

Newsbytes

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"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

The reason for this first article is because (besides loving Gatestone Institute's insights even though they are secular) what Europeans are seeing is the systematic destruction of the West, which they should have known would happen with the immigration demographic. Let me add for your ponderations: folks have long said that God's going to judge the West. Has He perhaps begun that process using its enemies? Not a precedent, by the way, biblically speaking.

The Burning of Notre Dame and the Destruction of Christian Europe

by Guy Millière

April 22, 2019 at 5:00 am

Barely an hour after the flames began to rise above Notre Dame -- at a time when no explanation could be provided by anyone -- the French authorities rushed to say that the fire was an "accident" and that "arson has been ruled out." The remarks sounded like all the official statements made by the French government after attacks in France during the last decade.

The Notre Dame fire also occurred at a time when attacks against churches in France and Europe have been multiplying. More than 800 churches were attacked in France during the year 2018 alone.

Churches in France are empty. The number of priests is decreasing and the priests that are active in France are either very old or come from Africa or Latin America. The dominant religion in France is now Islam. Every year, churches are demolished to make way for parking lots or shopping centers. Mosques are being built all over, and they are full.

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The fire that destroyed much of the Notre Dame Cathedral in the heart of Paris is a tragedy that is irreparable. Even if the cathedral is rebuilt, it will never be what it was before. Stained glass windows and major architectural elements have been severely damaged and the oak frame totally destroyed. The spire that rose from the cathedral was a unique piece of art. It was drawn by the architect who restored the edifice in the nineteenth century, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who had based his work on 12th century documents.

In addition to the fire, the water needed to extinguish the flames penetrated the limestone of the walls and façade, and weakened them, making them brittle. The roof is non-existent: the nave, the transept and the choir now lie in open air, vulnerable to bad weather. They cannot even be protected until the structure has been examined thoroughly, a task that will take weeks. Three major elements of the structure (the north

transept pinion, the pinion located between the two towers and the vault) are also on the verge of collapse.

Notre Dame is more than 800 years old. It survived the turbulence of the Middle Ages, the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, two World Wars and the Nazi occupation of Paris. It did not survive what France is becoming in the 21st century.

The cause of the fire has so far been attributed to "an accident," "a short circuit," and most recently "a computer glitch."

If the fire really was an accident, it is almost impossible to explain how it started. Benjamin Mouton, Notre Dame's former chief architect, explained that the rules were exceptionally strict and that no electric cable or appliance, and no source of heat, could be placed in the attic. He added that an extremely sophisticated alarm system was in place. The company that installed the scaffolding did not use any welding and specialized in this type of work. The fire broke out more than an hour after the workers' departure and none of them was present. It spread so quickly that the firefighters who rushed to the spot as soon as they could get there were shocked. Remi Fromont, the chief architect of the French Historical Monuments said: "The fire could not start from any element present where it started. A real calorific load is necessary to launch such a disaster".

A long, difficult and complex investigation will be conducted.

The possibility that the fire was the result of arson cannot be dismissed. Barely an hour after the flames began to rise above Notre Dame -- at a time when no explanation could be provided by anyone -- the French authorities rushed to say that the fire was an "accident" and that "arson has been ruled out." The remarks sounded like all the official statements made by the French government after attacks in France during the last decade.

In November 2015, on the night of the massacre at the Bataclan Theater in Paris, in which jihadists murdered 90 people, the French Department of the Interior said that the government did not know anything, except that a gunfight had occurred. The truth came out only after ISIS claimed responsibility for the slaughter.

In Nice, after the truck-attack in July 2016, the French government insisted for several days that the terrorist who crushed 86 people to death was a "man with a nervous breakdown".

In 2018, Sarah Halimi's murderer, who recited verses from the Quran while torturing his victim, was declared "mentally disturbed" and held in a psychiatric institution immediately after his arrest. He will most likely never face a court. On April 8, Alain Finkielkraut and 38 other intellectuals published a text saying that her murderer must not escape justice. The text had no effect.

The fire at Notre Dame took place less than three years after a "commando unit" of jihadi women, later arrested, tried to destroy the cathedral by detonating cylinders of natural gas. Three days before last week's fire, on April 12, the leader of the jihadis, Ines Madani, a young French convert to Islam, was sentenced to eight years in prison for creating a terrorist group affiliated with the Islamic State.

The Notre Dame fire also occurred at a time when attacks against churches in France and Europe have been multiplying. More than 800 churches were attacked in France during the year 2018 alone. Many suffered serious damage: broken, beheaded statues, smashed tabernacles, feces thrown on the walls. In several churches, fires were lit. On March 5, the Basilica of St. Denis, where all but three of the Kings of France are buried, was vandalized by a Pakistani refugee. Several stained-glass windows were broken, and the basilica's organ, a national treasure built between 1834 and 1841, was nearly wrecked. Twelve days later, on March 17, a fire broke out at Saint Sulpice, the largest church in Paris, causing serious

damage. After days of silence, the police finally admitted that the cause had been arson.

For months, jihadist organizations have been issuing statements calling for the destruction of churches and Christian monuments in Europe. Notre Dame was repeatedly named as a primary target. Despite all that, the Cathedral was not adequately protected. A couple of young men, who entered the Cathedral at night, climbed on the roof last November and shot a video that they then put on YouTube.

Many messages were posted by people with Muslim names on social media -- Twitter, Facebook, the website of Al Jazeera -- expressing a joy to see an important Christian symbol destroyed. Hafsa Askar, a migrant from Morocco and the vice president of the National Union of Students of France (UNEF), the main student organization in France, published a tweet saying, "People are crying on little pieces of wood... it's a delusion of white trash".

French President Emmanuel Macron, who had never even mentioned the attacks on Saint Denis or Saint Sulpice, quickly went to Notre Dame and declared, "Notre Dame is our history, our literature, our imagination". He totally left out cathedral's religious dimension.

The next evening, he said that Notre Dame would be rebuilt in five years: it was a bold statement. Many commentators interpreted his words as dictated by his will desperately to try to regain the confidence of the French people after five months of demonstrations, riots and destruction stemming from his ineffective handling of the "Yellow Vests" uprising. (On March 16, much of the Champs-Élysées was damaged by rioters; repairs have barely begun.) All experts agree that it will almost certainly take far longer than five years to rebuild Notre Dame.

Macron strangely added that the cathedral would be "more beautiful" than before -- as if a badly damaged monument could be more beautiful after restoration. Macron went on to say that the reconstruction would be a "contemporary architectural gesture". The remark raised concern, if not panic, among defenders of historic monuments, who now fear that he may want to add modern architectural elements to a jewel of Gothic architecture. Again, he totally left out the cathedral's religious dimension.

Macron's attitude is not surprising. From the moment he became president, he has kept himself away from any Christian ceremony. Most of the presidents who preceded him did the same. France is a country where a dogmatic secularism reigns supreme. A political leader who dares to call himself a Christian is immediately criticized in the media and can only harm a budding political career. Nathalie Loiseau -- the former director of France's National School of Administration and the leading candidate on the electoral list of Macron's party, "Republic on the Move," for the May 2019 European Parliament elections -- was recently photographed exiting a church after mass, which led to a media debate on whether her church attendance is a "problem."

The results of French secularism are visible. Christianity has been almost completely wiped out from public life. Churches are empty. The number of priests is decreasing and the priests that are active in France are either very old or come from Africa or Latin America. The dominant religion in France is now Islam. Every year, churches are demolished to make way for parking lots or shopping centers. Mosques are being built all over, and they are full. Radical imams proselytize. The murder, three years ago, of Jacques Hamel, an 85-year-old priest who was slaughtered by two Islamists while he was saying mass in a church where only five people (three of them old nuns) were present, is telling.

In 1905, the French parliament passed a law decreeing that all the properties of the Catholic Church in France were confiscated. Churches and cathedrals became property of the State. Since then, successive governments have spent little money to maintain them. Those churches that have not been vandalized are in poor condition, and most cathedrals are in poor condition, too. Even before the devastating fire, the Archdiocese of Paris stated that "it can't afford all the repairs" that Notre Dame needed, "estimated at \$185

million." According to CBS News, in a March 20, 2018 report:

"The French government, which owns the cathedral, has pledged around \$50 million over the next decade, leaving a bill of \$135 million. To raise the rest, Picaud helped launch the Friends of Notre-Dame of Paris Foundation. It works to find private donors both in France and across the Atlantic.

"'We know Americans are wealthy, so we go where we think we can find money to help restore the cathedral,' Picaud said."

On the evening of the fire at Notre Dame, hundreds of French people gathered in front of the burning cathedral to sing Psalms and pray. They seemed suddenly to understand that they were losing something immensely precious.

Following the fire, the French government decided to start collecting donations from private individuals, businesses and organizations for reconstruction; more than one billion euros have poured in. French billionaires promised to pay large sums: the Pinault family (the main owners of the retail conglomerate Kering) promised 100 million euros, the Arnault family (owners of LVMH, the world's largest luxury-goods company), 200 million euros, the Bettencourt family (owners of L'Oréal), also 200 million. Many on the French "left" immediately said that wealthy families had too much money, and that these millions would be better used helping the poor than taking care of old stones.

For the foreseeable future, the heart of Paris will bear the terrible scars of a fire that devastated far more than a cathedral. The fire destroyed an essential part of what is left of the almost-lost soul of France and what France could accomplish when the French believed in something higher than their own day-to-day existence.

Some hope that the sight of the destroyed cathedral will inspire many French people to follow the example of those who prayed on the night of the disaster. Michel Aupetit, Archbishop of Paris, said on April 17, two days after the fire, that he was sure France would know a "spiritual awakening".

Others, not as optimistic, see in the ashes of the cathedral a symbol of the destruction of Christianity in France. The art historian Jean Clair said that he sees in the destruction of Notre Dame an additional sign of an "irreversible decadence" of France, and of the final collapse of the Judeo-Christian roots of Europe.

An American columnist, Dennis Prager, wrote:

"The symbolism of the burning of Notre Dame Cathedral, the most renowned building in Western civilization, the iconic symbol of Western Christendom, is hard to miss.

"It is as if God Himself wanted to warn us in the most unmistakable way that Western Christianity is burning -- and with it, Western civilization."

Another American author, Rod Dreher, noted:

"This catastrophe in Paris today is a sign to all of us Christians, and a sign to all people in the West, especially those who despise the civilization that built this great temple to its God on an island in the Seine where religious rites have been celebrated since the days of pagan Rome. It is a sign of what we are losing, and what we will not recover, if we don't change course now."

For the moment, nothing indicates that France and Western Europe will change course.

Dr. Guy Millière, a professor at the University of Paris, is the author of 27 books on France and Europe.

Russia's largest yeshiva attacked with arson and swastikas ahead of Passover

No one reported injured in fire at Torat Chaim in eastern Moscow, hours before 60 people gathered for traditional seder meal

By AP and Times of Israel Staff



A person inspects the damage from a fire set at the Torat Chaim Yeshiva on the eve of Passover, April 19, 2019 (Courtesy/Torat Chaim Yeshiva)

MOSCOW, Russia — Jewish officials said Friday an arson fire was set at the largest yeshiva in Russia just ahead of the Passover meal celebration. Swastikas were also sprayed on the seminary.

No one was reported injured in the early Friday fire at the Torat Chaim

school in an eastern Moscow suburb.

Olga Esaulova, a spokeswoman for Moscow's chief rabbi, was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying the fire was set in a storage area for kosher meat and that swastikas were drawn at the yeshiva's entrance.

There were about 60 students, rabbis and guests in the building at the time, the state news agency RIA-Novosti reported.

on Twitter:

Avital Chizhik Goldschmidt



@avitalrachel

Reports from Moscow that the Torat Chaim Yeshiva was attacked last night by what seems to be neo-Nazis. Swastikas painted on the doors and the storehouse entirely burned, the yeshiva community's precious kosher meat/food for Passover gone.

While Russia has a long history of anti-Semitism, it has noticeably declined under Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Putin has made considerable efforts to reach out to Russian Jewish communities, both within his state's borders and in Israel. His country's chief rabbi, Berel Lazar, is a close confidante.

He has encouraged the restoration of dozens of synagogues destroyed under communism and taken a hard-line on anti-Semitism.

California Moves To Require Pastors, Priests To Become Government Informants

Matthias Browning

A new bill in the California Legislature would require clergy to report some confessions to the government.

The Pacific Justice Institute—Center for Public Policy (PJI-CPP) is raising the alarm about the bill, given the challenges it would bring to churches.

Senate Bill 360 by Sen. Jerry Hill (D – San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties) has been put forward as a response to clergy sex abuse scandals of the past several years. However, critics note it would do little to address the causes of such abuse while sweeping away centuries of legal protections. For the first time it would classify members of the clergy—without exception—as mandated reporters, triggering criminal prosecution if they do not immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect.

In a detailed opposition letter submitted to the Legislature, the PJI-CPP pointed out a number of other problems with the Bill. The letter, from PJI-CPP attorney Kevin Snider, explained the inviolate nature of penitent communications in many religious traditions. As one example, priests in the Roman Catholic Church can expect to be excommunicated if they reveal confessions as would be required by the Bill. Many other Protestant denominations and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have adopted similar stances.

Snider also pointed out that current definitions of “emotional abuse” are so broad that a pastor or youth pastor would be required to tell the government if parents seeking counsel are suspected of so much as failing to provide “warmth,” “attention,” or “normal living experiences” for their children or teens. California already has 46 categories of mandatory reporters, stretching far beyond typical positions such as school staff and coaches to dog catchers and computer technicians.

Snider noted, “Tragically, the children most at risk of experiencing sexual abuse are those already under California’s supervision as foster children. Instead of addressing its own abject failure to protect those directly under its care, the State is rolling back longstanding legal privileges in a way that could actually make the problem worse.”

A petition drive is being launched at PJI.org, urging church leaders and congregants to speak up now before California forces clergy to become government informants against their parishioners.

Brad Dacus, president of Pacific Justice Institute, commented, “This legislation is not just misguided, it is blatantly unconstitutional. Imagine the outcry if the Legislature tried to do away with attorney-client privilege. The clergy-penitent privilege stands on the same footing and is an essential component of restorative justice.”

SB 360 was approved earlier this month by the Senate Public Safety Committee on a 5-0 vote. It is scheduled to be heard next by the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 22.

Iran Appoints New IRGC Chief, Gen. Salami Vows to Destroy Israel

by TheTower.org Staff | 04.23.19

Iran's supreme leader appointed a new chief commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) on Sunday, just days after the United States designated the force – and its extraterritorial branch, the Quds Force – as a foreign terrorist organization.

Brig. Gen. Hossein Salami, who has vowed to “cleanse the planet from the filth” of the United States and Israel, was handpicked by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to replace Maj. Gen. Mohammed Ali Jafari, who led the force for 11 years. Until now, Salami served as a deputy commander in the IRGC.

Salami has frequently vowed to destroy Israel and has threatened to “break” the United States and its Arab allies. In January, the IRGC official said that, “Our strategy is to erase Israel from the global political map.”

After an attack on a military parade in the city of Ahvaz last year, Salami threatened what he called the “triangle” of Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States. “You are responsible for these actions; you will face the repercussions,” he said. Salami previously boasted that the Iranian-backed terrorist organization Hezbollah has 100,000 missiles aimed at Israel.

The high-ranking military official also said that if war broke out between Israel and Iran, “You can be assured that it will result in wiping you off.” In 2015, he said Iran would “welcome war” with the United States.

In addition to the significant control it exerts over Iran's economy, the IRGC-QF specializes in foreign missions and providing training, funding, and weapons to extremist groups. The IRGC also controls Iran's ballistic missile program.

Although Iran insists that its ballistic missile program is purely defensive, Salami threatened in November 2017 that if European governments insisted on negotiating over Iran's missile program, Iran would increase the range of the missiles to reach Europe.

UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which formalized the 2015 nuclear accord with the Islamic Republic, “calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.”