



# FRANCE AND THE CATHOLIC RIGHT

*Posted on March 1, 2021 by Gary Potter*



For the first time in decades there is visible on the French political landscape politics rooted in France's historical Catholicism. From the point of view and in the parlance of secular liberal globalists that makes the politics "far right," "extreme right" or even "fascist".

Given France's position as one of the world's leading nations, its role as a main actor in history and the lamentable fact that in 1789 it became the first country in Christendom to experience the overthrow of Christian government, the emergence of the new politics inspired by traditional Church teaching is of considerable significance.

It excites fear and loathing in some. One such is Mark Lilla, author of an article about the movement recently published by the New York Review of Books, that flag-bearer journal of the political left in the U.S. He fears that it can serve, at least in its "aggressive form," as a "powerful tool for building a pan-European reactionary Christian nationalism."

Bear in mind as we discuss it here that France is officially secular to the degree that the very buildings in which Catholics worship — their churches — are property of the state. It should not surprise us, therefore, that the young men and women expounding the new politics do not foresee their ideas prevailing soon. On the contrary, we should take them all the more seriously for that reason.

As Lilla noted in his article about them, Antonio Gramsci is frequently cited in their journals and magazines. Gramsci was an Italian Communist theoretician imprisoned by Mussolini in the 1930s who saw and taught that the Marxist subversion of Europe and the rest of the West required intellectual transformation — a "long march," as he put it, through educational and cultural institutions in order to weaken age-old attachments to family, community and religion. The social turbulence of the 1960s and general collapse of Christian standards of behavior, exemplified by the sexual revolution of that decade, showed that the long march had begun to pay off. Finally it arrived at today's secular liberal globalism which is culturally Marxist if it is anything, this even if many globalists identify themselves as being on the political right. Their true essential character is revealed by their economic vision of history and the life of society. If we assume they are familiar at all with the sayings of Our Lord, they have forgotten that man does not live by bread alone.

The young thinkers of the new Catholic right understand that nothing will roll back cultural Marxism except a long march in the opposite direction leading to the restoration of tradition. To speak of this

restoration is to speak of peoples of former Christendom, in this case the French, embracing their Christian history and thereby revitalizing family, community and religion, institutions in which humanity flourishes and which, when they are strong, also insulate men from the power of the modern state that seeks for that very reason to weaken them. It aims to take their place and in many respects has.

We ought to note here that the last rightwing political movement of Catholic coloration to exercise serious influence in France was Action Française. Its sway was the widest in the period between the First and Second World Wars. Its leading intellectual light was thinker, writer and member of the French Academy, Charles Maurras.

If we allude here to Action Française it is for two reasons: 1) Ideas set forth by Maurras can be seen to figure in the thinking of the young men and women of the emerging politics. To be sure, they are adapted to today's circumstances. 2) Apart from its monarchism, the most notable feature of Action Française was that it was anti-statist.

What are the exact, concrete positions staked out by adherents of the new politics? They reject the European Union, same-sex marriage and mass immigration. They also reject unregulated global financial markets, genetically-modified foodstuffs, consumerism and daily life dominated by what they refer to as AGFAM (Apple-Google-Facebook-Amazon-Microsoft). In Lilla's words, they see "the fundamental task of society is to transmit knowledge, morality, and culture to future generations."

Lilla goes on to explain that they oppose the E.U. "because it rejects the culture-religion foundation of Europe and tries to found it instead on the economic self-interest of individuals. Unlike their American counterparts...the young French conservatives argue that the economy must be subordinate to social needs."

Of course from the Catholic point of view they are correct to do so. Having a sound economy depends on having right politics, the means by which the life of society is governed, but such politics cannot exist except on the basis of right morality, and that is impossible if society is divorced from God, restricting religion to purely private practice.

Another big difference between the young French conservatives and their American counterparts is that the French are strong environmentalists, whereas the Americans by-and-large have never

understood that conservatism should conserve.

In the next installment of this article we'll identify some of the leading figures among the young French Catholic conservatives, take a closer look at what they espouse, including some differences between them, and see how all this fits, if it does, in the context of the "yellow-vest" uprising that has rocked France since November.

Meantime, my attention has been drawn to a Spanish poll that shows that the Vox Party, whose meteoric rise I recently wrote about, now enjoys nearly twelve percent support among voters nationally after their stunning victory in Andalusia ended 36 years of Socialist rule in that region.

About twelve percent support was what the AfD Party had when it won its first seats in Germany's federal parliament, where it is now the main opposition to lame-duck Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU-Socialist-CSU coalition government. It also now has seats in the legislatures of all sixteen German states.

From the traditional Catholic viewpoint news on several fronts during the first two weeks of 2019 was excellent even if all of it was not generated by practicing Catholics.

For instance: Jair Bolsonaro, inaugurated on January 1 as President of Brazil, the world's largest Catholic nation, acted quickly and vigorously to keep his campaign promises to turn back decades of Marxist rule of the country and to end the corruption it fostered; Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Marine Le Pen, leader of France's National Rally party (formerly the National Front) kicked off campaigns to elect candidates for seats in next May's European Parliament elections with the goal of a nationalist/populist takeover of the globalist body; the "yellow vest" uprising in France, begun as a protest against increased fuel taxes, morphed into a movement to unseat globalist President Emmanuel Macron; at last a major religious figure, Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, warned against "falling into slavery" to smartphones and social media. Every time a person uses a smartphone "someone can know exactly where you are, know exactly what you are interested in, know exactly what you fear," he said, and the centralized collection of such data could be used for world domination. It could even prepare the advent of Antichrist, he warned.

Perhaps the most important news during early January: a visit to Warsaw by Italy's Interior Minister

Matteo Salvini to meet with the leadership of Poland's governing Law and Justice party. He proposed to the Poles an Italy-Poland axis around which European nationalist/populist governments could form a replacement of the globalist Paris-Berlin duopoly that has dominated the EU since its inception. Viktor Orban immediately applauded Salvini's initiative.

Salvini, who has been known to hold aloft a Bible and rosary when speaking in public, based his proposal on a ten-point program. The three key points: national borders secure against mass alien incursion; national economies secure from globalist corporate control; the safeguard of national culture and traditions.

All these and other recent developments, all indicative of a rightward political shift, and not simply in Europe, merit commentary. but we want to continue our discussion of the emergence of a new Catholic "far right" in France.

The only one of its young leaders who is known to any extent in the U.S. is Marion Marechal-Le Pen. She is the niece of Marine Le Pen and granddaughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder of the National Front. Elected to parliament in 2012 at the age of 22, she chose not to run for reelection in 2017. She became known in the U.S. when she was a featured speaker at last year's annual Conservative Political Action Conference, following Vice President Pence to the podium. A line of her speech that I especially liked was her quotation of composer Gustav Mahler: "Tradition is not the cult of ashes; it is the transmission of fire."

This notion of transmission, of the time it takes, of the long march, was at the heart of her speech. Listen to this: "Without the nation, without the family, without the limits of common sense, natural law and collective morality disappear as the reign of egoism continues. Today even children have become merchandise. We hear in public debates that we have the right to order a child from a catalogue, we have the right to rent a woman's womb.... Is this the freedom we want? No. We don't want the atomized world of individuals without gender, without fathers, without mothers, and without nations.... Our fight cannot take place in elections. We need to convey our ideas through the media, culture and education to stop the domination of liberals and socialists. We have to train leaders of tomorrow, those who have courage, the determination, and the skills to defend the interests of their people."

Three months after her CPAC appearance Marion Marechal announced the opening in Lyons of the Institute of Social, Economic, and Political Sciences (I.S.S.E.P.) with the stated aim of displacing "our

nomadic, globalized, deracinated liberal system." Besides being a business school, it will offer great-book courses on philosophy, literature, history and rhetoric, and courses on "political and cultural combat." Jacques de Guillebon, editor of L'Incorrect, is in charge of establishing the Institute's curriculum.

Guillebon has written in his magazine: "We need a right that is revolutionary, identitarian and reactionary, capable of attracting the working and middle classes."

It is on account of his talk of revolution and Marion Marechal aiming to "stop the domination of liberals and socialists," that the political left brands them and the new politics they represent as "aggressive." However, another strain of thought and action also mark the new politics. We might call them back-to-the-earth conservatives.

Their principal publication is *Limite*, described as "a journal of integral ecology." In it you can read articles about couples moving from the city to a village, becoming involved in local parish life, schools, environmental activism, raising their children according to Christian standards — in short, becoming an example to the larger society of an alternative way of life. Their politics is akin to the Distributism that Catholics associate with Chesterton and Belloc. They can also be likened to the Southern Agrarians of the 1930s in the U.S.

Speaking of them is also a way to segue into a discussion of the "yellow vest" movement and its significance. We'll speak of that in the next installment of this article. Before then, it is important to address a question raised by a reader who posted it as a comment on the article's first installment. The reader was interested in knowing if adherents of the new Catholic "far right" in France are "against the use of contraception. Are they having big families?"

There is no "far right" political party or movement in Europe that isn't pro-natalist or that doesn't implement pro-natalist policies when elected into power. For instance, the Hungarian government offers married couples with five children generous financial help to buy or build a house. Such pro-natalist policies work. Poland, which had the lowest birth-rate in Europe under Communism, now has the third-highest.

There is no direct connection between the emergence of the new Catholic "far right" in France and the

yellow vest uprising that is in its twelfth week at this writing, but there is nothing political in France right now that isn't colored in some way by the slow-motion revolt, which is supported by seventy percent of the country's population according to polls (compared to President Emmanuel Macron's eighteen percent approval rating). Besides, the Catholic far right and the yellow vests are opposed to many of the same things. The Catholics, with the Church's traditional social doctrine as well as religious teaching to guide their thinking, simply have a clearer idea of what those things are and why it is past time society jettisoned them.

If the way we approach the subject of the yellow vest uprising is oblique — with reference to a book about America, not France — it is because a little discussion of the book will explain what the yellow vests are revolting against, as are the Catholic far right in France, and as should be Catholics everywhere. It is not simply Emmanuel Macron in France, no more than it is simply, say, Nancy Pelosi in the U.S.

The book is *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics is Destroying American Democracy*, by Jonah Goldberg, *National Review* senior editor and a fellow of the American Enterprise Institute.

Apart from his *National Review* and AEI affiliations, you know from Goldberg's first sentence that he is truly representative of U.S. conservatism, which is to say the right wing of our national liberalism: "There is no God in this book."

What there is, first of all, is an account of evolution up to the advent of *homo sapiens*. Then, after hundreds of thousands of years, mankind was sufficiently advanced, we are told, to arrive at John Locke *et al*, the Enlightenment and "the Miracle" (Goldberg's term, complete with the upper-case M), thanks to which "nearly all human progress has taken place in the last three hundred years."

The fruit of the Miracle and this "progress" is liberal democracy and liberal economics — the modern world, which "has helped to produce enormous prosperity, cure diseases, reduce violence, and liberate humanity from millennia of superstitions that held individual humans from realizing their potential."

Yet, and increasingly, many persons remain oblivious to, and unsatisfied by, modernity. Why? Goldberg concedes that modernity "does not give us much by way of meaning.... We miss the unity of the pre-

Enlightenment mind." As a consequence, our day is witnessing (as Goldberg's subtitle puts it) the "rebirth of tribalism, populism, nationalism and identity politics," all of which represent a "totalitarian temptation, and a corruption of the civilization we are blessed to live in. And it is utterly natural."

Goldberg is correct about that. The civilization of modernity with its "blessings" of moral relativism, normalization of sexual deviance and secular liberal globalism is not natural. Reaction against it is. In France the reaction has taken the form of the emergence of the new Catholic far right and the yellow vest uprising. In the U.S. it was manifest in the 2016 election of Donald Trump, whom Goldberg loathes. He calls him a tribalist, populist, nationalist and fraud, among other things. Well, I don't suppose many Catholic parents who take the Faith seriously would want to see a son grow up to be like Donald Trump, the man, but the man has little to do with the social and political dynamics that produced his election, especially given the alternative in 2016.

Though the roots of those dynamics extend back to the dawn of "the Miracle," we need trace them no farther than the Tory regime of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and the conservative Administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush in the U.S. It was then that multinational corporations, manufacturers of global reach looking to lower labor costs and thereby increase profits, began moving their operations to Third World countries — China, Mexico, etc. This was done with government assistance, NAFTA being an example in the U.S. Britain and the U.S. stopped making things and millions of blue-collar jobs were lost as a consequence. Instead of manufacturing there was a shift to financial services and other white-collar professions with workers whose earnings were often astronomical (think hedge-fund managers). The theory was that their new wealth would "trickle down" and thereby "all boats will be lifted."

That didn't happen. Instead the richer got richer and the wages of ordinary people stayed stagnant. We've wound up with college graduates working as waiters and Starbucks baristas faced with mountains of debt accumulated in order to obtain their degrees that exceed even what all Americans combined owe credit-card companies.

All this came later to France, but come it did. Factories outside the country's cities closed down while capital and finance became concentrated in Paris. It became one of the world's most expensive cities with ordinary Frenchmen no more able to afford its four-star restaurants and manicured boulevards than average Americans can afford Manhattan or San Francisco. The old rural France of small towns and villages died like the dead and dying small towns of the vast expanse of America that our coastal



elites contemptuously refer to as “flyover country.”

Enter Emmanuel Macron into the picture. He personifies in his one person both the left and right wings of globalism — the civilization of modernity that measures all things in economic terms. He began his career, and learned how the modern world works, as an executive of the French branch of the Rothschild banking empire, then moved seamlessly into the cabinet of Socialist Francois Hollande as Minister of the Economy. He then made his biggest move when the candidacy for President of the Republic of the leading “conservative” collapsed amid financial scandal. He announced formation of a brand new party with his initials, En Marche, and himself as its candidate. He won.

How does this relate to the yellow vests named for the florescent yellow sleeveless jackets that French law requires motorists to have in their vehicles to signal emergencies?

With the factories where they used to work shut down, where were the rural French to find jobs? In the same place where countless U.S. Midwesterners find them: bigger towns than the ones where they live. Of course the jobs will generally be lower-paying ones than they used to have. It will also require commuting to get to them. That means having to pay for gas or diesel. Thus when the government last year announced an increase in fuel taxes, it busted the budgets of a great many individuals and families. At the end of November a whole lot of them — more than 100,000 — put on their yellow vests and staged a protest march in Paris. When some of them became unruly, riot police were sent in. Fights broke out between them and protesters. Out came the water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets. Macron guaranteed further trouble when he branded the protesters “thugs.”

There is irony in the fuel tax increase sparking the yellow vest revolt. The increase was meant to discourage the use of gas and diesel-powered vehicles. That is, it was an environmental measure. The irony lies in the fact that more than any other European people, the French believe that human activity is the principal cause of climate change. Polls show seventy percent of the French believe it — the same number as now support the yellow vest uprising!

The inherent contradiction tells us that the yellow vest uprising may have begun as a protest against the fuel-tax increase, but is now about much more. Otherwise the protests would not have continued for three months, especially since Macron agreed to delaying the increase after the first few weeks of them.

We saw earlier in this article what the revolt is really about even if many yellow vest protesters aren't conscious of it. It is a revolt against the civilization of modernity and all that is unnatural about it, including secular liberal globalism. It is nationalism against globalism, populism against elitism, traditionalism and religion against scientific rationalism.

God willing, in weeks and months to come I shall continue to concentrate in my writing for this website on efforts here and abroad to overcome and turn back modernity, such as the emergence of the new Catholic far right in France.

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*The [featured image](#) shows, "Jeanne d'Arc écoutant les voix (Joan of Arc hears the voices)," by Eugène Romain Thirion, painted in 1876.*

