

Time to start an archive of our churches and synagogues

By [Randy W. Bright](#) - August 14, 2014

Most people who know me know that I am a very busy man. I work long hours with my business and I have other activities as well. My wife will most certainly believe that I have lost my sanity in announcing yet another project that I am going to take on outside of my business.

We are seeing it in the news every day now - Muslims destroying every religious building except those that they deem worthy of their brand of Islam. In Iraq, Christians are being given the choice of leaving, paying a huge tax, or being beheaded. Most have already left, and what few remain are leaving with nothing but the clothes on their back.

In their wake, Muslims are destroying their church buildings, buildings that are owned by Christian congregations that have been there for nearly eighteen centuries.

The purpose for the destruction is clear - remove any remnants of historical evidence of Iraq's Christians history in order to deceive future generations that Christianity never existed in Iraq.

For decades in Europe, churches have been converted to mosques. One report I recall reading some time ago indicated that most of the church buildings in Europe have met this fate.

Those buildings - what could have been a testament to Europe's Christian heritage - now exist as evidence of Islam's domineering presence, and its slow but steady growth.

In Iraq, as well as a number of other Middle Eastern countries, Christians are being persecuted and their buildings are being eradicated, and in Europe, apathy toward Christianity and ignorance of Islam has allowed the architectural evidence of Europe's Christian past to be destroyed through conversions to mosques. The thought of each of situation has led me to wonder what is going to happen in America.

Most people would notice - if they care about the church - that church buildings are disappearing in America as well, and there are several reasons why.

First, church infrastructure is aging. Many of our nation's church buildings are old and obsolete, suffering from years of lack of proper maintenance. As these buildings age, there is less interest in sinking too much money into maintaining buildings that are perceived as having a short shelf life remaining.

If congregations were shifting the funds to the construction of new facilities to replace the old ones, the lack of maintenance would be understandable, but most churches aren't doing that.

To be sure, there are new church buildings being built - reports indicate in the billions of dollars each year - but most of that construction (in my opinion, I can't substantiate this) is not being used to preserve existing church buildings.

Second, churches are finding fewer places where they can build in a visible location, if they are allowed to build at all. Urban planners give little to no attention to the inclusion of churches into new comprehensive plans for cities. Even in Tulsa County, which at one time had more churches per capita than any other county in the country, urban planners charged with developing the new Tulsa city plan completely left churches out of the planning process until they were called out for failing to do so.

Third, the misunderstood and abused concept of separation of church and state is growing to find more and more acceptance among Americans - even some Christian Americans. The phrase I coined several years ago, what the public sees the public owns, reflects the propensity of urban planners to try to control what the built environment looks like, and it is only a matter of time before they begin to argue that government cannot approve the design of a church that is clearly by design a church, reasoning that to do so would be government establishment of religion. Don't think that I am giving them any ideas - I'm just surprised that they haven't tried it already.

All this is to say why I am taking on a new project.

Tulsa's historical past has been preserved in photographs in large part due to one man (Beryl Ford) who made it a life's work to collect photos. Without his efforts, much of Tulsa's history would be forgotten.

What I propose to do is to begin collecting and archiving photos and historical records of our nation's church buildings (and Jewish temples as well), before they are torn down or otherwise destroyed. That is where I need the assistance of my readers and others.

Please start sending me photos and historical records - preferably in digital format, but in any form would be welcome - so that I can begin to build the archive of architecture that will attest to our Christian-Judeo past. Otherwise, someday someone may say that they never existed at all.



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