

## Bread and Circuses

The Roman poet Juvenal of the late first century penned the following words,

*Already long ago, when we sold our vote to no man, the People have abdicated our duties; for the People who once upon a time handed out military command, high civil office, legions - everything, now restrains itself and anxiously hopes for just two things: bread and circuses.*

Researching the contributions and experiences of the Roman Empire, the phrase 'deja vous' which translates to 'again you,' comes to mind. It's almost too painful to see history repeat itself since a change of course is unlikely because those in control benefit from the direction of the current.

Pandering has become the method of advancement in every aspect of our society, from politics to the office and the church. This mentality permeated the Roman society throughout its slide into obscurity. At the root is the selfishness of the masses who sell their future for a present-day thrill or appeasement, and the leaders who sell their integrity to win popular acceptance and power.

Pandering has at its roots the practice of prostitution: a person who furthers the illicit love-affairs of others. In other words, their gain is by giving to those who demand, what will eventually lead to their own demise.

In our example of Rome, those who were educated – in the know, pandered to the ignorant masses – giving them the pleasures of the present at the sacrifice of their own future. They literally laughed and caroused their days away as their empire crumbled and collapsed.

This article could at this point venture into a multitude of various veins of thought, all capable of illustrating the slide of our culture, simply because there is no anchor, no landmark, no compass, or star to fix upon. And yet, all the masses can fix their attention on is cheap gas, easy payments on a big screen and beer sale on Sundays.

What turns my blood hot isn't the actions of the uninformed, but the placating of those in the know for the gain it promises. A dominant characteristic of modern religion is the departure from standing in a position of providing guidance and insight into the wisdom of the ages; instead, determining the dominant wind and enthusiastically pointing the way like any weathervane ought.

Articles appear from 'progressive' leaders who are catching the wave of the newest trend of religious thought. These religious leaders admit catering what the consumer culture expect to receive. At least these leaders admit to the practice of what has existed since Jesus made his comparison of shepherds and hirelings.

Give a crying baby everything it wants and what do you gain? A spoiled adult who believes everything that used to be obtained through hard work, dedication and sacrifice is theirs by right. And sadly, there will always be supposed 'moral authorities' who for their own gain will place a stamp of approval on such behavior.

This is precisely how Christian doctrine has eroded over time. The masses demand change or alterations, and their hirelings bend with the wind, rather than standing as a stalwart of truth. Take any denomination and look at the teachings of their founder and you'll find principles, beliefs that distinguished them from others. Yet today, there's a race to see whose existence can become totally irrelevant before the others. The first to cross the finish line will be the one whose existence serves no purpose whatsoever. After all, what purpose does a lighthouse serve if it has wheels?

Barbara Tuchman, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most noted historians wrote a book entitled, "The March of Folly." In this work, she revealed the occasional tendency man has for marching like lemmings towards his own destruction. The real criminals in these cases aren't the individuals who through lack of knowledge make bad decisions, but the leaders who promulgate the course of folly for their own gain.

Are we ever going to reach a point where we can realize change doesn't always mean progress? Will we ever see the pendulum begin its swing in the opposite direction? Can we ever rise to the true demonstration of wisdom, by learning from the mistakes of those who have gone before us?

Not as long as the cry of our leaders can be heard ringing through the streets, "Free bread at the circus today!"

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