

# Decline in european christianity



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Liberty University The Decline of European Christianity A Paper Submitted to Professor J. Earls By La Dawn Brooks Church History 302 February 10, 2012

In this paper I will attempt to explain the decline in European Christianity and what attributed to it. When did it actually start? What caused people to move away from Christianity? More importantly will we ever see an increase in these numbers again? Europe has been known for its strong roots in Christianity.

It was known for its missionaries who spread the word through out the world. They came to share the Good News to those who otherwise may not have heard it through evangelism. The churches in Europe have been steadily deteriorating through the centuries. Every country in Europe has not experienced such a massive decline, some are thriving while others are about to be non-existence. The decline in Christianity of course did not come about overnight it happened progressively down through the centuries. It was believed to have initially about during the time of Constantine.

He did not allow it to be a separation between church and state and as ruler of the empire everyone was considered to be a Christian. The leader of any country that is given ecclesiastical rule will do more harm to the church because if they can use their agenda to influence what the majority should be and this alone left no room for growth or change. Lutzer wrote in his book "Doctrines that Divide" "with Constantine as power, Christianity was no longer a sect within empire but became synonymous with the empire.

One now would be a Christian by simply being born into the empire, not necessarily by having personal faith Christ. [4] The state of the church in this

time is like the church of Thyatira in (Rev. 2: 15-29). It was to the point that it was not about people's growth spiritually, but about how to manipulate people to the purpose of their own secular purposes. The Enlightenment, (The Age of Reason) was a clash with church dogma it loosened the grip of 2 faith and was the next step toward the downward spiral of Christianity in the European culture. Dogma was often substituted for faith, and orthodoxy for love. "[2] John Locke was one of the primary leaders during the enlightenment and his belief was that if it could not be proven then it could not be trusted and this is the way he felt about God. This thinking caused others during this time to believe that religion itself was simply superstitious. In the eighteenth century deism also came into play this is where there is a belief in a supreme being that is perpetuated and validated by innate ability of human reasoning.

It was during this time that deism was prominent. Deism led to a theological liberalism which began to eat at the heart of Christianity. In his article "Europeans Christianity" Failure to Thrive," Collin Hansen writes " Rome's Fall, Constantinople's forsaking, and Christendom's eventual collapse during the Reformation era wars of religion revealed the perils of uniting the church so closely with temporal earthly regimes. Bluntly put the church that lives by state power dies by state power---- its fortunes are too closely tied, to political vicissitudes. [5] After all of this it was generally accepted that the people of Europe will follow the religion of their kings. I wanted to give this brief history because of the I wanted to show that the history shows that there have been numerous accounts of activity in that time that history is repeating in this time. It appears there are several reasons why Christianity started to decline

and continues to do so. There is church and state involvement, Reformation, religious wars that came about after the reformation such as the "The thirty year wars.

That started out about religion but ended up being about power, land and a multitude of other things. This brought on the beginning of the modern era. During this time the era of religious toleration began as well. It was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that toleration of religions and non-religious was the norm, and a decline in Christianity started its spread in France and Germany along with this era, yet Christianity was still a dominant force. " Hence the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were characterized by doubts regarding the traditional dogmas of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. [2] The nineteenth century brought about a great change tolerance and rationalism were standing firm when secular Humanism made an entrance its entrance into the picture. " The rise of secular humanism happened in two distinct ways during the twentieth century During the first half the continent was plagued by a series of radical socialist regimes, which viewed Christianity as a tool of oppression used by the upper classes to keep the poor and destitute under their control. [1] Europe was put through two world wars involving the anti-religious socialists.

These wars involving Christian nations killed millions, which also hurt Christianity as well. Great Britain is said to be the first to go with liberalizing laws between 1959 and 1967 on such issues as abortion, obscenity, divorce and others. Some Christian leaders did not approve with this, but the laws that were set forth by the Europeans about toleration help to secure these

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actions, and still there are those that feel that this has not changed European Christianity altogether. There are several statistics that were used to show the effect that all this as a whole was having on the Christian community.

In 1967 two-thirds of the Germans believed the Bible to be the word of God, but by 1992 only half of them believed this and one out of ten believed the Bible was without error. In an article written in USA Today entitled "Religion takes a back seat in Western Europe" 2008 it reads, "church attendance in Ireland, though still among the highest in Western Europe, has fallen from 85% to 60% from 1975 to 2004, according to the Dublin Archdiocese." [8] Still there are many people there who consider themselves Christians, but are not attending churches.

In this same article they attributed the decline to Europe's turbulent history, an increasing separation between the church and the government, and most of all the continent's unprecedented affluence. Today one of the reasons stated for the decline is reproduction. It is suggested that the Western European countries' fertility rates are not sufficient enough to replace the current population. Europe is abandoning religion and growing older. Another USA Today article entitled "Is God Dead in Europe?" 2006 reads, "Court decisions that have banned school-sponsored prayer, removed many Nativity scenes from public squares, and legalized gay marriages are part of that pattern, as is the legal effort to erase "In God We Trust" from U.S. currency and "under God" from the "Pledge of Allegiance." Europe is showing us where this path leads." [7] According to the recent Eurostat Euro-barometer

poll conducted by the European Union based in Luxembourg, 48% of European Union Citizens responded that they do not believe in God.

Others belief in God results were as follows: Germany: - 47% United Kingdom - 38% France - 34% The Netherlands - 32% Denmark - 31% Norway - 31% Sweden - 29% These statistics clearly prove that there is an extreme decline in Christianity. These numbers above represents the percentage of people that believe there is a God. If more than half the population does not believe in God then truly there is a serious problem, one that most likely will never be resolved until Christ comes again. 5 Conclusion

We know that “ The Decline of European Christianity” was a process that begun during Constantine reign Down through the centuries it had taken on a snowball effect with the split, rule for power, reformation, religious wars, and human secularism. How loose up to this point about how we represent God that others who can't identify with him cannot tell whether profess Christians believe in God. Many self taught doctrines and numerous religions all effect the decline. How do we rectify this problem? It's like giving a dying man CPR.

He needs to be revived in order to obtain life and so does the Christian. It could possibly be done by evangelizing members of today (EMT). Teaching the current members of the church how to evangelize properly today so that there can be a church of tomorrow. The world as a whole is in need of healing today. The youth are not interested in what the church has to offer, because of so many other temptations , and those who know the word

become confused if they are not properly understand what Christianity is all about.

We cannot just sit idly by and do nothing watching humanity self destruct as Christians, We must do as the word of God says in 2 Chronicles 7: 14 (KJV) “ If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal the land. Bibliography:

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