

# OpenTheo

## Book Review: A Magnificent Catastrophe by Edward J. Larson

October 20, 2021



### For The King - Rocky Ramsey

I am not including this book review in my monthly book review episode because there is far too much to interact with. To do this book justice I needed to create a longer episode exposing some of the helpful things it gets into. I hope you learn something and walk away with some thoughts whether you agree or not!

Resources on defining atheism as a religion:

\* EDITORIAL Is Atheism a Religion? Recent Judicial Perspectives on the Constitutional Meaning of "Religion" DEREK H. DAVIS (Journal of Church and State)

\* <https://www.atheists.org/activism/resources/about-atheism/>

\* <https://www.thebanner.org/columns/2019/01/is-atheism-a-religion>

Get the book here -> [https://www.amazon.com/Magnificent-Catastrophe-Tumultuous-Election-Presidential/dp/0743293177/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=a+magnificent+catastrophe&qid=1634397641&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Magnificent-Catastrophe-Tumultuous-Election-Presidential/dp/0743293177/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=a+magnificent+catastrophe&qid=1634397641&sr=8-1)

Website: [forthekeepingpodcast.com](http://forthekeepingpodcast.com)

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/For-The-King-105492691873696/>

Contact: [forthekeepingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:forthekeepingpodcast@gmail.com)

--- Support this podcast: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/rocky-ramsey/support>

## Transcript

Quote, Calvinist, he believed that the state needed the church and political leaders needed Christ. Quote, end quote. That is the Christian position.

These leaders come in the late 18th century during the revolution, rise to power, and

abandon the gospel, abandon Christianity, abandon Christ. Don't think I will even ask you to make Jesus Lord of your life. That's the most preposterous thing I could ever tell you to do.

Jesus Christ is Lord of your life. Whether you serve him or not, whether you bless him, curse him, hate him, or love him, he is the Lord of your life because God has given him a name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow and tongue confess that he is Lord. Some of you will bow out of the grace that has been given to you and others will bow because your kneecaps will be broken by the one who rules the nations with a rod of iron.

(silence) And I will not apologize for this God of the Bible.

(music) The first book I want to review is a magnificent catastrophe, the tumultuous election of 1800, America's first presidential campaign by Edward J. Larson. This was a great book.

Highly recommend it. I want to give some quick background about the author and then I want to get into the content of the book. Edward J. Larson is the author of seven books and the recipient of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize in History.

For his book, *Summer for the Gods*, *The Scope's Trial*, and *America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*, and he has other books over evolution, God and science in America, the controversy over creationism and evolution in America. He has a ton of different books out. But currently, or at least when this book was written and the about the author section was penned, Larson is a professor of history and law at Pepperdine University and lives in Georgia and California.

He's appeared in a bunch of journals, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Nature*, *Scientific American*, *The Nation*, a bunch of different stuff. So obviously, good author with a lot of different books out that he's written. This was published by Free Press and the book is, it was written in 2007.

So the book is about America's first presidential election. And I don't want to get into, I mean, there's so much I could talk about with this book and I just want to hit some of the main ideas that I thought would be helpful to a reader and a lover of history and of our nation's history, American history in specific. The book starts off talking about Adams and Jefferson, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson's relationship.

So from 19 or sorry, 1788 to 1792, sorry to 1796. Yes, George Washington was the president. So he ran or was just selected as the first president of the United States.

So he didn't have to campaign. After that, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson being already recognized as public intellectuals and servants of the people in the American government were selected to run in 1796. So they didn't have a formal campaign or seek

to be elected by their party or to run as their party's candidate.

They were just selected to do so. Now, before any of that happened, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were both ambassadors to France and served the American government in that way along another capacities. But initially, John Adams was with Benjamin Franklin in France and everybody in France really loved Benjamin Franklin.

And he would debate with Voltaire and was a philosopher and super smart and savant. So people really took a liking to Benjamin Franklin. But John Adams, Benjamin Franklin did not particularly enjoy nor did the French people take a liking to him being a shorter, hot head kind of individual.

And then eventually along comes Thomas Jefferson, this six foot one taller, more demanding, smarter philosopher type than John Adams was. So Benjamin Franklin kind of took Thomas Jefferson under his wing and took a liking to him more. And this caused some growing animosity between the two.

But a friendship was quickly kindled and they served together under the American government for a while. And eventually they come to this impasse in 1800 where they're running against each other, America's first presidential election, where they seek candidacy by their party and that they run on their party's behalf. So that's kind of what makes this election unique.

Now, after they become rivals due to all their different what I was laying out animosity with being liked by Franklin and certain people and being respected in different senses and having different strengths, eventually they seek this candidacy and John Adams runs with Pickney and Thomas Jefferson runs with Aaron Burr. But there is this divide. Another big thing to note in this book is he lays out this divide between the Federalist and the Republicans.

Now, the Republicans is what Thomas Jefferson ran under. And this was the first time the Republican Party had actually picked a candidate, obviously, but the Federalists had had candidates and people in their party and leadership for 12 years now. So the Federalists at this time actually had this schism in their party due to Alexander Hamilton being this representative of the high Federalists, which were just a they had a different kind of political ideology than just the regular Federalists wanting a stronger Federal head.

High Federalists were angry with John Adams presidency that he would seek peace with France because France was a, you know, pagan nation that had this party called the Jacobins had risen to power and had beheaded all of the federal headship that was present in France, like the monarch and the monarchs and the religious officials, all that. So what they saw was this kind of secular uprising in France. Now, John Adams saw no reason to exactly declare war on France, but to just remain peaceful with them, which is what the Republicans like.

But the Republicans were more sympathetic to the actual political philosophy and ideology, religious nature of the uprising that was happening in France. So John Adams, although didn't approve, saw no reason to go to war due to America's most recent war, the Revolutionary War, and did not want to be involved in another war. Nor did he think the leadership of the company of the country would be helped by such a decisions.

But the high Federalists obviously wanted to declare war and wanted to fight them. And Alexander Hamilton, the leader of the high Federalist Party, had a standing army during this time to deter America's foes against it. And yeah, so there was a lot of trade war and stuff happening in France.

And that kind of comes into play at the end of the election about I think it's like a day or a week before the very final election in Rhode Island happens. They hear of this peace treaty that John Adams had finally struck with France. So this played a big role in the election.

But that just that's to highlight the differences, the split in the Federalist Party, because that's really what their downfall came from. And this election was because Alexander Hamilton did not like John Adams and did not think he was fit to rule and instead kind of created an inside coup against John Adams. And this was to the benefit of the Republicans.

So, yeah, the uniqueness of this election, this was the first kind of campaign. This is the first time that we have all these different types of ways that the electors are chosen by each state state legislator. So sometimes the whole state would be sweep with all of its electors, but sometimes each district would send and vote as an elector.

So instead of, you know, getting a majority of the state means that you get all of its electoral votes, some states you could actually divvy them up. And eventually, by the end of the book, there is this really interesting thing that happens. It comes down to Pennsylvania and then North Carolina, basically.

Pennsylvania had an impasse. The Senate and then the House of the state legislator was one was ruled by Federalists. One was ruled by Republicans.

So they come to this impasse and eventually they decide to split the electoral votes going eight because they had 15 electoral votes altogether because they were divided. They didn't want the state to run whole wholeheartedly with its electoral votes towards Jefferson. So the Federalists and I think it's in the Senate basically block the passing of the electoral votes laws that were being legislated.

And eventually got something passed where eight of the electoral votes went for Jefferson and seven for the Federalists. So instead of all 15 going to Jefferson, only eight did. And then in North Carolina, which was Pichne state, the Republicans get what they

need because it was there was a lot of Republicans in the state.

And Pichne's cousin, I think, was the leader of the Republican Party. So there's a lot of family ties there. But eventually Jefferson wins the election.

So that's kind of the story. A brief summary. The book is great and there's a lot I didn't I just missed out on there.

For instance, I forgot to mention that Pichne and Jefferson, when they were written down on their party's ticket, there was no explicit vice president. Pichne, which was a high federalist that Alexander Hamilton and wiggled his way in there as the as the vice president presidential candidate, they actually did not expressly state that Pichne ought to be the vice president. And they wanted Adams as the president because all the high federalists didn't want Adams as president.

They wanted Pichne. They wanted a high federalist there. So there's already that kind of splitting of the vote.

And the same thing happened where they expressly stated the opposite happened for the Republican Party, the unity there, where Aaron Burr was recognized as the vice president running mate with Thomas Jefferson as the president. So that's just yeah, there's a lot of fighting and vicious words that were shared during this time. And by the end of it, Alexander Hamilton duels.

I think Aaron Burr Alexander Hamilton dies in a duel. So one of the main takeaways just from the political unrest that was seen in this book of just the slander from all the different news outlets in each city. There was a you know, there's a federalist news outlet.

Then there's a Republican news outlet and just the slander against each party. We really see nothing different today. And I want to make you guys alive to that.

And the reason why I got this book is because I was talking to my pastor about some of the civil unrest that we see in our society today. And he was like, hey, just read this book and you'll see America's kind of always been like this. There's always been just vicious fighting between political parties and strong political ideologies.

And so I don't know. I just want to I think this book is worth reading because it'll give you an idea of historically where we've been that there's been fighting like this for a very long time. OK, I know this is going a while, but I think this book was really good.

And there are some really important things I want to highlight in in the seventh chapter of this book. The title of the chapter was called For God and Party. And because this is for the king, obviously, the King Jesus gets brought up in this book because political philosophy is and was heavily influenced by the Christian ethic.

God's word, the Bible. So I think there are some really helpful concepts for Christians to think about here. And if you're a non-Christian listening to the podcast, I think this will be helpful as well.

So in this chapter for God and Party, I'm going to start reading on page 166 and I'm going to read a bunch of quotes throughout this whole chapter. And I think this is going to be helpful. OK, starting on the top of page 166 in the first paragraph.

Quote, many revolutionary era leaders gravitated toward various forms of deism or unitarianism that acknowledge God as the creator of nature and nature's laws. But denied that God intervened in natural processes through miracles and view Jesus as simply a great moral teacher among statesmen, Franklin Jefferson and Thomas Paine publicly supported this movement. But Washington, Adams and even Hamilton privately drifted in the same direction, even as they endorsed the public displays of conventional religiosity as political conservatives, federalists tended to value religion, tradition and family authority as means of fostering social, economic and political order.

In contrast, Jefferson and many Republicans saw religion as a personal matter and denounced established churches as fetters on freedom. End quote. OK, what do we see here? The religious convictions backing the parties is on display here.

And also, I just want to expose you guys to this, that many of our leaders, even at the conception of this country, they were not Christians. They did not follow Jesus, nor should we expect some of those laws from the outset of America to be the most godly and upright laws. They were sinful, atheistic men that had presuppositional allegiances to certain ways of thinking, namely naturalism, enlightenment thought, all these things.

And because of that, yeah, there are some things that they get terribly wrong. And I'm going to read more quotes that are going to expose this, but when I say enlightenment thought, I'm talking about rationalism. I'm talking about the supremacy of natural law over God's revealed law.

These are some of the ideologies that were coming out of the Enlightenment era. And obviously, Jefferson, a lot of these men secretly were sympathetic to the viewpoints. But Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, these guys publicly supported this rationalistic, non-religious view of the world.

And this is the key sentence that I want to interact with. "In contrast, Jefferson and many Republicans saw religion as a personal matter and denounced established churches as fetters on freedom." Okay, this is the main flaw in the ideology backing some of the American viewpoints of freedom that we still see today that is terribly, terribly wrong. There is no freedom in religion being a personal matter and denouncing established churches or having an established church.

I do agree that there should not be any established churches by the state. And when the founders were talking about religious freedom, they were not talking about the freedom in America of anybody to have any thoughts, what they want whatsoever, on religion. You know, atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, all the other religions.

That's not what they were talking about when they were talking about religious freedom. They were speaking to religious freedom from the state authorizing a state church that was the position of the government. So what I think should happen is there should be a kind of mere Christendom, which is this is there's a book by Douglas Wilson that talks about this.

And I think that this is so far as I can tell, I could definitely change my view and I will do a podcast where I would espouse that I've changed my view on this. But as of right now, I think it makes sense that the position of the US government, the position of the state should be of Christianity. Now, it shouldn't be it has to be Calvinism.

It has to be X, Y and Z. Although I'm a Calvinist, I think the Reformed tradition is correct and the theology that comes out of that tradition is correct and the correct interpretation of the text. However, I think that there should not be a state church that defines that kind of thing. It should just be Christianity in general, mere Christendom.

That should be the position of the state because the current position of the state is not one of neutrality, but of one of secularism. There is a position that's that is being held by the state currently. And this is what Jefferson started this thought from these Republicans.

And we still see this in the Republican Party today. It is a foolish, evil, evil thought that Republicans need to repent of this kind of conservative values for conservative sake, but not knowing where the conservative values come from. For these people, they come from natural law and just their own intuition rather than from the scriptures.

And that's what we're conserving. And Jefferson, as the kind of, you know, birthplace of the Republican Party, was like this. That's an issue.

And I have an issue of that. And religion is not a personal matter. I think the freedom of conscience is a good thing.

It's a personal matter to believe what you think is true. But to say that you should denounce established churches. Well, I think the established church should be mere Christendom.

The the central tenets of the Christian faith should be the establishment from the state. That is not a federal freedom because the state taking a view of quote unquote neutrality and secularism. Now that that is a federal freedom because you're going to have a federal freedom no matter what when you define freedom that way.

You know, freedom should be anything that sets you free from whatever is enslaving you. Now, the only way to do that is for Christ to set you free from sin. If you just make secularism the position of the state, now you've just enslaved everybody to secularism to that thought process.

Now, being a slave is only OK in the instance of being enslaved to the truth that set you free. So, for instance, if the position on the state secularism now we're enslaved to secularism, now the secularism set you free. No, there's no way for an atheist to derive any first principles besides those that are evident from natural law to build a society.

And there's no foundation to ground any of that. Nor can they give an account where natural law comes from and where the uniformity of nature and what we learn from nature. Comes from.

They can't give an account for any of those things. But if the position of the state is that of Christianity mere Christendom, then we have now set people free because we've provided a savior. Secularism provides no savior.

The savior in secularism is a rationalism, your own thought, and empiricism, what you can what you can view and what you can test for empirically. That is that is the savior. And that does not set anybody free because it doesn't speak to morals.

It doesn't give you a moral uprightness that sets people free. It just enslaves people to more and more destruction. That's my point.

The logical the logical end of Christianity is not the Spanish Inquisition, is not the Crusades, it's love, peace, patience, kindness, forbearance, all these things. What is the logical end of atheism is the gulags from communist Russia in the 50s, 60s, 70s. That is the logical end of atheism.

Benito Mussolini's fascist state. That is the end goal, the end logic of atheism. That is the end.

And for atheists that want to say they want all the Christian values of love, loving others, being patient with people, they want all the Christian values without being able to be able to give an account of where they come from. Where did they originate? Well, I just think they're best. OK, well, what if you think it's best to not be patient with somebody in a moment? Have you now transgressed any objective law or did you just transgress your idea of patience that you can mold and it's malleable whenever you feel suit to bend it? That's my point.

So the end of the logical end of what we see from this Republican thought by Jefferson is what we see today, which I will get into more later. OK, I want to keep reading. I'm going to skip a paragraph on page 166 and then I went to at the very bottom of page 166, start a paragraph and I'm going to read like three paragraphs.



But I think this is highly, highly important. Quote in 1786, Virginia had leapfrogged other states by enacting Jefferson statue, the statue of religious freedom. By law, the state had established the Episcopal Church since colonial days.

But in one jump, this landmark legislation repealed that law and provided instead that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever. Further, it abolished a religious test for public office by adding that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinion anymore than our opinions in physics or geometry. OK, end quote.

I'm going to continue in a second, but I don't want to read this full big thing and not be able to interact with each point. I want you guys to be able to hear, you know, have that fresh in your mind so I can interact with it. So what's being said here is in Virginia, the established church from the state was the Episcopal Church.

Jefferson leading this new legislation, the statue of religious freedom, he abolishes that as the position of Virginia, the Virginia state. OK, sure. I actually do agree with abolishing that.

It should have been replaced not with what they're saying in this bill, in this legislation, but what I was saying earlier about how it should be mere Christendom should be replaced. Anyways, that's my position. Now, this is not just a quote from the book.

This is literally a quote from the law. "No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever." OK, now what is public school? Now, all the atheists want to claim that they're not a religion. If you look up the definition of religion, and I've already talked about this before on my debate with Keegan, it is religious.

What is a religion? Well, I mean, if I'll put in again the definition, you can go back and look at it. But secularism hits every single tenet of religion. It has a belief about God that there is a lack thereof.

It has morals derived from it, humanism. It has leaders of the movement. It has dogmas.

It has everything a religion needs. OK, secularism, atheism is a religion. One hundred percent.

There's no way around it. And that being a point, a presupposition I'm starting with, and sure, you can get down with that presupposition, but I think that it's rock solid, that sending kids to public school, people that work for the state that are forced to believe a certain thing, that is being compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever. That is present in the public schools.

You're forcing kiddos. You're forcing teachers to teach a certain way and to adhere to a

certain religion. So my point is that that statement is impossible to complete, to see to fruition, to create a space where no man should ever be compelled to support any religious worship.

That is impossible because whatever stance you have on religion is a religion, even atheism, even secularism, new age, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, whatever. I mean, we recognize those easily as religions, but the fact that people think that being "neutral" is not a religion is a foolish, foolish thought that has continued to lead our kids away from the faith when we send our kids to public school. Now, the second statement, that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinion any more than our opinions in physics or geometry.

What a stupid, stupid thought. Physics and geometry, you can reach truths about those fields through inductive reasoning, empirical inductive reasoning. You cannot in any way, shape or form derive principles or laws about religious opinion and morals, civil rights, morals, rights, aughts, rights, aughts, ethical aughts.

You cannot derive those like you can from inductive reasoning in physics or geometry. That statement is completely, completely wrong. And this is because they have bowed down to the God of naturalism.

You cannot derive every single moral principle from the natural law. Thou shall not murder? You can't even derive that from the natural law because obviously we have, we can rationalize murder in certain instances. For instance, babies and abortion, we can rationalize that or yeah, there's a bunch of different ways that that can happen.

Rationalizing murder, cannibalism in certain societies, that kind of thing. The natural law really does not get you that far. It does not get you as far as you would think that it would.

And because the animal kingdom, the creation itself, we don't see murder defined in the way humans define murder. Okay, so that's my point. Civil rights do depend on religious opinion and they're not comparable to the discipline of physics or geometry, mathematics, any of that.

Okay? Yeah, the natural sciences. No way, shape or form is our morals comparable to that. That's a stupid thought.

Doesn't make any sense at all. Okay, now I'm going to continue reading the next paragraph. Quote on page 167.

For Jefferson and Madison, who led the fight for the law's enactment, those two principles, no state support for religion and no religious test for civil rights, constituted fundamental freedoms endowed by the creator, whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free. The statute declared in a ringing affirmation that has echoed throughout the

centuries all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments and burdens, whereby civil incapacitations tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness and our departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion. As Jefferson saw it, state churches in Europe stereotypically with bloated, corrupt hierarchies invoked irrational superstitions to oppress people and support despots.

Through his statue of religious freedom and similar laws, he hoped for the freedom from religion as much as the freedom of religion. Okay, boom. End quote.

Wow. Okay, I mean, he's saying some crazy stuff here coming out of the Enlightenment era. I mean, these aren't new ideas.

These are things that have been around for a while. He's saying, whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free. Okay, that's where he's rooting a lot of this.

And this is, yeah, this has been a thought process for centuries. And he says that he's saying that these freedoms of the mind are endowed by the creator. Okay, to some extent, yes.

But we have to remember, he's not a Christian. His idea of a creator, that's this kind of deistic, unitarian, one God, not recognizing any miracles in the Bible whatsoever, no revelation, none of that. He only accepts in the Bible what he, on his own rational mind, thinks is worth considering.

Okay, so we have to remember that he has this presupposition in his mind when he's writing these things. So yeah, it seems enticing to say, oh my gosh, like God has created the mind free. This is great.

And that we see these corruptions of the despots of the hierarchies of the religious states in Europe and all this stuff. It's like, yes, okay, when we recognize the evils of this, yeah, 100%, they're evil when people abuse those powers. Now, that does not mean that it's necessarily evil in and of itself to have the hierarchy, to have a position of the state about religion.

That doesn't follow necessarily informal logic. That doesn't follow. So I guess, yeah, that's my point.

I don't know if I have anything else to say here. I mean, yes, we see these people, these irrational superstitions to oppress people into sport despots. I mean, yeah, to have something in mind like the witch trials, where they would just burn witches with these crazy superstitions to burn people at the stake that had not committed heresy, nor has there been any evidence of sorcery.

Yeah, so yes, this can turn bad 100%, but it doesn't follow that it's necessarily wrong. And that instead you should take that out because the second you take that out, you

have now created a new position, a new superstition, an irrational superstition, that of naturalism, secularism, atheism, deism, all that stuff. That is now the new irrational superstition.

Okay, let me continue on page 167. At the national level, the Constitution soon followed Virginia in precluding a religious test for public office and sorry, with the ratification of the First Amendment in 1791. Barring a national establishment of religion, some states continued to provide public funds for churches into the 1800s.

However, to require that government officials profess faith in Christ or more generally in God. Many Americans believe that in order to act right, people needed the precepts of religion backed by the promise of heaven and the threat of hell. They view Jefferson's support for the separation of church and state as reckless.

For some, the Virginians apparent rejection of the core Christian doctrine simply made matters worse. A leader should rely on God, Christ, and the Bible. They believed in 1800, Federalists could point to the terrors of Jacob in France to the logical consequence of trying to rule without religion.

Okay, 100%. These critics of this time dead on, dead on, seeing straight through Jefferson, seeing straight through this ideology, seeing, yeah, I mean like a ghost, like looking through a ghost, an apparition. I mean, it was that easy to see straight through this because these people that read their Bibles that knew what the Bible taught, you cannot derive first principles of morals, of political philosophy, understanding the authority of the state, the rights of humans.

You cannot get that without the scriptures, without presupposing a Christian worldview that something actually, things actually mean something. They actually have meaning and not just the meaning you ascribe to it. If you ascribe meaning to something, that is, that's a subjective ideology that all the meaning of something is what you ascribe to it.

And that's what these people are seeing straight through. These are just Jefferson's views of religion and they're not grounded in anything besides rationalism, besides mankind's own ability to think logically and reasonably. Okay, we can't trust humans to do that because we've seen the inability of people to think logically and reasonably in the past.

And still currently now, obviously, when we see things happening, like these mask mandates following the logic of some of the data that's being presented in a certain way. I mean, yeah, these people don't necessarily follow the logic perfectly. Neither do I, friends.

I'm not saying I, obviously every Christian thinks everything perfectly through, but if we use God's word as a standard, we will be able to think things through well. And that's the

point of my position. Let me move on.

Okay, this next part, starting on page 168, is about one of the pastors that were contemporaries of Jefferson and Adams and lived during this time. He obviously had a lot of sermons about the election during this time and about Jefferson and Adams and these guys. So his name is Timothy Dwight, and he, quote, "A Calvinist, he believed that the state needed the church and political leaders needed Christ," end quote.

That is the Christian position. I mean, that's a very explicit Christian teaching that I have no problem with. So I'm obviously not going to interact with it or try to debunk it.

I think it's great. I think it's a great thought. The state needs the church and political leaders need Christ.

The church, you know, when we talk about separation of church and state, we're saying that the state has no right to dictate when the church administers the sacraments, what kind of church is the only one that's allowed to be. And we're talking about Christian denominations, not church in general or not religion in general. We're talking about the Christian religion.

The state needs the church to inform it what righteousness and unrighteousness is. It qualifies that. OK, that's what the relationship is.

And then the state obviously preserves the social order in a society for the benefit of the church as well and the benefit of families. They all benefit each other, but they don't overlap the authority of one another. For instance, the state has no right to impose, you know, legislation about what state church, like we were talking about earlier in Virginia with the Episcopal Church in Jefferson's time.

But the church also has no right to tell the state, you know, what I guess it informs what authority it has. The God's word is what the anchor for all these different spheres are. But the church doesn't, you know, step into the political or the government's shoes and starts like a dishing out justice by putting people in jail, things like that.

That's what the church doesn't bleed into the state that way. So we're talking about sphere sovereignty. We're talking about the home, the church and the civil sphere all having their unique authorities from God.

And this is what this guy is talking about. He's a Calvinist that obviously understands God's word. So, yeah, let me continue with some other thoughts.

Dwight, Timothy Dwight, quote, saw the crumbling of the Antichrist Empire in the collapse of Roman Catholicism before the revolutionary armies of France and marked opposition to God in the rise of enlightenment naturalism. Deluded by French philosophy, princes and teachers in Europe had become proponents of irreligion and atheism, Dwight

asserted. The being of God was denied and ridiculed, he added.

The chastity and natural affection were declared to be nothing more than groundless prejudices. Spiritual and social ills merged in his conception of them with their common root and demonic forces allegedly channeled through the secret society of the Illuminati in Europe. Wow.

Really interesting thoughts. I mean, yeah, he's talking about the Illuminati. He's talking about I mean, he's coming hard against European leaders that have adopted all of this enlightenment thought, obviously.

But, yeah, I think he's dead on with a lot of this stuff. Deluded by French philosophy, all these people in Europe had become proponents of irreligion and atheism. We still see this happening today.

This isn't even this one. Even during this time, this speaks directly to our day as well. The being of God was denied and ridiculed.

Yeah, people make fun of Christians. People make fun of Christians for their propositions and what they believe about God's word, what they believe about Christ. I mean, but it's not just what we believe.

It's what is true. And they ridicule it. They make fun of God.

And, yeah, the common root is demonic forces. We battle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and rulers. And these thoughts are demonic in nature.

Anything that rises up against the knowledge of God to fight and wag your fist at God, that is demonic in nature. So I agree with what he's saying here that even what we see today with atheism and secularism, all of these different thoughts, naturalism, materialism, subjectivism or relativism, all these things, the sexual revolution, postmodernism, I mean, these are demonic thoughts. These are from Satan.

Yeah, 100 percent. OK, to continue, quote, "In Dwight's mind, Jefferson and the Republicans as proponents of French secularism in America served as the unwitting link between this vast satanic conspiracy and the United States. The great bond of union to every people is its government," Dwight declared.

"Without Christian rulers, there is no center left of intelligence, counsel or action, no system of purposes or measures, no point of rallying or confidence." "Secular chaos had replaced Christian order in France," he observed. "And it could happen in the United States, too, if anti-clerical leaders like Jefferson took power. For what end shall we be connected with men of whom this is the character in conduct?" Dwight asked.

"Is it that our churches may become temples of reason? Is it that we may see the Bible

cast into a bonfire? Is it that we may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution? All these acts had become commonplace in France," he claimed. "Shout our sons become the disciples of Voltaire or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati. Only Christian leaders can foster ordered liberty," Dwight maintained.

"If our religion were gone, our state of society would perish with it and nothing would be left, which would be worth defending." Okay. Wow, he goes pretty hard here. A lot of the stuff, again, I think he's dead on.

I think he's seen straight through all this, and I think that he was, you know, obviously speaking very foretellingly of what would happen in America. Now, these people speak drastically because usually you have to speak drastically about the issues at hand in any situation. Now, these things haven't taken place in a flash.

This is a very incremental, methodical disarmament of the church and the destruction of America, and this has been happening for a while. And it's not about America. When I say America, I mean the people that were Christians that founded this country and religious thought.

And then these leaders come in in the late 18th century during the revolution, rise to power and abandon the gospel, abandon Christianity, abandon Christ, and defame God's name and slowly, methodically disarm and disestablish the legislation that had, obviously, Christian undertones to it because they hate it. They hate the knowledge of the truth and they suppress it in unrighteousness. So the most telling thing of what he said is our churches may become temples of reason.

Okay, yeah, this happens all the time with the capitulation, the homosexuality and the sexual revolution, all these things. They think their reason is God rather than God's word and him himself. Is it that we see the Bible cast into a fire? I mean, yes, people burn Bibles, but this is more metaphorical of people destroying the Bible and not heating its instruction.

And we see this today. Is it that we may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution? I mean, what do we see happening in the pornography industry? What do we see happening with the fact that there's even such a job as a model? A woman that shows off her body and wears scantily, she scantily clothed and wears hardly anything. This is legal prostitution, you know, maybe not in its entirety.

I mean, there still is, I think, pockets of, I think in Europe, prostitution is legal. I don't know. I honestly have no idea if America has legalized it, but I think the principle stands that we're leading into that.

And just to give you a little background on this guy, he served as the president of Yale College from 1795 to 1870. He shepherded both his state's Federalist Party and its

established church from that position. His brother represented Connecticut in Congress.

He's the grandson of legendary evangelical theologian, Jonathan Edwards, and first cousin of Aaron Burr, who was the running mate of Thomas Jefferson. Dwight was an ordained minister in the state-supported congregational church. In books, sermons, lectures, and even poems, he used his keen intellect and sharp wit to promote his views of politics and religion.

Now, I'm going to read the next paragraph on page 169. Quote, "Will you trust philosophers," Dwight asked in his July 4th oration, "men who set truth as not, who make justice a butt of mockery, who doubt the being and providence of God." Widely known for his interest in philosophy and science, Jefferson bore the brunt of Dwight's assault. On the eve of the 1800 election, an appreciative Federalist leader in Massachusetts wrote, "Dr.

Dwight is here stirring us up to oppose the demon of Jacobinism." By then, however, Dwight was not alone in his religious crusade. So we see there are men that stand up in times like, you know, Dietrich Bonhoeffer during Hitler's rise to power. I mean, there are men that rise up.

Now, obviously, God uses these men in certain ways and there are certain spheres, but obviously they can't solve every problem. And we still see Jefferson being elected and we still see America's slow decline in the next two centuries to come and still continuing to this day. Yeah, it's a very sad thing, the things that he's saying how accurate they are and nobody really heeded his instruction.

Some did. The Federalist Party obviously lost by a small margin, but it really wasn't about the Federalist Party. It's about the principles behind them and the Federalists were willing to uphold them.

Jefferson was willing to dismantle them. Even though John Adams was a pagan, he was a Unitarian, he wasn't a Christian, even if he were elected, it would have been better for him to uphold the Christian principles that were already ingrained in the legislation in the American thought life. And Adams, or sorry, Jefferson is what slowly, slowly, slowly, dismantles all of this Christian thought in our country.

So let me continue on page 170. During the quote, during the ancient months leading up to the presidential election, countless tracts, essays and sermons, damned Jefferson as a deist or worse and called on Christians to oppose his candidacy. The flurry of activity bore the hallmarks of a coordinated campaign, but may have simply emanated from the collective angst of countless Christians, especially from the established churches of the Northeast, confronted with the prospect of something new, a president who did not defer to their beliefs.



In their official capacities while President Washington and Adams had publicly acknowledged God's sovereignty and Christianity had flourished, its prospect under Republican rule looked less certain, which we see happening, slowly but surely, the disarmament of the Christian position of the state. Continuing on page 170, quote, Dwight's public airing of Illuminati, conspiracy theories and invocation of obscure biblical prophecies evoked ridicule from the Republican press, even in Connecticut. His overheated imagination, this is what they say, the Republicans, quote, his overheated imagination adopts chimeras for reality, end quote.

And I'm also still quoting the paragraph. An article in the New London B observed, quote, this perversion of the prophecies of Revelation increases and confirms the disciples of deism, end quote. By 1800, Christian critics tended to take a settler approach in their published attacks on Jefferson.

In his words and deeds, Jefferson renounced the basic tenets of Christianity, they argued, and voters, as God's anointed means of choosing America's political leaders, therefore, should reject his bid to become president. Rulers needed the wisdom that comes from faith in Christ and reliance on scripture some Christians maintain. Although the Constitution permitted non-Christians to hold public office, they conceded the people should impose their own religious test on candidates.

Wow. You vote for the religious candidate you want. So as people abandon Christ, we will see less and less Christian leaders being elected, which is what we see happening today.

Yeah, I mean, a lot of interesting things here. I don't know if I want to go too much into this. I just kind of want to give you guys an idea of the book and what is being presented here.

Washington Adams publicly acknowledged God's sovereignty and Christianity had flourished. And yeah, Dwight may have had his weird statements about certain things. A lot of what he's saying is dead on.

These enigmatic men, men usually do have things that they're way off on, but the stuff they're right on, they're good and you want them around. OK, this is going to give you a really clear indication of what Jefferson's political and religious views were. OK, starting on page 170.

In the late, quote, in the late eighteenth century, most deists and atheists kept their religion opinions private. Those who did not, such as patriot pamphleteer Thomas Pannon and his 1795 book, *The Age of Reason*, were widely ostracized for their views. Indeed, in their zeal to expose, error, and attract followers, evangelical Christians probably exaggerated the extent of disbelief in the post-revolutionary war period.

So yeah, a lot of people were still Christians, but we have these leaders, which are very

important. Obviously not Christian and touting very bad views. Continuing on, quote, Jefferson never publicly professed either deism or atheism, even though critics regularly accused him of holding such views.

When asked about the subject at this time, Jefferson later recalled, my answer was, "Say nothing of my religion. It is known to my God and myself alone," which this is what the author says, "which was hardly the response of either a deist or an atheist. They would not speak of God knowing or caring about their religion.

A personal God played no part in their thinking." Wow. No thoughts of God played any part in their thinking. What about all the gifts of God that, you know what I mean? This is what they're claiming.

But he's saying this is hardly the response of a deist or an atheist, basically claiming that this guy was religious. Thomas Jefferson was religious. I mean, yes, he was a Unitarian, which is that God does interact in, you know, God is one.

There's only one God and all God's kind of all representations of God and different religions that have a monotheistic God are God. You know, they're all one thing. This is what he believed.

So, sir, when he says, "Say nothing of my religion. It is known to my God and myself alone," that does strike me as something a deist would say. It is all about what I conceive of God.

It's up to me and my mind and what I think God would be like and that God plays no part of in me. God plays no part in me and doesn't affect me at all. Hence, he says, "Say nothing of my religion." And this is hardly what a Christian would say.

A Christian would not say these things, say nothing of my religion. God commands us to go and proclaim the gospel and to speak the good news of Christ, to proclaim the goodness of God, to worship him publicly. I mean, this is what he commands us to do.

Jefferson was not a Christian. Continue on. Quote, "Although Jefferson may have been a deist at one time, by 1800, he probably was a Unitarian.

His private writings from the period reveal a profound regard for Christ's moral teaching and a deep interest in the gospels and comparative religion." This is important, guys. This next quote, this is a quote from Jefferson. This is going to display what he thinks about Christianity and what he thinks about Jesus.

"I am a Christian." His quote. Jefferson confided to Benjamin Rush in 1803. Quote, "In the only sense that Jesus wished anyone to be, sincerely attached to his doctrines in preference to all others, ascribing to himself every human excellence and believing he never claimed any other." As Jefferson read the Bible, Jesus never professed to be God.

Okay, this is, yeah, I mean, this guy just thinks Jesus is a human. He doesn't think Jesus is God. He just thinks Jesus, again, like everybody wants to think Jesus is.

He's always a great teacher. I'll take the stuff I want, but I'll reject all the stuff I don't want. He's a great teacher.

He was ascribing to himself every human excellence. That's all Christ wanted us to see in him, was that he was a really great human. Now, Christ wanted us to see that he is the anointed one, the chosen one, the king, the God-man, both God and man, making himself one with God.

He would claim things all the time that he was him and God. Him and God were one. He was God.

So this is what he claimed in Jefferson just completely rejects this. Okay, continuing on, I'm going to read a few. I'm going to try to, this is proving to be long, but I hope you guys are edified by this and you see some of the roots of just America and just the foolish thoughts of some of these guys that were leading us.

Let me see here. Okay, starting in page 173, I'm going to read these two last paragraphs of this section. One more thing at the end of the chapter, and then I'm going to read one thing that Abigail Adams said at the end of the book, and then we'll be done.

So, you know, a few more minutes. Quote on page 173 on the second paragraph, a campaign tract addressed to Delaware voters by a self-proclaimed Christian Federalist put the issue in blunt terms. If Jefferson is elected and the Jacobins get into authority, it declared, "Those morals which protect our lives from the knife of the assassin which guard the chastity of our wives and daughters from seduction and violence, defend our property from plunder and devaluation and shield our religion from content and profanation, will be trampled upon and exploded.

With Republicans in power, this Christian war in America would follow France into the moral and political abyss where the people turned, more ferocious than savages, more bloody than tigers, more impious than demons." And a bold-faced notice captioned, "The grand question stated and reprinted almost daily during September and October, the Gazette of the United States, the nation's premier Federalist newspaper, starkly presented the choice facing Christian voters in austere terms. At the present, solemn and momentous epoch it declared, the only question to be asked by every American, laying his hand on his heart, is, shall I continue in allegiance to God and a religious president or impiously declare for Jefferson and know God? Stated this way, the choice seemed easy." Okay, yeah, people always want to piggyback on religion to, like, defame one candidate to choose another. That happens all the time.

This still happens today. None of these candidates were Christians. Like, yes, these

people are right to say it would be much worse with Jefferson, but they should have also been at the same time talking about John Adams' non-allegiance to Christ.

I want our religious leaders to get up in public and talk about the kingship of Christ. I want Joe Biden should be a godly old man that stands for truth, that knows God's word. It's written on his heart.

He's a memorized scripture. He quotes it whenever he's... A State of the Union address. He's quoting scripture.

He's talking about the kingship of Christ. He's talking... He's telling everybody to repent, to turn to Christ. That's what a leader of a country should do.

This guy's not. Instead, he touts secularistic naturalism, atheistic religion. That's what he does.

And that's what these guys were doing back then, too, and it's bad. Okay, so one more thing to make you guys aware of Adams' non-religion and non-allegiance to Christ. Page 175, quote, "Other Republican writers took on Adams in Pickney." So this is the Republicans firing back about God and party.

"Despite his vow to civil religion by participating in public worship and proclaiming national days of prayer and fasting, Adams privately differed little from Jefferson and his personal beliefs about God. Both men inclined toward Unitarianism, though Adams kept it under wraps better than Jefferson did and regularly attended conventional Christian church services during his presidency. This led some partisans to accuse Adams of hypocrisy.

In their publications, Republicans also alluded to unfounded rumors about Pickney's reputation as an "Empious Libertine." So yeah, they also say... This is on page 176. Here's just a real quick quote that... I forget. Oh, somebody writing for the Carolina Gazette says this, "Mr.

Adams may have no more real religion than my horse," he declared, but in contrast with an open infidel, "All serious men would prefer the one who acknowledges his respect to his maker." So this guy's saying, "Yeah, Adams may not be a Christian, he might not be an actually godly man, he might not be a regenerate man, he might be a reprobate, but all serious men would prefer one who acknowledges and respects his maker, although he may not give homage to him in the way that God has commanded him to." Yeah, so they recognize, even these people recognizing that John Adams is not a Christian either, but they would rather have... Yeah, they would rather have... Obviously somebody who recognizes Christian values. So, real quick at the end of this chapter, his concluding paragraph, he says, "Quot on page 189, 'The partisan rhetoric became severe. Republicans warned of monarchy if their opponents retained power.

Federalists spoke of an atheistic leveling revolution should the Jacobins take over. Many believe these words and fear the worst." So this was the fight for God and party during this first presidential election. Republicans are warning of monarchy.

If these Federalists get power, they're just going to be sympathetic to the throne in Britain and they're going to continue to create a stronger and stronger federal head. The executive branch will continue to gain power. And then the Republicans, sorry, the Federalists say that we are going to have an atheistic evil regime that dismantles all of our Christian values and basically destroys the country over time.

These were the critiques during this time and I think both are interesting obviously, but that's kind of what he concludes with and what the point of his chapter was. So here's the last thing I want to read by Abigail Adams, which was John Adams' wife. And she says something very telling about Jefferson and I think it's a pretty good, bad little text that he added in this book from, I think it's her journal or something.

This is what she says. So between Aaron, so by the end of the book, remember how I said Jefferson and Burr get elected but they didn't exactly say, because of the way the ballots work, nobody ran as a vice president. It was just whoever was recognized as the vice president running mate, but you still had to be the person who received the most votes still became president even though the vice president ran at the same time.

Because of this, at the end of the book, they tie. They both have 173 votes, electoral votes, both Aaron Burr and Jefferson. And because of that, the House and the Senate have to vote who is going to be the next president because they tied.

And this is what Abigail says during that time of the tie. In contrast stating that she had, sorry, quote, "In contrast stating that she had turned and turned and overturned in my mind the merits and demerits of the two candidates," speaking of Jefferson and Aaron Burr, "Abigail Adams remained undecided, long acquaintance, private friendship and the full belief that the private character of one is much purer than the other inclines me to Jefferson," she explained to her sister. Because remember, they used to have a strong friendship, Adams family, John Adams and Abigail Adams with Jefferson.

And then she says, "Yet," quote, "Yet I am sometimes inclined to believe that the more bold, daring and decisive character would succeed in supporting the government for a longer time." That meant Burr. The first lady then added a question of great moment to her. Would God protect America if Americans knowingly chose a president as president, a heretic like Jefferson, quote, "Who makes no pretension to the belief of an all wise and supreme governor of the world, ordering or directing or overruling the events that take place in it?" she asked about Jefferson.

Will God bless America if we continue to choose evil, reprobate, non-Christian leaders? No. God will give us over to the folly of our ways and eventually this country will be

destroyed. But this is not of our doing.

This is the folly of the fool. The fool's ways leads to destruction. That is the end of the fool's ways.

So I hope that was helpful and I was clear about what I was saying and I hope you enjoyed that. I know it's a longer book review, but wow, was this worth doing. This book was really helpful.

It's so worth the read. Again, it's called A Magnificent Catastrophe, The tumultuous election of 1800, America's first presidential election by Edward J. Larson. This will give you an inside look at the political landscape during this first presidential election at the conception of America as a nation.

It will give you an idea of that and how vicious people were with each other, but also what the religious health was of the people then and what they thought about Christ, what they thought about God. It's a very, very interesting read. I highly recommend it.

Please check it out. Buy it. I got it used for like eight bucks.

I mean, it's an older book, so it's worth getting and it's helpful. So I think that's all I have to say. All right, I'm going to end with a doxology like I always do.

First Timothy 1 17 to the king of the ages, a mortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Holy day, oh warrior.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

(upbeat music)