

French Mayor Axes Christmas Tree

And, he suggests, only fascists would question the move.

by Theodore Dalrymple



In France, curiously enough, anti-clericalism seems to have long outlived its enemy, clericalism. The Catholic Church has not been a political force, even a social one, for a long time. In the mouths of the enlightened, the appellation *catho* (Catholic) is disdainful, as if the person to whom it is applied is almost certainly a primitive reactionary, if not an outright *pétainiste*. The eldest daughter of the Church has cut almost all links with its Mother, apart from being opposed to her.

Even the faintest connotation of Christianity is reprehended. The Mayor of Bordeaux, Pierre Hurmic, who belongs to the party of ecologists, has decided that, this year at least, the city will not erect the traditional Christmas tree—which he calls “a dead fir”—in its main square. No doubt this is to avoid cruelty to trees.

An immediate outcry resulted, and an online petition gathered 12,000 signatures. Many of the signatories, however, were not from Bordeaux but from as far away as Lille. Hurmic said that he was not interested in opinions emanating from the *fachosphère*—that part of the Internet and social media in which fascists express themselves.

In other words, a person who sees no reason to abandon what most people consider a harmless enough tradition, whose doctrinal links to Christianity may well be tenuous, is now equated automatically with a participant in a Mussolini rally.

One does not discuss anything with fascists; one can only ignore or suppress them. And since everyone who disagrees with the mayor is a fascist, *ex officio*, there is no reason to discuss anything with anybody. Suppression is the highest form of argument.

First published in