

Thoughts on Christianity and the Church

April 2 2012: Baby Boomer Churches



We went to see the Arizona Theatre Company production of *The Great Gatsby* a few weeks ago. It was a fine show, as all ATC plays are, and with the most entertaining props and sets (two actors were flying through the clouds in their seaplane, and without a break in the dialog, the seats and wings of the airplane were transitioned into the seats and fenders of a taxicab, complete with checkered stripes and working headlights!). For some of the shows, the ATC has a cast member or an "expert" doing a short lecture on the background of the play or a bio of the playwright before the show starts, and this time, we got in on the tail end of a talk in which the speaker was drawing a comparison of the Prohibition of the '20s to the

legalization of marijuana of our day. It occurred to me that this is equivocating; yes, the tension of some moral issue like alcoholism or drug abuse may be present in every age, but we have already resolved tensions - we as a culture have already accepted the legalization of alcohol... and adultery and promiscuity and pornography and homosexuality, and now we are gradually accepting the legalization of marijuana. So the slope of the moral decay of our current society may be similar to the 1920s, but we are a lot further down the curve by now.

At the end of the play, the main character contemplated the tragedy that the wealthy class had inflicted on their social inferiors: adultery and divorce, suicide and murder. He makes the statement, something like, "You leave the mess for someone else to clean up".

As a nation, we are now embroiled in a new conflict: the government domestic programs of the past 80 years (since Roosevelt, or even

Wilson) and the institutionalized funding of these programs by selling Treasury bonds, has produced so much national debt that it threatens the very existence of the Republic. There is no way to pay it off without severe sacrifice and strength of mind, but the current load of politicians and the bulk of their constituents refuse to take it seriously. Consider: Those programs were invented by, sustained by, and benefit primarily those people born during and after World War II - the "Baby Boomers". That previous generation is now retiring and going onto Social Security and Medicare, increasing the load on those already insolvent government programs. The politicians they elected over the years have staffed the government bureaucracies with like-minded people that, with virtually no check (other than the occasional Supreme Court case), continue to pile regulations and restrictions on businesses and individuals, suppressing our liberties and making it difficult for the next generation to find jobs or start new businesses. Furthermore, the abortion "rights" defended primarily by that previous generation have reduced the number of potential workers and wage-earners and tax-payers... and problem-solvers. We have a **Big Mess** - brought to us primarily by the Baby Boomers - and subsequent generations - mine - have to try to clean it up.

In considering all this, it occurs to me that in nearly all the institutional churches I've visited or been a member of, the "reins of power" are held by... yes... Baby Boomers. The "church people" culture I inveigh against is cherished and defended by... Baby Boomers. And even for new church starts, the expectations for what a church ought to be are inherited from the church planters' Baby Boomer parents, teachers, and mentors, and the agencies setting policies for church starts for the denomination are staffed and controlled by Baby Boomers. So even in the church, the *Big Mess* I've witnessed has been caused by the Baby Boomers.

In saying this, I am not condemning everyone in this social sector (which, amusingly to me, I am technically part of). However, a great deal of commentary by sociologists and statisticians I've read link an attitude of self-centeredness and refusal to sacrifice and defending the status quo that benefits them to that 50-to-80 year old crowd. It should be no surprise that this same attitude exists in the western church, hopefully to a lesser extent. When I say, "refusal to sacrifice", I do not mean sacrifice for the kingdom *as they see it*, but rather the refusal to sacrifice their cherished institutions and customs *when faced with the impending loss of those treasures* - even reacting to the analyses and statistics with denial... very much like those politicians facing the national debt.

Recently, we have seen alarming new developments by those politicians and bureaucrats installed primarily by the Baby Boomers, such as

- [Religious organizations being required to provide or fund contraceptives and even abortifacients to their employees \[1\]](#)
- [Churches banned from using public school buildings on the weekends in New York \[2\]](#)

Not to mention the recognized trend of prioritizing the "rights" of homosexuals over First Amendment rights of freedom of religion, and the removal of religious (that is, Christian) symbols from public places like government buildings and national cemeteries and parks. The hostility against Christianity is increasing, both officially by government agencies and culturally by a populace conditioned by the (Baby Boomer controlled) media and the (Baby Boomer controlled) public education, and so far, I have seen a (Baby Boomer controlled) Christian church unable to engage the culture or even recognize the threat. Even in Tucson, churches are faced with zoning battles or burdensome requirements for the use of their properties that businesses or other religious organizations do not seem to have to deal with. If these trends continue, how long can it be before churches are penalized, fined, even taxed, their full-time staffs become unsupportable, and their buildings become unmanageable or are even confiscated... or destroyed.

After all, churches in communist countries were converted to museums or warehouses. Even today, in formerly Christian countries like Kosovo, church buildings are being destroyed by the muslim victors (such as [Holy Trinity Church \[3\]](#)). We have already seen our culture accommodating communist, even Islamic interests, so if we don't think it can go that far, we are just living in denial.



If it is not too late, and we still have an opportunity to influence our culture and turn this around - *with God's power, not our own* - then the church needs to repent of its stereotypical Baby Boomer culture of selfishness, blindness, and lust for control. It will need to reconsider the

centrality of its entertainment-oriented "worship" service, create strategies for *intentionally* making disciples who will engage culture at all levels by living out a Christian Worldview, and seriously, committedly, even *desperately* **PRAYING** for God's leading and directing.

If it is already too late - or even if it isn't, and we recognize our responsibility to prepare for the worst - the church needs to plan for the day when there are no buildings, no full-time pastors, no auditoriums or classrooms or "fellowship halls" or gymnasiums, no organs or handbells or orchestras. The church needs to set up smallgroups or "cell churches" capable of autonomous operation, and train the leaders to be effective outside the support structure of an institutional "mother" church.

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1. www.npr.org/2012/02/09/146638094/bishops-stand-strong-against-birth-control-mandate
2. news.yahoo.com/churches-banned-using-nyc-school-buildings-weekends-222400349.html
3. www.rastko.rs/kosovo/crucified/default.htm