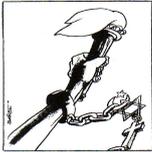


PRESENTATION



Extrait du ILCAF website - Le site du CILALP - el sitio de CIEALP International Liaison
Committee of Atheists and Freethinkers Comité International de Liaison des Athées et Libres
Penseurs Comité Internacional de Enlace de los Ateos y Librepensadores
<http://www.cilalp.org/spip.php?article12>

PRESENTATION

- ENGLISH - separation between churches and state in the world -



Date de mise en ligne : Sunday 4 March 2007

**ILCAF website - Le site du CILALP - el sitio de CIEALP International
Liaison Committee of Atheists and Freethinkers Comité International de
Liaison des Athées et Libres Penseurs Comité Internacional de Enlace de los**

PRESENTATION

Ateos y Librepensadores

PRESENTATION

Is secularism just another «French exception» ? In this overview of the separation of religions and the State, we want to show that, far from being a «French issue», secularism is a universal principle that was born with modern democracy. Secularism does not belong to France or to «Western culture» : can liberty belong to a nation or «a culture», exclusively ? Every man and woman on earth deserves to live in a society where religions and the State are separate.

It started in America, freed from the yoke of the British Empire, with the First Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1791. A few years later, in 1802, President Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter in which he compared the First Amendment to a «Wall of Separation» that was built between the citizen's private sphere and the State.

Since this «Wall of Separation» establishes a clear boundary between the State and religions, it creates the prerequisite of liberty for every citizen, whatever their creed. The State assures the freedom of conscience because it has no right to interfere with the citizens' private beliefs. Believers of all creeds as well as non believers are equal citizens. The State recognizes citizens, and only citizens and it does not discriminate believers or non believers. Wherever there is an established Church or a State religion, citizens do not have equal rights. Those who do not share the same beliefs as the majority are discriminated whereas those who belong to the established Church or the State religion enjoy a privileged status. First class citizens and second class or even third class citizens : this is against democracy.

Democracy is the recognition by the State that every citizen has the constitutional right to have an opinion, political or religious, and the right to peacefully express this opinion. No Separation, no Liberty : this is common sense. Separation of religions and the State is a peaceful response to religious unrest.

Secularism is necessarily opposed to discrimination. Great secularists such as Thomas Paine and Robert G. Ingersoll in the USA or Victor Hugo and Victor Schoelcher in France, also fought for the abolition of slavery, for justice and liberty. Some of them, like Jean Jaurès, were outstanding labor leaders. They came from Russia, the USA, Mexico, France or elsewhere. They fought for the separation of religions and the State. Proudly.

Sam AYACHE

June, 2005.