

# Church history took a wrong turn centuries ago in Europe

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Those of us who are conservative find it particularly irritating when we hear someone give us a version of history that we know isn't true.

Even more galling is when we discover that something we were taught as children and believed to be true turned out not to be true at all. For example, liberals have been telling us for years that most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were not Christians. David Barton at Wallbuilders has proved that to be untrue through records in the form of original, contemporary documents.

Another example is that the Crusades were about conquest and exterminating Muslims and Jews. That has been thoroughly disproved, again because of accurate historical records.

When we listen to liberal media and others about Christianity and Islam, we see a similar effort to distort the truth. In regards to Islam, we hear sanitized descriptions of Islam made with the intent to make Islam look better than it really is. How many times do we hear that Islam is a religion of peace?

Conversely, we are seeing an attempt by the same liberal crowd to redefine Christianity as something it isn't, and to even attempt to supersede God's word with their own wisdom. Gay marriage comes to mind as an example, when we are told that Christians are bigoted because they don't accept homosexuality as normal or morally right.

These two forces - liberalism and Islam - have already had a devastating effect on the church in Europe. As Europeans gradually turned their backs on God, their churches began dying off, so much so that there is little of the church left there.

For about twelve centuries, beginning in the 7th century A.D., when Islam began sweeping through North Africa, the Middle East, Asia Minor and southern Europe (in particular France, Spain and Italy), it was a common practice for the Muslims to burn the churches in the areas that they conquered and to kill or subjugate the Christians.

This was done in an attempt not only to wipe out the Christians, but to also remove any evidence that Christianity ever existed.

During the past fifty years or so, European church buildings have not suffered that fate, but something one could argue is even worse: Muslims converted them into mosques.

Several years ago, I was involved in a mission ministry in Swaziland, a tiny country adjacent to South Africa. Bruce Wilkinson, the author of the popular book *The Prayer of Jabez*, was attempting to build a series of orphanages to house some of the thousands of children who had lost their parents to the AIDS epidemic.

Through a number of circumstances, Wilkinson had to abandon the mission, but one of the reasons was due to the Muslim effort to spread Islam. Their mode of operation was to offer to pay for the education of children on the one condition that they change their name to Muhammad. In addition, their goal was to build a mosque in every five-square-mile area. They didn't need to proselytize. Even if the children weren't Muslim to begin with, the thinking was that if their name was Muhammad, and there were mosques everywhere, I must be a Muslim.

America was founded as a Christian nation, and as a result every town and city had, or still has church buildings. Most have church buildings of many different denominations.

But there are problems. The church is changing, and the nation is changing. Church buildings are growing old and obsolete, and are being torn down. Many churches have been burned, whether accidentally or purposely. Others are being abandoned to fall into disrepair, or are being converted into other uses. And in all cases, we are losing visual evidence of the Christian roots of our country.

We believe that it is important to preserve written records in the form of books, letters and other documents, because they tell us what people thought and were like at the time that they were written. But we don't realize how much our church buildings tell us similar things.

In addition, many new church buildings are indistinguishable from other building types, and would be unrecognizable as a church if not for signage or a cross symbol, both of which may someday will be prohibited from public display.

We may not be able to save our church buildings, but there is a way to preserve their history, and that is to document these buildings through photos, drawings and text in a database that gives future Americans the evidence that America was indeed a Christian nation.

Otherwise, someday we may be like the Europeans who appear to have completely forgotten their roots.



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