

# **TOWARDS A SECULAR STATE. NEW RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LAW**

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The Spanish government is drafting the draft Law on Religious Freedom which, for the first time in many years, introduces the Spanish "secularism of the State" into its articles. The draft echoed by the newspaper El País actually speaks of confessional "neutrality" in its basic articles and in its preamble but, although incomplete, it is a decided step towards the definitive separation of State institutions from the Church Catholic.

Five phases could be distinguished in the process towards secularism: confessional State, multi-denominational State, neutral State and secular State. The draft of the Law advances on that ladder of secularism to place itself in the nebula of "neutrality". Thus, it maintains the privileges agreed with the Catholic Church but opens the possibility of maintaining stable agreements with other "rooted" religions (the way the Government understands to adapt to the current social reality in Spain). This multi-denominational nature (of undesirable drift for those of us who advocate the full secularism of public powers) is cushioned by the obligation to avoid "any practice that confuses State functions with religious activities." Thus, attempts are being made to separate acts of homage and state civil funerals from religious services; the participation of public officials in religious acts is regulated (which from now on would be "voluntary") and the participation of representatives of the State in them is avoided. Religious symbols are prohibited in public buildings, public schools and hospitals.

They are all steps in the construction of institutions based on the principles of democracy, moving a little further away from the Catholic theocracy that still introduces its tentacles into our system of liberties and into our institutions.

Let us welcome this new Law, much more advanced and sensible than that of 1980, although it cannot be said that it is more modern (the French are 200 years ahead of us in this, for example). Something is something and many of us were waiting for it. It is clear, in any case, that today Zapatero does not have the strength and leadership that he had in his first legislature when, for example, he was much more radical when it came to equating marriages between people of the same or different sex. At that time he dared to go to major and did not stay halfway. In the situation of "permanent questioning" of his ability to lead Spain that suffers from the good art of political and social agents, he has not dared to give his chest and clearly and radically state the secularism of the State. It's politically understandable if a bit discouraging, and if you don't get it right, it can even be dangerous. By wanting to detach from the Catholic Church but without breaking with it, you can end up turning the State institutions into a showcase of the rich and varied confessionalism of our society and move away from the true objective: to separate the State from the Church, be it Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist. Don't let them get out of hand: it's not about pleasing everyone but setting the standard. It is not going to be that we end up seeing Queen Sofía (converted Catholic) and Princess Letizia (lifelong Catholic) at a State funeral hidden behind latticework and a tunic in a different room from that of her husband of the great mosque of the M-30.

**There are no comments yet.**