

Newsbytes

The First Watch

December 12, 2018

No. 902

Since 2001

Newzbytes is a ministry of Calvary Chapel of Appleton

www.ccapleton.org

“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Convulsions Over Brexit and the Struggle for the Western Nation

Theresa May’s Conservative government is at odds with Parliament. The majority of MPs want Britain to remain in the European Union and so are at odds with their Brexit-majority voters.

BY MELANIE PHILLIPS DECEMBER 6



The West is convulsing as a new world order struggles to be born. Nowhere is that convulsion currently proving more agonizing and potentially catastrophic than in the United Kingdom.

The fundamental division is between, on the one hand, nationalists who want to defend the nation and its core values and, on the other, those who believe these must be superseded by trans-national institutions and laws.

In the first camp are millions of ordinary people throughout the West in revolt against the steady undermining of their countries and cultures, alongside the nations of Eastern Europe, Israel, and Donald Trump’s America.

In the opposing camp are the intelligentsia who loathe and despise the ordinary people, alongside Western Europe’s political establishment, the radical Islamic world, and all who want to destroy Donald Trump’s vision for America.

In Britain, this titanic civilizational battle has produced a political and constitutional crisis over Brexit that threatens to break the country apart.

Theresa May’s Conservative government is at odds with Parliament. The majority of MPs want Britain to remain in the European Union and so are at odds with their Brexit-majority voters. And virtually the entire country is in a state of war with itself.

Both “Remainers” and “Brexiters,” however, are united on one thing: opposition to the faux-Brexit deal Mrs. May has struck with the EU. This would leave the UK still under the thumb of the EU but worse off even than now.

Not only would Britain still be bound by EU rules, it might only be able to leave the EU henceforth if the EU allowed it to do so – which it would obviously never do.

If Parliament rejects this travesty, the prospect looms of no-deal – or leaving the EU without agreeing the terms. No-deal is routinely described as “going off the edge of the cliff,” and is accompanied by apocalyptic warnings of planes falling out of the sky, supplies of medicines drying up and the country starving to death.

These and corresponding predictions of economic Armageddon are ludicrously exaggerated and make zero allowance for a crucial factor: the need for EU nations to make an accommodation with the UK, issue by issue, in order to avoid the enormous damage to their own economies that would otherwise result.

The suspicion is running high that the invidious choice with which Britain is accordingly being presented – catastrophic deal or apocalypse now from no-deal – has been engineered to terrify people into a second referendum, on the hallowed EU principle that if the people don't deliver the correct result the first time they must vote again until they do.

The country is set to stumble yet further into chaos and uncharted constitutional territory. None of the further possible scenarios – Parliament votes for the deal, it votes against the deal, Mrs. May resigns, she does not resign, there is a general election, an attempted renegotiation or a second referendum – offers any prospect of resolving the issue. The impasse and its roiling passions threaten to break British politics apart. If Brexit is betrayed, millions of British voters will never trust the democratic process again.

It is the greatest political and constitutional crisis in living memory. And although many Remainers are motivated not by ideology but more prosaically by fear of the costs of leaving the EU, the issue at its core is whether Britain should become again an independent, self-governing nation.

Across the English Channel, France's President Emmanuel Macron has made plain what he thinks of that concept. With almost sociopathic disdain for the supreme sacrifice made by free nations during the two world wars, he chose the anniversary of the 1918 armistice to condemn nationalism for being a “betrayal of patriotism” because it held “our interests first. Who cares about the others?”

This was not only incoherent but a travesty of nationalism – which is merely to feel part of a shared national project based on a common culture and bounded by a territorial border. But then, according to his own estimation, Macron is no less than a combination of Napoleon and Jupiter, and clearly regards the trans-national EU as the instrument of his imperial and godly ambitions.

Meanwhile, the people of his own country have been rioting against his ruinous policies. Both Macron and Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has come to grief over her promotion of uncontrolled immigration, have displayed contempt not only for their own citizens but also for life and liberty abroad. For both Germany and France are leading the EU's attempt to circumvent America's renewed sanctions against Iran and thus continue to further fund and empower the terrorist and genocidal Iranian regime.

This is not just due to greed over trade. It also results from a deeply amoral way of thinking: that other nations possess neither intrinsic value nor demerits and deserve neither respect nor resistance but are merely to be used as instruments of cynical self-interest. Macron was taking issue with President Trump's remarks a few weeks previously when, declaring himself to be a nationalist, he said: “A globalist is a person that wants the globe to do well, frankly not caring about our country so much. And you know what? We can't have that.”

Cue hysteria against Trump, matched only by hysteria over Brexit.

Trump is in fact trying to forge a new world order based on what was once accepted wisdom – the defense of the West and the nation-state that embodies its values. Israel is a vital component of this emerging order as the paradigm nation-state totally committed to its defense and survival.

Some in this new alliance make uncomfortable bedfellows: Hungary's President Viktor Orbán with his "illiberal democracy," or the "modernizing" Saudi crown prince whose reputation has been stained by the Khashoggi murder.

The Latest Poll on anti-Semitism in Europe Looks Bad. Trust Me: It's True *79 percent of respondents said they didn't report it because they thought doing so would be a waste of time*

Haaretz.com

The last time that a stranger directed an anti-Semitic insult at me, I was carrying supplies for my son's birthday party.

It was on a Sunday afternoon on Dam Square. Carrying Star of David party decorations in a see-through bag, I paused to snap some pictures on my cellphone of an anti-Israel rally.

I was busy sending them to a friend who had inquired about such events in the Netherlands when a bearded man sporting a Moroccan accent said loudly in my direction: "Cancer Jew. You're all made up, you're fake. You're fake dogs."

The incident was far from extraordinary — I have experienced much worse abuse during my years of covering European Jewry and its problems — but I found myself recalling it Monday following the publication of the unsurprisingly grim results from Europe's largest survey of Jews on anti-Semitism.

About a third of the 16,395 Jews polled this year in 12 countries by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights said they avoid Jewish events or places out of fear for their safety. A similar number said they have considered emigrating in the past five years because they did not feel safe as Jews.

More than 80 percent of respondents said anti-Semitism was "the most pressing problem" facing them. Nearly 40 percent said they had experienced an anti-Semitic incident over the past five years, and of those, 79 percent said they didn't report it because they thought doing so would be a waste of time.

Vera Jourova, the EU commissioner for justice, consumers and gender equality, called some of the poll's data "shocking" in an address she delivered Monday in Brussels during the presentation of the report.

She vowed tougher action on anti-Semitic crimes, especially online, and called on all EU member states to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism, which includes some forms of anti-Israel rhetoric, because "you cannot fight it if you can't define it," she said.

The respondents appeared more affiliated than the average European Jew, with 45 percent saying they eat kosher at home and 84 percent declaring they fast on Yom Kippur. A sample with more respondents for whom Judaism is a less central element of life may yield different results.

But even for a secular Jew like me, the report was no more shocking than the presence of the armed special forces officers at our children's Jewish kindergarten, where they block off the entire road twice a day, during pickup and drop-off hours.

My reporting has made me so used to such sights — the result of several terrorist attacks by Islamists on Jewish institutions, including the 2012 bloodbath at a Toulouse school — that I was genuinely surprised by how disturbing this is to my wife, who is Jewish but rarely attends Jewish community events.

Certainly the head of the European Jewish Association wasn't surprised by the EU report.

Anyone who is shocked, Rabbi Menachem Margolin said in a statement, is "disconnected from the reality on the ground."

Like so many of the poll's respondents, I also brushed off the anti-Semitic incident I had experienced without reporting it to police. After all, I do not believe Dutch police would have identified the man who accosted me. But if they did, he could have accused me of assaulting him and back his claim with false witnesses from his rally — who would land me in trouble.

The refusal by Dutch police to even investigate a Jewish community leader's complaint for assault did little to assure me that they have my back.

The Dutch government's resistance to adopting an internationally accepted definition of anti-Semitism was also of little assurance. Nor was a Dutch court's failure in July to charge a Syrian man with a hate crime for smashing up a kosher restaurant while waving a Palestinian flag.

These problems are not exclusive to the Netherlands.

In France, where half a million Jews live and the volume of anti-Semitic incidents increased by 69 percent in 2018, such occurrences have become a "daily occurrence," Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said last month.

In the United Kingdom, the country's former chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, said that many people in his community feel they are facing "an existential threat" in the supporters of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. Sacks, one of contemporary Judaism's most eminent representatives, called the far-left politician an anti-Semite. Corbyn, who has called Hamas and Hezbollah his "friends" and who had suggested that British "Zionists" are incapable of irony, has rejected the allegation vociferously.

In Sweden, anti-Semitic harassment by far-right activists led for the first time since World War II to the shuttering of a Jewish community anywhere in the European Union out of security concerns. The dissolution of Umea's Jewish community was a sad precedent in a country where Jews are regularly assaulted by Muslim extremists, often with Israel as a pretext.

Still, the news out of Brussels isn't all bad when it comes to the fight against anti-Semitism. Last week, the European Council — the EU's executive branch — made a declaration against anti-Semitism, calling on EU member states to shoulder Jewish communities' security costs and urging coordinated action against anti-Semitism. And whereas some European governments 20 years ago took pains to deny the resurgence of anti-Semitism after the Holocaust and the reasons driving it forward, mainstream politicians in Europe today seem to be more conscious of the problem's nature and more interested in confronting it.

Significantly, Jourova mentioned in her address not only anti-Semitism, but also anti-Zionism — a reference that many believe would have been unthinkable only several years ago coming from a high-ranking EU official. She also mentioned "Islamist anti-Semitism."

Such rhetoric reflects a reluctant acceptance in Europe of the effect of the arrival to the continent of millions of immigrants from anti-Semitic societies in the Muslim world. Whereas many integrated seamlessly into European societies and adopted their values, others have rejected them and reintroduced into the mainstream anti-Semitic sentiments that have been suppressed in Europe as part of the lessons of the Holocaust.

Labeled “new anti-Semitism,” this mutation of Jew hatred has baffled European progressives, who struggled to come to terms with the systemic targeting of one minority group by members of another.

Watchdog groups say that the vast majority of violent attacks on Jews in Western Europe today come from people with Muslim background. But accepting or admitting this has proven difficult for some advocates of Europe’s immigration policies.

Yet last year, French President Emmanuel Macron vowed that France will “not surrender to anti-Zionism because it is a reinvention of anti-Semitism.” It was the first time that a French president made such an equation.

Following France’s lead, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and several other countries mounted formidable efforts to protect Jewish community institutions, in some cases leading to a reduction in incidents.

Yet even under Macron, French authorities, who in the early 2000s downplayed the scale of anti-Semitic crimes, showed signs of relapsing. Last year, France’s National Consultative Commission on Human Rights asserted that it “had no evidence” to support what it called “the new anti-Semitism hypothesis.”

In May, a study published by a German federal entity said that anti-Semitism in Europe is unaffected by recent Muslim immigration, prompting a prominent critic to call the report selective and flawed. As the debate rages on, many Jews like me are increasingly contemplating their futures in Europe – despite major steps designed to ensure our ability to live freely and safely here. Because amid polls, reports, discussions and declarations about the need to balance freedoms, for too many European Jews “freedom of belief and the freedom to live without fear remain distant aspirations,” as Michael O’Flaherty, the director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, put it Monday during his address in Brussels.

This next article is from a secular perspective, but I think it has value for the believer. Of course all this popular “emptying of the mind” is NOT biblical and has a spiritual dark side which those who came out of the New Age movement already know. But it’s in the church, and sometimes no amount of warning has any effect. Now even the medical/psych community is saying it’s no cure all by any stretch and issues this warning. It goes without saying I hope that everyone reading this knows that all the contemplative junk in the church is downright DANGEROUS on an eternal plane.

What mindfulness gurus won’t tell you: meditation has a dark side

by Dr Miguel Farias and Dr Catherine Wikholm

We never intended to be the Richard Dawkins of mindfulness — but, because of our book, we seem to have started a public debate about its downsides nonetheless.

Our approach was to go through almost half a century of scientific evidence and tease out fact from fiction when it comes to beliefs about various meditative practices. As it happens, most of the media hype about mindfulness as a cure-all is not grounded in scientific evidence. But it was a chapter on the dark side of meditation that caused a stir, where we described the unexpected or exacerbated mental health problems that have been experienced and the potential misuse of meditative techniques (such as by the military). Our conclusion was that meditation might benefit some individuals, but not all — and it might be unhelpful for others.

We don’t yet know the reasons for these individual differences. There is very little research on why meditation doesn’t work in the same way for everyone and how it might cause emotional difficulties. One

hypothesis is that meditation amplifies emotional problems that are lying hidden under the surface. Think of an individual who went through a traumatic experience in early life but forgot about it, only to find themselves reliving it as an adult trying out mindfulness meditation. Since the book came out we have listened to this and other stories, often via email or our book's Facebook page, at other times from callers during live radio interviews. One of the most poignant accounts came from a journalist who interviewed us. She had been on a weekend meditation retreat with a friend who had a history of suffering from depression. Coming out of the retreat, they walked together to the railway station and, unexpectedly, this friend jumped on to the rail tracks as a train was speeding by.

Researchers like the amplification hypothesis because meditation comes out clean. The problem was already there and meditation only brought it out into the open. But there is a competing explanation, which we call the rattling hypothesis. We received a number of letters from long-term meditators supporting this explanation. According to them, the aim of sitting down and going within is to rattle the ego, to shake our sense of who we think we are, in order to move beyond self-centred concerns.

When techniques like mindfulness were adapted into a psychological, secular model, this rattling function was brushed under the carpet. But this was bound to resurface, as adverse effects can happen to anyone. In our book, we report the account of a psychiatrist who had to fight to keep his mental sanity after a meditation experience in which he felt the boundaries of his ego dissolve. This mystical experience led to a serious rattling of the self, which he was able to process in part because of his mental health training, but mainly because he had good social support, including a meditation teacher who explained that what he was going through was perfectly normal.

Unfortunately, mindfulness teachers (who are currently unregulated) are generally unaware of potential ego-rattling effects, nor possess the mental health training to deal with these situations. We have received emails and letters from individuals who were feeling anxious during mindfulness courses and this was dismissed by teachers as 'built up stress' that would go away.

But what happens when it doesn't? This was the case of Gareth, who tried out a mindfulness course because he was having some trouble falling asleep. While doing the course he became aware of negative thoughts, which wouldn't disappear no matter how much he accepted and tried to 'let them go'. After eight weeks his anxiety levels had increased from something barely noticeable to an everyday problem which he found hard to manage. 'Is it my fault?' he wanted to know — and this is a common question for those who don't feel the wellbeing, relaxation, happiness kick one might expect to get when meditating. Let's not add stigmatisation to the list of adverse effects. It is no one's fault when meditation goes wrong.

The problem is how we have come to think of mindfulness meditation as a practice that we should all engage in, because it will do us all good — and only good. This is a religious, not a scientific view (and to be fair, most religions actually tend to be cautious about the use of meditation).

There are many unanswered questions about the effects of meditation. Mindfulness, in particular, is portrayed as a universal ability to be 'in the here and now' — how can you not want that for yourself? Well, the bad news is that it doesn't work for everyone.

But this isn't necessarily bad. For one, there are many ways of 'being present' — meditation is just one of them. There are plenty of other activities that we can do for a sense of increased awareness and to feel 'in the moment' (and which may also help to reduce stress and improve mood), such as walking, swimming, talking to a friend, singing, dancing. The list is endless.

Another good thing is that it challenges simplistic notions of our minds as a more or less resilient muscle, which the mindfulness industry would encourage us to simply 'exercise' in order to achieve 'mental fitness'. The variety of experiences (pleasant or difficult) stimulated by meditation portrays mental life rather as a

combination of subtle and complex processes with various layers. Instead of dedicating more research to promoting a stereotypical image of meditation as a universal boon, we need to be mindful of how it affects people in different ways and try to understand why that is.

EU, in an Unusual Move, Warns Palestinians to Drop Muslim-Only Language for Temple Mount

The 28 member states voted in favor of two resolutions, but warned that this was the last year it would do so.

BY TOVAH LAZAROFF DECEMBER 3, 2018

In an unusual move, the European Union has publicly warned the Palestinians that they must drop their United Nations bid to reference the Temple Mount solely by its Muslim name of al-Haram al-Sharif.

It spoke out about the issue on Friday at the UN General Assembly, which approved six anti-Israel resolutions, including two that ignored Jewish ties to the most holy site in Judaism, the Temple Mount.

“The EU stresses the need for language on the holy sites of Jerusalem to reflect the importance and historical significance of the holy sites for the three monotheistic religions, and to respect religious and cultural sensitivities,” it said in a statement that was read out on the floor of the UN.

“The future choice of language may affect the EU’s collective support for the resolutions,” it added.

Traditionally the EU has been harshly critical of Israeli activity over the pre-1967 lines and its policies on that score have created tensions with Israel. It has historically supported the annual passage of pro-Palestinian resolutions involving Jerusalem at the UNGA, where the Palestinian have an automatic majority.

Its opposition, or even a decision to abstain, would mark a dramatic shift in its policy toward those texts.

EU support is not needed for the Palestinians to continue to secure passage of the resolutions. But its backing is significant to the Palestinians from a public relations perspective, particularly given the animosity between Ramallah and Washington in the era of the Trump Administration.

Both the Palestinians and the EU share a common understanding that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be a two-state solution based on the pre-1967 lines with east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Until now, the EU has not taken a united stand on a drive by both the Arab states and the Palestinians to subtly change UN language with regard to the Temple Mount in the heart of Jerusalem’s old city.

The main focus of that drive has been at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, where references to al-Haram al-Sharif were slowly inserted into texts. The initiative culminated in a failed 2015 resolution UNESCO’s Executive Board that sought to affirm that the Western Wall, referenced solely by its Muslim name of the Buraq Plaza “is an integral part of al-Aksa Mosque/al-Haram al-Sharif.”

Subsequent resolutions the following year, that were approved continued to speak solely of the Buraq Plaza and the al-Haram al-Sharif.

An intense diplomatic campaign by Israel and the United States, with the help of UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, neutralized that text.

This year, the Jerusalem resolution was fairly benign and all references to al-Haram al-Sharif were included in an annex to the text that also spoke of the importance of the site to all three monotheistic religions.

The EU never took a common public position on that text, with some members opposing it and others supporting it.

Scant attention, however, was paid to the issue of the Jerusalem resolutions at the General Assembly, which in 2015 also began to solely speak of the Temple Mount site as al-Haram al-Sharif.