A Letter from the Editor

By JOHN MADIGAN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Enquiry is a publication that consistently embodies its motto “free thought and discourse.” But in recent years, many have thought it was focused more on discourse, contradicting other opinions, rather than free thought. To much of the campus, *Enquiry* represents a publication that is simply contrary to the views of most students.

While we do offer differing opinions that cut against the grain of prevailing campus thought, we also wish to fully exemplify our motto by providing the seeds of conversation.

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At times, it is necessary to cut against the grain of campus thought, but it is equally important to inspire new conversations rather than react to the campus zeitgeist. In previous editions, *Enquiry* has published articles ranging from literary criticism to the role of the Titanic in Gilded Age thought to a piece on Sophocles and Flannery O’Connor. We aim to continue our tradition of covering all viewpoints and a variety of topics.

Fundamentally, we are a campus publication dedicated to quality, rather than a publication dedicated to a viewpoint or cause. We encourage prospective authors to write no matter what their viewpoint. Whether our authors choose to write from a left- or right-wing stance on politics or choose to take a nonideological position on science, art, or society, we welcome all work if it meets our standard of quality.

Besides quality, we also expect our writers to have something interesting to say and be willing to defend it. While the rare exception

may be made for satirical or anonymous pieces, a thought put out into the void fails to uphold the crucial point of saying something. The topic may be obscure, but it should always provoke the reader to engage with the material and motivate them to start a conversation with the author or their peers.

Enquiry is a platform allowing an opportunity to take part in free thought and to encourage discourse. Because of that, the opinions of its staff should not be the only ones, and the opinions of writers should not reflect on *Enquiry*.

Campus dialogue has always been less than friendly, but the moments where the exchange of ideas was genuine and friendly have been some of my most cherished experiences at Hamilton. They have always served as a source of learning and inspiration.

Not only do I gain knowledge of a differing perspective, but I am

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inspired to continue reading and to further develop my understanding. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience that there’s no way to know about except through free thought and discourse. Without access to this, we are siloed and unaware of the possibilities that exist outside our horizon. Without free thought and discourse, a liberal arts education is impossible to achieve.

Under my leadership, I hope *Enquiry* will publish articles that continue to embody our motto. I wish to publish pieces that pique readers’ curiosity and create a

French Secularism and the Law of 1905

By SOPHIE CHRISTENSEN
STAFF WRITER

The French law of separation between church and state is one of the most concrete steps in the development of French secularism (laïcité), which remains a defining characteristic of the country today.

During the French Revolution of 1789, the rise of secularism spurred a “de-Christianization” (“déchristianisation”), leading to a decrease in the power and omnipresence of the Catholic Church in society. With Napoleon’s seizure of power in 1799, many old traditions were upset: both the shift from Monarchy to Empire and Napoleon’s symbolic coronation ceremony (in which he crowned himself in lieu of the Pope doing so) created a perception of the State as equal to the Church. Lastly, Napoleon’s Concordat agreement of 1801 with the Vatican was not well-received in his Catholic country, a reaction that helped lay the path to the secular society that would take hold, and still persists today.

Another large contributor to the rise in secularity and in anti-Catholic sentiments was the increase in publicly educated citizens. Long after Napoleon I, during the “guerre scolaire” (“school war”) of the 1870s, the French state began to build free, secular public schools to compete with the country’s traditional Catholic schools.

In 1881 the Ferry laws, named for the prime minister of the time, required school for all children, forcing poorer children who would otherwise have been in the labor force to attend public, secular schools. Moreover, by encouraging the education of girls in public schools, the government began to shape mothers, families, and citizens without religion. Then, in 1894, the Dreyfus Affair completely disrupted

welcoming dialogue for all to engage in. Living up to our motto, we will continue to run articles that inspire the reader to know about the unknown and discuss it with others. I encourage everyone who has a topic in mind to put it on paper and submit it.

Enquiry accepts articles of 500 to 800 words at jmadigan@hamilton.edu. Please be aware that we do not accept anonymous submissions.

FRENCH SECULARISM . . . cont.

the Third Republic, polarizing a society which was already cracking in two. After the intense media coverage of the Dreyfus Affair, and thanks to the very high rates of literacy and education of that time, “popular front secularism” began: a more widespread anticlericalism.

Criticisms of luxury and lust in the Church, and suspicions that it was corrupt, spread throughout society with the help of yellow journalism and an increasingly educated population. Because of

Republic “guarantees the free exercise of worship,” ensuring that religions are not prohibited in France. The second article, the most important one in terms of change, says the “Republic does not recognize, does not pay, nor does not subsidize any worship.” This revolutionary article forced the Church to become a smaller and less powerful entity due to diminished financial resources. It also broke Napoleon’s Concordat agreement of 1801, which declared Catholicism the majority

And even today, it is not a secular region like the rest of France: the government of Alsace pays the salaries of its ministers of worship. The situation in Alsace is a subject of debate and controversy now, because it is in direct contradiction to the concept of secularism and the law of 1905. Even in the rest of France, the law of 1905 is frequently challenged, in particular on its compatibility with Islam, the second-most practiced religion in France.

Secularism is a deep-seated concept in French history, and any monumental changes to the law, if they ever occur, will spur controversy and uprising among its devout supporters.

these scandals, Protestants began to push for a smaller and poorer Catholic Church.

By the early 1900s, French society was nearing the end of a long-anticipated change. Many public officials realized that the damaged relations between the Church and the State were irreversible and pushed for a complete “divorce” of the two entities. Progressives were generally in favor of the separation, with support from anti-monarchists (known as Republicans) varying, and little support from Catholics.

The main principle leading to the law’s passage was that it allowed religion to continue to be exercised without interruption. After about four years of Senate and lower house negotiations the famous 1905 law, the Separation of Church and State, was enacted. Its first article emphasizes that the

religion of France and guaranteed state support of the Church.

After the law’s passage, some Catholics said “acceptance of the separation would be a humiliating capitulation,” and that because the Concordat was an agreement between two entities, one must consult the other before it could be nullified. Of course, the friendly relations between the Vatican and France were also disturbed: Pope Pius X condemned the rupture, saying it was not compatible with the Church. Others raised the possibility of the law’s harmful effects on the Republic by giving the Church total freedom of maneuver.

An interesting exception to the law of separation is the region of Alsace-Moselle, which was under German control in 1905. When it returned to France in 1919, it kept its German laws and did not adopt the principle of secularism.

The law prohibits any demonstration of religious affiliation in public schools, including wearing a cross necklace or a hijab. It has been criticized for unfairly targeting members of the Muslim community, as their religious practice of wearing a hijab is much more evident than those of Christians, whose religious symbols do not stand out as readily. Though the law has been amended several times since its inception, the original principles of its second article have not been changed. Secularism is a deep-seated concept in French history, and any monumental changes to the law, if they ever occur, will spur controversy and uprising among its devout supporters.

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CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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