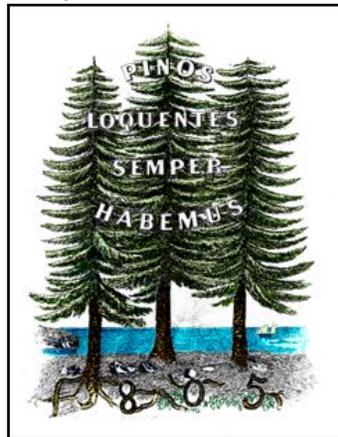


CHRONICLE

Resolution

*Secularization is bad
for America*



SIGNIFICANT THEMES

- ⊙ Definition of Religion
- ⊙ Necessity of Religion
- ⊙ Morality and Progress

Affirmative

Timothy O'Brien '10, delivering the affirmative address, asserted that the Judeo-Christian heritage of the United States has and should continue to guide Americans well. Without this moral compass, he posited, government is merely an arbitrary contrivance with little real force or authority. Only by adhering to the strong religious foundation upon which this country has grown can America expect to continue to survive and flourish as a nation.

Negative

Sam Smith '10, presenting the negative opinion, rejected Mr. O'Brien's assertion that Christianity has guided us well, citing several historical examples. "Christianity," he proclaimed, "is an impossible idea that suffuses us with fear" and undermines human will and potential. Instead of continuing along the failed path of religion, Mr. Smith advocated for replacing it with something (such as poetry, art, faith in community, or classical philosophy) determined through contemplation and a formation of visions.

THE SOCIETY DEBATE

After the opening addresses, President Ross Jacobs and others attempted to guide the Society toward the establishment of a common definition of "religion." As members quickly began to disagree about such a definition and the source of truth in religion, Dan Brady '08, a religion concentrator with experience sorting through these complex and sticky quagmires, suggested that the Society abandon its search in favor of moving forward with debate. Nevertheless, Timothy O'Brien '10, John Cunningham '10, Steven Bartus '08, and others continued to wrangle with these questions and Mr. Jacobs persisted in his attempt to establish common ground.

Midway through the disputation, discussion shifted when Rebecca Van Horn '09 proposed that the Society

engage in more concrete discourse concerning the practical purpose of religion in America. This proposal spurred a new wave of comments from a wider group and led the discussion into uncharted territory.

Debate raged unabated for the remaining time, and as the disputation drew to a close, the Society failed to reach any strong consensus on any issue discussed. As a result, Mr. Jacobs requested that each member submit a question or short series of questions formed during the debate. These questions served to conclude the disputation and to provoke further conversation and thought into the early hours of the following morning.



QUESTIONS CONCEIVED

If secularization is bad, is it bad in the Muslim world or in other parts of the world? – Kyle Ritter '09

Can we have faith without organized religion? Can we progress without alienating the foundations of religion? What would fill a the religious void if religion were eliminated? – Rong Li '08

Can religion be divorced from the public sphere? – Christine Carletta '10

If religion can be divorced from the public sphere, what form would it take? – Dan Brady '08

What are the origins of the Christian belief in progress? – Ross Jacobs '10

How are consumerism and Christianity related? – Archibald Abrams '09

Can we have “Religion 2.0” (“Youtube individualism” with religion) without losing core beliefs? – Joshua Miller '08

Can we reach a consensus on religion? Should we? – Wesley Hartwell '11

Does secularization lead to a decline in virtue? – Hassan Muhammad '10

What is truth? – Steven Bartus '08

Is consumerism an inevitable side effect of secularism? What can replace religion? – Sam Smith '10

Could an alternative to religion be better? – John Cunningham '10

Can you have tolerance without an unequivocal religious foundation? – Timothy O'Brien '10

Are all religions equally capable? – Jeffrey Jeng '09

Can spirituality be as deep as it was in the past? – Jordan Browning '08

Will a consumerist vie for political beliefs as much as an evangelical? – Bryant Johnson '11

Is reason necessary for morality? Is secularization natural or due to a more material-success-minded society? – Alicia Martinez '10

Is this [Alicia's question] a religious or cultural question? – Rebecca Van Horn '09

Might secularization result in a morality? Should we care? – Aisha Woodward '08

Professor Paul Franco's thoughts: “I am truly impressed with the level of conversation, and I believe my colleagues would share this impression. Debate was natural, messy, and full of great questions.”