

The Rise of the National Front in France

A Consolidation of Cultural Catholicism and Republicanism

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: The Great Lie of the Fifth Republic.....	3
Chapter 3: Literature Review / My Contribution.....	5
Chapter 4: A Revolution Left Unsettled, and an Identity Crisis Born.....	23
Chapter 5: Outlining My Argument.....	27
Chapter 6: Religion and Nationalism in France Prior to 1789.....	32
Chapter 7: The Revolution of 1789: Motivations and Outcomes.....	41
Chapter 8: Rebellion in the Vendée - Fracture Between Republicanism and Religion.....	47
Chapter 9: French Catholicism and Politics: 1801 - 1905.....	55
Chapter 10: The Modern National Front's Appeal to Cultural Catholicism.....	68
Chapter 11: How the National Front has Struck a Chord that Others Have Not.....	77
Chapter 12: Conclusion: Catholicism and the Destiny of France.....	83

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Introduction

"...our eighteenth-century philosophers attacked the Church with a sort of studious ferocity; they declaimed against its clergy, its hierarchy, institutions, and dogmas, and, driving their attack home, sought to demolish the very foundations of Christian belief. This part of eighteenth-century philosophy, stemming as it did from special conditions that the revolution did away with, inevitably tended to lose its appeal once those conditions had been removed and it was, so to speak, submerged by its own triumph... It was far less as a religious faith than as a political institution that Christianity provoked these violent attacks. The Church was hated not because its priests claimed to regulate the affairs of the other world but because they were landed proprietors, lords of manors, tithe owners, and played a leading part in secular affairs; not because there was no room for the Church in the new world that was in the making, but because it occupied the most powerful, most privileged position in the old order that was now to be swept away." - Alexis de Tocqueville¹

In the heart of Europe a slumbering beast is beginning to stir; its every movement sending shockwaves throughout the Western World. After a long period of hibernation, this ancient behemoth has once again reared its magnificent head, and his old servants are returning to him once more. After departing from the world stage in a time when he was scorned, the beast known as Nationalism has returned to retake his watch over the whole of Western Civilization. In his absence, the people had made for themselves an idol known as Patriotism, a false god that gave legitimacy to a regime, but created no real sense of belonging for its devoted adherents.

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Anchor Books, 1955), 6-7

Those who worshipped the idol are slowly being gathered by the beast who calls out to them from beneath the very soil.

Regimes throughout the West have adopted a cosmopolitan multiculturalism, in which the blood that runs through one's veins is irrelevant to one's sense of belonging within society. Western societies have conferred no sense of exclusivity upon the sons and daughters of their founders and ancient inhabitants, leaving many feeling angry and dispossessed. Recent concerns over immigration and ethnic identity have further strengthened the resolve of these true believers, who seek to restore what they see as the crumbling remains of their once illustrious societies. This phenomenon is at the forefront of European politics, with schisms in the European Union over migrant resettlement and border control in the news almost daily, and nationalist populist parties on the rise in many of Europe's foremost countries. In Sweden, the country with the highest amount of resettled refugees per capita, there are the Sweden Democrats. In the United Kingdom, where less than half of the population of London is considered to be White British, there is the UK Independence Party. In Germany, the country at the helm of the EU, and whose Chancellor Angela Merkel has spearheaded resettlement efforts in Europe, there is Alternative for Deutschland. These parties all have four key traits in common: they are right-wing populist, nationalist, eurosceptic, and gaining political traction. The Sweden Democrats received the third largest voter share in the 2014 Swedish general elections (12.9%, up from 5.7% in 2010). The UKIP received the third largest voter share in the 2015 United Kingdom general elections (12.6%, up from 3.1% in 2010), and the largest voter share in the 2014 European Parliament elections (27.5%, up from 16.6% in 2009). Despite being founded in 2013, Alternative for Deutschland won 4.7% of the votes in the 2013 Federal Parliament elections,

7.1% of the vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections, and have trended upwards in state parliament elections, receiving 24.4% of the vote in 2016 in Saxony-Anhalt.

It is readily apparent that Nationalist sentiment is growing across Europe, but nowhere is it more apparent than in the nation of France. France's analogous party that embodies these four traits is known as the National Front. Established in 1972, and headed by Marine Le Pen, the daughter of the party's founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, the National Front has seen its electoral support increase from a historic low of .2% in the 1981 National Assembly elections, to all time highs of 24.86% in the 2014 European Parliament elections, and 27.73% in the first round of the 2015 Regional elections. The National Front's 27.73% voter share in the 2015 Regional councils was the highest of any party, outstripping both the Union of the Left and the Union of the Right. The National Front is on the precipice of a major electoral breakthrough, and the destiny of Europe hangs in the balance. As arguably the second most important member of the European Union in a spiritual political rather than a tangible economic sense, the election of a eurosceptic party in France that would likely exit the Schengen free travel zone along with the EU in its entirety would be a major development. Such an exit would have with huge consequences for the entire continent, particularly in those countries within the Eurozone. France is on the brink, and depending on how its nationalist experiment goes, many Western European nations may follow suit.

The Great Lie of the Fifth Republic

The French Revolution of 1789 was characterized by a rejection of monarchical authority, a belief in the notion of equality espoused by Enlightenment thinkers, and a stringent anti-clericalism that sought to divorce the Church from public life entirely. Ostensibly, the Fifth

Republic has taken up the ideological mantle of the Revolution; they fly its flag, sing of it in the national anthem, and celebrate July 14 to commemorate the fall of the Bastille. The Preamble to the Constitution even makes use of the Revolutionary slogan: "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." As a product of this wholly secular political tradition, the French Fifth Republic does not permit any type of discrimination based on nationality, race, or religion, as per Title I Article II of the French Constitution. This means, in effect, that no laws can be made with respect to any distinctions amongst these three categories. Non-discrimination policies are as central to the French Constitution as its national symbols. So why then has the National Front, an almost singularly anti-immigration party, risen to the forefront of French politics in recent years? I argue that this is because the secular revolutionary origins of French republicanism do not accurately represent the attitudes or culture of France as a whole, and that France's historically Catholic roots are a more important political and cultural force than many are apt to believe. Although the legacy of the Revolution bears down upon French politics to this very day, many of its fundamental precepts have been firmly rejected by the populace at large.

Within the context of France's current government, the Fifth Republic, the National Front could easily be seen as an anomalous phenomenon. It seems almost as though it should not exist, and surely that it should not be nearly as successful as it is. This is because the political myths of the 1789 Revolution embraced by the Fifth Republic (primarily those of secular cosmopolitanism) preclude the existence of a party such as the National Front. If this is the case, then these political myths are nothing more than that: Myths. If the Fifth Republic was a true spiritual heir to the legacy of the French revolution, it would not be open to the existence of Catholic Republicanism, because the nature of revolutionary republicanism was staunchly anti-Catholic. Under a true revolutionary schema, all religions would be equally persecuted under the

Fifth Republic, and yet this is not the case. The text of the Fifth Republic's constitution belies the fact that Judaism, Protestantism, and particularly Catholicism are extremely well-tolerated within French society, whereas Islam is not. The Fifth Republic's non-discrimination policies seem to be an obstacle to work around, rather than a safeguard of the State against the Church and of the Church against the State. This has manifested on multiple occasions in both The 2004 Law, in the Application of the Principle of Laïcité [secularism], on the Wearing of Religious Symbols and Dresses in Schools, and The 2010 Law Prohibiting the Concealment of One's Face in Public. Although these laws apply multilaterally, the intent behind the passage of both laws was to outlaw the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in schools, and to outlaw the wearing of the burka in public, respectively. The desperate effort of France to remain wholly secular in the modern era is a folly; other nations have embraced their religious past, at least on a superficial level. In Germany for example, Chancellor Angela Merkel is the leader of the largest party in the country: The Christian Democratic Union. The lack of such a party in France speaks to the rending of Catholicism and republicanism which occurred in the years following the 1789 Revolution, and which persists to the present day. Due to the legacy of the Revolution, Christianity is nearly absent from the discourse surrounding the Fifth Republic, including from the mouths of those within it. In the Fifth Republic, Catholicism is a clandestine force that one must search for fastidiously, but a powerful force nonetheless.

Literature Review / My Contribution

In studying this topic I wondered why no one had yet made a serious effort to study the cultural factors that were contributing to the success of the National Front. I was convinced that the National Front was the only party to represent and defend France's unique national culture. It

became apparent to me through my research that France had been distinctly shaped by its largely Catholic history, and that the resultant *Cultural Catholicism* was the cornerstone of French identity, as well as the major pitfall that prevents Middle-Eastern and North African migrants from properly assimilating. In pondering why no other scholars had seemed willing to acknowledge this fact, I realized that the phenomenon of vanishing national identity and an ensuing populist reaction was not uniquely French. The United States of America has been dealing with nearly the same issues since the 1960s, and the mechanisms of this cultural deterioration have been well documented by Samuel P. Huntington. In his work *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Huntington develops a thesis quite similar to this one, transposed onto American society.

Huntington describes the destruction of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) American national identity that began in the 1960's as "subnational, dual-national, and transnational identities began to take hold."² In a particularly striking passage which I feel should resonate with any concerned Western reader, Huntington relates the story of a young woman who admits that prior to September 11th 2001, her and her girlfriend had been discussing [in the midst of their Gender and Economics class] their anger at the inequality in America, and the possibility of moving to a different country. She was a self-described artist, woman, lesbian, and Jew- but not an American. Huntington goes on to write that

"Among some educated and elite Americans, national identity seemed at times to have faded from sight. Globalization, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, immigration, subnationalism, and anti-nationalism had battered American consciousness. Ethnic, racial, and gender identities came to the fore. In contrast to

² Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), xv

their predecessors, many immigrants were ampersands, maintaining dual loyalties and dual citizenships. A massive Hispanic influx raised questions concerning America's linguistic and cultural unity. Corporate executives, professionals, and Information Age technocrats espoused cosmopolitan over national identities. The teaching of national history gave way to the teaching of ethnic and racial histories. The celebration of diversity replaced emphasis on what Americans had in common. The national unity and sense of national identity created by work and war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and consolidated in the world wars of the twentieth century seemed to be eroding."³

Much like in America, one could contend that French Patriotism has been on the decline ever since De Gaulle's Free France triumphed over the Vichy collaboration regime in the Second World War, beginning with the Algerian Crisis and the establishment of the Fifth Republic in 1958, and culminating in the immigration challenges following the end of the Thirty Glorious Years in 1975; and the vast student uprisings of May 1968 that opposed all traditional values and established order.

Although the woman from Huntington's story became a self-described Patriot after the September 11th Terror Attacks, the rally 'round the flag effect produced by the collapse of the World Trade Center began to vanish once again after the War in Iraq became politically unpopular. American cultural sensibilities appear to more or less have returned to where they were in the 1990's, as evidenced by many present-day political realities. Organizations such as Black Lives Matter that promote subnational identities and an anti-national agenda have proliferated. College-educated Millennials tend to support identitarian movements so long as

³ Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 4

they have nothing to do with being White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, or American (or straight or male). Many Americans with more liberal sensitivities are in favor of resettling refugees from countries controlled by the Islamic State terrorist network. There exists, however, one key difference between now and the 1990s: a class of Americans in open opposition to cultural dissolution. Although in 2012 the political fracture between the alt-left and alt-right was characterized by members of Occupy Wall Street who promoted economic equality, and members of the Tax Tea Party who strongly advocated for more libertarian ideals, in 2016 these same coalitions have moved into the social realm to defend, respectively, what could generally be summarized as cosmopolitanism and nativism.

The decline of Patriotism that occurred shortly after the invasion of Iraq, in my estimation, relates to an observation by Huntington that although Americans bought flags at ten times the rate they had previously after the September 11th attacks, the flag itself remained an enigma. He mentions that the only concrete meaning attributed to the American flag, across all of its iterations, is that we now have 50 states, whereas before we had 13.⁴ The flag itself is an artifact of patriotism, and devoid of meaning. Yes we may be proud to be Americans, but what does it mean to be American? In the post-nationalist era, in America as well as France, the devotion to national symbols without agreement on what they stand for is a point of contention. Walker Connor recognizes this discrepancy between patriotism and nationalism, being that the former describes loyalty to "one's state and its institutions", and the latter to "one's national group."⁵ This is the phantom of patriotism I alluded to in the opening lines of this paper, and this wraith is perhaps most visible in France. Both the United States and France have become reliant upon symbols of patriotic expression for cohesion, rather than meaningful things their citizens

⁴ Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 8

⁵ John Hutchinson, Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 69

actually hold in common. Contributing greatly to this problem are demographic changes, as a result of immigration, that have taken place over the past half century, and which have made it nearly impossible to find powerful aspects of identity that the residents of these countries share.

The failure of dominant ethnic groups to recognize their own self-interest as legitimate and embrace nativism and a strict policy of assimilation for migrants in the West is perhaps rooted in the evolution of the concept of ethnicity. Ethnic groups are defined by Manning Nash as collections of individuals who presumably share a common biological descent, engage in the practice of taking meals with one another, and have a system of values that is not merely a product of temporal or empirical circumstances.⁶ According to Nash:

"These boundary-marking features say who is a member of what group and what minimal cultural items are involved in membership. Like all things at boundaries, these index features must be visible to members of the group as well as to non-members... Valued insider aspects of culture may be comic or derided by outsiders, and caricature and exaggeration frequently mark outsiders' depiction of boundary mechanisms. Stereotyping is a form of caricature of cultural, index features of group differentiation; an emphasis and ranking of features that in itself helps mark the boundaries among different groups."⁷

However, ethnicity as a term was not derived until the 1950's, and was not common parlance until 1972 when it was included in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.⁸ Derived from the Greek *ethnikos*, a term which was used to describe something as heathen or pagan, the word "ethnic" had been in usage for a much longer period of time, since around the mid-fourteenth century, and

⁶ Hutchinson, *Ethnicity*, 25

⁷ Hutchinson, *Ethnicity*, 24-25

⁸ Hutchinson, *Ethnicity*, 28

was used in the same sense. However, by the time Second World War, "ethnic" in the United States had come to refer to racial characteristics, and meant anyone who was not a part of WASP culture, such as Jews, Italians, and Irish. Often in regions where a particular accent of a spoken language is preeminent, those who speak with that accent regard themselves as having no accent, whereas they regard those who do not as having an accent.⁹ Perhaps the same phenomenon occurred with regards to the "othering" and stereotyping of non-WASP groups within the United States. Their cultures were thrust into the spotlight, whereas the dominant WASP culture became blinded to its own peculiarities, and therefore its interests.

Thomas Eriksen writes that "Although it is true that 'the discourse concerning ethnicity tends to concern itself with subnational units, or minorities of some kind or another', majorities and dominant peoples are no less 'ethnic' than minorities."¹⁰ As members of ethnic groups themselves, Westerners are often not aware of their own cultural boundaries. Joshua Fishman concurs with this analysis, explaining the absence of a cultural self-awareness in the West: "Traditionally Western European individuals have debunked ethnicity- and have tended to ascribe it to disruptive and disadvantaged peoples. They have never recognized it in themselves or in their own unmarked societies."¹¹ If Huntington is to be believed, is to be an American then to either be a WASP or to embrace WASP culture? Being a white Anglo-Saxon and a Protestant with in-group solidarity is all it takes to meet Nash's criteria for ethnic status. What then does it mean to be French? This is a fundamental question that has often been overlooked, especially due to the legacy of the French Revolution, a universalist and egalitarian tour de force which came into being at the beginning of Europe's nationalist era. I aim to demonstrate that in order to

⁹ John H. Esling, *Language Myths*, Myth 20, (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 170, <http://lrc.ohio.edu/lrcmedia/Streaming/lingCALL/ling270/myth20.pdf>.

¹⁰ Hutchinson, *Ethnicity*, 28

¹¹ Hutchinson, *Ethnicity*, 67

be truly French in the sense that one is a member of the ethnocultural in-group, they must at the very least be nominally Catholic.

The dissolution or absence of national identity in these countries is a matter of grave importance for those of us who value Western society. If one finds anything praiseworthy in the scientific, philosophical, or social contributions of Western civilization to the world, they must be alarmed by the rapid disintegration of national character within Western nations. If one would like to see the achievements of the West preserved rather than destroyed, the problem of national identity is one that must be solved, otherwise Western civilization as we know it may go quietly into the dark. This may seem extreme or unreasonable to some readers, but I would urge them to reconsider. The fault lines between civilizations have grown ever clearer in the post-Cold War era, and the willingness of the West to subdue its own cultural character in order to become more cosmopolitan may warp its fundamental aspects until they become nearly unrecognizable. Huntington acknowledges this dilemma, and argues that the deterioration of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant identity group in the United States both through legislation and immigration has had a tremendous effect on the culture and values of America. Huntington and I both see a rift growing between the West, and the non-Westerners both outside and inside of its boundaries. In this global era, nationalism is a bulwark against cultural domination. Many societies in the West have tried, for example, with varying degrees of success, to prevent the "Americanization" of their countries by emphasizing their own unique national cultures. France even developed exceptions within its trade agreements with other nations to treat cultural products as different from other commodities as part of an effort to preserve domestic art. In the distant past, nationalism may not have been an important global force, but values and ideas were not transmitted nearly as rapidly. The ease with which culture is now able to spread is worrisome for

countries with large immigrant populations, as immigrants fail to assimilate due to their constant contact with each other and their ability to rapidly engage with the native cultures online. Radicalization of European-born Muslims due to online propaganda is just one expression of this phenomenon, and is the outcome of the national culture failing to subdue foreign cultures. Nativism may be the only way to prevent the Islamization of Europe, as Islamic culture has proliferated almost unabatedly within Europe's cosmopolitan framework.

I would like to preface my discussion of Huntington's seminal work, *The Clash of Civilizations?* by making it known that I am acutely aware of the criticisms leveled against him, particularly those of Edward Said. In Said's exposé of Huntington, published less than a month after the September 11th Terrorist Attacks, he is quite obviously on the defensive.¹² I can respect his beliefs, and imagine that he felt very strongly about the issue given his ethnic background and the context he was writing in, but offering as an example the ability of the hijackers to fly passenger planes to demonstrate that a line cannot be drawn between Western and Islamic civilization was certainly in bad taste, and a dubious assertion at best. He contends that the terrorists' ability to utilize Western technology speaks to the facility with which Islam can integrate into modern society- not a compelling argument in my own view. Further, Said states that Islam has always been at the heart of European civilization ever since the seventh century. He understands, but in my opinion not quite fully, the inamicable relation between a people and their occupiers. To argue that Islam has a place in Europe due to conquests made over a millennium ago does not give credence to his argument of interdependence. Neither does the fact that Dante elected to place Muhammad and Ali in the 8th circle of Hell, to eternally be cleaved in two, in Canto XXVIII of *Inferno*. Said speaks of the large Muslim population of

¹² Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation*, October 4, 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance/>.

France as further evidence of this interdependence, but fails again to explain why any of these things should contribute to anything more than a hatred for Islam in the West, and a popular urge to see it excised as if it were a cancerous growth. The contributions of Islamic science and philosophy to the civilizations of Germany and Carolingian France seem to do little to assuage the tensions between the two worlds that both Said and Huntington identify. As a final attack on Said's argument, I must point out his insistence on comparing Huntington to Hitler, evidenced in a 2004 description of Huntington's work: "[Huntington's thesis is] the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims."¹³ *Reductio ad Hitlerum*, a term coined by Leo Strauss, is in my estimation a sure sign that someone is fighting a losing battle. If your only offense is the sensational claim that your opponent is Hitler incarnate, you have run out of meaningful things to say.

Ultimately, Said and I are fundamentally at odds. He hopes to see the world from a secular perspective, discerning based on what he believes are concrete distinctions between reason and ignorance, and justice and injustice, with no care for "vast abstractions" such as civilizational identity. I believe that justice and injustice are vast abstractions, as one's own moral compass is calibrated largely with respect to one's cultural (and particularly religious) mores. Amongst societies that have taken divergent paths for centuries, each evolving under its own distinct religious framework, how can one reasonably expect to consolidate their principles of justice? Even if secular thought is able to provide us with a greater and more authoritative morality than religion can yield, it is certain that the common man has not yet discovered it. Until such a morality is discovered, it seems to me as though what is just is for a man to promote and protect those mores which he believes to be superior. The words of Thrasymachus in Plato's

¹³ Edward W. Said, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map*, (New York: Pantheon, 2004), 293

Republic come to mind: that justice is the advantage of the stronger. Within such a framework societies that are largely Christian or largely Islamic will retain their character, and are unlikely to converge. One must only look to the historical example of Iran in 1979 to see the failure of the West to superimpose itself over Islamic identity. If the legacy of the West is to continue on, its only hope is to preserve itself. Western nations must protect their cultures against attacks from within, because they will not be receiving external support in this endeavor.

In *The Clash of Civilizations?* Huntington advances, although he does not develop it, a hypothesis about France very similar to my own. He does this in passing by relating the fundamental aspects of his arguments as they pertain to Western society. In large part, he argues that the ideological differences between peoples that drove conflict during the Cold War era have given way, and that a new type of identity has taken hold of our collective consciences. These identities are civilizational identities, and are formed through common history, language, culture, tradition, and most importantly, religion.¹⁴ Huntington identifies the civilization as the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of identity people have beyond those attributes that differentiate them from animals.¹⁵ These differences amongst people of different civilizations are not easily assuaged, they are the product of centuries, and more fundamental to people than political or economic considerations.

Just as Huntington acknowledges the culturally deleterious effects of Mexican immigration upon what was formerly the more acutely American culture of the Southwestern United States, he recognizes the tensions created by North African and Middle Eastern immigrants in France (25). Perhaps the most poignant illustration of civilizational friction, and

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 25, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Huntington_Clash.pdf.

¹⁵ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 24

the example most relevant to my thesis is his assertion that although racially one can be half-Arab and half-French, it is much more difficult to be half-Muslim and half-Catholic.¹⁶ Obviously, this is not just a difficult task, it is impossible, and if as Huntington and I see, religion is increasingly becoming a way by which people define themselves, this is an extremely worrying fact of human existence. Huntington cites George Weigel, who asserts that the "unsecularization of the world is one of the dominant social facts of life in the late twentieth century." Likewise, he utilizes Gilles Kepel's term *la revanche de Dieu*, which in English means *the revenge of God*, to describe the phenomenon of religious revitalization.¹⁷ Huntington believes, as do I, that religion "provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations." If this is true, then by failing to recognize its Catholic history, and welcoming legions of Muslims and other non-Christians within its borders, France is becoming a nation divided against itself along civilizational lines. If it does not ascertain where and for what it stands, it may easily come to ruin.

Perhaps what is most fundamental to this religious conflict is that large segments of Western populations have failed to recognize its existence. As the West largely retains its commitment to secularism in the face of increasingly radical Islamism in the Middle East and North Africa, it simultaneously permits more and more of these individuals to seek refuge within its borders. Although this humanitarian mission seems commendable at surface level, if it threatens to corrupt what is arguably the greatest and most generous civilization to have ever emerged in world history, its efficacy must be questioned. As Huntington claims, the conflict between Islam and the West is centuries old, and the challenge of Islam to Western values and security may well be the first great conflict the West has faced in the post-Cold War era. The

¹⁶ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 27

¹⁷ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 26

West has been in conflict with Islam, knowingly or unknowingly for 1,300 years, since the foundation of the Islamic faith. Islam's great conquests during its early years were only stopped in 732 in Tours, France, and military antagonisms between these two civilizations have continued to the present day.¹⁸ Although the West has emerged victorious in the lion's share of its conflicts with Islam, members of its ruling class have recently grown unaware of this struggle and complacent about their faith, whereas Islam has ameliorated as a source of identity among its adherents and anti-Western sentiment is reaching new heights throughout the Islamic world. Although after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire the West was able to maintain some level of control over the political developments of the Middle East (for example the 1953 overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran via operation Ajax, and his replacement with the Shah), the rise of nationalism and identitarian movements in the region have hampered such efforts. Notably, Nasser was able to nationalize the Suez Canal in 1956 in spite of the British through an appeal to pan-Arabism, and Iran voted itself into a stable theocracy in 1979. As the Middle East modernizes due to wealth generated from the export of petroleum, more secular and autocratic forms of government that once went unchallenged in the region have faced increasing opposition, and as in Iran the primary beneficiary of such changes have been Islamist groups.¹⁹ Alliances Western nations once had in the region are falling apart. The United States' former twin pillars of stability, Iran and Saudi Arabia, appear to be doing less and less to promote US interests in the region with each passing day, and in the case of Iran actively oppose these interests. Although Saudi-Arabia has remained the ally of the United States, this alliance is tenuous and based only upon the cooperation of rulers such as king Abdullah (who need military protection), rather than the consent of the people- who tend to despise the United States and

¹⁸ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 31

¹⁹ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 32

subscribe to radical Wahabbism. In the event of a revolution, which is not altogether unlikely, it is doubtful that Saudi Arabia would remain a friend of the United States. As the West stretches its fingers out across the globe to exercise its influence, opposition to the West grows in equal measure. Iran took a U-turn in its cultural development under Ayatollah Khomeini and has grown increasingly anti-Western. One of the most well known terrorist groups, Boko Haram, whose name roughly translates as *Western education is forbidden*, is a prime example both of the growth of radical Islam as well as the antagonism of such groups towards the West and its values.²⁰ One thing is certain, and that is that the values which have traditionally been the most important in the West are among the least important worldwide.²¹

Despite the September 11th terror attacks in the United States, and the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan in France, among others, large segments of both nation's populations remain sympathetic or indifferent towards North African and Middle Eastern immigrants and the Islamic faith in general. Even some top elected officials in these countries have refused to speak against Islam, often referring to it as the Religion of Peace. President Barack Obama of the United States has come under heavy fire from the Republican Party for what they see as his refusal to use the words "radical Islamic terrorism", and Marine Le Pen has leveled the same criticism against sitting president François Hollande. As political elites and those with higher levels of educational attainment tend to have more cosmopolitan worldviews and hence more favorable views of Islam, the defense of Western civilization at its most base level is a task that has been taken up primarily by poor whites. This has manifested both as an increase in "racist" incidences in Western countries since 1990, as well as a resurgence of populist political

²⁰ Aliyu U. Tilde, "We Are Boko Haram," <http://www.gamji.com/tilde/tilde99.htm>.

²¹ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 41

movements whose voter base is largely comprised of disgruntled working-class natives.²² This is certainly the case in France, where the National Front has emerged as a populist alternative to the establishment parties, and has drawn a large majority of its support from working-class voters formerly aligned with the Socialist Party. The same model can be seen in the United States where Donald Trump is leading the race for the Republican nomination. He is regarded as a political outsider, is tough on immigration, and draws most of his support from working-class Americans, both on the right and the center-left. Where France politically differs from the United States in this regard, is that in France the migrants are less easily assimilable into the national culture, as Islam is much more distant from Catholicism and secularism than Catholicism is from Protestantism. Additionally, France is in constant contact with the terrorist elements of its migrant population. There are a few high profile cases of violence by Mexican immigrants in the United States each year, but they are largely isolated incidences. In France, Islamic fundamentalism struck the nation in the form of terrorism at least six times in 2015 alone.²³

In studying the National Front, it readily became apparent that there was a lack of serious inquiry into the historical and ideological origins of the party. All of the books I consulted spoke of the party in more or less the same fashion. They discuss its roots in French fascist movements, its creation in 1972, its relation to French politics from that time up until the mid-2000s, and the controversy surrounding the party's founder Jean-Marie Le Pen. I believe that this approach leads readers to a seriously misinformed understanding of the ancient and complex cultural factors that have driven the National Front to the forefront of French political life under the direction of Marine Le Pen. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly relate these failures in reference to

²² Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, 32,38

²³ Marine Le Pen, "Déclaration de Marine Le Pen," November 14, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2Ap6Ld3KN8>.

four specific texts: *Fascism, Populism and the French Fifth Republic* by Catherine Fieschi, *The National Front in France* by Peter Davies, *The National Front and French Politics* by Jonathan Marcus, and *The French National Front* by Harvey Simmons.

Harvey Simmons commences his discussion of the National Front with a quip that proceeds thusly:

"The specter of right-wing extremism is haunting Europe. Although the extreme right seemed to disappear along with Nazism and fascism after World War I, it never completely vanished. In the late 1940's and 1950's, tiny groups of fascists or ex-Nazis met to discuss common problems, publish newspapers or periodicals, and organize extreme right movements or political parties... over the past four decades, extreme right parties have emerged in almost every Western European country... The largest and most influential of these parties is the French National Front."²⁴

Taking no pains to conceal his personal biases, he writes in the foreword of the "dangerous" growth of such parties, and criticizes what he sees as their "anti-Semitism, racism, and hostility towards parliamentary democracy." He goes on to assault Jean-Marie Le Pen for surrounding himself with ex-Vichyites and ex-fascists.²⁵ Fieschi makes what is in my opinion a similar error by admitting that although the National Front is part of a movement distinct from fascism, it "owes a historical and ideological debt to fascism." I believe that she also mischaracterizes the National Front as counter-revolutionary, as in vehemently opposed to the ideals of 1789.²⁶ Both

²⁴ Harvey Simmons, *The French National Front*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 1

²⁵ Simmons, *The French National Front*, ix

²⁶ Catherine Fieschi, *Fascism, Populism, and the French Fifth Republic*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 136-137

commentators thus conclude that the National Front is indebted to fascism, and that it is hostile towards republican ideals. Although these analyses might have been on the right track in describing the party under Jean-Marie Le Pen, Marine Le Pen has undertaken great efforts to purge the party of any remaining fascist, Vichy, anti-Semitic, or otherwise distasteful political elements, rendering the first claim of these two authors unsubstantiated. Even François Furet disagrees with this characterization, proclaiming that the National Front was "the pathology of the new France" rather than a re-emergence of fascism.²⁷ The second claim, that the National Front is hostile towards Democracy, is false. Although the progenitor movements of Jean-Marie's National Front such *Action française*, and Marshal Philippe Pétain's Vichy collaboration regime may have had royalist or authoritarian ambitions, the National Front has always worked within the existing political framework of the French Fifth Republic, and Marine Le Pen has never suggested anything akin to dismantling parliamentary democracy in France. In fact, her acceptance of the Fifth Republic at large is one of the factors which I believe has propelled her to greater heights than any of her alt-right predecessors.



²⁷ François Furet, Jacques Julliard, and Pierre Rosanvallon, *La République du Centre*, (France: Calmann-Lévy, 1988), 26

One of the National Front's official Facebook cover photos depicting Marianne, a symbol of the government of the Fifth Republic and a personification of Liberty. Silver screen darling Brigitte Bardot, the model for Marianne, believes that Marine Le Pen will be the Marianne of the future.^{28 29}

The lack of distinction between Jean-Marie and Marine is the next great problem of the existing scholarship. Although it is somewhat understandable as Marine Le Pen only became the head of the party in 2011, the vast majority of existing works on the National Front only discuss the movement under Jean-Marie Le Pen, and in doing so become more of an exposé of his character and political aims than a study of the movement as a whole. For example, Simmons devotes entire sections of his work to discussing anti-Semitic, misogynistic, and homophobic remarks made by Jean-Marie Le Pen which are in no way indicative of the parties current state, and which were not necessarily true of the party by-and-large at the time of the work's publication. Perhaps the biggest fault of the books I have studied is that they were all published before Marine's time, around the year 2002, a year that was the acme of Jean-Marie's political career. Marcus himself admits as much when he states:

"Ever since its formation in 1972, the National Front has been associated with the name of one man, Jean-Marie Le Pen. When the Party obtained its first electoral successes during the early 1980s, it was Le Pen who personified its message and it was his rhetoric that, in large part, gained the Party a following. Le Pen and the Front have become so closely associated that it is now hard to imagine the Party in the absence of its charismatic and ebullient leader."³⁰

²⁸ Front National, "Cover Photos," *Facebook*, July 16, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/FN.official/photos/a.10150641283185750.404185.21254500749/10152525368510750/?type=3&theater>.

²⁹ Le Scan politique, "Brigitte Bardot voudrait voir Marine Le Pen en future Marianne," *Le Figaro*, December 2, 2014, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/insolites/2014/12/02/25007-20141202ARTFIG00228-brigitte-bardot-voudrait-voir-marine-le-pen-en-future-marianne.php>.

³⁰ Jonathan Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics*, (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1995, 12

Despite the fact that it has been five years since Marine took control of the National Front, no materials I have found elsewhere in existence as of yet have chronicled Marine's rise in the sort of fashion which I intend to do here, even if they do pronounce her noteworthy break from her father's directive. Similar to my taking issue with pointing to fascism as the fountainhead of the National Front, other commentators have often failed to point out that although the National Front comes into existence in 1972, the fervor it thrives upon is much more ancient. Davies, Marcus, and Simmons all study the party since 1972 almost exclusively, and make no effort to discuss any events that transpired nor ideas that appeared prior to the twentieth century. Simmons alludes to the fact that historically religious and secular elements had battled for control over education in schools, but for him it is a mere footnote, and he does not bother to discuss when or why these conflicts arose.³¹ Fieschi does not fare much better, and despite her claim of taking a long-term view of the party's history she fails to seriously consider events and themes of centuries prior to the twentieth.

Throughout the four previously mentioned books one is hard-pressed to find the least mention of Catholicism as a driving force behind the National Front's surging popularity. I consider it my mission to begin to rectify the errors of this outdated scholarship, and to promote the concepts of *Cultural Catholicism* (Catholicism as a cultural force and a wellspring of identity rather than as a religious practice) and *Catholic Republicanism* (the consolidation of Cultural Catholicism and French republicanism) as essential factors for understanding modern French politics and rise of the National Front under Marine Le Pen. I am hoping that by examining the National Front in a new and unique way that I will be able to start a dialogue

³¹ Simmons, *The French National Front*, 172

concerning the continued importance of Christianity in the modern Western world, as well as its role as fundamental component of French nationalism.

A Revolution Left Unsettled, and an Identity Crisis Born

If one wonders why the values and politics of the Revolution might be yet unsettled the present day, one must only look at the sheer ideological force that was necessary to contest the longstanding values and politics of the Old Regime. Even in the post-revolutionary era, France never wholly abandoned the idea of returning to a monarchical system, and there have since been two periods of monarchical rule. As recently as the French Third Republic, which lasted from 1870 until 1940, there was serious discussion of reinstating a monarch as the head of state under a parliamentary government. A great myth is that the Revolution of 1789 was a populist movement that saw peasants from across all of France unite against a wasteful and tyrannical regime in order to establish a government of the people. However, this is simply not the case. The Revolution was a hotly contested issue both during and after its completion, and revolutionaries experienced fierce intranational opposition from nobles and layman alike. In order to understand the ideological puissance of the National Front in France's collective conscience, one must understand both the process and the outcomes of the Revolution.

Alexis de Tocqueville relates in some of the opening lines of *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* that the Revolution "after changing laws, it tampered with age-old customs and even French language; when not content with wrecking the whole structure of the government of France, it proceeded to undermine the social order and seemed even to aim at dethroning God himself."³² This passage highlights what are perhaps the most important aspects for

³² de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 3

understanding the plight of modern day France: the culturally destructive element of the Revolution, and its hard swing against religion in a State that was known as the eldest daughter of the Catholic Church. Although the fervor of the Revolution was directed largely at Christianity, being its first and final target, this stemmed from the privilege the Catholic Church received in the political order, the clergy being the first estate and possessing more land than anyone else, rather than as a function of religion.³³ Although this anti-religious character abated over time, its effects upon French republicanism and politics in general have been much more lasting. In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, the Catholic Church did not factor in the slightest into the republican equation.

De Tocqueville characterized the Revolution as a religious one, for although its aims were chiefly political, it followed the lines of a religious revolution.³⁴ By this he means to say in part that in rejecting religion, the revolutionaries had to proffer an alternative standard for morality and communality. A famous quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche states that “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”³⁵ Nietzsche intends to convey the message that Christianity had been the basis for Western Civilization, and he agonizes and hopes in part over what the future will hold for Europe as this deified foundation crumbles in the face of secular ideologies. The revolutionaries

³³ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 6

³⁴ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 10

³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120

of 1789 addressed this problem, even if they did not acknowledge it, by substituting Christian morality for the Enlightenment ideals of 18th century anti-religious philosophers. De Tocqueville describes the core beliefs of this moral code: that all men are born equal, and that all privileges of class, caste and profession must be abolished. These beliefs were likely a reaction against both the hierarchy implicit in the Christian faith, and the feudal character of the Old Regime, in which society was divided into the first, second, and third estates; comprised of clergymen, noblemen, and peasants respectively. If Robespierre and his guillotines did not spare the noblemen their lives, then what hope had the clergy to retain their power and influence over a post-Revolutionary society? Indeed, organized religion did not hardly survive. In an attempt to remove what they deemed as the pernicious influence of religion, de-Christianization campaigns were undertaken by revolutionary governments. Their efforts included destroying monasteries, creating an all new character, and the invention of two new religions: the Cult of Reason and the Cult of the Supreme Being. These secular reformers were under no delusion that in discarding Catholicism as the basis of public morality they were not trying to create their own god. One consequence of this rejection of Catholicism was the dissolution of traditional French national identity.

France's Revolution heralded the birth of a new form of kinship between men. Formerly, one's allegiance lay with one's countrymen. In revolutionary France, people were not united by common language or common customs, but by common abstract intellectual ideals. France became a spiritual fatherland for those who embraced the notion of equality espoused by Enlightenment thinkers. This was a henceforth unseen development, and it rattled many Europeans to their core. The feelings of bewilderment which resulted were captured by Joseph de Maistre in *Considérations sur la France*, in response to the Constitution of 1795, which

established the Directory, the government which succeeded the infamous Committee of Public Safety, and lasted until Napoleon Bonaparte's coup of 18th Brumaire in 1799. He had this to say:

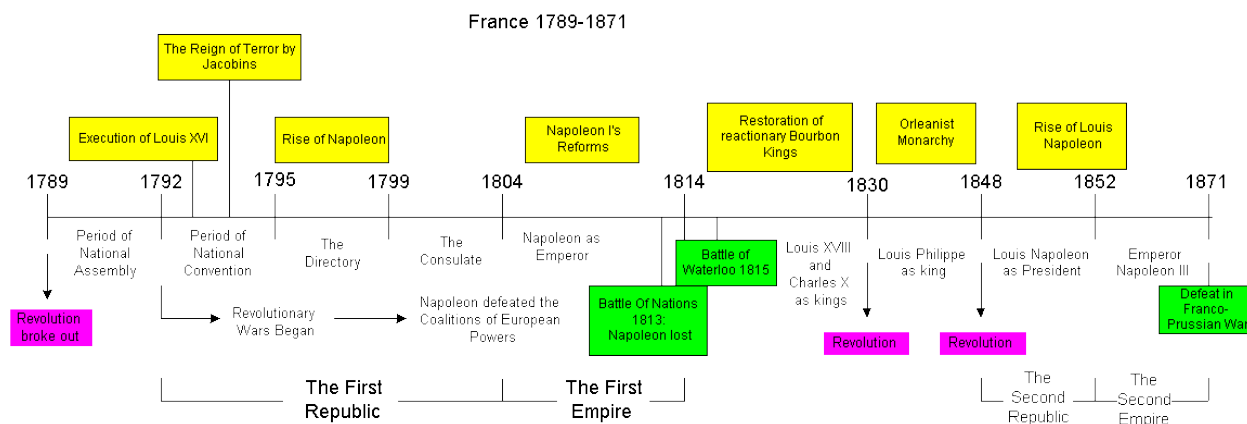
"... as for Man, I declare that I have never met him in my life; if he exists, it is without my knowledge... This constitution could be utilized in all human communities, from China all the way to Geneva. But a constitution which is made for all the nations, is not made for any of them: it is a pure abstraction... What is a constitution? Is it not the solution to the following problem? To give to a population, given the mores, the religion, the geographical situation, the political relations, the wealth, and the good and bad qualities of their particular nation, the laws which are most suitable? Now, this problem is not addressed at all in the Constitution of 1795, which is only concerned with Man."³⁶

This new ideological fatherland was open to all men, and did not make racial distinctions; this legacy is upheld under the banner of laïcité.³⁷ From these developments a distinction is made clear, and that distinction is between the legacy of colorblind, secular, and equality-oriented values of the Revolution which are evident in the constitution and comportment of the Fifth Republic; and the nationalist, ethnocentric, and culturally Catholic values of the Old Regime and the National Front. This entanglement of secularism and republicanism, as well as Catholicism and royalism beleaguered the detachment of these cultural values from their supposed political counterparts, and hitherto has prevented the genuine emergence of what I believe would be France's most legitimate political enterprise: Catholic Republicanism.

³⁶ Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, (Lyon: Imprimerie de J.B Pélagaud, 1880), https://archive.org/stream/considerationssu00maisuoft/considerationssu00maisuoft_djvu.txt.

³⁷ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 10

Outlining My Argument



A timeline of French political developments from the 1789 Revolution until the Third Republic.³⁸

In an effort to make sense of the information that will be outlined shortly, it seems crucial to take a moment to broadly summarize how Catholicism has trended in what is now France beginning with the Second Century AD and continuing to the present day. What is to follow is merely my interpretation of events, and is subject to dispute.

In the second century AD the Church of France begins its communion with the Bishop of Rome, becoming the eldest daughter of the Catholic Church. All Frankish people's are united under Clovis I in the fifth century, and Clovis I converts to Roman Catholicism. In 732 Charles Martel repulses a Muslim invasion force at the Battle of Tours in what is now France, preventing Islam from taking hold in the region. In 800 Charles's grandson Charlemagne is the first to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor. The death of Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious triggers the fracture of the Kingdom of Francia, West Francia is established and goes on to become the Kingdom of France. This Kingdom is predominantly Roman Catholic, and France becomes the

³⁸ Luis Rady, "Diseases during the French Revolution," April 1, 2013, <http://frenchrevdiseases.blogspot.com/>.

leader of the majority of the Crusades.³⁹ Many powerful nobles in France take out loans with the French Crown against their lands in order to participate in the expensive war effort, and the monarchy grows in power. This power continues to grow throughout the crusader era via strategic marriages, conquests associated with the Crusades, and the fruits of productivity generated by land holdings acquired in both of these ways. All of these events serve to both demonstrate the ingrained Catholic character of France, or Cultural Catholicism, and simultaneously expand the power of the throne.

Near the end of Hundred Years' War Joan of Arc emerges as a religious and military leader who in popular imagination [if not in reality] turns the tides against the opponents of the legitimate heir to the French Crown. She is captured by her adversaries, tried, and executed for heresy. The circumstances of her martyrdom and the political mythos surrounding it link the Church and the Crown: Joan of Arc legitimizes the French Crown by allowing it to ascribe its continued existence to the providence of God. The propagandizing of these events births the Political Catholicism which would characterize the Old Regime: a symbiosis between Church and State in which each tries to use the other to maximize its own power. The eventual Wars of Religion further highlight the social aspects of French Catholicism, while Henri IV's conversion to Catholicism and Louis XIV's Edict of Nantes represent the political aspect of the faith. All of these events lead to Political and Cultural Catholicism becoming hopelessly intertwined under the Old Regime.

When the Old Regime falls out of favor in the eighteenth century, so too does the Catholic church due to its close ties with the Monarchy. The centralization of the Old Regime

³⁹ E.L. Skip Knox, "France During the Crusades," Overview, Boise State University, <https://europeanhistory.boisestate.edu/crusades/Europe/france/01.shtml>.

within Paris under Louis XIV led to the city becoming a cultural black hole in which all of France was quickly enveloped. This metropolitan behemoth would soon give birth to the Revolution. Due to the prominent influence of secular intellectuals in revolutionary circles and the rise of pamphleteering, the 1789 Revolution takes on an unnatural anti-religious character. Almost immediately revolts break out across the countryside, especially in the region known as the Vendée, led primarily by religious individuals who did not wish to see Catholicism discarded along with the monarchy. However, by taking to the field under the banner of royalism, the Vendéans further cement the artificial distinctions created by the revolutionaries between royalism and Catholicism on the one hand, and republicanism and secularism on the other. Catholics took up the banner of royalism against the secularization imposed by the republican government primarily because they could see no other political recourse; the government incorrectly interprets their religiously motivated counter-revolution as a primarily royalist rather than primarily Catholic event, impeding the creation of a Catholic Republican movement.

Just after the unnecessary tensions between Catholics and republicans reach their zenith, Napoleon Bonaparte takes over in the 1799 Coup of 18th Brumaire. His forward thinking Concordat of 1801 restores the Church to a dignified position in society while preventing it from possessing its former political power. This action begins to soothe tensions between the Catholics and revolutionaries by abating both of their fears. The greatest fault of the Concordat is that it retains the Church as a tool of the State, an issue that would later have to be redressed. It is also worth noticing that the First Empire gained all the good graces of the Catholics for its actions, not the First Republic; the Church and republicanism's reconciliation was thus postponed. Sustained efforts to canonize Bonaparte after his death speak to the gratitude of

Catholics for saving them from republican de-Christianization, as well as their desire for reconciliation between revolutionary patriotism and Catholicism.⁴⁰

The Bourbon Restoration of 1814 brings with it new hopes of the emergence of a Political Catholicism (Catholicism is once again the State religion), a fact which is looked upon disparagingly by various segments of the population. Due to large public misgivings about Charles X, his dynasty is ousted in the July Revolution of 1830. The resultant July Monarchy is more careful to adhere to public sentiment, and does not find itself in the good graces of Catholics. Increasingly liberal throughout its lifespan, it is reviled primarily for secularizing education and not intervening to stop the ransacking of various religious sites. It is during this time that Cultural and Political Catholicism ultimately distinguish themselves. Social Catholicism grows as a cultural force (or, Cultural Catholicism grows as a social force), and Catholics by and large are ready to give up any political advantages they have in order to free themselves from State meddling.

A similar pattern re-emerges under Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte. As the July Monarchy began to collapse, Catholics rightly recognize that they could regain political favor by fervently supporting whoever was going to come into power. Encouraged by their favorable experience with Louis-Napoleon's uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte, they rally around Louis en masse in 1848 and help carry him to the most overwhelming electoral victory in French history (with a margin of victory unsurpassed until 2002). Throughout the short years of Second Republic, and well into the lifespan of the Second Empire which followed, Catholicism experiences another revival as a political institution, again to the chagrin of less devout segments of the population. As Louis-

⁴⁰ Matthew Zarzeczny, "Religion in Napoleonic France," Part IV, October 2003, http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/napoleon/c_religion4.html.

Napoleon's popularity drops, he recognizes that he must toe a middle line, and liberalizes his regime. Although he maintains significant support amongst rural Frenchmen, he is unloved in the cities and his support amongst Catholics dwindles. Catholics once again recognize that they must not be subject to the mercurial interests of the regime, and that the only way they can ensure their autonomy is through separation. Religious elements in France are given little time to reflect upon their course of action however, as Napoleon III's defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870 plunges France, and particularly Paris, into an extremely volatile political situation. The emergence of the Paris Commune in 1871 exposes the religious population of France once again to the horrors of unfettered secularism, and gives us a glimpse of the French populations ingrained Catholic character. The resistance of average Parisians to the tyranny of the communards and the birth of the *Ordre Morale* government directly following the commune's dissolution give testament to this. The failure of Patrice MacMahon's attempt to re-establish the monarchy finally killed royalism as a tenable political position in France, and the ebb and flow of religious and secular extremism continue on their paths towards temperance.

In the wake of the Revolution royalism, political Catholicism, and stringent secularism were all politically impossible. What then was possible? revolutionary patriotism, republicanism, and social Catholicism. Since 1789 these three ideals have proven themselves time and time again to jointly represent the interests of the French people at large. Despite occasional setbacks, these ideas have always remained at the forefront of popular opinion. Due to the circumstances of the Revolution however, the political and patriotic aspects of the Revolution were never consolidated with the culturally Catholic character of France. The *Avenir* movement attempted it, and the idea lived on through Marc Sagnier's doctrine of social Catholicism, but neither was able to overcome the widespread aversion to religious politics due to Catholicism's ties with royalism

and Bonapartism. The final great step in the transition towards political modernity is the passage of the Law of December 9, 1905 Concerning the Separation of Churches and the State. By cleaving apart the institutions of the Church and of the State once and for all, the Church retains its influence in the social sphere and loses its political privileges, to the chagrin of almost no one. This law coupled with the decline of royalism and anti-clericalism finally disentangles Cultural Catholicism from the Church's historic political ambitions. France was now open to the possibility of Catholicism coexisting with Republicanism as a complementary rather than a hostile force. This series of events has allowed Catholic republicanism to materialize as a popular and legitimate form of political expression under Marine Le Pen's National Front.

Religion and Nationalism in France Prior to 1789

The Modern French State first emerged around 840 after the division of Charlemagne's empire. West Francia was among these newly carved territories, and it would eventually become the Kingdom of France. In 1328, France became embroiled in a succession crisis that led to a civil war in 1337 known as the Hundred Years' War. From this conflict arose the figurehead of French nationalism, Joan of Arc, who has unsurprisingly been appropriated as a symbol for the National Front.^{41 42} Joan of Arc was a maiden who was believed to have received visions from God beginning at the age of thirteen. In 1429, when she was approximately sixteen, she had military-related premonitions that allowed her to lead the French House of Valois to its eventual victory in the conflict over the Anglo House of Plantagenet. Despite what may have actually transpired during her brief time in the military, in popular culture she became a national and religious icon. Her story is at the heart of France's political and ideological mythology. What was

⁴¹ Peter Davies, *The National Front in France*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 105

⁴² Simmons, *The French National Front*, 238



Marine Le Pen in front of an image of *Jeanne d'Arc* by Emmanuel Frémiet. Every May 1st the leader of the National Front lays a ceremonial wreath at the feet of the statue.⁴³ Actress Brigitte Bardot has called Marine Le Pen a modern day Joan of Arc.^{44 45}

a dry conflict over laws of succession, became a religious and regional conflict that saw the birth of nationalism in France. It must be understood that from its very inception, French identity and nationalism are hopelessly tied to Catholicism. In fact, Catholicism became a tool by which the Monarchy was able to justify itself. In *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (Song of Joan of Arc), written in the same year Joan assisted in the liberation of Orléans, court writer Christine de Pisan seeks to tie together the Catholic faith, the monarchy, and the conception of France as a nation. In her elegant Middle French poetry, she legitimizes the regime in what could be considered a

⁴³ Louis Aliot, "L'hommage du Front National à Jeanne d'Arc: plus que jamais!", *Boulevard Voltaire*, March 6, 2016, <http://www.bvoltaire.fr/louisalioth/hommage-du-front-national-a-jeanne-darc-plus-que-jamais,243113>.

⁴⁴ David Chazan, "Brigitte Bardot calls Marine Le Pen "modern Joan of Arc," *The Telegraph*, August 22, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11051530/Brigitte-Bardot-calls-Marine-Le-Pen-modern-Joan-of-Arc.html>.

⁴⁵ Tomasso Pinazzi, "Il Front National vince, la sinistra si rintana in trincea," *Cronaca Popolare*, 2016, <http://www.cronacapopolare.it/2015/12/07/il-front-national-vince-la-sinistra-si-rintana-in-trincea/>.

propaganda piece by weaving together a tale in which God had given the Monarchy a divine seal of approval by sending Joan of Arc on a sacred mission to save it.

Christianity was so central to French national identity that it was used for centuries as a tool of the monarchy and remained a powerful cultural factor among laypeople, even those who were not particularly pious. Continuing in the tradition of Christine de Pisan, French Monarch Louis XIV of France, the Sun King who famously declared "The State is me." became one of the primary proponents of an emerging political theory known as the Divine Right of Kings. Simply put, the King considered himself to be divinely appointed by God for the purpose of ruling over his country; thus he was beyond reproach. Just as God had appointed Charles VII to the throne as evidenced by the emergence of Joan of Arc, Louis XIV believed that he had been put into his position by the Almighty. Interestingly enough, Louis XIV belonged to a different dynasty than Charles VII, and the way in which his House of Bourbon came power over the House of Valois would resemble those that had transpired to save the House of Valois during the Hundred Years' War.

In 1517 Martin Luther published *The Ninety-Five Theses*, marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Protestantism gained popularity all across Europe, and garnered non-negligible support in the Kingdom of France. France historically had enjoyed a very close relationship with the Pope and was fervently Catholic, so the reformation made serious waves in a society where the question of religion had long since been settled. From 1519 until 1521 Luther's works freely circulated throughout France without censure or censorship. Francis I tolerated Lutheranism for a time, but the Affaire des Placards in 1534 brought an end to this

period of acceptance.⁴⁶ On the night of October 18, 1534, Protestants throughout France placed pro-Lutheran posters about in many public places- one was even placed on the door of the King's bedchamber at the town of Amboise in the Loire Valley. This bold challenge to the Crown, coupled with the virulent attack the posters had leveled against the Catholic practice of Mass sparked an intense backlash from Francis I. In a regime whose legitimacy was tied so closely to that of the Catholic Church, King Francis I could no longer peacefully harbor the Protestants who challenged his authority both on the ground and at its source. Protestantism was from this point onward recognized by the regime as heresy, and was persecuted as such. The Edict of Fontainebleau issued in June of 1540 gave control over heresy persecution to the French parliaments, and the number of these persecutions rose dramatically. After the death of Francis I and the ascendance of Henri II in 1547, judges lost the right to use their own discretion, and henceforth the only penalty for heresy was death. Just as Joan of Arc had been burned at the stake for her supposedly heretical beliefs, the Protestants were killed for theirs, ushering in the era of the House of Bourbon.⁴⁷

In some sense, one could argue that the resulting Wars of Religion that developed out of this sectarian conflict foreshadowed the Revolution, in that the Catholic foundation of the Old Regime came under increased scrutiny, and the role and privileges of the clergy were called into question. The deep cleavages this conflict created within French society are perhaps best captured in the life of Marguerite de Navarre, author of a collection of short tales espousing Christian morality known as the *Heptaméron*, and sister of Francis I. Despite her brother the King's eventual persecution of the Protestants, she was deeply involved in the Meaux Circle, one

⁴⁶ R.J. Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion 1559-1598*, (New York: Longman Inc., 1989), 2

⁴⁷ Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion 1559-1598*, 3-4

of the most influential groups within the reformation.⁴⁸ In fact her *Heptaméron*, published posthumously, depicted immorality amongst the clergy, and was one of many publications that spurred public dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church.⁴⁹ Worryingly for Francis I's House of Valois, there were over two million Protestants in France by the mid-1500s, including over half of the nobility. This constituted a serious challenge to the authority of Francis I as well as his son, Henri II. After many acts of intolerance propagated by the regime against Protestants, there was open rebellion, many battles were fought, and up to four million French died.⁵⁰



⁴⁸ Harold Grimm, *The Reformation Era 1500-1650* (2nd ed.), (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 263-264

⁴⁹ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 279

⁵⁰ Robert J. Knecht, *The French Religious Wars 1562-1598*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 10, 91

A Huguenot, on St. Bartholomew's Day, Refusing to Shield Himself from Danger by Wearing the Roman Catholic Badge - John Everett Millais

Although the French Wars of Religion are infinitely complex, all of its most important elements can be largely understood through one of its final campaigns: The War of Three Henri's.⁵¹ In 1587 Henri III, Henri de Navarre, and Henri de Guise, each entered into a competition for the throne of France. These three men represented the Royalists, the French Protestants, and the Ultra-Catholics respectively. Henri III was king of France, the last monarch of the house of Valois and a moderate Catholic, who hoped to end the bloodshed and restore France through a religiously tolerant but absolutist rule. Henri de Navarre was a Protestant, cousin to and legitimate successor of Henri III. Henri de Guise was a fanatical Catholic who would lead a group known as the Catholic League.

Now as France had been for a considerable time embroiled in internal religious conflict that threatened the sovereignty of the monarch, outside Protestant powers in Switzerland and Germany sought to lend military assistance to the Crown in order to secure a lasting peace and prevent the extreme Catholics who were hostile to their faith from taking power. Henri de Navarre, who felt compelled to protect the monarchy he was destined to inherit, was quick to align himself with these friendly Protestant forces. Henri III however, was not willing to risk his public image even further by receiving aid from foreign Protestant militaries. Thus an uneasy alliance was formed between the Henri III's Royalists and the forces of de Guise against the Protestant forces. Henri III sent troops to confront Henri de Navarre, but they were routed at the battle of Coutras. Henri III himself went to confront his Swiss allies for putting him in an uncomfortable political situation, and paid them to return home. The Swiss and German forces gave into Henri III's wishes at large, but some still sought to end the licentious influence of de

⁵¹ The description of these events is corroborated by Leopold von Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: a history of France principally during that period*, Volume 2. full cite on pg. 39

Guise in France, and so engaged with him and his men at the Battle of Vimory. De Guise emerged from this conflict victorious, and through a campaign of propaganda coordinated via his Catholic League he convinced the citizens of Paris that Henri III had been part of a greater plot to bring large Protestant armies into the heart of France in order to kill all of the good Catholics. Henri III had known of de Guise's designs, but believed he would be able to quash the Protestant rebellion as well as keep de Guise subordinate, a plan which had proved to be a failure. In a time of great fear, the dissemination of misinformation to a people who already did not trust the King led to a historical event important for understanding French public conscience: The Day of the Barricades. The Day of the Barricades was a spontaneous public uprising in 1588, in which ardent French Catholics rose up against the regime under the direction of the Catholic League and its leaders known as The Sixteen. This armed insurrection forced Henri III out of Paris, and effectively thrust de Guise into power. Leopold von Ranke said of the public's victory: "The rigid Catholic element, once aroused, victorious, and independent, now strove to obtain unconditional dominion. It deemed itself to possess an ecclesiastical and political right to an exclusive existence in France." In an important contrast to the Revolution of 1789, those opposed to the monarchy were ultra-Catholic, rather than secular. As was the Revolution, the Day of the Barricades was a popular uprising against the Old Regime, stirred up by mistrust of the elites and divisions between Frenchman.

In July of 1588, in order to retain power, Henri III found it necessary to concede to the League, and issued the Edict of the King on the Union of his Catholic Subjects, which established that he would promise to destroy heresy and refuse to coronate anyone who was a heretic or who was amiable toward heretics. His authority and influence were limited, and his political position was lower than de Guise's. Much like Joan of Arc had done centuries prior, he

looked to a dream that had once come to him, in which he was attacked by wild beasts, and saw in the assault of de Guise upon his monarchical authority a manifestation of this vision. As French Monarchs and political commentators before and after him would often argue, the king of France was divinely appointed by God: Henri III used this line of reasoning to justify that this permitted him to transgress upon the Lord's commandments in pursuit of the greater good. In this circumstance he believed the greater good to be the preservation of the heavenly anointed French monarchy. Owing to his dream and his supposed divine mandate, Henri III chose to have his political rival de Guise assassinated. This prompted an open conflict between the forces of Henri III and those of the Catholic League who held sway in Paris. It seemed as though the League's forces would over power Henri III, but Henri de Navarre's troops joined with the King in order to overthrow the League and reestablish the monarchy as an insular authority in France. Although the joint forces of Royalists and Protestants with the aid of the Swiss were winning the war, their success did not last, as Henri III was assassinated in 1589 leading to the dissolution of the coalition. After the death of Henri III, further siege attempts by Henri de Navarre's forces and four more years of war had left the city of Paris beleaguered and weary. In order to prevent further conflict, Henri de Navarre, the hero of French Protestantism, declared that "Paris is worth a mass" and officially converted to Catholicism in order to peacefully take the throne.⁵²

With his conversion, Henri de Navarre became Henri IV, first king of the House of Bourbon, the same dynasty that would later be forced from power in the 1789 Revolution. It is impossible to understate the massive importance of this development. The French people had definitively proven that without the blessing of Catholic Church, no regime could even begin to

⁵² Leopold von Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: a history of France principally during that period*, Volume 2, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), https://archive.org/stream/civilwarsmonarch00rank/civilwarsmonarch00rank_djvu.txt.

be considered as legitimate. Henri IV had been raised Protestant by his mother Jeanne d'Albret, who was considered the political leader of the Huguenot (French Calvinist) movement. He had fought alongside the Huguenots since his teenage years, and had even faked a conversion to Catholicism once before in order to escape certain death during the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre.⁵³ Even this champion of the Protestant cause had succumbed to the French people's iron will hell bent on remaining a staunchly Catholic society. Henri IV saved the monarchy, but he could not save the Protestant movement in France. The best he could offer to his Protestant brethren was the 1598 Edict of Nantes, which offered some concessions to the Protestants, and returned to them their civil rights, but it could do nothing to change the burning Catholic fanaticism of the French people. The Edict of Nantes signaled an end to the Wars of Religion which had drawn on for over thirty years, but did not signal an end to religious tensions in France. Extremist members of the Catholic League continued to resist the new monarch, and France was thrust into war with the Spanish over Spain's support of de Guise during the War of the Henries. Henri IV himself was eventually assassinated by a fanatical Catholic in 1610. Although time passed, these tensions never fully vanished, and although France sided with the Protestant coalition of states in the Thirty Years War, Henri IV's grandson, Louis XIV, the Sun King, revoked the Edict of Nantes only eighty-seven years later in 1685, which led to the expulsion of nearly all Protestants from France.

The Wars of Religion had been a Protestant revolution which led to the emergence of radical Catholic reactionaries. The Protestants may have won a symbolic victory in the coronation of Henri IV, but their leader had capitulated, and resigned the cause to the will of the

⁵³ "Henri IV Biography," <http://www.biography.com/people/henry-iv-9335199#early-life>.

French people. After over 30 years of fighting followed by a brief period of begrudging tolerance, the French people had elected to rid themselves of a group they saw as a scourge to their Catholic State. What one must glean from the history of France prior to the 1789 Revolution, is that religion was at the forefront of society. Religion justified or undermined monarchical authority. French people were so deeply concerned with Catholicism that they found it grounds to go to war, even amongst themselves. Protestants, who worshipped the same God were treated as pariahs by a devout populace. Religious tolerance was regarded as heresy, and anything but a devout adherence to Catholic precepts was considered to be intolerable. Protestantism was persecuted to the point that to this day only 2% of French citizens identify themselves as Protestant.^{54 55} Most incredible in this tale is that Paris was the home of the most impassioned Catholics in all of France, and yet Paris would be the birthplace of the secular French Revolution less than two centuries later. Would seven centuries of fervent dedication to a religious monarchy be so shortly and lastingly cast asunder? How could secularism manifest itself in a nation whose identity had been predicated first and foremost upon its religious affiliation?

The Revolution of 1789: Motivations and Outcomes

It is plain to see how in light of political turmoil, a people could be led to turn upon that which they hold most dear in order to improve their station in life. And so it was that in the period leading up the Revolution, the average Parisian peasant was liable to be led astray from God by irreligious intellectuals who opposed the Old Regime, and Catholicism because of it. As

⁵⁴ "Global Christianity," *Pew Forum*, December 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Erik Sengers, Thijl Sunier, *Religious Newcomers and the Nation State*, 2010, <https://books.google.pl/books?id=DaJtXsY4ttQC>.

it has been laid out, the French monarchy was hopelessly bound to the Catholic faith. After Louis XIV had made the country nearly uniformly Catholic, and the clergy had become privileged above all others in society, it was difficult to envision the State apart from the Church, just as it was difficult to envision the Church apart from the State. Religion was an omnipresent part of a seemingly oppressive system of rule, and the French began to believe that they needed to do away with it in order to instigate political reform. Anti-Royalist sentiment had already manifested in Paris during the Wars of Religion, and the Wars themselves led some moderate factions of the population to become disillusioned with Catholicism. These two facets of Parisian character would ready the way for a perfect ideological storm.

At its core, the Revolution of 1789 was a political reform movement that sought to do away with the crumbling vestiges of feudalism in order to better implement more contemporary forms of government and social organization. In France the feudal system had begun to pass away even before the beginnings of the Revolution, and in fact, its slow but evident passing was one of the Revolution's leading causes. In France, the non-monetary privileges of the nobility had largely been dissolved. Nobles no longer possessed control over the administrative regions they had once dominated. Indeed, the peasants who had once paid rent in order to cultivate the lands of their lords had become landowners themselves. Although their parcels of land were often too small to be self-sustaining, the peasants for the first time began to feel the effects of a long-since defunct feudal system weighing down upon them. Their seigneur was no longer their master nor protector, but he still retained privileges. In fact, the nobles no longer played part in the administration of any public affairs, except for in matters of justice. French peasants had been completely emancipated from their old feudal masters, and yet their masters still retained some ancient entitlements for as far as any peasant could tell, simply existing. From this

realization the peasant began to grow bitter, and the Revolutionary ideal of social equality would come to prey upon this bitterness. Moreover, the peasant himself began daily to feel the effects of the tithe, and of obsolete agricultural laws, which had not concerned him when he was no more than a contracted laborer, doing another's bidding for his part and parcel.⁵⁶ In this way, the crushing weight of the old system's ineptitude began to suffocate the average Frenchman, leading to a distaste for the system and its artifices writ large, and a hunger for change.

In large part, the disempowerment of the nobility was part of a trend towards a centralized authority administrated by a bureaucracy. The Royal Council established under the Old Regime consolidated many of the powers nobles had once held, and contributed to the largely to this centralization in the final decades of the French Monarchy. Defense, public works projects, law enforcement, and many other powers traditionally held by the nobility were consolidated under the Council. Having been deprived of many of their former powers, the nobility no longer saw it their duty to care after their former subjects who had fallen into poverty, so the central government oversaw even this aspect of public life, often engaging in extremely paternalistic behavior, such as coercing peasants into increasing their output by utilizing pre-approved methods of production.⁵⁷ If the primary political outcome of the Revolution was to create a centralized state and to abolish all privileges of the higher social classes, these developments were already well underway in the mid-eighteenth century. However, the way in which the dismantling of the old system dragged on is what made that system so intolerable to the French people that revolution was a foregone conclusion. If the political aspect of the Revolution was part of a steady historical process, what then can be said about its ideological

⁵⁶ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 27-30

⁵⁷ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 31-32

components? The ideological motivations, justifications, and ramifications of the Revolution are a matter of great interest insofar as they relate to modern France.

France's newfound metropolitan character played a large role in the development of its revolutionary culture. Karl Marx states in *The Communist Manifesto*, that "the bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life."⁵⁸ Written at the end of the First Industrial Revolution, a period of history that was beginning just prior to the French Revolution, this quotation serves as a poignant allegory of the situation in France (although the population of Paris relative to the rest of the nation stayed the same as it had during the Wars of Religion). Paris undoubtedly played a key role in the Wars of Religion, but de Tocqueville is right in claiming that as a city it did not shape France's entire political destiny; it was merely a staunch holdout against Henri de Navarre that had to be dealt with in order to reestablish peace. When speaking of Paris on the cusp of the Revolution however, he says in fact that "Paris *was* France," a political obstacle that would have to be overcome in the future. Going further, De Tocqueville includes a passage from a letter sent by Montesquieu to a friend that states: "In France there is only Paris- and a few outlying provinces Paris hasn't yet found time to gobble up."⁵⁹ One must recognize that the Revolution of 1789 overrepresented urban and specifically Parisian viewpoints. Born, incubated, and fought largely within Paris, the Revolution reflected the cities' character, and did not necessarily represent the interests of commoners elsewhere.

⁵⁸ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, Marxists Internet Archive, 2000, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>.

⁵⁹ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 72

After relocating nearly all aspects of governance to the vicinity of Paris, Louis XIV should not have been shocked that he found it nigh impossible to check the city's growth.⁶⁰ Having dismantled ancient feudal structures that had created the independent regions of the nation in the first place, it comes as no surprise that the provincial character of France was largely lost. From the dissolution of these smaller administrative regions, Paris emerged as a conglomeration, centered around a new type of government, with a character all of its own.⁶¹ Like a growth left unchecked, this unintended consequence of political reformation and monarchical absolutism absorbed all of the ambitious people and all of the great minds who fled their now dull and failing provinces. These people then came together and formed a new and aberrant cultural force that would soon destroy the edified foundations of French society. As it had been in the Protestant Reformation and French Wars of Religion, the printing press once again became the leading agent of social change. Pamphleteering reached a new zenith, and new and radical ideas were accessible all throughout the Paris region. In the countryside, the other provinces of France who had lost nearly all of their character through the death of feudal institutions and Paris's emergence as a nationwide brain drain waited with bated breath for the latest news and ideas coming in from the city. In this way a small segment of the population managed to broadly capture the public imagination.⁶²

In the period leading up to the French Revolution, the average Frenchman played no part in politics, and as a consequence of this lack of civic life, he easily fell for the promises of ideologues without making any practical considerations.⁶³ Seeing himself as oppressed, and at odds with the regime, the average citizen was offered an escape route by the men of letters who

⁶⁰ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 73

⁶¹ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 74

⁶² de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 74-75

⁶³ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 141

had conjured up an image of a free and equal society, based on reason and opposed to oppressive tradition. As the Church had historically played a primary role in censorship and stood for order and tradition, it was a natural target of the intellectual elite; and because the Church was so closely tied to the regime and possessed so much power, while still remaining an easier target for overthrow than the monarchy, it became a natural target for a disgruntled and misled people.⁶⁴

Although there was a popular basis for anti-religious sentiments in eighteenth century France, this is largely because of forces already described. Salons bustled, writers were unlikely to be severely persecuted, and a distinctly Parisian intellectual culture began to emerge. Free to write on any subject they wish, this new generation of scholars, lacking any political experience and with no great understanding of the practical aspects of social transformation, conjured up an image of an ideal society which institutionally and culturally bore virtually no resemblance to the one that currently existed. Initially spurned on in the Age of Reason, secular thought boomed during the period of the Enlightenment, with its primary focus on man, his good nature, and his rights as an individual; the Catholic Church, which promoted a hierarchy of being and taught of an authority that was greater than our human reasoning was seen as an impediment to progress, and reviled.⁶⁵ Through the rapid dissemination of knowledge and the sharing of ideas that occurred through pamphleteering and social institutions, these armchair political theorists were able to put themselves in the spotlight, and became a new source of intellectual authority amongst disgruntled common folk, who often found themselves in a worse position in the eighteenth century than their ancestors had found themselves in the thirteenth.⁶⁶ However the secular attitudes and strong-arm tactics of the Revolutionaries did not win them unanimous

⁶⁴ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 151-152

⁶⁵ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 151

⁶⁶ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 120

public support, and indeed they faced ideological and political resistance all throughout France, particularly in agrarian parts of the country, and most notably in a region known as the Vendée.

Rebellion in the Vendée - Fracture Between Republicanism and Religion

On February 24, 1793, a decree was sent out by the recently established French First Republic that ordered the conscription of 300,000 unmarried men, to be chosen by lot from among all of the regions of France, and on March 10 the first recruitments were to be made.^{67 68} The presence of military recruiters triggered an uprising in the Vendée that would burn brightly and hotly for months to come. This uprising became violent immediately, as youths from the Vendée region and surrounding areas banded together and killed military recruiters, as well as hundreds of citizens loyal to the new regime.⁶⁹ At its onset, the origins of this conflict seemed to be purely political, a people once again lashing out at an overreaching government. This seems to be especially true in light of the fact that in 1793 the Federalist Revolts had already broken out in order to ensure the decentralization of government in response to its rapidly growing power, and that in 1789 there was no evidence anywhere that the Vendean region of France was "morally at odds" with the aims of the Revolution, or that it actively opposed the ousting of the Old Regime in any tangible way. Despite this, the rebellion possessed in great measure a religious fervor that could be easily interpreted as even more fundamental to its counter-revolutionary message than its opposition to the rising power of centralized government. Indeed, the most accurate characterization I have come across of the motivations of the rebels who were to become the Catholic and Royal Army proceeds as such:

⁶⁷ François Furet and Mona Ozouf, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1989), 165

⁶⁸ J. Gilchrist, W.J. Murray, *The Press in the French Revolution*, Section 151, (London: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1971), 275

⁶⁹ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 165

"it was not the fall of the Ancien Régime that aroused the population of the region against the Revolution but the reconstruction of the new regime: the new map of districts and [departments], the administrative dictatorship of towns and cities, and above all the affair of the nonjuring priests, whose refusal to take an oath to the Constitution bestowed the name of God on the clandestine resistance and rewarded it with the active support of the refractory priests. Rebellion had first flared in August 1792 but had quickly been put down. In 1793 however, it was not the January regicide that triggered the insurrection but the return of forced conscription. Here is yet another sign that if the Vendean people inscribed God and king on their flags, they invested those inevitable symbols of their tradition with something other than simple regret for the Ancien Régime, whose death they had witnessed without sorrow."⁷⁰

If Furet is correct, the most obvious conclusion is that this was an uprising predicated almost purely upon religious sentiment; a matter which will weigh heavily upon our understanding of French Republicanism.

The War in the Vendée was the longest and deadliest disturbance of 1793, and killed at minimum four times as many people as the entire Reign of Terror.^{71 72} This war is a matter of great importance for understanding the clash between France's religious character and elements of the Revolution and the First Republic. Just as the leaders of the French Fifth Republic have been so willing to overlook France's deep-seated Catholic character, members of the First

⁷⁰ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 166

⁷¹ Jean-Clément Martin, *La Terreur*, (Découvertes/Gallimard, 2010), 82

⁷² Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror During the French Revolution: A Statistical Interpretation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935),
https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Incidence_of_the_Terror_During_the_F.html?id=f9hnAAAAMAAJ.



"God the King" - A patch worn by Vendean insurrectionists.⁷³

Republic were apt to make the same error. Having honed in strictly upon the royalist element of the Vendean uprising, the First Republic erred greatly in their characterization of the rebellion. Fearing for the future of the Republic, and the possibility of a re-established monarchy, the Republicans were brutal in dealing with the Vendéans, and on March 19 issued a decree ordering all who wore its symbol, the white cockade, to be executed within 24 hours.⁷⁴ Another decree issued on August 1 set forth a new strategy for Republican troops in the Vendée: to completely and utterly destroy it. Troops were commanded to burn down all of the trees and houses, kill all of the livestock, and otherwise make the region uninhabitable by any great number of people. By February 1794, this strategy proved itself to be very successful. Pockets of insurgency were destroyed successively, leaders and followers alike were captured and killed, and by May 1795, what had once been a successful and semi-organized rebellion had effectively been stopped, and

⁷³ <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/Coeur-chouan.jpeg>.

⁷⁴ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 166

in February and March of 1796 the two primary leaders of military resistance were taken prisoner and executed.⁷⁵

Even after the conflict had passed, historiographers had trouble explaining what had occurred in the Vendée. It is easy to understand their error when one looks at the rebellion as nothing more than royalist political movement; as the region had shown no signs of aberration from the tendencies of the great cities or the other regions of France in the midst of the Revolution, and likewise expressed no great remorse over the execution of Louis XVI. What these historians failed to grasp was the deeply religious character of the revolts, and how it was exacerbated by the actions of Republic. Throughout the conflict the Republic so situated itself against religion in the Vendée, that it made the region's integration into the Republic nearly impossible. This speaks to the larger issue-at-hand: the inability of the Republic and its successors to differentiate between the Church and the Old Regime, and therefore their obstinate refusal to embrace France's Catholic heritage. As I have previously described, the institutions of the Church and the Monarchy had become inextricably tied throughout French history, most notably under the reign of Louis XIV. However, Catholicism had largely guided the development of French national identity independently of the regime. Indeed, the independent power of the Catholic faith upon French national consciousness had gone largely undetected due to its omnipresence as well as its influence being confounded with that of the Old Regime, and in the wake of the Revolution, as Furet states, people were forced into a political dichotomy that consisted of Catholicism and the King on one hand, and secularism and the Republic on the other.⁷⁶ I hope to impress upon the reader that the leading intellectuals behind the French Revolution needlessly affixed a staunchly secular character to French republicanism, and that

⁷⁵ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 168-169

⁷⁶ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 170

that character has continued to exist into the present day as founders of new French republics have sought to keep with old traditions. Rather than embracing a French, culturally Catholic republicanism that could have easily developed after the consolidation of political authority under the First Republic, members of society both for and against the Revolution contributed to a false dichotomy that ultimately cemented the secular aspects of French republicanism.⁷⁷ Nowhere is this unnecessary ideological conflation better represented, nor perhaps more importantly cemented than by the conflict in the Vendée.

François Furet explains that the powerful religious conviction present in the Vendée was ancient in origin, but that its origins are unknown and cannot be circumscribed as an artifact of revived religious intensity among certain circles during the Enlightenment.⁷⁸ This characterization lends support to the argument I have laid out thus far, that Frenchmen had been incubated since birth in a culture that was inherently (and mystifyingly to some observers) Catholic. It should have come as no surprise to the politicians of the First Republic that the religious tendencies of the Vendée were not to be underestimated, as disquiet in the region had previously flared due to the preceding governments insistence on the state regulation of religion. In 1790, the French National Assembly passed the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*, which put an end to all Monastic orders in France, and forced all bishops to swear an oath of loyalty to the government and the law. Perhaps this could have been the first action that began to turn the Vendean people against the Revolutionary government toward whom they had previously supported, if not remained indifferent towards. It seems quite likely that the frustrations which so violently burst forth from these people after the order to conscript 300,000 men was an artifact of this perceived religious persecution. This seems very likely owing to the fact that revolts had

⁷⁷ H.A.C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, (New York: Longman Inc, 1988), 1

⁷⁸ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 173

broken out in the Vendée in 1792, prior to the order for mass military conscription. Unfortunately for those in the Vendée, by taking up the mantle of Royalism as necessitated by the false political dichotomy created by the Revolution, they were subject to harsh retaliation from the Republic. Furthering the rift between Catholic sensibilities and republican ideals, many agents of the government sent to the Vendée were ardent de-Christianizers, and as a consequence of the massive destruction carried out by republican troops, many churches were razed, and following the conflict religious connotations were removed from town names, among other things, "as if in order to be totally victorious the Revolution was obliged to destroy its anti-principle, to erase it from history."⁷⁹ Despite the Vendée's eventual capitulation to and reintegration with the Republic, the region continued to revolt sporadically until the time of Napoleon Bonaparte.⁸⁰

In describing the Vendée's religious character, and the revolutionary intellectual's response to the Vendée uprisings, Furet accurately summarizes a phenomenon still present in the Fifth Republic: a lack of religious consciousness among the intellectual and political elite. He writes:

"This tradition was less ancient than revolutionary bourgeois administrators believed, and they were ill prepared to comprehend it; being disciples of the century's other side, the philosophies they saw in it nothing but superstition and savagery. The Vendée war was born of the clash between these two mutually opaque worlds, whose features it brought into sharp relief for subsequent centuries... Lyons fought under the banner of royalism; but the Vendean people

⁷⁹ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 174

⁸⁰ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 175

asked to be given back their priests and their Church. In opposition the Convention placed the armies of the Republic under the command of sans-culottes, terrorists, and de-Christianizers. Thus even though it was never the ambition of the Revolution to root out Christianity- Robespierre, and before him the Constituent Assembly, made this perfectly clear- circumstances nevertheless brought a Catholic people face to face with a republican people in the Vendée."

His conclusions is that "For that reason, this war aptly optimizes the depth of the conflict that arose in the history of France between religious tradition and the revolutionary foundation of democracy."

Under the Constituent Assembly as well as the First Republic, many efforts were undertaken to remove traces of Christianity from public life. Revolutionary leaders created new units of telling time, new units of measurement, and new units for currency; they took away all of the Church's property, closed all of the convents, created a French Republican Calendar, and even established two new state religions based on Enlightenment principles. All of these were attempts to undermine royalist influence and religious authority within France, and consequently the Vendée was never truly at peace. Yet all of these major changes were products of legislation, rather than the will of the people. The popular support necessary in order to sustain such radical changes was simply not there. Napoleon restored the convents and was even crowned by Pope Pius VII, near the beginning of his reign the Senate ruled by decree to return France to the Gregorian Calendar, and he outlawed the Revolution's two artificial religions, the Cults of

Reason and of the Supreme Being, and although units of measurement and currency stayed in their new forms owing to their convenience, timekeeping remained a 24 hour affair.^{81 82}

It would be a mistake to conclude that although the Revolution was secular in nature, it represented a paradigm shift in deep-seated French cultural attitudes, instead of merely a change in the nation's political character. The revolutionary movement was led by secular idealists, grew from their theories, and therefore it maintained an unrepresentatively secular character. As de Tocqueville writes: "The more the political achievement of the Revolution is consolidated, the more its anti-religious elements are being discredited." and that in the years following the Revolution "the Church has tended to recover its hold on men's minds."⁸³ The falsehood of the dichotomy between secular republicanism and royalist Catholicism forged in the years directly following the Revolution of 1789 is evidenced by the Vendée's support of the Revolution's political aims, and its simultaneously staunch maintenance of religious faith. In the end, the rift between the secular spirit of the Revolution and the Catholic faith of the Vendée never managed to heal. After the coup of 18th Brumaire, Napoleon's Concordat of 1801 re-established monasteries, restored the symbolic status of Catholicism as the primary religion of France, and once again made Sunday a festival day. This soothed the tensions between Catholicism and the French State, but it was not a wound that Republicanism had been able to heal. This lack of reconciliation would continue to characterize the divisions between Republicanism and cultural Catholicism into the twentieth century and beyond.

⁸¹ "Le calendrier grégorien en France," <http://www.henk-reints.nl/cal/audette/cgfrance.html>.

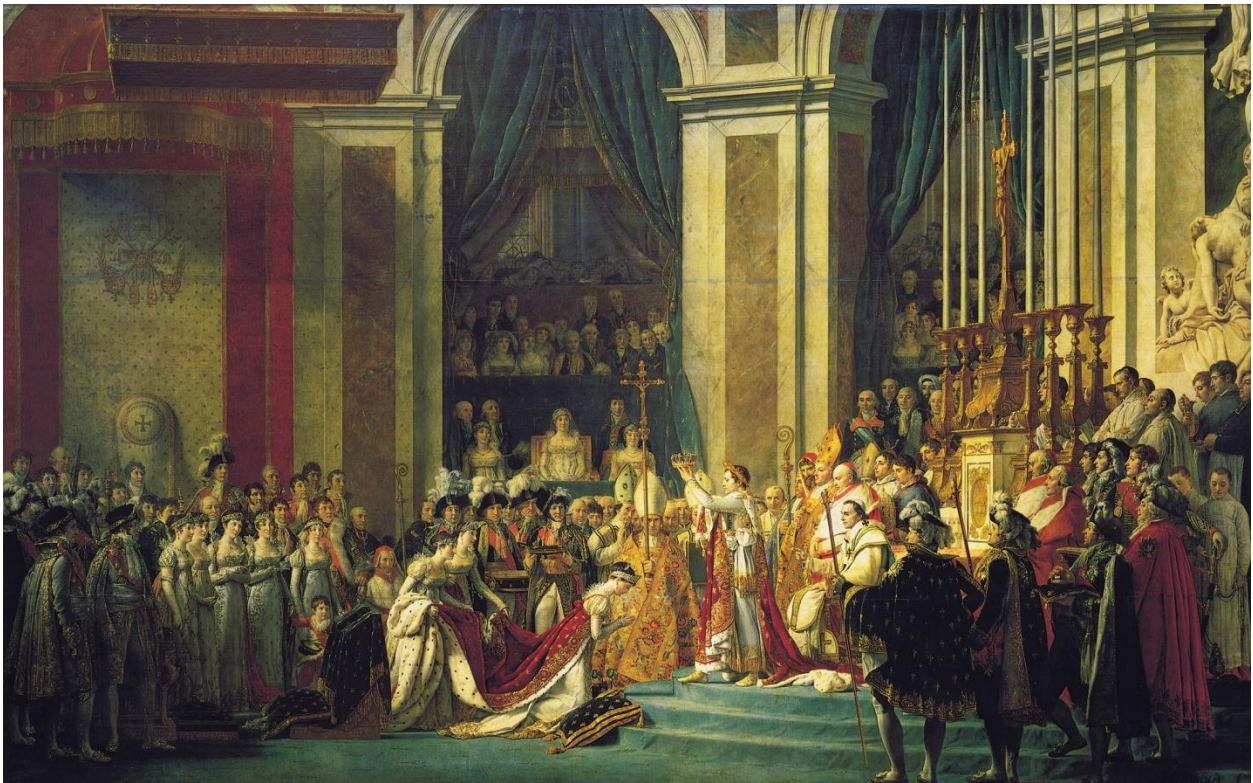
⁸² William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 389

⁸³ de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 7

French Catholicism and Politics: 1801 - 1905

"Bonaparte recognized what the directors did not: he understood that only the Catholic religion stirred the emotions of the people, could effectively mend the religious divisions of the revolution, provide a basis for morality, and support the authority of the new Consular regime."

- Matthew Zarzency⁸⁴



(*Le Sacre de Napoléon* - Jacques-Louis David) Napoleon crowned himself at his coronation ceremony to symbolize that his authority did not derive from the Catholic Church.

Although Napoleon Bonaparte appears to have had no particular attachment to the Catholic Church, he recognized the special role it played in French society as the supreme arbiter of morality and as a source of authority more important than the government in the minds of many citizens. Napoleon would not have been able to lead a unified France had he not soothed

⁸⁴ Zarzency, "Religion in Napoleonic France," Part I

the tensions between regime and religion. Despite his use of the Catholic faith as a political tool to control the morality of his subjects and to legitimize his regime (much as his predecessors had done), he greatly advantaged the Church relative to its status under republican governments. Popular movements to canonize Napoleon speak to the gratitude many members of the Catholic Church felt towards him for his actions (as well as the desire of the Church to reconcile themselves with revolutionary patriotism).⁸⁵ Napoleon's Concordat of 1801 would go on to characterize the next one hundred years of Church and State relations in France. The most jarring exception to this trend took place just after Napoleon's downfall.

After his defeat in the 1814 campaign in north-east France by a coalition of major European powers, Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba, and the Monarchy was for a time restored in France. The Restoration (as it is known) of the House of Bourbon would herald the last great political triumph of the Catholic Church in post-revolutionary France. Once again the official state religion rather than a reviled entity (as it had been under Revolutionary governments) or merely the religion of most Frenchman (as it had been under Napoleon), the Catholic Church enjoyed an elevated status, although it would never reach its former heights. Ultra-royalist zealotry however reached a new zenith, likely a reaction to the intense oppression that monarchists had faced in years prior, such as in the Vendée. Just as in the first White Terror of 1795, a second terror was unleashed by royalists against Bonapartists after the Hundred Days of Napoleon in 1815 and his final defeat at Waterloo. Unfortunately, the zealotry of the monarchists would become conflated with Catholicism and its values, but it seems to have been inevitable given the interplay between the two ideologies both in public perception and common discourse. In 1824 when Louis XVIII, the first monarch of the restoration, passed away and was

⁸⁵ Zarzecny, "Religion in Napoleonic France," Part IV

succeeded by his brother Charles X the Church as well as the Royalists rose to even greater prominence. The moderate Louis had long suppressed ultra-royalist elements from pervading the government, but his successor Charles had no intention to do such a thing. In fact, Charles was a member of this faction and actively supported it.⁸⁶

France's new Ultra-Royalist government sought to promote the power of the Catholic Church in society. Although the Church had lost its property in the revolution, and faced competition for control over the minds of the young due to the emergence of rival secular educational institutions, they were to be given a great boon through the passage of the Anti-Sacrilege Act in 1825. This act sought to restore public reverence for the Catholic Church by deterring sacrilegious acts through the State's threat of force. In a further entanglement of religion and royalism, the government acted on its belief that its laws could not be respected if Catholicism were not first respected.⁸⁷ This law reinstated penalties of lifetime servitude as well as execution for various sacrilegious crimes, to be applied on a graduated scale according to the type of the offense. Although the act went into effect in 1825, it was only a symbolic victory for the Church, as by the time the regime folded in 1830 it had not been put into use.⁸⁸ Economic downturns in the 1820s, as well as mounting pressure against Charles X due to the Four Ordinances (which would reduce the political power of the middle class and restrict the press, among other things) ultimately led to the July Revolution of 1830, and the Orléanist July Monarchy.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 1

⁸⁷ Jean-Nöel Jeanneney, "Quand le sacrilège était puni de mort en France," *L'Histoire*, June 2006, <http://www.histoire.presse.fr/recherche/quand-le-sacrilege-etait-puni-de-mort-en-france-01-06-2006-7035>.

⁸⁸ "La loi du Sacrilège," <http://www.herodote.net/almanach-ID-3198.php>.

⁸⁹ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 6-9



(*La Liberté guidant le peuple* - Eugène Delacroix) A Commemoration of the July Revolution featuring Marianne, a goddess of Liberty. The use of the Tricolore flag by the Orléanist regime speaks to the impact of the Revolution's legacy. Marine Le Pen recently included this image in a blog post calling for France to exit the European Union.⁹⁰

This period was marked by a return to Napoleonic "normalcy" in regards to the relation between Church and State. The more liberal Orléanist regime that ascended to the throne after the abdication of Charles X repealed the Anti-Sacrilege Act, and returned to the jurisprudence of the Concordat of 1801. Much as it had under Napoleon (with respect to the Old Regime), the political power of the Church continued to decline, while its social arm continued to expand.⁹¹ Although hostilities remained, in that many priests and religious peoples of the countryside did

⁹⁰ Marine Le Pen, "Frexit," March 13, 2016, <http://carnetsdesperances.fr/2016/03/13/frexit/>.

⁹¹ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 311, 308

not support the Orléanist regime, and that the regime did not prevent Church property from mob destruction, tensions seemed to abate somewhat over time.⁹²

Having foreseen the difficulties the Church would face under the Orléanists, a small group of individuals led by a man named Lamennais started a publication in 1830 known as *l'Avenir* (which means 'the Future') to start a new discourse on how the Catholic Church's interests may best be served in the trying years that lay ahead.⁹³ Collingham characterizes the mission of this movement: "The Avenir school had attacked the alliance of throne and altar, and they and their disciples continued to try and free Catholic action from all traces of royalism."⁹⁴ He also describes the methods of one of *l'Avenir's* primary proponents "Lacordaire made Catholicism a new crusade: he mixed ultramontanism with nationalism."⁹⁵ Detachment from the throne and an appeal to nationalism would eventually prove to be the future of Culturally Catholic politics, an evidence of *l'Avenir's* forward-thinking. An excerpt from one of *l'Avenir's* early publications should make their aims very clear: "But in order that the Church may discharge its mission, it must win the confidence of the masses. This confidence it has forfeited at present as the result of its fatal alliance with the monarchy. Its first step, then, must be to renounce this alliance for good and all. The priest must no longer condescend to be the 'gendarme of royalty.' But this alone is not enough. The Church must also become *free*. Such freedom can only be had in one way-by the rupture of the Concordat [of 1801], the complete separation of the Church and the State."⁹⁶ At the time of writing, this opinion was one that not many Catholics shared, and religious interests would still for some time try to work through

⁹² Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 56-57, 304

⁹³ C.S. Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 230, 236

⁹⁴ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 305

⁹⁵ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 306

⁹⁶ Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, 237-238

politics to accomplish their ends. Lammenais was rebuked by the Pope, and l'Avenir was declared an apostate publication.⁹⁷ Despite this failure, the message of l'Avenir would prove to be prophetic: the clamor for separation of Church and State would only grow over time. Catholic sentiment would also grow across France, as the faith experienced a revival in the 1830s.⁹⁸

The dominant issue amongst the Catholics throughout the rule of the Louis-Phillipe's Orléanist regime was the question of the Church's role in education. Although Napoleon had already re-allowed monastic orders in France, their establishment was still left to the discretion of the State. Napoleon's policies towards religion had indeed sought to soothe tensions between different segments of the population, but in many respects they were ploys to make the Church a useful tool of the government. An 1830 Charter was the first step towards the hotly-contested dissolution of this practice: it appeared to allow the Church to construct orders without the need for approval.⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ In a post-Revolutionary world, it seemed as though education was necessary to provide order to a people that since 1789 had been in perpetual disorder. Emilie de Gerardin declared that "As soon as a people comes to know its rights, there is only one way to govern it, that is to instruct it."¹⁰¹ The secular *Université* system established by Napoleon had come to dominate over French education, and controlled education at the primary, secondary, and university level. Owing to the growing importance of literacy within society, a law was passed in June 1833 dictating that every commune must have a school and a teacher, and that the school would be free to attend. The supply of teachers was however limited, and State supplied

⁹⁷ Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, 256-257, 259

⁹⁸ Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, 282

⁹⁹ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 304

¹⁰⁰ Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, 289

¹⁰¹ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 309

educators were often trained to be skeptical of religion.¹⁰² The Catholic's had a pervasive interest in building religious schools and providing a non-secular education to the youth of France. Politically, they made the argument that the Charter of 1830 granted them the right to open independent schools, free from the influence of the Université. The establishment of these little seminaries (as they came to be known), free from the influence of the largely secular State-run education system became a point of contention, and political battles were fought over their continued existence into the 1840's.^{103 104} Although the Catholics would have nearly all of their demands regarding education met after the Revolution of 1848, the battles of the 1840s led them towards a new theory of the Church's role within the State. The advent and continued growth of social Catholicism, as well as the hassle that the constant legal battles brought upon Catholics who merely wanted the right to educate their young without State interference contributed to a desire for autonomy. Catholic elements in French society ended up leading the charge for the further separation of Church and State. Having given up entirely on their ancient rights and privileges, the largely consolidated Catholic movement argued that in return they should be considered separate from the State, and remain free from the government's meddling, much as the fringe Avenir movement had attempted prior.^{105 106} I consider this to be a founding moment in establishment of French Laïcité, given that it was the happy resignation of the Catholic portion of France to live in an outwardly secular state, provided they would be able to act freely within their own establishments as well as the social realm.

¹⁰² Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 311

¹⁰³ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 311

¹⁰⁴ Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, 290

¹⁰⁵ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 313, 305-308

¹⁰⁶ Phillips, *The Church in France 1789-1848*, 300-302

Collingham writes that the Church's popularity in the late 1840's was greatly strengthened. The hatred of the Church by the lower classes which had been held in earnest since 1789 began to dissipate, and that by refusing to link itself to the legitimists who argued for the return of the Crown to the House of Bourbon, Catholicism made itself "intellectually respectable, positive, and progressive."¹⁰⁷ After the 1848 Revolution, the short-lived second Republic, and the ascension of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte to the position of Emperor, the Catholics once again saw an opportunity to regain political favor. By adamantly supporting Louis-Napoleon [Napoleon III], Catholicism regained the favor it had lacked under the Orléanist regime.¹⁰⁸ This attempt to once again create a symbiosis between Church and State represents a dramatic shift from the efforts of Catholic groups in the 1830s and 40s, and symbolizes in my own view the divergence between the Church itself and Cultural Catholicism, which persists to the present day. Catholicism was already redeemed in the eyes of the French public at large, and social Catholicism was growing, but opportunistic members of the faith could not relinquish the opportunity for increased political power so easily. It is under the reign of Napoleon III that we see the final institutionalized power struggle between political religion and fervent anti-clericals.

The relationship between the Catholics and Louis-Napoleon was not one born of great mutual affection, but rather mutual self-interest. Having been disinherited by the July Monarchy, the Catholics offered their support to Napoleon III in order to obtain his favor, and Napoleon III gladly received it.¹⁰⁹ Although I do not wish to discuss the intricate details of this symbiotic relationship in any great detail, it was under Napoleon III that the Falloux Laws were passed, laws which made religious instruction a mandatory part of primary school curriculum. Under the

¹⁰⁷ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, 316

¹⁰⁸ Zarzeczny, "Religion in Napoleonic France," Part II

¹⁰⁹ C.S. Phillips, *The Church in France 1848-1907*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 41

Constitution of 1852 the Senate was charged with maintaining the interests of religion, Cardinals were allowed to sit in the senate, and blasphemous and subversive texts were censored.¹¹⁰ In the meantime, social Catholicism continued to thrive, particularly in the realm of charity. New religious charities sprung up everywhere, and those already in existence were burgeoning.¹¹¹ Even as Catholicism flourished institutionally and socially, there were worries about the future of the Church under the Second Empire- privileges for Catholics were seen as being entirely too dependent on the temperament of the regime, as they had no permanent basis. These fears were well-founded: this last golden age of Catholicism as a political entity was not destined to last. Foreign policy blunders would make Napoleon III less popular in his home country (and by extension the Church's involvement in politics), and his regime's increasing concessions to liberal policies and its actions in Italy did not please the Church.¹¹² ¹¹³ In an attempt to retain the balance of power in Europe, and according to some scholars, unite the people of France in opposition to a common foe, Napoleon III went on to declare war against Prussia in 1870.¹¹⁴ ¹¹⁵ His speedy and humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War spelled the end of the Second Empire, and the reemergence of republicanism as the dominant political force in France.

After Napoleon III's surrender at Sedan, he was taken captive, and a new government needed to rise up in order to fill the vacuum left by the instantaneous dissolution of the empire on 2 and 3 September, 1870. In Paris and elsewhere, Republican mobs took over government buildings with little or no resistance, and an official Third Republic [then known as the

¹¹⁰ Phillips, *The Church in France 1848-1907*, 42-43

¹¹¹ Phillips, *The Church in France 1848-1907*, 45

¹¹² Zarzecny, "Religion in Napoleonic France," Part II

¹¹³ Roger Price, *Napoleon III and the Second Empire*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 58-59

¹¹⁴ Price, *Napoleon III and the Second Empire*, 62-63

¹¹⁵ Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, xii

Government of National Defense] was declared nearly immediately.¹¹⁶ Still at war, Prussian forces quickly advanced upon Paris, and besieged the city until it was forced to capitulate.¹¹⁷ In response to the perceived weakness of the government in its negotiations with the newly formed German Empire, which amounted to large reparations and the cessation of Alsace-Lorraine, the people of Paris once again attempted to take their political destiny into their own hands.¹¹⁸ What events unfolded are not indicative of the population at large: Paris had been extremely discontent under the rule of Napoleon III, unlike the people of the countryside who were quite taken with him. The Paris Commune grew from this spirit of rebellion, and in many ways represented popular anti-clericalism's final effort to lash out against the Church. The Paris Commune was a hostile popular takeover of Paris led by revolutionary workers and given power through the support of the National Guard. Fueled by the poor economic climate caused by the siege of Paris, distaste for the provisional government of Adolphe Thiers which had succeeded the government of National Defense, and motivated in part by Marx's materialist conception of history, the Paris Commune represented what Marx himself would call the first example of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Just as the communards, Marx believed that the people of Paris had been betrayed by the government (although he admitted that civil resistance to Prussia was hopeless).¹¹⁹

As members of an extreme-left and extremely secular movement, the Communards did not take kindly to the Church, both for its complicity with the Second Empire, as well as its historical ties to the monarchy. Among the first decrees of the newly formed commune was one formally severing the ties between Church and State; thereby taking away the salaries of Catholic

¹¹⁶ Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870* (2nd ed.), (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 12-13

¹¹⁷ Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 13-15

¹¹⁸ D.W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France [1870-1939]*, (London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1967), 54-55

¹¹⁹ Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, Marxists Internet Archive, 2009, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/>.

priests and bishops (as well as Jewish rabbis and Protestant ministers), legalizing slander against the Church, and forbidding religious teaching.¹²⁰ ¹²¹ Monks and nuns were persecuted over ridiculous matters by kangaroo courts.¹²² However, even from within, the secularization schemes of the communards faced internal resistance. The 13th and 15th arrondissements of Paris were strongly opposed to these measures, and throughout the city small bouts of violence against anti-clericals in a surprisingly peaceful time demonstrated that hating religion was not as popular as it had been in 1789. The Mayor of the 5th arrondissement claimed that it was possible to be both "a practicing Catholic and a revolutionary socialist."¹²³ After refusing to accept the authority of the nascent Third Republic under Adolphe Thiers, and the execution of two Army generals by Guardsmen, the regular French Army intervened directly and militarily in the commune, routing the Guardsmen and Communards in a "Bloody Week." The fall of the Commune was significant because it represented the reclaiming of French politics and political authority from the City of Paris, an obstinate city which had imagined itself the ruler of France ever since the Revolution. Louis Veuillot remarked that "Since 1789 France has only had one King, Paris." D.W. Brogan echoes this sentiment when he writes "That monarch was now dethroned, with far more bloodshed than had been necessary to secure the deposition and execution of the heir of thirty kings. For the Reign of Terror was far less bloody than the 'Bloody Week' and its blood thinly spread over a year. In the conflict between France and her arrogant capital, Paris was at last beaten. And if universal suffrage was to have its way, it was as necessary to dethrone Paris as to dethrone any Bonaparte or Bourbon. Thanks to M. Thiers it had been done."¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Phillips, *The Church in France 1848-1907*, 42

¹²¹ Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune*, (Frome and London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1971), 269

¹²² Brogan, *The Development of Modern France [1870-1939]*, 65

¹²³ Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune*, 270

¹²⁴ Brogan, *The Development of Modern France [1870-1939]*, 74

The fall of the Paris Commune is where I will mark France's tradition to modernity in regards to Church and State relationships. After the defeat of the communards, elections were held almost immediately for the National Assembly, and it was an overwhelming victory for the royalist right. This began the period of the Third Republic known as the *Ordre Morale*, which attempted to suppress the elements in society that had been affiliated with the Paris Commune. Succeeding in the restoration of order, but failing in the restoration of the monarchy, the early years of the Third Republic mark the end of France's social religious evolution. The re-secularization of education nationwide, the sale of the crown jewels, and the eventual passage of the 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State consolidated once and for all the existence of Catholicism as a powerful social force [divorced from royalism] in France with the emerging concept of *Laïcité* which had been foreshadowed by the Edict of Nantes and given full birth in the Revolution of 1789. Certainly hostilities between the old factions of pro and counter-revolutionaries remained, and Catholic extremists remained as active as ever in politics, but that is a topic beyond the scope of this paper, and unrelated to its purpose. Boulangism, or the cult of personality that formed behind Georges Boulanger in response to his anti-German political views, the evolution of its adherents into members of the radical-right during the Dreyfus affair, the resultant rise of Anti-Semitism, political Catholicism, and royalism as parts of a coherent far-right political ideology, the political activism of *Action française* which represented all of these ideals, and their ultimate realization in *Pétainisme* and the Vichy collaboration may have created the legacy which inspired Jean-Marie Le Pen and his ilk, but it certainly has no bearing on the modern National Front under Marine Le Pen. As evidence for my claims, I would remind the reader of the distinction between social and political Catholicism that grew out of frustration over the July Monarchy's liberal legislation, and offer them this quotation from Furet: "Studies in

electoral sociology invariably confirm the existence of a unique conservative tradition in the Vendée... more clerical than monarchist per se. In the period between the two world wars, for example, Marc Sangnier's social Catholicism made inroads in the region at the expense of the royalists, and the Action Française never established a foothold even before its condemnation by Rome in 1926."¹²⁵ From this it is evident that Furet himself recognized a divergence between the two movements, and I find that the judgment of the Vendéans on the issue is as good as final. Having put up the greatest resistance to revolutionary anti-clericalism in an era where royalism and Catholicism were considered inseparable, they came firmly down on the side of social rather than political religion in their acceptance of Sangnier's doctrine, which was progressive and republican, and rejection of Action française's royalism. Additionally, it is doubtful that these political movements which claimed Catholicism as one of their core tenants had much to do with actual religion, as there is little reason to believe the Church played any role in the condemnation of Alfred Dreyfus, and as mentioned Action française was condemned by the Pope.¹²⁶

The 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State codified what had already been set in motion by the French Revolution, ushered in by the Concordat of 1801, and whose need was evident from the emergence of reactionary movements against both the religiosity of Napoleon III's regime and the anti-clericalism of the Paris Commune: a separate but peaceable coexistence of Church and State, with each free from the institutional influence of the other. This law finally unchained the two giants who had been thoroughly entangled since the emergence of the Kingdom of France. After over one hundred years the Concordat of 1801 was no more; Churches lost all State support, were liable to be audited, had any religious buildings previously paid for by the State 'repossessed' (they came under public ownership, but were still open to religious

¹²⁵ Furet, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 170

¹²⁶ Phillips, *The Church in France 1848-1907*, 259

organizations to use), and were granted the freedom to practice without State interference as well as to worship publicly.¹²⁷

The Modern National Front's Appeal to Cultural Catholicism (or, How the Modern FN Differs from its Old Self)

When Marine Le Pen took over the National Front in 2011, one of her first efforts was to soften the party's image by purging radicals within the party associated with anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, and other inherited ideologies that the far-right had taken on during the Dreyfus affair and during Vichy.¹²⁸ She even went so far as to excommunicate the party's founder, her father, for his comment that "les chambres à gaz aient été un détail de l'histoire de la guerre, à moins d'admettre que ce soit la guerre qui fut un détail des chambres à gaz." or that "the gas chambers are a detail in the history of the war, unless you admit that it is the war which is a detail of the gas chambers."¹²⁹ Jean-Marie had been an exceedingly divisive figure in French politics, and his past behavior likely had as much or more to do with his expulsion from the party as one relatively innocuous comment about the Holocaust. As a defender of Marshall Philippe Pétain and the Vichy regime, he was heir to the sort of radical and politicized Catholicism that had become so intolerable to large segments of the French population under the Bourbon Restoration and the Second Empire.¹³⁰ Marine Le Pen's National Front disavows all of these radical movements, and seeks the middle way which evolved over the century following the French

¹²⁷ Phillips, *The Church in France 1848-1907*, 279-280

¹²⁸ Nonna Mayer, "The de-demonisation of the Front National," *Policy Network*, March 26, 2013, http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4358&title=The+de-demonisation+of+the+Front+National.

¹²⁹ Christophe Forcati, "Les chambres à gaz, toujours un <<détail>> pour Jean-Marie Le Pen," *Libération*, April 2 2015, http://www.liberation.fr/france/2015/04/02/les-chambres-a-gaz-toujours-un-detail-pour-jean-marie-le-pen_1233597.

¹³⁰ "Jean-Marie Le Pen défend le régime de Vichy," *L'Express*, October 20, 2014, http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/fn/jean-marie-le-pen-defend-le-regime-de-vichy_1613329.html.

Revolution, and which was finally codified in the 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State.

The distance between Marine and Jean-Marie is considerable, evidenced most clearly by their positions on various issues, as well as the type of voter they attract. Jean-Marie Le Pen was incensed by what he perceived as the French culture of antinatalism, fearing that declining birthrates among ethnic French were leading to a crisis of national identity.¹³¹ The cause of this crisis in the discourse of the National Front was the rise of immigrant births, as well as the importation of immigrants themselves to counteract the effects of declining birthrates on the economy.¹³² Bruno Mégret, a one-time member of the National Front said of Dénatalité: "The survival of a people remains the only responsibility of the women who compose it." The National Front under Jean-Marie Le Pen hoped to control women in order to defeat Islam demographically, but under Marine Le Pen it instead turns to women's liberation as a tactic to defeat Islam. The two most prominent figures of the present-day National Front are Marine Le Pen and her niece, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen. One would assume that under the leadership of two women, the party may take a stance more favorable towards women's independence and agency, and they would be correct. Marine and Marion utilize the implications of the Islamization of France for women as arguments against immigration. For example, Marion has repeatedly expressed that rapes committed by migrants in Germany are an example of what is to become the norm if immigration is not brought under control, and Marine describes herself on her blog first as a "free woman" then as a "mother and "Frenchwoman" who has made a commitment to her

¹³¹ Davies, *The National Front in France*, 120

¹³² Davies, *The National Front in France*, 121

country.¹³³ ¹³⁴ ¹³⁵ The argumentative style of Marine and Marion is certainly much more palatable to liberal Westerners than that of their patriarch Jean-Marie (even if their message is not radically different), and is but one piece of evidence demonstrating the reinvigorated and increasingly accessible message that the National Front has developed during Marine's tenure. Although it is merely anecdotal, David Jones writing for The Daily Mail accurately sums up the



Majority of "refugees" implicated in #Cologne rapes did not come from countries at war...¹³⁶
 These rapes are the result of an insane migration policy, from #Calais to #Cologne it's the same.¹³⁷

transformation the party has undergone in describing a National Front rally he attended in late 2015: "The last time I attended an NF rally in this melting-pot Mediterranean port, eight years

¹³³ " MARÉCHAL-LE PEN FUSTIGE UN "PHÉNOMÈNE D'ÉMEUTES SEXUELLES DE MASSE" DANS L'UE," *Agence France-Presse*, January 12, 2016, <http://www.lcp.fr/afp/marechal-le-pen-fustige-un-phenomene-demeutes-sexuelles-de-masse-dans-lue>.

¹³⁴ Sylvain Chazot, "Pour Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, les "féministes de gauche" dénoncent plus le "sexisme de la grammaire" que les viols en Allemagne," *Le Lab*, January 19, 2016, <http://lelab.europe1.fr/marion-marechal-le-pen-setonne-que-les-feministes-de-gauche-denoncent-plus-le-sexisme-de-la-grammaire-que-les-viols-en-allemande-2652943>.

¹³⁵ Marine Le Pen, "Frexit"

¹³⁶ Marion Le Pen, January 11, 2016, https://twitter.com/marion_m_le_pen/status/686638551845482499.

¹³⁷ Marion Le Pen, January 18, 2016, https://twitter.com/marion_m_le_pen/status/689338578179067904.

ago, an ageing Jean-Marie Le Pen was making his final run for the presidency, and his attendance attracted a sizeable number of oddballs and thugs. On Wednesday, there wasn't a skinhead or Swastika tattoo in sight."¹³⁸ Clearly a more mainstream appeal unassociated with avowed racists can only be a good thing for the party. One bit of evidence that demonstrates Marine's broadened appeal is that no one has tried to murder her for her political views; the same cannot be said of her father, whose house was bombed in 1876 (with eight year old Marine inside) in an unsuccessful assassination plot.¹³⁹

Results do not lie, and the National Front has experienced tremendous improvements in electoral outcomes under Marine's relatively brief stead. In elections for the National Assembly, the European Parliament, Regional councils, and the Presidency, the National Front has increased its voter share since Marine has taken the helm. In fact, in the most recent of all of these types of elections, that National Front has recorded their best performances yet, barring the elections for the National Assembly, where although they saw growth, they were not quite able to surpass their 1997 performance.^{140 141} The tables that follow show the results of all of the major elections in which the National Front has participated. Their best results are in **bold**.

¹³⁸ David Jones, "Beauty and the Beasts," *The Daily Mail*, December 11, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3356859/Beauty-beasts.html>.

¹³⁹ Julia Heyer, "Marine Le Pen and the Growing Influence of Front National," *Spiegel*, December 4, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/front-national-under-marine-le-pen-has-broadened-its-appeal-a-1065612.html>.

¹⁴⁰ J.G. Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 319

¹⁴¹ *Les résultats*, Ministère de L'Intérieur, <http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats>.

National Assembly Election Year	National Front Voter Share (1st Round)
1973	0.46%
1978	0.29%
1981	0.18%
1986	9.80%
1988	9.80%
1993	12.70%
1997	15.24%
2002	11.34%
2007	4.29%
2012	13.60%

We see a radical growth in voter share for the only election in which Marine Le Pen led the party. 2012 was the Front's best performance in the National Assembly elections besides 1997. The reason the dates are erratic is because although the National Assembly serves a 5 year term, the president can call for new elections at any time. After 1997 the Front's results dropped off partially due to the split of Bruno Mégret and his National Republican Movement in 1999. Recall that Marine became leader in 2011.

Regional Councils Election Year	National Front Voter Share (1st Round)
1986	9.70%
1992	13.90%
1998	15.27%
2004	15.11%
2010	11.42%
2015	27.73%

The National Front's performance in the 2015 Regional Councils was their best in any election type to date, edging out their performance in the 2014 European Parliament elections. In fact, the List of the

National Front received more votes in the first round of the 2015 Regional Council elections than either the Union of the Right or the Union of the Left.

European Parliament Election Year	National Front Voter Share
1984	10.95%
1989	11.73%
1994	10.52%
1999	5.70%
2004	9.81%
2009	6.34%
2014	24.86%

There are many who believe voters cast their ballots for the National Front as a vote of protest, not necessarily because they agree with the party's platforms. The results of the European Parliamentary elections leave the National Front most vulnerable to these criticisms, as their eurosceptic ideology makes them an ideal protest vote for those angry at the government in Brussels. One does not have to search hard to find a video of Marine Le Pen giving a venomous anti-EU speech at a European Parliament session. Taken as a whole, this argument seems to hold no water. The uptick from 2009 to 2014 is immense, and the 2014 results accord well with those of the 2015 Regional Councils.

Presidential Election Year	National Front Voter Share (1st Round)
1974	0.75%
1981	-
1988	14.40%
1995	15.00%
2002	16.86%
2007	10.44%
2012	17.90%

If Regional Councils or the European Parliamentary elections are anything to go by, Marine Le Pen appears on track to garner the highest share of voters in the first round of the 2017 presidential elections.

This result has been projected by the French Institute of Public Opinion.¹⁴² France's presidential voting system is such that if no candidate garners an absolute majority of votes in the first round, the two candidates with the greatest number of votes move on to a second and final round of voting. Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002 is thus far the only National Front candidate to have made it into the second round of the presidential election.



As of March 15, 2016 Marine Le Pen is the most "liked" French political figure on Facebook, surpassing Nicolas Sarkozy of Les Républicains.¹⁴³

Although at the apogee of his career Jean-Marie Le Pen managed to make significant political inroads, many pundits argued that his appeal was not broad enough to carry him much farther than he got in 2002. I agree with this assessment, as his popularity as well as the popularity of the National Front dropped significantly following his breakout performance. His inclusion in the second round of the 2002 presidential elections was largely a fluke- too many reasonably popular far-left and center-left candidates ran and took votes away for Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin. In the wake of this development, hundreds of thousands of French took to the streets to demonstrate against the candidacy of Jean-Marie. When ballots were tallied after the second round of voting, Jean-Marie had been dominated- garnering only a few thousand more votes than he had in the first round, and suffering an 82.21% - 17.79% defeat at the hands

¹⁴² "Le sondage Marianne-Ifop qui alarme : Marine Le Pen en tête du premier tour en 2017," *Marianne*, July 31, 2014, http://www.marianne.net/Le-sondage-Marianne-Ifop-qui-alarme-Marine-Le-Pen-en-tete-du-premier-tour-en-2017_a240405.html.

¹⁴³ Marine Le Pen, "Cover Photos," *Facebook*, March 15, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/MarineLePen/photos/a.400642239952106.113960.123316887684644/1308166015866386/?type=3&theater>.

of center-right candidate Jacques Chirac, the worst in French electoral history. Clearly Marine has struck a chord that her father was not able to, as she has already eclipsed him in popularity and shows no signs of slowing down. Her more approachable version of the right-wing populist message is reminiscent of the situation in the Vendée in the time of the Third Republic. Social Catholicism succeeded in gaining support where Action française failed. Republicanism is



A man wearing a mask which reads "I am ashamed to be French" and shows an image of the National Front's logo crossed out. Somewhat ironically he is not an ethnic French.¹⁴⁴

untouchable in contemporary France, and it is politically unpopular to oppose it. Marine's doctrine of promoting Catholic culture (and to a lesser extent Catholic morality) consolidated with secular Republicanism has proven to be a successful strategy. As a Catholic herself, she has never disavowed the National Front's platform of opposition to gay marriage, but at the same

¹⁴⁴ Christian Lutz, "Mask of Shame," *Associated Press*, April 22, 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/pictures/image/0,8543,-10104399111,00.html>.

time it is an issue she is not vocal about.¹⁴⁵ When thousands of protestors demonstrated against its legalization in early 2014, she was conspicuously absent (although her niece Marion was not).¹⁴⁶ When one of Marine's top advisors and one of five National Front vice-presidents Florian Philippot was outed as gay, all Marine had to say was that he had a right to a private life, the same as socialist president François Hollande (whose romantic affairs had been exposed by the same publication).¹⁴⁷ For reasons like these, Marine Le Pen is garnering unprecedented support from groups the far-right has traditionally persecuted, including homosexuals and Jews, who see her as tolerant of their lifestyles, and remain fearful of Islam due to its persecution of their respective groups. As Islam has grown in France, homophobic and anti-Semitic attacks have greatly increased in frequency and in violence.¹⁴⁸ Bordeaux's gay scene collapsed after the murder of five gay men in the span of two months in the city, and following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, a kosher supermarket was attacked by the terrorists and four Jews were killed. This is a far-cry from the Jean-Marie Le Pen era, as he advocated putting AIDS patients into camps, claimed that there were no "queens" in the National Front, and has been characterized often throughout his life as anti-Semite. By softening the National Front's rhetoric while maintaining her Catholic image, Marine's constituency seems to be continually expanding. Perhaps the best evidence of her social progressivism has been the rebuke of her father since his banishment from the party: he has since told her to get married because he is ashamed she shares

¹⁴⁵ S.P., "Waiting in the shadows," *The Economist*, April 11, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/elysee/2012/04/marine-le-pen>.

¹⁴⁶ Heyer, "Marine Le Pen and the Growing Influence of Front National"

¹⁴⁷ Rachel Halliburton, "How Marine Le Pen is winning France's gay vote," *The Spectator*, January 24, 2015, <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/01/how-marine-le-pen-is-winning-frances-gay-vote/>.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Kaplan, "Attacks On France's Jews Surge Amid Concerns Of Rising Anti-Semitism in Europe," *International Business Times*, July 13, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/attacks-frances-jews-surge-amid-concerns-rising-anti-semitism-europe-2006003>.

his name, and yet she continues to see her partner Louis Aliot romantically and without marital commitment, having already experienced two divorces.

How the National Front has Struck a Chord that Others Have Not:

A Brief History of Immigration in France ¹⁴⁹

There is in France, a general malaise surrounding migrants. A survey in *Le Monde* from 2013, indicated that sixty-two percent of French respondents did not feel as comfortable in their own homes as they used to, and that seventy-five percent considered Islam incompatible with French society.¹⁵⁰ Among these concerned Frenchmen are reformers, who believe that turning off the spigot of third world immigration into France would attack the root cause of these problems.¹⁵¹

The French system of immigration has historically sought to integrate newcomers into French society through secular education as well as military service.¹⁵² This strategy worked for a time, particularly when the immigrants were of European origin, like the Italians and Polish who entered under the watch of the *Société Général d'Immigration*, an organization tasked with regulating the immigration that was needed to bolster France's labor force in the absence of a rural exodus.¹⁵³ It is not difficult to make the claim that integration has failed with respect to Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa. The secular education approach to assimilation does not seem all too promising when immigrant students clap upon learning about the Holocaust in history class, particularly in France, the European country with the greatest

¹⁴⁹ This section are adapted from a paper I wrote previously, but which has not been published, titled " The Likelihood of Immigration Reform"

¹⁵⁰ Jonathan Fenby, *France on the Brink* (2nd ed.), (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2014), 22

¹⁵¹ James F. Hollifield, *France, Section 5: Immigration and the Republican Tradition in France*, 184

¹⁵² Hollifield, *France*, 158

¹⁵³ Hollifield, *France*, 159

number of Jews.¹⁵⁴ Some Muslim immigrants serve to create as well as exacerbate anti-immigration sentiments by committing acts of violence and causing civil strife. In 2012 Mohammed Merah shot and killed four French Jews, including three children. In 2013 Riots broke out in the town of Trappes over a police officer enforcing the ban on wearing overt religious symbols in public on a Muslim woman wearing the veil.¹⁵⁵ In 2014 there were terror attacks three days in a row: a stabbing and two attempts at mass vehicular homicide, and in all instances the culprits were documented as having chanted "Allahu Akbar". In 2015 the high profile attacks on Charlie Hebdo in January and Paris in November left a combined total of one hundred and forty-nine dead and three hundred and seventy-nine wounded.

During the Thirty Glorious Years (a period of incredible economic growth from 1945 to 1975), the French economy came to rely heavily upon immigrant workers.¹⁵⁶ After the OPEC oil embargo began in 1973, the French economy took a turn for the worse, and immigration was no longer considered sustainable, but it could not easily be done away with, as France did not have the institutions nor the infrastructure necessary to restrict the flow of migrants.¹⁵⁷ It is here that the economic and cultural factors which have continually hampered immigration reform began to intertwine: although France was able to take an economical stand against the continued immigration of workers, they were not able to stand against family reunification for humanitarian reasons. The republican political mythos of the Fifth Republic was a detriment to attempts at reform as a belief in the rights of all men, including foreigners, made it difficult for the government to turn away immigrants from its former colonies.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the myriad of workers

¹⁵⁴ Fenby, *France on the Brink*, 23

¹⁵⁵ Fenby, *France on the Brink*, 23

¹⁵⁶ Hollifield, *France*, 164

¹⁵⁷ Hollifield, *France*, 165

¹⁵⁸ Hollifield, *France*, 165

who had previously made their way to France as economic migrants were able to import their families, and immigration levels in France remained high despite the fact that immigration had technically ended. Attempts to keep immigrants away by refusing to give out work permits and other such measures were ineffective, as they were stricken down by the courts as unconstitutional.¹⁵⁹ This problem persists, as despite an undeniably widespread public interest in immigration reform, there are many speed bumps and road blocks that make the path to reform a difficult one to traverse, including the historical unwillingness of the preeminent political parties to commit themselves to overhauling the immigration system.

In 1981, Socialist François Mitterrand sought to control immigration by keeping borders closed, but also attempted to avoid the development of a black market for labor by granting amnesty and giving all immigrants work permits. Mitterrand thus allowed 145,000 immigrants to file for citizenship status, believing that they would integrate.¹⁶⁰ A focus on assimilation has always been the Socialist Party's answer to immigration, and they currently maintain that levels of immigration are no issue, that France is a country of immigration, and that migrants make positive economic contributions to French society. To this day they seek to end illegal immigration, and focus on receiving and assimilating legal immigrants.¹⁶¹ In 2002 as Minister of the Interior, Republican Nicolas Sarkozy enacted some new immigration policies, but still pushed for integration and stood against supposed racism in his promotion of diversity.¹⁶² For all intents and purposes, his new controls such as increased wait times for residence permits, and complication of the family reunification process were not a true break from older policies, and in

¹⁵⁹ Hollifield, *France*, 165

¹⁶⁰ Hollifield, *France*, 166

¹⁶¹ *Partie Socialiste, Immigration*, May 31, 2011, http://www.ps29.org/IMG/ARGU_Immigration.pdf.

¹⁶² Alistar Cole, Sophie Meunier, & Vincent Tiberj, *Developments in French Politics* (5th ed.), (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 203

fact his reforms opened up immigration channels to laborers for the first time, officially, since 1974.¹⁶³ This is consistent with the recent tactics of the Republicans, who speak tough on immigration to steal votes from the National Front, but in reality enact weak legislation that represent a break only from the extreme reform attempts of Pasqua. As an example, Sarkozy won the presidency in 2007 on a platform that promised an end to uncontrolled immigration, but levels of immigration failed to decrease during his term.¹⁶⁴ These cases serve to illustrate the point that both parties make marginal efforts at reform, but remain uncommitted to major change. Both have proven ineffective in separating "chosen" from unchosen immigrants, and have been unwilling or unable to turn immigrants away or force them to submit to their model of integration.¹⁶⁵

Perhaps the greatest institutional factor that stands in the way of immigration reform is the European Union. The EU controls the borders of all member states within the Schengen area, which France is a part of.¹⁶⁶ France cannot institute proper immigration reform without reclaiming its borders, but France is a key member of the EU, and neither the Socialist Party nor the Republicans are Eurosceptic, so they have not been willing to directly oppose the EU on this issue.¹⁶⁷ Although Sarkozy did claim he would renegotiate control over France's borders in the 2012 election cycle, he was never able to fulfill this promise as he lost his presidential bid to François Hollande.¹⁶⁸ The National Front's Eurosceptic party platform is becoming increasingly attractive after at least one of the men responsible for the November 13 terror attacks in Paris was apparently able to quietly slip in to and back out of France via Belgium, and even socialist

¹⁶³ Cole, *Developments in French Politics*, 205

¹⁶⁴ Front National, *Le Projet du Front National*, Immigration, <http://www.frontnational.com/le-projet-de-marine-le-pen/autorite-de-letat/immigration/>.

¹⁶⁵ Cole, *Developments in French Politics*, 207

¹⁶⁶ Charles Hauss, *Politics in France*, (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2008), 163

¹⁶⁷ Hauss, *Politics in France*, 165

¹⁶⁸ Hollifield, *France*, 183

president François Hollande elected to temporarily close France's borders in the wake of the attacks in an effort to apprehend the persons involved.

The primary difficulty in instituting immigration reform is that the French people are not in agreement on what to do with refugees and other immigrants. On economic issues, there is a clear divide between those who believe refugees are stealing jobs and government benefits from native French, and those who believe that deportation services are a waste of money and that immigrants breathe life into the stagnating economy of a graying society.¹⁶⁹ ¹⁷⁰ Worries about assimilation as well as immigrants purloining benefits are compounded by statistics that show youth unemployment in some migrant communities of over fifty percent, and an increase in the numbers of first and second generation immigrants disturbs unemployed French workers faced with perpetual ten percent unemployment- especially when migrants were ostensibly meant to be cheap labor, and fifty-six percent of French people fear they may be homeless one day.¹⁷¹ ¹⁷² Culturally, many people in France identify with groups and movements such as *SOS Racisme* and "Don't Touch my Buddy" that are still committed to accepting and integrating all immigrants.¹⁷³ These people are proponents of diversity, multiculturalism, and equality. They believe in the legacy of equality and human rights left behind by the French Revolution, and other founding republican principles of the Fifth Republic.¹⁷⁴ ¹⁷⁵ On the other side, there are those who see Muslims as failing to integrate, and as a danger to French identity. France has historically been very protective of its culture and language, propping up domestic industries with government money, and establishing the *Academie Française* to protect the French

¹⁶⁹ Front National, *Le Projet du Front National*, Immigration

¹⁷⁰ Partie Socialiste, *Immigration*

¹⁷¹ Fenby, *France on the Brink*, 160, 23

¹⁷² Hauss, *Politics in France*, 145

¹⁷³ Hollifield, *France*, 168-169

¹⁷⁴ Hollifield, *France*, 185

¹⁷⁵ Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 377

language by banning words such as "e-mail."¹⁷⁶ Arab, or *Beur* culture threatens this French identity, by standing firmly in opposition to French Laïcité, and even by introducing culturally deleterious slang terminology to the public lexicon.^{177 178} More than a danger to French identity, Muslim immigrants are often regarded as a danger to national security, committing violence to an extent that shocks the French public, and rioting and rebelling over religious and ethnic identity.¹⁷⁹

When seventy-five percent of French people feel that Islam is not compatible with French society, and reported anti-Islamic attacks rose from 160 in 2011 to 200 in 2012, it seems clear that France is moving closer and closer to voting the National Front into power.¹⁸⁰ Both the Socialist Party and the Republicans have traditionally been unwilling to completely end immigration, but Marine Le Pen and her reinvigorated National Front stand as a beacon of hope for French citizens concerned about their security and their ethnocultural identity.

¹⁷⁶ Hauss, *Politics in France*, 137

¹⁷⁷ Hauss, *Politics in France*, 137

¹⁷⁸ Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 377, 387

¹⁷⁹ Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 426

¹⁸⁰ Fenby, *France on the Brink*, 160, 22

Conclusion: Catholicism and the Destiny of France



Marine Le Pen, sporting a Belgian flag in her profile picture in a display of solidarity with the victims of the 2016 Brussels terror attacks, tells her supporters on Twitter: "Happy Easter everyone! Especially thinking of the Christians in the Orient who are always suffering from persecution. #Easter - MLP"¹⁸¹

Throughout the lifespan of the Fifth Republic, only Marine Le Pen's National Front has attempted to meet the French people's need for a Culturally Catholic and pro-republican party. Others have tried to blend Catholicism and republicanism, such as the Christian Democratic Party, the Center of Social Democrats, and the Popular Republican Movement, but they all failed because their version of Christianity was too similar to the platform of the establishment right: legislating morality, while refusing to tackle issues of French identity as they relate to immigration and the European Union. There is a large niche in politics that Cultural Catholicism fills, which Political Catholicism does not. France is not a devout nation, but it is a Catholic one, and over sixty percent of the population still identifies itself as such.¹⁸² The National Front under Marine Le Pen captures this attitude, through its commitment to the separation of Church and

¹⁸¹ Marine Le Pen, March 27, 2016, https://twitter.com/MLP_officiel/status/714065326850359296.

¹⁸² "Global Christianity," *Pew Forum*

State, modern liberal values, and the defense of France's ethnocultural identity. The National Front is not trying to superimpose Christian teachings onto the current government like other Christian Democratic movements have, it is hoping to preserve Catholicism as a dominant cultural force in France, and traditional French identity with it.

In the 2015 Regional Council elections, the National Front (FN) dominated the first round, but failed to win a single contest in the second. This was because in the second round, where contests were narrowed down to two candidates, the Socialist Party (PS) urged their constituents to go out and vote for the Republicans (LR) in regions where the LR battled the FN in order to stop the National Front. Both the PS and the LR are comprised of elite intellectuals, coming from the same schools, who look to solve issues in mostly the same way. There is a degree of commonality between the two parties because of this, as well as their shared (and outdated) notion of secular republicanism. For these reasons they are more willing to lend their support to each other rather than supposed radicals on the opposite end of the political spectrum. One can assume that if Marine Le Pen and an LR candidate reach the second round of the 2017 Presidential election, the FN will meet the same fate as in the Regional Councils, but if Marine comes across a PS candidate instead, the people of France will truly be at a crossroads. Unlike in a PS versus LR contest, many working class PS voters may defect to the FN, but their numbers will not be great enough to swing the election. The biggest question is what will traditional LR voters do? The LR constituency is comprised of two major groups, devout Catholics and right-leaning individuals who are still attached to the revolutionary mythos of cosmopolitan secularism (the type who will pass a thinly veiled burka ban). Will devout Catholics decide that they prefer national security and cultural homogeneity, or the cosmopolitanism of Pope Francis I who recently washed the feet of Muslim refugees? Will establishment right voters decide they prefer

Cultural Catholicism, or a different flavor of the status quo and the risks imposed by the Islamization of France? Of course they always reserve the right to abstain, and as PS leader Jean-Cristophe Cambadélis has remarked, abstention is the majority party of France.¹⁸³ However, abstention could also lead to an FN victory.

Charles de Gaulle founded the Fifth Republic, and he also founded the establishment center-right. The LR is just one in a line of parties descended from the legacy of de Gaulle. Interestingly enough, de Gaulle himself once remarked:

"It is very well that there are yellow, black, and brown Frenchman. They demonstrate that France is open to all the races and that she has an universal calling. But this is on the condition that they remain a small minority. If not, France will no longer be France. We are above all a white European people, of a Greek and Latin culture, and of a Christian religion... Try and mix oil and vinegar. Shake the bottle. In a second, they separate. Arabs are Arabs, French are French."¹⁸⁴

It seems as if the LR's leadership is slowly coming to the same conclusion. The LR's policy platforms have shifted closer and closer to those of the FN in the hopes of retaining their voter share, and as of yet it does not appear as though LR voters have jumped ship to the PS. The introduction and amelioration of Islam in France has cracked the facade of French secularism, and Marine Le Pen offers a way to solve those problems associated with immigration. She has avoided the pitfalls that plagued her father's FN, as well as the similarly-fated British National

¹⁸³ "Highlights from the first-round French regional elections 2015," France 24, December 7, 2015, <http://www.france24.com/en/20151206-liveblog-french-regional-elections-2015>.

¹⁸⁴ Charles de Gaulle, Letter to Alain Peyrefitte, March 5, 1959, <http://www.pointsdereperes.com/articles/charles-de-gaulle>.

Party, Party of the Swedes, and National Democratic Party of Germany, and is leading the charge in developing the type of nativist and eurosceptic political ideology palatable to liberal Westerners that the UK Independence Party, Sweden Democrats, and Alternative for Deutschland have thrived on. The people of France will ultimately choose which path their nation takes, but thanks to Marine Le Pen they have finally been offered a viable alternative to the political establishment.

Even those cosmopolitans who subscribe to the views expressed by Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man*, who do not believe that Islam represents a real threat to the West, believe that although liberal Western democracy is the final stage of political development, there is still a risk of a centuries long democratic collapse. Does it not make sense then, that in the short term, these types should take pains to defend their own liberal Western democracies? It makes no sense to chase a long-term ideal when your short-term security is threatened; you can return to your ideals once the problem is resolved. If seventy-five percent of Frenchmen truly believe that Islam is not compatible with French society, they must think that either French society, or Islam, is the problem: I would wager that the problem, in the minds of most French, does not lie with their own society. If the French persecuted Protestants to the point that they are only two percent of the population, it seems unlikely that their interaction with Islam will go much more smoothly; especially based on the outcome of their first encounter, which ended in 732. Remaining culturally and more or less ethnically monolithic may be the only hope for preserving France's security and the French way of life, at least until Islam can be tamed to fit within a liberal Western democratic framework.