




# Campaigns & Christianity

Activism In The  
Age of Apostasy

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## 1. Introduction: God's Design for Community

- a. God created community Gen 2:15-25
  - i. **“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” - Genesis 2:18**
- b. From the beginning, families have created communities and those communities have been organized and ordered for the benefit of their members. As those communities grew, they took on the names of significant leaders and developed into nations.
- c. This community order has come because God has designed us for social connections. The Bible tells us that because our ancestors rebelled against God, we are broken creatures that are incapable of self-control.
  - i. **“The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, To give to each person according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.” - Jeremiah 17:9-10**
- d. Three main institutions of delegated authority:
  - i. Fathers over their families and husbands and wives over their children (Ephesians 5:21-6:4, Proverbs 6:20-21)
  - ii. Pastors over their churches (Ephesians 4:11-16, Hebrews 13:17, and I Peter 5:1-11.)
  - iii. Local, state, & national governments over communities (1 Peter 2:13-17, Romans 13:1-7).
- e. Purposes for each type of authority
  - i. **Family:** The authority of the family is given the task of being the spiritual primary influence in the lives of everyone in the household.
  - ii. **Church:** The authority that has been given to pastors and the body of Christ divine accountability before God that they will be held accountable for the leadership of God's people. (James 3:1)
  - iii. **Government:** The primary goal of government is to protect the integrity of the community against evil internal and external influences. The most basic expression of this authority is in the ability to limit and take away personal liberties.

*“Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Pay to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor.”*  
- Romans 13:1-7 (AD 55-59)

## 2. The People of God and Government

- a. God's people have been active with government since the ancient world.
  - o Age of Israel (Abraham 17th-10th Century BCE)
    - Moses - God uses an ungodly government to display His power (Exodus 32:9-14)
  - o Age of the Kings (1020-586 BCE)
    - King David - refused to raise his hand against King Saul because he would not allow God's reputation to be diminished. David understood that because Saul was chosen by God to be King, deposing him would be offensive to God and would undermine his influence with the people (1 Samuel 24:6-7).
  - o Age of Exile (587- 7 BCE)
    - Cyrus The Great and Individual Religious Liberty (Isaiah 45:1-7) (600-530 BC)
    - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed Nego (Daniel 3)
    - Daniel - being told not to pray (Daniel 6)
    - Note: during the intertestamental period, the people of God began to shift away from reliance on God, to their own political means.
  - o Jesus and the Apostles (6 BCE - AD 70)
    - Fractured faith: Zealots, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes
      - Zealots: a small group of Jews who used a type of guerrilla warfare to fight the Roman invaders. They believed that Rome should be overthrown by military power.
      - Pharisees: a sect of religious leaders who rose during the second temple period to preserve the Jewish religion and way of life from Gentile influences. They were very strict adherents to the Laws of Moses and other Jewish writings.
      - Sadducees: members of the wealthy affluent class in ancient Palestine. In many ways, they were more conservative than the Pharisees. They only believed that the first five books of the Old Testament (Torah) were the inspired word of God and did not believe in an afterlife.
      - Essenes: a sect of Hebrews who chose to live apart from society while quietly studying and copying scripture. They rejected the political games of the Herodian dynasty and their interactions with Rome. This group is responsible for copies of scripture that were later discovered in 1946 known as the "Dead Sea Scrolls."
      - Sanhedrin: the legislative body and religious leadership that was given limited governing authority over the Hebrew people by Rome.
    - The primary persecutors of Christians in the first century were Jews. They believed the followers of Jesus were heretics who were polluting Judaism.
    - Claudius of Rome (reigned 41-54): removed Jews from Rome because they were combative and disturbed the peace. Christian Jews later returned to find their Gentile brothers and sisters partaking in both pagan and Christian traditions. This led to the letter from Paul to the church in Rome.
    - Nero of Rome (reigned 54-68): Was more than likely insane and is thought to have burned down 10 of the 13 sections of Rome and blamed it on the Christians. He would routinely impale Christians on long spears, douse them in tar, and light them as human torches to illuminate his dinner parties. He was known to ride his chariot around his garden basking in the light of their suffering.
  - o The Age of the catholic (united) Church (70-312) (patristic period)



was destroyed. With no political or military might left, the church began to lead in the absence of government.

- Charles the Great “Charlemagne” (reigned 800-814): After 300 years of change and political movement, on Christmas Day 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charles, king of the Franks emperor of the Western world. Charlemagne’s great contribution to the story of the church was the centralization, reform, and establishment of the union of church and state.
  - Confrontation between the Empire and the Church: Because of the elevation of the papacy with the crowning of Charlemagne, the office of the pope became a competitive political position. In the years following his coronation, the office was traded by all kinds of men who used the office for political and carnal gain. Although there were several attempts at reform, none seemed to fully rid the papacy of scandal. This led to political conflict between rulers and popes that has lasted until today. It also led to divisions within church leadership. Things finally reached a boiling point when an unknown monk from Germany wrote a challenge to church doctrine that detailed 95 points of disagreement with scripture.
- The Age of the Reformation 1517-1648
  - Martin Luther: In 1517 Martin Luther nails his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany challenging the church to a debate. He was called before the church and moderately challenged at first, and later had to flee for his life.
  - Tools for reformation:
    - Written word: While the church primarily argued its case in the academic language of Latin, the common person spoke German. Luther was able to make his case to the public in a language that they understood. This strategy of appealing to the people further alienated the religious establishment.
    - Gutenberg printing press: The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440 enabled Luther to write and distribute more literature to the public than ever before. It was said by one church leader that every day it was “raining” writings of Luther. The number of positions he produced was overwhelming and left the bureaucracy of the church unable to answer every charge. Over his lifetime Luther produced over 600 writings on theology, doctrine, politics, and papal authority.
  - Key events:
    - Posting of the 95 Theses (challenges to the church) (1517)
    - Heidelberg Disputation (April 1518)
    - Leipzig Disputation (July 1519)
    - Writings: Three Treatises (1519-1520)
    - Diet of Worms (March 1521)
  - Key reformers:
    - John Wycliffe (1330-1384)
    - John Huss (1372-1415)
    - Martin Luther (1483-1546)
    - Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)
      - Conrad Grebel & Felix Manz (Anabaptist (Baptist))
    - John Calvin (1509-1564)
  - Reformation(s):
    - Germany: Lutheranism

- Switzerland: Calvinism & Anabaptism
- England: Henry VIII (Anglican Church/Church of England)
- Rome: Counter-Reformation (Council of Trent)
- Luther and the Peasant Rebellions (1524)
  - As the reformation began to inspire people to rebel against the political establishment, Luther realized that he was not willing to be at the front of a violent revolution. He soon began to condemn the revolts publicly.
- England separates from the Catholic church (1534).
  - Henry VIII - split to divorce his wife,
  - Daughter Mary (catholic) came down hard on protestants and gained the name “bloody Mary” for her treatment (reigned 1553-1558). Many protestant Christians fled England under her reign.
  - Her middle sister Elizabeth took a moderate position and relaxed restrictions (reigned 1558-1603). The refugees from England settled in parts of Europe where they saw additional persecution and eventually petitioned to settle in the New World (America).
- Pilgrims leaving Europe to flee persecution (mayflower 1620)
  - Reformation sparked a division in the church. That division spread throughout Europe and to England.
  - Church power had been so engrained in European political institutions, that it was used for political purposes (i.e. church of England, peasant rebellion). That political tension caused people to flee to the New World (America).
- The Age of Reason and Revival 1648-1789
  - 13 colonies and their denominations:
    - Virginia - Anglican/Church of England
    - New York - Anglican/Church of England
    - Massachusetts - Congregational Church
    - Maryland - Anglican/Church of England
    - Delaware - None
    - Connecticut - Congregational Church
    - New Hampshire - Congregational Church
    - Rhode Island - None
    - Georgia - None
    - North Carolina - Anglican/Church of England
    - South Carolina - Anglican/Church of England
    - Pennsylvania - None
    - New Jersey - None
  - Most colonies felt so strongly about the moral compass of their community that they wrote restrictions into their governing documents for only people of faith to hold office.
  - However, not everyone agreed early on. In the early to mid 1630s a pastor named Roger Williams in Massachusetts was concerned that the newly formed colonies could take on the same self-destructive powers as the state-sponsored religions in Europe. Williams called for a “hedge or wall of separation between the Garden of the church and the wilderness of the world.”
  - As the colonies came together they realized that the one thing they all had in common was that they did not want another state or the federal government to dictate elements of their faith.

- The Age of Progress 1789-1949
  - The American colonies settled on the idea that their federal government would have tight, specific powers, and whatever power was not given would by default be the power of the states.
    - *“I doubt whether the people of this country would suffer an execution for heresy or three years imprisonment for not comprehending the mysteries of the Trinity. But is the spirit of the people an infallible, a permanent reliance? [No, it was not]. The spirit of the times may alter, will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, and our people careless. It can never be too often repeated, that the time for fixing every essential right on a legal basis is when our rulers are honest, and ourselves united.”* -Thomas Jefferson
  - The primary social fabric of each community within each state was the network of churches. There were limited powers given to the national government, but the states still governed themselves as they saw fit. This led to inevitable conflict.
  - After the Revolutionary War, there was massive debauchery. (1776-1900)
    - Only 5 to 10 percent of the American people were church members at this time. It was far from the idealized religious picture many paints today of the founding generation of the country.
    - Unwed pregnancy, alcoholism, pervasive gambling, and prostitution were worse than at any other time in American history.
    - This led to the second great awakening (1795-1835).
    - The new moral movement was fueled by resentment toward this degrading lifestyle and the newly converted individuals of the church began an effort to use federal power to force states into moral positions.
    - This eventually led to the Civil War, the progressive movement of the late 19th century, and the Third Great Awakening.
      - The Civil War acted as validation that the state could be used to enforce moral positions. Just like the aftermath of the revolution, the aftermath of the civil war also left a wake of poverty-driven decadence. It was in the critical season of reconstruction that more moral issues seemed in need of addressing by the federal government.
  - European theologians reject the Bible
    - During the Enlightenment (17th & 18th Centuries), there was a shift in public perception about human nature. This shift was in part because of three primary influences.
      - In 1859, Charles Darwin published his work, *The Origin of Species*. This created a challenge between what was traditionally accepted for over 6,000 years about the intentional design of humans by a personal creator and those who wanted to validate (or invalidate) faith in science.
      - The industrial revolution of the mid-19th century brought massive growth to small towns and cities. This growth came from the American countryside as well as foreign immigrants who settled from around the world. Each brings different ideas about God and religious tradition.
      - Finally, the most significant battlefield for Christians in the 19th century continues today. As more American clergy were educated

in European seminaries, they brought back with them a skepticism of the Bible and a low view of scripture. This created a more flexible moral foundation as 1900 years of orthodoxy gave way to philosophy and personal experience. All three of these influences worked to shift Western thought away from Christian to secular forms of thought and behavior.

- Philosophers of the Enlightenment
  - Francis Bacon (1617-1621)
  - René Descartes (1596-1650)
  - David Hume (1711-1776)
  - Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
  - Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716)
  - John Locke (1632-1704)
  - Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
  - Voltaire (1694-1778)
  - Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a Christian theologian who played an integral part in the dismantling of the validity of scripture. Schleiermacher believed that all a person could know about God was determined by what they were able to experience. Scripture and Christian tradition therefore took a back seat to personal experience because how else could a personal God communicate with His children?
- Progressive movement: The reconstruction of the United States after the Civil War was built on the philosophic foundation that men were inherently good and their success or failure is determined by what is allowed to influence their life. This worldview led to a new type of moral political reform that placed government as the supreme moral compass for the nation.
  - Significant Moral Legislation 1860-1935:
    - 14th Amendment (citizenship by birth) (1868)
    - 15th Amendment (voter rights act) (1870)
    - 16th Amendment (Income tax) (1913)
    - 17th Amendment (removal of state legislature oversight for US Senators) (1913)
    - 18th Amendment (prohibition against alcohol) (1919)
    - 19th Amendment (Voters Rights Act) (1920)
    - 21st Amendment (repeal of prohibition) (1933)
- Scopes Monkey Trial: One of the champions of the progressive movement in the early twentieth century was a man named William Jennings Bryan. He was a deeply religious man who ran for President of the United States on three separate occasions on the Democratic ticket. He later served as Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State (1913-1915). In an organized attempt to challenge a Tennessee law that prohibited teaching the theory of evolution, Bryan found himself as the champion of the Biblical perspective of life and the origin of man. On the other side of the courtroom was an experienced attorney named Clarence Darrow. The combination of Darrow's wit and courtroom prowess, Bryan's age, and a slew of biased media who covered the trial moment by moment, all proved too much for the aged politician. Throughout the trial, he was regularly turned around and made to look like an uneducated fool. By the end of the trial, the nation had seen all that it wanted to. Five days after the trial ended Bryan died



peacefully in his sleep. The evangelical crusade for a Christian America died with him.

- The Age of Ideologies 1950-present
  - Soon after the Scopes trial, the American church turned inward. There was already a strong pull in that direction after the theological battles of the 19th century over the validity of scripture and the Judeo-Christian worldview. As a result, Christians began to turn away from public life and relegated themselves to keeping their head down in society. This was common in American life until the Jesus movement in the 1960s and 70s.
  - Christian activism in modern American Life: There is still a strong pull toward civic involvement in the American Church. The tension between the church and the state that existed 400 years ago in the original colonies is still alive and well. It is important to remember where we have come from as a people of faith in our relationship with the government and to always look for ways to influence our culture through the biblical strategy of righteous living.
  - Cultural shifts in the 20th century (those professing to be Christian)
    - 63% of the total population in the US claim Christianity as their faith across all demographics
    - 54% of those people attend church services only a few times a year
    - Percentages of each generation that claim to be Christian:
      - 84% of Silent Generation (1928 and 1945)
      - 76% of Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
      - 67% Gen X (1965-1980)
      - 49% of Millennials (1981-1996) (largest generation in US history)
        - 64% do not attend church regularly
        - 36% attend church regularly
    - GenZ (1997-present) (data not sufficient)

## Additional Resources

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