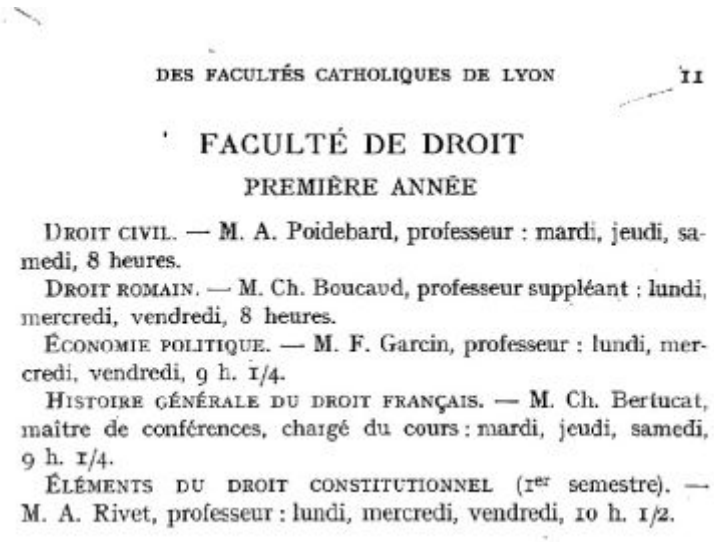
The Catholic Faculty of Law in Lyon during the Great War



DES FACULTÉS CATHOLIQUES DE LYON 11

FACULTÉ DE DROIT

PREMIÈRE ANNÉE

DROIT CIVIL. — M. A. Poidebard, professeur : mardi, jeudi, samedi, 8 heures.

DROIT ROMAIN. — M. Ch. Boucaud, professeur suppléant : lundi, mercredi, vendredi, 8 heures.

ÉCONOMIE POLITIQUE. — M. F. Garcin, professeur : lundi, mercredi, vendredi, 9 h. 1/4.

HISTOIRE GÉNÉRALE DU DROIT FRANÇAIS. — M. Ch. Bertucat, maître de conférences, chargé du cours : mardi, jeudi, samedi, 9 h. 1/4.

ÉLÉMENTS DU DROIT CONSTITUTIONNEL (1er semestre). — M. A. Rivet, professeur : lundi, mercredi, vendredi, 10 h. 1/2.

The Catholic law faculty had just finished its degree exams when war broke out, but despite the events, it reopened its doors in November. However, due to the conscription of almost all of their students, the theology faculty and university seminary were unable to resume classes. Classes resumed on November 4 for first- to third-year law students, but without the traditional formal opening ceremony, which was suspended for the duration of the war. In 1914, a mass celebrated by the cardinal chancellor on November 19 and attended by teachers and students replaced the ceremony.

Not many professors were called up during the war (only twelve from all the Catholic faculties in Lyon). To our knowledge, only Emmanuel Gounot, a young lecturer (aged 29 at the start of the war), fought in the war. Other professors were also called up for various positions, but they were few in number due to their age; people over fifty were no longer eligible for military service. The Bulletin des facultés catholiques de Lyon,

which began publication in 1880, is one of the main sources of information. In its early days, it was edited by the director of the subscription fund, Father G. Wedrychowsky, and served to liaise with subscribers by informing them of what was happening in the Catholic faculties and the progress of the subscription fund. Running until 1935, the Bulletin provided information on the life of the Catholic faculties of Lyon. For instance, seven professors serving in various positions were mentioned in the Bulletin but without specifying their names. Civil records of the faculty's staff in 1914 suggest that, in addition to Emmanuel Gounot, they likely included Auguste Rivet and Pierre Raver du Magny – both aged 46 at the time – as well as three younger lecturers : Charles Bertucat (aged 35, teaching legal history), Charles Boucaud (34, assistant professor), Félix Garcin, aged 35 (teaching political economy and industrial legislation), and Antoine Mazas (also in his thirties). An eighth teacher can also be mentioned: Paul Magnin, who teaches evening classes in civil and commercial procedure, aged 42 and therefore also potentially eligible for military service. Beyond the difficulty of identifying these teachers, no information survives about their specific wartime duties. The dean's report merely mentions "various posts — combat units, military tribunals, hospital services". Because of their age, some were likely spared front-line service and instead assigned to territorial units or support roles behind the lines. The mobilization rate was comparable to that of law faculty staff across France, averaging 43%.

The only professor to serve on the front lines was the young Emmanuel Gounot, assigned to the 159th Infantry Regiment, where he quickly rose to the rank of captain. In August 1918, he led his men in an assault on a village defended by numerous machine guns. Severely wounded, he refused evacuation and continued urging his troops forward. His bravery earned him the Légion d'honneur — he was made a Chevalier in 1919. Upon returning, he resumed teaching and advanced in rank within the faculty, becoming assistant professor in 1919 and full professor in 1921. His promotion also reflected a generational shift following the deaths of early faculty members such as Joseph Rambaud and Gilbert Boucaud (both in 1919), and André Gairal de Sérézin (in 1920). Gounot later became vice-dean in 1940 and dean in 1944.

As mentioned above, a significant proportion of the faculty's staff were spared mobilization, at least on the front lines, due to their age; others were not mobilized at all and continued to teach. One such example was Dean Charles Jacquier. Born in 1845 and 69 years old at the start of the war, he was not mobilized ; he remained dean until

1928. Alexandre Poidebard, born in 1844 and who died in 1925, and Gairal de Sérézin, born in 1843 and who died in 1920, were also in the same age group. Joseph Rambaud, slightly younger, born in 1849, was also past the age of mobilization.

Like most French families, however, some professors suffered personnal losses. For example, Auguste Rivet, professor of administrative law, lost his brother in combat; Reverend Father Louis Rivet of the Society of Jesus, professor of canon law at the Roman College, died in May 1915 at the age of 44. Similarly, Joseph Rambaud lost one of his sons during the war. It is worth noting that five of Joseph Rambaud's sons fought on the front lines, as did three of his sons-in-law.

Beyond military mobilization, the intellectual stance of the Catholic Faculty of Law during the Great War raises questions. The State Faculty of Law in Lyon is known to have actively supported France's cause against Germany. As early as 1915, it opened Professor Paul Pic's public international law course to the general public. That same year, the University Council of Lyon organized a series of public lectures on current military topics. Among them were those delivered by law professors such as Dean Josserand ("Force and Law," January 20) and Émile Bouvier ("The German Conception of the State," April 1).

What about the Catholic Faculty of Law in Lyon? Dean Jacquier was particularly involved in giving various lectures denouncing German barbarism. He gave a lecture on this subject in Lyon at the Cirque Rancy in front of an audience of 4,000 to 5,000 people, bringing together both Catholics and Republicans. The event was organized on May 30, 1915, by the Society for Aid to Wounded Soldiers and the Catholic Committee for Aid to Prisoners of War (*Courrier de Saône-et-Loire*, June 12, 1915, p. 1). Similarly, on June 27, 1915, he gave a lecture in Turin on "Germany and the Law of Nations" under the auspices of the Catholic Committee for French Propaganda Abroad, founded by Monsignor Baudrillart, rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris. During this conference, Charles Jacquier, in order to impress his audience and highlight German barbarism, presented photos of the cathedrals of Reims and Soissons before the war and after the bombings.The professor of civil law denounced Germany's contempt for international law. On December 19, 1915, at the request of the League of Large Families, he gave another lecture in Lyon, this time on birth rates. Once again linking the subject to wartime circumstances, he expressed Christian ideals about France's moral and demographic renewal, arguing that the nation's strength was rooted in the family, and

pointing to Germany's higher birth rate as a national weakness for France. This legal war takes on a particular significance for Catholics, who use it to spread their vision of law — for example, marriage, defined as a social function established by God, whose primary purpose is the transmission of life.

After the Armistice, the dean carried on his efforts with a lecture given in Lyon on November 21, 1918, on the theme of sacrificed heroes (*L'Action française*, November 20, 1918, p. 1).

Beyond the activities of Dean Jacquier, we found no mention of lectures given by other teachers. However, Pierre Ravier du Magny (professor of administrative law) published articles on nationality, in which he wrote about the return to legal nationalism brought about by "the war unleashed by Germany" (Revue catholique des institutions et du droit, July–September 1918, p. 204).

This limited ideological mobilization is hardly surprising: half the faculty were on active duty, and the others were likely absorbed by the task of maintaining teaching continuity. After the war, Rector Fleury Lavallée emphasized the value of humanistic education — particularly nurtured in Catholic faculties — as a moral weapon against the Germans.

Although the small number of mobilized professors allowed teaching to continue, the student population was drastically reduced. Only students under 20 (and those unfit for service) remained, though many would later be drafted. It is difficult to determine the exact number of enrolled students between 1915 and 1918. The proportion of students mobilized is not indicated in the *Bulletin des facultés catholiques de Lyon*, and it was not until 1920 that reports became available and the number of students was known again. The only source of information is the student registers kept in the archives of the Catholic University in Lyon, which must be examined one by one to deduce the different student profiles. Among the 31 students who did not re-enroll after May 1914, we note different profiles. One-third of them died during the war. Of the others, nine deferred their studies or did not even have time to take an exam, as the war may have changed their career prospects. Finally, only four obtained their bachelor's degree, which means that they may have decided to stop their law studies at that stage.

As for students enrolling during the Great War, situations also varied. A number of students – we have identified 25 – took a break from their studies for at least one year, or even four years in the case of students who were mobilized far from Lyon and unable

to return to enroll or take exams. For example, Camille Prénat, the son of a lawyer, was forced to suspend his registration between May 1917 and November 1919, resuming only after returning from service.

Among other situations, there were students who only enrolled in a few courses and did not take all of their exams, or even any exams at all. For the period 1914-1918, 29 students fell into this category. These sporadic studies can again be explained by sudden mobilization or financial difficulties in continuing their studies in the midst of war. Finally, a last group of about thirty students continued their studies without interruption, benefiting from reformed status. Some even obtained doctorates, such as Lucien-Brun, whose father was already teaching when the Catholic Faculty of Law opened, as well as René-Louis Nouvellet and Camille Cottet. The number of students varied widely by year, but the registers show that in 1916-1917 – the lowest point – there were probably no more than 27 students enrolled between January and September. The following year, 1917-1918, enrollment increased, however, with 13 new registrations in November.

Interestingly, the Catholic Faculty of Law tended to minimize the number of students absent during the war, instead emphasizing its continuity and rapid postwar recovery. This parallels the speech given in 1918 by Louis Josserand, dean of the State Law Faculty of Lyon, who emphasized the void left by the war, with very few students remaining: “For five years, our classrooms remained half-empty, almost deserted; For five years we continued our task, which had become particularly unrewarding, since we were working almost for no one.” (*Opening session of the Lyon Faculty of Law for the year 1919-1920*, Lyon, A. Rey, 1920, p. 7). Such cautious phrasing from the Catholic side is understandable : since the decline in enrollment in the 1880s, maintaining student numbers had been an obsession. Nevertheless, the decline must have been severe; for comparison, the State Faculty of Law saw 75% of its students mobilized, and enrollment fell from 585 to 184.

Another noteworthy aspect of the wartime registers is the admission of women – for the first time – into the Catholic Faculty of Law in Lyon. While women had already entered the faculties of Science and Humanities, they now penetrated the jurists’ conservative stronghold. The promotion of women’s higher education within Catholic faculties had, in fact, been underway since the turn of the century. Higher education for young women was established in 1885. On the eve of the war, there were two different types of

education. First, and this was the first to be established, was education that had no professional purpose but was « intended to occupy young women between the end of their studies and marriage ». This was the position of the rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris, Baudrillart, when he referred to the courses for young women also offered at the Parisian institution (Alfred Baudrillart, “La question des étudiantes et le devoir des catholiques” [The question of female students and the duty of Catholics], *Le Correspondant*, no. 6, 1912, p. 1078). More recently, higher education for young women had evolved towards a more vocational focus with the introduction of « complementary courses » that serve as effective preparation for the baccalauréat in sections B and C. Preparing for competitive examinations is obviously not insignificant, as it aims to provide teachers in Catholic middle and high schools with a diploma. In a second wave, young women entered higher education, first in Humanities and Science, then, during the war, including the Catholic Faculty of Law. The low number of students undoubtedly facilitated this new development. The first female student to enroll at the Catholic Faculty of Law in Lyon was Victorine Héritier. She only enrolled twice, first in November 1916 and then in January 1917, and did not take any exams. Her profile was all the more atypical in that she was older than her male counterparts, being 34 years old at the time of her first enrollment. In comparison, students enrolling for the first time at the same time were between 17 and 21 years old.

However, the door had been opened because the following year, two other young women, Miss Jacquet and Miss Girod, also enrolled in law studies. It should be noted that they were only seeking the basic law degree. After two years of study, the *certificat de capacité* allows people who are often older and less well-off to become court officers and pursue certain careers in the civil service.

Both young women quickly passed with honors, while their male classmates did not receive any honors. Again, they were a little older, 25 and 22 respectively, but this was still in line with the average age of students taking the exam.

It should be noted that there were hardly any more women at the State Faculty of Lyon; in 1913, they could still be counted on one hand. The numbers were no more impressive at the national level, with 119 women enrolled in Law out of 16,763 students of both sexes.

Returning to the general situation, the decline in enrollment inevitably meant fewer exams each year. In his 1919 annual report, Dean Jacquier indicated that the number of exams taken by students in 1914 was 124; however, this fell to an average of 35 in the following years due to the war.

Despite all difficulties, the Catholic Faculty of Law in Lyon, like the other Catholic faculties in Lyon with the exception of the seminary, did not disappear. In fact, as soon as the war ended, the Catholic Faculty of Law welcomed back its previous student numbers and exceeded 100 enrolled students. The faculty had thus continued its teaching mission in difficult conditions while upholding its Christian ideals. At the end of the war, still with a view to increasing its influence, and in a context of fierce competition with the State Law Faculty, the Catholic Faculty of Law inaugurated practical courses in commercial law.

Ultimately, the greatest change brought by the war was the transformation of the student body, marked by the arrival of women at the *capacité* level. These practical law courses were open to them as well. Though few in number, they broke the glass ceiling, and within a few years, women began pursuing the *baccalauréat* and then the licence in law. In 1922-1923, four women earned their law baccalaureate degree, and two others their *certificat de capacité*.

Myriam Biscay, lecturer in legal history, Jean Moulin – Lyon 3, Centre lyonnais d'histoire du droit et de la pensée politique (Lyon Centre for Legal History and Political Thought)

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