



Why the Certainty That Notre Dame Fire Was Accidental?

In the wake of Muslim immigration and the embrace of secularism across Europe in general and in France in particular, violence and crime are on the increase. That includes the desecration and vandalism of Christian churches. In fact, recent reports show that in France alone, more than 1,000 churches have been vandalized, burned, or burglarized in the past year. This reasonably leads to the question: “Was the Notre Dame fire really an accident?”



Almost as soon as the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral was reported, officials — and major media — were already calling it an “accidental fire.” That statement is particularly odd, given that in many fires, authorities are hesitant to make determinations of cause for days or even weeks after a thorough investigation has been completed and all of the evidence fully examined. In the case of Notre Dame, the statement was made even as the fire was still hours away from being extinguished.

This writer would like to say up front that he has no evidence that the fire was deliberately set by Muslim jihadists or anyone else. The point is that — given the fact that part of the rolling-release jihad taking place across Europe involves the desecration of churches — the question is reasonable.

In an article originally published April 6 and then updated April 16, the British newspaper *The Sun* [reported](#) that official reports from French police show that “875 churches in France were vandalised last year” and “a further 129 churches reported thefts from the premises.” Those figures do not include vandalism at 59 cemeteries.

There are 42,258 churches in France. That means that one out of every 42 churches was targeted last year.

The Sun reported:

Recent incidents have included a fire in Saint-Sulpice church in Paris, human [feces] daubed on a wall in Notre-Dame-des-Enfacts in Nimes, and an organ vandalised at Saint-Denis basilica outside Paris.

The desecration of Christian churches and cemeteries has led some French politicians to the realization that France’s Christian heritage is under attack by “militant secularism.” Republican MP Valerie Boyer said: “Every day, at least two churches are profaned.” And after the fire at Saint-Sulpice — which was determined by police to be a case of arson — Republican leader Laurent Wauquiez accused the media of operating under a “code of silence” on the issue, saying, “Saint-Sulpice is not only a church, it’s a part of who we are. That’s enough of this code of silence.”

And it is not just the Republicans saying this. Annie Genevard and Philippe Gosselin — both members of the Opposition party — are calling for a parliamentary investigation into anti-Christian acts in France.

Just nine days after that article was originally published, the fire broke out at Notre Dame, which had already been one possible target for jihadist attack in September 2016. The British newspaper *The*



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on April 18, 2019

Guardian [reported](#) at the time:

A cell of radicalised French women guided by Islamic State commanders in Syria was behind a failed terrorist attack near Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral last weekend and planned another violent attack this week before they were intercepted by police, the Paris prosecutor has said.

The women, aged 19, 23 and 39, were arrested in Boussy-Saint-Antoine, a small town 19 miles (30km) south-east of Paris, on Thursday night after they were linked to the discovery of a car packed with gas cylinders parked near the cathedral last weekend. Officials said the women had been planning an imminent violent attack on the busy Gare de Lyon station in Paris and were stopped after a police and intelligence operation described as a "race against time."

That Notre Dame was at least one target in that failed attack is clear, since *The Guardian* reported:

The group's first attempted attack involved parking a Peugeot 607 car packed with gas cylinders near the cathedral in the heart of Paris and trying to blow it up. The car was also found to have contained diesel canisters and a barely-smoked cigarette had been thrown into the car near a canister with traces of hydrocarbons. Molins said the perpetrators had clearly tried to blow the car up and if they had succeeded it would have led to the explosion of the whole vehicle.

After Monday's fire that very nearly destroyed the more-than-800-year-old cathedral, *Daily Mail* [reported](#) that "ISIS fanatics revel in Notre Dame's destruction days before Easter" and that those "fanatics" described the inferno as "retribution and punishment." According to the report, terror intelligence researchers revealed a poster showing the cathedral inferno and the words, "Have a good day" and "Its construction began in the year 1163 and ended in 1345. It's time to say goodbye to your oratory polytheism."

It also called the fire "retribution and punishment" — suggesting that the fire may have been deliberately set.

The poster — created by the ISIS-affiliated Al-Muntasir media group — was created and distributed via the Internet even as the fire was still raging. Against that backdrop, French authorities and media around the world reported the fire as "probably accidental" and related to the renovations taking place at the time the fire started.

What is puzzling is why — without any evidence being cited — it is considered alright to speculate that the fire was "accidental" but it is heresy to speculate that it may have been a case of arson. In fact, CNN and other media have called any discussion of the possibility of arson "conspiracy theories" and dismissed them out-of-hand while continuing to repeat the "accidental fire" mantra. And remember, the "accidental fire" theory was floated by authorities while the fire was still ongoing and before any investigation — forensic or otherwise — could have taken place.

Again, neither this writer nor *The New American* claims to have any evidence that the fire was the work of either radical Islamists or radical secularists. But given the hatred of both of those groups for Christianity, the recent history of attacks on Christian churches, and the thinly-veiled "retribution and punishment" claims of ISIS, this writer can perhaps be forgiven for concluding that the possibility that the Notre Dame fire was set should not be ruled out.

And it is not just the liberal media that eschew any discussion of the possibility of arson while regurgitating the phrases "conspiracy theory" and "accidental fire." The day after the fire, Fox News' Shepard Smith had French media analyst Philippe Karsenty on his show as a guest. Karsenty — who



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was a call-in guest — was allowed to speak for exactly 49 seconds before Smith cut him off and ended the interview. In those 49 seconds, Karsenty told Smith he had been in the area and had seen the fire before leaving when French officials asked people to keep the area clear for emergency workers. He called the Notre Dame fire “a French 9/11” and said that Notre Dame had survived “more than 850 years” and that “even the Nazis didn’t dare to destroy it.” Then he pointed out that “for the past year, we’ve had churches desecrated each and every week in France” and said, “Of course, you will hear the story of political correctness which will tell you that it’s probably an accident —”

And that is as far as he got.

Smith took the moment as his cue to occupy the moral high ground and shut Karsenty down with, “Sir! Sir! Sir! We’re not going to speculate here of the cause of something which we don’t know.” He then challenged Karsenty to provide evidence, saying, “If you have observations or you know something, we would love to hear it.” But when Karsenty tried to answer, Smith immediately interrupted with, “No sir! We are not doing that here; not now; not on my watch!” He then thanked Karsenty for joining him and kicked him off the air.

There are a couple things about that exchange that are odd. First, Smith had a guest on his program who was a first-hand witness to the fire and is respected enough to have been invited onto the program. Then, because he didn’t stick to the “accidental fire” orthodoxy, Smith cut him off and kicked him off the program. One might expect a journalist of Smith’s experience to simply — even if firmly — redirect his guest back into “safer waters” if he did not like where the interview was going. Instead, Smith acted shocked and ended the segment without any effort to save the interview.

Second, it is not likely that Smith was actually shocked by what Karsenty had to say. After all, Fox has a vetting process for guests, and any quick Internet search of Karsenty would show them that he is known for taking this type of stand. He was branded as a “conspiracy theorist” for correctly pointing out that a 2004 piece by the French television network France 2 showing what the network described as the shooting of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy by Israelis was faked.

It looks for all the world as if Smith had Karsenty on his program for the express purpose of using the interview as an opportunity to appear to be taking the moral high ground by shutting Karsenty down and ending the call. This is especially apparent, given that when Karsenty attempted to rise to the challenge to provide information to bolster his assertion, Smith refused to allow him to get more than three words out before telling him he would not allow that on his watch.

The virus of political correctness and the “code of silence” that have resulted in the recent attacks on Christian churches across France being under-reported by the media and perhaps under-investigated by authorities show that, although we must never engage in wild speculation, we must doggedly pursue the evidence, regardless of where that may lead.

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