

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 24: The Church in the World

A Brief History of the Church



The Acts of the Apostles

1. The Church is born when the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples on the day of Pentecost. The disciples begin to speak in new tongues and become bold witnesses for the Gospel.
2. Peter preaches to the Jews in Jerusalem. 3,000 are baptized that day (Acts 2:14-41). The disciples boldly proclaim the Gospel and perform many signs. They are opposed by the Jewish leadership.
3. Stephen is stoned to death - the first martyr. Saul is present at his death (Acts 7). Persecution breaks out against the Church in Jerusalem. The disciples are scattered through Judea and Samaria, where they spread the Gospel (Acts 8).
4. On the road to Damascus, Saul meets the risen Lord. He is converted and baptized (Acts 9). He goes to Jerusalem to meet the apostles.
5. Peter's vision in Jaffa announces that Gentiles will also have a part in the Kingdom (Acts 10). Peter travels to Caesarea to the house of Cornelius the centurion. The Holy Spirit is poured upon his household and they are baptized into the Church.
6. Paul travels through the Roman Empire and preaches the Gospel, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. He is opposed and persecuted by many Jews, but others receive the Gospel and are baptized. Many Gentiles also join the Church. Paul's epistles form the greater part of the New Testament.
7. At the Council of Jerusalem, the apostles decide that Gentiles can be joined to the Church and saved without being circumcised or keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15).
8. On his second and third journeys, Paul travels through Turkey and Greece, guided by the Holy Spirit. He preaches the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles, performs many signs and is often persecuted. He is arrested in Jerusalem and sent to Rome.
9. In 64 AD, Nero blames the Christian for a great fire in Rome and begins a persecution. Peter and Paul are martyred.



The Church of the Fathers

10. End of the Jewish Church: In 66 A.D., the Jews revolt against the Romans. In 70 AD, the Romans destroy the Temple in Jerusalem. The Judeo-Christians gradually disappear and the Church becomes almost exclusively Gentile.
11. The persecuted Church: Christians were persecuted because they were suspected of being enemies of the State who refused to pay homage to the emperor, threatening Paganism, engaging in secret rituals, cannibalism, and atheism, and dividing families. Persecutions were not constant but sporadic, though increasing in scope and intensity with time.
12. Second Century: Expansion and Defense of the Faith. The leadership structure of the Church takes form: bishops, priests, deacons. The Church combats the Marcionite and Gnostic heresies. The bishop of Rome has preeminence in settling disputes. Apologists explain and defend the faith through reason and philosophy:



- a. Justin Martyr, convert from Paganism, presents Christianity as the “true philosophy.”
 - b. Irenaeus of Lyons sees all creation as brought together and summed up in Christ.
13. Third Century: Persecution and Theological Development. Origen (184-254) leads a catechetical school in Alexandria. Empire-wide persecution under Decius (250-51): All people forced to sacrifice to the gods. Those who refuse are put to death. Thousands of Christians renounce their faith in the face of death. Persecution of Diocletian (303-311): bishops and priests are compelled to turn over Bibles and sacred books to be burned.
14. The Conversion of Constantine: In A.D. 312, Emperor Constantine attributes his victory at the battle of the Milvian Bridge to the Christian God. He passes the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) which grants religious toleration throughout the Empire. After A.D. 324 Constantine begins to actively support Christianity, building churches, passing laws honoring Sunday, Christmas and other Christian holy days, protecting Christian clergy, etc...
15. Nicea and the Arian crisis: Arius of Alexandria taught that Jesus was not God but the highest creature of God. Constantine calls the council of Nicea in A.D. 325 to settle the dispute. The Nicene Creed says that Jesus is “one in being” with the Father. The crisis grows worse after the council. Most of the Empire turns Arian. St. Athanasius leads the fight for orthodoxy. The Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) reaffirms that the Son is “one in being with the Father.” Arianism remains among the Barbarian tribes.
16. The rise of monasteries was in reaction to the worldliness that came into the Church after the end of persecutions. The Desert Fathers go to the desert to live a life alone with God, following Christ through a life of penance and prayer.
- a. St. Anthony lives in solitude for 20 years.
 - b. St. Pachomius founds a community of ascetics in the desert near the Nile River.
 - c. St. Martin of Tours founds a monastery in Gaul in A.D. 371.
17. In A.D. 381, Emperor Theodosius declares Christianity to be the only official religion of the Empire and moves to end paganism. Rapid growth of Church, but with increasing laxity. Increase in the authority of the pope
18. The Great Latin Fathers: St. Jerome (ca. 347-420) translates the Bible into Latin in Bethlehem. St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) writes the *Confessions* and *The City of God* in response to the accusations that the rise of Christianity brought about the collapse of the Empire. Augustine fights battles with heretics: the Manicheans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians.
19. Theological controversies: Nestorius denied that Mary could be called Theotokos (“God-bearer” or Mother of God). The Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) upheld that Mary is Mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus-Christ who is both fully God and fully man. Against the Monophysites, the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) decreed that Jesus exists in two natures (divine and human) which form his one undivided person.
20. Barbarian Invasions: The Visigoths plunder Rome in A.D. 410. With the collapse of political power in Rome, the pope and bishops lead and defend the people physically and spiritually. Pope Leo I (440-461) dissuades Attila the Hun from attacking Rome. Fall of the Western Empire in 476.
21. The conversion of Europe: Missionary monks evangelize Europe and convert the Barbarian tribes: St. Patrick brings the gospel to Ireland (A.D. 432). Conversion of Clovis, King of the Franks, and of his people (A.D. 496). St. Benedict founds a community in Monte Cassino (A.D. 529). He is the founder of western monasticism. The Benedictines later become a great missionary force and preservers of Western culture.

The Church in the Middle Ages



22. Main features:

- a. The emergence of "Christendom," the alliance of Church and state.
- b. Increasing tension between Eastern and Western Churches.
- c. Emergence of great Christian scholars and saints.
- d. Growth of Christian culture in art, literature, architecture and theology.
- e. New religious orders.
- f. Limited missionary expansion to Germanic and Slavic nations of Europe because of political forces.
- g. Establishment of Europe as a Christian continent.

23. St. Gregory I the Great (pope 590-604) lays the foundation for the Church in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. In an age of chaos and war, saves Rome many times from plunder by the Lombards. Great pastoral care of the Church throughout Christendom. Gregorian Chant attributed to him. Organizes great missionary enterprises.

24. Mohammed (570-632) founds Islam, which expands rapidly through Asia and Africa, even to Spain. The oldest centers of Christianity are lost: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage. Charles Martel defeats the Muslim forces at the battle of Tours in 732, preventing the Muslims from conquering Europe.

25. St. Boniface evangelizes Germany from 723-739. Brings multitudes of pagans into the fold. Reforms the corrupt Church. Promotes union with the Holy See in Rome. Martyred by pagans in 754.

26. The Holy Roman Empire: The Popes form an alliance with the kings of the Franks in Gaul. Pope Stephen II anoints Pepin king; makes him "Patrician of the Romans" (A.D. 754). Pope Leo III crowns Pepin's son Charlemagne emperor in A.D. 800. It is the beginning of the "Holy Roman Empire." Frequent conflicts between Church and State, pope and emperor. The Carolingian revival of learning: an attempt at making all of society Christian. Evangelization by force; choice to be baptized "with water or with blood." Catholicism becomes more of a cultural religion.

27. 9th century decline. The alliance between pope and emperors alienates the Eastern Church, loyal to the Byzantine emperor (Photius schism 858-879). Lay investiture: secular rulers install priests and bishops without consulting the pope. Illiteracy and corruption among clergy. Invasions weaken the unity and peace of the empire. Europe enters an age of feudalism - the splitting of the continent into small competing divisions. Cyril and Methodius bring the Christian faith to the Slavic people in Eastern Europe.

28. 10th century: The darkest period of the papacy. Some of the worst popes during this time. Pope Formosus, dead for 9 months, is put on trial by Pope Stephen VI (897). John XII (955-64): Fornicator and murderer; deposed by Otto I the Great.

29. The Great Schism: Tension between the Eastern and Western Churches had been growing for centuries, with Eastern support for iconoclasm condemned at 7th Ecumenical Council of Nicea and coronation of Charlemagne seen by the East as the taking over of Rome by barbarians. The East rejects the primacy of the pope. In 1054 the patriarch of Constantinople and the pope mutually excommunicated each other.

30. In the 11th century, popes and cardinals increasingly oppose the selection of bishops and popes by secular rulers (lay investiture). Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) wages war against simony (buying spiritual offices), clerical marriage, and lay investiture. Excommunicates Emperor Henry IV for not supporting the Church's reform.

31. The Crusades: Following the harassing of pilgrims in the Holy Land by Muslims, Pope Urban II calls for the first crusade at the Council of Clermont in 1095. The Crusaders take Antioch in 1098 and Jerusalem in 1099. The Second Crusade (1147-49) is a failure.

Saladin recaptures Jerusalem in 1187. The Third (1189-92) and Fourth (1201-04) Crusades fail to reconquer Jerusalem. Sack of Constantinople in 1204 aggravates schism between East and West. Final defeat of Christians in Acre, 1204.

32. 12th century: Church reform through the Cistercian Order (founded in 1098). Bernard of Clairvaux is a leader of spiritual renewal. New heresies: The Cathars/Albigensians: neo-Manichaean dualists: spirit/good, material/evil. The Waldensians: started as reform movement but later attacked the fundamental dogmas of the faith. Rise of Gothic cathedrals. Increased popular piety to Mary & saints. Beginning of scholastic theology: St. Anselm (1033-1109).
33. 13th century: Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) brings the papacy to the zenith of its power. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) approves the term transubstantiation, requires Catholics to go to confession and receive communion at least once a year. Establishment of the Inquisition (1229) to protect the faith from heresies.
34. The Mendicant Orders: St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) hears Christ telling him: "rebuild my Church, which is falling into ruin." Founds the Franciscans who live a gospel life of joyful poverty; receives Innocent III's approval. St. Dominic Guzman (1170-1221) founds the "Order of Preachers" (Dominicans) to win back heretics into the Church.
35. Golden Age of Scholasticism: Founding of the first universities (ca. 1170). With the translation of Aristotle from Arabic to Latin begins a new approach to theological study, demonstrating how Christian faith is rational: St. Bonaventure (1217-74); St. Albert the Great (1200-80); St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) builds the greatest system of Christian thought in his *Summa Theologiae*. Dante's Divine Comedy.
36. 14th century decline: The Avignon Papacy (1305-76). The popes reside in Avignon, France for political reasons. They are criticized by St. Bridget of Sweden and St. Catherine of Sienna. The great western schism (1378-1417): 2 popes at the same time (in Rome and Avignon); even 3 popes for a short time. The Council of Constance (1414-18) deposes the competing popes and elects Martin V, recognized by the whole Church. Serious blow dealt to prestige of papacy.
37. New heresies attack the hierarchy, the priesthood, the sacraments, and advocated sola scriptura: John Wycliffe (1330-84) in England; John Hus (1369-1415) in Prague. Decline of scholastic theology. Spiritual awakening: Christian mystics seek to approach God through the heart more than through the intellect (Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*; Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*).
38. 15th century: the Renaissance. Humanism: the revival of the arts and learning of classical antiquity. Christian humanism combined classical materials with Christian ideals (Dante, Petrarch, Raphael, Michelangelo) but Pagan humanism looked down upon the supernatural. The Renaissance popes are patrons of art and learning, but give in to nepotism, self-indulgence and political ambition.

Reformation and Counter-Reformation

39. The situation before the Reformation: the rise of nationalism forced the popes to negotiate with nations who manipulated the Church and made revenues from her. Secular rulers bought ecclesiastical offices (simony) then never cared for the people (absenteeism). The Church raised money from sale of indulgences. There was widespread illiteracy, corruption and immorality among lower clergy and superficial faith among the faithful, largely focused on external devotions to saints.
40. Martin Luther (1480-1546), Augustinian monk, posts his 95 theses in Wittenberg in 1517. He teaches sola fide, that man is saved by faith alone; sola scriptura (the Bible is sole authority); rejected the authority of popes and councils, the priesthood and the sacraments; that the church is the invisible union of believers. He is excommunicated in



1521 (Diet of Worms);

41. John Calvin (1509-64) founds strict theocracy in Geneva. Writes the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the basis of Reformed theology. Iconoclastic: plain church buildings with no altars, statues, images, or music. Advocated strict predestination.
42. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) starts a church in Zurich, Switzerland. Teaches that the Lord's Supper is only a commemorative meal. The Anabaptists denied the validity of infant baptism.
43. The Reformation in England: Henry VIII severs ties with Rome because the pope would not grant him a divorce. Proclaims himself supreme head of the Church of England in 1534. Thomas More beheaded for holding to the Catholic faith. Catholics are severely persecuted in England.
44. For 100 years, Europe is engaged in bitter wars of religion. The Peasants' War (1524-25): impoverished peasants led by the Anabaptists rise up against the princes in Germany. Lutheran State Churches begin to organize themselves. The Peace of Augsburg (1555): *cuius regio, eius religio* (the people of a territory follow the religion of their prince). War between Catholics and Huguenots in France. The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) in Germany.
45. The Catholic Reformation: Formation of new religious orders, e.g. The Jesuits, founded by St. Ignatius Loyola in 1534. Educated the illiterate and poor, princes and kings and did great missionary work. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*: a classic of Christian spirituality. The Council of Trent (1545-63) clarified and defining the teachings of the Church that were challenged by Protestantism, corrected abuses (e.g. sale of indulgences) and promoted reform (e.g. seminary system).
46. Spanish Mystics: St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82) is a Carmelite nun who had a second conversion and reformed the Carmelite order. Wrote her *Autobiography*, the *Way of Perfection*, and the *Interior Castle*. St. John of the Cross (1542-91) describes an approach to God through darkness and suffering in *The Dark Night of the Soul* and *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*.
47. French saints: St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), bishop of Geneva, brought thousands of Protestants back to the Church. Wrote *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God*. St. Jeanne de Chantal (1572-1641): Founded with Francis the Order of Visitation, working with the poor and sick, and devoted to prayer. St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) had great zeal for reform and love for the poor. Patron of all works of charity.
48. Beginning of a great period of Catholic missionary outreach to all nations: St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) - India and Far East; Matteo Ricci - China; Robert de Nobili - India; Bartholomew Las Casa - Central and South America; Isaac Jogues and Jean de Brébeuf - Canada
49. Aftermath of the Reformation: The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) ends with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). Europe is exhausted from the wars and divided into warring camps. People seek a "reasonable religion" that will unite rather than divide people. The authority of the Church has been undermined; the Bible will be next.

The Church in the Modern World

50. Changes in the 17th century: Emergence of science and technology; the Copernican revolution; later led to the industrial revolution. New Philosophy based solely on human reason (rationalism, beginning with Descartes). Basing life on faith is seen as primitive. Political upheavals and new forms of governments. Rejection of monarchy. Secularization: Christianity is relegated to the private sphere. Religion is excluded from public life.
51. The rise of rationalism and the Enlightenment philosophers: Lord Herbert of Cherbury (d. 1648) builds a system of natural religion based on reason and not on revelation or

authority (Deism): God is an uninvolved clockmaker. David Hume (d. 1776), the apostle of modern skepticism, denies that certitude can ever be attained. Voltaire (1694-1778) and the philosophes openly attack Christianity and the Church through satire. Rise of Freemasonry. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) teaches that truth is subjective, relative to the thinking subject. G.F.W. Hegel (1770-1831) claims that truth is constantly evolving through a dialectical process.

52. Catholic response: Blaise Pascal (1623-62) insists on approaching God through revelation, religious experience, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and reason. The Church is sometimes overly cautious: condemned Copernicus in 1616 and Galileo in 1623. Still, Christianity gave birth to science because of its respect for the intellect. The Church points out two limitations of reason and science: a) Denies or overlooks the reality of original sin; b) cannot tell us the ultimate goal or meaning of the new discoveries.

53. More challenges: Jansenism is a rigorist spiritual movement in France that bordered on Calvinism. Jansenists complained about the laxity of Jesuits who did not call people to repentance. Quietism was a spirituality that advocated total passivity before God in prayer. Gallicanism: an attempt to create a French National Catholic Church where the king ruled and the pope had no real authority. Suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773. Protestant churches take the lead in missionary expansion.

54. The French Revolution is the climax of the Enlightenment: overthrow of King Louis XVI and formation of revolutionary government in 1789. All priests and bishops must swear an oath of allegiance to the new regime or lose their office; exile and murder of thousands of priests. Dechristianization of France: Christian holidays are suppressed, churches turned into temples of reason; statue of the Goddess of Reason set up in Notre Dame Cathedral.



55. After the Revolution: Napoleon reestablishes the Church in 1801 but attempts to control it; standoff between Napoleon and pope Pius VII (1800-23), who is imprisoned for 6 years. Fragility of the Church but perseverance of the common people in their faith. Anticlericalism and secularism; separation of Church and state; civil marriage & divorce, establishment of public school system. Restoration of the prestige of the pope.

56. The 19th century: Political liberalism supported constitutional governments, religious toleration, separation of church and state, freedom of press and education. Most Catholics at first opposed political liberalism, fearing the anarchy and chaos of the French Revolution, the suppression of the Church and the relativizing of the truth. Pope Pius IX (1846-78) at first in favor of liberalism but then turns against it.

57. Intellectual liberalism: Liberal Catholics desired a new approach to Catholic theology in light of modern philosophy, science and historical study (e.g. John Henry Newman). Popes cautious about the new approach, equating them with the rationalism and skepticism of the enlightenment that undermined the faith. Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors (1864) condemned most of the new ideas. He stressed that Christianity is also a religion of the heart; emphasized the reality of the supernatural and encouraged reception of the sacraments. Proclaimed the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854.

58. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) proclaims two constitutions: *Dei Filius* - God can be known from created things through natural reason and has spoken through revelation; the marriage of faith and reason; condemnation of atheism, materialism, pantheism and rationalism; *Pastor Aeternus*: defined the primacy and infallibility of the pope. The council was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War. It emphasized the authority of the pope but lacked balancing statements about bishops, priests and lay people. Loss of Papal States in 1870: end of the Church as a political force in Europe, but this helped it to focus on its

spiritual authority and mission.

59. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903): Sought reconciliation of the Church with modern society and learning. Great diplomat: Acted as a friend of democracy and of the new governments. Defended justice and better working conditions for workers (*Rerum Novarum*, 1891). Encouraged the scientific study and popular use of the Bible while affirming its inerrancy (*Providentissimus Deus*, 1893). Promoted the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The Twentieth Century

60. A century of progress? The age of ideologies: fascism, socialism, communism, capitalism. Two world wars. The rise of global jihad. The century of Christian martyrs: more Christians put to death for their faith than in any other century. But secular humanism and individualistic materialism have sapped the strength of Christianity. Masses of Christians have left the Church. Many others are lukewarm. Yet great Christian growth in the Third World.

61. St. Pius X (1903-1914) strengthens Catholic worship, promotes frequent communion, renews liturgical music, compiles the Code of Canon Law; condemns the errors of Modernism, the "synthesis of all heresies." Promotes lay Catholic Action and foreign missionary work.

62. During World War I, Pope Benedict XV (1914-22) maintains political neutrality and promotes peace and reconciliation. Mary appears in Fatima, Portugal (1917). The October Revolution, the rise of Communism and its persecution of Christianity.

63. Pope Pius XI (1922-39) sees the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany; signs treaty with Mussolini and surrenders the Papal States to Mussolini's control. Condemns Fascism and Nazism in *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937). Pope Pius XII (1939-58) is the pope of World War II. Maintained appearance of neutrality but quietly helps Jews and other persecuted people.

64. Saints in Auschwitz: St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941) organizes the *Militia Immaculata* to work for the conversion of sinners and the enemies of the Church. In Auschwitz, volunteers to take the place of a prisoner condemned to death by starvation. St. Edith Stein (1891-1942) is born in Breslau, Germany, into orthodox Jewish family; becomes an atheist in 1904. Receives doctorate in philosophy in 1916 and becomes member of faculty in University of Freiburg. Conversion to Catholicism in 1921; enters Carmelite convent in 1934; flees to Holland. Deported to Auschwitz by the Nazis; dies in gas chambers on Aug 9, 1942.

65. After the war: Pope Pius XII promotes biblical scholarship (*Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943); excommunicates all Catholics belonging to the Communist party (1949); declares the dogma of the Assumption of Mary (1950). But the Church is sometimes seen as proud and triumphalistic. Pope John XXIII (1958-63) is a jolly, spontaneous, loving pope, and a pioneer of the ecumenical movement. He promotes *aggiornamento*: the updating of the Church to the modern world and calls Vatican II.



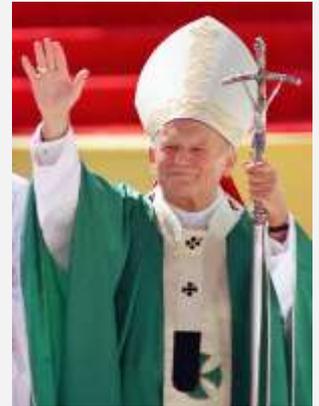
66. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) is not a doctrinal council but one of renewal. Its main documents: *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church); *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy); *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation); *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism); *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World); *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on Non-Christian Religions); *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity).

67. Pope Paul VI (1963-78) led the implementation of the Council. Achievements of Vatican

II: New freedom in Catholic theology and exegesis; Decentralized Church: greater role for bishops, priests, religious and lay people; Liturgical reform made liturgy more meaningful to the faithful, with increased active participation; The "new Pentecost" brought charismatic renewal and new lay apostolates; Great advances in ecumenism; Greater involvement of Catholics in society, especially to promote justice and peace.

68. Problems and challenges after Vatican II were not because of the Council but because of its misinterpretation, isolated from the Church's Tradition: Thousands of priests and religious left their ministries; more permissive pastoral leadership, allowing Catholics to do or think what they wanted; loss of the sense of the sacred in worship; dissenting theologians overlooked the role of the magisterium as teacher and guardian of the faith; crisis in Christian education; undermining of Catholic moral teaching (c.f. *Humanae Vitae* 1968) and sexual permissiveness; false belief that there is no need for converting non-Christians to Christ; false belief that all Christian churches are the same.

69. Pope John Paul II (1978-2005): Opposition to Nazism and Communism in Poland; bishop at Vatican II. Played a key role in the fall of communism. Extensive travels, great missionary to all nations; called for the New Evangelization; reconciliation with the Jewish People and Eastern Christians; defense of the dignity of life against the culture of death.



70. Benedict XVI (2005 - 2013): Standing up to the "dictatorship of relativism." First encyclical: *Deus Caritas Est* ("God is Love").

71. Francis (2013 -): Encyclicals: *Lumen Fidei* ("The light of faith"); *Laudato si'* ("Praised are you").

72. Towards the future: Encouraging signs: Movement towards unity of Christians; Jewish-Christian reconciliation; Purification of the Church – a smaller and holier Church; Holy popes. Signs of danger: The once "Christian world" is rejecting its Christian heritage; Dropping attendance at Church; Culture of death (Abortion, contraception, homosexuality, euthanasia); Religious and moral relativism; Islamic fundamentalism.