Remaking Religion: Islam, Empire, Race, and the Secularization of French Christianity 1830-1920

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On December 9, 1905, the French Third Republic ratified the Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State. The law, touted by contemporaries as advantageous to the productive, modern country, ended the ancient relationship between the French state and the Catholic Church and severed collaboration between the government and all religious institutions. The ratification of the law was considered by anticlerical contemporaries an emancipatory measure that would liberate the French citizenry from the illogical belief-systems of the Catholic Church. However, despite the changes wrought by these secularization laws, France's outward ties to Christianity continued to feature prominently in public discussions after 1905, particularly regarding France's Islamic colonies. In fact, early twentieth-century newspapers, government documents, and academic research regularly highlighted the religious dichotomy between the "Christian" French and the "Muslim" inhabitants of North Africa, particularly those of Morocco: the Islamic Kingdom across the Mediterranean Sea that had become the focal point of French imperial aspirations in the early twentieth century. Thus, even as anticlericalists lauded France's new secular status, they—along with their Catholic counterparts—concurrently drew upon the centuries-old religious rivalry that set the "French Christians" against the "Muslims" of North Africa. Herein lies an interesting paradox: after the Law of Separation, at a moment when France's connections to Christianity should have been downplayed within mainstream newspapers, the halls of government, and the French public sphere more generally, both Catholics and secularists in the press, government, and in various areas of colonial knowledge production frequently assigned the label "Christian" to describe the French writ large vis-à-vis the label "Muslim," a term applied generally to the Moroccans. This dissertation endeavors to explain the epistemological origins of this trend by illuminating the complex role that Christianity played in the construction of French views towards Islam—and, subsequently, French colonial policy—in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Introduction

"Assimilation is impossible in Islamic countries…for there is a fundamental dissimilarity between the Muslim and the Christian."[1] Réginald Kann, 1921

On December 9, 1905, the French Third Republic ratified the Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State. The law, touted by contemporaries as advantageous to the "productive, modern country," ended the ancient relationship between the French state and the Catholic Church and severed collaboration between the government and all religious institutions. [2] The ratification of the law—a triumph for the prominent contingent of secularists within the government—codified the nineteenth-century French concept of *laïcité*, or constitutional secularism, and was considered by anticlerical contemporaries an emancipatory measure that would liberate the French citizenry from the illogical belief-systems of the Catholic Church.[3] After over a century of debate over the role of religion in French society, France had become a secular republic. The Law of Separation signified nothing short of a new social system—a system in which the claims of all religious communities were relegated to the private sphere—and reinforced the notion that the French public domain was to be free from all religious influence.[4] While the private practice of religion certainly endured as an important foundation for many people within France during this period, contemporary

[1] Réginald Kann, *Le Protectorat Marocaine* (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1921), 51.
[2] Henri Cahm"Le Bilan de la séparation," *Le Matin,* December 9, 1905.
[3] Eoin Daly, "Laïcité, Gender Equality, and the Politics of Non-Denomination," European Journal of Political Theory, Vol. 11, Issue 3 (2012), 298.
[4] Aristide Briand, *La Séparation: Discussion de la loi 1904-1905* (Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1908), 8.

discussions about the Law of Separation suggest that a profound legal and cultural transformation had taken place.

Nevertheless, despite the changes wrought by the nation's revolutionary secularization laws, France's outward ties to Christianity continued to feature prominently in public discussions after 1905, particularly regarding France's Islamic colonies. In fact, early twentieth-century newspapers, government documents, and academic research regularly highlighted the religious dichotomy between the "Christian" French and the "Muslim" inhabitants of North Africa, particularly those of Morocco: the Islamic Kingdom across the Mediterranean Sea that had become the focal point of French imperial aspirations in the early twentieth century.[5] Thus, even as anticlericalists lauded France's new secular status, they—along with their Catholic counterparts—concurrently drew upon the centuries-old religious rivalry that set the "French Christians" against the "barbaric Muslims" of North Africa. Herein lies an interesting paradox: after the Law of Separation, at a moment when France's connections to Christianity should have been downplayed within mainstream newspapers, the halls of government, and the French public sphere more generally, both Catholics and secularists in the press, government, and in various areas of colonial knowledge production frequently assigned the label "Christian" to describe the French writ large vis-à-vis the label "Muslim," a term applied generally to the Moroccans. This dissertation endeavors to explain the epistemological origins of this trend by illuminating the complex role that Christianity played in the

[5] Edmund Burke, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2014), 8.

construction of French views towards Islam—and, subsequently, French colonial policy—in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although it is now widely accepted amongst French historians that secularization—traditionally defined as the retreat of religion from mainstream culture and politics—was a multifaceted and incomplete process in post-revolutionary France, enquiries into *how* religion evolved and even retained prominence in mainstream discourse remain sparse. Scholars continue to characterize secularization in France as a progressive decline in the mainstream cultural importance of Catholic Christianity. Even as French historians such as Caroline Ford and J.P. Daughton have convincingly shown the important roles Catholics continued to play in French metropolitan society and in France's empire during this period, Catholic Christians are typically considered distinct from the rising tides of secularism and anticlericalism.[6] This view is incomplete.

Far from merely devolving into an unfashionable or even negative description in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the label "Christian" was also adopted and employed by prominent secularists in the colonial context to indicate the presence of conventionally anticlerical French values such as rationality, free thought, and materialism—particularly in contrast to the label "Muslim," a category denoting religious fundamentalism, irrationality, and, ultimately, racial inferiority. As such, this dissertation considers secularization not as the removal of Christian language, practice, and traditions

[6] For more information on this subject, please see Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); and J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

from mainstream French politics and culture, but alternatively as a process by which the label "Christian" was repurposed—that is, imbued with secular, enlightenment values and racial connotations—to bolster modern French imperial ambitions, particularly in the *Maghreb*. Ultimately, I contend that this "secularized" French Christian identity—initially invoked by prominent French secularists Alexis de Tocqueville and Ernest Renan and, eventually, embraced by the increasingly influential French print media—was adopted to assert French superiority over supposed cultural and racial inferiors rather than to indicate any shared belief or practice.

Importantly, this religio-racial "Christian" label was riddled with complexities and not indicative of any kind of religious unity within the metropole. Rather, the invocation of this racially-informed Christianity in the colonial context by notable French secularists reveals the contemporary need for a unified colonial identity during a century of extreme instability, political division, and social conflict in the French metropole. As great moments of political and religious rupture rocked the foundations of metropolitan French society—moments such as the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Franco-Prussian War, the Dreyfus Affair, and the fierce debates over the Law of Separation—France's Islamic colonies provided a material and discursive space in which the "Christian" French seemed to reaffirm their own racial and civilizational superiority over perceived religio-racial "Muslim" others. The influx of North African Arab immigrants into France over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has brought questions of religion, secularization, and pluralism in France to the forefront of public discussion. The secularized, religio-racial conceptions of French Christianity presented in this dissertation continue to be shaped and defined by French people's interactions with supposed

religious and racial inferiors within the Fifth Republic. Therefore, it is crucial to these study moments of religious and political fissure in the metropole through a lens of empire to better understand the evolution of religion within a modern, secular republic.

As briefly suggested above, the rise of the French print media provides an indispensable backdrop to the arguments of this dissertation. The nineteenth century is known amongst French historians as the "century of the press," an epoch in which daily newspapers harnessed the power to sway the increasingly-literate echelons of French society: novels and political debates were published in newspapers, novelists often worked as journalists, and publishers commanded celebrity status on the streets of Paris. As literacy rates skyrocketed and new technologies brought the printed word to an ever-widening public by the late nineteenth century, the social and cultural landscape of the French public sphere was utterly transformed. As such, the dissertation will track the secularization of the label "French Christian" considering these societal changes, shifting methodologically from intellectual to cultural history as the chronology makes its way across the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Before proceeding any further, one clarification is necessary. This project does not intend to carelessly conflate the terms "Catholic" and "Christian." Clearly, the two words do not always represent the same people or groups and must not be thrown around haphazardly. However, contemporaries in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France did use these words interchangeably. Based on the sources utilized in this dissertation, French academics, politicians, and the media assumed the overwhelming majority of French people who were likely to associate themselves with Christianity in the metropole were Catholics. French protestants were effaced in this discourse. My dissertation will

use these terms based on these contemporary assumptions while at the same time maintaining full awareness of the complexities inherent in such a methodological approach.

The dissertation is divided into three sections and focuses on the period between 1830-1920. The first section contains two chapters of intellectual history and locates the earliest usage of the above-mentioned religio-racial "Christian" label in the works of nineteenth-century French thinkers and politicians Alexis de Tocqueville and Ernest Renan. Chapter one opens with the French invasion of Algeria and the July Revolution in 1830. As King Charles X of France sanctioned the invasion of Ottoman Algeria in a desperate bid for public approval, he and his ministers depicted the conquest of the North African territory as a triumph of Christian kingship over Oriental despotism. Conversely, the French liberal opposition cast the successful invasion as a victory for popular sovereignty manifested in the nation, not the king. After the July Revolution a few weeks later, the triumphant revolutionaries deposed Charles X even as they won the rhetorical battle over Algeria, clearly defining the invasion as a secular victory and recasting the enterprise in language that tied the conquest to the sovereign nation and the people of France. Though the new king, Louis-Philippe, also loosely embraced the conquest in such terms, discord between the two groups remained.

While the current historiography has tended to focus only on the differences between monarchical Catholics and secular liberals in early to mid-nineteenth-century France, this chapter demonstrates that both factions utilized religious rhetoric in the colonial context by examining the works of Francois-Rene Chateaubriand and Alexis de

Tocqueville, respectively.[7] While the works of Chateaubriand—himself a famous panegyrist of both monarchy and Christianity—predictably painted the peoples of the Islamic world as savage, decadent, and incompatible with civilized French Christians such as himself, works by the secularist Tocqueville also exploit France's ties to Christianity for cultural and political gain.

Tocqueville is perhaps best known within French historiography for his secular liberalism, his commentary on political and sociological matters, and in the most recent postcolonial historiography, his contradictory promotion of French imperialism in Algeria. That is, while Tocqueville is renowned for his belief in human equality, recent scholarship has been keen to expose his encouragement of violent French military action in Algeria in the 1840s. Historians including Jennifer Pitts, Roger Boesche, and Margaret Kohn utilize this "two Tocquevilles" framework to better understand the rising, paradoxical forces of liberalism and empire in the mid-nineteenth century.[8] Pitts in particular explains the ways Tocqueville himself incorporated nineteenth-century liberal and imperial ideologies in her translation of his *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, showing

[7] Referencing Jennifer Session's work, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria*, the chapter both corroborates and challenges Sessions' argument that the French invasion of Algeria exposed and fueled divisions between the liberal understanding of secular, popular sovereignty and the ultraroyalist vision of Christian kingship in the French metropole. That is, the chapter concedes that while there were legitimate differences in the ways that secular liberals and Catholic monarchists discussed the invasion of Algeria, it shows that the use of religious rhetoric—particularly the label "Christian"—to justify French colonialism and underpin French ideological and political institutions prevailed amongst monarchists and liberals alike when discussing the peoples of Algeria and the larger Islamic world.

[8] See Roger Boesche, "The Dark Side of Tocqueville: On War and Empire," *The Review of Politics* vol. 67, no. 4 (Autumn 2005); Margaret Kohn, "Empire's Law: Alexis de Tocqueville on Colonialism and the State of Exception," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* vol. 41, no. 2 (June 2008).

that Tocqueville considered the imperialist venture in Algeria critical to the success of metropolitan republican politics and critical for the advancement of France's international position.[9] However, though Tocqueville's views towards Algeria clearly locate him at the problematic intersection of liberalism and empire, few scholars have considered how his observations related to the larger narratives of secularization and the changing role of religion within nineteenth-century France.[10] Chapter one steps into this historiographical lacuna, arguing that, while Tocqueville showed little interest in Christianity's spiritual efficacy—at least in his political and mainstream writings—his constant references to France's Christian identity in the Algerian context illuminates the fact that religion endured as a means by which to exercise power through the politics of difference in regards to the Muslims of North Africa.

Utilizing a similar structure and theoretical premise, chapter two begins in 1870 with the outbreak and swift conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent Paris Commune of 1871. As France's government and populace reflected on the devastation wrought by both foreign and civil war, anxieties emerged regarding France's diminished position amongst the modern nations of Europe. Because of these anxieties, questions arose and as to how France would regain its former dominance on the world stage, questions that caused fierce divisions in the metropole. One the one hand, members of the recently-ousted Napoléon III's left wing opposition felt that the events of 1870-

[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, trans. Jennifer Pitts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xxxv.

[10] See: Alan S. Kahan "Tocqueville and Religion: Beyond the Frontier of Christendom," in *Tocqueville and the Frontiers of Democracy,* ed. Ewa Atanassow et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Alan S. Kahan, *Tocqueville, Religion, and Democracy: Checks and Balances for Democratic Souls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

1871 offered an opportunity for France to join the modern world: freed from the bonds of Bonapartism, the French had the chance to secularize civic institutions and place a heavier emphasis on science and material progress. Amongst this group was the renowned author, philologist, and politician Ernest Renan. For Renan, France had been too tolerant of the Catholic Church and its aversion to technological development, but he believed that speedy, secular reforms would lead to a revitalized France on the international stage. Renan's *La réforme intellectuelle et moral* supported the agenda of republican politicians who went on to found the French Third Republic and who aimed foremost to regain French stature among the nations of Europe.

On the other hand, certain segments of the French population countered that technological progress, scientific materialism, and worldly ambition were the source of France's troubles. This group—largely comprised of Catholics—asserted that France had lost the war due to a lack of faith, not a lack of technology. According to these Catholics, France would find prominence again by reinstating the French monarchy and reviving of France's manifest alliance with the Church. Important to note is that, within this group, a subsection of nativists also emerged. While the aims of individuals who preached this nativist French gospel—such as pseudo-scientist and thinker Arthur de Gobineau—did not always overlap with the universal purview of the Catholic Church, both Catholics and nativists believed that a return to the mythical, ancestral Frenchness of the past was France's only way forward. In his work, *La Troisième République française et ce qu'elle vaut*, de Gobineau argued that French Catholicism and monarchism were an integral part of the French racial being. Just as Renan's views would influence progressive republicans under the Third Republic, Gobineau's nativist convictions would inspire regressive

nationalists like Édouard Drumont and Maurice Barrés and underpin their nefarious political agendas during the Dreyfus Affair. These two widely-encompassing viewpoints—an emphasis on progress or on the past—would inform France's social, political, and cultural life in the last decades of the century, framing a bitter debate over the country's heart and soul.

Even as the ideas of Ernest Renan and Arthur de Gobineau would come to influence opposing sides of the French cultural wars during the fin-de-siècle, this chapter contends that Renan and Gobineau shared a religio-cultural approach to civilization and even race vis-à-vis the Islamic world. In other words, while the role of religion in the French metropole seemed a key point of division between monarchical Catholics, such as Gobineau, and anticlerical secularists, like Renan, both writers drew on France's cultural ties to a rational, worldly-minded Christianity to assert civilizational superiority when discussing the Islamic world and its Muslim practitioners. In much of the current historiography, Gobineau is portrayed as a staunch Catholic and one of the first purveyors of biological racism while Renan—though his legacy is admittedly much more complex—is most often depicted as a progressive secular liberal with a more inclusive view of national belonging. While these portrayals are not necessarily incorrect, they do not provide a complete representation of these two historical actors.

By putting Gobineau and Renan's works on Islam into conversation with each other, this chapter addresses multiple bodies of French historiography—the development of European racial theory and the complex legacy of Ernest Renan foremost among them—and demonstrates that, as divisions raged at home after the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, the Islamic "Orient" continued to provide a space in which

seemingly dissimilar groups within French society found camaraderie in a rational, secularizing, and even racialized "Christian" identity. Building on the arguments of chapter one, this second chapter of intellectual history reveals that, in the tumultuous last decades of the nineteenth century, France's Christian tradition was invoked by Catholics and secularists alike when discussing the peoples of the Islamic world. Just like Tocqueville before him, France's Christian heritage becomes fundamental to the secularist Renan when discussing Islam and its practitioners.

The second section of the dissertation, containing one chapter of cultural, colonial history, serves as a bridge between sections one and three as it examines the growing influence of the French print media during the Dreyfus Affair and its subsequent influence over ideas about religion and race in modern France. The Dreyfus Affair—a much-studied moment in modern French history—is primarily known in the historiography for its role in perpetuating antisemitic discourses throughout modern Europe and for its part in exposing and heightening the French culture wars of the late nineteenth century. This chapter argues that the Dreyfus Affair's significance extends beyond these areas, contending that the media coverage around the Dreyfus Affair profoundly altered the French populace's relationship to religion writ large. Not only did the antisemitic press coverage of the Affair motivate anticlerical republicans to codify the Law of Separation of the Churches and the State in 1905, but the Affair also popularized the practice of religious othering and bound religious heritage and traditions to modern concepts of race in France's newspapers and journals.

Most significantly, however, is that while the Dreyfus Affair is notorious for the propagation of racialized, antisemitic discourses throughout France and Europe more

generally, the act of religious othering—defined in this chapter as the expulsion of an individual or group from an idealized, mythological "civilization," "society," or "nation"—was not exclusive to France's Jewish population during the Affair. Amidst the frenzied and divisive coverage of the Affair, newspaper articles containing negative, racially-charged portrayals of Muslims occupied the pages not only of the Catholic, anti-Dreyfusard journal *La Croix,* but also of the secular-leaning, Dreyfusard newspaper, *L'Aurore.* Further, the religious othering of Muslims in the French newspapers during the Dreyfus Affair saw both Catholic and anticlerical journalists emphasize an entrenched dichotomy between Christianity and Islam—often portrayed as a clash between civilization and barbarism—that operated in conjunction with more blatant examples of racial categorization. This chapter attempts to explain these phenomena by studying the discursive links between antisemitism and Islamophobia that emanated from French Algeria in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Although adverse views of Muslims had connected French thinkers from disparate religio-political camps throughout the nineteenth century, these attitudes took on new significance during the Affair as they were adopted and propagated by the increasingly influential press. As mainstream papers sold at record rates during the late 1890s and early 1900s, the seemingly contradictory stances towards Islam held by fervent secularists like Alexis de Tocqueville and Ernest Renan —and their consequent emphasis on a secularized, humanistic form of French Christianity vis-à-vis the Muslim world—trickled into mainstream public discourse, inevitably shaping the French populace's discursive relationship with Christianity in conjunction with its views of Muslims in France's North African colonies.

The third and final section contains two chapters of cultural, colonial history and examines the seemingly paradoxical ways French journalists, governmental figures, and public intellectuals across the metropolitan cultural divide wrote and spoke about French Christianity between 1905-1920. It does so by focusing on the 1905 Law of Separation in conjunction with the French invasion of Morocco in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Importantly, the Law of Separation passed at a moment when the European contest over Morocco—the last kingdom in North Africa to avoid colonization—was reaching a fever pitch. As such, this section considers these two seemingly disparate events within one theoretical framework, arguing that the French invasion of Morocco and the Law of Separation were, in fact, connected in the minds of contemporaries. While anticlericalists—the instigators and authors of the Law of Separation—extolled France's new secular status after 1905, they, along with their Catholic counterparts, simultaneously drew upon the centuries-old religious rivalry that set the French Christians against the Muslims of Morocco as French political and military forces attempted to infiltrate the Moroccan government in the early twentieth century. Although the hostile relationship between Christians and Muslims had been established within French discourse by the early twentieth century—a larger theme of sections one and two of the dissertation—this section clarifies why France's Christian identity features so prominently in both Catholic and mainstream, secular literature after the 1905 Law of Separation.

Chapter four focuses on the metropolitan side of this story and begins with a discussion on the 1905 Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State by outlining the history of the law—including the history of Christianity in modern France—as well

as the legal and cultural ramifications for contemporaries in the French metropole and in France's colonies. While France's clear association with Christianity in the mainstream newspapers after 1905 might appear contradictory at first, it was not necessarily inconsistent for Catholics, moderate secularists, or even open anticlericalists to identify with the notion of a Christian France in the early twentieth century. This was mainly due to a shared moral code—based in Christian discourse—that linked these disparate groups during the period and continued to bind them after the Law of Separation was codified. By uncovering the underlying moral rhetoric shared by Catholics and secularists in early twentieth-century France, chapter four elucidates why the notion of a Christian France—though in theory untenable after 1905—continued to resonate in public discourse vis-à-vis the colonies.

Chapter five focuses on Morocco, examining how the religio-racial categories of "Christian" and "Muslim" were employed by French contemporaries vis-à-vis Morocco after the Law of Separation to justify military and cultural intervention in the North African kingdom. Specifically, it explains how the label "Christian" came to be affiliated with secular, enlightenment ideals like rationalism and material progress in relation to the label "Muslim." Even though it was not necessarily contradictory for French men and women of all religious viewpoints to identify with the notion of a Christian France after 1905 thanks to the shared moral code described in chapter four, the broad associations made between France and Christianity vis-à-vis Morocco did indicate a contemporary shift in meaning ascribed to the label "Christian." That is, chapter five contends that term "Christian" no longer exclusively referred to a person who practiced Christianity, but was rather invoked after 1905 to denote civilization, morality, racial superiority, and material

progress vis-à-vis the label "Muslim," a category indicating backwardness, moral degeneracy, racial inferiority, and decline.

During the early to mid-nineteenth century, French secularists such as Tocqueville and Renan applied the term "Christian" to underline the supposed French traits listed above—rationalism, progress, and racial superiority—in direct contrast to the alleged civilizational decline, religious fanaticism, and racial inferiority that were supposedly inherent to the Muslim populations of North Africa and the larger Islamic world. These religio-racial categories—which ultimately trickled into mainstream discourse amidst the media coverage of the Dreyfus Affair—were adopted by both Catholic and secularists in the early twentieth century and functioned in public rhetoric to connect the French populace to France's high, Christian past and a distinctly secular, progressive—and imperial—modernity. This secularized French Christianity endured for years in the media and academic literature surrounding Morocco, broadly resonating with both Catholics and anticlericalists in the metropole. After the cultural turmoil of the Dreyfus Affair and the sense of rupture caused by the codification of the 1905 Law of Separation, Morocco functioned as a space where the French could draw on both past, present, and future glory. By invoking a secularized Christian identification, Catholics and secularists upheld common collective sentiments in a time of moral and geopolitical uncertainty.

1.0 Chapter 1: "Shifting Identities: Alexis de Tocqueville, François-René de Chateaubriand, and French Religious Categorization During the Conquest of Algeria 1830-1860"

In the early summer of 1830, King Charles X of France sanctioned the invasion of Ottoman Algeria in a last, frantic bid for public and electoral support. While the assault on the North African territory was a military success, it exposed and fueled metropolitan discord revolving around religion's role in the political sphere. The king and his ministers depicted the conquest of Algeria as a triumph of Christian kingship over Oriental despotism. The French liberal opposition replied that the martial success was a victory for popular sovereignty manifested in the nation, not the king. Jennifer Sessions upholds this division in her work *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria,* writing "at the heart of the liberal interpretation of the expedition [in Algeria] lay a series of oppositions…between the liberal understanding of secular, popular sovereignty and the ultraroyalist vision of Christian kingship."[1]

After the July Revolution that year, the successful revolutionaries not only deposed Charles X, but they also won the rhetorical battle over Algeria, explicitly defining the invasion of the North African territory as a secular victory and recasting the enterprise in language that tied the conquest to the sovereign nation and the people of France. While the new king, Louis-Philippe, also embraced the conquest in such terms, discord between the two groups remained. Historian Joseph F. Byrnes remarks on this religio-political fissure, "The opposition was deep-seated; the ideological sides self-

[1]Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 57.

consciously chosen."[2] However, while existing scholarship sustains this stark division between Christian monarchists and secular liberals in early to mid-nineteenth-century France, the use of religious rhetoric to justify French colonialism and underpin French ideological and political institutions prevailed amongst monarchists and liberals alike throughout the early nineteenth century, particularly when discussing the peoples of Algeria and the larger Islamic world. This use of religious rhetoric amongst both factions can be seen in the works of Francois-Rene Chateaubriand and Alexis de Tocqueville, respectively. While the works of Chateaubriand—himself a famous panegyrist of Christianity—predictably painted the peoples of the Islamic world as savage, decadent, and incompatible with civilized French Christians such as himself, works by the secular Tocqueville also exploit France's ties to Christianity for cultural and political gain. In fact, no historical character embodies the complicated union between secular liberalism and Christianity more completely than Alexis de Tocqueville.

Tocqueville is perhaps best known for his secular liberalism, political and sociological insight, and in the more recent postcolonial historiography, his paradoxical promotion of French imperialism in Algeria. Specifically, while Tocqueville is renowned for his observations on democracy and his belief in human equality, modern scholars have been keen to expose his support of brutal French military action in Algeria in the 1840s. Historians including Jennifer Pitts, Roger Boesche, and Margaret Kohn utilize this "two Tocquevilles" metaphor as a lens to better understand the rising, contradictory forces of liberalism and empire in the mid-nineteenth century.[3] Pitts in particular acutely

[2] Joseph F. Byrnes, *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), xx.
[3] See Roger Boesche, "The Dark Side of Tocqueville: On War and Empire," *The Review of*

explains the ways Tocqueville himself integrated nineteenth-century liberal and imperial ideologies in her translation of his *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, demonstrating that Tocqueville considered the imperialist venture in Algeria critical to the success of metropolitan republican politics and essential for the advancement of France's international position.[4] According to Tocqueville, empire was necessary for democracy to succeed. However, though Tocqueville's stances on colonialism clearly locate him at the problematic intersection of liberalism and empire, few scholars have considered how Tocqueville's observations related to the larger narratives of secularization and the changing role of religion within nineteenth-century France.[5] Tocqueville's employment of religious language within political and imperial contexts may enable us to better understand the multifaceted ways religion functioned and continues to function within postcolonial modernity.

Although it is now increasingly common to claim that secularization—traditionally defined as the retreat of religion from mainstream culture and politics—was a complex and incomplete process in post-revolutionary France, questions over *how* religion evolved and even retained prominence remain to be examined. Even as existing works paint the rise of secularism as a more convoluted process than traditionally

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Politics vol. 67, no. 4 (Autumn 2005); Margaret Kohn, "Empire's Law: Alexis de Tocqueville on Colonialism and the State of Exception," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* vol. 41, no. 2 (June 2008).

[4] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, trans. Jennifer Pitts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xxxv.

[5] See: Alan S. Kahan "Tocqueville and Religion: Beyond the Frontier of Christendom," in *Tocqueville and the Frontiers of Democracy,* ed. Ewa Atanassow et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Alan S. Kahan, *Tocqueville, Religion, and Democracy: Checks and Balances for Democratic Souls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

assumed, scholars continue to characterize secularization as the progressive decline of religious practice and the cultural importance of religion in France.[6] Tocqueville's writings prove such a view as incomplete. As Tocqueville pronounced, religion may have "lost its sway over men's souls" by the 1830s, but Christianity continued to fundamentally shape his conceptions of democracy, slavery, and French intervention in Algeria.[7] When discussed in relation to Western democracy in *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the French Revolution,* Christian principles—devoid of their spiritual orientations—proved imperative to ensure moderation, equality, and liberty within society. Regarding the abolition question, which Tocqueville addressed in his 1843 essays *The Emancipation of Slaves,* France's Christian heritage directly underpinned French universalist ideology and legitimized notions of human equality and brotherhood. And, most importantly for this dissertation, when invoked in the colonial context in Tocqueville's numerous writings on the French colonization of Algeria, France's Christian identity was utilized to construct a religious binary between the French Christians and the Algerian Muslims. Analyzing the disparate and even contradictory ways religion operated within Tocqueville's most publicized writings enable one to explore the influence Christianity had in fashioning French identity as well as the significant impact it had in the construction of French cultural and political institutions during the mid-nineteenth century.

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[6] Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe 1848-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 3.

[7] Additionally, while many scholars including François Furet, Nestor Capdevila, and Ran Halévi have studied how Tocqueville's writings shed light on the relationship between democracy and revolution, they have failed to incorporate Tocqueville's beliefs about religion into their analyses.

Without question, Christianity continued to fulfill an internal, spiritual function for many French people in the nineteenth century. And, it is important to recognize that French Christian values continued to be publically espoused by conservatives like Chateaubriand—a piece of this story that will be examined later in this chapter. However, it is vital to consider the fact that Tocqueville—who was not a practicing Christian—invoked Christian principles and Christianity's connections to the French state in the broader public domain for political purposes. In other words, although Tocqueville did not ritually practice or believe in the salvific value of any religion, he firmly contended that Christianity had a significant role to play in the temporal sphere and thus utilized religious rhetoric to fulfill civic aims.

Though religion had undoubtedly been utilized as a political force to dominate kings, nations, and peoples for centuries, the political and spiritual functions of Christianity had always been linked—at least rhetorically—in French society before the Revolution of 1789.[8] For Tocqueville, the French Revolution was the first historical instance in which politics "developed into a species of religion" that aimed to regenerate the "whole human race."[9] However, the political sphere did not supersede the religious sphere or render it irrelevant. Rather, nineteenth-century France witnessed a discernible separation between Christianity as a spiritual force laboring to bring souls closer to God and Christianity as a secular tool utilized to exercise political and rhetorical power.[10] On

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[8] David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 35.

[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution,* trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Random House Inc., 1955), 13.

[10] Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin, *Religion, Society, and Politics in France since 1789* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003), 5.

the one hand, widely-published writers such as Chateaubriand predictably defended the Christian faith against the forces of revolution and secularism well into the nineteenth century. On the other hand, French governmental officials—as well as intellectuals who otherwise did not publically espouse any religious affiliation—began to commonly invoke France's Christian identity in both the metropole and in Algeria, thus giving rise to non-confessional secular forms of Christianity that manifested themselves in the French public sphere. Tocqueville's reflections on liberalism, empire, and religion fit squarely into this trend.

Considered within this context, Tocqueville's references to religion with respect to France's metropolitan and colonial circumstances specifically reveal the critical role this "civic Christianity" played in the construction of Western democracy, French universalism, and, most significantly, French colonial doctrine in the *Maghreb* during this period. Tocqueville, a resolute supporter of the separation of church and state, paradoxically invoked France's intimate ties to a creedless Christianity in order to bolster French democratic institutions and universalize France's missionary appeal to the enslaved and "barbaric"—thereby laying the ideological groundwork for what would become the *mission civilasatrice* under the Third Republic—even as he simultaneously used Christianity as a tool to underline religious and cultural difference in French Algeria, a development that would later come to define France's imperial project into the early twentieth century. Ultimately, though Christianity filled many temporal positions in Tocqueville's works, the religious language used in his writings demonstrates

Christianity's crucial place in the formation of an increasingly essential colonial identity during a period of extreme instability, political division, and social conflict in the French metropole.

1.1 Politics and Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century France

Before exploring the specific works of Chateaubriand and Tocqueville as they relate to the arguments of this chapter, it is important to outline the political and cultural landscape in which both figures lived and wrote. The first decade of the nineteenth-century was largely dominated by France's ongoing, expanding Revolution as well as constant wars throughout Europe and within France's colonies. The defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815 at Waterloo appeared to conclude a twenty-five-year period of unprecedented political upheaval not only within France, but throughout Europe and the greater Atlantic world as well. The Bourbon monarchy was effectively restored under Louis XVIII. Many French nobles who had emigrated abroad amidst the throes of revolutionary violence returned to France. As such, hopes of returning to the hierarchical, Catholic society of the *Ancien Regime*—harbored by counter-revolutionaries since 1789—almost seemed as if they might materialize. However, the Revolution of 1789 had effected too many changes to permit a straightforward return to the former status quo, and the population of nineteenth-century France bore the stamp of revolutionary divisions in almost every aspect of its political and cultural life.[11]

[11] It is important to note that, while this chapter will be exploring the political and religious divisions between monarchical Catholics and liberal secularists, there were also other religious divisions playing out during the revolutionary years within France. Divisions and connections between North African and Eurasian Muslims and secular French revolutionaries have been

Far from restoring French society to its prerevolutionary status, the Restoration government under Louis XVIII was an uneasy hybrid of liberal and counter-revolutionary principles. During his years in exile, Louis XVIII had become circumspect and open to negotiation. As such, while his reign was characterized by political and religious strife, he nevertheless managed to uphold a tenuous peace between the liberal and the royalist factions within parliament until his death in 1824. On the other hand, his brother and successor, Charles X, became obdurate and increasingly devoted to his Catholic faith during his tenure as an émigré. On ascending the throne, Charles immediately issued a challenge to liberals and moderates by restoring the lavish coronation ceremonies at Rheims cathedral and regarding the *Charte*—a charter written in 1815 that essentially limited the powers of the French monarch and established a parliamentary government—as an intolerable constraint on his power. His support of the royalists in parliament led to an increase in pro-Catholic legislation which widened the gap between monarchical Catholics and secular liberals. As a result, rather than uniting post-revolutionary French society under the banner of a revamped Catholicism, the Restoration period under Charles X saw an explosion of intellectual and cultural currents which were hostile to the ultra-Catholic regime.[12]

Desperate for a spectacular military success that would boost the regime's popularity, Charles X's hand-picked minister, Jules de Polignac, sent French troops to

explored by scholars in recent years. See: Ian Coller, *Muslims and Citizens: Islam, Politics, and the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

[12] For more background on the beginnings of the Revolution of 1830, see: David S. Pinkney, The Revolution of 1830 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). and Jeremy Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830-1835* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

occupy the coast of Algeria in early summer of 1830.[13] While the campaign ultimately proved successful for the French, it failed to bolster support for the king's increasingly repressive government at home. On July 26, 1830, French liberals began to protest newly-minted ordinances that were aimed at quashing the press and altering voting laws. By July 27, the protests had morphed into a popular insurrection as barricades were thrown up in neighborhoods across Paris, effectively igniting what would be known as the Revolution of 1830 or the July Revolution. After three days of street skirmishes—known as the "Three Glorious Days"— Charles X gave up the fight and fled to England. His departure marked the end of his reign and of the Restoration period more generally. Power—as well as the recently invaded territory of Algeria—was now in the hands of the liberal politicians and France's new, accommodating king, Louis-Philippe. Significantly, while the liberals rejected the ousted monarchy's claim that victory in Algeria equaled the victory of Christian kingship, they did not reject the legitimacy of the military conquest itself. Even as the liberals condemned the Polignac ministry's attempts to co-op the success of the French army and strengthen the flailing Catholic monarchy, they sought to recast the military triumph as a victory for the *Armée d'Afrique* and secular, popular sovereignty. In fact, French liberals went so far as to assert that the army's struggle against Oriental despotism in Algeria and their own struggle against Christian kingship at home were one in the same.[14] At first glance, it seems that the lines were

[13] For more background on the invasion of Algeria, see: Benjamin Stora, *Algeria, 1830-2000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) and James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[14] Sessions, *By Sword and Plow, 59.*

clearly drawn between Catholic monarchists and secular liberals after the invasion of Algeria and the Revolution of 1830. But how stark were these divisions?

Historiographically, works that focus on the numerous and momentous events of early nineteenth-century France tend to highlight the obvious political, cultural, and religious divisions that existed within the French metropole and France's colonies.[15] However, while religion in particular appears to be a point of severe division between Catholic monarchists and secular liberals, the role and evolution of Christianity in nineteenth-century France is more complex than current historiography suggests. This is because prominent French Catholics and secularists alike continued to use France's ties to Christianity to fulfill political aims and to define who—and who was not—French, particularly when discussing the peoples of the Islamic world. In other words, while a monarchical Catholic like François-René de Chateaubriand predictably drew upon France's connections to Christianity in his published works discussing the peoples of the Islamic world, a secular liberal like Alexis de Tocqueville—who was otherwise wary of religious influence in the realm of politics—also heavily relied on France's rhetorical links to Christianity to highlight French civilizational and moral superiority vis-à-vis the Muslims of Algeria. By viewing the works of Chateaubriand and Tocqueville together, this chapter demonstrates that Christianity was not simply a mainstay of certain Catholic,

[15] See: Joseph F. Byrnes, *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, *New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars* in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005)l Joan Wallach Scott, *Sex and Secularism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

monarchist-leaning factions during the early nineteenth century, but a complex rhetorical tool wielded by Catholics and secularists alike to underpin French political and imperial institutions.

1.2 Chateaubriand and Islam: The Monarchical, Catholic Viewpoint

1.2.1 Chateaubriand and Christianity

François-René de Chateaubriand was a nineteenth-century French writer, diplomat, politician, and historian. His novels, travelogues, and other various works dominated the literary scene in the first half of the nineteenth century and continued to have a significant impact on French literature and culture even after his death in 1848. A descendant from an ancient aristocratic family in Brittany, Chateaubriand did not support the French Revolution of 1789 and joined the Royalist army in 1792. After being injured at the Siege of Thionville the same year, Chateaubriand was banished to England where he spent most of the next decade in political exile. After famously reconverting to the Catholic faith of his childhood in 1798, Chateaubriand returned to France in 1800 and published the *Génie du christianisme* in 1802. This stalwart defense of the Catholic faith—particularly in an age where many intellectuals had abandoned the church—won him considerable fame and even the fleeting patronage of Napoleon Bonaparte, who was eager at the time to curry the favor of the Catholic Church in Rome.[16] Historian James McMillan claims that *Génie du christianisme* "did more than any other single work to

[16] See: Jean Boorsch, "Chateaubriand and Napoleon," in *Yale French Studies Volume 26* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960) and Fabienne Moore "Chateaubriand's Alter Egos: Napoleon, Madame De Stael and the 'Indian Savage'," in European Romantic Review 9.2 (Oxford: Routledge Press, 1998).

restore the credibility and prestige of Christianity in intellectual circles and launched a fashionable rediscovery of the Middle Ages and their Christian civilisation. The revival was by no means confined to an intellectual elite, however, but was evident in the real, though uneven, rechristianisation of the French countryside."[17]

While the French Revolution created a scenario in which an entire generation came of age without any kind of substantial religious formation, the renown of Chateaubriand's works in the early decades of the nineteenth century reveal that the dechristianization tactics employed by the Revolutionaries in the 1790s were incomplete.[18] And certainly, Chateaubriand's works demonstrate the enduring relevance of French Christianity from the standpoint of religious practice and tradition. But it is important to note that Chateaubriand's Christian faith also informed his writings on the peoples of the Islamic world and underlined an association between Christianity and civilizational progress. However, unlike the secular Tocqueville's paradoxical invocation of France's ties to Christianity vis-à-vis the peoples of Algeria in the 1830s and 1840s, Chateaubriand's earlier descriptions of the Islamic Other through a lens of his Christian faith are a bit less surprising. For the deeply religious Chateaubriand, only Christianity had the power to interrupt the alleged civilizational decay of the Islamic Orient he witnessed on his travels to the Levant and North Africa in the first decade of the nineteenth century.[19] However, while Chateaubriand's views towards the peoples of the

[17] James McMillan, "Catholic Christianity in France from the Restoration to the separation of church and state, 1815-1905." in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, eds., *The Cambridge history of Christianity* (2014), 219.
[18] Ibid, 219.
[19] See: Alain Guyot and Roland LeHuenen, *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem de Chateaubriand: L'invention du voyage romantique* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006).

Islamic world were indeed in keeping with his Catholic sympathies, this section will examine two works—his 1811 travelogue, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem,* and his 1826 novel, *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage*—as counterparts to Tocqueville's later writings. As such, it demonstrates that certain French Catholics, like their secular liberal equivalents, utilized religion to underline the superiority of French civilization concerning the Islamic Orient in the first half of the nineteenth century.

1.2.2 Chateaubriand the Travel Writer and Novelist

Chateaubriand's *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, published in 1811, is a travelogue that catalogued his 1806 pilgrimage to Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, and Spain. Throughout its pages, Chateaubriand's travelogue maintains a stark dichotomy between civilization and barbarism grounded almost wholly on religious identity. *L'Itinéraire* extols the honorable French military in comparison with Levantine and North African brutality, condemns the alleged "Arab greed" that had come to prevail in the Holy Land where Jesus once preached compassion, celebrates the piety of the Arab Christians, and consistently scorns the heretical "savage…infidel Muslim" regardless of nationality.[20] Chateaubriand pits the hopeless sensuality of the Muslim inhabitants of Constantinople—which he characterizes as a place "not of pleasure, but debauchery"—against the sacrosanctity of the ancient remnants of Christianity in Jerusalem.[21] And he bemoans the fact that,

[20] François-René de Chateaubriand, *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (Paris: P.H. Krabb, 1851), 282.

[21] After leaving a Christian holy site in Jerusalem, Chateaubriand stated, "Let me add that an extraordinary contrast renders these things even more striking; for on leaving the cave where

"thanks to the despotic Muslims," even the once-fertile soil of the Holy Land "offers only thistles, and dry withered grasses" and villages "in ruins."[22] Chateaubriand was the quintessential Orientalist in the Saidian tradition.[23]

Importantly, while *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* espoused a clear contrast between alleged advanced and degenerative societies based almost entirely on religious identity, Chateaubriand's travelogue was not simply anti-Islam, but fervently maintained that Christianity enabled all civilizational and material progress. That is, societies rooted in the traditions of Christianity tended to have advanced political and cultural institutions as well as a robust infrastructure, while nations under Islamic law boasted nothing but societal and physical decay. For Chateaubriand, this literal decay was prevalent in Greece, which was under the control of the Islamic Ottoman Empire in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Chateaubriand found it remarkable that, in Ottoman Greece, all "fountains…and all…bridges are crumbling, and date from the early days of the empire: I do not think I encountered one modern construction along the way: from which one must conclude that religion is enfeebled among the Muslims and, along with that religion, Turkish society is

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you found richness, the arts, the religion of civilized nations, you are transported to a profound solitude, amidst Arab hovels, among half-naked savages, and infidel Muslims. These places are still the very ones where so many wonders occurred, yet this holy ground dares not proclaim its joy outside, and the memories of its glory are enclosed within its breast." Ibid, 282.

[22] Ibid, 262.

[23] For background on Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and its critics, please see: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979); Bernard Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism," in *The New York Review of Books* (Summer 1892); Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation* (Oxford: Routledge, 1996); Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

on the point of collapse."[24] For Chateaubriand, the lack of proper religious conviction amongst the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire—a prevalent trait in his descriptions of all Islamic societies—had stopped any material improvements in the once-influential Greek islands. Chateaubriand declared throughout *L'Itinéraire* that Islam itself eroded the fabric of society.

Similarly, in a later part of his travelogue, Chateaubriand describes the arduous journey to Laconia, where he and his party were forced to rest at a "pleasure house" stinking of goats and dung. Chateaubriand claims that the owner of this hovel refused to give sustenance to their party of "Christian dogs" and, being too lazy to tend to the Europeans himself, forces a wretched employee described as "totally naked…swollen by fever and lashes" to serve Chateaubriand "ewe's milk in a jug disgusting for its dirtiness…"[25] The physical descriptions of dirtiness clearly serve to evoke a sense of moral as well as physical decay in this section. And, it is critical to note that, amidst his descriptions of this hovel, Chateaubriand highlights the fact that he is indeed a Christian—a civilized, French outsider—shocked and dismayed by the supposed perfidious influence of Islam on this helpless society. But, as mentioned above, for Chateaubriand, it is not simply the presence of Islam, but the absence of Christian values and traditions that causes a society to lapse into this supposed sorry state of affairs. Ruminating on the glories of ancient Greece, he mused that, perhaps nations, like individuals, "are cruel in their decrepitude…perhaps the spirit of a nation exhausts itself; and when it has created everything…filled with its own masterpieces, and unable to

[24] Chateaubriand, *L'Itinéraire, pg. 40.*
[25] Ibid, 54-55.

produce new ones, it becomes brutalized, and returns to purely physical sensation." However, there was hope for the Christian nations of Europe, for "Christianity will prevent the modern nations from ending in such a deplorable old age…"[26] Chateaubriand's language suggests that, in a sense, Christianity is the key to eternal youth and infinite progress. It is the only entity that guards a nation against the "purely physical" cycle of decay and decline.

While Chateaubriand's descriptions of the Islamic world in *L'Itinéraire* certainly reflect his own alleged experiences and observations as a practicing French Catholic, his language demonstrates that his ideas about Christianity were not limited to religious rituals or belief. For Chateaubriand, Christianity served a political function: it was the foundation of advanced societies, of modern knowledge, and of just political systems. As a result, the natural state between Muslims and Christians was war and had been since the time of the Crusades. Chateaubriand viewed the Crusades of the medieval period as a zero-sum game over which religion—Christianity or Islam—deserved to triumph across the known world. In what is probably the most cited passage of *L'Itinéraire*, Chateaubriand pontificates that the Crusades—for the French—were not simply about reclaiming the holy tomb of Christ, but were rather an existential contest over which religion ought to prevail on earth. Was it Islam, "a religion inimical to civilization, systematically disposed to ignorance, to despotism, to slavery?" Or was it Christianity, "a religion which revived among the moderns the genius of sage antiquity and which abolished

[26] Ibid, 151.

slavery?" For Chateaubriand, the answer was Christianity. Chateaubriand's belief that Christianity alone enabled historical progress is revealed through his musings in *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem.*

Just like *L'Itinéraire,* Chateaubriand's 1826 novel *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage* was based on his 1806 pilgrimage to the Levant, North Africa, and Spain. Similarly drawing on the themes of Christian regeneration and progress, *Les Aventures* belies Chateaubriand's belief in the irreconcilability between Christian and Muslim societies. *Les Aventures* is set in Granada, Spain after the reconquest of Granada by Christians in the late fifteenth century. At its base, the work is a story of forbidden love between an honorable, dispossessed Muslim prince, Abn-Hamed, and a Spanish, Christian girl named Blanca. The tale begins with Abn-Hamed, heir to the expelled *Abencérage* dynasty, returning to Granada to take revenge on the Christians who overthrew his family years before. Almost immediately, he encounters the beautiful Blanca, who, to his dismay, is a Christian, and, as a result, forbidden fruit. Nevertheless, they begin a secret courtship. After courting Blanca, Abn-Hamed's priorities shift. The narrative states, "his homeland no longer occupied the mind of Abn-Hamed solely and entirely. Granada has ceased to seem deserted, abandoned, widowed, and solitary; it was dearer than ever to his heart, but a new glory embellished its ruins; the memory of his ancestors was mingled now with another charm."[27] Blanca, a symbol for the regenerative power of Christianity, had remade the ruined city in the eyes of the Muslim, Abn-Hamed.

[27] François-René de Chateaubriand, *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage,* trans. A.S. Kline (Dover: On-Demand Publishing LLC, 2011), 21.

The remainder of the novel finds Blanca attempting to convert Abn-Hamed to Christianity so that they might marry. One such exchange proceeds with Blanca crying out: “have you forgotten that you are an infidel, a Moor, an enemy, and I am a Christian and Spanish?"...become a Christian, and nothing can stop me from being thine. But…an enemy of the Christians has no right.”[28] While Chateaubriand seems to have created a narrative space in which the Muslim Abn-Hamed might lay down his literal and proverbial arms and convert to Christianity, the metaphorical divisions prove too deep. For, in a dramatic turn of events, Abn-Hamed learns that Blanca is a descendent of the House Bivar, and it was her grandfather who dealt the death blow to Abn-Hamed’s royal grandfather when Granada was taken by the Christians. The narrative states of Abn-Hamed, “The temptation was great…but…though love with all its power spoke to the heart of the Abencerraje, yet he could not think without horror of any idea of uniting the blood of the persecutors to that of the persecuted.”[29] Ultimately, Blanca deals the final blow to the relationship and admonishes Abn-Hamed to “return to the desert” before she collapses in a heap.[30] While the novel is an almost comical Orientalist trope, it importantly reveals the idea that, for Chateaubriand, not even Blanca—who is the embodiment of the regenerative power of Christianity—is able to gain a foothold in the mind and heart of the relapsed Abn-Hamed—who ultimately proves to be the embodiment of Islamic infidelity. One imagines that a contemporary French reader was meant to feel relief at the fact that nineteenth-century Granada remained in Christian hands.

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[28] Ibid, 38.
[29] Ibid, 72.
[30] Ibid, 73.

In the end, both *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* and *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage* demonstrate that Chateaubriand drew upon religious differences to underline the superiority of French political institutions, culture, and mores vis-a-vis the Islamic Orient in the early nineteenth century. Again, while it is hardly shocking that the Catholic Chateaubriand viewed the Islamic world through a lens of his own religious ideas and experiences, this does not change the fact that Christianity is inextricably tied to historical progress and material civilization in his works. Importantly, the association between Christianity, modernity, progress, and civilization was not simply used by Catholic monarchists in the first half of the nineteenth century, but was also drawn upon by prominent secularists, most notably among them Alexis de Tocqueville. Before exploring Tocqueville's works on Algeria and Islam, however, it is important to take a step back to understand his ideas about Christianity's role within democratic institutions and the maintenance of empire. It is to these ideas that we will now turn.

1.3 Tocqueville and Islam: The Secular, Liberal Viewpoint

1.3.1 Christianity: The Foundation of Democratic Institutions

Alexis de Tocqueville was born in 1805 in Normandy to a French aristocratic family. Throughout his tenure as a public figure and writer, Tocqueville wore many hats: that of politician, diplomat, political economist, philosopher, and historian. Perhaps most famous to posterity for his adherence to classical liberalism, Tocqueville advocated parliamentary government and was profoundly skeptical of the potential extremes of democracy. Though he was a secular liberal and firm proponent of the separation of

church and state, Tocqueville believed that certain Christian principles were essential to the success of Western democracy. He had little interest in Christianity's spiritual efficacy, but limited his discussions to religion's impact on the temporal, public sphere. This is not to say that the "spiritual" and "temporal" were always mutually exclusive domains. Oftentimes, "spiritual" values had worldly effects. However, this section intends to distinguish between Christianity's salvific and earthly functions to illustrate that Christianity was not the sole property of faithful Catholics like Chateaubriand in nineteenth-century France. Thus, a non-practitioner like Tocqueville could capitalize on Christianity's capacity to underpin democratic objectives. Even as Christian values remained important in Tocqueville's texts, they took on secular significance separate from their spiritual connotations. By reading Tocqueville from this angle, one can see the fundamental role that this burgeoning, civic Christianity played in the construction of modern French institutions.

Tocqueville shared a conviction with contemporary Protestant thinkers Benjamin Constant, François Guizot, and Edgar Quinet that Christianity was involved in the progressive realization of democratic freedom because it promoted the fundamental equality of all human beings whatever their stations. However, a linguistic analysis of Tocqueville's writings suggests that in the United States and France, religion's primary role was to fulfill civic purposes as it promoted freedom, equality, and restraint amongst its adherents. It is important to note again that Tocqueville was a firm advocate of the separation of Church and state. It was only when Christianity was kept within this circumscribed, non-political sphere that it could effectively exercise all the temporal benefits it offered democratic society.

Tocqueville's 1835 work *Democracy in America* grappled with many facets of democracy, not least among them the position of religion within modern societies. Though Tocqueville understood Christian ethics—such as the promotion of equality—and democracy to be natural allies in the Western march towards greater liberty, the French case, which he constantly referenced throughout the work, challenged this alliance. In nineteenth-century France, "men of religion [fought] against freedom and the friends of freedom attack[ed] religion; some noble and generous spirits praise[d] slavery while some dishonorable and servile souls advocate[d] independence."[31] In other words, a person's *belief* in Christian doctrine had no bearing on whether he or she upheld what Tocqueville claimed were the Christian tenets of human freedom and equality. Religious convictions within a given populace did not guarantee democratic success. Even as Tocqueville perceived Christianity in France to have been "temporarily involved with powers overturned by democracy," he held that it had the fundamental potential to "support freedom's struggles." However, it was not faith in dogma but the Christian principles of liberty, equality, and self-restraint operating in the temporal sphere that sustained freedom in society. Consequently, Tocqueville observed that men who called upon the help of religion whilst keeping their sights "upon the earth rather than heaven" were in the best position to promote the equalizing benefits Christianity offered.[32] Tocqueville's conviction that civic Christianity contained the capacity to transcend class and political division and unite a given

[31] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin Publishing, 2003), 22.
[32] Ibid, 21.

society would influence his later writings on the French presence in Algeria. Tocqueville believed that religion could only function productively in a democratic society when it was formally detached from a nation's governing body and, thus, its factional struggles. However, while Tocqueville praised what he perceived as the United States' healthy, delineated relationship to religion, his views of France's historical affiliation with Christianity were more complex.

For Tocqueville, it had been the lack of separation between the Catholic Church and the French monarchy, among other political and cultural factors, that led to the vehement and fanatic attack on religion during the French Revolution. In *The Old Regime and the French Revolution,* published in 1856, Tocqueville attempted to account for the violent, radical reaction against the Church's power:

> It is not a question of analyzing the shortcomings of the Church as a religious institution, but one of perceiving in what manner it obstructed the revolution that was getting under way … at this time the church was, if not the most oppressive, the chief of all the powers in the land, and though neither her vocation or her nature called for this, co-operated with the secular authority … bent on investing it with her aura and sanctity and making it as infallible and eternal as herself. Thus anyone attacking the church could count on popular support.[33]

By closely associating with the government and endowing it with its inviolability and sacredness, the Church ironically made itself vulnerable to the scathing critiques of the French revolutionaries in the last years of the eighteenth century. The state of religious and moral chaos in the years following the Revolution brought on by the intimate and unsuitable association between the Catholic Church and the French state was not

[33] Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution,* 151.

conducive to a healthy democratic society.

Although Tocqueville's writings on religion's role in society varied slightly in his chronologically disparate yet related discussions on the United States and France, he undoubtedly alleged that Christianity, democracy, and equality had the potential to mutually reinforce and underpin each other within the increasingly liberal, democratic West. While Tocqueville's personal views on religion are undeterminable, he understood religion could play a crucial role in the secular spheres of Western culture and politics. Even if this secular-minded Christianity simply enabled civil society to function, *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime* demonstrate that it was present in the formation of nineteenth-century Western democratic institutions.

1.3.2 Christianity's Role in the Emancipation of Slaves and Maintenance of Empire

Tocqueville believed that secularized Christian principles enabled mainstream democratic society to function properly. However, his embrace of Christian ideas proved more complicated in his discussions on slavery and its role within France's empire. For Tocqueville, Christian ideas underpinned French claims to moral superiority regarding the issue of slavery, which in turn functioned to enable the maintenance of France's colonial holdings and ensure its powerful political position on the continent. In other words, Tocqueville's employment of Christian ideals such as equality and universal brotherhood supported France's project to free the enslaved so that France might maintain its coercive empire. Importantly, Tocqueville's seemingly inconsistent attitude is in keeping with larger trends throughout the post-revolutionary Atlantic world, as seen in monographs such as Sylvia Larcher's *L'autre citoyen: L'idéal republican et les*

Antilles après l'esclavage, which highlights the fact that French doctrines of universalism went hand in hand with a process of exclusion in France's colonies throughout the nineteenth century.[34] Even though Tocqueville undoubtedly viewed the abolition of slavery as a moral issue, his interest in abolition was intimately tied to his fervent desire to preserve and fortify France's overseas colonies. France needed to eradicate slavery—and indemnify former slave owners—if it wanted to maintain its Caribbean colonies, its powerful diplomatic position in Europe, and its reputation as the world's advocate for human equality. Tocqueville believed that France must not leave it to Britain to be the primary representative of what he called *French* principles—that is, the principles of the Revolution—in the world.[35]

Christian ideals, serving as an explicit foundation for the universalist claims in Tocqueville's writings on emancipation, provided an ideological base for the developing *mission civilisatrice* that would come to characterize the French imperial project at its zenith under the Third Republic. As implied above, the Christian tenets of egalitarianism and liberty for all peoples offered Tocqueville a discourse with which to bolster France's moral and civilizational preeminence whilst sustaining and rationalizing empire. While most of France's chief competitors in the mid-nineteenth century—primarily Great Britain—also laid claim to a Christian heritage, Tocqueville invoked Christian principles in conjunction with France's unique revolutionary tradition, thus producing a

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[34] See: Sylvia Larcher's *L'autre citoyen: L'idéal republican et les Antilles après l'esclavage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014).

[35] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, trans., Jennifer Pitt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xxx.

secularized, popular rhetoric which strengthened French claims to moral superiority over other European nations while achieving colonial and geopolitical goals. In this way, religion, integrated with France's secular revolutionary heritage, contributed to and shaped Tocqueville's mainstream writings on emancipation and paved the way for the ideological paradoxes inherent in the impending *mission civilisatrice.*

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Tocqueville dedicated substantial energy both in and out of parliament to the issue of abolishing slavery in France's colonies. In 1835, Tocqueville, along with other noteworthy liberals of the era, connected with the *Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage*, a moderate abolitionist society established in 1834 by the duc de Broglie. In 1843, Tocqueville presented his views on abolition to the public in a series of essays titled *The Emancipation of Slaves*. Although they were initially published anonymously, the authorship of the articles was widely known. As mentioned earlier, while slave trading had been abolished in France in 1818, Tocqueville argued that France should properly abolish all forms of slavery if it desired to keep its Caribbean possessions and maintain its reputation as the world's protector of human equality. Though full emancipation did not occur in the French colonies until 1848 when unrest in Paris surrounding the February Revolution began to cause metropolitan fears of a colonial uprising, Tocqueville's invocation of Christian and secular Revolutionary rhetoric in *The Emancipation of Slaves* highlighted the nation's commitments to the enchained peoples across the globe so that France might preserve its imperial holdings and maintain its moral supremacy within Europe.

In this work, Tocqueville considered Christianity and Frenchness as two separate, though converging, forces. In fact, France's attempts to emancipate slaves

were meant to succeed and surpass Christianity's redemptive mission. He wrote of the emancipation movement, "we have seen something unprecedented in history: slavery abolished, not by the desperate effort of the slave, but by the enlightened will of the master; not gradually…over the course of those successive transformations that have led insensibly from bondage to the soil toward freedom." The combination of Biblical language and references to the French Enlightenment in Tocqueville's writing accentuated France's celebrated and unique historical traditions. He continued, "in an instant almost a million men together went from extreme servitude to total freedom, or better put, from death to life. Just a few years were enough to accomplish something that Christianity itself could only do over a great number of centuries. Open the annals of all peoples, and I doubt you will find anything finer or more extraordinary."[36] In addition to highlighting France's distinguished cultural heritage, Tocqueville used Christian rhetoric to assert that the French nation had greater potential than Christianity to confer liberty upon the enslaved. However, while this passage may appear to suggest that universal Frenchness was supplanting religion's role in the emancipation movement, Christian principles proved fundamental to Tocqueville's conceptions of France's moral responsibilities to subjugated peoples across the globe.

Although Tocqueville believed France and its populace were ostensibly more capable than Christianity in rising to meet supposed historical inevitabilities such as the abolition of slavery, he continued to underline France's Christian heritage in his essay. Regarding the eradication of the slave trade, he stated, "this great event was produced

[36] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Emancipation of Slaves,* trans., Jennifer Pitt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 199.

by the general movement of the century … it is the product of the spirit of the times. The ideas, passions, the ways of all European societies have pressed in this direction for fifty years. When among free men, races mix and classes grow closer and merge throughout the Christian and civilized world, can slavery endure?"[37] Tocqueville's language revealed his conviction that France's civilized, Christian heritage, merged with the growing surge of nineteenth-century equality and liberal democracy, rendered slavery reprehensible. Christianity played an integral role in the construction of Tocqueville's universal notions of equality and liberty. While Christian ideas were ultimately assimilated into a more progressive French universalism, we can see through Tocqueville that religion continued to shape French perceptions of their own cultural institutions in the nineteenth century. Even though Tocqueville was a staunch advocate of the separation of Church and state, he understood that religious identity politics contained the potential to validate French institutions and ideologies.

According to Tocqueville, the French singularly possessed the aptitude to harness certain aspects of Christianity and turn them into a temporal, humanitarian crusade. He wrote,

> Christianity … was tired and resigned. Our philanthropy took up its work, reawakened it, and brought it into battle as an auxiliary. We were the ones to give a determined and practical meaning to this Christian idea that all men are born equal; we were the ones, finally, who, seeing new duties for social power, imposed upon it as the first of its obligations the need to come to the aid of the unfortunate, to defend the oppressed, to support the weak, and to guarantee to each man an equal right to liberty.[38]

Even though Christianity seemed to have been incapable of enacting any substantial

[37] Tocqueville, *The Emancipation of Slaves,* 201.
[38] Tocqueville, *The Emancipation of Slaves,* 207.

social change, Tocqueville believed that the Christian ideal of egalitarianism, when combined with the French revolutionary idea of political liberty, took on a renewed and invigorated purpose. It was the French who had the potential to transform the idea of Christian egalitarianism into a material, worldly reality. As implied earlier, eager to bolster France's international moral standing concerning the slavery issue, Tocqueville privileged the unique capacity of French universalism to provide justice to the subjugated and oppressed.

These essays on emancipation are critical for understanding Tocqueville's complex colonial policy, for they bear witness to his belief in the vital significance of France's colonies for the nation's international status, regardless of their political or monetary cost, and they display what Tocqueville conceived of as France's moral obligations in the world.[39] Tocqueville's proclamations of France's unique duty to the enslaved and uncivilized across the globe contain an underlying claim to moral and sociopolitical power over other European nation states, particularly Great Britain. Tocqueville believed that, if there was way for France to keep its colonies, it would come only from the abolition of slavery.[40]

Importantly, France's moral superiority in Europe was threatened by the continued existence of slavery in its colonies. Regardless of the fact that the British policy was proving itself more progressive than that of the French—the British abolished slavery in 1833—Tocqueville's claim that the "French sentiments" of equality and liberty undoubtedly intended to undercut Britain's ethical position within Europe by

[39] Pitts, *Writings on Empire,* xxxi.
[40] Tocqueville, *The Emancipation of Slaves,* 200.

highlighting France's distinctively revolutionary, Christian heritage within public discourse.[41] In Tocqueville's writings, the Christian principle of equality and France's Christian tradition legitimate and universalize France's natural obligations to the chained and "barbaric" in France's colonies while simultaneously bolstering its moral and, indirectly, its economic claims over other European nations. This contradictory justification of empire undoubtedly offered an ideological foundation for the *mission civilisatrice* in subsequent French colonial policy. Even as the success of Chateaubriand's writings challenge prevalent secularization narratives, a close reading of Tocqueville offers us yet another take on religious evolution in nineteenth-century France. That is, though Christianity's influence remained widespread in French society, it became increasingly amalgamated into more temporal cultural fixtures, such as the civilizing mission, within secular liberal discourse.

1.3.3 Race and Religion in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France

If Christian principles operating within the temporal sphere underpinned democratic society and substantiated arguments for emancipation and geopolitical advancement, France's rhetorical ties to Christianity were also an essential factor in the construction of cultural difference in the Algerian context. While Tocqueville eschewed all notions of biological racism, he nevertheless invoked France's ties to Christianity to emphasize a fundamental inequality between the French Christians and the Algerian Muslims. Before exploring Christianity's position in the development of Tocqueville's

[41] Tocqueville, *The Emancipation of Slaves,* 207.

views on culture and race in the Algerian context, it is critical to examine the relationship between race, culture, and religion within the larger context of nineteenth-century Europe.

The literature that focuses on citizenship and belonging in modern France contends that French racism places a greater emphasis on culture than on biology, distinguishing it from other, more ethnocentric or scientific visions of race.[42] While there was undeniably a growing European concern with physical anthropology over the course of the nineteenth century, French racial theories as expressed in the military and colonial literature remained pluralistic and highly fluid. Even though emerging factors of scientific racism were important to the French medical community, French racial attitudes in general were based on a *mixture* of biological and cultural factors. It is the persistent and continuing role of culture that distinguished French racial attitudes from those in other national traditions.[43] This French form of culturally-motivated racism appears in Tocqueville's writings on Algeria. However, the cultural discrimination present in his Algerian texts has deeper implications when considered in conjunction with his prolonged correspondence with Arthur de Gobineau—the nineteenth-century thinker most famous for his scientific theories of race. Through these letters, one can postulate that, while Tocqueville disdained the theories of biological racism, he

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[42] See: Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1; Patrick Weil, *How to Be French*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 12.

[43] Richard Fogarty and Michael A. Osborne "Race in French Military Medicine," in *The Color of Liberty Histories of Race in France,* ed. Sue Peabody et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 210.

nevertheless affirmed an essential disparity between the French and Algerian cultures that was rooted in religious difference.

Tocqueville brought Gobineau into the French Foreign Ministry in 1849 while he was Foreign Minister under the Second Republic. Though the two men had already been in contact with each other before Gobineau's appointment, it was during this period that they struck up a friendship that generated a prolonged correspondence that would last until Tocqueville's death in 1859. While many—though certainly not all—of Tocqueville's letters to Gobineau were written years after his most well-known writings on Algeria, they still contain, among other topics, important deliberations over the relationship between morality, religion, and race that significantly echo and bear weight on Tocqueville's earlier viewpoints, which will be discussed in the following section. Although race, religion, and morality are frequently discussed in tandem with each other in the letters between Tocqueville and Gobineau—suggesting that both men considered the three entities to be linked—the relationship between religion and race proved complex within their exchanges. On the one hand, their correspondence supports the conventional idea that Tocqueville did not embrace biological racism. For Tocqueville, arguments about the superiority of one race over another were an alternative form of predestination and denial of human freewill, which he scorned in the name of freedom.[44] Acting on this conviction, Tocqueville accused the biologically racist Gobineau—who was a practicing Christian—of hypocrisy and failing to uphold

[44] Olivier Zunz and Alan S. Kahan, ed., *The Tocqueville Reader: A Life in Letters and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2002), 267.

the Christian principle of equality. On the other hand, Tocqueville's own ideas about difference were themselves deeply embedded in religious distinctions between people groups.

Arthur de Gobineau converted to Christianity from Hegelian atheism in 1843. A decade later, he produced his infamous *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, one of the earliest examples of scientific, biologically-based racism that divided the human species into three main groupings—white, yellow, and black—distinguishing the white Aryan race as the pinnacle of human development. Tocqueville believed Gobineau's stance on race to be morally incorrect as well as hypocritical from a religious standpoint. In a letter from January 1857, Tocqueville wrote to Gobineau,

> I admit that it was impossible for me to believe you had not perceived the difficulties in reconciling your learned (racial) theories with the letter and spirit of Christianity. Regarding the letter: what is more clear in Genesis than the unity of humanity and the origin of all from the same man? And regarding the spirit of Christianity: its distinctive trait is … making a human species in which all the members are equally capable of perfecting and gathering themselves. How can this notion…conciliate with the historical doctrine that makes distinct, unequal races?[45]

Tocqueville's belief in a religiously-based equality applied to his position on biological racism. In fact, he extended the idea of equality to *all* men in this passage, not simply those who professed a shared Christian heritage. While Tocqueville recognized that Gobineau's racist theories were prominent among Christians who benefited from the institution of slavery, specifically mentioning those in the southern United States, he believed that Christianity and racial equality were mutually

[45] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Correspondance entre Alexis de Tocqueville et Arthur de Gobineau, 1843-1859*, (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1908), 306-7.

reinforcing entities on a theoretical, idealized level.[46] Christian principles functioning in the temporal sphere should ideally have led to greater equality and freedom for all peoples regardless of race.

Opposed to the idea that men are naturally unequal, Tocqueville labeled Christian adherents of Gobineau's scientific doctrines hypocritical, even stating to Gobineau in 1857, "the reading of your book left me with doubts on the soundness of your faith … it is better to be a pagan with…clean hands than to be Christians in this manner."[477] However, Tocqueville used France's Christian identity to indicate a fundamental difference between peoples in the colonial context. Thus, when romantic notions of Christian equality encountered the political and social challenges of empire in the Tocqueville's writings, religion—in a similar manner to that of biological racism—functions to created insurmountable difference.

In Tocqueville's writings vis-à-vis Algeria, religion replaced race as the vital distinction between civilization and barbarism. Tocqueville stated, in an 1843 message to Gobineau,

> I studied the Koran a great deal, mainly because of our position vis-à-vis the Muslim population of Algeria … I must tell you that I came away from the study with the conviction that by and large, there have been few religions in the world as deadly to men as that of Mohammed. As far as I can see, it is the principal cause of the decadence so visible today in the Muslim world and, though it is less absurd than the polytheism of ancient times, its social and political tendencies are in my opinion infinitely more to be feared, and I therefore regard it as a form of decadence rather than a form of progress in relation to paganism itself.[48]

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[46] Tocqueville, *Correspondance entre Alexis de Tocqueville et Arthur de Gobineau*, 307.
[47] Tocqueville, *Correspondance entre Alexis de Tocqueville et Arthur de Gobineau*, 307.
[48] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Letter to Arthur de Gobineau 14 March 1843,* trans. Olivier Zunz and Alan S. Kahan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2002), 229.

Even though it was not the biological makeup of the Algerians that rendered them culturally inferior to the French, their religion usefully facilitated Tocqueville's construction of difference.

Even as Tocqueville condemned the biologically racist views of many practicing Christians—namely, those in the Southern United States—he readily invoked the fundamental disparities between "civilization" and "barbarism" that were rooted in France's non-confessional Christian identity as a tool for empire. However, while cultural racism could be overcome and, therefore, proved itself more in line with Tocqueville's liberal ideals, it nevertheless operated to create and underpin stark, incontrovertible difference in his works.

1.3.4 Christianity and the Racialization of Religion in French Algeria

Christian principles performed multiple functions in Tocqueville's writings: grounding democratic institutions, furthering arguments for emancipation, enabling French expansion, and reinforcing fundamental disparities between the French and Algerians. In these scenarios, Christianity contained the potential to bolster French social, political, and colonial life in the temporal sphere. As such, Tocqueville's writings on the French presence in Algeria in the 1840s, emphasizing religious difference rooted in France's Christian identity, employed religion to dehumanize the Muslims of Algeria, to reinforce the binary between colonizers and colonized, and to justify violent excess in the North African colony.

While there is an undeniable shift in the ways Tocqueville talked about Christianity between the 1830s and 1840s, Tocqueville's discussion of religion and religious difference also changed over the course of his interactions with the Algerian population. From the beginning of his political life, he placed French colonialism at the center of his agenda. During his first attempt to obtain a seat in the Chamber of Deputies in 1837, Tocqueville published two "Letters on Algeria," written after several years of studying the recently acquired North African colony. At this early stage in his exchanges with Algeria—having not yet been to the colony himself— Tocqueville held a firm conviction that the "amalgamation" of the two races—which he simplified to include only the Arabs and the French—was possible and desirable through both inter-marriage and gradual interaction.[49] Significantly, this eventual union would be achieved through initial religious toleration and legal pluralism.

After winning the seat for Valognes in 1839, Tocqueville conducted a detailed study of government reports on Algeria, finally travelling there himself in 1841.[50] As his encounters with the Muslims of Algeria became more frequent, France's connections to Christianity became more important and entrenched in Tocqueville's thinking. His shifting views were made manifest in his explicit invocation of a French

[49] Tocqueville was instrumental in propagating The "Kabyle Myth" (See Patricia Lorcin's *Imperial Identities" Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria,* published in 1995) which racially defined the Kabyles or Algerian Berbers as an ethnic group different from 'Arabs' and imputed to them qualities extolled by many French colonists in the nineteenth century (such as individualism, a sedentary lifestyle, and a commercial spirit) in contradistinction to the nomadic Arabs. However, Tocqueville's use of France's Christian identity was almost exclusively re- served for discussions regarding the Arabs due to the fact that their belligerency was seen essentially in terms of religion, while Kabyle hostility was considered to be primarily defensive and unconnected to Islam.

[50] Pitts, *Writings on Empire and Slavery, xx.*

Christian identity in his writings and signified an emerging racial component inherent in his conceptions of religious difference.

Because he did not actually step foot on North African soil until 1841, Tocqueville's ideas about empire were purely theoretical in his 1837 *Second Letter on Algeria.* His language in this letter indicates that he believed a "single people" would eventually emerge out of the interactions between the French and the Algerians. As such, he initially presented religious difference as a relatively insignificant impediment to the ensuing integration of the two peoples. He stated that "the majority of the Arabs preserve a lively faith in the religion of Muhammad; however, it is easy to see that in this portion of Muslim territory, as in all the others, religious beliefs are continually losing their vigor and becoming more and more powerless to battle the interests of this world."[51] Here, Tocqueville made a distinction between religious beliefs and the so-called interests of this world, setting them up as if locked in an ideological battle with each other in Algerian society. It hints that decreased interest in the Islamic religion in Algeria would ultimately prove to be beneficial to France. He continued,

> Although religion has played a large role in the wars that have been waged against us in Africa until now … religion was nothing but the secondary cause to which these wars must be attributed. We were attacked more as strangers and as conquerors than as Christians, and it is the ambition of the leaders more than the faith of the people that has led them to take up arms against us.[52]

Tocqueville's language implies that Algerian religion was not only fading in

[51] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Second Letter on Algeria,* ed. Jennifer Pitts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 25.
[52] Tocqueville, *Second Letter on Algeria*, 25.

importance; it was unquestionably being superseded by politics. However, the Algerians' religion, their customs, and their politics did not "make them incapable of yielding to a communal life" with the French.[53] Politics might have been the chief impediment to French-Algerian unification, but it was a conquerable obstacle.

As such, Tocqueville believed that politics, economics, and other "worldly matters" proved more amenable than religion to the blending of the French and Algerian peoples. Even so, while religion seems at first glance to be the decisive barrier between the French and Arabs from the Arabs' perspective(s), Tocqueville viewed Islam as a fluid, surmountable obstacle that the French might overcome at this early stage of colonization. "We may thus believe that if we prove more and more that Islam is in no danger under our domination or in our vicinity," he wrote, "religious passions will come to be extinguished and we shall have only political enemies in Africa…I have no doubt that they would adopt our style of life if we gave them a lasting interest in doing so."[54] As religious passions cooled amongst the Arabs, a union between the French and Algerians would become conceivable. Even as Tocqueville revealed his own distinctions between secular and religious politics in relation to Algeria, he divulged his belief that disparate cultures must focus on secular, worldly matters such as economics to achieve consolidation. Remaining hopeful, Tocqueville concluded the letter by affirming, "There is, then, no reason to believe that time will not succeed in amalgamating the two races. God is not stopping

[53] Tocqueville, *Second Letter on Algeria*, 25.
[54] Tocqueville, *Second Letter on Algeria*, 25-26.

it; only human deficiencies can stand in its way."[55]

As Tocqueville became more involved in France's Algerian endeavors, going there himself in 1841, he began to emphasize the importance of religious difference more openly. However, before he started discussing French and Algerian religious identities, he began to depict Algerian society in increasingly religious terms. In his *Notes on the Voyage to Algeria,* which he penned en route to the North African colony, Tocqueville stated that upon seeing Oran for the first time that "architecture depicts needs and mores: the architecture here does not merely result from the heat of the climate; it also … depicts the social and political state of the Muslim and oriental populations: polygamy, the sequestration of women. The absence of any public life, a tyrannical and suspicious government that forces one to conceal one's life."[56] While he was clearly fascinated by this new landscape, his interpretation of the architecture in light of the Algerians peoples' Islamic faith suggests a privileging of religious factors in his early firsthand assessments of Algerian society. After experiencing Algerian culture in person, Tocqueville, who had hitherto referred to the Algerians exclusively as "Arabs," starts referring to them as "Muslims," often making references to the "entire Muslim population" within his assessments.[57]

A far cry from his *Letters on Algeria* that spoke of the consolidation of the French and Algerian peoples, Tocqueville's 1841 *Essay on Algeria* draws explicit connections between French Christianity in direct opposition to Algerian Muslims.

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[55] Tocqueville, *Second Letter on Algeria*, 26.
[56] Tocqueville, *Notes on the Voyage to Algeria in 1841,* ed. Jennifer Pitt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 37.
[57] Tocqueville, *Notes on the Voyage to Algeria in 1841,* 49.

Because Tocqueville never mentioned religious conversion—and, why would he? — there is a non-confessional, civic value to Tocqueville's notion of a French Christian identity. This civic Christianity discursively excluded Muslim Algerians from enlightened Christian civilization and justified the French presence in Algeria by infusing ideas about religious difference with rhetoric emphasizing race. In his *Essay,* sounding at times reminiscent of his contemporary Chateaubriand, Tocqueville underscored the necessity of France's action in Algeria: "What we saw in Egypt has occurred in Algeria: it happens every time there is contact…between two races of which one is enlightened and the other ignorant, one progressing and the other declining … if we abandon Algiers, the country would probably pass directly under the rule of a Christian nation." He went on, "but even if Algiers were to fall back into the hands of Muslims ... it would enter into regular contact with the Christian nations and would be controlled by one of them. In a word, it is clear to me that … Africa has entered into the movement of the civilized world and will never leave it."[58] Tocqueville's aim in this frequently quoted passage was first and foremost to persuade the French to revive and continue their conquest of Algeria or risk losing their geopolitical significance. However, by associating France—and Europe more generally—with Christianity, civilization, and enlightenment and Algeria with Islam, ignorance, and decline, Tocqueville reinforced the idea of a religious and civilizational binary between colonizers and colonized. Tocqueville's former confidence in the eventual amalgamation of the two races had been supplanted by a nationalist fervor

[58] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Essay on Algeria*, ed. Jennifer Pitt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 60-61.

heightened by racially-tinged religious rhetoric.

Religion functioned in Tocqueville's works both to highlight the disparities between colonizers and colonized and to indicate the precariousness of France's empire vis-à-vis the other so-called civilized Christian nations. Tocqueville invoked France's Christianity to define an abstract Frenchness against a racially and religiously inferior Algerian population even as he underscored France's vulnerable position in the growing colonial competition among other Christian nation states. Tocqueville asserted that "to leave any important spot in the hands of the Arabs is to give the first Christian power that comes into conflict with us a place of security and refuge."[59] Such allusions to religious identity in his writings emphasized stark differences and undesirable resemblances to defend French action in Algeria on all fronts.

Moreover, Tocqueville's 1837 assertions that religious fervor was declining amongst the Algerians had been overturned by 1841. He stated in his *Essay*, "the Arab tribe's passions of religion and depredation always lead them to wage war on us…Christians…habitual war…is the natural taste of the populations that surround us. They grant power only to those who permit them to act on this taste."[60] Here, Tocqueville characterized the Algerians by their passions for fanatical religion, destruction, and war mongering against French Christians. As a result, the French had to respond with superior martial strength. Because the Algerians were "condemned by humanity and the law of nations," the French should have few scruples about the potentially vicious acts of military necessity in the North African colony.

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[59] Tocqueville, *Essay on Algeria,* 64.
[60] Tocqueville, *Essay on Algeria*, 63.

In the end of his *Essay on Algeria,* Tocqueville invoked religious difference to underline the fundamental incompatibility between the French and the Algerians. He stated, "the population of the colony being composed of…Muslims and Christians, we could not govern it in the same way that we can our homogenous societies…those who have been there (Algeria) know that unfortunately Muslim society and Christian society do not have a single tie…they form two bodies that are juxtaposed but completely separate."[61] He concluded by contending, "this state of things seems to become more so every day, and nothing can be done against it…the fusion of these two populations is a chimera that people dream of only when they have not been to these places…there can, therefore, and there must, be two distinctive legislative systems in Africa, because there are two very separate societies there."[62] These passages signify a dramatic shift in Tocqueville's language and approach to both French religious identity and his own conceptions of colonial policy. Not only did Tocqueville contend that amalgamation between the French and Algerian races was impossible, but by the early 1840s, religious identity also became the chief way to characterize the differences between the French and the Algerians.

In his *First Report on Algeria*, composed in 1847, Tocqueville unflinchingly asserted that "civilized and Christian society has been founded. Now our only task is to know under what laws it must live and what must be done to hasten its development." Ultimately, distinctions made between the two potentially cohesive "races" were superseded by distinctions between two mutually opposed religions, indicating that

[61] Tocqueville, *Essay on Algeria* 111.
[62] Tocqueville, *Essay on Algeria,* 111.

religion itself had become a chief means by which to indicate difference. This trend continued into the early twentieth century, by which time, according to Naomi Davidson in her work *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France,* "the French belief in Islam's domination of the Muslim's physical self was less a cultural argument than a biologized one."[63] For Tocqueville, Christian France's "domination over the indigenous peoples, its limits, its means, its principles" was of fundamental importance for the metropole.[64] Tocqueville would eventually come to regret some of his harsher stances on the Algerian question, stating in 1847 "Algeria will become, sooner or later, a closed field, a walled arena, where the two peoples will have to fight without mercy, and where one of the two must die. God save us gentlemen, from such a destiny! Let us not, in the middle of the nineteenth century, begin the history of the conquest of America all over again."[65] Nevertheless, his ideas which linked France with civil Christianity endured and came to characterize the later French imperial project more generally, a subject that will be explored in the later chapters of this dissertation.

1.4 Conclusion

Traditionally, France's most historically celebrated cultural fixtures, such as universal republicanism and its colonial manifestation, the *mission civilisatrice,* have

[63] Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 4.
[64] Alexis de Tocqueville, *First Report on Algeria*, ed. Jennifer Pitt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 130.
[65] Pitts, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, xxviii.

been characterized as predominantly secular entities with their ideological roots entrenched in the principles of the Revolution of 1789 and their concrete political and social origins embedded in the late nineteenth-century policies of the Third Republic.[66] However, by examining the role of religion within Tocqueville's writings, one can postulate that the genealogies of these celebrated institutions in French national mythology prove much more complicated than current scholarship suggests. Indisputably, late nineteenth-century conceptions of French universalism and the civilizing mission were influenced by secular, even antireligious, ideas promulgated during the French Revolution. Nevertheless, these perceptions were also significantly shaped by beliefs about religion held and espoused by public figures, particularly Tocqueville, during the French conquest and colonization of Algeria in the mid-nineteenth century.

A resolute supporter of the separation of church and state, Tocqueville paradoxically invoked France's intimate ties to Christianity in order to universalize France's project to free and elevate the enslaved and uncivilized—thus providing the ideological foundation for the impending *mission civilisatrice*—even as he drew upon France's Christian identity to contribute to the entrenchment of religious and cultural difference in French Algeria that would come to characterize France's imperial project at its zenith under the Third Republic. Reevaluating the ideological foundations of

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[66] See Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa 1895–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003); Patricia Tilburg, *Colette's Republic: Work, Gender, and Popular Culture in France 1870–1914* (New York: Berghahn, 2009).

French universalism and republican imperialism changes the ways that we comprehend the function of religion in France as well as its role in the construction of a French colonial identity. As one of the leading commentators on France's mid-nineteenth-century imperial undertakings and a central figure of modern political thought, Tocqueville's observations prove an effective lens by which to reevaluate religion's role in the makings of modern French institutions. Tocqueville's utilization of religion in his writings demonstrates that Christianity and its ideals proved a fundamental element in the making of modern Frenchness.

Ultimately, religion's disparate functions in Tocqueville's works of enable historians to observe how Christianity and its principles, operating in the temporal sphere, continued to shape French culture, politics, and identity in the nineteenth century. Whether it was undergirding democratic institutions, legitimizing Tocqueville's arguments for emancipation and French geopolitical advancement, or justifying violent colonial excesses, Christianity, far from retreating from mainstream politics and culture, continued to structure secular French society. Even though Tocqueville was not interested in Christianity's spiritual efficacy, at least in his political and mainstream writings, his invocation of France's Christian identity illuminates the fact that religion endured as a means by which to exercise power through the politics of difference. While Christianity had undoubtedly been used as a force to wield political power for centuries before the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, these events sparked a separation between Christianity as a spiritual entity and Christianity as a nineteenth-century secular tool by which to exercise political, cultural and social power. That is, the nineteenth century saw French political figures

and intellectuals--like Chateaubriand and Tocqueville—who occupied both sides of the religio-political divide begin to invoke France's Christian heritage and identity to accomplish political and colonial ends. By examining how religious discourse operated in Chateaubriand and Tocqueville's works, this chapter sheds new light on the secularization of religious discourse and religion's evolving role within nineteenth-century French society.

2.0 Chapter 2: "Racialized Religion? Ernest Renan, Arthur de Gobineau, and the Role of Christianity in the Construction of Modern Frenchness 1850-1885"

In March 1871, Versailles—once the formidable seat of France's monarchy and the beating heart of the *Ancien Regime*—became the de facto capital of a humiliated nation. Much had transpired in the eight months since France had declared war on the Germanic state of Prussia in July of 1870: Emperor Napoléon III of France had abdicated his imperial throne after capitulating the tattered remains of his army to the Prussians at Sedan; Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian prime minister, had declared his king, Wilhelm I, emperor of a united Germany; and the French had signed the Treaty of Frankfurt, which would eventually force them to cede Alsace and Lorraine—the border provinces which King Louis XIV had seized in 1697—to the victorious Germans. As France's provisional government established itself at Versailles, the newly elected legislature—which happened to be largely controlled by conservative nobility—had barely assembled before the population of Paris, led by several hundred armed battalions, declared the assembly illegitimate and created a governmental counterpart to Versailles known as the Paris Commune. As a result, French troops who had recently bled against the Prussians were reassembled to fight their fellow Frenchmen on the streets of Paris. Ultimately, the city was reconquered in May 1871, but severe damage had been done. As French governmental figures and the larger populace reflected on the destruction inflicted by both foreign and civil war, fears emerged over France's diminished position amongst the modern nations of Europe. And consequently, questions arose as to how France would regain its former dominance on the world stage.

In his monograph *For the Soul of France,* Patrick Brown asserts that after France's humiliating defeats in 1870-1871, science and supernatural intervention were the competing prescriptions for France's recovery.[1] One the one hand, prominent members of Napoléon III's left wing opposition felt that the events of 1870-1871 offered a chance for France to join the modern world: freed from the shackles of Bonapartism, French men and women had the opportunity to secularize civic institutions and thus place a heavier emphasis on science and material progress, as their German counterparts had done. Amongst this group was the renowned author, philologist, and politician Ernest Renan, who claimed in his 1871 work, *La réforme intellectuelle et moral*, "the victory of Germany was the victory of the disciplined man over the undisciplined man….it was the victory of science and reason."[2] For Renan, France had been too influenced by the powerful Catholic Church and its aversion to technological development, but it was his conviction that, "if France submits to the conditions of serious reform, it can very quickly resume its place in the European concert."[3] Renan's *La réforme intellectuelle et moral* corroborated the agenda of republican politicians who went on to found the French Third Republic and who aimed above all to regain French stature in Europe.[4]

On the other hand, certain segments of the French population believed that technological progress, scientific materialism, and worldly ambition were the source of France's maladies. This group—largely comprised of Catholics—believed that France had lost the war due to a lack of faith and that the French would find prominence again

[1] Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 4.
[2] Ernest Renan, *La réforme intellectuelle et moral*, (Paris: Michel-Lévy frères, 1871), 55.
[3] Ibid, 63.
[4] Brown, *For the Soul of France,* xxiv.

through a return of the French monarchy and a revival of France's manifest alliance with the Church. In other words, this group called for salvation, not enlightenment. Importantly, within this group, a subsection of nativists also emerged: those who argued for the "sacredness of soil, the virtue of roots, the infallibility of instinct, and the subversiveness of intellect."[5] While the aims of individuals who preached this nativist French gospel—such as Arthur de Gobineau—did not always overlap with the universal purview of the Catholic Church, both Catholics and nationalists believed that a return to the mythical, ancestral Frenchness of the past was France's only path into the future. In his work, *La Troisième République française et ce qu'elle vaut*, which was published posthumously in 1907, de Gobineau—who was discussed vis-à-vis Tocqueville in the previous chapter—argued that French Catholicism and monarchism were an integral part of the French racial being. After extensively citing the valiant efforts of the selfless French nobility in the Franco-Prussian War, Gobineau claimed, "it is because of this moral temperament, this often indistinct, irrational…feeling…that, despite the defects of France's monarchs, they reign in the hearts and imagination of the French countryside." This is because, for Gobineau, hierarchy and monarchy "bind the whole history of the country through flesh, blood, and spirit."[6] Here, Gobineau's visceral, nativist language underlined his belief that the mythical past provided sanctuary from the dangerous mobility of the modern world. Significantly, just as Renan's words influenced future progressive republicans, Gobineau's nativist convictions were carried into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by regressive nationalists like Édouard Drumont

[5] Ibid, xxv.
[6] Gobineau, *La Troisième République française et ce qu'elle vaut,* (Strassburg: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1907), 40.

and Maurice Barrés to substantiate their nefarious political agendas during the Dreyfus Affair.[7] These two widely-encompassing viewpoints—an emphasis on progress or on the past—would inform France's social, political, and cultural life in the last decades of the century, undeniably framing a bitter debate over the country's heart and soul.

However, even as the ideas of Ernest Renan and Arthur de Gobineau would come to influence opposing sides of the French cultural spectrum during the fin-de-siècle, this chapter contends that Renan and Gobineau shared a religio-cultural approach to "civilization" vis-à-vis the Islamic world. That is, while the role of religion in the French metropole seemed a key point of division between monarchical Catholics, such as Gobineau, and secularists, like Renan, both writers drew on France's cultural ties to a rational, temporally-minded Christianity to assert civilizational superiority when discussing the Islamic world and its Muslim practitioners. In much of the current historiography, Gobineau (seen briefly in the previous chapter) is described as a staunch Catholic and one of the first purveyors of biological racism in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines,* while Renan—though his legacy is admittedly much more complex—is often portrayed as a progressive secular liberal who had a more inclusive view of national belonging.[8] While these portrayals are not necessarily incorrect, they do not provide a complete representation of these two historical actors.

[7] Brown, *For the Soul of France,* 46.

[8] Renan's inclusive view of national belonging is more complex than this passage suggests. There were connections between nationality and race in some of his widely-published works, such as *La Reforme Intellectuelle et Morale.* For more on Renan's connections between nationalism and race, see A.E. Saaman, *From a "Race of Masters" to the "Master Race"* (Knoxville: Samaan Library Without Walls, LLC, 2020).

Renan is commonly known to posterity for his famous works, *Vie de Jésus*, which, controversially for the time, depicts Jesus not as divine, but merely human, and his 1882 lecture titled *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation,* which at its core suggests that the "nation," far from being intrinsic to soil or blood, is a social construct.[9] Current historiography is quick to muse over Renan's interesting life—a life in which he went from budding Catholic seminarian to passionate secularist—his seemingly inclusive approach to national belonging, and his complex political legacy.[10] However, Renan also penned several significant works and engaged in debates over the role of Islam in the late nineteenth-century world. These works, though lesser-known, portray a different side of Renan's thinking and approach to religion. Even as Renan championed the idea that religion should take a backseat when considering national identity in his more widely-cited works, like his *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation* lecture, he draws heavily on religious national identities vis-à-vis the Islamic world in his 1883 lecture titled, *Islam et Science,* and the ensuing debates with political activist and Islamic ideologist Jamal Al-Afghani that same year. The idea that religious national identities are somehow intrinsic is also found in Renan's university thesis *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique.* While *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* was penned at the very beginning of Renan's dynamic and variable career, there is thread of continuity between this work and his much later debates with Al-Afghani, suggesting that France's intrinsic ties to a "civilized," rational, and

[9] For additional information on Renan's nationalism, see: Paul Lawrence Rose, 'Renan versus Gobineau: Semitism and antisemitism, ancient races and modern liberal nations', History of European Ideas, 39 (2013), pg. 528-40.; Shlomo Sand, *On the Nation and the Jewish People* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2010); Halvor Moxnes, *Jesus and the rise of nationalism: a new quest for the nineteenth century historical Jesus* (London, 2012).

[10] Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Chapter 6.

racially-tinged Christianity vis-à-vis Islam continued to be deeply important to Renan throughout his life.

Gobineau and Renan each produced several works that dealt explicitly with the Islamic world of the nineteenth century. A lifelong orientalist, Gobineau's 1858 travelogue, *Trois ans en asie*, documents his tenure as a diplomat to Persia, and his 1876 work, *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* is comprised of a series of short stories set in Persia, Afghanistan, and other parts of Central Asia. In these works, Gobineau's Christian faith and belief in biological racism predictably inform his views of the Muslim inhabitants he encountered during his diplomatic travels across the Islamic world. Renan's works are a bit more incongruous with his secularist convictions. As mentioned above, Renan's thesis, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique,* his 1883 lecture at the Sorbonne, *Islam et Science,* and his subsequent debates with Al-Afghani all consider the role of religion in the world. In these works, the fiercely secular Renan draws heavily on national religious identity vis-à-vis the Islamic world, paradoxically emphasizing the superiority of France's rational Christian heritage and traditions against the alleged stagnant, fanatical Muslim Other. By putting Gobineau and Renan's works on Islam into conversation with each other, this chapter demonstrates that, as divisions raged at home after the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, the Islamic Orient continued to provide a space in which seemingly disparate individuals and groups within French society found common ground in a rational, secularizing Christian identity. Like the trends explored in the previous chapter, we see in the tumultuous last decades of the nineteenth century that France's Christian tradition was invoked by Catholics and secularists alike when discussing the peoples of the Islamic world. In fact, just like Tocqueville before him,

France's Christian heritage becomes fundamental to the secularist Renan when discussing Islam and its practitioners. This secular, Christian heritage would become vital to the French imperial project after the 1905 Law of Separation, thus challenging the way that we think about the evolving role of religion and secularization in France during the fin-de-siècle.

2.1 Gobineau, Renan, Racial Theory, and Nationalism: A Brief Historiography

After the Franco-Prussian War, Gobineau and Renan found themselves on opposing sides of the ever-widening cultural divide in France during the fin-de-siècle. However, the intellectual and material legacies of these two historical actors have proven much more complex than this simplistic dichotomy suggests. This section will explore these theoretical complexities as they appear in the current historiography on the development of nineteenth-century racial theory and nation-building. In so doing, it will contextualize the works of Gobineau and Renan—works that primarily pertain to Islam and its adherents—that will be explored in the later sections of this chapter.

While the historiography of French racial theory has traditionally depicted Gobineau as one of the first writers to codify biological racism, Renan has more often been shown as a liberal who detested the concept of biological racism and who harbored a more inclusive view of national belonging.[11] So, perhaps surprisingly, given the

[11] For additional information on the contradicting viewpoints of Renan and Gobineau, see: Paul Lawrence Rose, 'Renan versus Gobineau: Semitism and antisemitism, ancient races and modern liberal nations', *History of European Ideas*, no. 39 (2013): 528-40.; John Nale, "Arthur de Gobineau on Blood and Race," *Critical Philosophy of Race*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2014): 107-125.; Robert Priest, *The Gospel According to Renan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

contrasts presented above, historians of nineteenth-century attitudes towards race have, in recent decades, cited works by both Gobineau and Renan as they track the development of French racial theory. In her presidential address to the American Historical Society in January 2015, titled "*Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France,"* Jan Goldstein cites Gobineau's 1853 *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* and Renan's 1855 *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* as parallel examples of early racial theory in France. According to Goldstein, both works would go on to have material consequences: Gobineau's *Essai* was eventually integrated into Nazi ideology in Germany and Renan's *Histoire générale* was cited by the rabid anti-Semite Edouard Drumont to underpin his campaign against the French Jews—a campaign that would culminate in the Dreyfus Affair.[12] While Goldstein admits that Renan's thinking on race was a bit more complex, she argues that he nevertheless played a role in the construction of racial theory in France. Similarly, Richard McMahon's 2019 anthology, *National Races: Transnational Power Struggles in the Sciences and Politics of Human Diversity 1840-1945*, categorizes both Gobineau and Renan as nationalistic "race classifiers" in its introduction.[13]

The question presents itself: why have historians continued to challenge traditional views of the often-celebrated Renan, lopping him into the same unsavory categories as Gobineau regarding the development of racial theory? Chris Manias' 2013 work, *Race, Science, and the Nation: Reconstructing the Ancient Past in Britain, France,*

[12] Jan Goldstein "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-century France" (Presentation, American Historical Association Presidential Address, New York, NY, January 2, 2015), 3.
[13] Richard McMahon, *National Races: Transnational Power Struggles in the Sciences and Politics of Human Diversity 1840-1945* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 4-5.

and Germany, provides a concise answer. Manias argues that focusing on an extreme—and relatively marginal—character like Gobineau as an "exemplar of racial reasoning" in the development of nineteenth-century racial theory distorts the nuanced way in which "*Homo europeaus"* was "discursively constructed, culturally maintained, and secured."[14] In other words, the heritage of French and, more broadly, European racism was not confined to peripheral figures like Gobineau but was rather a mainstream, broad-based ideology disseminated by habitually celebrated thinkers such as Renan. Thus, Manias' work argues that, while historians have traditionally been wont to portray Gobineau as a "high profile racist" that propagated a biological, nativist theory of race and the more prominent figure of Renan as the "key liberal theorist of voluntarist nationality," Renan in fact utilized linguistic characteristics to construct a dichotomy between nations and races—markedly between Aryans and Semites.[15]

Notably, all the works cited above that discuss Renan's contradictory stance(s) on race hone in on his views of the Jews. This is chiefly because, as mentioned above, his earlier, academic works on Semitic languages were marshalled by the likes of the anti-Semitic Drumont against the French Jews during the Dreyfus Affair. [16] According to Rob Priest in his article "Ernest Renan's Race Problem," when historians have underlined Renan's support of biological racism, they usually substantiate their claims with these earlier works.[17] So, even as historians of race have persuasively underlined the damning connections between Renan's linguistic determinism and the Dreyfus Affair, they have

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[14] Chris Manias, *Race, Science, and the Nation: Reconstructing the Ancient Past in Britain, France, and Germany* (Oxford: Routledge Press, 2013), 38.
[15] Ibid, 39.
[16] Rob Priest "Ernest Renan's Race Problem," *The Historical Journal,* vol. 58, no. 1 (2015), 315.
[17] Ibid.

often neglected his larger *oeuvre* when thinking about his comprehensive views on race, religion, and national belonging.

Renan scholars typically claim that the onset of the Franco-Prussian War in summer of 1870 caused a volte-face in Renan's thinking about race and nationhood. A long-time admirer of Germany as well as a French patriot, Renan was aghast at the Prussian annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. In the fall of 1870, he began a public dialogue over the war with David Fredrich Strauss, whose book *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* greatly influenced Renan's own tome on the life of Jesus. Their professional relationship notwithstanding, Renan was horrified to hear Strauss defend the new German state's expansive borders.[18] In a famous phrase which asserted the preeminence of cultural identity over biological racism, Renan replied to Strauss, "ours is the politics of the rights of nations; yours is the politics of race. The division of humanity into races…can only lead to wars of extermination, to 'zoological' wars."[19] Notably, the cultural definition of nationhood developed in these letters ultimately came to maturity in his 1882 lecture "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?"* which will be explored in more detail in a later section.[20] So, despite his works published in the 1850s and 1860s that championed linguistic determinism, Renan, taken at his word, was an enemy of biological racism in the later part of his career. [21]

Nevertheless, while Renan's views on race and nationhood might have expanded to include the Jewish population of France by the 1880s, his writings on Islam during this

[18] Ibid, 313.
[19] Ernest Renan, Œuvres complètes, ed. Henriette Psichari (1 vols., Paris, 1947-61), pg. 456.
[20] Priest, "Renan's Race Problem," 314.
[21] Ibid, 315.

time show yet another troubling facet of Renan's thinking. Despite Renan's conviction that religion should not "serve to define the frontiers" of a people or nation by the 1880s, his writings on Islam present religion as a defining characteristic that fundamentally shaped the past and determined the future prospects of a nation.[22] This chapter will consider several of Renan's lesser-known works on the Islamic world: his 1883 lecture at the Sorbonne, *Islam et Science,* and his subsequent debates with Al-Afghani, as well as his thesis *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique*. I contend that in these works, Renan used religious identity—specifically, the contrast he believed existed between supposed Christian and Islamic nations—to construct a discourse of fundamental difference that functioned similarly to biological race.

The following two sections will survey works by Gobineau and Renan that discuss the peoples, governments, and various cultures of the Islamic world. Despite the differences in their respective stances on religion, race, and nationhood, both writers emphasized France's civilized, Christian tradition when discussing the Islamic nations and empires of the late nineteenth century. However, while Gobineau's views towards Islam are in keeping with his racially-driven nationalistic, Catholic viewpoint, Renan's emphasis on the Christian traditions of the French vis-à-vis Islam seem at odds with his later liberal secularism. How do we account for this inconsistency? As an explanation, this chapter will contend that that Renan's 1883 *Islam et Science* lecture at the Sorbonne and subsequent debates with Jamal Al-Afghani function in a similar way to Tocqueville's writings on Algeria 40 years prior. That is, while the anti-clerical Renan eschewed the

[22] Ernest Renan, "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation"* Conférence prononcée à la Sorbonne le 11 mars 1882.

biological racism of Gobineau after 1870, he nevertheless clung to a secularized, nonspiritual Christian identity vis-à-vis the peoples of the Islamic world.[23] Rather than fulfilling any kind of spiritual purpose, France's ties to Christianity function in Renan's 1883 lecture and debates with Al-Afghani to underline the cultural and intellectual superiority of the French nation-state, creating an entrenched dichotomy between Christianity and Islam—that is, between civilization and barbarism—that functioned tantamount to racial categorization.[24]

2.2 Gobineau and Islam

Arthur de Gobineau was a self-proclaimed French nobleman most famous for his 1853 pseudo-scientific *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, which is largely credited for being one of the first works to argue for the "permanent and indelible" superiority of the white race—particularly Aryan Germans—over the "yellow and black races."[25] His essay also famously contended that racial mixing was gradually weakening humanity's best racial stock, which was in turn bringing about the ultimate decline of civilization. [26] As touched on above, the famously Catholic, nationalistic Gobineau holds an unenviable position in the historiography of the development of nineteenth-century racial theory. Frequently described as anomalous, insignificant, and fantastical, Gobineau's theories of race have been classified as anti-science and outside the realm of any moral field by

[23] Rob Priest, "Renan's Race Problem," 315.
[24] Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 135.
[25] Goldstein, "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking," 11.
[26] Ibid.

notable contemporaries like Tocqueville as well as an overwhelming number of historians.[27] Regardless, Gobineau's *Essai* had grave material consequences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: namely, it underpinned the combative Pan-Germanism of the Second Reich between 1870 and 1914, and it was finally integrated into Nazi ideology under the Third Reich, paving the way for the eventual genocide of the European Jews.[28]

However, while Gobineau is most widely known for his *Essai* and its contributions to racial theory, Gobineau also penned several works on the Islamic world in the latter half of the nineteenth century. These lesser-known works, his 1858 travelogue titled *Trois ans en Asie*, and his 1876 literary work, *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* catalogue his time spent amongst the Muslim populations of Persia, Afghanistan, Egypt, and other countries across Central Asia. While these works do not challenge the current view of Gobineau—they are predictably racist and ascribe to ideas of nationalistic determinism—they do shed light on Gobineau's conceptions of religion and its relationship to race—a less-studied facet of his thinking. Gobineau's language in these works, specifically, the assertion of his own French Christian identity vis-à-vis the Muslims of the Islamic world, demonstrate that his own conceptions of religion were not

[27] While Gobineau was indeed marginal for the French right, he was deeply influential (by way of the Bayreuth Circle) on the German far right, including ultimately, Hitler. For more, see George L. Mosse's *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1978). For additional information on Gobineau's portrayal within French historiography, see Chris Manias, *Race, Science, and the Nation: Reconstructing the Ancient Past in Britain, France, and Germany* (Oxford: Routledge Press, 2013); Richard McMahon, *National Races: Transnational Power Struggles in the Sciences and Politics of Human Diversity 1840-1945* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2019); Jan Goldstein "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-century France"(Presentation, American Historical Association Presidential Address, New York, NY, January 2, 2015).

[28] Goldstein, "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking," 2.

limited to Catholic rituals or dogma. Even though Gobineau claimed that Christianity did not necessarily bestow civilization on its practitioners—a facet of his *Essai* that is explored below—it certainly functioned as an indicator of his and his French comrades' racial and civilizational superiority. Again, Gobineau's views are hardly surprising. Rather, they are noteworthy because his views on Islam share many assumptions with Renan's 1883 *Islam et Science* lecture and subsequent debates with Al-Afghani. As such, this section will function as both a work of intellectual history—it will explore the role of religion in Gobineau's pseudo-scientific conceptions of race—and it will provide a foil to the more important arguments of this chapter: beyond simply occupying seats on opposing sides of the French culture wars, the Catholic Gobineau and the secularist Renan shared a discourse of civilizational superiority regarding the Islamic world that was rooted in an increasingly secularized French, Christian identity.

Before examining *Trois ans en asie* and *Nouvelles Asiatiques,* however, it is critical to first examine Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité* and how Christianity related to his theories on race within this work. While the *Essai* is most often cited for its theories of racial hierarchy, Gobineau also wrote extensively about his views on Christianity and its influences—or lack thereof—on race and civilization. In chapter seven of his *Essai,* Gobineau espoused that most human races were "forever incapable of civilization." Often describing these so-called "lesser races" as "congenitally barren," Gobineau claimed that no external force—be it religion or the civilizing presence of European colonizers—could provide the impulse needed to turn this alleged cultural barrenness to fertility.[29] Because

[29] Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Librarie de Firmin-Didot, 1884), 63.

of the civilizational stagnation that supposedly plagued most of the world's population, the Catholic Gobineau poses the question: "here we shall be asked, no doubt, whether the light of Christianity is to shine in vain on entire nations, and whether some people are doomed never to behold it at all?"[30] In other words, were the "uncivilized" lower races incapable of accepting the religion of civilized Europe? In one sense, no. Gobineau subsequently asserts in this passage that all human races are gifted with an equal capacity for being "received into the bosom of the Christian communion." According to Gobineau, Christians exist in all climates and latitudes regardless of their race or (lack of) culture.[31] However, it is a mistake to confuse the "universal power" of accepting Christianity with the "very different faculty that leads one human race, and not another, to understand the earthly conditions of social improvement, and to be able to pass from one rung of the ladder to another, to reach finally the state which we call civilization. The rungs of this ladder are the measure of the inequality of human races."[32] While Gobineau believed that anyone might accept the precepts of Christianity, the religion itself did not indicate a capacity for advanced civilization or worldly progress.

Gobineau believed that Christianity had positive effects on a culture: it supposedly strengthened social ties, condemned violence, and, importantly, it "forced men to appeal to reason…and elevated the mind."[33] That is why Gobineau confidently asserted that "we are right in calling Christianity a civilizing power," but, only within certain limits. This is because Christianity did not belong exclusively to one civilization

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid, 64.
[33] Ibid.

or people—it was addressed to the whole world and, as such, it leaves "all men as it finds them—the Chinese in his robes, the Eskimo in his furs, the first eating rice, and the second eating whale blubber."[34] So, even if all races were equally capable of receiving the spiritual benefits of Christianity, Gobineau firmly stressed that "it cannot have been sent to bring equality among men. Its kingdom, we may say, is in the most literal sense 'not of this world.'"[35] These passages reveal several important aspects of Gobineau's thinking. There is a clear connection between Christianity, higher reasoning skills, and civilization in Gobineau's assessments. According to Gobineau, Christianity forces people to use reason, it elevates the mind, and has the potential to be a civilizing power. However, Christianity appears to only have these rather worldly effects on the one race that is predisposed to be rational and civilized: the white Europeans. The other "races" mentioned in this passage are described in simplistic tropes and, regardless of any creed or practice, they are clearly excluded from the civilizing benefits of Christianity. Christianity does not bring racial equality in this world, merely salvation in the next. Gobineau concluded, "you may search through all the pages of history, and you will not find a single people that has attained to European civilization by adopting Christianity, or has been brought by the great fact of its conversion to civilize itself when it was not civilized already."[36] In one fell swoop of his pen, Gobineau emphasizes the moral and intellectual superiority of "Christian" civilization—that is, modern European civilization—while underpinning his theory of racial hierarchy and entrenched civilizational inequality.

[34] Ibid, 64-65.
[35] Ibid, 70.
[36] Ibid, 74.

Gobineau's notion of a superior Christian civilization—rooted in his theories of race—is most stark in his works that deal with the Islamic world. In *Trois ans en Asie* and *Nouvelles Asiatique,* Gobineau conflates the idea of Christian civilization with modern, rational European civilization. Again, as a practicing Catholic, Gobineau's tendency to see the world through a lens of religion isn't necessarily surprising, but his works nevertheless contribute to an overarching trend in which both Catholics and secularists identified Christianity with reason and material progress and Islam with backwardness, fanaticism, and stagnation, an overarching trend that this dissertation identifies as the secularization of a French Christian identity.

In 1855, Gobineau was selected for the role of secretary on a diplomatic mission to Persia. During his three-year tenure as secretary, Gobineau traveled throughout Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other various locations throughout central Asia. In 1859, he published *Trois an en Asie*, a travelogue that documented the landscapes, cultures and peoples he encountered on his travels. Throughout the pages of *Trois an en Asie,* Gobineau portrays the Islamic world—and the Muslims he encountered—as irrational and fanatical. In contrast, he characterizes the French—who are portrayed as reasonable and controlled—as Christians. In his account of Saudi Arabia, Gobineau describes an event in which his company of fellow French travelers enters the sacred spaces of the Islamic holy city of Mecca. Fully aware that this was a revered place for "Muslim devotees" upon whom the "spirit of Islam called for absolute attention," Gobineau and company nevertheless decide to approach a holy doorway into a mosque, believing that they had license to do so as European Christians. Gobineau claims that, despite their status as infidels, nothing untoward happened to the party as they moved through the consecrated space, except for

a small stone being thrown at one of their group by either an "upset fanatic…or a small, mischievous child."[37] Even as he depicts the Muslims he encountered as generally harmless, Gobineau utilizes religious difference to defend his party's own rights and status as Christians—they are not bound by any religious rules—and to simultaneously undermine the Muslims' reasoning skills, going as far as to equate the actions of an upset "fanatic" with a small child.

Later in the journey, Gobineau's group arrived in Jeddah, another important destination for Muslim pilgrims in Saudi Arabia. The population of Jeddah, according to Gobineau, didn't like Europeans entering the city. This was primarily because the Europeans' status as Christian infidels diminished "the character of holiness within the towns of the Prophet." In other words, Europeans posed a threat to Jeddah's status as a sacred site of Islam and, ultimately, the alms pilgrims would offer at the mosque. Nevertheless, Gobineau and his party entered and began conversing with the inhabitants. Amongst these conversations, Gobineau records one of interest to him. The week prior, an Algerian subject—who was himself a Muslim—had been on pilgrimage to Jeddah and praying in the mosque. At noon, the pilgrim was stabbed by another Muslim because "he had come from a French country."[38] Gobineau recorded that for that "crime" alone, his orthodoxy was suspect. Gobineau then claimed that the orthodoxy of all French Muslims—that is, Muslims from the French colonies—had begun to be called into question. This is because, according to the work, "often, soldiers—true French, born in France, Christians—slip amongst the pilgrims who come from our African possessions.

[37] Arthur de Gobineau, *Trois an en Asie* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1923), **72-73.**
[38] Ibid, 76.

These soldiers either love adventure or are simply bored." As such, "they would accompany a Muslim comrade on pilgrimage ."[39] Gobineau claimed that he initially doubted the veracity if this story, but ultimately was "convinced that it was very real and that these daring characters are not extremely difficult to meet. They put on the Hiram just like the other pilgrims, perform the legal ceremonies, and ravage the black stone."[40] The story recounted in this rather bizarre passage reveals the indirect discord that had been produced across the Islamic world by French colonization of Algeria. However, it is Gobineau's language—particularly his religious characterization of the Muslims and Christians—that concerns us here. In this passage, the "true French…Christians" are described as daring, adventure-loving soldiers, and, for all their disrespect, portrayed as forgivable rogues. The Muslims, on the other hand, shown to be prone to religious violence and suspicious of unorthodox behavior. Within Gobineau's dichotomy, Christians have the capacity for worldly pursuits and adventures, while Muslims are defined in every sense by their religion.

Trois an en Asie also documents Gobineau's travels to Egypt and his interactions with the inhabitants of Suez and Cairo. The first interaction of note occurred in Suez. In Gobineau's recounting, he and his company had arrived in the seaport city and spent the afternoon shopping and chatting with the local population. He then describes a "pleasurable experience" that constituted him watching an interesting religious ceremony to celebrate the day of the Prophet's birth.[41] In the ceremony, the town sheriff entered the mosque on horseback by making the horse walk on the body of about forty "devotees"

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Gobineau, *Trois an en Asie,* 43-44.

lying in dust. Gobineau claims that not all of these devotees were willing participants: he recounts that one "zealot" tried to get up before his turn came to be walked over, but he was forced to remain in the dust.[42] As one might imagine, Gobineau claims that the episode was long and difficult for the participants. At the front of the procession was a "violently overexcited" man whose "head was upside down, his eyes white" and who "seemed to utter words without meaning" being dragged along by two other men.[43] Gobineau finished his recollection of the experience by claiming that, in the past, Muslims liked to see Christians at these kinds of shows. That's because they found such scenes edifying and thought that it could result in conversions to Islam. However, Gobineau claims that this had changed in recent years. He stated, "several of the spectators were watching us with an evil eye, and one asked loudly what the infidels were doing there." He explains that this is because, "without a doubt, Muslims will have experienced that most of those whom they had once hoped to convince by such wonders were more inclined to sarcasm than to devotion."[44] Gobineau's description of this ceremony paints a strong image in the mind of his reader. His descriptions of these Muslims, prostrate in the dirt and being trodden upon—coupled with the image of the man having a religious fit—stand in silent contrast to his own rational self-possession as he explicitly identifies himself as a Christian. He continues to drive home these entrenched differences by explaining that Muslims had all but given up trying to convert the Christians due to the "sarcasm" with which the Christians watched such ceremonies.

[42] Ibid, 44.
[43] Ibid, 44.
[44] Ibid, 44.

Again, we see the idea that Christianity represents rationality and self-control vis-à-vis supposed Islamic zealots.

Gobineau's journey through Egypt also took him to Cairo. In the town square of the ancient city, Gobineau and his party of Christians came upon a lecture being given on the Koran. Gobineau observes this lecture, pointing out that most of the students were "grown men rather than adolescents" who were content with "down-to-earth" lessons rather than lectures on science. This was because "learned masters are rare because Egypt is no longer the classic land of Muslim science." Gobineau asserts, "we must also admit that it has never contributed very much in the way of science."[45] Nevertheless, Gobineau patronizingly recalls the talk given by the "little professor" who had a pointed nose and a green turban and was "crouching at the foot of a column…presenting to twenty students dazed with attention, necks tense, eyes fixed and mouths open, teaching on a passage of the Koran."[46] He continues, "he was waving with his right hand and had eyes bright with scientific conviction. I would have liked to make him happy to believe what he said."[47] This passage is particularly interesting for several reasons. First, it underlines the racially-tinged religious dichotomy between Christians and Muslims that Gobineau so frequently alludes to. By pointing out that the students of the Koran were grown men, rather than adolescents, learning from a "crouching" professor, Gobineau—again, the self-proclaimed French, Christian academic—paints a picture of a group of Muslims past their prime attempting to hold a mock university lecture. Second, this passage underlines a connection between Christianity and rationality in Gobineau's thinking. A logical

[45] Ibid, 29.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

approach to the material world—a quality that, for Gobineau, was indicative of enlightened, western rationality—seems to have eluded both the Islamic professor and his pupils in this text. In fact, Gobineau goes as far as to deride the allegedly rudimentary "scientific conviction" that seemed to consume the professor. Standing in contrast, Gobineau and his designated "Christian" comrades presumably knew the difference between myth and modern learning—a characteristic possessed by the French Christians but not by the Egyptian Muslims described in this passage.

Drawing upon similar concepts, Gobineau's 1876 work *Nouvelles Asiatique* contains six fictional short stories that exhibit Gobineau's theories on race in tales about people from Persia, Afghanistan, and other parts of the Islamic world. Particularly, the novel proliferates the idea that the character of a group of people is determined by race.[48] Amidst this larger theme, *Nouvelles Asiatique* also contains the idea that Christianity is inextricably tied to European racial superiority, specifically when it rubbed shoulders with practitioners of Islam. One such example can be found in the short story *La Danseuse de Shamakha*. While this story is primarily a trope about the dangers of miscegenation, Gobineau nevertheless incorporates the idea that the superior race subscribes to Christianity. Gobineau mused, "it's worth remembering that in the accounts of the Crusades, there are always tales of a generous emir, a brave Bedouin, or, at the very least, of a faithful slave attaching his fate to that of a Christian knight. On occasion, this subaltern willingly sacrifices himself in the interest of his master."[49] Despite the

[48] Robert Irwin, "Gobineau the Would be Orientalist," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* vol. 26 no. 1-2, January 2016, pp. 321-332.
[49] Arthur de Gobineau, *Nouvelles Asiatiques* (Paris: Librairie Académique, 1876), 45.

traces of whimsy that surround the idea of the loyal and faithful subaltern Muslim, Gobineau constructs a master/slave dichotomy rooted in religious and racial identity.

Containing themes that echo those in *La Danseuse de Shamakha,* Gobineau's short story *La vie de voyage*—also found in *Nouvelles Asiatique*—focuses on the incompatibility between eastern and western cultures and, ultimately, between Christianity and Islam. Describing one of the characters in the story—the Pacha of Erzeroum—Gobineau outlined the fact that the Pacha was a relatively worldly man. However, even as Gobineau praises what he considers the Pacha's more distinguished qualities, he also reveals his conviction that being a Christian was akin to being civilized and racially superior. Gobineau described the Pacha, "he was good company, not much of a Muslim, but, on the other hand, certainly not a Christian; he had little confidence in the future of his government and his country; he believed little in merit…but he strongly believed that it was necessary to make his personal position the best possible." By Gobineau's description, while the Pacha was allegedly "not much of a Muslim" because he strove to enhance his position in the world, he undoubtedly lacked the essential qualities that might allow him to partake in Christian civilization. Gobineau puts it succinctly in the next line: "his European habits had not stifled his Asian instincts."[50] Here, we see Gobineau put forth a distinctly secular conceptualization of Christianity. In the descriptions of the Pacha, the moniker "Christian" functions as a stand-in for European habits and civilization, while "Muslim" is synonymous with allegedly fatalistic, "Asian instincts."

[50] Ibid, 324.

Throughout this discussion of *Trois an en Asie* and *Nouvelles Asiatique,* Gobineau's propensity to view the world through a religious, hierarchical, and racial lens has hardly proven surprising. The language that Gobineau uses to describe the Islamic world in the latter half of the nineteenth century are in keeping with the infamous monarchical, Catholic, and racist viewpoints he held throughout his life. However, this section has shown that Gobineau's ideas about Christianity are more complex than a superficial reading might suggest. A close examination of Gobineau's writings on race and the Islamic world show a distinctly secularized Christianity—a Christianity that is synonymous with racial superiority, a logical, scientific approach towards knowledge, and a separation between the spiritual and the material. Most significantly, this secularized Christianity becomes of paramount importance when discussing the alleged backwardness of the Islamic world. Yet, while interesting on their own, Gobineau's ideas take on a heightened significance when juxtaposed with the ideas put forth by the secular liberal Ernest Renan in the 1880s.

Despite the historiographical argument that the famously anti-clerical Renan adopted a more liberal view towards race and national belonging after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the next section will examine Renan's propensity to draw upon France's Christian identity when discussing the peoples of the Islamic world. Echoing the language and categorization of Gobineau examined above, Renan's *Islam et Science* lecture and his subsequent debates with Jamal al-Afghani argued that Christianity, standing in stark contrast to Islam, had not stifled science, philosophy, or civilization, except in very rare instances. Rather, Christianity had ultimately allowed secular, temporal civilization to flourish. The following passages demonstrate that, while Renan's

views on race and national belonging might have become increasingly liberal in a European context, Renan continued to draw heavily on a religious dichotomy between Christianity and Islam—that is, rationality, science, and civilization, on the one hand, and fanaticism and superstition on the other—when discussing the Muslim peoples of the Islamic world.

2.3 Renan, Al-Afghani, and the Racialization of French Christianity

Ernest Renan was born in 1823 in Tréguir, France into a respectable, but poor, Catholic family. Renan had a highly-developed intelligence that presented itself at an early age and caught the attention of the local clergy. Winning scholarships to the best schools in Paris in his youth, Renan subsequently entered the prestigious seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where all his mentors and peers believed he would enter the priesthood. But it was not to be. In a dramatic turn of events, Renan had a crisis of faith, left the Church, and embraced the thoroughly secular discipline of philology.[51] Renan's early pursuit of philology—specifically his analyses of the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament—would lead him to develop his controversial ideas on linguistic determinism that allegedly separated the Aryan and Semitic races. Of course, as stated earlier in the chapter, these ideas would be championed by the far right during the Dreyfus Affair in the 1890s, effectively challenging Renan's later, more famous writings that advocated a liberal approach to race and nationalism. This complicated legacy has been the source of fierce scholarly debate. In the decades since the linguistic and cultural turns, some of the

[51] Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self,* 254-260.

most notable historians in the field have attempted to pinpoint Renan's stances on race and national belonging, with two camps coalescing around two supposedly different Renans. Within the first camp, though their conclusions have varied widely, historians and literary theorists such as Léon Poliakov, Edward Said, Maurice Olender, Tzvetan Todorov, Jan Goldstein, Zeev Sternhell, and Chris Manias all point to the idea that Renan was an emblematic figure in the canon on linguistic racism and was fundamental to the propagation of ethnic determinism in nineteenth-century France.[52] Within the second camp, scholars such as Laudyce Rétat, Perinne Simon-Nahum, Halvor Moxnes, Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, Paul Lawrence Rose, and Rob Priest generally assert—with varying degrees of nuance—that Renan's views on race and determinism dramatically changed after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Horrified by the events of the war, Renan moved away from racial language starting in the 1870s and his complex and important legacy should not be narrowly defined by his earlier writings.[53]

Much is at stake with these historiographical debates. As one of the preeminent French scholars of the late nineteenth-century, Renan's ideas echoed widely throughout France, Europe, and the larger world.[54] Specifically, Renan's views on race, determinism,

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[52] For additional detail on these works, see: Leon Polikav, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (New York: Basic Books Publishing, 1974).; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1979).; Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (London: Robert Harper Books, 1992).; Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).; Zeev Sternhill, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[53] For additional detail on these works, see: Laudyce Rétat, "A propos du prétendu racisme de Renan," *L'Histoire*, 216 (December 1997); Laudyce Rétat, 'Quand Renan dénonçait les "crimes contre l'humanité,"' *Commentaire, vol. 89* (2000) pp. 131-9; 'Interview Perrine Simon-Nahum: "Renan n'est pas un conservateur,"' *Le Point* (July 29, 2010); Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, *Renan, la Bible, et les juifs* (Paris: Arléa, 2008).

[54] Hanssen and Weiss, *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age*, 135.

and nationalism played a significant role in French public discourse during a period when racial theory and ideas about national belonging were crystalizing.[55] Since the forces of race and nationalism continue to have a material impact on the world in the twenty-first century, it is no surprise that Renan and his writings continue to spark discussion. However, as stated earlier in the chapter, while the overwhelming majority of the current historiography focuses on Renan's philological writings and, thus, his views on European Jews, few scholars have focused on Renan's works that address his views towards Islam. This lacuna in the historiography limits our understanding of Renan's intellectual evolution in general, but it also masks the important role that his ideas played in the secularization of French Christianity—a process that took place over the course of the nineteenth century. So, while this section upholds the idea that the anti-clerical Renan might have rejected Gobineau's biologically-based racial theories and adopted a more liberal approach to national belonging in a European context after 1870, he nevertheless continued to foster the idea of a secular, nationalistic, and even racially-charged Christianity vis-à-vis the peoples of the Islamic world.[56]

Before diving into *Islam et Science* and the subsequent debates, however, it is important to examine the lecture that solidified Renan's legendary status as the "liberal advocate of voluntarist nationality."[57] Without question Renan's most widely-cited work, his 1882 discourse titled *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation* challenged the prominent nativist idea that the nation was something intrinsic or based on race or ethnicity, asserting instead that

[55] Monica M. Ringer and A. Holly Shissler, "The Al-Afghani-Renan Debate, Reconsidered," *Iran Nameh*, 30:3 (Fall 2015), XXXII.
[56] Rob Priest, "Renan's Race Problem," 315.
[57] Manias, *Race, Science, and the Nation,* 38.

the nation was defined by the desire of a people to live and work together.[58] Within this rather lengthy discourse, Renan addressed the role religion played—or, more accurately, didn't play—in the construction of national identities in the late nineteenth century. Renan stated:

> In our own time, the situation is perfectly clear. There are no longer masses that believe in a perfectly uniform manner. Each person believes and practices in his own fashion what he is able to and as he wishes. There is no longer a state religion; one can be French, English, or German, and be either Catholic, Protestant, or orthodox Jewish, or else practice no religion at all. Religion has become an individual matter; it concerns the conscience of each person. The division of nations into Catholics and Protestants no longer exists…Religion…preserves all of its [former] importance in the inner tribunal of each; but it has ceased almost entirely to be one of the elements which serve to define the frontiers of people.[59]

In this passage, we see Renan claim that religion no longer played a defining role in the composition of modern nations. Due to a lack of religious homogeneity in the pluralistic world of the late nineteenth century, nations could no longer be demarcated or characterized by any particular religious persuasion. For Renan, religion would retain its importance on an individual level, but the concept of a "Catholic," "Protestant," or, the logic would follow, "Christian" nation no longer retained any sacred or elemental implications. However, despite these assertions in *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation*, Renan's lectures and writings that focused on the Islamic world during this same period continued to utilize the dichotomy between Christian and Islamic nations writ large. It is to these paradoxes in Renan's *oeuvre* that we will now turn.

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[58] For more on this idea, see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[59] Ernest Renan, "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation"* Conférence prononcée à la Sorbonne le 11 mars 1882.

Renan delivered his lecture, *Islam et Science*, at the Sorbonne on March 29, 1883. Before a crowd of academics and public intellectuals, the liberal Renan contended that the "Muslim countries" of the late nineteenth-century had "an iron band" around their proverbial brows that stifled free-thinking, scientific progress, and rationality.[60] It was this "iron band" of fanaticism, radicalism, and irrationality that explained the Islamic societies' supposed backwardness vis-à-vis the nations of "Christendom."[61] There are several ways that scholars have analyzed this infamous speech and Renan's ensuing debates with the dynamic Muslim scholar Jamal Al-Afghani. Monica Ringer and Holly Schissler explore Al-Afghani's refutation of Renan's thesis and contend that Renan and Al-Afghani, despite their diverse backgrounds and Renan's disappointing assertions, shared conceptions of science and the scientific method. By looking at the role religion played in both thinkers' conceptions of modernity and science, Ringer and Schissler conclude that Muslim modernists, as seen through the example of Al-Afghani, were sincerely committed to the relevance of Islam in the modern world.[62] Similarly, Irfan Habib contends that these debates shine a light on the critical role scientific approaches to knowledge production played in the construction of a distinctly "Islamic modernity."[63] Pankaj Mishra highlights the exchanges between Renan and Al-Afghani for the important fact that they constituted the first major public debate between a Muslim and a European intellectual.[64] Taking a slightly different approach to these texts, Cemil Aydin contends

[60] Ernest Renan, "*Islam et Science"* (Lecture at the Sorbonne, Paris, March 29, 1883).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ringer and Shissler, "The Al-Afghani Debate: Reconsidered," XLV.
[63] See: Irfan Habib, *Jihad or Ijtihad: Religious Orthodoxy and Modern Science in Contemporary Islam* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 2012).
[64] See: Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*: *The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2013).

that Al-Afghani's response to Renan was insufficient and failed to demonstrate an alternative framework to the Eurocentric concepts of time and civilization put forth by Renan. In other words, Al-Afghani accepted Renan's false premise that European superiority was based on science and reason—rather than on the economic and military might that was derived from the Atlantic slave trade.[65]

While the overwhelming majority of the historiography on these debates focuses on Al-Afghani's response to Renan's polemical assertions—thereby filling a critical gap in the historiography of modern Islam—this section will instead concentrate on how Renan's lecture and his responses to Al-Afghani contributed to the complex process of secularization in fin-de-siècle France. That is, even as the secularist Renan claimed religion no longer served to "define the frontiers of people" by the late nineteenth century, his language in these debates utilizes sweeping religious generalizations to underline the material and civilizational progress that had been made by France and the other nations of Europe in the nineteenth century. To make sense of this apparent inconsistency, I contend that Renan's participation in these debates demonstrates his own reconceptualization and re-propagation of religion's role in the public sphere. Instead of a reference to a shared approach to belief, dogma, or ritual, Renan utilizes the label "Christian" to indicate a nation or group defined by rationality, scientific progress, and, ultimately, race, while the label "Muslim" indicates an intellectually stifled, irrational person or society. Despite his supposedly altered views on race beginning in the 1870s, the entrenched religious dichotomy put forth by Renan in these texts functioned

[65] Cemil Aydin, "The Emergence of Transnational Muslim Thought, 1774-1914," in *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age,* ed. Jans Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), 33.

comparably to biological racism and facilitated the construction of Muslims as a race within French public discourse during the fin-de-siècle. [66]

Renan's intellectual career spanned an acutely unsettling period within France. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, religion, religious dogma, sacred rituals, and formerly sacrosanct texts were analyzed—oftentimes by Renan himself—and challenged by new ideas prioritizing "scientific truth" and positivist methodology. As a result, attempts to resolve the apparent conflicts between religion, science, and the history of human civilization took multiple forms.[67] Renan, influenced by positivism and concepts of religious evolution, utilized the scientific method over the course of his variable career to attack the dogma and traditions of orthodox Catholicism, asserting instead that Christianity—functioning in the world as an "utterly non-dogmatic principle"—was the pinnacle of religion writ large.[68] In other words, while Renan believed the societal function of religion was important, religious conviction or belief was not. Christianity, devoid of dogma or even a hint of the supernatural, uniquely provided the intellectual and moral flexibility French society needed to evolve into the next stage of an ever-advancing civilization.[69] For Renan, this secularized manifestation of Christianity within French society had the dual function of underpinning the moral fabric of the populace while also allowing science to flourish.

However, while innocuous on a theoretical level, Renan's ideas that tout the exceptionality of a secularized Christianity in the French context manifest to produce a

[66] Ibid, 135.
[67] Ringer and Shissler, "The Al-Afghani Debate: Reconsidered," XLV
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

discourse of intrinsic, elemental difference between Christians and Muslims in *Islam et science* and his responses to Al-Afghani. Polemically asserting at the beginning of his lecture that, the "fanatical…Muslim has the deepest contempt for education, for science, for all that constitutes the European spirit," Renan mused why the Islamic world—once the "mistress of the Christian west," and whose intellectual culture was once "superior to Christendom" had experienced such an intellectual decline in the modern world.[70] The answer, for Renan, lay in the religious and cultural history of the Islamic world. He subsequently weaves a quick tale of Islamic history, arguing that "as long as Islam was in the hands of the Arab race," that is, under the first four caliphs and under the Umayyad Caliphate, there was "no intellectual movement of a secular character."[71] However, after the Arabs of the Umayyad Caliphate conquered the Sassanian Persians—and after the Abbasid dynasty conquered the Umayyads—the center of Islam was transported to Baghdad. This is the moment when Islamic civilization reached its zenith. But there was a specific reason for this civilizational ascent. According to Renan, the Persians possessed one of the most brilliant civilizations the Orient had ever known before the Islamic conquest. Renan cited their formidable achievements in art, industry and philosophy. However, it is critical to note that not all Persians had contributed equally to this grand civilization. Rather, Renan claimed that Persia's ancient successes were due to the labors of the Nestorian Christians who lived within the empire. The Nestorian Christians "formed the most considerable element of their population, were versed in Greek science and philosophy; medicine was entirely in their hands; their bishops were

[70] Ernest Renan, "*Islam et Science,*" (Lecture at the Sorbonne, Paris, March 29,1883).
[71] Ibid.

logicians and geometers."[72] In other words, the Sassanid empire was built by the rational, logical Christians who lived there.

After the Islamic conquest, Baghdad rose as the capital of what Renan called the "Persian Renaissance" under the Abbasid and Samanid dynasties. And, while some Persians adopted the religion of the conquest—Islam—it was allegedly the native Persians and the Christians who prevailed in this new, mixed society of Arabs, Persians, and Christians. Renan, echoing the language of Gobineau, even claimed that all the brilliant, successful caliphs of this period were "barely Muslims." Even as they externally practiced the religion they led, Renan claimed that the minds of these religio-political leaders were "elsewhere."[73] By propagating the idea that the Islamic caliphs of the Abbasid and Samanid dynasties were not actually Muslim and by contending that the Christians within the empire led the artistic, philosophical, and mathematical movements that characterized this progressive period, we see Renan superimpose his own ideas about religious difference and civilizational evolution onto the Islamic world of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. In these passages, the only secular, material progress made during the "Persian Renaissance" were by those who were either Christians or Muslims who eschewed the fundamental tenants of Islam.

After this period of rationalism, Renan declared that a "reign of dogma, without any possible separation of spiritual and temporal" took hold across the Islamic world beginning in the twelfth century.[74] Presumably, as corporal punishments for non-believers became the norm in Muslim territories, the Christians in these societies were

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

killed for forced to flee, taking with them the spirit of rationality and progress that had hitherto fueled these societies. Importantly, this "reign of dogma" was fundamentally unique to Islamic nations. While Renan conceded that the Christian world contained parallel examples of unsavory religio-political alliances, he claimed that even if one or two Christian governments had occasionally utilized dogma to govern society, these paled in comparison to the actions of modern Islamic nations, where, across vast portions of the globe, there existed an indistinguishable union of the spiritual and temporal that stifled everything it touched. [75] On the other hand, Renan asserts that Christianity—even in its most dogmatic manifestations—failed to crush the spirit of modernity. Thus, as Islamic culture and society faded into temporal obscurity in the twelfth century, Europe—led by the French Christian philosophers of the Medieval period—took up the intellectual torch. Renan proudly asserted,

> In fact, while Averroes, the last Arab philosopher, was dying in Morocco, in sadness and abandonment, our West was in full awakening. Abélard has already sounded the call of a reborn rationalism. Europe has found its genius and begins that extraordinary evolution, whose end point will be the complete emancipation of the human spirit. Here, on Mont Sainte-Genevieve, a new sensorium for the work of the mind was created.[76]

In this passage, Renan paints a dramatic image for his audience. The dying, abandoned Averroes—also known as Ibn-Rushd—a Muslim polymath representative of Islamic science and philosophy, fades away in North Africa. Concurrently, the renowned Catholic philosopher Peter Abélard—representative of Christian rationalism and logic—is engaged with creating a sensorium for the mind at the French monastery of Mont Sainte-Genevieve in Paris. As he compares birth to death, progress to degradation,

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

emancipation to slavery and, ultimately, France to Morocco through a lens of religion, Renan highlights the unique role that rational Christianity played and would continue to play in the "emancipation of the human spirit" within France during the fin-de-siècle.

Furthermore, the discourse of difference constructed between Christianity and Islam in *Islam et Science* was expressed through striking religio-racial representations. As such, I contend that Renan's emphasis on the intrinsic and insurmountable differences between Christians and Muslims operates similarly to racial classification à la Gobineau. Returning to the beginning of *Islam et Science*, Renan contended that anyone with even the most basic education in the political climate of the late nineteenth century clearly saw "the current inferiority of Muslim countries, the decadence of states governed by Islam, the intellectual sterility of races that derive their culture and education from that religion alone."[77] This passage establishes a direct connection between Islam and race, utilizing words that invoke images of physical decay and barrenness as they are applied to describe the intellectual fruitlessness of the entire Islamic world. Renan continues to underline the deterministic connections between Islam and race, contending that the focus instilled by the Muslim faith is so all-consuming for its practitioners, "that all differences of race and nationality disappear by the act of converting to Islam. The Berber, the Sudanese, the Circassian, the Afghani, the Malaysian, the Egyptian, the Nubian: once they become Muslim are no longer Berbers, Sudanese, Egyptians, etc. These are Muslims. Persia alone is an exception."[78] Renan's language in this text evokes Gobineau's diatribe on Christianity in *Essai sur l'inégalité des races*, but proves its

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

inverse. That is, where Gobineau claimed that the adoption of Christianity in a society had no fundamental effect on said societies' culture or civilization—its only effects were in the afterlife— Renan argues that, excepting Persia, Islam flattened all former ties of race and nationality, subsuming every aspect of life in the communities it enters and bestowing upon its members a new religio-racial identity: Muslim.

Renan's polemical assertions did not go unanswered. The texts of his *Islam et Science* lecture were dispersed throughout the Islamic world, prompting many refutations from Muslim academics and politicians. Of course, the most famous of these was the repudiation from Jamal Al-Afghani. Al-Afghani was born in a small Iranian town but lived a distinctly cosmopolitan existence, residing at different points of his life in Delhi, Kabul, Istanbul, Cairo, Tehran, London, Moscow, and Paris. In 1871, he was banished from Istanbul for suggesting that the prophet's words were open to reconsideration. However, he was summoned back over two decades later, after which he worked as an advisor to the Sultan. He sought audiences with crowned heads of Eurasia—including the Ottoman Sultan and the Russian Tsar, and one of his chiefs aims in life was to unify the Muslim world from Central Asia to India. At different stages, he functioned as a teacher, an activist, a politician, and a scholar, but he was first and foremost a pan-Islamic and anti-imperial campaigner.[79] Although he is an important historical figure who has only recently begun to receive the scholarly attention he deserves, Al-Afghani presented a formidable opponent to Renan as they debated the role of Islam in the late nineteenth-century world.

[79] Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*, 46.

In his rebuttal of *Islam et Science*, Al-Afghani takes umbrage with Renan's two main points: the idea that Islam is essentially opposed to the development of science, and the notion that the Arab people have no natural aptitude towards metaphysical science or philosophy. In other words, he condemns Renan's use of religio-racial determinism. Al-Afghani muses whether these supposed obstacles come from Islam itself or "from the way in which it has spread in the world, of the character, customs, and aptitudes of the peoples who have adopted this religion or of those of the nations to which it has been imposed by force."[80] In other words, was it determinism or specific historical, geographical, and cultural circumstances that had led to a lack of scientific progress within the nineteenth-century Islamic world? It's important to note here that Al-Afghani doesn't necessarily refute Renan's conclusions or the dichotomy between east and west employed in *Islam et Science* (at least it is not evidenced in this text), but rather questions the methodology Renan used to reach said conclusions. Operating within Renan's framework that sets Christianity and Islam in opposition to each other, Al-Afghani nevertheless questions Renan's notion that Christianity and Christian nations have a monopoly on reason. Renan's deterministic, polemical approach to Islam is anathema to Al-Afghani, who contended that all religions, including Christianity, have moments of intolerance in their histories, and, as such, all religions have the potential to move beyond "the tutelage of religion" and embrace "the path of progress and science."[81]

Al-Afghani concluded his refutation by expressing his belief that, "Mohammedan society will one day manage to break its ties and to walk resolutely in the way of

[80] Jamal Al-Afghani., "Réponse à M. Renan," *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, May 18, 1883.
[81] Ibid.

civilization…I am pleading here with Mr. Renan, not the cause of the Muslim religion, but that of several hundreds of millions of men who would thus be condemned to live in barbarism and ignorance."[82] Yet again, Al-Afghani condemned Renan's propensity to characterize the Islamic world based on racial and religious determinism and demonstrates, through virtue of his own writings, that a secularized, rational approach to Islam certainly existed in the late nineteenth century. However, Al-Afghani nevertheless reinforced the dichotomy presented in *Islam et Science*, ultimately reifying the divisions between Christian and Islamic nations offered by Renan.

Renan's subsequent, public response to Al-Afghani was slightly less polemical than his original lecture. In his response, Renan praised Al-Afghani, lauding his "original and sincere" perceptions and describing him as an "enlightened Asian."[83] Renan outlined the importance of listening to diverse voices across the globe that favored rationalism and emphasized that, while religion caused division, reason always operated to bring unity among men. Drawing upon his earlier writings that extolled the societal virtues of a "non-dogmatic," rational Christianity, Renan stated, "the unity of the human spirit is the great and consoling result which emerges from the peaceful clash of ideas, when one sets aside the opposing claims of so-called supernatural revelations."[84] In other words, rational religious debate—devoid of any belief in the supernatural—had the potential to unify even Christians and Muslims. Renan drove this point home a bit later in his response:

> It is not for the Christian to give up Christianity, nor for the Muslim to give up Islam. It is for the enlightened parts of Christianity and Islam to come to this state of benevolent indifference where religious beliefs become harmless. This is done

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ernest Renan, "*Réponse à M. Al-Afghani,"* Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires, May 19, 1883.
[84] Ibid.

> in roughly half of Christian countries; I hope it will be done for Islam. Of course, that day the Sheik and I will agree to applaud with both hands.[85]

In what appears a volte-face, Renan conceded that Islamic nations might one day follow the rational countries of Christendom—he enigmatically asserted that about half of "Christian" countries were enlightened—and adopt a more scientific, secular approach to religion and the construction of knowledge. In this short passage, it appears that Renan is agreeing wholesale with Al-Afghani and retracting his more polemical statements from *Islam et Science*. However, while this might be the case on a superficial level, it's important to note that Renan considered Al-Afghani to be racially superior to most of his Muslim coreligionists. Within this response, Renan qualified the Persian-born Al-Afghani by asserting that "he belongs to those energetic races of upper Iran, neighbor of India, where the Aryan spirit still lives so vigorously under the surface layer of official Islamism." Here, amidst his concessions to and pledges of respect for Al-Afghani, Renan draws on his narrative of Persian exceptionalism—and exceptionalism that was based somewhat on the rationalizing presence of the Christians in pre-Islamic Persia. Just like the Persian Caliphs of the Abbasid and Samanid dynasties, Al-Afghani is characterized in this passage as "barely Muslim." According to Renan, it was Al-Afghani's Aryan spirit—underneath a thinly worn veil of Islam—that contributed to his superior reasoning skills. Even as he lauds Al-Afghani's rational response to *Science et Islam,* Renan's language demonstrates the critical role that race plays in his conceptualization of religious and civilizational evolution.

[85] Ibid.

This referral to Al-Afghani's Aryan spirit echoes a passage in Renan's 1852 university thesis *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique.* One of Renan's first works, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* outlines Renan's views on reason, religion, and their relationship to race. Interestingly, the language used highlights a thread of continuity between Renan's early career and his final response to Al-Afghani. Renan argued in *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* that, even though "Arab philosophy" played an immense role in the annals of human history, the French should not look to the Arabs for philosophy lessons. Rather, it was to the Aryans, also referred to as the Indo-European race, that the French should emulate in their quest for rational truth. Renan stated, "the thoughtful, independent, stern, courageous search for the truth seems to have been the product of the Indo-European race, which…to the ends of the West and the North, from the most remote centuries until modern times, sought to explain God, man and world in the rationalistic sense."[86] For Renan, a rational approach to religion was intrinsic and exclusive to the racial makeup of the Indo-Europeans, not the Arabs.

Despite Renan's assertions in *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation* that religion was no longer a useful means by which to define national communities in the late nineteenth century, a Christian religious identity—and critically, a secularized, rational, Christian identity—remained fundamental when considering French civilization—and European civilization more broadly—in relation to the Islamic world writ large. Even as Renan relied heavily on the sweeping religious categories of "Christian" and "Muslim," his use of racially deterministic language and concepts in *Islam et Science* and his ensuing debates with

[86] Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique* (Paris: Auguste Durand, 1852), 3.

Jamal Al-Afghani demonstrate that race remained a critical part of his thinking about religion and civilizational evolution after 1870. As such, Renan's lecture and his participation in public debates with Al-Afghani in 1883 complicate the prevalent narrative of Renan's intellectual evolution even as his ideas contributed to the larger processes of secularization and the establishment of religio-racial theory in fin-de-siècle France.

2.4 Conclusion

As the French culture wars reached a fever pitch in the late nineteenth century and opposing political and religious factions adopted figures like Gobineau and Renan as their emblematic spokesmen, the Islamic world continued to be a place where both sides of the religio-cultural divide found common ground in an increasingly rationalized, secular manifestation of Christianity in the French public sphere.[87] While the secularist Renan's assertions about the ways that Christianity should function in society were entirely different than the Catholic Gobineau's, both writers' language and approach to religion vis-à-vis the Islamic world shared many assumptions in common. Despite the disparities in their stances on religion, race, and national belonging, both figures accentuated France's civilized, rational Christian tradition when discussing the Islamic nations and empires of the late nineteenth century. Most significantly, Renan's reliance on the dichotomy between Christians and Muslims in his *Islam et Science* lecture reveals that even anticlerical individuals recognized the value of invoking a nonspiritual, rational

[87] Brown, *For the Soul of France*, xivv.

Christianity that allegedly brought material benefits to society. This notion of a secularized "Christian France" would eventually disseminate from the halls of the Sorbonne out into the streets of Paris by the increasingly influential and powerful French press. This secular, Christian heritage promoted by Renan—and by Tocqueville before him—would become vital to the French imperial project after the 1905 Law of Separation and the subsequent invasion of the Islamic kingdom of Morocco.

3.0 Chapter 3: "The Dreyfus Affair: Religious Othering, Race, and the Power of the Press in *Fin-de-Siècle* France"

On November 1, 1894, the right-wing French periodical *La Libre Parole*, edited by the notorious antisemite Édouard Drumont, confidently pronounced that charges of espionage were to be leveled against a French officer named A. Dreyfus.[1] A few weeks later, despite a severe lack of evidence, Captain Alfred Dreyfus—a 35-year-old French artillery officer of Jewish descent—was convicted of treason by seven military judges. Dreyfus was handed a sentence of life imprisonment for supposedly sharing French military secrets with an attaché at the German Embassy in Paris. Upon his conviction, Dreyfus was famously stripped of his military rank in the courtyard of the *École Militaire* and shipped to a prison on Devil's Island in French Guiana, where he would unjustly spend nearly five years. Despite its abstruse beginnings, this seemingly obscure case of military justice would command the attention of the French public for over a decade, eventually escalating into larger questions over the role of reason versus religious tradition and between belief in a common humanity and the tenets of scientific racism. In this way, the Dreyfus Affair exemplified the conflicts of the late-nineteenth-century culture wars in the French metropole. At the height of the Affair in the late 1890s, advocates for a secular, republican France—many compelled by the writings of Ernest Renan—eventually rallied around Dreyfus' cause, and champions of a nativist, monarchical, Catholic France—some inspired by the works of Arthur de Gobineau—

[1] Édouard Drumont, "Haute Trahison: Arrestation D'un Officer Juif," *La Libre Parole*, November 1, 1894.

fervently pronounced his guilt.[2] The struggles and divisions between Dreyfus' supporters and Dreyfus' opponents fundamentally spoke to their contradictory visions of what the nation ought to be and, consequently, who belonged within the French body politic and who did not.

The roots of the Dreyfus Affair can be loosely traced back to the years 1870-1871. As explored in the last chapter, the tumultuous events of the Franco-Prussian War and the bloody Paris Commune left France militarily weakened and humiliated on the international stage. Amidst the chaos of the early 1870s, two socio-political camps emerged with competing notions for France's revival. One the one hand, prominent members of the deposed Napoleon III's left-wing opposition felt that the events of 1870-1871 offered a chance for France to secularize civic institutions—like state-sponsored education—and place a heavier emphasis on rationality, science, and material progress. On the other hand, certain segments of the French population—mostly comprised of Catholic royalists—believed that technological progress, scientific materialism, and worldly ambition were the source of France's maladies. For both factions, the Revolution of 1789 was the inescapable point of reference. For secular republicans, France had to remain loyal to the eighteenth-century thinkers who had begotten the Republic. For Catholics committed to France's pre-revolutionary past, the Enlightenment and republicanism were anathema: France needed divine grace, not progress or rationalism, as it navigated a path into the future.

[2] Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), xxiv; 46.

In 1875, France's parliament finally embraced a republican constitution, solidifying the legitimacy of the fledgling Third Republic, but stark political and social divisions endured. By the 1880s, moderate republicans, pejoratively known by contemporaries as the Opportunists, faced both royalist discontent as well as the rise of powerful socialist factions that capitalized on economic uncertainties. As the moderate republicans came under increasing attack from right and left, General Georges Boulanger, a military officer who had been appointed minister of war in 1886, began to build a personal following. Boulanger posed as a champion of ordinary French men and women, encouraging the army to fraternize with workers on strike and pledging to democratize the army. His anti-German rhetoric won him the approval of French nationalists. Because Boulanger's increasingly radical viewpoints threatened to undermine the moderate government, he was dismissed from his post and turned instead to popular politics. Boulanger won several by-elections in the early months of 1888 as he began uniting disparate groups who opposed the uninspiring Third Republic. Boulanger's first supporters had been radical republicans, and his populist rhetoric obtained the support of many socialists and working class individuals. However, his nationalist, pro-French rhetoric won him the support of the conservative right, which saw in his mass appeal a chance to bring down the republic. As such, it was the royalists and Bonapartists who funded his campaign—in secret—in the hopes of launching a successful coup.[3]

Boulanger was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1889 as a representative from Paris and, for a moment, seemed poised to take over the government. Amidst this

[3] Jeremy Popkin, *A History of Modern France* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2006), 171.

victory, his supporters had planned to nominate him in every electoral district in France in the upcoming general election and install him in Paris in a plebiscite. However, the republican government quickly changed the electoral laws and prohibited candidates from running in more than one district. After these new laws were passed, Boulanger lost his courage, fled to Belgium, and ultimately committed suicide. With its leader in disgrace, the Boulangist movement quickly fizzled out, particularly after Boulanger's secret ties to French royalists were exposed and he was abandoned by his republican and socialist supporters.[4] While the rise of Boulangism might seem a bizarre political blip in late-nineteenth-century French history, the opportune rise of Boulanger transformed the French right in the years leading up to the Dreyfus Affair by introducing a new strain of militant nationalist rhetoric into the political arena that was perfectly suited for the new age of mass media and politics. Though he garnered transient support from the left, it was Boulanger's right-wing supporters whose legacy would endure into the 1890s and beyond. Functioning as political counterweights to the French socialists and loathed by the anti-clerical republicans, these followers of Boulanger—such as the notorious French antisemite Maurice Barrès—appealed to the politically and economically displaced as they called for the physical and moral restoration of the fatherland and harped on alleged threats from enemies within. The decade that stretched from Boulanger to the Dreyfus Affair proved to be a hothouse for antisemitic, nationalist rhetoric—often rooted in France's Catholic traditions—to develop.[5]

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[4] Ibid.

[5] William D. Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 157.

At the dawn of the 1890s, France's moderate republican government attempted to navigate a middle course between the vying factions of socialists, right-wing conservatives, and Boulangists, but the complex and powerful political divisions of the period endured and echoed loudly within the expanding field of popular print media—the very newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books in which the pitched battles of the Dreyfus Affair would be waged. The meteoric rise of the press that took place in the last decades of the nineteenth century was the result of rising literacy rates amongst France's populace as well as the development of innovative printing technologies that led to the quick production of hundreds of daily journals and newspapers. By the 1890s, circulation numbers were increasing at such a rapid rate that paper dealers required an additional one hundred tons of raw stock to meet the demand.[6] Priced to sell to even the lowest classes of literate French society, popular newspapers appealing to every political persuasion entertained, informed, and sensationalized the news of the day. Flourishing amidst the political, social, and cultural divisions of the *fin-de-siècle*, the French press exploited scandals and sought scapegoats upon which to pin society's anxieties and fears.[7]

It against this frenzied political and cultural backdrop that the antisemitic daily newspaper *La Libre Parole* boldly pronounced Dreyfus' guilt in November of 1894. By 1898, two sweepingly broad ideological camps—the nationalist, Catholic anti-Dreyfusards and the secular, republican Dreyfusards—had emerged and diverged over the theoretical questions invoked by the Affair. However, as evidenced above, the

[6] Ann O'Neil-Henry, *Mastering the Marketplace: Popular Literature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 3.
[7] Jeremy Popkin, *A History of Modern France*, 182-183.

political realities were far more complicated. Thus, it is important to note that even though not all Catholics and French nationalists turned against Dreyfus and not all Jews, socialists, and anticlerical secularists rallied to his side, the powerful French print media capitalized on these most profitable, palpable divisions of the epoch and thus shaped the way French people of all political and religious persuasions regarded themselves and their neighbors during the *fin-de-siècle*.

There is no question that the Dreyfus Affair deepened the French culture wars—and fueled latent antisemitic discourses—in the final decade of the nineteenth century. However, the significance of the Dreyfus Affair extended beyond heightening the political discord between secular republicans and monarchical Catholics, and the Affair's effects even surpassed its profound impact on metropolitan, colonial, and European dialogues regarding antisemitism.[8] Rather, this chapter contends that the media coverage surrounding the Dreyfus Affair profoundly changed the French populace's relationship to religion writ large. Not only did the antisemitic press coverage of the Affair incite secular republicans to pass the Law of Separation of the Churches and the State in 1905—a law that would codify France's status as a secular republic—but the Affair also popularized the practice of religious othering and bound religious heritage and traditions to modern concepts of race in France's print media. In other words, the Affair was "the first moment

[8] For more on the Dreyfus Affair's effects on French and European discourses of antisemitism, see: Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics* ((London: Routledge Press, 2013); James F. Brennan *The Reflection of the Dreyfus Affair in the European Press 1897-1899* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998); Piers Paul Read, *The Dreyfus Affair: The Story of the Most Infamous Miscarriage of Justice in French History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012); Lou Begley, *Why the Dreyfus Affair Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)*;* Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early-Twentieth Century France* (Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization Press, 2007).

in which nation, race, and religion received much of the dynamic impulse they now have."[9] Specifically, while the Dreyfus Affair is infamous for the propagation of racialized, antisemitic discourses, the act of religious othering—defined here as the exclusion of an individual or group from an idealized, mythological "civilization," "society," or "nation"—was not exclusive to France's Jewish population during the Affair. Amidst the rabid and divisive coverage of the Affair, newspaper articles containing detrimental, racially-charged portrayals of Muslims peppered the pages of the Catholic, anti-Dreyfusard journal *La Croix* as well as the secular-leaning, Dreyfusard newspaper, *L'Aurore.* Further, the religious othering of Muslims in the French newspapers during the Dreyfus Affair witnessed both Catholic and anticlerical journalists emphasize an entrenched dichotomy between Christianity and Islam—often portrayed as a clash between civilization and barbarism—that functioned in tandem with more blatant examples of racial categorization. This chapter explains these phenomena by considering the discursive links between antisemitism and Islamophobia that emanated from French Algeria in the last decades of the nineteenth century and by situating this watershed moment in French history within a broader, colonial context.

Although adverse views towards Muslims had connected French thinkers from disparate religio-political camps throughout the nineteenth century—a current explored in chapters one and two of this dissertation—these attitudes took on new significance during the Dreyfus Affair as the sensationalized and widely-read Catholic and secular-leaning newspapers published articles excluding Muslims from their own idealized versions of

[9] George Steiner, "Totem or Taboo," *Salmagundi* 89-90 (Fall 1990-Winter 1991): 385-98.

the French nation. As mainstream papers sold at record rates during the late 1890s and early 1900s, the paradoxical stances towards Islam held by fervent secularists like Alexis de Tocqueville and Ernest Renan —and their consequent emphasis on a secularized, humanistic form of French Christianity vis-à-vis the Muslim world—trickled into mainstream public discourse, inevitably shaping the French populace's discursive relationship with Christianity in conjunction with its views towards Muslims in France's colonies. This hitherto unexplored legacy of the Dreyfus Affair would have great significance for France's later imperial ventures in Morocco and shape how ordinary French people conceptualized religion and national belonging in a secular republic into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

3.1 The Century of the Press/Dreyfus in the Colonial Context

As the central event under the French Third Republic, the Dreyfus Affair has naturally been the object of countless studies over the past century. Historians and sociologists have dissected the affair from multiple angles, citing its influences on contemporary French politics, pan-European antisemitic discourses, and its effects on the politicization and racialization of religion via the modern press.[10] However, in an attempt

[10] For more on the Dreyfus Affair's effects on French politics, race and culture, please see: Pierre Birnbaum, *The Antisemitic Moment: A Tour of France in 1898* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003); Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics* ((London: Routledge Press, 2013); James F. Brennan *The Reflection of the Dreyfus Affair in the European Press 1897-1899* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998); Piers Paul Read, *The Dreyfus Affair: The Story of the Most Infamous Miscarriage of Justice in French History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012); Lou Begley, *Why the Dreyfus Affair Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)*;* Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early-Twentieth Century France* (Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization Press, 2007); Ruth Harris, *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century* (New York:

to bring new perspective to a much-studied moment in French history, this section situates the arguments of this chapter amongst several bodies of literature rarely examined in conjunction with each other: the evolution of the nineteenth-century French press—and its profound effects on contemporary French society—and the relationship between the French metropole and Algeria during the Dreyfus Affair, particularly regarding the often-overlapping discourses of antisemitism and Islamophobia that emanated from the colony. When considered in conjunction with one another, these two bodies of historiography provide a deeper understanding of religious othering in *fin-de-siècle* France and the ways in which contemporary French people conceptualized the practice of belonging vis-à-vis the media they consumed.

The nineteenth century is known amongst French historians as the "century of the press," a period in which daily newspapers influenced the increasingly-literate echelons of French society: novels and political debates were published in newspapers, novelists often worked as journalists, and publishers commanded celebrity status on the streets of Paris.[11] As literacy rates climbed and new printing technologies brought the printed word to an ever-widening public, newspaper circulation multiplied by a factor of forty between 1830 and 1880, transforming the social and cultural landscape of the French public

Metropolitan Books, 2010).

[11] For more on the celebrity status of nineteenth-century French writers and journalists, see: Edmund Birch, *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan Press, 2018); Ann O'Neil-Henry, *Mastering the Marketplace: Popular Literature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017); Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi, Ed., *Constructing Charisma: Celebrity, Fame, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Dean de la Motte and Jeannene Przyblyski, *Making the News: Modernity & the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

sphere by the late nineteenth century.[12] These generally acknowledged trends have led many literary critics and cultural historians to consider the relationship between the press and power, most notably in the case of Richard Terdiman's work *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*. At its core, Terdiman's foundational work aims to delineate the cultural function of texts and ultimately sees the press as the vehicle of a dominant discourse.[13] Terdiman's work spawned a plethora of literature corroborating and challenging his conclusions after its publication in 1989.[14] Chief among the challengers stands Jeremy Popkin's book, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France 1830-1835*. Popkin asserts the we must see newspapers not merely as purveyors of a dominant ideology but as more heterogeneous: namely, as critical sites for the construction of multiple social and cultural identities.[15] Focusing on the evolution of the Lyonnaise press under the July Monarchy, Popkin nevertheless outlines the centrality of the press in the lives of all nineteenth-century French contemporaries, contending that the press played a crucial role in defining a new repertoire of identities for different groups—multiple "imagined communities"—within the broader French public sphere.[16]

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[12] Edmund Birch, *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan Press, 2018), 3.

[13] Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1989), 15.

[14] See the various articles in Dean de la Motte and Jeannene Przyblyski's anthology, *Making of the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

[15] Jeremy Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France 1830-1835* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 3.

[16] As suggested in the text of the chapter, Popkin is drawing on Benedict Anderson's monumental work on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, that puts forth the idea that the media fabricates, constructs, and organizes a certain version of the everyday, the coherence of which must be experienced in the reader's imagination daily. Popkin challenges Anderson's idea that there is one "imagined community," insisting instead that there are multiple imagined communities

Drawing on similar ideas, Edmund Birch's *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth Century France* explores the way the nineteenth-century French newspaper was an imagined force which nevertheless assumed the power to reconfigure the nature of social intercourse itself.[17] For Birch, the modern newspaper's influence to script the terms of contemporary debate and shape all aspects of society was a notion at the very heart of nineteenth-century French journalism.[18] Although Birch's work primarily focuses on the novel and its relationship with the nineteenth-century French press, he emphasizes the critical functions of the French press in informing its citizens, in helping to form socio-political agendas, and in influencing its various readerships.

It is important to note that contemporaries were aware of the social and cultural power the daily newspapers wielded. In fact, early-nineteenth-century journalists were actively determined to change the way in which French people received and processed information. As early as 1836, Emile de Girardin, the French journalist credited with the creation of the "colorless" information-based daily newspaper stated, "we do not intend to redo what the old press has done, but to do different things and in a different way."[19] The new press conceptualized and espoused by Girardin would fashion itself as the authority on all matters social, cultural, and political in nineteenth-century French society.[20] Contemporary journalists and writers exalted the medium as being distinctively

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operating concurrently and parallel to each other in any given society, but he corroborates Anderson's notion that the media does have the cultural power to create these fictitious communities.

[17] Birch, *Fictions of the Press, 6.*

[18] Ibid.

[19] Emile Girardin, No Title, *La Presse*, July 1, 1836.

[20] Adamowicz-Hariasz, Maria, "From Opinion to Information: The *Roman-Feuilleton* and the Transformation of the Nineteenth-Century French Press," in *Making of the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France,* ed. Dean de la Motte and Jeannene Przyblyski

suited to promote progress. One such journalist was Alexandre Saint-Cheron, who affirmed this notion in his *Revue encyclopédique,* stating, "journalism… addresses itself to all…journalism is today the only legitimate authority…the only one that is not denied and combatted."[21] Saint-Cheron's words demonstrate that, as early as the 1830s, French journalists aggressively emphasized the egalitarian, pervasive potential of the press. The determined intervention of journalists—coupled with the increase in literacy rates and other democratizing trends over the course of the nineteenth century—enabled French journalists to become some of the most powerful agents of shaping and constructing the political and cultural opinions of the French populace by the end of the century.[22]

Though it is tempting to view the evolution of the nineteenth-century press as a triumph for the democratic dissemination of information, contemporaries were wary of the potentially stupefying power of the press even as they rabidly consumed it. While the *fin-de-siècle* press is often characterized as the golden era of the French media due to its popularity and prevalence, this very influence spawned a litany of fears amongst the populace. By the end of the *fin-de-siècle*, weekly journals even began addressing what contemporaries referred to as the *crise de la presse.*[23] In January 1898, as debates over the preferred fate of Alfred Dreyfus were splashed across newspapers throughout the metropole, the political journal *La Revue politique et littéraire*, published a survey of contemporary views on the *crise de la presse*.[24] Among these views was that of

(Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 160.

[21] Alexandre Saint-Cheron, *La Revue encyclopédique*, September 1832.

[22] The democratizing trends are namely the arrival of the passenger rail, the popularization of photography, and the decrease in the price of daily newspapers thanks to the onset of advertising.

[23] de la Motte and Przyblyski, *Making the Press,* 307.

[24] This journal was also known as *la Revue Bleue.*

contemporary historian Gabrielle Monod, who claimed that the press "had fallen into a deplorable state…and no longer acts as anything but an agent of moral disorganization."[25] Monod attributed the corruption of the press to fierce competition amongst the prominent newspapers, the economic dependence of writers and editors on advertising agencies, and a general decline in morality in late nineteenth-century France. For Monod, the newspaper bore the blame for political scandals, increased violence in urban centers, and for moral degeneracy in a democratic society. The crisis wrought by formidable and uncontrollable journalists was a popular trope in the *fin-de-siècle* and proved a source of anxiety for the men and women of the period.[26]

Related to this fear of the press was the growing popularity of psychology and an increased awareness that unconscious forces could influence the human mind.[27] In fact, the above-mentioned survey in *La Revue politique et littéraire* was inspired by an article written by Alfred Fouillée that touched on these very issues. In the article, titled "*La Responsabilités de la press contemporaine*," Fouillée blamed newspapers and their graphic description of violent crimes for inciting young people to commit comparable violent acts. Fouillée contended that "each day, a French man or woman, even in the basest classes, reads at least one paper, and often reads two…like the dust and the wind, it insinuates itself in even the most closed mind, and without much effort it sweeps the most open; it creates a social atmosphere from which no one can escape."[28] Like those of

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[25] Gabrielle Monod, "Les Responsabilités de la Presse Contemporaine," *La Revue politique et littéraire : revue des cours littéraires*, January 8, 1898, 71.
[26] Ibid, 72-74.
[27] Mary Louise Roberts, "Feminist Journalism in Fin-de-Siècle France," in *Making the News: Modernity & the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Dean de la Motte and Jeannene Przyblyski (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 308.
[28] Alfred Fouillée, "Les Responsabilités de la Presse Contemporaine," *La Revue politique et*

Monod, Fouillée's concerns were indicative of a general fear that the social and cultural role of the press had experienced a terrifying transformation over the course of the nineteenth century. Whereas once the press had served to enlighten and educate the French public, it now served their basest instincts, manipulated their thoughts, and ultimately dictated the politico-cultural landscape of French society.

Contemporary anxieties even led journalists themselves to make comparisons between the newspapers and courtesans. In the *La Revue politique et littéraire* survey, director Henry Bérenger cautioned his readers that, even though French journalists were permitted to publish what they wanted, "each of you democrats is a king surrounded by courtesans; your newspapers allow you to know only the truth they want you to know." The daily newspapers—portrayed as a corrupting, sexualized female influence—dictated their own version of the truth and were bent on seducing and subjugating their readers. Ultimately, for Bérenger, this led to the decay of France's robust democratic spirit. [29] Comparably, the same journal published an article in December 1897 in which publicist and historian Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu denounced the French press, claiming that it made "itself the courtesan of the masses, and like a good courtesan, fears above all to be boring or repulsive." He continued, "for it is, alas, easier to attract masses of men by catering to their appetites or passions than by talking to their reason or conscience."[30] For Leroy-Beaulieu, the newspapers, likened to a group of prostitutes, played to the bottomless appetites and passions of the French populace at the expense of intellect and integrity.

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littéraire : revue des cours littéraires, December 25, 1897, 34.

[29] Henry Bérenger, "Les Responsabilités de la Presse Contemporaine," *La Revue politique et littéraire : revue des cours littéraires*, January 8, 1898, 76.

[30] Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, "Les Responsabilités de la Presse Contemporaine," *La Revue politique et littéraire : revue des cours littéraires*, December 25, 1897, 46.

Based on this sampling of contemporary viewpoints, it is clear that many French individuals had come to acknowledge the press' immense cultural power over their lives by the end of the nineteenth century—fearing both the moral degradation of society as well as the anesthetizing power of print media over the French populace more generally.[31]

Obviously, this chapter does not propose that French men and women had no agency to withstand the machinations of journalists and the press. However, it is important to highlight contemporary views of what was unquestionably a powerful—albeit heterogeneous—discursive force in late-nineteenth-century France. The diverse press—from the low-brow penny press to the serious newspapers of record such as *Le Temps*—shaped and was shaped by many politically divided public opinions. As suggested earlier, French journalists had clearly become influential agents who shaped and even constructed the political and cultural opinions of the French populace. In 1901, French journalist Yves Guyot contended "For a long time, the press has been a pulpit. It will more and more become an inquiry office and a laboratory."[32] Guyot's notion of the newspaper not as a disseminator of facts, but as a laboratory for constructing identities and shaping opinions is an important one. This chapter contends that French editors and journalists on both sides of the cultural divide had already begun utilizing the press as a cultural laboratory of sorts in their coverage of the Dreyfus Affair, rhetorically including or excluding individuals and groups from the French body politic based on religious

[31] Mary Louise Roberts, "Feminist Journalism in Fin-de-Siècle France," 310.
[32] MM. Henry Maret, Yves Guyot, Hector Depasse, *La presse française au vingtième siècle : portraits et biographies / sur l'avenir de la presse* (Paris: Ernest Flammerion, 1901), XII.

affiliation. Significantly, this use of religious categorization was not limited to metropolitan Jews, but extended to both Jews and Muslims in Algeria and across the Mediterranean world.

Even as the tremendously influential media endeavored to shape the French public's ideas about religious others during the Dreyfus Affair, these ideas were not produced solely within a metropolitan framework, but were shaped by the complex relationships between Jews, Muslims, and Christian European settlers in French Algeria. A hotbed of antisemitic rhetoric in the late-nineteenth century, cultural and political events within Algeria directly affected metropolitan discourse surrounding the Dreyfus Affair. To understand this phenomenon, however, it is necessary to briefly outline the historical relationship between Jews, Muslims, and colonists in French Algeria and their interactions with their counterparts in the French metropole.

The French invasion of Algeria in 1830 invoked varied responses from the Jewish minority and Muslim majority populations. While many of Algeria's 25,000 Jews, particularly those living in Algiers, were well-positioned to accept the French presence along the coast and quickly established trade relations with the French military, the Muslims, called natives or *indigènes* by the French, had less interest and even less contact with the occupying forces. The French government—at this point ruled by King Louis-Phillipe—remembered the example of the European Jews' assimilation during the French Revolution, and this memory, coupled with the pragmatic attitude adopted by many Jews during the conquest of Algeria, inspired the French authorities to view the Jews as potential allies. As such, attempts were made to garner the support of Algeria's Jewish

minority.[33] Over the course of the nineteenth-century, metropolitan French Jews lobbied for the inclusion of Algerian Jews into the French political community. Historians of French Algeria including Pierre Birnbaum, Sophie Roberts, Benjamin Stora, and Joshua Schreier have documented the efforts of these nineteenth-century metropolitan Jews to raise their colonial coreligionists to the status of French citizens.[34] According to Schreier in his work, *The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria,* in an effort to secure full citizenship for Algerian Jews, colonial officials—working in tandem with metropolitan Jews—developed a mythology holding Algerian Jews to be more intelligent, faithful, and ultimately more redeemable than Muslims. In fact, practices permitted by Algerian Jewish law that did not correspond to French metropolitan concepts of morality—such as the practice of polygamy—were viewed as products of Islamic oppression, and many French men and women considered ways of emancipating Jews from this unfortunate situation.[35]

The years 1865 and 1870 were watershed moments in the history of Jewish-Muslim-Christian relations in French Algeria. In 1865, the French government passed a senatus Consultum vis-à-vis Algeria, a series of personal status laws which created a path

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[33] Benjamin Stora, "The Cremieux Decree," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day,* ed. Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 286.

[34] For more information on the relationship between French metropolitan and colonial Jews, please see Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Pierre Birnbaum, "French Jews and the 'Regeneration' of Algerian Jewry," *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 88-103; Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora, *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); and Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

[35] Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 2-3.

for Algerian Jews and Muslims to obtain French citizenship, but only if they revoked their personal statuses as Muslims or Jews. A handful of Jews and even fewer Muslims took this path to citizenship, but unsurprisingly, not many were willing to choose expulsion from the religious jurisdiction of their respective faith communities.[36] As a result, reformist circles in France and Algeria considered the senatus consultum of 1865 an insufficient measure and fought over the next four years for the collective naturalization of Algerian Jews. Adolph Crémieux, a French statesman and politician of Jewish descent, was at the forefront of this battle, and he ultimately drafted the decree that would grant French citizenship to the 35,000 Jews in Algeria. Enacted on October 24, 1870—after several delays caused by the Franco-Prussian War—the Crémieux Decree stipulated that "the Israelites native to the departments of Algeria are declared French citizens; as a result, their real status and their personal status are…regulated by French law…Every contrary legislative provision, senatus consultum, decree…is hereby abolished."[37] However, though viewed by many contemporaries as a victory for the Algerian Jewish community, the Crémieux Decree became an essential element in the antisemitic mobilization of French circles in Algeria.

This antisemitism was rooted in what Pierre Birnbaum claims was a general lack of understanding of the Crémieux Decree by the non-Jewish French population of Algeria. According to Birnbaum, for many years after 1870, the Crémieux Decree was considered to constitute convincing proof of an alleged plot by the French Jewry to undermine the Christian nature of French Algerian society and to gain the upper hand

[36] Their experiences have been documented by historian Lauren Blévis in her article *On the Margins of the Crémieux Decree: Jews Naturalized as French in Algeria (1865–1919).*
[37] Stora, "The Cremieux Decree," 289.

over Algeria's Muslim population. Over time, these rumors provoked Muslim ire. Muslims perceived the Crémieux Decree as an incomprehensible act on the part of metropolitan France, primarily because they saw the act as one that codified the superior status of a group they considered inferior. In turn, these tensions caused fear amongst French Algerians that Muslims would revolt against French rule, thus destabilizing their precarious position in the colony.[38] Indeed, some contemporary French colonists even believed the Crémieux Decree was directly responsible for the Mokrani Revolt in 1871—the most significant Muslim uprising that had occurred since the French invasion of 1830.[39] Other colonists demanded the revocation of the Decree not only because it allegedly caused Muslim disquiet, but because Algerian Jews were too "oriental" for French citizenship. Charles du Bozet, former prefect of Oran and Special Commissioner in Algeria, claimed that Algerian Jews were merely "Arabs of the Jewish faith…strangers to the tradition of French nationality…and civilization."[40] By placing the Algerian Jews and Muslims into the same racialized category, Bozet exposed the multifaceted connections between the two groups in the French colonial mindset.

Reacting to these attitudes, metropolitan Jews, including Crémieux himself, attempted to distance Algerian Jews from their Muslim counterparts in the years following the Decree. Crémieux's arguments were based on the idea that Algerian Jews desired to be freed from their "archaic religious laws"— unlike their Muslim foils. And,

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[38] Pierre Birnbaum, "French Jews and the 'Regeneration' of Algerian Jewry," *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 86.

[39] Elizabeth Friedman, *Colonialism and After: An Algerian Jewish Community* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988), 10.

[40] Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria 1870-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); 8.

for many French contemporaries, this notion resonated: while Jews could be regenerated and thus remade into civilized French citizens, Muslims were corrupt by nature and their religious practices—particularly polygamy—were incompatible with French mores and laws.[41] From a legal perspective, Crémieux and his ilk were relatively successful: the Crémieux Decree wasn't revoked until 1940 under the Vichy Regime. However, the complex tensions between Jews, Muslims, and French colonists circulated within metropolitan and colonial discourses for the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[42]

So, even as an unrelenting policy of fully assimilating the Algerian Jews was being pursued within France, the conflicts between Jews, Muslims, and settlers produced by the Crémieux Decree led many French civil servants in Algeria to support the antisemitic campaigns of notorious figures like Édouard Drumont and Max Régis.[43] Régis was elected mayor of Algiers in 1898 and Drumont—as well as three other antisemitic leaders—were elected parliamentary representatives for Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. This antisemitic overhaul of the French Algerian government in the final decade of the nineteenth century has led scholars to claim that, by the late 1890's, antisemitism had become the official policy of French Algeria.[44] This antisemitism

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[41] Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith, 2-3.*
[42] Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria*, 12.
[43] It is interesting to note that Drumont was a champion of Algerian Muslims even as he denigrated the colony's Jewish population. This fact highlights the complexities of the relationships between settlers, Jews, and Muslims in colonial Algeria in the years leading up to the Dreyfus Affair. For a further exploration of Drumont's complex views on Islam, please see Dorian Bell's *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018) and Pierre Birnbaum's article "French Jews and the 'Regeneration' of Algerian Jewry," *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[44] Ibid, 93-96.

traversed the geographical and ideological space between metropole and colony by way of newspapers, pamphlets, and monographs, drumming up support for Drumont and his ilk on both sides of the Mediterranean. In 1897, as the Dreyfus Affair reached its climax in the metropole, a wave of antisemitism began in Oran, Constantine, and Algiers. This violent movement was spawned by various cultural cross-currents: the calculated journalistic campaigns of Drumont and other Catholic nativists in Algeria and in France, the political and ideological tensions between Jews, Muslims, and Christians caused by the Crémieux Decree, and most importantly, the broader media coverage of the Dreyfus Affair in the metropole. This antisemitic upsurge culminated in riots and was accompanied by persecution and daily violence against Algerian Jews.

Without question, the Dreyfus Affair unleashed an especially virulent form of antisemitism—in both France and Algeria—that led to the vilification of Jews within the French public sphere. However, while the events of the Dreyfus Affair acutely exposed the Jews' precarious position as both French citizens and religio-racial others, this historiographical analysis has demonstrated that antisemitism and Islamophobia were loosely connected in larger public debates about religious outsiders, citizenship, and belonging within the larger French public sphere during the fin-de-siècle.[45] Importantly, the essence of these debates were published in French journals, newspapers, and like

[45] In his article "An Imperial Entanglement: Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism," historian Ethan Katz contends that placing the history of antisemitism alongside that of other exclusionary ideologies and practices has the potential to alter our perspective on both antisemitism and other forms of marginalization. This chapter intends to loosely implement this methodological approach in conjunction with Dorian Bell's work, *Globalizing Race*, that is detailed in a later section. Katz' and Bell's reconsiderations of antisemitism have become central to the ever-widening relational conversation about how different racisms previously circulated and acted on one another between metropole and colony.

publications that were cheap and readily consumed by the increasingly-literate segments of the French public. As news coverage of the Affair effectively shaped the national conversation about Jews and their status in French society, Muslims in Algeria and across the Mediterranean world were inextricably bound up in these discourses, even if they weren't the primary focus.[46] As the first decade of the twentieth century commenced, reason appeared to prevail over religion: Dreyfus was exonerated after a decade-long battle against the Catholic, military establishment and France's secular status was codified with the Law of Separation of 1905. However, the negative attitudes towards Islam that had unified Catholics and secularists across the religio-political divide for decades endured in public discourse and would have significant implications for French-Islamic relations in the twentieth century.

3.2 The Press and the Racialization of Religious Heritage in a Secularizing Nation

On Saturday, January 4, 1895, Alfred Dreyfus, a French artillery officer of Jewish ancestry accused of treason against the state, stood before nearly four thousand French troops and twenty thousand civilian spectators and was ceremoniously stripped of his military rank and titles. The degradation of Dreyfus took place in the *Cour Morland,* the central courtyard of the *École Militaire*, where Captain Dreyfus trained as a young officer. Amidst the racially-charged cries that emanated from the civilian crowds, Dreyfus endured a ten-minute ritual of humiliation that would be detailed within dozens

[46] Ethan B. Katz, *An Imperial Entanglement: Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1191.

of newspapers and journals within a matter of hours.[47] In the aftermath of Dreyfus' conviction, degradation, and imprisonment on Devil's Island, anti-clerical writers, artists, professors, and other champions of rationalism and human rights—ultimately known as the Dreyfusards—would mobilize on behalf of Dreyfus against the Catholics, royalists, and nativists—collectively known as the anti-Dreyfusards—who proclaimed his guilt. However, despite the undisputable political, cultural, and social divisions that existed between these two factions, both groups portrayed Dreyfus' Jewish heritage using racially-charged tropes and language throughout the Affair. Even as anti-clerical writers and public intellectuals coalesced around Dreyfus' cause between 1897-1898—citing the importance of rationalism and freedom in the face of religious prejudices—they propagated the visceral, racialized language employed by the Catholic, anti-Dreyfusard press in their defense of the condemned man. This section examines this trend and ultimately demonstrates that the Affair normalized the widespread practice of religious categorization within both the anti-Dreyfusard and Dreyfusard press. As both sides of the politico-cultural divide connected religious heritage to emerging, modern theories of race, this religio-racial categorization became one the chief ways the media delineated belonging even within a secularizing French state.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, *La Libre Parole*—under the direction of infamous antisemite Édouard Drumont—famously broke the news of Alfred Dreyfus' supposed treason on November 1, 1894. The article contended, "the officer who is vile enough to sell the secrets of our national defense, who is miserable enough to have

[47] Brown, *For the Soul of France,* 180.

committed this crime of treason against the fatherland, is Captain Dreyfus of the 14th Artillery Regiment…" The article continues, "but however painful that revelation may be…we have the one consolation of knowing that it is not a true Frenchman who committed such a crime!"[48] Drawing on xenophobic, nativist language extolling the "vile" Dreyfus' crimes against the fatherland, this article offers its readers solace: even though France had allegedly been betrayed, the fact that the Jewish Captain Dreyfus had committed the crime mitigated the effects on the French body politic. For Drumont, those of Jewish descent were not and could not be "true Frenchmen."[49] On November 10, 1894—nine days after the announcement of Dreyfus' arrest—a cartoon appeared on the cover of *La Libre Parole* portraying Drumont skewering a caricature of Alfred Dreyfus who was depicted as hook-nosed and wearing the spiked helmet of a German solider. The caption reads "Judas Dreyfus," referring to the infamous betrayer of Christ.[50] As evidenced here, almost immediately after Dreyfus' arrest, the antisemitic, right-wing press utilized racially-charged language and imagery in their depictions of Dreyfus, hammering home the message to their readers that Frenchness—specifically Catholic Frenchness—and Jewishness were mutually exclusive.

As the Affair gained traction amongst the right-wing press in early November of 1894, an article in the antisemitic, Catholic periodical, *La Croix,* using similar language to that in *La Libre Parole*, also unfavorably compared Alfred Dreyfus to Judas Iscariot, the disciple who, according to the Christian tradition, betrayed Christ before his arrest

[48] Édouard Drumont, "Haute Trahison: Arrestation D'un Officer Juif," *La Libre Parole*, November 1, 1894.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Édouard Drumont, *La Libre Parole Illustrée,* November 10, 1894.

and crucifixion. However, the author of the article, Father Vincent de Paul Bailley, a Catholic priest, contended that, "whereas Judas belonged to the people of God, being the apostle chosen by the Master, the Jewish officer did not belong to the French nation."[51] Utilizing nativist logic and language, Bailley contends in this passage that, despite his betrayal, Judas Iscariot had nonetheless belonged to the Jewish people and had once been invited into Christ's inner circle. So, whereas Judas betrayed his own, Bailley is at pains to underline the fact that Dreyfus had never belonged or been invited into his idea of who and what comprised the French nation. France remained in essence untarnished because of Dreyfus' alleged actions.

However, even though Jewish men and women did not belong within Bailley's delineation of the French nation, their influence had far-reaching effects within the metropole, he insisted. Bailley continued by stating, "our society has already been punished, but its suffering is not at an end—our treasures, our banks, our papers, our railroads, and our army are caught in a spiderweb of Judaism."[52] This image of a web-like syndicate spun by Jewish men and women that imposed financial and cultural suffering on Catholic, French society is a powerful one that had far-reaching effects. Similar language pervaded the Catholic newspapers in the early months and years of the Affair. By including racialized and xenophobic notions of an essentialized, Catholic, French nation, the right-wing press functioned to exclude Dreyfus—and therefore, all Jewish peoples—from the parameters of French society. In the right-wing press, Jewishness was explicitly tied to treason and sedition, but more importantly for the

[51] Vincent de Paul Bailley, "Vengeance," *La Croix*, November 2, 1894.
[52] Ibid.

arguments of this chapter, Jewishness was fundamentally incompatible with Catholic Frenchness on a profound, religio-racial level.

Crucially, it wasn't just the right-wing press that initially condemned Dreyfus' actions or his Jewishness. It wasn't until the late 1890s, when the fabricated evidence against Dreyfus was made increasingly public, that the Dreyfusard camp gained significant membership.[53] Rather, the early reactions of the mainstream French public were celebratory. Having cast out the religious alien, France celebrated its collective salvation via the press. Everyone rejoiced, the anti-clerical socialists shoulder to shoulder with the Catholic monarchists, affirming Dreyfus' conviction in the strongest racialized language. The leftist Georges Clemenceau, who would later lead the fight for Dreyfus' retrial, initially characterized the exiled captain as inhuman, stating, "he has no relative, no wife no child, no love of anything human—or even animal—ties, nothing but an obscene soul and an abject heart."[54] Despite the fact that this statement was categorically untrue—Dreyfus had a devoted family who ceaselessly fought for his release over the course of a decade—it powerfully demonstrates that the visceral, racist portrayals of Dreyfus were not exclusive to self-proclaimed Catholics or nativists in the early months of the Affair.

Several weeks later, on January 6, 1895, *Le Figaro*, a centrist paper that would eventually offer overwhelming support for the anticlerical, Dreyfusard camp in the later years of the Affair, published an article by the xenophobic monarchist Léon Daudet titled "*La Punition*" that gave a first-hand account of Dreyfus' public degradation in the

[53] The publication of Émile Zola's *J'Accuse* in January 1898 was the pinnacle of this progression.
[54] Jean Denis Bredin, *L'Affaire* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 65.

courtyard of the *École Militaire.* The language used to describe Dreyfus reveals a connection between Dreyfus' Jewish heritage and race in Daudet's mind. The piece elucidates on the degradation ceremony: "I catch a glimpse of the condemned man's wan and weasel-like face…I am engrossed by his body, that run-down body…from which is skinned away…everything that gave it social value…this black…hideous beast of treason…magnified by infamy."[55] At the same time described as weasel-like, run-down, black, and hideous, the "beast" that had been a French army captain, once imbued with social standing whilst in uniform, was now reduced after being stripped of his clothing. Daudet continues to describe Dreyfus' visage in stark terms as his sword was ceremoniously broken in the *Cour Morland*: "his face is ashen…surely foreign, a wreck of the ghetto…" The description of Dreyfus as foreign and associating him with a Jewish ghetto is a clear attempt to underline his supposed connection with foreign, working-class Jews who had no political or social autonomy. However dire he describes the situation, Daudet offers solace to his readers. He postulates, "in the wreckage of so many beliefs, a single faith remains genuine and sincere: that which safeguards our race, our language, the blood of our blood, and which brings us together in solidarity. The closed ranks are our ranks. The wretch was not French."[56] Though lacking the Catholic convictions of Bailley—even though he would later become a practicing Catholic in 1903—Daudet's summation of the episode at the *École Militaire* in the centrist *Le Figaro* also invokes brutal, xenophobic language employed to underline the notion that Dreyfus' was never a part of the French populace.[57] Characterizing France as a physical body rooted in ties of

[55] Léon Daudet, "La Punition," *La Figaro*, January 6, 1895.
[56] Léon Daudet, "La Punition," *La Figaro*, January 6, 1895.
[57] Brown, *For the Soul of France*, 263.

blood, Daudet also invokes more modern, pseudo-scientific ideas of race.[58] As such, he aims to reassure his readers that the foreign, Jewish Dreyfus was not French and, therefore, not a metaphorical stain on the collective.

Undoubtedly, right-wing—and initially centrist and even left-wing—journalists utilized racially-charged conceptions of Dreyfus' Jewishness as a weapon to exclude him and all Jewish men and women from the French body politic. However, even as the centrist and left-wing media overwhelmingly condemned the exclusion of Jews in the later years of the Affair, their condemnations of right-wing slander during the years 1897-1898 nevertheless demonstrate the fact that they were required to engage in debates framed in ethno-religious terms set by the right. In other words, the Dreyfusards had to fight on ground chosen by the anti-Dreyfusards. Bernard Lazare, a secular journalist of Jewish ancestry, published a famous, widely-read manifesto on the Dreyfus case in 1897 titled *Une erreur judiciare: L'affaire Dreyfus. Une erreur judiciare* famously upheld Dreyfus' innocence in very public terms. In his work, after condemning Dreyfus' accusers, Lazare posed the question, "Did I not say that Captain Dreyfus belonged to a class of pariahs? He is a soldier, but he is a Jew, and it is as a Jew that he was prosecuted. Because he was a Jew, he was arrested; because he was a Jew, he was tried…"[59] By emphasizing Dreyfus' Jewishness as they key element in his condemnation in *Une erreur*

[58] See Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Librarie de Firmin-Didot, 1884), 63.

[59] It is interesting to note that Lazare was an unlikely ally of the Dreyfus family. Known for his spirited defense of anarchists, Lazare—though Jewish himself—had historically blamed antisemitism on its victims and typically didn't associate with well-to-do Jewish families like the Dreyfuses. However, the plight of Dreyfus proved so compelling to Lazare that, by 1895, he had converted to Dreyfus' cause and began to see himself as the spokesman of a Jewish resistance that had been too long deferred.

judiciare, Lazare—in language echoing that of his right-wing opponents—expressed the Affair in explicitly religio-racial terms. Lazare continued to couch his argument thus by stating of the French army, "They needed their own Jewish traitor, to replace the classic Judas…in order to cover an entire race with shame."[60] By repeating the Catholic tropes that compared Dreyfus to a modern-day French Judas Iscariot and by emphasizing an allegedly separate Jewish "race," Lazare's work highlighted the fact that the right-wing anti-Dreyfusards had successfully framed the Affair utilizing their own religio-racial terminology. That is, even as Lazare's *Une erreur judiciare* contested those who espoused a racialized, Catholic definition of French society, it was required to operate within the ethno-religious contexts fashioned by the right during the final years of the nineteenth century.

Émile Zola, perhaps the most influential and well-published amongst Dreyfus' supporters, was recruited to the cause by a small coalition of Dreyfusards led by Alfred Dreyfus' brother, Mathieu, in late 1897. An important novelist and journalist in *fin-de-siècle* France, Zola was approached for the valuable advice he could give as a famous and persuasive writer who had built a career on influencing mass audiences. In addition to his professional credentials, Zola had been outspoken against the antisemitism that had cropped up in France during the later years of the nineteenth century. Because of Zola's formidable background, he became the symbolic voice of the Dreyfusard camp.[61] On December 1, 1897, Zola published an article in *Le Figaro*—which by this time had begun consistently publishing works by anticlerical, Dreyfusard authors—that was directed

[60] Bernard Lazare, *Une erreur judiciare: L'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: Stock, 1897), 8-9.
[61] Brown, *For the Soul of France*, 195.

against the myth of a powerful Jewish "syndicate" that had been propagated by the right-wing press. Zola began, "Captain Dreyfus was condemned by a court-martial for treason," however, he continued sardonically, "since then he has become the traitor—no longer a man but an abstraction embodying the idea of the fatherland bled dry and handed over to the conqueror…There he is with his black soul and hideous face—the shame of the army, the thug who sold his brethren as Judas sold his God." Though clearly condemning the idea that Dreyfus had unjustly become the "shame of the army," Zola's language in this passage nevertheless functioned to perpetuate the very images it denounced—images of Dreyfus as a traitor of biblical proportions with a black heart and gruesome visage. Later in the passage, Zola discussed the fabricated syndicate: "But since he's Jewish, it's clear what will happen. Rich and powerful as they are—and, moreover, without national allegiances—Jews will work clandestinely, using their millions to bail him out. They will buy consciences, they will envelop France in a damnable plot, they will substitute an innocent man for the evildoer."[62] The twenty or-so right-wing, Catholic newspapers who traded in xenophobia had planted ideas of a powerful Jewish collective in the mind of the French populace and perverted public opinion against Dreyfus over the course of the Affair. While Zola clearly writes with a tongue in cheek tone and dismissed this syndicate as nonsense, his painstakingly detailed description of Jewish men and women as a separate religious group without national allegiances utilized the ethno-religious terms established by the Catholic anti-Dreyfusards. Further, his need to denounce the existence of the false syndicate in *Le*

[62] Emile Zola, "Le Syndicat," *Le Figaro,* December 1, 1897.

Figaro reveals how deeply rooted these ideas promulgated by the Catholic press had become. The language used by both anti-Dreyfusards and Dreyfusards alike revealed that the language of religious categorization introduced by the antisemitic right had become a pervasive weapon with which to exclude religio-racial others—in these examples, Jewish peoples—from French society.

Even as Dreyfusard writers challenged xenophobic tropes against the Jews, the language used in their contestations had been originally propagated by the Catholic media. Thus, even by engaging with the cultural frameworks that portrayed the Jews as racially and culturally apart from the rest of the French populace, Dreyfusard writers underlined the uncertain place of religious others in French society during the *fin-de-siècle*. However, it's important to highlight the fact that, in outlining their own ideas of who or what constituted the French nation, some anti-clericalists explicitly excluded Catholics as well. Specifically, many of Dreyfus' most outspoken supporters—Zola chief amongst them—excluded Catholics from their own versions of an idealized French nation. However, while Zola echoed the racist tropes against Jewish peoples spouted by the Catholic media, his categorization of French Catholics—though clearly demonstrating how widespread religious othering had become by the late 1890s—lacked the racial component that characterized his descriptions of Dreyfus and other French Jews.

In 1898, Zola penned a pamphlet titled *Lettre à la France: l'affaire Dreyfus* in which he outlined his views on the Catholic Church's pernicious influence in late-nineteenth-century French society. Zola stated in the work,

> Today the tactic of antisemitism is quite simple. Catholicism tried in vain to gain sway over the populace by creating worker's circles and multiplying pilgrimages…but Churches remained deserted, the people no longer believed in

> God. But here an opportunity presents itself to stir up those common people, to poison them with the species of fanaticism, to have them march through the streets shouting: 'Down with Jews!' 'Death to the Jews!'[63]

In a very astute summation of the Dreyfus Affair from the perspective of the Catholic Church, Zola unearths an interesting paradox regarding religion in *fin-de-siècle* France. While religion—in this case Catholicism—as a practiced set of beliefs was clearly on the wane within the French metropole, Zola recognized the fact that many members of the French populace still identified culturally with Catholicism. Thus, the Catholic media exploited the French populace's cultural ties to Catholicism to ostracize religious others—in this case Jewish peoples—within the metropole. Zola continued, "what a victory [for the Catholics] it would be if a religious war could be unleashed...when Frenchmen have been turned into fanatics and executioners, when their love for the rights of man has been torn from their hearts…God will undoubtedly do the rest."[64] Within this scathing critique of religion's influence on French society, Zola outlined his own vision of the French nation-state: one where rational thinking and human rights prevailed over outdated religious prejudices. However, even as Zola asserts his belief that the Catholic press had turned French people into fanatics, his language nevertheless portrays Jewish peoples as wholly separate from "common" French men and women. In this article, even the Catholic-leaning fanatics Zola denounces are referred to as "Frenchmen," whereas Jews are very clearly presented as a separate, religio-racial faction.

[63] Emile Zola, *Lettre à la France: l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1898), 10
[64] Ibid.

While Zola published a prolific amount of material regarding the Dreyfus Affair, no article or pamphlet was more explosive or famous than his *Lettre au Président de la République*, better known to posterity as *J'Accuse. J'Accuse* was Zola's response to officer Ferdinand Esterhazy's acquittal before a military court in January 1898 and the subsequent reconviction of Dreyfus for what eventually proved to be Esterhazy's crimes of treason. Arguably the most famous article published during the Dreyfus Affair, the article, published in the Dreyfusard daily paper *L'Aurore* in January 1898, accused senior military officers and magistrates of deliberately perverting the course of justice vis-à-vis Dreyfus. While *J'Accuse* holds significance for many reasons—chief among them the fact that the article generated a substantial public mobilization in favor of Dreyfus and prompted the response of an increasingly impassioned opposition—it also shows the ways the Dreyfusard press employed religious classification to exclude not only Jews, but also Catholics, from French society.

Throughout the paragraphs of *J'Accuse*, Zola accused the army officials culpable for Dreyfus' conviction of bring ruled by "religious passions." Zola stated of said officers, "the worse we can say is that they gave into the religious passions of the circles they move in…they let stupidity have its way."[65] For Zola, Catholicism was a negative influence that stood in the way of justice prevailing in France. He continues in a later section,

> These, M. le Président, are the facts that explain how a miscarriage of justice has come to be committed…he [Dreyfus] has been a victim of Major du Paty de Clam's overheated imagination, and of the clericalism that prevails in the military circles in which he moves, and of the hysterical hunt for 'dirty Jews' that disgraces our times.[66]

[65] Emile Zola, "J'Accuse," *L'Aurore*, January 13, 1898.
[66] Ibid.

Zola argues in this passage that it was the religious leanings of Major Armand du Paty de Clam—the general staff official and expert graphologist who was responsible for initially condemning Dreyfus—that led to the horrific miscarriage of justice. The Catholicism of Paty de Clam and his high-ranking colleagues in the army led to hysteria and ultimately the disgrace of the entire French nation. For Zola, individuals and groups with strong Catholic leanings had no place in a modern, secularizing French society. However, it is imperative to underline the fact that, while the high army command is portrayed in these lines as stupid, hysterical, and lacking in their ability to use reason, they are never referred to—even in a second-hand capacity—as "dirty." Certainly, Zola's reference to "dirty Jews" in this passage was a quoted, reiteration of language used by the Catholic press. However, even as Zola defends Dreyfus and condemns the religious passions of the military high command, it is the Jewish peoples who are portrayed once again as a separate, religio-racial entity in his writings.

As stated earlier, Zola's writings between 1897-1989 had a tremendously positive impact on the outcome of the Dreyfus Affair, ultimately encouraging a determined coalition of Dreyfusards to secure several retrials and, eventually, exonerate Dreyfus from the charges of treason that had ruined his life. Nevertheless, a close read of Zola's most famous works demonstrates that, while the anti-clerical Zola believed religion in any form had no place within modern France, he continued to echo racialized tropes rooted in religious difference that portrayed Jewish men and women as distinct from mainstream French society. In Zola's writings, Catholic zealots may have had no place

within modern France, but they were not portrayed as racially and culturally separate like their Jewish counterparts.

As evidenced in this section, the Dreyfus Affair normalized the widespread practice of religious categorization—and the racialization of established religious others, like French Jewish peoples—within both the anti-Dreyfusard and Dreyfusard press. However, while the Affair's impact on antisemitic discourses was profoundly important across Europe and the wider world, the practice of religious othering extended beyond metropolitan France's Jewish population. As racially-informed religious categorization emerged as a significant litmus test of belonging in the French print media, Muslims—having long been considered foils to Catholics, secularists, and Algerian Jews in French academic, literary, and political circles—were implicated as well.

3.3 The Alternative Others: Muslims during the Dreyfus Affair

In his 2018 work *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture*, Dorian Bell contends that twenty-first century historians—in the tradition of post-colonial thinkers like Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire—must consider colonial racisms mutually and relationally constitutive.[67] Specifically, nineteenth and twentieth-century antisemitic discourses cannot be considered in a theoretical vacuum because they were reinforced and shaped by other forms of racism throughout France's empire. As a result, Bell states that, "reconsiderations of antisemitism have…become central to the ever-widening relational conversation about how different racisms

[67] Dorian Bell, *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 7.

previously circulated and acted on one another between metropole and colony."[68] This section will draw on Bell's theoretical assumptions in *Globalizing Race*, contending that the antisemitic discourses spouted by the French newspapers during the Dreyfus Affair did not circulate solely within a metropolitan bubble, but were related—both directly and indirectly—to the overlapping discourses of antisemitism and Islamophobia emanating from French Algeria at the end of the nineteenth century. As the particularities of the Dreyfus Affair gave way to larger debates over the role of religion—and religio-racial others—in France, Muslims were inevitably caught up in the crossfire in complex ways.

When the Dreyfus Affair reached its apex in the metropole in the years of 1897-1898, a wave of antisemitic agitation began in Algeria's three most populous colonial cities: Oran, Constantine, and Algiers. This violence was produced by multiple cultural cross-currents: the nefarious antisemitic campaigns of Edouard Drumont and other Catholic nativists, the religious, political, and social tensions between Algerian Jews, Muslims, and Christians caused by the Crémieux Decree, and most importantly, the broader media coverage of the Dreyfus Affair in the French metropole.[69] This antisemitic surge resulted in riots and daily violence against Algerian Jews. French settlers accused the Jewish population of being "capitalists" who oppressed the common people, even though the overwhelming majority of Algerian Jews lived in a state of enormous economic insecurity.[70] While these antisemitic discourses profoundly harmed both Algerian and French Jews, they affected Muslims as well. This was because, according to

[68] Ibid.
[69] Stora, "The Cremieux Decree," 292.
[70] Of the 53,000 Jews residing in Algeria at that time, 44,000 lived in poverty, their needs met by some 10,000 proletarians.

celebrated Algerian historian Benjamin Stora, these anti-Jewish campaigns concealed a broader condemnation of the Algerian "native" who had been elevated to French nationality through the Cremieux Decree.[71] As such, within the fervent declarations of European antisemitism in Algeria, a French fear of the "Arab peril" prowled beneath the surface.[72] As a result, even as contemporary right, center, and left-wing newspapers utilized racially-charged language to convey the outsider status of French Jews in the metropole and in Algeria, Muslims were implicated in these discourses—and portrayed in the newspapers as alternative religious others—even if they weren't the media's primary focus. Thus, at the height of the Dreyfus Affair—a moment in which French journalism had obtained a level of cultural and political power hitherto unknown—stories about Muslim atrocities and violence against Christians throughout France's empire and the larger Mediterranean world were splashed across the pages of French journals and avidly consumed by the French populace. This religious othering of Muslims in the French newspapers witnessed not only Catholic but also anticlerical journalists emphasize an entrenched dichotomy between Christianity and Islam that was underpinned and reinforced by more obvious examples of racial categorization.[73]

As the Affair gained momentum in the French metropole and pitched violence against Jews escalated throughout Algeria in 1897 and 1898, the Greek population living on the Island of Crete—then controlled by the Ottoman Empire—staged a successful revolt against their Ottoman overlords. The small uprising garnered the attention of the

[71] Stora, "The Cremieux Decree," 9.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 135.

Great Powers of Europe, and the fledgling insurrectionists received supplies and armed support not only from the Kingdom of Greece, but also from France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia. After the outbreak of hostilities, several European powers even attempted to mediate the conflict and stop the combat on the island.[74] Naturally, news of the insurrection was reported in the daily newspapers of the French metropole, highlighting the violence between the two opposing sides of the Cretan conflict on the same pages in which they proclaimed the guilt or innocence of Alfred Dreyfus. Interestingly, the coverage from both the Catholic and secular-leaning newspapers did not present the rebellion as a nationalist uprising against a colonial power, but rather presented the conflict exclusively in religio-racial terms, emphasizing the alleged fanatical tendencies of all Muslims and the atrocities they committed against their Christian victims.[75]

An article published on February 17, 1897 in the Catholic daily newspaper *Le Croix* discusses the violence in Crete by highlighting the supposed violent nature of Muslims while asserting the idea that Christians, particularly French Christians, embodied a kind of medieval, chivalric civility. Frustrated by France's inaction on the ground in Crete, and thus, France's failure to come to the aid of the Christian insurgents, the unknown author contends that the French populace has the blood of fellow Christians

[74] The conflict ended in 1898 when the insurgents and the Ottoman Empire agreed on a plan presented by the European powers that created an autonomous Crete under the authority o of Prince George of Greece that still recognized Ottoman authority.

[75] These discourses appeared in the broader context of anti-Turkish agitation within western Europe, a phenomenon comprised of geo-political and cultural elements. It is important to note that anti-Ottoman sentiment was slightly different than general anti-Muslim attitudes because t the Ottoman empire was still nominally considered a "Great Power" while Muslims in European colonies were portrayed as allgedly inferior. For more on this, see Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

on its hands.[76] By appearing to support the massacres in Crete, massacres which the author asserts have been "ordered in the name of Allah," the French clearly had forgotten that "Algeria—a colony barely in our control because of its fanaticism—is watching, and that in Morocco and in the Sudan, black tribal converts to Islam are agitated, and still awaiting the signal to revolt."[77] In this passage, the author groups the Muslims of Crete, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan together as violent religious fanatics, utilizing racial undertones essentializing these "black" and "tribal" societies.[78] Despite the fact that these groups did not intersect politically or culturally, the author portrays an allegedly united Islamic world connected and fueled by insatiable need to enact religious violence in the name of their God, ultimately describing Islam as "the fire that can devour the house of Europe.[79]" Just as there is supposedly one Islamic world defined by violence, the author asserts here that there is also a similarly unified European Christian realm rooted in the civilized and imperial traditions of France. He states, "our house is threatened by the Muslim flame…All of our traditions, from Saint Louis to…Napoleon, protest against abandoning our influence in the East. France, the land of the Crusades, is still the protector of…Christians."[80] Utilizing similar language to that employed by Arthur de Gobineau several decades before, the author presents Muslims as religio-racial others lacking morality and honor, while French Christians are characterized by their

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[76] Rachel Ainsworth, The Cretan Rebellion of 1897 and the Emigration of the Cretan Muslims, Refugee History, Last Modified July 29, 2022, http://refugeehistory.org/blog/2017/7/20/the-cretan-rebellion-of-1897-and-the-emigration-of-the-cretan-muslims

[77] "*Conflit Greco-Turk: Declaration de Guerre de la Gréce," La Croix,* February 17, 1897.

[78] Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Librarie de Firmin-Didot, 1884), 63.

[79] "*Conflit Greco-Turk: Declaration de Guerre de la Gréce*," *La Croix,* February 17, 1897.

[80] Ibid.

superior civilization and allegedly principled imperial past. Importantly, while the author of this article clearly views the world from the perspective of a devout Catholic, this article has explicitly temporal aims: there is a clear connection between the religious violence in Crete and France's precarious hold on its North and central African colonies, suggesting that if France allowed Islamic violence to endure against Christians anywhere, it risked its own political and economic interests closer to home. The article ends with the rhetorical question "what is the secular policy of the Church?" a question that suggests a correlation between religion and imperialist policy in the mind of contemporary Catholics.

While it might be in character for a Catholic journalist to view the situation in Crete through a lens of religion, similar language appeared in the mainstream, Dreyfusard newspapers as well. An article in *Le Figaro* published on February 7, 1897 similarly explained the Cretan rebellion as a fight between Islam and Christianity, describing the violent struggle that was said to have "broken out between Muslims and Christians."[81] The article, taking a mournful tone, described the brutal massacre of an entire Christian neighborhood and the subsequent burning of said neighborhood carried out by a Muslim group.[82] It stated, "Christians were slaughtered…fires broke out on several parts of the island and the families were forced to take refuge on ships in the harbor." The unknown author condemns the French government for their inaction on behalf of these victims, questioning "what measures the government has taken and intends to take to safeguard…the refugees who had retreated to the French mission on the island."[83] While

[81] Denis Guibert, "Les Troubles en Crète," *Le Figaro*, February 7, 1897
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

not explicitly tying the religious violence to France's empire, this passage is at pains to underline the fact that the French mission on the island was providing stability and civility as it harbored Christian refugees fleeing the violence brought upon them by their Muslim foils.

A few weeks later, on February 25, 1897, *Le Figaro* published another article that continued to highlight the Muslim violence against Christians. Describing an act of arson in another Christian quarter of Crete, the article states "the Muslim arsonists were arrested by the Turkish authorities; but they were immediately released."[84] After recounting these events in a landscape apparently devoid of justice, the article continues to describe the "armed Muslims" who "roamed the city…excited by news from their co-religionists" and underlines the fact that there had been many "reported attacks by soldiers and Muslims against Christians."[85] Here, Ottoman Crete is portrayed as a land without rule of law, in which criminals are immediately released to continue their damaging work. In addition to the descriptions of the lawless nature of Muslim Ottoman rule, Muslims are portrayed as roaming, armed insurgents, easily riled by news of victory from their co-religionists on the island. In language similar to that in the *La Croix* article, we are offered a picture of a dichotomous world: one divided between Islam and Christianity and between the Muslim oppressors and the Christian victims. The use of religious characterization in the above-mentioned articles underlines a common, temporal goal shared by both Catholic and secular-leaning journalists: to safeguard France's Islamic colonies by decrying Islamic violence against supposed Christians everywhere.

[84] August Avril, "Les Affaires D'Orient: devant le député musulman," *Le Figaro*, February 25, 1897.
[85] Ibid.

Almost a year later, the Dreyfusard paper *L'Aurore*—the paper that had published Emile Zola's *J'Accuse* only a few days prior—printed an article comparably highlighting Muslim violence against Christians in the city of Chania in Crete. The article stated, "We have become nervous again about Crete…because people are being murdered in the middle of Chania. Muslims…hunt Christians under the benevolent eye of the police" as the city dissolves into "fire and blood."[86] Here again we see the fervently anti-clerical *L'Aurore* portraying this conflict as an explicitly religious one. In this retelling, Muslims hunt Christians in the street as the police watch with not merely indifference, but with seeming approval as the city melts into an apocalyptic landscape. It is important to note that these examples—of which there are countless more—are not meant to negate whatever violence took place on either side of the Cretan conflict, but rather to emphasize that both Catholic and secular newspapers alike portrayed this colonial rebellion in exclusively religious terms in the French metropole. Ultimately, journalistic descriptions of the conflict—published in tandem with stories covering the Dreyfus Affair—highlighted the religious fanaticism and violent excesses of the Muslims and the relative innocence of the Christian victims. Oftentimes, France is portrayed as the protector of Christians and the bringer of civilization and justice to these suffering Christians by papers across the French religio-political divide.

Slightly shifting focus, another article published on the Cretan conflict in *Le Figaro* on February 25, 1897 contains an interview with the infamous "Muslim of Pontarlier," a derisive nickname for Philippe Grenier—a French doctor and politician

[86] Ad. M., "Echos et Nouvelles," *L'Aurore*, February 2, 1898.

who famously converted to Islam on a trip to French Algeria in 1894, an act which effectively qualified him as the first Muslim member of parliament in France. Grenier features often in the secular-leaning newspapers of the period—particularly *L'Aurore*—and is mocked for his ostentatious displays of the Islamic religion in the halls of French government.[87] In this article, the interviewer for *Le Figaro* directs a series of questions towards Grenier, requesting him to elucidate on the situation in Crete. The interviewer inquires:

> Muslim, what do you think of the massacres carried out by Muslims against Christians? Muslim, what do you think of the Christian influence in the East? Do you believe it is useful, indispensable? In your opinion, does the fanaticism of the peoples who practice your religion come from dogma itself or does it have other causes?[88]

While Grenier's affirms in his response that "the Catholic religion is no more proper to civilization than the Muslim religion," the tone of the article—in keeping with other comparable stories published about Grenier—suggests that Grenier is no more than an oddity to indulge rather than a parliamentarian well-briefed on matters of international policy.[89] Additionally, the leading questions asked by the interviewer suggest a deeply negative view of Islam vis-à-vis Christianity in this mainstream, Drefyusard newspaper.

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[87] An article in L'Aurore published on May 28, 1898, published a satire by Jean Jullien celebrating the fact that Grenier had lost reelection to parliament. Jullien extols how Grenier's s strange idiosyncrasies would no longer have to be tolerated in in the halls of government, stating, "it is all over, we shall never see again the excellent man who endeavored to put a little picturesqueness and fantasy into the banal parliamentary comedy, the Moslem of Pontarlier is returned entirely to the exercise his culture in peace. Passers-by who are not shocked by religious or military disguises will no longer have to laugh at his burnous, fanatics of Catholic mummeries or military antics will no longer be scandalized by his salamalecs and the bourgeois will no longer be indignant at his ablutions." This excerpt is one of many in this anti-clerical journal that emphasize—through its descriptions of Grenier—that Muslims did not belong within French society or French government, particularly due to their refusal to drink alcohol.

[88] August Avril, "Les Affaires D'Orient: devant le député musulman," *Le Figaro*, February 25, 1897.

[89] Ibid.

Judging by these questions, the interviewer believes that a French, Christian colonial presence in the Muslim world is indeed useful—and perhaps indispensable—and that Islamic dogma inherently produces violence and fanaticism. The reader finishes the interview with a sense that the interviewer's leading questions—rather than Grenier's more moderate answers—were more indicative of *Le Figaro's* views on the situation in Crete and of French imperialism in the supposedly monolithic Muslim world.

Examples of anti-Islamic sentiments during the years 1897-1898 do not stop with descriptions of the rebellion in Crete. At this particularly turbulent moment during the Dreyfus Affair, negative descriptions of Muslims in various locations across Africa and the greater Mediterranean peppered the pages of Catholics and secular newspapers alike. An article published on September 22, 1897 in the anti-Dreyfusard *La Croix* discussed French fears of Islam vis-à-vis policy in French Sudan. The article's chief purpose was to highlight a perceived crisis occurring to French Christian soldiers stationed in the colony, namely that French soldiers were "falling victim to the fanaticism of the evil Muslim faith."[90] However, the concern is not that these soldiers might convert to Islam, but rather that French practice of educating the native Muslim populations would end in the loss of France's empire. The article stated, "Europeans, particularly the French, are unspeakably naïve towards Muslims. Our officials have yet to understand them. Perpetual betrayal is a dogma for them. They dream of only one thing: to throw the Christians into the sea." The author concluded that the French colonialists bent on the education of these allegedly unscrupulous Muslim populations "do not know…that each Muslim they make is one

[90] M. LeRoy, "Notre échec au Sudan," *La Croix*, September 22, 1897.

more enemy they are creating."[91] It is significant to note that this article in *La Croix*, though clearly written from a Catholic perspective, is not remotely concerned with the conversion or education of the Muslim population of French Sudan. The article's aims are temporal, not spiritual: focusing on preserving France's colonial empire in Africa, not the conversion of Muslims in Sudan. Thus, the religious dichotomy created here between the allegedly civilized French Christians and the apparently violent, anti-colonial Muslims living in Sudan falls almost completely outside traditional conceptions of religion's function in the world.

This alleged chasm between the Christian and Islamic civilizations continued to make headlines into the first decade of the twentieth century, albeit in varied and complex ways. In September of 1903, *Le Figaro* published an editorial written by Egyptian nationalist and Islamic scholar Moustafa Kamel-Bey titled "Europe and Islam." At first read, the publication of this article in *Le Figaro* seems wholly at odds with the arguments of this section. Kamel-Bey, a self-proclaimed "fervent partisan of a rapprochement and a lasting peace between Christians and Muslims," opens the article by stating that "to fully understand the Muslim state of mind, one must exclude all ideas of religious fanaticism."[92] Admittedly, while this article—written by an Islamic scholar in the French language and extoling the possibility of a entente between Christians and Muslims—seems to suggest a positive view of Islam on behalf of *Le Figaro* and its publishers, the article nevertheless functions to reify the increasingly important political gulf between an monolithic Christendom and a cohesive Islamic world.

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Moustafa Kamel-Bey, "L'Europe et L'Islam," *Le Figaro* September 12, 1903.

To explain the discord between the European "Christians" and the Muslims living in their colonies, Kamel-Bey asserts that, it was not the Christians' religion but the politics and policies of empire that had turned the Muslims against them. Kamel-Bey argues, "political domination was not enough for the European states. They added tyranny and injustice to imperial policies. Many will agree with me: instead of bringing civilization and fairness to the Muslim peoples, and instead of reconciling its ideas with the principles of Islam, Europe has sought only to construct barriers between her and her subjects."[93] Kamel-Bey continues on to outline his own political and social remedies that would allow for Muslim subjects to partake in the benefits of empire. He ultimately concludes that this more inclusive empire would "see Islamism and Christianity, the East and the West, walking hand in hand towards the common ideal of peace and progress for all of humanity."[94] While this article in *Le Figaro* overtly suggests that a more inclusive approach to empire might break down the barriers between the peoples of the West and the East— leading to a sort of vague rapprochement— the divisions between these two worlds ultimately come across as deeply entrenched and, most importantly, defined wholly by religion in a mainstream newspaper. Even though France was on the brink of passing the Law of Separation of 1905 and codifying its status as a secular republic, the editor of *Le Figaro* seems to have no qualms with Kamal-Bey's characterization of the French colonists as "Christians" vis-à-vis the Muslim world.

It is well-documented at, at the height of the Dreyfus Affair—a moment in which French journalism had acquired a level of political and cultural influence previously

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

unknown—racialized, antisemitic discourses circulated in both metropolitan and Algerian newspapers, profoundly harming French Jews on both sides of the Mediterranean. But, as demonstrated this section, Jews were not the only religio-racial others targeted by the media during the *fin-de-siècle.* As religio-racial othering became commonplace over the course of the 1890s, Muslims—having long been considered cultural foils to Catholics, secularists, and Algerian Jews in French scholastic and political circles—were implicated in these practices as well. Stories of violence against Christians enacted by Muslims occupied countless pages of French journals during the height of the Dreyfus Affair—often on the same pages the Affair was discussed—and the descriptions of Muslims contained therein used racially-charged language that mirrored descriptions of the Dreyfus and French Jews more generally. Most significant, however, was the fact that not only Catholic but also anticlerical journalists emphasized an entrenched dichotomy between Christianity and Islam—often portrayed as a clash between civilization and savagery—that operated in tandem with blatant racial categorization of Muslims on the pages of France's widely-read daily newspapers.

3.4 Conclusion

The beginning of the twentieth century brought significant changes to France. As the chaos and division that had characterized the 1890s waned, it seemed reason had finally triumphed over religion: Dreyfus was exonerated after a decade-long battle against the Catholic, military establishment and France's status as a secular republic was made into law as the Law of Separation of 1905 was passed by the Third Republic. However, the widespread practice of religious categorization and the racialization of

religious heritage normalized by the Affair would endure with significant effects on French culture, politics and empire well into the twentieth century. While the profound impact of these practices on the Jewish population of twentieth-century Europe has been the focus of countless publications, this chapter has demonstrated that the practices adopted by the French print media during Dreyfus Affair ultimately functioned to normalize the religio-racial othering of Muslims in French newspapers and journals. As suggested above, this was due to the close connections between antisemitism and Islamophobia that emanated from French Algeria in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Significantly, the use of religious categorization was not only employed by Catholic journals. Rather, moderate, mainstream, and even anti-clerical newspapers also utilized religio-racial othering to exclude Muslims from their own ideations of the French nation. Although adverse views towards Muslims had connected French thinkers from disparate religio-political camps throughout the nineteenth century, these attitudes took on new significance during the Dreyfus Affair as the sensationalized and widely-read Catholic and secular-leaning newspapers sold at a breakneck pace.

Crucially, it was not only the religio-racial othering of Muslims, but a parallel emphasis on France's traditional ties to Christianity vis-à-vis the Islamic world—in the tradition of secularists like Tocqueville and Renan—that united these Catholic and anticlerical factions of the French media. As the French government set its sight on acquiring Morocco in the first decade of the twentieth century, France's Christian heritage—rooted in a shared language and practice of morality in relation to Islam—would become increasingly important to both secular republicans and monarchical

Catholics when they discussed the Islamic kingdom in North Africa. It is to the Moroccan question that we will now turn.

4.0 Chapter 4: "Two Frances? Metropolitan Conceptions of Religion, Language and Morality after 1905"

On December 9, 1905, French newspapers announced that the Third Republic had passed the Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State. This law, hailed by contemporaries as "most beneficial to the productive, modern country," dissolved the historical relationship between the French state and the Catholic Church by terminating collaboration between the government and all religious institutions. [1] The ratification of the law—a victory for the influential contingent of secularists within the government—codified the late-nineteenth century concept of *laïcité*, or constitutional secularism, and was seen by anticlerical contemporaries as a means of emancipating the French citizenry from the servile, irrational belief-systems of the Catholic Church.[2] After decades of debate and conflict over the function of religion in French society, France had become a secular republic.

The Law of Separation signified a new legal system in which "religions continued to exist…within a social and political order which they no longer determined."[3] In other words, the law effectively relegated the claims of all religious communities to the private sphere and reinforced the notion that the French public domain was to be free from any

[1] Henri Cahm"Le Bilan de la séparation," *Le Matin,* December 9, 1905.
[2] Eoin Daly, "Laïcité, Gender Equality, and the Politics of Non-Denomination," European Journal of Political Theory, Vol. 11, Issue 3 (2012), 298.
[3] Comments by Marcel Gauchet noted in Jacques Myard *(ed), La laïcité au coeur de la République*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003) 78.

and all religious influence.[4] While private religious practices undoubtedly endured as an important foundation for many people within France during this period, discussions about the Law of Separation that flooded French newspapers in the early twentieth century suggest that a profound transformation had taken place. From a political and cultural perspective, the codification of constitutional secularism was a watershed event for contemporaries of all religious persuasions.

Many individuals in France reacted positively to the new law. Catholic influence in the public sphere, according to the prominent Parisian newspaper *Le Matin*, had been sowing discord within France, and the new law was sure to be a powerful instrument of peace throughout the country.[5] A growing number of mainstream French secularists believed that France would not enjoy the fruits of democracy until all religious influence was rooted out of civic life.[6] Nevertheless, despite the promise of progress, a sense of turmoil had taken hold of French metropolitan society in the years after the Law of Separation. While republicans asserted that legal secularization would transform humankind—once "an accursed race slouching…through a valley of tears"—into "an endless cortege proceeding towards the light," a perceived sense of cultural and moral decline permeated writings by both Catholics and secularists during this period.[7] French sociologist Emile Durkheim reflected on this state of religious uncertainty in early

[4] Aristide Briand, *La Séparation: Discussion de la loi 1904-1905* (Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1908), 8.
[5] Des Houx, "Le Bilan de la séparation," *Le Matin,* December 9, 1905.
[6] Eoin Daly, "The Ambiguous Reach of Constitutional Secularism in Republican France: Revisiting the Idea of Laïcité and Political Liberalism as Alternatives," Oxford Journal of Legal Studies, Vol. 32, Issue 3 (2012), 587.
[7] Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 39.

twentieth-century French society in an essay titled "*La Conception sociale de la religion*." Durkheim stated:

> The old ideals and the divinities which incarnate them are dying because they no longer respond sufficiently to the new aspirations of our day; and the new ideals which are necessary to orient our life are not yet born. Thus, we find ourselves in an intermediary period, a period of moral cold which explains the diverse manifestations of which we are, at every instant, the uneasy and sorrowful witnesses.[8]

However, despite Durkheim's assertions that religion was ill-equipped to resolve modern problems, France's ties to Christianity continued to influence and shape public discussions in the years following the Law of Separation, particularly regarding France's colonies. In fact, early twentieth-century newspapers, government documents, and academic research frequently highlighted the religious dichotomy between the allegedly Christian French and the Muslim inhabitants of North Africa, particularly those of Morocco: the Islamic Kingdom across the Mediterranean that had become the focus of French imperial ambitions in the early twentieth century.[9] Thus, even as anticlericalists extolled France's secular status, they—along with their Catholic foils—simultaneously drew upon the centuries-old religious rivalry that set the alleged "French Christians" against the so-called "barbaric Muslims" of Morocco as French political and military forces attempted to infiltrate Moroccan soil.[10]

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[8] Emile Durkheim, "La Conception sociale de la religion," séance du 18 janvier 1914 de l' "Union des libres penseurs et de libres croyants pour la culture morale," in *Le sentiment religieux a l'heure actuelle,* Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1919, 104.
[9] Edmund Burke, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2014), 8.
[10] M. Rebout, "Fez et révolte," *Le Matin* April 19, 1912.

Although the complex and oftentimes antagonistic relationship between Christians and Muslims had been well-established within French discourse by the early twentieth century, the emphasis on France's explicitly Christian heritage in both Catholic and mainstream, secular literature after the Law of Separation requires additional consideration. As such, the following two chapters will examine the seemingly paradoxical ways French journalists, governmental figures, and public intellectuals across the metropolitan cultural divide wrote and spoke about French Christianity between 1905-1920. During this period, the label "Christian" was imbued with new meaning in mainstream public discourse. That is, the term "Christian" would no longer exclusively refer to a person who practiced Christianity, but was rather invoked after 1905 to denote civilization, morality, racial superiority, and material progress vis-à-vis the label "Muslim," a category indicating backwardness, moral degeneracy, racial inferiority, and decline. By analyzing these religio-racial categories as they appeared in contemporary literature surrounding the conquest of Morocco, this section of dissertation will demonstrate the vital and perhaps surprising role religion continued to play in the French public sphere after the 1905 Law of Separation.[11]

Before examining how the religio-racial categories of "Christian" and "Muslim" were employed by French contemporaries vis-à-vis Morocco after the Law of Separation, it is critical to historicize the relationship between conceptions of French identity, Christianity, moral values, and linguistic usage in the metropolitan context. While

[11] For more on the role religion played in the French public sphere and in the French colonial mindset after 1905, see generally: Martin, Thomas and Thomas Martin, *The French Colonial Mind Volume 2: Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (Omaha: The University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

France's perspicuous association with Christianity in the mainstream newspapers after 1905 might seem paradoxical upon first consideration, it was not necessarily contradictory for Catholics, moderate secularists, or even overt anticlericalists to identify with the notion of a Christian France in the first decade of the twentieth century. This was primarily due to a shared moral code—based in Christian discourse—that connected these disparate metropolitan groups during the *fin-de-siècle* and continued to connect them after the Law of Separation was codified. By uncovering the underlying moral rhetoric shared by Catholics and secularists in early twentieth-century France, this chapter clarifies why the notion of a Christian France— though in theory untenable after 1905— continued to resonate in public discourse, both domestically and in relation to the colonies. The invocation of this specifically Christian moral authority during the first two decades of the twentieth century demonstrates that religious identity endured as a powerful influence over French colonial practices and ideology even after it was legally privatized within metropolitan France.

4.1 Two Frances? Historicizing the Debates Between Church and State 1789-1905

Despite their manifest differences, French secularists and Catholics shared ideas about morality in the early twentieth century. These shared morals were inextricably tied to Christian discourses and were employed regularly in the colonial context. However, before exploring the ways these communal French views of morality played out in the Moroccan context—a subject that will be the focus of the following chapter—it is necessary to historicize the complicated relationship that existed between the Catholic Church and the French State in the century preceding the 1905 Law of Separation.

On the eve of the French Revolution, the Catholic Church and its clergy held vast amounts of ideological and material power. Not only did the Church alone possess the knowledge and administer the rituals that led to salvation, but it also took precedent over the nobility and the third estate in political assemblies and had significant judicial and fiscal privileges under the *Ancien Régime*.[12] However, the Church's pervasive power came into question after the revolutionary events of 1789. It is important to note that this shift was not out of the blue. The religious, political, and philosophical shifts that stemmed from Enlightenment ideas in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century caused many French men and women to perceive God as absent from the realm of human events. David Bell corroborates this notion in his work, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800*, claiming that by the end of the eighteenth century, there was a broad shift in the way the French perceived the world around them. By means of this ideological shift, the French progressed from a perspective in which humanity was subordinate to external—particularly divine—determinations to one in which it was sovereign and self-sustaining. This shift would make it feasible for the French to eventually hold up the nation, rather than God, as the source of all legitimate authority.[13] And, as dialogue concerned with scientific knowledge and faith in reason increased and gained adherents, moral power in France shifted significantly. The Church's monopoly over all things spiritual and intellectual was diminished—though certainly not extinguished—in a culture increasingly reliant on science and reason. In addition, the

[12] William Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19.
[13] David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 26.

growing belief in scientific truth rendered the Church incapable of laying claim to any undisputed absolutes. As a result, the rational, republican values of the French nation allowed it to harness discursive and ideological control over France's populace at the expense of the Church.[14]

While it might be tempting to understand these new ways of perceiving and ordering the world as a process of de-Christianization, the men and women living in eighteenth-century France did not necessarily lose their faith or come to disbelieve in God. Religion simply began to assert less power in the public and political realms. Bell claims that the Christian began to confine himself in his everyday life to altogether secular attitudes, looking exclusively to the rule of prudence and good sense to regulate the details of his life.[15] This shift in attitude does not so much reflect a process of secularization as it does an interiorization of belief. That is, belief was overwhelmingly relegated to the private consciences of individual believers. This privatization of religion, the growing conviction that religion had no connection with the French body politic, and the subsequent, subtle favoring of secular power over divine power had deep ramifications in urban French society. In fact, these changes enabled *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion—that a properly constituted national community required a civil religion that would inspire people to love their duties—to arguably become a reality in France by the late nineteenth century.[16] In this way, the secular French nation arose both out of and against a religious system of belief: even though the abstract concept of the nation was gaining ideological authority in France at the expense of the Church, this

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid, 37-39.

new faith in the nation cannot be accurately understood without reference to religion, because the early French nationalists borrowed extensively from Christianity's symbolic stockpile. [17] This chapter draws on Bell's theoretical assumption that the new, secularized nationalistic faith and Catholicism were symbolically and discursively interrelated in France in the years following the Revolution of 1789. The rhetorical overlap that existed between Catholic and secular approaches to morality would endure in public discourse into the early twentieth century, particularly in the colonial context.

However, the road from the Revolution of 1789 to the 1905 Law of Separation proved a circuitous one. After several revolutionary governments abjectly failed to acquire any lasting legitimacy in the last decade of the eighteenth century, Napoleon Bonaparte, an ambitious military officer from Corsica, marched into the power vacuum, launched a coup against the feeble French Directory, and proclaimed himself First Consul of the fledgling French Republic in November of 1799. A realist concerning matters of religion, Napoleon valued the ideological and political stability that an agreement between the French state and the Catholic Church—with its considerable political power—offered. As such, the Concordat of 1801, an agreement between Napoleon Bonaparte and papal and clerical representatives in both Rome and Paris, overturned the revolutionaries' efforts at de-Christianization by reestablishing relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the French state. Nonetheless, the undisputed power the Church enjoyed before the Revolution of 1789 would never return.

[17] Ibid, 24.

While the Concordat maintained cordial relations between Rome and Paris, the French state would henceforth rule over all religious questions. The Concordat named Catholicism as the religion of the French majority, but significantly established state control over all religious matters and established a state-run ministry of religion. This ministry handled affairs such as naming Catholic bishops and overseeing the practice of other religions. Although Catholicism was no longer the official state religion in France as it had been before the revolution, ties between the Church and the French government were regenerated. While French Catholicism did not go back to its seemingly invulnerable pre-revolutionary status, the government acknowledged it as the "religion of the great majority of the French people."[18] The Concordant would remain law until the Law of Separation passed in 1905.

As discussed in previous chapters, the humiliating loss France incurred at the hands of the Prussians in 1871 saw republican advocates of scientific progress and Catholic proponents of a nationwide return to Christianity emerge as two competing forces attempting to bring about the material and ideological recovery of France in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The struggle between scientific rationalism and Christianity that ensued amongst the anticlerical officials of the Third Republic and contemporary adherents to Catholicism after 1871 appeared to fiercely divide the French nation.[19] Current historiography confirms this rift in French society during the *fin-de-siècle*, upholding the existence of these stark divisions between anticlerical republicans and Catholics during the period.[20] And, admittedly, the nineteenth and early twentieth

[18] Lucien Crouzil, *Le Concordat de 1801* (Paris: Librairie Bloud et Cie, 1904), 4.
[19] Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France*, 4.
[20] For more on the noted divisions between secularists and Catholics in nineteenth-century France

centuries seem to be partly defined by the slow demise of French Christianity, culminating in 1905 with the passing of the Law of Separation.

The conflict between Catholics and secularists was waged in the popular press and publications of the period. Countless newspapers and monographs written in the years leading up to and following the Law of Separation highlight the animosity that existed between secularist and Catholic contemporaries. The 1887 anticlerical work *L'Évolution de la morale,* by Charles Letourneau—a nineteenth-century anthropologist and intellectual—denounced the insidious influence of Catholics within the French metropole. Letourneau wrote in his work of a "terrifying tyranny" that "the religion of Jesus placed on the souls and bodies of the French populace."[21] In a similar vein, passionate anticlericalist politician Émile Combes' 1905 article titled, *Une Deuxième campagne laïque,* stated that the Church had limited the liberties and actions of the French people.[22] The Catholic Church was also hotly denounced in the halls of government. In one of the published governmental debates that focused on the Law of Separation, one Third Republic official described the Catholic Church as "a permanent menace for the future, the seed of new and innumerable conflicts." For many secularists, unless the Church's considerable influence was eradicated from public life, it would restrict France's potential to grow into the modern age.[23]

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see: Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French 1799-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[21] Charles-Jean-Marie Letourneau, *L'Évolution de la morale: Leçons professées pendant l'hiver de 1885-1886* (Paris: A. Delahaye et E. Lecrosnier, 1887), 425.

[22] Émile Combes, *Une Deuxième campagne laïque* (Paris: G. Bellais, 1905), 2.

[23] Aristide Briand, *La Séparation: Discussion de la loi 1904-1905* (Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1908), 21.

While it is easy to assume from these excerpts that all secularists hated the Church and religion in general, that wasn't necessarily the case. Rather, many secularists hated the temporal power of the Church and its influence on the French body politic, but continued to affirm that religion—when kept private and confined to hearth and home—had intrinsic value in French society. An article in the politically moderate *Le Matin*—published on December 9, 1905—stated of the Catholic Church, "it does not need to offend the government or civilians, nor interfere in the political discussions of the nation." However the author upheld the idea that the Church had domain over "the conscience, the interior." And that its work was "lawfully exercised only on the soul."[24] This attitude was typical for many secularists during the *fin-de-siècle*. While many believed that the Church had no role to play in public life, it contained some value to individuals behind closed doors. This idea is upheld in an editorial discussing the Law of Separation in *Le Matin* published in January of 1906. The article stated, "this agreement…makes religion an essentially personal matter. Since this reform is made in a spirit of justice and it guarantees freedom of conscience in the most absolute way, we have only to congratulate ourselves. We can finally see that religious truths are only supported by those who profess them."[25] While anticlerical secularists in early twentieth-century France disparaged the Church's influence on French public life, many of them believed that there was room for religion as a personal, private matter. Nevertheless, even though debates between secularists and Catholics over the role of religion characterized a large part of French cultural and political life in the years surrounding the Law of

[24] Henri Des Houx, "Le Bilan de la séparation," *Le Matin,* December 9, 1905.
[25] H. Hardun, "Propos d'un Parisien*," Le Matin*, January 3, 1906.

Separation, a discursive analysis of contemporary rhetoric reveals these two seemingly oppositional entities were not as ideologically disparate as it may seem.

In the late nineteenth century, an aggressive form of constitutional secularism, or *laïcité,* emerged under the French Third Republic. *Laïcité,* as briefly outlined above, refers to the separation of Church and state through the state's protection of individuals from the claims of religion.[26] Despite the fact that the majority of government officials in the Third Republic believed progress depended on scientific truth rather than religion, they were keenly aware of the Catholic Church's potential influence in the public sphere. French historian Patricia Tilburg asserts that the Republic's secularization efforts—particularly those efforts in public schools—and its promotion of a secularized interior life resulted from a belief that any mention of religion would help bolster the cultural and political influence of the Catholic Church in France.[27] However, after liberating the French populace from the moral shackles of the Church, government officials recognized that a vigorous *morale laïque*—or "secular morality"—was required to replace Christianity's moral imperative to revive the nation.[28] In her work *Colette's Republic: Work, Gender, and Popular Culture in France 1870-1914*, Tilburg touches on the importance of *morale laïque* in the Third Republic's secularizing initiatives, contending that the moralizing crusade of *laïcité* itself developed out of French Catholic discourse and ideals. This section of the dissertation utilizes this theoretical notion, contending that French secularists depended heavily on laying claim to discourses of morality that the

[26] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 15.
[27] Patricia Tilburg, *Colette's Republic: Work, Gender, and Popular Culture in France 1870-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 56.
[28] Ibid, 59.

Church had employed for centuries, particularly in the colonial context after 1905. Even though officials of the Third Republic minimized France's explicit role as "eldest daughter of the Church," contemporary sources show that Catholics and secularists alike recognized that France's dominant moral framework—and its superior civilization—was linked to its Catholic traditions.[29]

An 1894 monograph titled *De La Famille: Leçons de philosophie morale,* written by progressive Catholic philosopher Amédée de Margerie, states, "a moral civilization is the heritage we have received from the Church."[30] Here, in overt terms, de Margerie connects French morals with Catholicism, suggesting that morals, French civilization, and the Church were mutually reinforcing entities. Similarly, the work *La Morale sans dieu, ses principes et ses conséquences*, written by Christian apologist Auguste-Théodore-Paul de Broglie, claimed that "the establishment of Christianity in France brought significant moral, social, and civilizational progress."[31] Here, in a similar vein to de Margerie's work, de Broglie puts forth the idea that Christianity itself has led to France's moral and civilizational advancement. For these two writers, Christianity was sewn into the fabric of French society and notably contributed to the advanced ethics and society of the French populace. Crucially, despite both being progressive Catholics, these writers were concerned with Christianity's role in promoting France's secular interests and advancement rather than the salvation of souls.

[29] Brown, *For the Soul of France, 8.*
[30] Amédée de Margerie, *De La Famille: Leçons de philosophie morale* (Paris: Téqui, 1894), 31.
[31] Auguste-Théodore-Paul de Broglie, *La Morale sans dieu, ses principes et ses conséquences,* (Paris, Putois-Cretté, 1886), 15.

Secularists also recognized the role of the Church in the construction of France's shared moral framework. Letourneau's above-mentioned *L'Évolution de la morale*, despite being fervently anticlerical, conceded, "the Christian Church laid the framework for the progressive, new, secular morality."[32] Although secularists attempted to disentangle these ideas of a secular-minded morality from French Catholicism, the latent connections between Christianity and a moral, progressive civilization prevailed in contemporary thought across the metropolitan cultural divide.

In fact, multiple sources underline the idea that republican morality was intended to directly improve upon Christian ethics. Author Albert Dès' commentary on secular morals, *Éducation morale et civique,* discussed the benefits of a secular, post-Christian moral framework: "these [secular] morals are more rational than Christian morals which are too particular, too numerous, and too circumstantial." For Dès, nonspiritual, republican morals "would not be concerned with religious affiliation, but would be based on the universal conscience and immutable reason of humanity."[33] Despite his clear desire to move beyond a constricted, Christian form of morality, Dès was clearly aware of the connections between established, religious values and what he sees as more innovative, secular mores. Charles Letourneau's *L'Évolution de la morale* also underlines the innate connection that existed between secular morals and Christianity in the minds of contemporaries. Letourneau admitted in his anti-Christian work, "to be fair, Christianity is responsible for the dissemination of civilized ideas such as brotherhood and charity. It is here that it has its importance."[34] In these passages, both Dès and Letourneau

[32] Letourneau, *L'Évolution de la morale,* 461.
[33] Albert Dès, *Éducation morale et civique* (Paris: Librairie des Ecoles, 1900), VII.
[34] Letourneau, *L'Évolution de la morale,* 426.

begrudgingly tipped their hats to the role Christianity had historically played in the construction of French society's moral framework and civilized state. However, while these sources ultimately suggest an imagined difference in Catholic and secular morality, a deeper look at these professed differences reveals significant similarities between the two ideological camps.

Not surprisingly, works published by Catholic groups suggest that for Catholics, morality was partly characterized by submission to God, the acceptance of his will, and keeping the body and mind away from worldly influence.[35] However, there were earthly benefits to morality as well. De Margerie's work, *De La Famille: Leçons de philosophie morale,* glorified the undisputed "moral power" the medieval church exerted over the people of France. In *De la Famille*, de Margerie asserted that French society had reached its civilizational peak before the Revolution of 1789 when France was "Christian in faith, in public morals, in law, in institutions, in science, in art, and in language."[36] However, the work takes solace in the fact that Christian moral ideals continued to produce more practical, earthly results for contemporaries of all religious persuasions. When properly exercised, moral behavior produced ethical mothers and fathers, enabled familial affection, allowed French civil life to function properly, and, most importantly, fostered a deep love for France among its citizens.[37] These results were celebrated by both Catholics and secularists alike during this period.

Some Catholic writers also suggested that morality based in Christian values contributed to the preservation of modern French civilization. The Catholic novelist and

[35] Tilburg, *Colette's Republic,* 53.
[36] Amédée de Margerie, *De La Famille: Leçons de philosophie morale,* 12.
[37] Ibid, 226.

philosopher George Fonsegrive argued in his work *Morale et société*, that "morals maintain an indispensable cohesion and enable the existence of an active, civil society…the moral order is based on superior reasoning."[38] This passage from Fonsegrive's work suggests that, at least in the eyes of some contemporary Catholics, a moral framework produced a vibrant civil society full of engaged citizens. Echoing his secularist counterparts, Fonsegrive's work connects France's Christian past with a more vibrant, moral, and rational future. Similarly, the Catholic pamphlet titled *La Conscience naturelle et la conscience religieuse: Philosophie morale*, by Henri Kleffer, contended that without morals founded on Christian principles, "the social edifices of France will crumble into barbarism."[39] This quote from Kleffer's work attributes France's social progress and civilization to the influence of Catholicism. For Catholics—and their anticlerical colleagues— morality both exhibited and produced an advanced, patriotic, and civilized French citizenry.

While contemporary secularists did not think that Christian dogma or rituals should influence French institutions or laws, they upheld the importance of a Christian-based morality in modern French society. This was chiefly due to the belief that a moral populace contributed to France's advanced civilization. After making a list of "savage" peoples across the globe who lacked moral, patriotic sentiments, Albert Dès', *Éducation morale et civique* states that, for the enlightened French citizenry, "the love of the *patrie* is based on reason, traditions, and morals."[40] For, Dès, the objective of teaching morality

[38] George Fonsegrive, *Morale et société* (Paris: Bloud, 1907), 20-87.
[39] Henri Kleffer, *La Conscience naturelle et la conscience religieuse: Philosophie morale* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1890), x.
[40] Dès, *Éducation morale,* 351.

was to produce "patriotic" French citizens filled with "charity, personal dignity, justice, good habits, and moral thoughts."[41] Dès' language parallels his Catholic equivalents across the ideological divide. Similarly, the monograph *Études de morale* by positivist philosopher and professor Frédéric Rauh, directly connects Catholic morality and patriotism. For the anticlerical Rauh, Catholic traditions and morals were indeed the sources out of which the French population's patriotic sentiments came. *Études de morale* links the concepts of morality, justice, and love for the *patrie* within its pages.[42] Although clearly skeptical of the relationship between Christianity and modern moral concepts like human rights, Rauh nevertheless was aware of the unifying influence of France's Christian tradition. For Rauh, "many who doubt the divinity of Christ are nevertheless persuaded of the necessity of human rights and fraternity." Here, Rauh implies that modern French concepts like human rights and fraternity both came out of Christianity's moral lexicon. At the same time, he affirms the idea that one can enjoy the benefits of France's Christian tradition without any personal religious devotion. Rauh argues, "instead of being content with this vague and indeterminate deduction, democrats today rely on historical reasons to show that in fact religious beliefs…are likely to contribute to the development of the democratic spirit."[43] Even as he stresses the importance of rationality and evidence when historicizing France's modern institutions, he highlights the contemporary belief that modern, democratic impulses emerged out of the French Christian tradition.

[41] Ibid, 5.
[42] Frédéric Rauh, *Études de morale* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1911), 183.
[43] Ibid, 263.

Judging by these examples, both Catholics and secularists believed that morality rooted in France's Christian tradition led to a deep love of the *Patrie* and contributed to the maintenance of an advanced—and distinctly modern—French civilization. While the role of religion was the fundamental point of contention between fervent Catholics and secularists, both groups understood the critical role morality played in French society. As a result, discourses that emphasized France's superior, moral civilization in relation to the peoples of Morocco resonated with both Catholics and secularists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

4.2 The Role of Language in France Under the Third Republic

As this section of the dissertation focuses on the shifting meaning of certain religious categories and linguistic constructs, it is imperative to briefly outline the relationship between the French populace and language, particularly after the French Revolution of 1789. Modern French historiography is littered with scholarship that focuses on how the emergence of new linguistic concepts radically altered the French public's perceptions of the worlds in which they inhabited. Although the composition of the French public sphere changed and expanded between the late-eighteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the notion that ideologies might be constructed, the compelling intensity inherent in rhetorical transformation in France, and the crucial role of language in shaping identity remained important within French society writ large throughout the modern period.[44] In other words, "great moral power" was traditionally attributed to

[44] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 15.

language and literature amongst the people of modern France.[45] Moments of great historical change and societal rupture—such as the French Revolution, the invasion of Algeria, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Dreyfus Affair, to name a few key events—emerge within French historiography as moments when language provided a venue through which governments, individuals, and classes both exercised—and resisted—power. The influence of language amplified over the course of the nineteenth century as increased literacy rates and a spike in journalistic publications placed the French media in a unique position to influence the ideals and values of the expanding French public sphere.

While the utilization of language to accomplish political and cultural goals is obviously not an exclusively French practice, Eugene Weber's foundational work, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914,* claimed that linguistic politics played a fundamental role in the construction of a modern, secular French identity under the Third Republic. For Weber, the linguistic diversity that had characterized France for centuries prior to 1870 became significant when it was perceived as a threat to ideological unity. For officials of the Third Republic, all citizens had to understand what interests of the Republic and, most importantly, the Third Republic needed an effective vehicle for propaganda.[46] However, the Republic could hardly capture the hearts and minds of France's populace if this populace did not know the French language. As such, according to Weber, a French state that had been previously

[45] Gilbert D. Chaitlin, *Culture Wars and Literature in the French Third Republic* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 16.
[46] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 72.

unconcerned about linguistic diversity was replaced by an ideology that embraced unity as a "positive good" and "recognized language as a significant factor in achieving it." [47] Therefore, educational reforms, notably the Ferry Laws of the early 1880s that provided free, secular, and compulsory education for all French children, were implemented not only to increase literacy rates but also to promote unity via the French language throughout the country's diverse regions.[48] As the nineteenth century progressed, Weber argued that secular educators used language to inculcate French children with a deep love for France at the expense of Catholicism. As a result, by the early twentieth century—the period in which the first children affected by the Ferry Laws reached adulthood—the French language had become more than a possession of an educated elite. Rather, it became "a patrimony in which all could share, with significant results for national cohesion."[49] In other words, language itself was the venue through which the Third Republic allegedly forged a universal, secular French identity.

Weber's thesis in *Peasants into Frenchmen* has been challenged by many historians—most notably Caroline Ford in her work *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany.* In *Creating the Nation,* Ford analyzes the process of French nation-building not from the center—that is, Paris—but from the periphery through a regional study of Finistère in Brittany. Ford's work ultimately demonstrates how the emergence of an indigenous social Catholic political movement committed to republican and democratic ideals served as a bridge between the people of Finistère and secular republican officials in Paris. Far from the center imposing upon the

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid, 336.

periphery, those in the periphery brokered with those in the center, successfully challenging uniform religious and linguistic policies emanating from Paris into a familiarized notion of republican France representative of local interests.[50] In keeping with Ford's critical approach, this chapter contends that, while the Republic's education and secularization initiatives may appear to have succeeded in winning the French people's allegiance from the alters of the seemingly defeated Catholic Church, religious language and a French Christian identification endured in public rhetoric into the twentieth century, particularly in the colonial context. The important role of language within contemporary French society and politics prevents us from simply viewing the endurance of the label "French Christian" as a linguistic oversight on the part of the secular republicans writing about Morocco. Language played too crucial a role in the conflicts between the Third Republic and the Catholic Church to have been used indiscriminately or randomly in any circumstance. Therefore, we must set such language within its historical contexts and judiciously consider its various meanings.

As stated above, when the Third Republic came to power in 1871, government officials, their supporters, and their critics alike all utilized language to achieve their own social and political ends. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the drive for increased secularization—and the subsequent Catholic backlash—the fight to prove Alfred Dreyfus' guilt or innocence, the passing of the Law of Separation, and the

[50] Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). See also, Stephane Gerson "L'état français et le culte malaisé des souvenirs locaux, 1830-1880," *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle* 29 (2004); Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Ils apprenaient la France: L'exaltation des régions dans le discours patriotique* (Paris: MSH Paris, 1997).

continued struggle to legitimize and justify the French hold over Morocco all exemplify battles fought at the level of rhetoric within French newspapers, literature, and legislation. Catholic contemporaries, according to David Bell, argued that Frenchness was something inherited, something in the blood, even if political action was still necessary to purge France of impure alien influences. In their eyes, France in the early twentieth century remained a Christian, Catholic nation, part of a great and unbroken chain that extended from the people to God and the kingdom of heaven.[51] Conversely, secular republicans asserted that the era when religion permeated French life had definitively ended, and an "extinguished Christianity" had passed its torch to the republican *patri*e.[52] However, many French republicans continued to associate the French explicitly with Christianity in the Moroccan context, producing an innovative, secularized religious identification rooted in France's established Christian traditions.[53] In this way, French republicans—enabled by the powerful French media, increased literacy rates, and an expanding civil society—drew upon the modern French practice of imbuing words and concepts with new or alternative meanings in times of cultural upheaval. In so doing, they contributed to the enduring cultural importance of a "Christian" France after the Law of Separation, particularly in relation to France's colonial holdings.

[51] David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, 203.
[52] Ibid, 204.
[53] Ibid, 201.

4.3 Dreyfus, Durkheim, and a Period of French "Moral Coldness"

In 1883, the well-known secularist Jules Ferry, French minister of education and author of the "Ferry Laws" which, as mentioned above, provided mandatory secular education for all French children in the late nineteenth century, wrote a letter to Pope Leo XIII. In the letter, Ferry assured the new pope that, despite republican commitments to secularization, the French government had no intention of undoing the Concordat and separating the Church and the state.[54] For Ferry, the Concordat, which had governed the Church of the French majority since 1802, "was a fixed point."[55] Catholicism in France was culturally ingrained to the point of inevitability. In 1888 Ferry declared in a meeting that a separation between Church and state would be contrary not only to the beliefs of a great number of French people but to "something much stronger than beliefs, to the habits and traditions of the French people, to popular instinct itself."[56] Ferry believed the relationship between the French state and the Catholic Church, however problematic for secular republicans in the late nineteenth century, was a fundamental feature of French life. Nevertheless, the Law of Separation passed only seventeen years later, breaking the Concordat and rendering France a secular nation. This *volte face* might seem surprising, but certain events account for the secular republicans' shift from a policy of toleration to a policy of separation in less than a generation.

It is important to mention that Ferry was not entirely correct about the grassroots support for a Catholic France in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Across France,

[54] Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French 1799-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 344.
[55] Ibid, 344.
[56] Jules Ferry, speech of 21 December 1888, in *Discours et opinions,* VII (Paris, 1898), 129.

religious practice was declining amongst increasingly varied and heterogeneous groups including rural peasants, industrial workers, students, writers, and socialists. In addition, religious processions were steadily banned in various towns across the country towards the end of the nineteenth century and the number of civic burials rose exponentially in regions from Paris to the Limousin.[57] The comments of a peasant from Beissat—now Creuse—in the early twentieth century further highlight this point. This individual stated of the Catholic Church and its priests, "honor be to those who cleave to reason instead of the enigmatic revelation…Let us shake off the monastic and clerical yoke and thus become free men again."[58] Echoing language used by anticlericalists in Paris, many individuals across France seemed to be placing a higher value on reason, science, and knowledge than on religious belief and practice during the *fin-de-siècle.* However, it was the Dreyfus Affair and its aftermath that accounted for the fundamental shift in views towards the Catholic Church and France's Catholic population during this crucial period in French religious life. As discussed in the previous chapter, the debates over the guilt or innocence of Captain Alfred Dreyfus ideologically split the population of France from its commencement in 1894 into the early years of the twentieth century. Historians of modern France have often referred to the Dreyfus Affair as a religious war between Catholics and secularists and widely recognize the affair as a time of extreme tumultuousness in French religious and cultural life in the last years of the nineteenth century.[59]

[57] Gildea, *Children of the Revolution,* 347.
[58] Ibid, 348.
[59] Ibid, 355.

Though the Dreyfus Affair was explored in chapter three for its role in popularizing the practice of religious othering and binding religious heritage to modern concepts of race in France's print media —and the media's subsequent utilization of this religio-racial categorization against both Jews and Muslims—this chapter considers the Affair through a different lens: as a moment of moral rupture that would lead to the secularization of the label "Christian" in mainstream French discourse. For many, the Dreyfus Affair and the anti-Semitic rhetoric spouted by anti-Dreyfusard Catholics highlighted all that was wrong with the Catholic Church and its place within the French public sphere, affecting wider French viewpoints of the Church and religion more generally. As the Affair led to a sense of severe moral anxiety and religious skepticism with in the metropole, it deepened the outward rift between the Catholic, monarchical right and the Republican, secular left and, ultimately, paved the way for the codification 1905 Law of Separation.[60]

As suggested above, at the height of the Affair, contemporary Dreyfusards asserted that France's monarchical Catholics had brought the nation to a state of moral catastrophe. An article in *Le Temps* from December 1899 contended that the Dreyfus Affair had been an instrument of discord for "far too long between the French" and had caused a great moral crisis within French society.[61] The monograph *Les Doctrines de*

[60] Importantly, recent historiography considers the Dreyfus Affair and the 1905 Law of Separation to be two parts of the same phenomenon. Gilbert Chaitin combines the two events in his analysis within his book, *Culture Wars and Literature in the French Third Republic,* claiming that it was the Dreyfus Affair and the Law of Separation, which "divided the country into two warring camps" causing "internal strife which lasted until the beginning of World War I." Although I have demonstrated in the three previous chapters that the two groups were not as irreconcilably distinct as present historiography suggests, the outward divisions between the two were formidable and caused a deep sense of uncertainty within metropolitan culture.

[61] M. Falateuf, "Haute cour de justice," *Le Temps,* December 29,1899.

haine, written by the historian Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, contended that the Dreyfus Affair was responsible for the moral crisis that traversed France.[62] French socialist leader Jean Jaurès claimed the affair had been responsible for the moral degradation permeating French society in his work, *Les Preuves: Affaire Dreyfus*.[63] Joseph Reinach, a French writer, politician, and admirer of the famous secularist Léon Gambetta contended that monarchical Catholics had caused "genuine inquietude and anxious uncertainty" in France.[64] Many of these Dreyfusard works refer to the French army officials associated with the Affair as both "Catholics" and "Christians."[65] During this Affair, Catholic Christianity began to be widely portrayed as a reactionary force responsible for a newfound moral uncertainty within France.

These sentiments led to the rise of a new imagined threat to France: the "Catholic fanatic." Anticlericalist Henri la Soudiar argued that the Dreyfus Affair was not merely a miscarriage of justice, but was rather a conscious and premeditated crime: the crime of "clericalism and anti-Semitism." Soudiar affirmed that France was trapped in a crisis that rendered the French nation "unconsciously drowned in a deep moral lapse that explains and characterizes it."[66] The work *L'Affaire Dreyfus et ses ressorts secrets: Précis historique,* by famous novelist and politician Paschal Grousset, claimed that the French army officers who charged Dreyfus with treason were akin to a "Catholic fury" who had

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[62] Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *Les Doctrines de haine* (Paris: C. Levy, 1902), 2.
[63] Jean Jaurès, *Les Preuves: Affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: La petite République, 1898), 247.
[64] Joseph Reinach, *L'Affaire Dreyfus: Tout le crime* (Paris: P.V. Stock, 1900), 532.
[65] Joseph Reinach, *Vers la justice par la vérité: L'Affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: P.V. Stock, 1898), 108.
[66] Henri la Soudiar, *Bibliographie Française, recueil de catalogues des éditeurs Français: Accompagné d'une table alphabétique par noms d'auteurs et d'une table systématique* (Paris: H. le Soudier, 1900), 40.

unleashed a "ruinous tempest" on France. Grousset asserted that religion was "a prodigious instrument of rule, which crushes the seeds of all revolution, repeals all rights, and enslaves and humiliates the conscience." He continued, regarding the "Catholic, royalist" nature of the army: "when we forge armies in such a way it is for a purpose. For Grousset, this purposed was to crush the French Revolution and the modern world, "establishing the rule of a state where the Christian priest be all, where the individual will be nothing."[67] The work *Vers la lumière...impressions vécues: Affaire Dreyfus*, by the French feminist and socialist Séverine—a *nom de plume* for Caroline Rémy de Guebhard—maintained that the Dreyfus Affair was triggered by Catholics and that Catholic anti-Semitism was a "doctrine of hate, destroyer of progress, and a danger for the Republic.[68] The Dreyfus Affair inspired Dreyfusard journalists and writers to associate Catholicism particularly and Christianity more generally with doctrines of hate, France's despotic past, and reactionary politics that inhibited modern progress.

The association of Catholics with the *Ancien Régime* and counter-enlightenment principles during the Dreyfus Affair continued to influence debates over the Law of Separation a few years later. An article in *Le Matin* from October 1904 stated, "the present political regime is inspired by the emancipatory principles of the revolution—free from dogmatic input—and is pressing towards intellectualism and rationality. Clericalism has always stood against the Republic as an implacable enemy…the law is called upon to rescue us from any fanaticism and ignorance in the country." The article supported the law, which it alleged "undermined religion" since religious power had denied the rights

[67] Paschal Grousset, *L'Affaire Dreyfus et ses ressorts secrets: Précis historique* (Paris: A. Goudet, 1899), 18.
[68] Séverine, *Vers la lumière...impressions vécues: Affaire Dreyfus* (P.V. Stock, Paris, 1900), 352.

of the French people since the establishment of the Concordant.[69] So, when the Law of Separation passed in 1905, many contemporaries perceived it as a rational, progressive move. An article in *Le Matin* claimed exuberantly that the Law of Separation was "a law truly worthy of a secular republic…henceforth, no vestiges of the old state religion remains, it recognizes no religion…all are equal before the law." It asserts that the law will be effective "against religious fanatics," leaving the French people to "carefully roll abolished deities in the purple shroud of sleeping, dead gods."[70] The cultural and political sway of these supposed "fanatical" Catholics seemed to be diminished within French society after the Law of Separation.

However, while the Dreyfus Affair led to a fanaticisation of Catholics within public discourse, minimized the political power of the monarchical right, and ultimately led to the passing of the Law of Separation in 1905, a sense of moral degeneracy and confusion continued to pervade the metropolitan population of France, both Catholic and secularist alike. Contemporary Catholics were at pains to underline the moral and religious breakdown in France after 1905. Even though the law was not implemented to eradicate religion from France—rather, it was implemented to relegate religious conviction to individuals' private lives in favor of public peace—many Catholics felt that France had lost a key part of its identity and former glory. Albert de Mun stated in his work *Contre la séparation*, that the rupture between the French government and the Church constituted the "crucial happening of our times…France is in an uncertain, precarious, and sad position." Mun continued, "some call it the intellectual and social

[69] Stephane Lauzanne, "Vers la séparation," *Le Matin,* October 23, 1904.
[70] Jean D'Orsay, "La Fin du concordat," *Le Matin,* July 4, 1905.

emancipation of the nation, others will see that is will cause moral decay and national abasement. But without even addressing this debate, we must acknowledge the fact that the separation of Church and state is France's official apostasy."[71] Further, for some Catholics, the separation was of great and detrimental significance to their religious lives, as seen in the monograph *Après la séparation: Suivi du texte de la loi concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État*, by the moderate right writer and politician Gabriel-Paul-Othenin d' Haussonville. D' Haussonville stated in this work, "the ambiguities and inconsistencies of the law explain and justify the abundant uncertainties which currently shape Catholic points of view."[72] An article published in the more moderate *Le Matin* emphasized this uncertainty as well. It stated, "this nation that was previously called the eldest daughter of the Church in regards to religion is now an object of sadness, grave concern, and anxiety."[73] While the Law of Separation was implemented first and foremost to privatize religion, it is clear that contemporary Catholics perceived it as something more resembling apostasy than religious interiorization. France's symbolic status as eldest daughter of the Church, despite over a century of revolution and increasing secularization, had continued to hold ideological sway for France's Catholics.

While it was understandable for Catholics to have felt a sense of unease vis-à-vis the Law of Separation, secularists espoused similar sentiments. An article in *Le Temps* expressed concerned over the political nature of the Law of Separation. The author acknowledged that, by definition, the rupture would "result in greater liberty for both

[71] Albert de Mun, *Contre la séparation* (Paris: Vie C. Poussielgue, 1905), 95.
[72] Gabriel-Paul-Othenin d' Haussonville, *Après la séparation: Suivi du texte de la loi concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État* (Paris: Perrin, 1906), 20.
[73] Stephane Lauzanne, "La Séparation," *Le Matin,* December 12, 1905.

spouses," that is, the Church and the state. However, the author worried that the Law of Separation was a Pandora's box that would pave the way for "a new arbitrariness" in France "that will not be limited by the pleasure of the majority." As a result, the author apprehensively stated that France was "passing from a stable regime to a regime based on the whims of the highest bidder."[74] While not concerned for the fate of the Church for its own sake, the author feared that France was lapsing into incertitude and potentially falling under the rule of an arbitrary government. The separation of the former "spouses" carried momentous social consequences even for non-religious French men and women.

By minimizing France's traditional role as eldest daughter of the Church, the French government removed a fundamental characteristic of French culture that had contributed to the country's international prestige for centuries.[75] An article appearing in *Le Matin,* written by antisemitic Catholic Eduard Drumont, one of the chief instigators of the Dreyfus Affair, highlights this notion: "1906 finishes in sorrow and 1907 begins with anxiety. There has been the total collapse of one society and we lack the ability to create a new one…never have I seen such a series of dark events… The good French men who had been attached to the traditions which made France glorious never found themselves…so low."[76] In this passage, Drumont reiterates the prevalent notion that France's relationship with the Catholic Church had made the nation somehow more illustrious and secure on the international stage.[77] More importantly, it also demonstrated that the Law of Separation had caused the perception of a moral crisis within

[74] Charles Vernes, "Concordat et séparation," *Le Temps,* August 31, 1903.
[75] Gildea, *Children of the Revolution,* 439.
[76] Eduard Drumont, "La séparation," *Le Matin,* December 31, 1906.
[77] Gildea, *Children of the Revolution,* 337.

metropolitan society. The work *La Crise de la République,* by self-identifying liberal J.L. de Lanessan, repeated similar sentiments. According to Lanessan, the "individual" had not lost any physical or intellectual qualities after the Law of Separation, but the nation was "no longer governed by morality. It seems to overlook the purpose of moral greatness and power."[78] While the individual in France continued to thrive physically and intellectually, France had lost its moral compass. While de Lanessan was not opposed to the separation, he questioned the state's ability to replace the Church's role in society as he maintained the important stabilizing and moralizing role that the "high Catholic cultural ideal" had played in France prior to the Separation. Regardless, Lanessan affirmed that, despite the political differences that divided the Catholics and secularists, "they must unite and make every effort to…raise the moral greatness of this country."[79] Judging by these sources, feelings of division, moral decay, and social instability permeated France in the years After the Law of Separation. Thus, the metropolitan French populace found itself in a state of ideological limbo. Perceived breaks with a reactionary Catholic past coupled with the sense that enlightened progress—no matter how liberating—was unable to fill the cultural void left by the separation: a reality which echoed Durkheim's befitting notion that "the old gods are growing old or already dead, and others are not yet born." [80]

[78] J.L. de Lanessan, *La Crise de la République* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1914), 14-37.
[79] Ibid, 56, 120.
[80] Durkheim, *On Morality and Society*, xlvii.

4.4 Conclusion

Based on the contemporary commentary analyzed above, the codification of the 1905 Law of Separation was a momentous event in metropolitan French life: the equivalent of apostasy for many Catholics and a jolting experience on a political and sociocultural level for anticlericals and the religiously ambivalent. However, as suggested earlier, even as the increased allusions to Catholic fanatics during the Dreyfus Affair and the codification of the Law of Separation made it increasingly unpopular to be associated with Christianity in public rhetoric, mainstream, popular discourse surrounding the French infiltration of Morocco explicitly identified the French with Christianity, oftentimes associating and conflating the labels "French" and "Christian." This was due to the fact that, although anticlericalism became more widespread across the nineteenth century—and particularly visible during the Dreyfus Affair and the debates over of the Law of Separation—secular public intellectuals continued to value the traditions of French Christianity for their role in allegedly civilizing the French populace and for promoting private morality even as they rejected the idea that the Church should play any kind of official public role within modern France. Even as Catholic intellectuals lamented the banishing of Christianity to the private sphere, both Catholics and secularists agreed that Christianity had fundamentally impacted French culture and morals in a positive way.

This sense that Catholic Christianity was an essential element of Frenchness was even more pronounced in the colonial context, where the conflict between secularists and Catholics faded in the face of the larger "civilizational" confrontation with Islam, particularly Moroccan Islam. Despite their differences, secular French intellectuals and

their Catholic counterparts asserted that Christianity— either as a living tradition or at the very least as a cultural heritage—had produced a superior civilization to those of the Islamic world. As such, the sweeping associations made between the French and Christianity in the Moroccan context denoted a change in meaning to the label "Christian" during this period of moral and social instability in the French metropole. Far from signifying any religious cohesion amongst the French, contemporaries applied the label "Christian" to denote a superior French civilization, French racial superiority, and rationality in direct contrast to the Muslims of Morocco: peoples defined by a dilapidated material civilization, racial inferiority, and irrational religious fanaticism. In so doing, contemporaries—both secular and Catholic— acknowledged the enduring notion of a shared, French Christian identification that simultaneously linked the French people to France's illustrious Christian past and a distinctly material, progressive, colonial modernity.

5.0 Chapter 5: "The French In Morocco: Religion, Sexuality, and the Secularization of Christianity"

The scramble for Africa entered its final phase at the dawn of the twentieth century, deepening international rivalries as the nations of Europe conspired to acquire the last independent domain across the Mediterranean Sea: the kingdom of Morocco. Unlike its North African neighbors Algeria and Tunisia, Morocco had evaded the yoke of European colonization throughout the nineteenth century.[1] Due to its tactical location on the Strait of Gibraltar, its resources, and its noteworthy financial and political independence, Morocco proved an appealing prize to not only France, but also to Britain, Spain, Italy, and, later, Germany.[2] Perhaps ironically, Morocco's prized status within the increasingly complex global power dynamics helped preserve its independence until 1912. The "Moroccan question," as it would come to be known, had hitherto blocked any one European power from attempting to annex the Islamic kingdom.[3] However, by 1900,

[1] For more on the French invasion and colonization of Algeria, please see the footnotes in chapter one of this dissertation. For more on the French invasion and colonization of Tunisia, which ultimately falls beyond the scope of this dissertation, see Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Mary Lewis "Geographies of Power: The Tunisian Civic Order, Jurisdictional Politics, and Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1881–1935," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 80 (December 2008), 791-830; Mary Lewis *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

[2] Edmund Burke, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2014), 12.

[3] For more information of the geopolitics surrounding Morocco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Edmund Burke, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance 1860-1911*(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976); Sahar Bazzaz *Forgotten Saints: History, Power, and Politics in the Making of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Spencer Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul:*

Morocco's political isolation was coming to an end. As early as 1905, Morocco's government—the *makhzan*—had become significantly indebted to foreign speculators and governments. These growing debts, coupled with several years of bad harvests and the outbreak of disease amongst certain segments of the population, rendered the Moroccan state vulnerable to foreign influence.[4]

As the *makhzan* became increasingly unstable and politically impotent, divisions between Moroccan elites and the disenfranchised poor increased.[5] As elites made their own arrangements with European speculators, large swaths of the Moroccan population were attracted to the concept of Islamic jihad against the alleged Christian imperialists.[6] Concurrently, back in France, domestic politics under the Third Republic were characteristically tumultuous. Governments rose and fell frequently over the first decade of the twentieth century as the Dreyfus Affair, religious discord, and class conflicts impacted politics and divided the metropole. Within this cacophonous political climate, colonizing Morocco became the focus of debate even as it harbored the potential to unify the French populace.[7]

French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance 1912-1956 (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2009)

[4] Burke, *The Ethnographic State,* 12.

[5] Around 1904, European—mostly French—speculators began buying up the best agricultural land and the Moroccan state began borrowing large sums of money from the French government. Attempting to secure much-needed revenue, the *makhzan*—the Moroccan government—attempted to enact a tax reform in 1902, but failed to provide the needed revenue to keep the state autonomous from European creditors. By 1904, Morocco was encumbered with an international debt commission and had a treasury balance of 100 million francs.

[6] Sahar Bazzaz, *Forgotten Saints: History, Power, and Politics in the Making of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 13.

[7] For its part, the French colonial lobby laid out the benefits of annexing Morocco as they faced fervent opposition by others wishing to focus first on reacquiring Alsace and Lorraine from the Germans. Further, the colonial lobby itself was fragmented over which policy might prove most efficacious in procuring the North African kingdom for France. These deliberations in the early twentieth century would shape both French policy on the Moroccan question as well as French

As outlined in the previous chapter, while their views on the role of religion within France conflicted, both Catholics and secular republicans stressed an essentialized French Christian identity when writing about the supposedly degenerate practices, backwardness, and the irrational fanaticism of the Moroccan Muslims.[8] In this way, despite France's newly-minted secular status, France's ties to Christianity continued to underpin the republican imperial project under the Third Republic, enduring as an important fixture by which both Catholic and secular academics and journalists defined the French populace against supposed religio-racial inferiors in Morocco. As such, this chapter explores how perceptions of the Moroccans' supposed moral, cultural, and racial inferiority were used to legitimate the French republican—and allegedly Christian—presence in Morocco. Rarely was this French Christian identification more frequently invoked than when discussing the supposedly degenerate sexual practices, proclivities, and bodies of the Moroccan Muslims. According to French contemporaries, the Moroccans' supposedly immoral, Islamic sexual practices explained their cultural, political and economic backwardness, which ultimately led to the need for imperial intervention and the establishment of the French Protectorate in 1912.[9] By first considering contemporary French views of Moroccan sexuality through a lens of religion,

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ideas and knowledge production about Morocco and its Muslim inhabitants.

[8] This argument considers the critiques made by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper in their chapter on "Identity," in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2005). This chapter takes Brubaker and Cooper's critiques of "identity" as a theoretical category seriously, and, rather than stirring all self-understandings based on race, religion, ethnicity, and so on into the great conceptual melting pot of identity it attempts to utilize a more differentiated analytical language in place of the all-purpose identity by implementing terms such as "identification," Commonality," "Connectedness," and "Groupness."

[9] Ellen Amster, *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 74.

this chapter explores one of the crucial ways in which Christianity continued to underpin the republican imperial project after the Law of Separation. Despite France's secular status, the concept of a unified, Christian France based in French moral and sexual supremacy gave legitimacy to France's political and military interventions in Morocco.

Even though France's *mission civilisatrice* in Morocco was not explicitly religious—in fact, it was explicitly secular in nature—its advocates in the popular media and academic circles associated the French civilizing mission with a cultural and moral preeminence that was deeply rooted in Christian discourse.[10] Poignantly, as debates over marriage, divorce, and notions of proper sexuality fiercely divided Catholics and secularists within France, the writings produced by people from both groups were unified in their condemnation of the supposedly immoral Islamic sexual practices of the Moroccans, particularly the practice of polygamy, which ostensibly led to racial decline via venereal disease.[11] As French Christian sexual mores were set in direct opposition to those held by Muslims in widely-published scholarly journals, these practices inevitably reinforced certain French moral ideals and structures within the metropole, shaping and changing French conceptions of religion vis-à-vis discourses of sexuality.

The chapter subsequently focuses on how the label "Christian" came to be associated with traditionally secular ideals like rationalism and material progress in relation to the label "Muslim." As argued in the previous chapter, even though it was not necessarily contradictory for Catholics, moderate secularists, or even fervent

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[10] For more on the secularization and racialization of the French civilizing mission in Morocco see Ellen Amster, *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 52.

[11] Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 4.

anticlericalists to identify with the notion of a Christian France after 1905 thanks to the shared moral code that connected these disparate groups during the *fin-de-siècle*, the broad associations made between France and Christianity vis-à-vis Morocco did indicate a contemporary shift in meaning ascribed to the label "Christian." [12] Over the course of the nineteenth-century, French secularists like Alexis de Tocqueville and Ernest Renan applied the term "Christian" to denote French rationality, racial superiority, and material progress in direct contrast to the civilizational decline, racial inferiority, and irrational fanaticism that were supposedly inherent to the Muslim populations of North Africa and the larger Islamic world. These religio-racial categories—ultimately trickling into mainstream discourse amidst the media coverage of the Dreyfus Affair—were adopted by both Catholic and secularist contemporaries in the early twentieth century and functioned in public rhetoric to connect the French populace to France's high, Christian past and a distinctly secular, progressive—and imperial—modernity.

Although more progressive Catholic groups accepted the importance of science and rational thinking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contemporary metropolitan discourse overwhelmingly associated the Catholic Church and Christianity more generally with the despotism and backwards politics of the *Ancien Regime*."[13] These views, shared by countless secularists of the era, associated Catholicism in France with political and cultural oppression and described the Law of Separation as

[12] See the arguments in chapter four for more on this Christian-based discourse of morality.
[13] A 1905 article in *Le Matin* stated that the separation of Church and state would not affect personal freedom of conscience, but would guarantee individual empowerment while "ensuring the supremacy of a secular power over outdated concepts of theocracy." According to the a author, while the correlation between the French state and the Catholic Church had been the work of a despotic regime, the new regime would be the work of a "free people." Cited in Brown, *For the Soul of France,* 56.

proportionate to a new system of governance. However, the mainstream press and other public figures utilized the label "Christian" in the colonial context to underline aspects of French culture that had traditionally held more secular connotations. Enlightenment values including rationality, free thought, human rights, materialism, and a willingness to modernize and evolve, though rarely associated with Catholicism in metropolitan discourse after 1905, were linked with an evolving "Christian" identification vis-à-vis Morocco to underline Moroccan religious fundamentalism, irrationality, and, ultimately, a pseudo-scientifically-grounded racial inferiority—all invoked to legitimate the French claim to Moroccan soil. As suggested above, while secular intellectuals like Tocqueville and Renan had utilized similar categorizations in their writings on the Islamic world, these labels took on new significance after the codification of the 1905 Law of Separation and the subsequent employment of these religio-racial labels in the widely-consumed mainstream press.

Thus, after 1905, French secularists in various branches of knowledge production invoked Christianity to underline French enlightenment values, thereby connecting the French state to its lauded Christian traditions and moral structures while simultaneously linking it with modern, secular ideals not typically associated with Catholicism in the metropole. Morocco—one of France's first and most geographically important colonial acquisitions after the Law of Separation—provided a conceptual and geographical space in which French writers, lobbyists, and governmental figures asserted French sexual, civilizational, moral, and racial superiority over Islamic others during a time of moral

uncertainty and transition within the Metropole.[14] This secularized French Christianity endured for years in the media and academic literature surrounding Morocco, broadly resonating with both Catholics and anticlericalists in France.

Emile Durkheim, who ultimately treated religion as a *sui generis* social fact—the product of human activity rather than the result of divine intervention—stated in 1912 that "there can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality."[15] After the cultural turmoil of the Dreyfus Affair and the sense of rupture caused by the codification of the 1905 Law of Separation, Morocco functioned as a space where the French could draw on both past, present, and future glory. By invoking a secularized Christian identification, Catholics and secularists upheld common "collective sentiments" in a time of moral uncertainty.

5.1 The Moroccan Colonial Archive and Colonial Approaches to Sexuality

As the Morocco crises escalated in the first decade of the twentieth century, France possessed relatively little knowledge of Morocco or its inhabitants. In response to this lacuna, according to Edmund Burke in his 2014 work, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam,* the French colonial lobby consisting of military personnel, doctors, orientalists, economists, ethnographers, and other self-styled experts published extensively on Morocco, creating what Burke refers to as the Moroccan

[14] Emile Durkheim, *On Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), xlvii.
[15] Durkheim, *On Morality and Society,* xlix.

colonial archive.[16] French experts on Morocco agreed that if the France was to prevail over its international rivals—not to mention unite warring factions within the metropole—it would need more information on Moroccan society. Thus, the ability to collect and classify facts of all sorts was vital to task of colonial administration in the North African kingdom. It is crucial to note that, unlike the Algerian colonial archive, which was constructed for diverse purposes over the course of several generations, Burke argues that the Moroccan archive was constructed in less than twenty years and was "yoked from the outset to facilitating French rule."[17]

Burke's work—building on a Foucauldian examination of the relationship between knowledge and power—demonstrates the means by which colonial knowledge was produced in Morocco and the ways in which the Moroccan colonial archive was used to legitimate and justify France's presence and colonial policies after the creation of the Protectorate in 1912.[18] Ultimately, Burke's study shows that "Moroccan Islam"—the concept that suggests Morocco's approach to Islam was wholly unique and rooted in its unbroken history of Islamic kingship—was, among many other ideas about Morocco and the Moroccans, a French colonial construct. This chapter, utilizing Burke's theoretical premises, further suggests that as French colonial experts constructed myths about Moroccan Islam—and Islamic sexuality—their own ideas and myths about French Christianity inevitably changed as well.

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[16] Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 8.
[17] Ibid, 9.
[18] Ibid, 186. See also: Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1980).

Considering French ideas about Moroccan sexuality through a lens of religion contributes to a substantial body of historiography that focuses on colonial sexuality and family life. It is a well-established notion that issues of sexuality, family, and intimacy fundamentally shaped colonial policy and profoundly impacted metropolitan perceptions of the colonized. In her work, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule,* Ann Laura Stoler asserts that colonial spectators and participants in the imperial enterprise seem to have been endlessly interested in the sexual boundaries of the colonial encounter. Even as her study considers European colonialism in the broadest sense, Stoler points out the fact that no subject is discussed more than sex in colonial literature and that lurid descriptions of supposed sexual perversion and immorality marked the otherness of the colonized for metropolitan consumption. [19] Focusing in on French North Africa and its Muslim inhabitants, Julia Clancy-Smith touches on similar themes in her article, "Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830-1962." For Clancy-Smith, colonial—typically French—male writers believed Arab men to be 'over-sexed.' The social consequences of exaggerated male sexuality, symbolized by polygamy and the harem, were, for the French, detrimental for North African Muslim civilization.[20]

Judith Surkis' 2019 work *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria 1830-1930* pushes Clancy-Smith's notion even further, contending that the Orientalist sexual fantasies at the epicenter of the French colonial project in Algeria were central to

[19] Ibid, 43.

[20] Julia Clancy-Smith, "Islam, Gender and Identities in the Making of French Algeria 1830-1962*"* in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 162.

maintaining sovereignty over the Muslim population there. For Surkis, French ideas about Muslim sexual behaviors as they related to Islamic law—specifically polygamy and child marriage—went beyond merely being outlandish representations of the Islamic other, but rather underpinned the legal framework in colonial Algeria that served to exclude Algerian Muslims from French citizenship.[21] Joshua Schreier's work, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria*, supports this argument even as he focuses on the Jewish experience in Algeria. Schreier contends that soon after the conquest of Algeria in 1830, French military and academic interest in the Muslim family structure brought questions about polygamy and divorce—practices permitted by both Islamic and, coincidentally, Jewish law in North Africa—into debates about citizenship. Many French peoples in favor of granting Algerian Jews French citizenship argued that Jewish men and women only accepted these "immoral" practices within a framework of Islamic oppression. As such, personal status laws passed in 1865 barred Algerians from citizenship unless they agreed to formally reject the immoral Muslim family codes permitting to polygamy and polygamous divorce. In fact, according to Schreier, a powerful republican colonial faction compared the Muslims to the oppressive Old Regime that had once persecuted them in the French metropole. According to these self-styled experts, while the Jews could be regenerated, Muslim rule by nature was corrupt, oppressive, and had to be overthrown. Ultimately, the Muslim family code—in Algeria and beyond its borders—was incompatible with French citizenship. These laws

[21] Judith Surkis, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria 1830-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 9.

distanced Muslims from Jews in Algeria: while benefiting the Jews, the civilizing ideology functioned as a means of excluding Algeria's Muslim majority.[22]

Even as these works explore how questions of sex and the family profoundly influenced the lived experiences of the colonized Muslims in North Africa, particularly Algeria, less attention has been given to the ways in which constructed ideas about Islamic sexuality in Morocco impacted discourses surrounding Christianity and religion's role in the metropole. As such, this chapter contends that, even after the 1905 Law of Separation, as doctors, ethnographers, and other experts on Morocco published their findings on Islamic sexual practices, they explicitly drew upon France's ties to Christianity—ties that were palatable due to a shared moral framework amongst Catholics and secularists—to underline the French populace's cultural and racial superiority over Moroccan Muslims and to justify the French presence there. To reiterate, it is my contention that this practice indicated a change to the label "Christian" in the early twentieth-century French colonial mind. Rather than indicating any kind of collective approach to religious practice or belief between French Catholics and secularists, the links highlighted between France and Christianity in these various works on Moroccan sexuality suggests that the label "Christian" came to designate a distinctly secularized moral, civilizational, and even biological and racial preeminence over the Moroccans during this period. Because the construction and maintenance of "moral" and "immoral" sexual practices were historically modalities through which both colonial and religious authorities managed power, sexuality proves an acute lens through which to

[22] Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith,* 4.

examine the secularization of the label "Christian"—a broadly-applied label rooted in a shared discourse of morality—that was invoked by both Catholics and secularists in early-twentieth-century France.

5.2 French Sexual Morality and Religion

Even as an overt division existed between the supporters of a secular France and advocates of a Catholic France in the early twentieth century, discursive moral ties and shared ideals—particularly those regarding sexual morality—connected these two groups, enabling contemporaries of all religious—or anti-religious—persuasions to be categorized under a seemingly unified banner of Christianity vis-à-vis the Muslims of Morocco. Although notions regarding proper sexual conduct were not necessarily tied to religion in early twentieth-century France, anticlerical discussions about sexuality suggest an innate connection to Christian morals. Though secularists attempted to disentangle their belief in the benefits of sexual morality from French Catholicism, works produced by secularists and Catholics all stressed the benefits of sexual restraint in a modern, progressive society.[23]

[23] Though France during the *belle époque* is often remembered for its music halls and its sexually liberated Bohemian artists, a framework of middle-class respectability characterized by the values of domestic order, moral sanctity, and bourgeois sexual morality continued to exercise influence. According to Patricia Tilburg in *Colette's Republic,* studying the *belle époque* leaves one with the impression of a strangely bifurcated France—a country at once plodding through positivist reforms and reveling in avant-garde experimentation and irrationalism. Even though concepts of sexual morality were questioned and challenged by contemporaries on both sides of this divide, a moral structure that extolled sexual purity and monogamous conjugality continued to shape public opinion within France. Judith Surkis upholds the view of a prevalent moral framework vis-à-vis sexuality in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century France in her work, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France 1870-1920.* Surkis states that, for certain contemporaries, conjugal sex produced a new moral being, a 'new person', which transcended the discrete and separated individual. This union constituted and confirmed the

This idea of proper sexual morality presents itself in both secular and Catholic writings of the period. The work *L' Éducation sexuelle*, by secularist doctor E. Stérian, acknowledged that humans are physical beings that required sex. However, Dr. Stérian claimed that young men forced to satisfy their "reproductive" desires in unfavorable circumstances inevitably "acted against morality and practiced masturbation and homosexuality."[24] Even though this work does not condemn young men for having—or even fulfilling—sexual urges, proving it more open-minded than the traditional Catholic morality, it does imply that an overarching moral code concerning sex existed within the broader discourses of early twentieth-century France. This morality, which included monogamy and heterosexual marriage, excluded homosexuality, which, according to the work, was "very dangerous for societies in the civilized world." The work then outlined various scientific methods through which homosexual practices might be eradicated from French society.

It is important to note that Stérian associates both physical and moral degradation with venereal disease, stating, "it is important to fight venereal disease and, in so doing, contribute to the work of moral regeneration" in France. [25] By linking the eradication of venereal disease—a malady associated with prostitution, sexual promiscuity, and the Islamic practice of polygamy—with the idea of moral regeneration, Stérian suggested that a healthy, vibrant society was one in which sexuality was kept within the confines of contemporary morality: that is, within the confines of heterosexual marriage.

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social value of the married couple, while relegating all other sexual relations to the realm of 'profanity.' Thus, contemporaries witnessed and participated in the linguistic construction of conjugality as a moral ideal.

[24] Dr. E. Stérian, *L'Education sexuelle* (Paris: J.B. Baillière et fils, 1910), 26.

[25] Ibid, 73.

The socio-scientific work *Amour, préservation et sécurité,* by French doctor Maxwell Alexander, reiterates these views. While making room for the possibility of sexual liaisons outside of marriage, Alexander nonetheless stated, "the man who wants to satisfy his sexual desires outside of marriage…exposes himself to venereal disease…the danger is great."[26] Most importantly for Alexander, sexual disease posed a great threat to French society because it contributed to a decline in birthrates. Statistically, French birthrates were falling significantly behind those of the German population. Given the events of the Franco-Prussian War several decades before and the continued hostilities with Germany (and other nations) over Morocco, this caused national disquiet within France. For Alexander, the disparity in birthrates between France and Germany came down to morals. Because Germans were more likely to enter moral sexual unions, their population was growing at a faster rate. The work poses the question, "What is the dominant thought and desire of the Germans? It is to marry!" Alexander continues, "marriage gives aid in the struggles of life…contracted in such conditions, marriage satisfies the requirements of society and the needs of nature…it engenders the reciprocal attraction between the sexes and ensures fertility."[27] According to Dr. Alexander, illicit sexual activity had led to a demographic and moral decline within French society. The Germans lived more strictly within the confines of morality and these practices benefited their population, culture, and, most importantly, their military and imperial prospects.

French Catholics similarly believed sexual restraint—in the form of a heterosexual, monogamous union—was the key to a productive French society. The

[26] Max Alexander, *Amour, préservation et sécurité* (Paris: F. Pierre, 1909), 62.
[27] Ibid, 95.

Annales Catholique, a weekly religious magazine that wrote about political issues relevant to the French Church, stated that sexual morality was "the way to purity and fecundity in France." Again, belying the preoccupation with the French national birthrate during this period, the article nonetheless claims, "it is not possible for man to repress his passions or instincts except by submitting to God, the moral authority."[28] Although this work invokes the help of God instead of the help of science in combating sexually immoral—and, according to these contemporaries, degenerative—behavior, the sense that sex should be kept inside a moral framework for the prolificacy of the French people is apparent. As geopolitical rivalries between the nations of Europe heated up on the continents and in colonies around the globe, the sexual practices of French men and women went beyond private morality. Both secularists and Catholics emphasized the importance of proper sexual practices due to a need for increased fertility, an upsurge in population, and, ultimately, amplified international prestige.

The Catholic work *L'Impureté* also commented on illicit sexual practices in France. The author, Benjamin Arbousset, contended, "our young men are in danger… If we do not educate them about carnal passions and the individual and societal consequences of such passions, they will drink the poisoned cup of vice and develop an insatiable thirst for pleasure."[29] Again, we see here Arbousset referencing the societal consequences of extramarital relations. He continues, "the danger we report is a terrible reality…these misfortunes that afflict families and weaken society have their roots deep

[28] Joseph Chantrel, "Revue politique de la France et de l'Église," *Annales catholiques. Revue religieuse hebdomadaire de la France et de l'Église,* November 7, 1903, 441.
[29] Benjamin Arbousset, *L'Impureté* (Lyon: E. Bicksel, 1909), 6.

in immorality."[30] Even though secularists and Catholics differed in their responses to this supposed sexual immorality, there appears to have been a contemporary understanding that social and sexual practices such as heterosexual marriage and monogamy were indicative of a prolific, superior civilization and would lead to a strong, vibrant *Patrie*.[31]

For French contemporaries across the cultural divide, morality was intrinsically bound to a progressive, superior civilization. Alternatively, a lack of sexual morality indicated degeneration and decline. While the role of religion was the fundamental point of contention between the Catholics and secularists, their parallel language examined above reveals that both groups perceived the aim of sexual morality to be quite similar. The advanced civilization that was indicated by the relative sexual virtue of the French vis-à-vis the Muslims of Morocco would have certainly resonated with both Catholics and Secularists after 1905. Thus, a French Christian identity—used in conjunction with rhetoric about Islamic sexuality and Moroccan bodies—was employed to unify the French populace, thereby staying French fears of civilizational decline, and to warrant the French conquest of and civilizing presence in Morocco.

5.3 Divorce, Or, French "Polygamy"

Even as French doctors and ethnographers emphasized France's superior approach to sexuality to justify French authority in Morocco, the rhetoric surrounding

[30] Ibid, 21.

[31] Judith Surkis supports this notion of an idealized form of civilized sexuality. In *Sexing the Citizen,* Surkis argues that many republican thinkers imagined married heterosexuality as a motor and manifestation of civilizational and moral progress. According to Surkis, conjugal complementarity became generative of sociality itself and it bound together gender ideals with a specifically social and moral account of sexuality.

matters of Islamic sexuality and familial life served to expose deeper concerns within French society. As suggested above, concerns over marriage, divorce, and the family loomed large in *fin de siècle* France. These concerns were a result of a perceived deterioration in French geopolitical power that contemporaries related to moral and demographic degeneration. If France was weak, writers frequently claimed, its weakness was rooted in a "growing demographic deficit" caused in part by the legalization of divorce.[32] French sociologist Emile Durkheim outlined other potentially negative effects of divorce in his work *L' Éducation morale.* Durkheim stated, "If the rules of conjugal morality lose their authority, if the duties which spouses owe one another are less respected, and if the passions and appetites that this aspect of morality contain and regulate, were to unleash and deregulate themselves…they would bring about a disenchantment, which would be visibly translated by suicide statistics."[33] Although many hailed the legalization of divorce as a step towards modernity—an article in *Le Matin* claimed in 1913, "it is better to have divorce than to accept murder into our moral code"—contemporary sources suggested that the issue of divorce caused division, disenchantment, and increased anxiety regarding demographic decay.[34]

Interestingly, contemporary French sources often associated divorce with polygamy—a practice associated with Islam and racial degeneration that was fiercely condemned by early twentieth-century French men and women. An article published in 1908 in *Le Matin* stated, "When we measure the strength of a civilization, we find that the strong societies tend to practice monogamy. Whenever they decline, they return to

[32] Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux,* 11.
[33] Emile Durkheim, *L'Éducation morale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 99.
[34] Stéphane Lauzanne "Le Jury de Seine-et-Oise Acquitte," *Le Matin,* January 23, 1913.

polygamy, that form of disturbed morality. Divorce is a kind of successive polygamy."[35] An article using identical language appeared the same year in *Le Temps,* stating "the strong races tend to practice monogamy…monogamy implies civilization and it is to this that we should return. Divorce is a type of successive polygamy." According to this article, when a man and a woman divorced one another with the intention to remarry, there existed practices of "polygamy and polyandry simultaneously." It went on to claim, "these are the morals of savages."[36] Utilizing racially-charged language and directly referencing Islamic practices, this article paints divorce as a practice indicative of a supposed savage, degenerative civilization and a practice the French should avoid at all costs.

As sharp division and fears of potentially degenerative conduct gripped the metropole during the formative years of the Moroccan protectorate, the French media and other experts on Morocco highlighted the alleged degenerate sexual practices of the Moroccans. By associating the French with familial and sexual practices rooted in a Christian identity, the French media and other academic and governmental commentators connected the French populace with civilization, morality, and prolificacy vis-à-vis the Moroccans.[37] While debates surrounding the legalization of divorce caused apprehension and proved so contentious within the metropole, the assertion of a French Christian

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[35] Paul Borget, "Le Divorce," *Le Matin,* January 28, 1908.
[36] Adrien Hebrard, "La Question du divorce," *Le Temps,* January 30, 1908.
[37] Corroborating this notion is Alice Conklin's work *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). Conklin states, "French imperial policy consistently identified civilization with one principle…mastery…mastery of nature, including the human body, and mastery of what can be called 'social behavior'…mastery was integral to France's self-definition under the Third Republic." Because inhabitants of the non-European world lacked the "crucial ability to master," they were "barbarians, in need of civilizing."

civilization in the Moroccan context connected secularists and Catholics and reaffirmed their relative civilizational superiority. If the French lacked the crucial ability to abide by—or even agree upon—correct forms of social behavior within the metropole, condemning the degenerative sexual and familial practices found within Moroccan society soothed fears of French demographic and societal decline.

5.4 French Christian Sexuality in Morocco and North Africa

As French military officials, academics, and doctors—secular and Catholic alike— encroached upon Moroccan sovereignty throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, they published a variety of works affirming the superior sexual morality and familial practices of the Christian French vis-a-vis the Muslims of Morocco. The work *Psychologie sociale contemporaine* by secular philosopher Joseph Maxwell broadly claimed that "religious reasons determine certain prohibitions." Applying this to the Moroccan context, Maxwell underlined the fact that, while Islam permitted multiple wives within the societies it dominated, "western nations and those who have undergone the influence of civilization and Christianity cannot tolerate the plurality of wives, for polygamy is contrary to morality." Although Maxwell's work puts forth a pluralistic, anti-religious conception of morality, there remains a blatant connection between Christian monogamy and civilization on the one hand, and Islamic polygamy and societal deterioration on the other.[38]

[38] Joseph Maxwell, *Psychologie sociale contemporaine* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1911), 189.

The monograph *Dieu et science* by Catholic Jacques Brac de La Perrière stated of Islamic civilization, "in rejecting the religion of Christ, these Mohammedans have diminished civilization everywhere their scimitars have struck. Men collapse under their fate and women are found in degradation and servitude."[39] Because the Moroccans had rejected the Christian religion that had led France directly to progress and civilization, their people—particularly their women—were sexually degraded and their society in a perpetual state of regression. De la Perrière, a firm believer that Christian morals should play a role in temporal matters, later issued a warning to his anticlerical contemporaries. He contended that if a nation were to lose the characteristics of Christian civilization "polygamy would gradually invade" in the form of child marriage and other "vices against nature" and, most terribly, patriotic unity would collapse.[40] Drawing a connection between the loss of Christian civilization and the adoption of the Islamic practice of polygamy, de la Perrière demonstrates the links between Christian morals and a vibrant love for the French nation even as he associates Islamic sexual and familial practices with decline and a lack of modern patriotic sentiment. Similarly, the monograph *L'Islam: Impressions et etudes,* by the Catholic writer Henry Castries declared "Islamic polygamy greatly offends our civilized, Christian morals…the two faiths are morally opposed to one another."[41] By mutually condemning the sexual practice of polygamy in a variety of contexts, both secular and Catholics writers connected French Christian morals with civilizational progress and Islamic mores with societal degeneration in North Africa.

[39] Jacques Brac de La Perrière, *Dieu et science* (Lyon: E. Vitte, 1909), 254.
[40] Ibid, 341.
[41] Henry Castries, *L'Islam: Impressions et études* (Paris: A. Colin, 1907), 108.

The work *Mœurs Arabes* by secularist Witold Lemanski, highlighted the prevalent contemporary notion that France's secular morality—particularly in the areas of sex and family life— had evolved out of "Christian dogmas." Lemanski juxtaposed this religiously-inspired *morale laïque* with Islam. The author stated, "monogamy…and polygamy…prove to be opposites. Monogamous marriage and its rules are the very foundations of civilization," while polygamy was "a sign of primitive civilization."[42] Lemanski continued to condemn the status of women in Islamic countries: "It is the Islamic religious tradition which fashions the immutable souls and lives of Muslim women…Islam would be undermined with the emancipation of women."[43] Although the anticlerical Lemanski was writing for a mainstream, secular audience, his invocation of France's Christian moral heritage suggests that, ultimately, Christianity led to familial practices that yielded civilization, whereas Islamic law generated primitive societies and gender norms the resulted in regression.

Comparably, German orientalist and philologist Carl-Heinrich Becker delivered a lecture in 1910 at a conference for the influential colonial lobby group *L'Union coloniale française*, a financial interests group comprised mostly of merchants who advocated for the economic benefits of French empire. The lecture, titled *L'Islam et la colonisation de l'Afrique,* discussed the fact that Christianity and Christian morals encompassed "the spirit of Europe" in a similar way that Islam had influenced the civilizations of North Africa. However, those who argued that "in the interest of civilization…Islam should be crushed in North Africa" were misguided and bound to fail.[44] According to Becker,

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[42] Witold Lemanski, *Moeurs Arabes* (Paris: A. Michel, 1908), 24.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Dr. C.H. Becker, *L'Islam et la colonisation de l'Afrique: Conférence faite sous le patronage de*

civilization would destroy the basic foundations of "indigenous family and economic life," of which the chief tenets were "Islamic polygamy and slavery."[45] While Becker—a secular academic and one of the fathers of modern orientalism—provided a more nuanced understanding of Islam and its role in North African societies than many of his contemporaries, he nevertheless connects Christianity explicitly with civilization in this passage, inherently portraying Islam as the foil to progress due primarily to the practices of polygamy and slavery. Judging from these selected passages, both Catholic and secular observers found common ground in connecting the sexuality and gender roles endorsed by Islamic law with societal stagnation. By linking France's moral Christian heritage to its evolved civilization and by focusing on the supposed immoral practice of polygamy and the role of women in North Africa, Catholics and anticlerical writers alike demonstrated the stark contrasts between French progress and Islamic decline in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Newspapers in the early twentieth century echoed these discourses. An article in the moderate mainstream newspaper *Le Temps* from 1903 states of Muslims, "they will never submit to our practices…for even if they cease to be Muslims, they will never become Christians…If we allow Muslims to unite with us, won't their familial life slowly invade our mores? For the two essential principles of their intimate domestic life, polygamy and the confinement of women…are signs of savagery."[46] This passage suggests that the act of "becoming Christian" implies something more complex than mere religious conversion. Instead, the label "Christian" appears to be associated with civilized

l'Union Coloniale Française (Paris: Union Coloniale Française, 1910), 5.
[45] Ibid, 11.
[46]Adrian Hebrard, "Le Problème indigène en Algérie," *Le Temps,* April 15, 1903.

sexual practices rather than religious belief. Not only did this article connect the morals of secularizing France to Christianity, it also revealed a fear that "savage" Islamic practices would slowly pervade the French population's superior mores and, ultimately, weaken French civilization.

As mentioned above, the Moroccan colonial archive was actively constructed during the early 1900s to facilitate French rule in the North African kingdom. Throughout this process, French academic monographs were littered with references to the supposed depraved sexual practices of the Moroccan Muslims and the ways in which the French might improve the civilizational prospects of the Moroccans with imperial intervention. Despite being written largely by anticlerical humanists, these works often used language invoking France's Christian identity and approach to morality. In the monograph *Sorcellerie au Maroc*, the author, scientist, and fervent secularist Emile Mauchamp—whose extraordinary death at the hands of the Moroccans will be explored later in the chapter—presented his posthumous work, not in the interest of religion, but in the interest of science and civilization and for beneficial instruction and scientific progress in Morocco.[47] According to Mauchamp in *Sorcellerie au Maroc*, "the people of Morocco have a fear and contempt of Christians…in this closed world of Morocco, which exists on the fringes of radiant Europe, the people suffer, sealed in their misery and wariness, refusing the help of their Christian neighbors, like obstinate prisoners in their cells rejecting freedom, health, light, and comfort."[48] It is revealing that Mauchamp, a self-identifying secular republican, refers to French men and women as "Christian neighbors"

[47] Emile Mauchamp, *Sorcellerie au Maroc* (Paris: Dorbone-Ainé, 1919), 3.
[48] Ibid, 75.

to the Moroccans as he uses strong imagery comparing the light of French civilization to the supposed prison of Moroccan culture. For Mauchamp, polygamy was one of the key indications of Moroccan demographic and moral decline. When commenting on the Islamic male practice of keeping multiple women in a harem, Mauchamp remarked, "love between women among the Moroccans exceeds moral and natural relations…the women, confined within the harem are, almost without exception, lesbians. Passions are born within the harems, provoking jealousy between the women and…homosexuality." Clearly informed by metropolitan fears of population decline, Mauchamp's comments on female homosexuality were meant to indicate a failed civilization. Mauchamp also mentioned the "debauchery" and "lasciviousness" that inevitably cropped up among these confined women, concluding, "the role of women in Morocco is restricted to pure animality."[49] According to Mauchamp, without the civilizing aid of the French Christians, Moroccan women were reduced to an almost animalistic state of being.

Likewise, the *Congrès de l'Afrique du Nord,* held in Paris on October 6-10, 1908, proposed many reforms that might be made in Morocco on behalf of civilization. The printed monograph consistently referred to the French as "Christians" and stated, "it is certain that if reforms such as the abolition of polygamy are necessary for the social evolution of Muslim peoples, they may be hampered by the very fact that they are against Islamic law, which is immutable because, for them, it is divine in essence."[50] Though the civilized, Christian world freely offered civilization to the Moroccans, their sexual practices—embedded within their society and cemented by their religious beliefs—

[49] Ibid, 81,169.
[50] *Congrès de l'Afrique du Nord, tenu à Paris, du 6 au 10 octobre 1908. Compte-rendu des travaux. Questions indigenes et Maroc* (Paris: Charles Depincé, 1909), 171.

proved an almost insurmountable obstacle to contemporary French men and women. While France's Christian morals resulted in its civilizational progress, Islam left Moroccan society stagnant.

Adding to these discourses are pamphlets focused on improving Moroccan ethics. The tract *Dans le grand atlas Marocain* written by humanist doctor Paul Chatinières, characterizes Moroccan society by stating, "the Islamic religion determines the unique character of Moroccan culture just as Christianity created our civilization." However, where Christian morals had contributed to a productive and vibrant French civilization, the acceptance of polygamy and degradation of women in Islamic Moroccan society, according to Chatinières, had led Moroccan society to depravity.[51] A bulletin published in 1912 by the secularist *Société Française de Prophylaxie Sanitaire et Morale* also sets Christian sexual practices above Islamic sexual practices. After encouraging men and women "inhabiting Christian countries," to practice "monogamy" and "early marriage between a man and a women" in order to avoid "moral degradation" and "carnal lust," the work considered the oversexed nature of Muslim men that was causing depravity in Morocco.[52] It concluded that "the suppression of debauchery and polygamy in Morocco is desirable" due to the important fact that these practices were causing venereal disease and contributing to the moral decay found among the Moroccans.[53]

Venereal disease was the chief way in which French doctors and ethnographers highlighted the Moroccan Muslims' inability to master themselves morally or physically

[51] Paul Chatinières, *Dans le grand atlas Marocain, extraits du carnet de route d'un médecin d'assistance médicale indigène, 1912-1916* (Paris: Plon Nourrit, 1919), 277.
[52] Société Française de Prophylaxie Sanitaire et Morale (Paris, J. Rueff, 1912), 54.
[53] Ibid, 10.

and the primary way in which French contemporaries connected the Islamic religion to racial decline. In 1913, Pierre Remlinger contended that "Venereal diseases...constitute the very essence of Moroccan pathology…Syphilis is the Moroccan malady par excellence."[54] Despite being a secularist, Remlinger—a French doctor of infectious diseases who served as the director of the Tangier Institut Pasteur in Morocco—associated the French with Christianity in his works on various diseases in the Islamic world.[55] According to Remlinger, the Moroccan polygamous family was unnatural and defined by a frenzied, animalistic approach to sex. In his work, *Les maladies vénériennes et la prostitution au Maroc,* he describes Muslim women engaging in lesbian acts in the harems and then prostituting themselves in the streets while their husbands copulated with multiple wives and subsequently initiated homosexual acts at the public baths.[56] These graphic images served to further the completely fabricated myth of "the syphilitic Moroccan." This trope, according to Ellen Amster in her 2013 work, *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956*, originated in its pseudo-scientific form with the publication of Émile-Louis Bertherand's 1855 work *Médecine et hygiene des Arabes* that argued Islam caused syphilis.[57] Despite innovative

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[54] Paul Remlinger*, "Essai de nosologie marocaine"; "Rapport du général commandant les troupes debarquées au sujet de l'organisation de l'assistance médicale aux indigènes de la Chaouia, annexe au journal politique d'Octobre 1908"* Cited in Ellen Amster *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013),74.

[55] Académie nationale de médecine, *Bulletin de l'Académie nationale de médecine* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1932), 735.

[56] Paul Remlinger, "*Les maladies vénériennes et la prostitution au Maroc"* Cited in Ellen Amster, *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 75.

[57] Émile-Louis Bertherand, *Médecine et hygiène des Arabes: Études sur l'exercice de la médecine et de la chirur- gie chez les musulmans de l'Algérie . . . précédées de considérations sur l'état général de la médecine chez les principales nations mahométanes* (Paris: 1855) 254–255.

blood tests that effectively diagnosed the disease on a biomolecular level, doctors such as Remlinger and his contemporaries Edmond Doutté and Georges Lacapère put forth the idea that Islamic law led to the spread of syphilis in early twentieth-century Morocco. Whereas French sexual morality—based in the nation's Christian traditions—led to a heightened birthrate and a healthy population, Islamic sexuality led to a syphilitic, diseased populace.[58] Through these comparisons, contemporaries utilized the religio-racial categories of Christian and Muslim to denote racial decline amongst the Islamic population of Morocco and to indicate inherent civilizational and racial progress amongst the Christian French.

Contemporary Catholics also highlight the dangers that they believed Islamic sexuality posed to the Moroccan population. The work, *Annales de thérapeutique dermatologique et syphiligraphique et de prophylaxie anti-vénérienne*, though scientific in nature, nevertheless contains strong Catholic undertones when discussing the prevalence of syphilis in Morocco. The work affirms that syphilis was indeed very widespread in Morocco, as it as in all Muslim countries who adopted the morals and habits of Islam.[59] However, the author, compelled by their own supposed Christian charity, provided those suffering from the venereal diseases inherent to Islamic populations with a few easy recipes that might help with the symptoms. One of these recipes included a drink comprised of "wood pulp, sarsaparilla, white wine, anise, and 'sené,'" which was a shrub whose leaves were used in laxative teas.[60] While this recipe—

[58] Amster, *Medicine and the Saints,* 74-81.
[59] Léon Bizard, *Annales de thérapeutique dermatologique et syphiligraphique et de prophylaxie anti-vénérienne* (Paris: 1904), 188.
[60] Ibid, 405.

provided "for the glory of God"—was undoubtedly useless against any genuine cases of syphilis amongst the Moroccan population, these passages underline the connections between France, Christianity, and racial vigor on the one hand and Morocco, Islam, and racial decline on the other in the minds of contemporaries. Despite France's newly secularized status, a supposedly Christian sexual morality enabled both Catholic and secularist French contemporaries to characterize themselves favorably vis-à-vis the Moroccan Muslims. By extolling their Christian civilization over that of the Moroccans' Islamic society, French academics and public figures not only asserted that the Moroccan population was morally depraved—and, therefore, in need of French civilizing aid—but they also characterized the Moroccans as racially inferior due to their religion, thereby justifying French imperial actions in Morocco.[61] This Christian label reinforced a connection between sexual morality and French society and generated ideas of a fertile French civilization teeming with productivity in a time of seeming religious and moral crisis in the metropole.

5.5 The French in Morocco: The Mauchamp Affair Through a Lens of Religion

Even as it was utilized to strengthen narratives of French fertility vis-à-vis Muslim depravity and barrenness, the label "Christian" became associated with traditionally secular-leaning, enlightenment values like rationality and materialism. It is important to note that this secularization of the label "Christian" was a composite process that took place amidst the backdrop of European and North African geopolitics. For their

[61] Amster, *Medicine and the Saints,* 80.

part, the French exhibited a strong interest in Morocco as early as 1830, not only to guard the border of France's newly-acquired territory of Algeria, but also because Morocco occupied a strategic geopolitical position with coasts on both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. By 1904, both France and Spain had carved out zones of influence in Morocco, with France exhibiting a growing influence over the kingdom. Although France's increasing power in North Africa was recognized by its ally Great Britain, the German Empire attempted to undermine French authority in Morocco by making assurances to the Moroccan Sultan, Abdelaziz, that Germany supported Moroccan sovereignty in direct opposition to French influence there. By 1905, France appeared—yet again—to be on the brink of war with Germany. The Algeciras Conference was called in January 1906 to settle the dispute—which came to be known as the First Moroccan Crisis. Fortunately for France, between the thirteen European nations present, the German representatives were supported only by the Austria-Hungarian contingent. And, while a German attempt at compromise was rejected by all but Austria-Hungary, France had firm support from Britain, Russia, Italy, Spain, and the United States. The Germans signed an agreement in May of 1906 that effectively ended the First Moroccan Crisis and solidified the French presence in Morocco.[62]

By 1911, Germany and France were once more at odds over the fate of Morocco after France deployed a substantial force into the interior of the North African kingdom. While Germany did not object to France's expansion, the German Empire wanted territorial gains for itself. Berlin threatened warfare and sent a gunboat to Morocco's port

[62] Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 56-87.

of Agadir. Negotiations to resolve what came to be known as the Second Moroccan Crisis were called. These negotiations between Berlin and Paris resolved the crisis, effectively paving the way for a French protectorate over Morocco in exchange for territorial concessions to Germany. However, this was not a one-sided story. Despite the increasing French economic and territorial gains in Morocco, the Moroccan people resisted French rule throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. Although Morocco did not become an official Protectorate until 1912, the French media consistently drummed up support for a French seizure of the North African country throughout the first decade of the twentieth century.

Starting in 1905, France's newspapers and other published works were filled with examples of individual Moroccans speaking against French "Christian" meddling in Morocco. In December 1906, an article in *Le Matin* quoted a Moroccan living in the city of Fez who allegedly exclaimed that the Moroccans would not let "those French Christian dogs" rule in their city.[63]A few years later in 1908, *Le Matin* quoted another Moroccan man who claimed that God was on the side of the Moroccan cause, evidenced by the fact that the Muslims had already repelled the "Christians" time and time again. The article quotes the Moroccan as saying, "we are sure of success. We will throw the Christians into the sea."[64] As metropolitan French interest in Morocco increased, the French press frequently highlighted the religious binary between Christians and Muslims on the ground in North Africa, casting the French presence in Morocco as a battle between

[63]Stephane Lauzanne, "Agression contre un officer Française," *Le Matin*, December 21, 1906.
[64] Stephane Lauzanne, "Les Sultans Marocains," *Le Matin,* January 24, 1908.

Christian rationality and Islamic fanaticism—a battle the Moroccans had supposedly cast in exclusively religious terms.

In 1907, Moroccan civilians and Islamic leaders deposed their impotent Sultan, Abdelaziz, and replaced him with his brother, Moulay Hafid. An interview with the deposed Abdelaziz appeared in *Le Matin* in 1908. When asked why his own people deposed him, Abdelaziz—according to the author of the article—shook his head, smiled, and replied, "they accused me of selling Morocco to you Christians."[65] However, according to the French media, the Moroccans believed Moulay Hafid to be no better than his predecessor. In 1909, after Moulay Hafid had assumed political control of Morocco, an article was published in *Le Figaro* claiming that the Moroccans felt Moulay Hafid should be struck down so as to prevent his dealings with the French "Christians."[66] Although the economic and political situations in Morocco were in chaos, the Moroccans' apparent hatred of the French Christians remained a constant within French newspapers. An article in *La Revue de Paris,* published in 1907, stated, "Although negatively disposed towards all Christians, the Moroccans consider the French Christians their particular enemies."[67] Despite the privatization of religious practice in the metropole, the French media presented the French infiltration of Morocco in starkly religious terms, utilizing the categories of "Christian" and "Muslim" to sensationalize events and character the supposed divide between colonizer and soon-to-be colonized. Importantly, by consistently underlining the fact that it was the Moroccans who labelled the French as Christians, the secular French press adopted a "Christian" identity vis-à-vis

[65]Christian Houel, "Interview d'Abd El Aziz," *Le Matin,* May 25, 1908.
[66] Benoît Jouvin, "A L'Etranger: Au Maroc," *Le Figaro,* February 3, 1909.
[67]*La Revue de Paris* (Bureaux de la Revue de Paris, 1907), 344.

Morocco without having to actively enact it, broadening the appeal of this religious label in a secular republic.

As evidenced above, the French media employed the label "Christian" to indicate civilization and rationality vis-à-vis the fanatical Muslims of Morocco in the formative years of the Protectorate to great effect, imbuing traditional religious categories with modern racial undertones in French colonial discourse. However, nowhere is this trend better exemplified than in the coverage of the 1907 murder of the French doctor Emile Mauchamp in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh. Emile Mauchamp was a French secularist par excellence: a republican, scientist, and practitioner of medicine in Morocco in the early twentieth century. Born in 1870 in Chalon-sur-Saône, France, Mauchamp studied medicine as a student, became a doctor, and was appointed by the foreign ministry to a post in Jerusalem in 1900. Due to his success overseas, the French government appointed him to a position in Marrakesh in 1905, part of a larger attempt towards the "peaceful penetration" of Morocco by way of western medicine.[68] Mauchamp set up a clinic in Marrakesh in the autumn of 1905 and joined the city's fledgling European community. While in Marrakesh, Mauchamp gathered materials for a study of Moroccan religion, customs, and mores—published posthumously in 1910 as *La Sorcellerie au Maroc*.[69] On March 19, 1907, less than a year and a half after arriving in Marrakesh, Mauchamp was brutally murdered by a group of Moroccans outside his medical clinic in the city's Arsa Moulay Musa neighborhood. Mauchamp's murder—later known as the Mauchamp

[68] For more on Emile Mauchamp and his work in Morocco, see Henri Guillemin, *Biographie du Docteur Émile Mauchamp*; and Jonathan Katz, "The 1907 Mauchamp Affair and the French Civilising Mission in Morocco."

[69] Mauchamp's work is discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation.

Affair—was a watershed moment in French-Moroccan relations. The Mauchamp Affair would serve as the pretext for the French military invasion of Oujda in 1907 and ultimately the creation of the French protectorate in Morocco in 1912. The response to Mauchamp's death has been analyzed in recent years for the insight it provides into the political culture of precolonial Morocco and for the role it played in French knowledge construction about the Moroccans.[70] In keeping with these current historiographical trends, this chapter considers the response to Mauchamp's murder as it contributed to the shifting meanings of the labels "Christian" and "Muslim" in the formative years of the Moroccan protectorate. Even though Mauchamp was a secular republican hailing from a secular republic, his murder was portrayed as a conflict between Christianity and Islam in French newspapers and journals throughout the metropole.

In January 1909, a few years after Mauchamp's death, the journal *Bulletins de la Société des sciences naturelles de Saône-et-Loire*, a periodical covering the latest developments in the areas of natural science and medicine, published a biography of Mauchamp's life and death in Marrakesh. While the journal typically focused on topics like disease prevention and medical breakthroughs, the article about Mauchamp drew heavily on religio-racial categorization to make its arguments. The article, likening Mauchamp's would-be killers to a "pack of fanatics," describes how this rabid band pursued the good doctor to his own doorstep, where Mauchamp was overtaken "in an incredible scene of hate and fanaticism. Everyone was honored to plunge their fist into his heart while the fanatical women on the terraces shouted in a delirium of joy: the

[70] See additional works: Jonathan Katz, *Murder in Marrakesh: Emile Mauchamp and the French Colonial Adventure;* and Ellen Amster *Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam, and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956.*

unfaithful Christian is dead. Glory to God and Mohammad."[71] Mauchamp's final moments are interwoven into a comparison between alleged Christian rationalism and Islamic fanaticism in the passage, with Mauchamp—the "unfaithful Christian" in the eyes of the Moroccans—appearing as a republican martyr and a foil to the supposed overzealous Muslim men and women baying for his blood. The Moroccan Muslims are then described as "a populace of ignorant, savagely superstitious people…hateful of all that is Christian" and who desired, "death to these infidels (the French) who are a menace to our independence"[72] The Mauchamp Affair is portrayed as a pitched battle between Christians and Muslims and at the same time as a conflict between science and religious ignorance. This article utilized Mauchamp's death to discredit the Moroccans from self-sovereignty and justifying French military action in Morocco.[73] However, it also reveals that French Christianity had come to be associated in the most explicit terms with reason, scientific progress, and a racially-motivated superiority vis-a-vis Moroccan Islam and its adherents.

In 1910, Mauchamp's biographer, Jules Bois, musing on the political and religious context of Mauchamp's murder, suggested that it was in fact antiscientific Islamic "sorcery" that was to blame for Mauchamp's demise.[74] After referring to Mauchamp as "the Christian" in his descriptions of the murder, Bois stated, "the sorcerers' jealously conserve corrupted and corrupting traditions…the *Ulémas* and *talebs* are the great enemies of our intervention…It is not the sultan with his ministers who in

[71] Société des sciences naturelles**,** *Bulletins de la Société des sciences naturelles de Saône-et-Loire* (Chalon-sur-Saône: Paris, January 1, 1909), 34.
[72] Ibid, 45.
[73] Amster, *Medicine and the Saints*, 82.
[74] Quoted in Mauchamp, *La Sorcellerie au Maroc*, 33.

reality governs, directs and exploits Morocco: it is the sorcerers who profit from the credulity, the timidity, the darkness…of these people."[75] Bois, utilizing religio-racial language to underline the allegedly credulous nature of the Moroccan people, links Christianity with rationality and science while Islam is portrayed as its opposite: a religion associated with physical and cultural darkness leading to civilizational collapse.

Popular, left-leaning daily newspapers—the same papers who praised the codification of the 1905 Law of Separation—also discussed the Mauchamp Affair as a conflict between religious opposites. An article published on September 8, 1907 in *La Charente,* a republican newspaper, stated of Mauchamp's murder that the Moroccan Muslims "consider these engagements as victories…but even these don't diminish the enthusiastic hate felt for the Christian" in Morocco.[76] Even as metropolitan newspapers extolled the virtues of the Law of Separation, they simultaneously associated the label "Christian" with French republicanism and scientific progress during the Mauchamp Affair. An article published on March 20, 1907 in *Le Temps* discussed Mauchamp's murder and work as a doctor in Marrakesh, affirming that, while the associations between the French State and the Catholic Church had enabled past "crimes of theocracy," the French needed only to look to the chaos of Islamic Morocco to realize what a boon Christianity had been to French civilization.[77] The article encouraged its readers to be aware of the "blessings which the Christian culture" has given the French.[78] The author, clearly a firm believer in the separation of church and state, nevertheless affirms the

[75] Ibid.
[76] Paul Mairat, "Les Affaires Marocaines" *Le Charente*, September 8, 1907.
[77] Adrien Hébrard, "L'Assassinat du docteur Mauchamp" *Le Temps*, March 20, 1907.
[78] Ibid.

worldly benefits that Christian culture had bestowed on France and would bestow on France's empire by proxy if the colonized would submit to French rule. While the conflicts between secularists and Catholics endured in France, the French media frequently associated the French with Christianity vis-à-vis the Muslims of Morocco, often using the term "Christian" as a religio-racial label to characterize even the most stanchly secular French republicans, as seen in the coverage of the Mauchamp Affair. The powerful medium of print media disseminated this secularizing Christian identification widely in the years leading up to the Moroccan protectorate, reinforcing and shaping French metropolitan ideas about religion in a secular republic.

5.6 Moroccan Islam and the Secularization of French Christianity

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the 1905 Law of Separation caused a sense of rupture in the French metropole amongst Catholics and secularists alike. As the population of metropolitan France staggered under the weight of the religious change and perceived moral decay that resulted from the separation, Morocco provided a literal and discursive space that allowed the French media, colonial lobbyists, and the French government to find common ground in a secularizing Christian identification in relation to the Moroccan Muslims. This secular Christian label paid homage to France's illustrious Catholic past while simultaneously connecting the French colonial brand to enlightened rationality, scientific reasoning, and racial superiority vis-à-vis the Moroccans.

As briefly outlined earlier, even after Sultan Moulay Hafid assumed power in Morocco after the deposition of his brother Abdelaziz in 1908, he proved unsuccessful in

guarding Moroccan sovereignty against European incursion. Morocco's poor economic situation and mounting debts to the French government forced the new sultan to sign a treaty in the city of Fez on March 30, 1912, officially establishing the French Protectorate over Morocco. According to the Moroccan people, Moulay Hafid, in a similar manner to that of his brother, had sold Morocco to the French Christians.[79] Less than three weeks later, the capital city of Morocco, Fez, was in revolt. The Moroccan rebels not only killed French military personnel and civilians within the city, but they also attempted to take the French consulate in the city center.[80] In April 1912, the left-leaning newspaper *L'Aurore* published an article that derided the "savage adherents to Islam" who had perpetrated the massacre. This article stated, "we Christians… placed the savages under our protection. Could they learn that we are now their masters? They must submit to our powerful occupation before another revolt takes hold of them…they must realize the material and moral advantages of our presence."[81] Even as this anticlerical newspaper utilizes the label "Christian" as a synonym for the French, it highlights the material, worldly advantages the Moroccan "savages" would reap if they allowed the French to assume their rightful role as "masters" in the Islamic colony, fusing a Christian identification with material, modern progress—and racial undertones—in the colonial context.

In a similar vein, an article about the massacre published in *Le Matin* in May contended that, while French "Christians" had come to Fez to bring peace and tranquility to Morocco, the jihadist leaders' effective propaganda against the Christians had turned

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[79] Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of Overseas Expansion* (New York: Palgrave, 1996), 35.
[80] Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 186.
[81] Richard, "Les Incidents de Fez," 1.

even the most trustworthy and loyal Moroccans against the French. The article subsequently claimed that "some of the Moroccan tribes came to tell us that…they were obligated to march against us in order to evade being massacred themselves."[82] This passage, though sympathetic in tone to these seemingly feckless Moroccans, nevertheless depicts Islam—and the Islamic practice of jihad—as a corrupting force against the enlightenment principles of rationalism and self-determination. The Moroccans, forced to conform to the will of God and their earthly superiors at the point of a sword, stand in stark contrast to the French Christians, who appear to pity the Moroccan's lack of personal agency in the matter.

Comparably, *Le Temps* ran an article a few weeks after the Treaty of Fez was ratified, affirming that the treaty had caused "the resentment against French Christians" to increase in the protectorate.[83] Referring to the Moroccan Muslims as fanatic "mutineers" blinded by their religious hatred, the article then admits that "those who know Morocco declare that the country is able to be civilized. These individuals, whose authority is great in this matter, must be included so that France can institute in Morocco a regime of clarity and enlightenment. The people must feel the benefits of our action. If these benefits are not imposed on the spirit of the population, France's actions risk remaining sterile."[84] In this context, French experts on Morocco, collectively categorized as Christians, are portrayed as harbingers of clarity and enlightenment and are saddled with the task of ridding the Moroccans of religious fanaticism and subsequently imposing rationality and order within the new protectorate. By linking France's Christian identity

[82] Jules Madeline, "Les Attaques des tribus contre Fez," *Le Matin*, May 31, 1912.
[83] Adrien Hebrard, "L'Enquête sur les troubles a Fez," *Le Temps*, May 6, 1912.
[84] Ibid.

to its modern capacity to civilize and secularize the Moroccan people, this article demonstrates the shifting conceptions surrounding the religio-racial categories of "Christian" and "Muslim" in the Moroccan context. As the label "Christian" increasingly became synonymous with rational enlightenment values in contemporary French sources, Islam becomes a symbol for irrational religious fervor and the civilizational decline that necessitated French intervention in the North African kingdom.

A story discussing the Massacre of Fez—appearing in *France-Maroc: Revue mesuelle* in 1916—contains similar language. Circulated in Paris between 1916 and 1925 by the French Committee for Moroccan Affairs, *France-Maroc: Revue mesuelle* was created to highlight France's political, economic, and cultural achievements in Morocco in the early years of the protectorate. Written by L. Mercier, a French interpreter for the government in Morocco, the piece, dedicated to the "Christian" survivors, recounts the horrifying events that took place in Fez in March 2012. At the time, Mercier and a fellow contingent of French civilians and government workers were staying in a local hotel in Fez, where they were attacked by the growing mob of Moroccan Muslims who were angered by the establishment of the French protectorate.[85] Mercier's recounting of the massacre highlights the French Christians' civilized bravery in direct comparison to the Muslims' "savagery," and it reaches its climactic moment when an Islamic holy man covered in dirty rags slowly decapitates an unfortunate Christian.[86] After he is finished with the account of his traumatic experience, Mercier stated from the safety of 1916, "that was Fez in 1912! What a long way we have come since then! Today, a fair meets on

[85] L. Mercier, "Souvenirs des massacres de Fez," *France-Maroc: Revue Mensuelle,* April 17, 1916, 11.
[86] Ibid.

the same streets, attended by the perpetuators of the massacre and the benevolent winners. The contrast between yesterday and today entitles us to plead in favor of French action in Morocco—the facts speak for themselves."[87] While clearly a piece of clunky colonial propaganda, Mercier's narrative demonstrated the widespread utilization of this secularized "Christian" identification: a label meant to indicate a superior system of values as well as a moral, racial, and material superiority over the Moroccan Muslims rather than to indicate any kind of unified approach to religious practice.

Moroccan opposition to French "Christian" interference led to several other rebellions over the first two decades of the twentieth century. Daily French newspapers covered these rebellions, playing up the dichotomy between Islam and Christianity for a mainstream metropolitan audience. An article in *Le Temps*, covering the 1908 Fez riots, claimed that that the Moroccans blamed the recently-deposed sultan, Abdelaziz, of acting at the behest of the French Christians. After linking France with Christianity, the article asserts that "France, Morocco's neighbor, needs to impose order on the anarchic feudalism in Morocco…which is always synonymous with disorder." It continues to discuss the riots in Fez, referring to the Moroccans as "xenophobic," "anarchic," and "largely ignorant."[88] Even though Catholics within the metropole were condemned in wider metropolitan discourse for their reactionary religious and political views in the early twentieth century, French Christians in the Moroccan context were implored to impose republican order on an allegedly feudalistic, ignorant society dominated by religious sentiment.

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[87] Ibid, 17.
[88] Adrien Hebrard, "La Situation au Maroc," *Le Temps*, January 13, 1908.

This secularized Christian label permeated discussions of French actions in Morocco throughout the formative and early years of the protectorate. A publication of the bulletin *Affaires du Maroc: 1901-1905* stated that it was only the "hate of the Christian" which guided their Moroccan adversaries and that military failures did nothing to diminish the religious fanaticism found amongst the population there.[89] The bulletin also addresses the state of French reform work in Morocco, outlining the attempts of the French "Christian" France to bring Moroccan society into the modern era. Unfortunately for the French—and, in their opinion, for the Moroccans as well—their efforts to improve the material and moral lives of the Moroccans only served to excite "the fanaticism of the Moroccan population…against French…Christians."[90] In these passages, French Christians are portrayed as rational carriers of worldly, material progress while the Muslims are characterized as supposed irrational, religious fanatics. Referring to the general culture of Moroccan insurrection against the French, the government bulletin, *L'Organisation financière de l'empire Marocain* asserted that, when the Moroccans endured serious circumstances—"like when the country is flooded by Christians"—then the Sultan would proclaim a jihad or holy war. When he proclaimed jihad, the Sultan was absolutely sure to receive the dedicated support of his subjects. This was due to the fact that "religious initiation causes a Muslim child to suddenly become fanatical, full of foolish pride and believing that he possesses the absolute truth, happily demonstrating his inferiority. This is a foolish, prideful, radical Muslim vice."[91] The initial contrast between

[89] France. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Affaires du Maroc, 1901-1905* (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1905), 109.
[90] Ibid, 263.
[91] Taleb Abdesselem, *L'Organisation financière de l'Empire Marocaine: Affaires du Maroc* (Paris: E. Larose, 1911), 21.

the Christian French and the Muslims in Morocco in this bulletin suggests that, in the eyes of the French government, the Moroccans' belief in absolute religious truth rendered them intellectually inferior. The French Christians "flooding" Morocco stand in contrast as foils guided by reason, not religious truth.

The propaganda piece *La Renaissance du Maroc: Dix ans de protectorat, 1912-1922,* a work published by the *Résidence Générale de la République Française au Maroc*, upholds this contemporary correlation between Islam and fanaticism. The work, in language reminiscent of that used by Tocqueville in his writings on Algeria, commissioned to sum up France's imperial experiences in Morocco during the first decade of the protectorate, consistently referred to the Moroccans as ""violent" "savage" and even "fanatical in their subconscious lives."[92] The work stated from the French perspective, "we must guard against Islamicized and Arabized natives, who today oppose our valiant troops with resistance." However, while the piece maintained that the Moroccans hated the French "Christians," the author hoped that "perhaps one day they will become the strongest supporters of our domination." [93] Drawing connections between the French and Christianity in direct opposition to the fanatical Muslims of Morocco, the author nevertheless holds fast to the belief that reason and material progress might convert the Moroccans to the French colonial cause. Interestingly, these portrayals of Muslims as unreasoning and driven by mindless religious observance are reminiscent of the secularist French portrayals of fervent Catholics within the metropole that were cited above. As evidenced here, metropolitan descriptions of Catholics as "religious

[92] *La Renaissance du Maroc: Dix ans de protectorat, 1912-1922* (Rabat: Résidence générale de la République française au Maroc, 1922), 40.
[93] Ibid.

fanatics" become irrelevant in the colonial context, where secularists favored an essentially racialized bifurcation—with "Christian" ultimately serving as a synonym for "white"—over a broader, ecumenical religious one.

The French media also associated France's secularized Christian civilization with humanitarian sentiment. An article published in *Le Temps* in 1912 described the "fanatical" Moroccan Muslims who observed "their religion with more severity than other peoples."[94] It discussed the sad plight of the "poor, small Moroccan refugees" who survived the rebellion in Fez a few months before. However, the editorial concludes that while the French would be tempted to sympathize with the "large, somber eyes" of the Moroccans affected by France's response to the events in Fez, "the Christian is always abhorred by these fanatics."[95] Here, the French Christian is defined by rationality as well as a controlled, superior sentimentality. Although a French man or woman might have been lured into feeling sympathy for the destitute, they are not subject to the violent fanaticism supposedly characteristic of the Moroccan Muslims.

Additionally, government officials and writers often associated French Christians explicitly with enlightenment ideals in the Moroccan context. Despite asserting that France was "slowly coming out of the 'age of religion,'" the monograph, *Un Programme de politique coloniale: Les Questions indigenes* by anticlericalist Louis Vignon, makes dozens of references to French Christians when discussing the peoples of the Muslim world. Vignon asserted in this work that France was being delivered into the modern world by science and that the French "offer the premier example of a people who, in sum

[94] Adrien Hébrard "La Vie a Paris," *Le Temps,* April 26,1912.
[95] Ibid.

and en masse, practice free thought." Nevertheless, he continued to associate the people of France with Christianity when discussing Islam, stating that "France has large colonial holdings over the Islamic world, where an opposition to Christianity exists among the Muslims" because "Christianity and Islam clash."[96] The work later sensationally asserts that non-European peoples "cannot comprehend the religion of Christ" which leads to Muslims possessing "a lack of moral unity." Paradoxically, Vignon condemns "inferior" peoples—namely, Muslims—for lacking the ability to comprehend the Christian religion while at the same time extolling the French people's increased secularism, propensity for free thinking, and their ability to place value on scientific rather than religious truth.[97]

Minutes from the *Congrès de l'Afrique du Nord,* held in Paris on October 6, 1908, stated that the Moroccan populace was vehemently against the Christians in their country. However, the text muses that "if it were really a hatred of all Christians, without distinction of origin, dictated by unique religious motives, all would be rejected with the same disapproval."[98] Amongst the Moroccan population, however, only the French Christians were held in defiance due to the fact that "their skillful legends represent the French people as tyrants and oppressors."[99] The congress continued to assert that the Moroccan's anger against the French was "based on more than religious enthusiasm…when they fight against the possible intervention of our troops. Certainly,

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[96] Louis Vignon, *Un Programme de politique coloniale: Les Questions indigenes* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1919), 409, 415, 565.
[97] Ibid, 159, 565.
[98] *Congrès de l'Afrique du Nord, tenu à Paris, du 6 au 10 octobre 1908. Compte-rendu des travaux. Questions indigènes (enseignement, justice, institutions religieuses, conditions de vie matérielle). Maroc (questions politiques et économiques)* (Paris: M. Ch. Depincé, 1909), 172, 823.
[99] Ibid.

religious enthusiasm exists amongst the Moroccans, but it would be a mistake to believe that is the cornerstone of their general hostility…particularly against the French." While these passages give the Moroccan people slightly more agency and depict them as more than religious fanatics—musing that perhaps they had political and cultural reasons for rejecting French rule—this work demonstrates that French government officials continued to associate France overtly with Christianity even after the Law of Separation. The congress argued that, while it would be humiliating for the Moroccans to be governed by Christians, a French-ruled Morocco would, "allow the natives to participate in the work of progress and justice, which will be fulfilled around them…we can conceive the creation of a modern Muslim University where, light of Western science will train a new generation…more apt…to appreciate the civilizing mission of France."[100] In this passage, the label "Christian" is attributed to the French, who were solely fueled not by Christian dogma, but by an ambition to civilize and spread progressive, enlightenment values amongst the supposed backwards, unenlightened population of Morocco.

The notion that secular France was somehow a Christian state also permeated French colonial knowledge production in the early twentieth century. The ethnographic study, *Précis de sociologie nord-africaine* by A.G.P. Martin, delves into the mindsets of the Moroccan peoples, stating that, "from a Muslim point of view, the sovereign cannot accept the political tutelage of a Christian state without losing prestige." Even as Martin identifies France as a Christian state, he condemns religious values influencing political

[100] Ibid.

society or culture. He states of Morocco, "we have already seen that the character of Islam does violence to reason. Their reasoning abilities are relatively low, since there is only one mystery, the existence of God." Martin condemns "the cohesive forces of Islam" that "establish mental uniformity among its followers," a uniformity that that had become "aggressive and disturbing" to the French. He concludes his work with a call for reform, contending that "all the groups of the Muslim community" must "regain their liberty, and, each accountable for himself, try to be resigned in submission to avoid greater damage."[101] While stating that these Muslims must put aside their collective religious devotion in favor of individual, free thought, he maintains that they must remain submissive to the rule of the supposedly Christian French state.

Christianity was also connected explicitly with modernity and capitalism in the Moroccan context. The monograph *Chrétiens et musulmans: Voyages et études,* by progressive author Ludovic de Contenson, claimed that Muslims "hated Christians," that is, "modern civilization." The work, linking Christianity with material innovation and development, continued to claim that "the Muslims hate Christians not only because they are infidels" according to Koranic law, but because they are "capitalists" "conquerors" "engineers" and "the masters of tomorrow."[102] These descriptions of Christians as capitalists and engineers, in particularly, show a clear shift in the way contemporaries utilized the label "Christian." According to Contenson, the French Christian was a "master" of the future, not a supplicant invoking God's favor.

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[101] Alfred-Georges-Paul Martin, *Précis de sociologie nord-africaine* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913), 46, 115).

[102] Ludovic de Contenson, *Chrétiens et musulmans: Voyages et études* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1901), 179.

The Moroccan penchant for religious warfare served to highlight the secular, enlightened brand of French Christianity touted by French contemporaries. The work, *La Conquête du Maroc; La Question indigene,* by French government official and lecturer René Millet, claimed that the Moroccans so long "removed from civilization," should "graciously accept the foreign yoke within the rebellious, turbulent, fanatical ancient city of Fez, which...has been long inaccessible to Christians." Now that France had gained access to the Islamic stronghold however, the French people had "received the mission to spread among them our civilization," and "fight the lasciviousness and misery found" within Moroccan culture.[103] Regarding the rebellious nature of the Moroccans, the monograph stated that, "undoubtedly, the religious reaction which followed the appearance of Christians…would bring attention to Fez, the holy city of Islam." Nevertheless, "French institutions will penetrate Moroccan disorder" until "the backwards instincts of the natives are presented with liberty." For, the author asserted, France's "queen is named Reason" and the French nation is "not without grandeur…if we consider the intellectual progress France has made as well as its progress in its colonial endeavors."[104] Utilizing a mélange of ideological tropes in the Moroccan context, Millet connects France's Christian identity explicitly with enlightenment principles of intellectualism, reason, and liberty. For Millet, the supposed Christian penetration of the Islamic holy places would lead to material civilization and productivity within Morocco.

The twentieth-century secularization of the label "Christian" is exemplified par excellence in the minutes from a 1910 meeting of the colonial lobbyist group, L'Union

[103] René Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc; La Question indigene* (Paris: Perrin, 1913), 2-252.
[104] Ibid, 69.

Colonial Française, titled, *L'Islam et la colonisation de l'Afrique: Conférence faite sous le patronage de l'Union Coloniale Française*. Concerned with questions of modernizing the intransigent Muslims of North Africa, the text claimed that "experience has proved a thousand times that adherents to Islam are lost to the Christian religion." However, this lobbyist group had no interest in spreading Christian beliefs or teachings. The meeting notes continue to claim that, while "Islam responds to a spirit of discipline," it does not "guarantee the free thought of modern civilization or the morality of enlightened Christianity."[105] Because of this fact, Christian ideals were crucial in spreading the gospel of secular French progress. The lobbyists asserted that while the metropole had no interest in the religion of the indigenous peoples, "the modern state favors the formation of strong Christian groups among the colonized populations, not for any religious or sentimental reasons, but for reasons of state. This is possible without great difficulty, because…it is evident that Christianity is superior by the very fact that it is practiced by the superior race."[106] Here, a secular, racialized Christianity emerges fully-formed in the context of Islamic North Africa. Lobbyists utilized this secular Christian label to demonstrate France's superior civilization an considered how it might be used to civilize and control the Muslim populations of North Africa.

[105] M. Dr C.-H. Becker, *L'Islam et la colonisation de l'Afrique: Conférence faite sous le patronage de l'Union Coloniale Française* (Paris: Union Coloniale Française, 1910), 16,17.
[106] Ibid.

5.7 Conclusion

As evidenced in the chapter, the label "Christian" was diffused with new nuance and meaning vis-à-vis Moroccan Islam in the early twentieth century. By comparing the Moroccan's supposed fanatical devotion to Islam against the rational, enlightened French Christians after 1905, French journalists, government officials, and other public figures and groups demonstrated that the ideas surrounding Christianity's role in French society was changing after the codification of the Law of Separation. By invoking ties to France's Christian traditions in a time of religious and political instability, French public figures created a sense of solidarity amongst their divided metropolitan constituents. However, by highlighting Christian France's scientific and civilizational achievements, these individuals' language suggests that French Christianity was referring to a superior, enlightened France—not a devout, Catholic France—in the Moroccan context.

After the turmoil caused by the Dreyfus Affair and the sense of sociocultural rupture caused by the secularization of France and the privatization of religion in 1905, Morocco functioned as an ideological space in which French Christians could draw on both past and present glory. In so doing, the French media, government, and other public figures upheld certain "collective sentiments" which appealed to both Catholic and secularist French men and women in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Epilogue

French historian Sarah Maza stated in her work, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850* that, "who we are as social beings is shaped by the constant messages we receive about whom to desire and whom to despise."[1] While Maza's subject matter falls beyond the scope of this dissertation, her words are nevertheless applicable to the discussions of religion, race, and empire contained herein. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, French writers, academics, members of government, and journalists applied the term "Christian" to underline the supposed French traits of rationalism, progress, and racial superiority in direct contrast to the alleged civilizational decline, religious fanaticism, and racial inferiority that was supposedly inherent to the "Muslim" populations of North Africa and the larger Islamic world. These religio-racial categories—eventually incorporated into mainstream discourse amidst the media coverage of the Dreyfus Affair—were adopted by both Catholics and secularists in the early twentieth century, operating in public rhetoric to connect the populace to France's mythical Christian past and simultaneously to an alleged secular, progressive—and imperial—modernity. This secularized French Christianity endured for years in the media and academic literature surrounding North Africa and broadly resonated with both Catholics and anticlericalists in the metropole.

Over a century after the codification of the Law of Separation, ideas surrounding racial and religious belonging within France remain complicated. The immigration of

[1] Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850 (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 204.

North African and Arab immigrants to France over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has once again brought questions regarding religion, secularization, and pluralism in France to the forefront of public debate. On March 15, 2004, the French government passed a statute prohibiting the wearing of "conspicuous signs" of religious affiliation in public schools. Article 1 states,

> In public elementary, middle and high schools, the wearing of signs or clothing which conspicuously manifest students' religious affiliations is prohibited. Disciplinary procedures to implement this rule will be preceded by a discussion with the student.

An explanation of "conspicuous" accompanies this article:

> The clothing and religious signs prohibited are conspicuous signs such as a large cross, a veil, or a skullcap. Not regarded as signs indicating religious affiliation are discreet signs, which can be, for example, medallions, small crosses, stars of David, hands of Fatima, or small Korans.[2]

Even though this law applied to all explicit signs of religion, it was widely understood to have been aimed primarily at Muslim girls wearing headscarves. According to French historian Joan Scott in her work, *The Politics of the Veil,* the headscarf—more commonly known as the veil—was considered contrary to French custom and law because it violated the separation of Church and state, insisted on differences among citizens in a nation one and indivisible, and accepted the subordination of women in a republic premised on equality. For many supporters of the 2004 law, the veil was the ultimate symbol of Islam's resistance to modernity, and a direct affront to the secular French republic and its universalist values.[3] This dissertation has demonstrated that the historical relationship between French secularism and Islam is more complex than this popular

[2] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1.
[3] Ibid, 2.

narrative suggests. Far from expunging France's ties to Christianity throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prominent anticlerical secularists drew upon a secularized, religio-racial Christian label specifically when discussing the peoples of France's Islamic colonies. In fact, corroborating this assertion, contemporary critics of *laïcité* have claimed that it is not a universal concept at all, but is rather intimately bound up with the dominant Catholic religious culture of the nation.[4] It is my contention that the religio-racial conceptions of the label "Christian" considered in this project continue to resonate today: shaping and defining French people's interactions with supposed religious and racial outsiders—specifically Muslims—within the Fifth Republic. In viewing traditional nineteenth-century secularization narratives through a lens of empire, our conceptions of secularization—and the role of religion—are wont to change. That is, by defining secularization not as the retreat of religion from mainstream culture but rather as the repurposing of religious labels to strengthen and both promote empire and racial hierarchy, this project has endeavored to better understand the evolution and continued importance of religious identity within a modern, secular republic.

According to Kevin J. Callahan and Sarah A. Curtis in their work *Views from the Margins: Creating Identities in Modern France* that the core/periphery framework allows the historian to investigate the salient features of modern French identity in multiple ways.[5] Religious evolution in twentieth-century France did not occur within an ideological bubble. Therefore, it is essential to understand French secularism in light of the French populace's interactions with colonialized peoples, for not only did the

[4] Ibid, 7.
[5] Kevin J. Callahan and Sarah A. Curtis, ed., *Views from the Margins: Creating Identities in Modern France,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 4.

periphery permit more fluid and dynamic notions of identity, but peripheral developments also had the power to drastically upset or change identity patterns emanating from the center.[6] As debates over the role of religion in a secularized French society continue to influence public affairs into the twenty-first century, examining the contradictions inherent in the secularization narratives over the last century prove more crucial than ever. For, according to Joan Scott, "the attribution of inferior otherness…was attached to the veil, and beyond it to everything Muslim, Arab, and North African. The headscarf law, then, was not so much a solution to a problem as a symptom of France's inability or unwillingness to face…the continuing power imbalance based on ethnic/religious difference—that has characterized its dealings with North Africans for so long."[7] Ideas about religion and identity continue to influence both French government policy and views towards supposed religious and racial inferiors and, as a result, must be allotted a central position in the historical analysis and understanding of twentieth-century French cultural and political life.

[6] Ibid.
[7] Scott, *Politics of the Veil,* 181.