

The Last Supper

An RPG in one dinner party
With the future of the world in the balance

*Written by Eric Finley
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The Last Supper must be played in a single session and incorporates a potluck supper. Each participant should bring one or more dishes, and they are encouraged to coordinate for a satisfying meal. The GM will provide the beverage.

One participant - the GM - takes the role of Christ. The remaining participants - the players - each play one of the twelve Apostles. Of these Apostles, some - the evangelists - will go on to write the Bible. Others - the proselytes - will travel unto the corners of the world and spread Christianity to the masses. And one - the traitor - will betray Christ to the Romans and initiate the crucifixion.

Without a traitor, all other efforts will fail.

The story of the "real" Last Supper should be considered simply one example of how the game might turn out, just as our world should be considered an example of how the world might be shaped by Christianity over the millennia which follow this event. There is no guarantee that Judas Iscariot will be the traitor, nor that any other disciple will follow the destiny we see for him in our world.

Ultimately, the point of the game is to interpolate the doctrine of the church which will form around Christ, and to simultaneously extrapolate the effects of this doctrine on the world to come.

WARNING AND DISCLAIMER

This game is not intended to be played, or even read, by those who are offended by speculation about matters of religion. It postulates an alternate history of the Christian church and is intended to explore the relationship between trigger events and their distant outcomes, between doctrine and history. The author is not a Christian, but respects religion in all forms; the game is intended to be enjoyed by both Christian and non-Christian players.

Under no circumstances do we encourage you to disrespect or make light of the subject matter. Not only would it be offensive to some, but more importantly (as far as the author is concerned) it would undermine the point of the game and render it meaningless

Preparations for the Feast

*The game itself is modeled on a historical religious custom called an **agape feast**, which was essentially a potluck worship feast. This feast was similar to, but predates, the use of Communion as a ceremony. Plan amongst yourselves for a lengthy, leisurely meal, with dishes that you will all enjoy. Each player should bring a fair share of the food. We strongly encourage that as much of the cooking as possible be done by the players, rather than using store-bought items. Even players who can't normally cook can probably follow a recipe, make a salad, or the like. (For instance, beating a small amount of honey or herbs into soft butter or margarine, and serving with storebought fresh bread, is cheap and very yummy.) The personal investment in the meal will help a lot to bring a sense of ownership of the entire session and thereby of the results - so stretch your skills a little, and be humbleproud of what you can achieve.*

The exception is drinks for the evening. Drinks for the evening must be supplied by the GM, and have constraints. Ideally, the drink will be wine. Poll the players for preferences. Serve in a pitcher or jug, not from the bottle; drink from a single communal glass. If absolutely necessary, such as playing with a participant who cannot or will not drink wine, a substitution such as white grape juice mixed with ginger ale and served in a pitcher will help achieve the same effect. When playing with wine and players who do not customarily drink, it would be period-appropriate to water down the wine, though it may be preferable to simply alternate a jug of water after each jug of wine, treating them as the same thing in-game. Be warned - drinking the wine is a meaningful act in game terms, and no other beverage should be available.

The glass you use for the wine is also important for the feel of things. It should either be a thing of beauty in its own right, or a plain and simple vessel, even a pottery bowl. The reason is very simple; this is the Holy Grail you portray, and the act of drinking from the Grail should remind players of the tremendous significance of this night.

The site should be comfortable, firelit or candlelit well, free of children and other distractions. Either a coffee table or none (trays only) is appropriate; a dinner table is not. Neither are chairs; people of the period ate reclining on couches or cushions, much like Romans. No one should be in a place of preferment over another, not even Christ, nor should anyone be required or allowed to do less (or more) serving of food than anyone else.

Of Which A Game Is Made

Before sitting down to the meal, take time to lay out the play board, choose characters, and make sure that everyone is familiar with the rules.

The GM, as mentioned before, is Christ. Unlike in most games, his role in adjudicating conflict is quite limited. His primary responsibility is simply to remain ambiguous. When asked questions, respond indirectly, with a metaphor, or with a parable. The GM will be rewarded in play for his work based on how unclear and confused the doctrine is. Naturally this is not the GM's in-character goal as Jesus, but this is his first and foremost goal as a participant.

*Each other player must choose one of the twelve Apostles, each of whom is summarized briefly on the play board. Those Apostles not being played by someone will have their reactions and decisions represented in-game by their row on the board. A non-player Apostle, for instance, might end up as the proselyte to the East, or to Britain, or one of the evangelists. **A non-player Apostle may not be the traitor, the accuser of Christ.***

The game's components are the play board and two decks of cards. The board is an 11x17" foldout included in the center of the rulebook. On it, the twelve Apostles are listed and described down the left, and the five issues of doctrine across the top. The play board should be placed in a location which is accessible to all but not distractingly central; under the coffee table, for instance, or on a side table with space on all sides.

To go on the play board, there are Doctrine cards and Mission cards. Sort them into their respective decks. The Doctrine cards represent positions on the issues which will be raised during the supper. Shuffle this deck and deal five cards to each participant. The Mission cards represent the various tasks the Apostles may go on to perform, after the Crucifixion. This deck is placed face up and need not be shuffled. Set both decks on the play board in the spaces set aside for them.

The Meal

The format of play is one hundred percent free conversation. There is nothing (apart from the usual social conventions) preventing more than one person speaking at once. Inasmuch as physical actions are relevant, consider this a LARP; to have your character take an action, you must do so yourself. Physical conflict is possible only to the extent that it is legitimate to do so to your fellow player, as the Apostles and Christ are bound by bonds of love and loyalty at least as strong as those between players.

The conflict enters into things in the form of issues of doctrine. There are five big questions here. This companion and brother of yours, Christ, who the Jews and Romans would put to death if they could – what does he mean to us, as people of faith? How should we, or anyone else, choose this teaching over any other... and, having accepted it, how to relate to those who have not? What is right, what is good, what is the shape of virtue in the conduct of men? War and strife exist, but when are they right and when wrong? All men must die – so what comes then? They're hard questions, with no easy answers.

Supper conversation will range across whatever topics come to hand. This is your teacher, but also your friend, and to at least some degree this is a society of equals. It is also a stressful time for all involved... here we mark the end of a week in which Jesus led a riot in the Temple, enraged the powerful of Rome and the rabbinical tradition, raised the rabble in the streets... and all of this is coming to a head around you. There is a very real danger of death, not only to Christ but to everyone here. As spiritual leaders and as men, you must all make decisions about what to admit, where and when to speak, where lies the better part of valour. But here and now, you can speak frankly. Do you approve of urging faster change? Do you think there's a hope of standing up to the Romans and the elders of the Temple? What do you think Christ, and the movement he represents and to which you belong, should do next?

Also, you are confused. The lessons of Christ have not been distilled down, they are by no means common knowledge. Perhaps you wonder if he himself is entirely consistent in his teachings. Perhaps you haven't fully decided what to think about this interpretation of God, having converted for the sake of change or the draw of Christ's personal magnetism, but not yet internalized the content. Some of these messages are troublesome in the extreme - is it really going to be possible to respond always by turning the other cheek? You have personally seen persecution, execution, rape at the hands of legionnaires and disdain from the bulk of the Jews amongst whom you live. Several of you are married and have children to think about; when your fellows would take a hard line, weigh this message against their little lives.

Talk all you want. Look for clarity, but look also to play up the tentative opinions you've adopted for your apostle. The more you can communicate your vision of Christianity, the more likely the world is to take shape in the manner of your liking. But the better you adapt to the prevailing winds, ditto; it's up to you to make a balancing act between the two.

Spend some of your time talking to the NPCs. Literally talk to them; obviously it will be more a monologue than a conversation, but that's okay. Part of the challenge for you as a player is to make it so that even with their words left out (of the transcript, as it were), the other players can make sense of the conversation you're having. They are the ones who will judge how well you have spoken - not its content, but the conviction, rhetorical skill, use of period language, consistency of metaphor and the like. The content is not subject to judgment, and players are encouraged to reward opinions at odds with their own more readily than any other.

The reward for a well-spoken argument (whether said to an NPC or to a PC) is a Doctrine card; draw one from the deck and hand it to the speaker. You may only reward any given conversation with one card, but more than one of you may join in approbation if you like, and once the topic changes the speaker is fair game again.

The GM can reward and be rewarded just as a player. Remember that he is being rewarded not for clarity but the reverse; the ideal case is if his answer could be interpreted on either side of the question, but would be deeply meaningful either way.

*After a while, you're likely to have firmer opinions on some of the doctrinal issues in question. You're also likely to be getting thirsty - morality is thirsty work. These two things are bound together by the wine itself, the wine being drunk from what the Grail, the wine which Christ will come (during this very meal) to liken to his own blood which is soon to be spilt for the sake of man. **To drink the wine is to trigger a game event – to play a card, and to explore the future of all mankind.** See the section on Ripples In The Wine for more on this.*

As the ripple scenes sketch in the shape of history to come, the card plays will build to the point where they complete a column – marking the point where every Apostle has chosen an interpretation on this issue. This permits the proposal of a toast, which in turn triggers a more significant scene, a turning point in the history of things. See the section entitled Splashes In The Wine for how this works.

Similarly, as the ripples play across history, an Apostle will eventually place an opinion on each of the five issues. At this point he is eligible to be assigned a Mission card, establishing the course not only of history but of the rest of his life. See the section marked Drowning In The Wine for this one.

When all the rippling, splashing, and drowning is done, the game is nearly over. The last set of scenes, to close off our sketch of the history we form, is a blessing of forgiveness, a redemption in light. See the last rules section, Floating On The Wine, and then get yourselves all a drink – you've earned it. What you've made is a world.

A Question Of Belief

We establish the message of the church through the play of Doctrine cards to issues. The feelings of a given Apostle on a given issue might be a belief, an opinion, a position on the issue, or an interpretation; these feelings are expressed as a Doctrine card played to that location on the board.

The issues we cover are five, listed at the top of the five columns on the board. Note that they certainly need not be addressed in this order during the meal. They are listed here, and each one is discussed in much greater depth in the Appendix to the game.

How should we understand the nature of Christ?

How do men know what to believe?

How can we determine what is morally right?

How do we tell when violence is justified?

How shall we comprehend the reality of death?

Note that these are extremely open-ended questions. The positions on these issues, as represented by the Doctrine cards, take the form not of answers, but of approaches to reaching an answer. Therefore two plays of the same card to the same issue might represent different lessons, taught through the same route. If the two do not agree, this can bode very ill...

The eight different kinds of Doctrine cards are as follows. There are twenty of each in the deck,

***Ego** - People should be guided by their own consciences, which the Bible will help build.*

***Dictum** - The correct answer will be explicitly spelled out by the Bible and the church.*

***Mysticism** - The answer stems from the spiritual verities which are invisible to man.*

***Immanence** - The answer is manifest in the present, physical world.*

***Sophia** - The answer is available to those with the wit to unravel the word and the world.*

***Credo** - The answer concerns belief itself, unanswerable to reason.*

***Disciplus** - The answer relates only to, or is valid only for, true believers in this faith.*

***Universalis** - The answer applies to all mankind, regardless of their beliefs.*

Note that they come in pairs (matched by colour), and that they are not all mutually exclusive approaches to things. The card professed by an Apostle on an issue is simply the facet which they feel is most important to how the issue should be answered and, more importantly, taught.

Ripples In The Wine

Anytime a player takes a drink he must, immediately afterward, describe a scene and play a card. This is the central rule of cards in the game, and should not be violated under any circumstances. The card is played face-down into one of the spots on the Issues board, representing a stance being adopted by the speaker (or by one of the NPC Apostles) on a specific issue. The scene is called the ripple in the wine. It's like a kind of oracle, except that none of the characters except Christ is aware of it. The players all are; all other conversation should pause during a ripple. The GM is responsible for encouraging a quick pacing, a cut to the quick, during these and all other narrated scenes in the game.

The scene is a cutscene, describing an event which will occur during the history to come, and the Age when it occurs. Any historical period is fine, from the Classical age where we are right now, to the Information age far in the future (see the next section for more on the ages). Other than defining the age, the scene should appear without context, save that which is absolutely necessary to establish its nature. "A man lost in the woods in the middle ages" is perfect. Preferably it should avoid references to specific years or centuries, or to specific rulers; use "a fascist despot" rather than Hitler, "a great king" rather than Charlemagne. Keep it short and keep it specific - the fate of a single human is usually the most moving sorrow.

***The ripple must be a tragedy, brought about because of the doctrine card and issue you just played.** Playing "Disciplus" with regard to the issue of violence, for instance, implies that the answer is different for believers as for the unfaithful... think the horrors of the Crusades; think Auschwitz. Every Doctrine card has its downsides - Ego can bring pride and false doctrine; Dictum can bring slavery. Mysticism could separate from the world in austerity; Immanence could overrate it with greed. Sophia can bring schism; Credo can suppress invention. Disciplus might imply xenophobia; Universalis might imply forced conformity.*

The start of the ripple is signalled when you drink. The end of it is signalled when you lay down your card. The card is played face-down, into the spot corresponding to the Apostle who has firmed up this belief and the issue on which it is held. After the card is played, conversation resumes.

Player Apostles may play cards on their own row or that of an NPC Apostle who they have just addressed. When playing a card to an NPC, players should make sure that the belief and issue played are a reasonable outcome of the preceding conversation - note that this might be a contrary belief, not an agreement. So long as the player is satisfied on this point, he is the only one in a position to judge.

Christ's opinions are remembered only through these his Apostles; as such the GM can play cards only on NPCs. Note that because everyone present is listening to Christ with at least half an ear whenever he speaks, the GM need not be specifically addressing the NPC in question; it may be that it is the overheard words which sway that Apostle's mind.

Generally, a card must be played to an empty slot on the board. The one exception is that a player Apostle may have a change of heart, replacing one of his own played cards with another (the replaced card goes on the bottom of the Doctrine deck). This can be done to a card which is still face-down, or it may even be done to one which is face-up in a completed column; this does not retract or change the splash scene which was told when the column is turned up.

Splashes In The Wine

Once all twelve slots in a single column (single issue) are filled, any player may trigger a bigger event by proposing a toast. They drink from the cup and pass it on, around the circle. Most of their fellows will presumably drink to this, though they need not do so. Once the cup has passed around the circle, the player who began the toast flips over all the cards in the column of his choice. (Bonus cool points for linking the toast to the issue to be flipped, but this is not required.) Based on the revealed cards, one of the players will narrate a splash scene, in which a significant turning point in the history of the world is told. As with ripple scenes, play is paused until the aside is ended.

The splash scene must be an event whose significance for all of Christendom, possibly all the world, is clear. Unlike the ripples it need not be a tragedy; in fact, the tenor of the event will be determined by the cards revealed. The sort of event is defined in turn by the issue that was flipped. The splash scene must occur in, and will in fact define, an Age of the world (see sidebar) which has not already been splashed. All the scenes which have been narrated so far must remain possible; you may not contradict or cancel anything that has already been said. Within these constraints, anything goes, and the player who gets narration can make tremendous changes to the shape of history.

On the play board, listed at the bottom of each column, is the manner of event which the splash scene should involve. From the issue of the Christ, comes the hand of the church as a force upon the world. From the issue of faith comes a clash of religions, a schism in the church, or a great teacher. From the issue of virtue comes a success or failure of diplomacy, a mass movement, or a mob hysteria. From the issue of violence, war or peace. From the issue of death, a plague, a famine, or a catastrophe.

To determine narration, each player tallies the number of cards revealed of the same colour as his own; the colour with the most cards present is the dominant colour. (Ego/Dictum cards are blue, Mysticism/Immanence are gold, Sophia/Credo are silver, Discipulus/Universalis are scarlet.) The player who proposed the toast breaks ties as he sees fit. Every player whose revealed card is this colour then speaks a line of bible verse or a snippet of sermon (as told later, to the gathered masses) which explains the teaching his card represents.

The issue is considered to have **clarity** if this dominant colour is present as just one type of card (such as Ego), or **discord** if it is represented by two (Ego and Dictum). Any of the players speaking may also declare the issue to be in discord, even though all the cards are the same, if their explanations seem to clash with one another. (For instance, "Always turn the other cheek" and "Thou shalt not suffer the sinner to sin again" could both result from Dictum/Violence plays. Their incompatibility is clear.)

The Ages of the World

The Classical Age – The spread of christianity and civilization out from the cradle of the Mediterranean. Romans, Syrians, Babylonians, Jews.

The Feudal Age – The rise of new nations and the solidification of borders and peoples. Normans, Franks, Byzantines, Danes and Britons.

The Enlightenment – The time of inquiry and art, where trade and craft have risen to the point where stretching as a race can begin. Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Germans.

The Industrial Age – The rise of mechanisation, completion of world maps, colonial territories and colonial wars. East India Company, Imperial Japan, North America.

The Information Age – Tapping electricity and the transistor, the atom and the wind. The rise of the private sector and the private citizen. Halliburton, General Motors, Taiwan, Communist China.

If the issue has clarity, then the GM selects one of the speakers (the players whose colour was dominant) to narrate the splash scene, and the player who proposed the toast draws three cards. The splash scene should end in a gain for Christianity as a religion, an unfurling of possibilities, a Teilhardine drawing nearer unto God. If the issue is in discord, then the player who proposed the toast selects one of the speakers to narrate the event, and the GM draws three cards. The splash scene should increase the chaos present in the world, and mark a decline in the power of the church.

*The narrator thus has four details to weave together. The **type of event** (war, plague, etc) as given by the issue; the **doctrines cited by the speakers**, and how they might impact the outcome; the **age of the world** he chooses, one splash per age; and the **clarity or discord** of the cards, increasing or decreasing the power of the church. Out of these constraints, he changes the world.*

The narrator marks the end of the splash scene by lifting the cup once more, and repeating the toast. This may be with respect, or it may be rich with irony. In any event, conversation resumes once this is done.

Drowning In The Wine

Once any Apostle has a full slate of five opinions, he is eligible to receive a Mission card in the last column on the board. This Mission summarizes his chief contribution to the formation of the church; he may contribute in the other ways as well, but it is for this that he will be remembered.

To play a Mission card, a player dips his fingertips in the wine and anoints the recipient's brow (miming as necessary for the NPCs), after which he selects a Mission card from the remaining options and narrates the first of two scenes. He gets his choice: one of the scenes will describe his fate as a character, and the other will further refine the unfolding of history. After finishing his scene, he passes the Mission card to the GM, who narrates the second scene – his Apostolic fate if he chose to refine history, or vice versa.

Of the two, the character's fate is the most wide open. He necessarily goes on to the task implied by the Mission card itself; this need not be part of the description, but rather serves as background. The focus instead is on his actual end; frequently this is martyrdom (the St. Andrew's Cross of the Scottish flag is no metaphor), but it is left to the speaker's discretion entirely.

The addition to history is constrained by the HISTORY entry on the Mission card. In some cases the constraint is an Age; in some it's a type of event; in others it's a setting. The default scope of this event is in between that of a Ripple and a Splash – larger than a single life, smaller than global. The Crimean War, genocide in Bosnia, church suppression of the printing press, the reign of a French populist turned tyrant.

Once the GM has completed the second scene, he places the Mission card onto the board for the player, and play returns to the Apostles and their supper.

Each card appears only once. Note that there are more than twelve cards in this deck; this is quite deliberate. In games where there are many Evangelists, the Bible is a more robust and expressive document, and the religion will be less oral in tradition. In games which turn out to have many Proselytes, the religion will be more global in scope. In games which have many Witnesses or ones without a category, the religion will have a greater body of ritual and tradition.

Two of the Mission cards are worthy of specific note. One is the Obscurity card; the Apostle who receives this card is lost to history, his end unknown. In place of describing his end, describe what historians believe to have been the truth – he might be thought to be a misinterpretation of scripture, might be thought to be another name for one of his fellow Apostles, might be thought to be a metaphor rather than a person. How he dies? We'll never know.

The other is the Accuser of Christ – the traitor. First of all, it must be present in every outgoing set of twelve Apostles - else the Crucifixion does not take place. Second, it may only be taken by a player, never an NPC Apostle. Third, it is not claimed by the usual anointing gesture. Instead, it is triggered very simply by the literal, specific act of kissing Christ. (Groups are welcome to be as brotherly or not as they feel is appropriate and tolerable, but a kiss of some kind is mandatory. If enough attention is drawn to it, a kiss on the hand or even a blown kiss may suffice for your group.) No scenes are narrated in response; the tragedy that results from this choice is the central tragedy of the whole affair, as this Apostle will go from this place to betray Christ to the Romans. Whether this is due to greed, doubt, weakness, repudiation of Christ, or service to fate... is up to you and your group's play of the game.

Floating On The Wine

When the last Doctrine cards are revealed and resolved, the last Mission sorted out, the game is ready to be done. The world has been explored almost as much as it can be, in this way. Hopefully the world thus made is one which captures the imagination, which leaves you wondering. For certain, it is a world of many small failures, many tragedies, and precious few glories.

So far.

The very last scenes are the GM's to do, and bring us back to the blessing and curse of the Accuser of Christ, who marked Jesus out to the Romans for death. None of the characters will ever know his reasons.

But Christ, as a character, is aware – and sorrowfully so – of all of the scenes that have been described. Is aware on some level of all of these things that will be done in his name. And is aware, ultimately, of the act of betrayal, and the reasons why.

And he forgives the traitor everything.

For the last five scenes, you will revisit five of the ripple scenes. The five tragedies which arose from the play of the Accuser's own beliefs. As the Accuser, remind us all, one by one, of the sorrows that came from these things. After each one, the GM answers – with a redemption that underlies the sorrow, that makes it more than worthwhile. The GM's job is to extend the ripple scene, carrying it forward past where the Accuser left off, and turn those tears into gladness.

This is the forgiveness. This is what was bought with all those tears. Five simple human lives, turned around and made whole again. Five examples, drawn from a world of mixed joys and pains.

Then say farewell, as characters, and let them disperse into the night. Clear away the dishes, let everyone put their feet up and get themselves a drink without price.

This was the Last Supper.

Appendix – The Issues Of Doctrine

Christ

How should we understand the nature of Christ?

Also covers: Interpretation of the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the nature of the trinity of Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit.

Example beliefs:

Ego – Christ as Everyman, exemplar. OR The crucifixion and resurrection as metaphor for proper behaviour in time of crisis.

Dictum – Literal interpretation of this as verbatim history, every word true. OR The Holy Trinity with enumerated attributes, resurrection as a specific interaction of them.

Mysticism – Christ as divine being; the temptation in the garden as literally true. OR Worship of the Holy Spirit as the force behind all these events.

Immanence – Christ as mortal man. OR The crucifixion as historical/political conflict.

Sophia – The resurrection as many-layered parable, lesson upon lesson. OR Christ as teacher, focus on the wisdom of his teachings.

Credo – Christ as a face of God, to be worshipped directly. OR The resurrection as ineluctable truth, the unknowable divine plan.

Disciplus – Christ dying on the cross for Christians, giving blood and flesh unto the celebrants. OR Christ as literal King of the Jews.

Universalis – Christ absolving the sins of the race of man. OR The resurrection as crux needed to bring the church to the unfaithful.

Splash event: Direct influence by the church or Christianity on world affairs. An intercession, an excommunication, a suppression, an inquisition, a beatification.

Examples from our world and nearby:

Division of the New World between Spain and Portugal. The Spanish Inquisition. Persecution of Copernicus and Galileo.

Condom use and Africa's AIDS epidemic. Liberation theology. Excommunication of John Kerry.

Faith

How do men know what to believe?

Also covers: Stance of the church on proselytism and conversion. Scope of ritual and rite. Relationship between the church and other faiths, and the church and nonbelievers.

Example beliefs:

Ego – Faith as no man's business but your own. OR Christianity as only one road among many to the truth.

Dictum – Thou shalt have no other gods before me. OR Copy this book exactly; translation and adaptation will corrupt its sense.

Mysticism – Prayer as doorway to the divine. OR Angels carry blessings unto the works of the faithful. Providence as proof.

Immanence – Communal worship as an effective social tool. OR The church is the true kingdom and ruler of the faithful.

Sophia – Jesuit logic as an instrument of conversion. OR Strive to comprehend other faiths, so as to coexist.

Credo – Men's hearts tell them what is true. OR Belief is paramount – above profession of faith or schismatic labels.

Disciplus – There is one true faith, all else is godless heathens. OR Each people has its proper religion.

Universalis – All virtuous men shall be forgiven and saved. OR All men are Christians; many are merely ignorant of this.

Splash event: A clash or other meeting with other religions. A schism within the church. A great teacher and the effects of her words. The spread of atheism and secularism, estrangement from the church.

Examples from our world and nearby:

The Crusades. The rise of Islam. Martin Luther's Theses. Quaker emigration to the New World. Nietzsche's "God is Dead." A geneticist-pope. Conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity. Secular humanism.

Virtue

How can we determine what is morally right?

Also covers: Ethics and sin, the proper reaction to sin, redemption. The source of grace. The role of the church as moral leader.

Example beliefs:

Ego – We do not teach commandments; we teach consciences. OR We're not really going to tell you, just let you stew in guilt.

Dictum – Thou shalt and shalt not. OR Only the priesthood can really tell you what is right or wrong in a given situation.

Mysticism – Grace is a granted quantity; all virtue is actually God's. OR Omens and prophecy will guide us.

Immanence – Christ's lessons as utilitarian pragmatism. OR Virtue and sin reside always in deeds, never in thoughts.

Sophia – Teach by parable; moral truths are elusive and implicit. OR Doctrine of ends and means – with all ends acknowledged.

Credo – Trust in God as the kindly judge, all sins forgiven. OR God is the inner voice which lets us judge our actions.

Disciplus – Thus and so is morally right for us; they may judge themselves. OR To be Christian is the first step of virtue.

Universalis – Moral relativism is a trap; morality is absolute. OR Our teachings will help guide the whole world to righteousness.

Splash event: A great success or failure of diplomacy. A mass movement or a mob hysteria. Grand judgmental proclamation or treaty. Hypocrisy amongst the church ranks.

Examples from our world and nearby:

The Nuremberg Trials. Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A peaceful resolution to World War II. Sex scandals involving the pope. The sale of indulgences.

Violence

How do we tell when violence is justified?

Also covers: Pacifism and passive-aggression. The role of the church in war. Zealots and fanaticism. Coping with the messy nature of real crises.

Example beliefs:

Ego – Guidance we can give, but hard rules never. OR The church teaches ends – not means.

Dictum – Turn the other cheek, no matter what may pass. OR Thou shalt not suffer the sinner to sin again.

Mysticism – Triumph is proof of God's hand. OR The soul can suffer no violence; pain of the body is meaningless.

Immanence – The dead make difficult converts. OR War is a part of this world; the church therefore teaches us to do it correctly.

Sophia – The rule is here, the Bible is as common law and precedent. OR Reason together, that ye both shall live.

Credo – Man's war is sin; war for God's sake is holy. OR The meek shall inherit the earth.

Disciplus – The kings of Christendom rule, and fight, by Divine Right. OR Let thou never make war on thy Christian brother...

Universalis – See why your brother strikes you, but strike him not in turn. OR Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Splash event: A war. A duel which shapes a nation. Pacifism working right; pacifism failing to work in the real world. An execution. A lasting peace.

Examples from our world and nearby:

The Crusades. Both world wars. The Holocaust in specific. The Spanish Armada defeated. September eleventh. The War of the Roses, the Hundred Years' War. The fall of the Roman Empire. Nuclear armageddon.

Death

How shall we comprehend the reality of death?

Also covers: The afterlife, the immortal soul. The rapture, the eschaton, the Second Coming. Church response to existentialism and nihilism. Heaven. Hell.

Example beliefs:

Ego – We can only know death once we have felt grief. OR We are the only architects of our own book of works; we choose by acting.

Dictum – Fear our recounting of the hellfire and the brimstone. Harken to the glories of heaven. OR Listen and be saved.

Mysticism – The soul continues its journey – we were but a stop along the way. OR Go unto the bosom of God whence you came.

Immanence – Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. OR We make our own Heaven, our own Hell.

Sophia – The wisdom we have learned is weighed as part of judgment. OR Have you ever heard of Pascal's Wager, my son?

Credo – We cannot know until we come unto that kingdom, as we shall. OR Rapture. Rapture's coming...

Disciplus – The first circle of Hell is reserved for virtuous pagans. Convert! OR Christians go to Heaven or Hell. You? I don't know.

Universalis – A virtuous life is full passport to the Kingdom of Heaven. OR Whatsoever you may believe, God will judge you.

Splash event: A plague. A great famine or other catastrophe. An accident with fateful consequences. A death untimely, without which the world could have been very different.

Examples from our world and nearby:

The black plague. (Esp. as in The Years of Rice and Salt by Kim Stanley Robinson.) The Irish Potato Famine and its effects on emigration. A Rome built upon Vesuvius. The Great Fire of London. A bioweapon or nanoweapon error. Black Tuesday.